

1. Now, I always bring it up, I had many Jewish friends, but my best friend was a non-Jewish boy, Walter. His parents had a nice, big restaurant business and here you know, you boys and girls, after school, you go play baseball, basketball, and football, whatever you want and over there, soccer. That was the main game and still the game. So, after school, everybody run out to play soccer but I went every day to my friend's restaurant because his step mother said, "You're old enough, first you come home and cleanup the business. You can do something for us." So for years, and months, I went everyday with my buddy back to the business, cleaned up everything, and then the mother would say, "Ok, you guys, beat it, go." So it went on for years, we were the best of friends.

We went to concerts and games and movies, and one day called my best friend to me to say, "Klaus, I can't play with you anymore."

I say, "What are you talking about? We're the best of friends; we never had an argument, what's going on with you?"

"I have to tell you the truth. I have to join Hitler Youth, like anybody else. And if anybody sees me playing, and going out, concerts, or movies, go out with a Jewish boy, my parents might lose their business."

Here I lost my best friend and buddy, Walt, because he had to join Hitler Youth and I was Jewish and it was a big shock for me. You know, when you're 13, 14 that sure gets you. You're the best of friends, like brothers, and he let me go because I was Jewish. (~6:05 - ~7:50)

2. In '38, another ordinance came out, "All Jewish people have to get a new identification card. Okay, you have to go to the nearest police station to get your new identification card." So I took my younger sister to the police station. And they grabbed us; we were apprehended, like Communists.

My little sister said, "What are they doing to us? I didn't do anything wrong!"

They say, "You do like everybody else."

And so they apprehended us like Communists and we were told, "Come back in 3 days and pick up your card."

So after 3 days, we went back and I got my card with a big J for Jew. And I look at my card and I've got another middle name. I've never had a middle name like that before. But the Nazi State, they went back to the Bible and show us two names out of the Bible: Israel for men and Sarah for women. So, my new name was Klaus Israel Stern, and my sister **Rita** Sarah Stern, to identify us. (~10:15 - ~11:40)

3. So we went like a bunch of sheep, as they called us, and here we were inside a cattle car. 70 or 80 people. There was some straw on the floor, it appeared, to relieve yourself. They took off and we didn't know what happened. Then, after a day and a half, the train stopped and we looked out of the little window, out of the door. And when we stopped there were no cities and no

farms; we were surrounded by watchtowers and barbed wire fences. And the Nazis came with some German Shepherd dogs and even some inmates came in their striped uniforms and _____ "Cattle car, hurry up! We have no time, get going." And they took us to an open field and we found out it was Auschwitz-Birkenau: that's the open field here and that's the main door and the train station here. (~34:15- ~35:24)

4. And then came another group of people and everybody was led in, into the Auschwitz camp. They were tattooed on the left front arm. I don't know if you can see it here. I did not have no more name, because the Nazis say there may be another guy maybe with the same name and we don't want to fool around with names. And I got my tattoo on my left arm, my left front arm. 1-17-0-33. And that was mine; no more name. (~40:35- ~41:15)
5. I reported sick. It was the end of April of '45. I reported sick, and the clinic was overloaded; they put 4 guys in one bed. Bunk bed. Can you imagine that? Four guys. Hey, we were only skin and bones. _____ we didn't take much room. We lay there waiting to die and all we could get was water. Oh, we got water, but no medication, they didn't care. There was no Aspirin or something. We just lay there.

But on the second of May, 1945, the guy next to me said, "You know, I hear some strange voices."

And I told the guy, you know, "Oh, you're delirious. You don't know what the heck you are talking about."

He said, "Yes, I hear some strange voices."

And I listened a few minutes later, and the guy was right. I hear some English, yeah. What really happened was the American Army came a few days earlier than expected, they surrounded the small town and they came closer and closer to the camp. And when the guards, Nazis guards, SS guards saw the American coming, most of them had their own motorbike. They would take off, but they caught some of the guys anyhow. And here the American soldiers came inside the camp and saw the clinic and the guys saw we were half-dead.

We were begging, "Please, don't kill us; we didn't do anything! The Nazis took us only because we are Jewish." So the soldiers look at us and some of those guys start crying like little kids. They couldn't believe that educated people like the German people were supposed to be would do that to their fellow citizens, fellow man. People were crying and crying.

After they came back to themselves, they are on from one guy to the next, "Hey, buddy, we are here to liberate you. Don't worry, we don't shoot anybody. We are American soldiers, here to liberate you." (~8:55 - 11:22)

6. Anyhow, they took me to the nearest Catholic hospital, with American doctors. And I was deaf, of course, at the time, and I found out I had typhoid at the time, typhus fever. And I was about 6

to 8 weeks in the hospital to get me to get going again.

When I got into the camp in April of '43, my weight was about 165 pounds and the first time I was in the hospital and they weighed me, I was down to about 96 pounds. Just skin and bones. I wasn't the only one, everyone was like that. And of course they fed us good and everything. So I was there for a few weeks, the Army doctors did everything food-wise and everything.

And when I felt a little bit better, I asked somebody to get me a piece of paper, and I wrote a little note to my wife. I didn't even know if she was still alive. What we did, we agreed, if we both make it we will meet in my wife's hometown, which was about 25 or 30,000, and I was from **Berlin**, which was 4 million. So we agreed, if I ever make it, I'm going to meet you in your hometown.

So I wrote on the piece of paper, "Paula, I made it. I am still alive. Please wait for me." And I went out on the highway, there were some homecoming German soldiers and I asked one of the soldiers, "Can I trust you guys? Which way do I go to Munich? Okay, you guy, take that little letter and give it to somebody who goes north, like Augsburg or Nuremberg and give it to somebody. And I find a little later, as bad as they were _____ and my wife got a little note later on. So it was time to get out of _____, but it was time to go, I didn't want to stay longer than I was supposed to.

I was 5 or 6 hours by train from my wife's hometown, but there were no trains, no buses, no nothing. Everything was shut out and bumped out. So I walked from one city to one village to another one. When I came to a river, the Nazis burned all the bridges, so I had to wait for somebody to be along by boat. And I walked again. Anyhow, it took me about 3 and a half weeks to get home.

And when I got home, I met my wife for the first time in 28 months. She didn't know I was alive and I didn't know she was alive. We both made it somehow. And we found out there were about 10 couples on the farm, and of the other couples, there was another couple and we were the other ones who made it. The other 8 or 10 couples, the husband got killed, the wife got killed, they both got killed, or murdered whatever you want to say. So we were the only ones who made it. (12:34 - ~15:50)