Interviewer:
Today is the 22 of May, 2012. Weâ€™re in the studios of the Center for Oral History with Alan Moskin. Alan, would you spell your name for the transcriber, please?
Alan Moskin:
A-L-A-N, not two Ls, one L, A-L-A-N M-O-S-K-I-N.
Interviewer:
And what is your birth date?
Alan Moskin:
May 30, 1926.
Interviewer:
Happy early birthday.
Alan Moskin:
Eight days ahead of time; Iâ€™ll take it.
Interviewer:
Okay.
Alan Moskin:
Every day is a plus at this age.
Interviewer:
Right. So you have a - youâ€™re a veteran of World War II.
Alan Moskin:
Correct.
Interviewer:
And why donâ€™t we go back to sort of your early life, before we get to that?
Alan Moskin:
Okay.
Interviewer:
Where did you grow up?
Alan Moskin:
I grew up and I was born and raised in Englewood, New Jersey, which is in Bergen County, New Jersey, not too far from the George Washington Bridge.
Interviewer:
What did you father do for a living?
Alan Moskin:
My father was a pharmacist, but was also an active politician; a councilman, originally, and then the mayor of Englewood, and then he was a county councilman also in Bergen County.
Interviewer:
And you grew up, letâ€™s see, in the 1930s, then, around the time of the Great Depression. How did the Depression affect your familyâ€™s life?
Alan Moskin:
Well, I think everybody suffered to a certain extent. I think the pharmacist didnâ€™t suffer as much as other people, but you know, I was a teenager, and things were a little tight, and I learned that at an early age, and as I tell the young people today, we didnâ€™t have any credit cards or anything. If I recall correctly, I think the first allowance I got was when I was a junior, or maybe a sophomore, my father gave me 25 cents. Now, the kids laugh today, my grandchildren, because they donâ€™t understand that 25 cents a week - a week - was a lot of money in those days. We played for pennies, games and things - pennies. The kids today wouldnâ€™t bend down for a quarter on the ground if they saw it. We, if we saw a penny, weâ€™d kill to get one, but I got a quarter a week for allowance. But things were tight, but we managed to, you know, we managed to survive the Depression, and I remember hearing stories.
Interviewer:
What do you first remember about the news from Europe, news of the war? How did it first

come to you?
Alan Moskin:
Well, you got to remember, those days, we didnâ€™t have any television or obviously computers and things; it was just a radio, and radios werenâ€™t up-to-the-minute. But we would get the same thing when you went to the movie, you would get the - there was Fox Movietone News. I remember the Lowell Thomas, I think, certain voices that I remember, and they were always a few days behind when they were talking about something that happened. But as far as the war in Europe, you know, we knew that Germany in â€˜39 was invading different countries, and we were unhap -
Interviewer:
In â€˜39, you were 13, is that right?
Alan Moskin:
I was about, yeah, 13. I was probably in the junior high school, or middle school, they call it today.
Interviewer:
Do you recall when the news came that Germany invaded Poland?
Alan Moskin:
Yeah, I remember, you know, that the newspapers had it. Those days, I think it was the Daily News and the Mirror would come out the night before in Manhattan, and anybody lived there would bring the papers at work in Manhattan, and it was always, â€œExtra, extra, Germans invadeâ€ - what was it, Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia? It was like one country after another, if I recall, and - but you know, I have to be honest. There still wasnâ€™t the fear in this country. It was like far away, and it was like, you know, itâ€™s going to go away and nothingâ€™s going to happen as far as Americans are concerned. And again, I was 13 years old, so you know, I wasnâ€™t a student of history or anything like that, and I would just listen to what the older people would say. But I never got the impression that there was fearful of anything, of America being involved, the United States being involved - initially. And thatâ€™s the best recollection that I have.
Interviewer:
Well, thatâ€™d be â€˜39, but then in â€˜41 comes Pearl Harbor, right? So how do you remember the -
Alan Moskin:
That - that was -
Interviewer:
Days of Pearl Harbor? That was very different.
Alan Moskin:
That was a different story. At that time I was 15, and I was a sophomore in high school. I had skipped one year, so I skipped from third to fifth grade. I donâ€™t know if they skip any more, but those days, they mustâ€™ve tough I had something upstairs, but they skipped me and I didnâ€™t like it, because I was a good athlete, and one year meant a lot. I always had to be better than the big guys a year older than me, but. So I was 15, I was a sophomore in high school, and I remember being at the old polo grounds, watching the football Giants play the football Dodgers - they had a football team then and a quarterback by the name of Ace Parker - and they beat the Giants. That was my favorite team, the Giants, but they lost that day. I wasnâ€™t too happy. And I remember we were going out - I lived in Englewood, New Jersey, as I said. We were going out toward the subway to go to get toward the bus that takes us back to Englewood.
And all of a sudden, we heard all these newspaper kids outside screaming, â€œExtra, extra, Japs bomb Pearl Harbor, Japs bomb Pearl Harbor, read it, read it, read it.â€ And I remember, we were with a couple of young kids like myself, we were with one older person, and the other friends - nobody knew where Pearl Harbor was. â€œPearl Harbor,â€ I said, â€œwhereâ€™s Pearl Harbor?â€ but nobodyâ€™d heard of it until we eventually got home. We got home, it was a Sunday afternoon, if I recall, and by the time we got home it

was late afternoon, and we had one big radio in the living room. That was our communication. My grandkids canâ€™t believe it, but thatâ€™s - theyâ€™ll believe it now - thatâ€™s where we had a radio. And my father was sitting in a chair, and my mother was going about her usual business in the kitchen, whatever. My father, when I came in I was going to, ready to talk to him about, â€œDid you hear about Pearl Harbor?â€
The next day, we went to high school - Dwight Morrow High School - and the principal said that President Roosevelt is going to make - is going to make a speech, I forget whether the early afternoon or noontime, and weâ€™re going to pipe it in in the auditorium. The whole school went into the auditorium, and we listened to Franklin Delano Roosevelt - who, by the way, at that stage and when I was a kid, boy, he was idolized by everybody in my neighborhood. Jew, Catholic, colored, white, didnâ€™t make any difference - everybody. He was an orator. You know, you didnâ€™t see him so much, except in the news later on, but you heard the voice. And I always remember when I was a kid, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill; those voices just hypnotized me. I just thought they were great orators. And sure enough, we all had to be quiet, and it was that famous -
I can never forget that speech, but it was basically, â€œYesterday is a day of infamy, when the Japanese deliberately - â€œ and whatever, and then, you know, it went on and on, â€œand without provocation - â€œ he declared war. And I remember listening, you got a tremendous ovation from the Congress. You could hear it coming over, oh, a long time, you know, the clapping and every - and I remember feeling a surge, even at 15, of a patriotic surge going through my blood. Thatâ€™s my first reaction of when I really felt - â€˜cause I love this country. I mean, I got red, white and blue going through my veins; my father was World War I. And so that was my initial thing. Boy, oh boy, weâ€™re at war, and I wanted - like so many guys, I wanted to enlist. And I tell this to a lot of the young people today - I donâ€™t want to deviate too much - they donâ€™t get it. I meanâ€¦
Interviewer:
Weâ€™ll come back, though. You were 15, you wanted to enlist.
Alan Moskin:
I wanted to enlist, but I knew - my mother, like all mothers, particularly Jewish mothers - oh God, that wouldâ€™ve been no, no, no, no. And so I could not enlist or Iâ€™d have been disowned, but I did, some of my - I do recall that -
Interviewer:
Well, you wouldnâ€™t have been accepted at 15 -
Alan Moskin:
No, but I heard later on, there were one or two that were 16 that somehow got in the Navy - I donâ€™t know. This was after the fact. They either took their brothersâ€™ birth certificate - I donâ€™t know the details, but they got in before, because they started a draft, you know, World War II, where when you hit 18, you would get a notice from the government to report for, you know, for the draft board and for a physical exam. But no, I had to wait it out, and then we -
Interviewer:
So is that what happened, you were drafted at 18? Did you wait to be drafted?
Alan Moskin:
What happened is I graduated Dwight Morrow High School when I turned 17, which is a little young. Couple of weeks after my 17th birthday, which came on May 3 - May 30, excuse me, 1943. I started Syracuse University in June, because in those days they had whatâ€™s called accelerated, because of the war, they would try to get as much college as you could. So they would start in the summer and go - actually, I started Syracuse at 17, and I went to the summer, the fall, the spring, and then when I hit the next summer - wouldâ€™ve been four semesters, Iâ€™d have been a junior when I turned 18. But as soon as I turned 18, I got my draft notice from the government, up at Syracuse. And I reported in at the draft board, and then I went for a physical exam, and I passed the physical and went into the service.
Interviewer:

Where was the war at that point? We know that with the bombing of Pearl Harbor the U.S. declared war on Japan, but then the Germans joined in and declared war on the U.S.
Alan Moskin:
Yes, they did.
Interviewer:
So now we had a two-party war.
Alan Moskin:
Well, we had - we had - the invasion took place, if I recall, on June 4, and it was right after my 18th birthday. And we knew that - again, we didnâ€™t get the news, as I said before, right up to date - but we knew that we had, you know -
Interviewer:
Which invasion are you talking about here now?
Alan Moskin:
Was that Normandy?
Interviewer:
No, Normandy wouldâ€™ve been June 6 -
Alan Moskin:
June 6, was it -
Interviewer:
1944.
Alan Moskin:
Forty-four.
Interviewer:
Yeah.
Alan Moskin:
Well, like I turned 18 May 30 -
Interviewer:
Okay.
Alan Moskin:
So I said - you asked me, I think, where the war was.
Interviewer:
Yes.
Alan Moskin:
My recollection is right after I turned 18, we had invaded - Iâ€™m sorry, youâ€™re right, it was June 6. I know every day they were postponing it, from what my father was saying, because of the weather, but it was June 6, I guess, at Normandy. And so then, we, you know, we didnâ€™t get the full details about the invasion, but we knew that we had lost quite a number of soldiers in the invasion. And then I was waiting for my draft notice, and I got it I think either the end of June or July. Then you had to report for a physical exam or whatever, then they gave you a certain amount of time to get - and I went in, actually, I think the end of - I got - I actually went in the end of September. And then I went -
Interviewer:
And where were you stationed first?
Alan Moskin:
I went in - I remember, just a side note, that my mother and father said, â€œTry to get into the Navy. Try to get into the Navy. The Navyâ€™s better, itâ€™s more advanced; you have some college education, itâ€™ll be better.â€ So I remember when they interviewed me, they gave you an opportunity to say where you would want to go - Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force - and I was a pretty good talker, even at that time. And I remember, there was - they sat at a desk about 20 feet ahead of me, Major or Captain, I think, First Lieutenant sitting there, said, â€œYou want to tell us, sir, whatâ€™s your preference?â€ And I went on for about three minutes - I lied a little bit, to be honest with you - that my grandfather, it was in my blood, the Navy was in my blood. And theyâ€™re all looking at

me, never said a word, and after about three minutes, itâ€™s - they called me â€œsonâ€ and I wasnâ€™t, I didnâ€™t know what - â€œSon, are you finished, Son?â€ â€œYes, sir.â€ â€œGet up.â€ So I got up.
And they had me in a chair, by the way, which is not very uncomfortable, sitting in an open room with a desk about 20 feet away. But you got up, and I went up and I looked, and this Major in the beginning, in the middle, took a, took a, one of those - you know, with the stamp? Vroomp - A-R-M-Y - and never said a word to me, and I was in the Army. I donâ€™t know what, what their reason for that is, but they made a fool out of me, I thought. But I was in the Army, and had a few days off, a furlough or something, and then eventually I went down to Camp Blanding, the northern part of Florida, for three-plus months of Infantry Basic Training. And I was a good athlete, I was a jock.
Interviewer:
What was your sport, by the way?
Alan Moskin:
I played baseball, I was point guard in basketball. I started to play football - my father was All State; he was a little guy, was a great quarterback - so I played quarterback. But I was 145 pounds soaking wet and kind of a stupid jerk, â€˜cause we played both ways those days. You played defense and offense, and I used to go in head-first. We didnâ€™t have the equipment, and I ended up with several concussions, and finally the coach said, â€œMoskin, thatâ€™s it.â€ I was annoyed, but. The concussions were mild, but he was smart enough to figure that Iâ€™m too little, Iâ€™m too crazy, so he took me off the team, but. And I ran -
Interviewer:
Letâ€™s go back to basic training.
Alan Moskin:
I ran track. So I go - Basic Training I went to Camp Blanding, norther part of Florida. They went the northern boys down there, and we had a bunch of southern boys also at Camp Blanding, Florida, which I felt was - they kept the southern boys like in one couple of squads, and the northern boys came down together in other squads. I thought they shouldâ€™ve put us in together, but thatâ€™s what they did. I got along with all the southern boys - want to tell you something now that I think itâ€™s important, â€˜cause I was an athlete and I knew how to get along with people, â€œHi,â€ everything else. But about the third week or fourth week, if I recall, they were telling us we could put, we could put pictures behind our bunk, any pictures we want. You know, families, whatever, girlfriends, sports. And I put a picture - we had one the, some of the sectionals or something in Bergen County, and I - when you win, they take a picture right afterwards.
And I had my arms around a colored kid - now called black; I used the word colored, but my oldest daughter, â€œItâ€™s not politically correct.â€ But thatâ€™s the word back then, it was a good word; you called colored, werenâ€™t called black. Three colored kids, myself, Billy Oâ€™Malley, my Roman Catholic buddy - Jew, Roman Catholic, three black, we all had our arms around each other. The southern boys are walking by and theyâ€™re looking, and I donâ€™t know what theyâ€™re looking at, Iâ€™m making my bunk. And finally, the one guy blurts out, â€œCollege boy - â€œ that was my nickname, by the way. We all had nicknames, and mine was one of the better ones, Iâ€™ll tell you that - but I was â€œcollege boy.â€ â€œCollege boy, is that you, is that you?â€ and I said, â€œYeah, what the - I just told you. We won this - â€œ and the next thing I hear, â€œYou got your arms around - you got your arms around that nigger, that nigger baboon?â€ Well, I was taken aback, needless to say.
Iâ€™m not violent, but I guess youâ€™d call me feisty. Iâ€™ve been in a few things; my nose has been busted more times than I can count. But northern boys say, â€œHey,â€ you know, Iâ€™m getting hot. I said, â€œWhat did you say? What? Thatâ€™s my friends here.â€ â€œYeah,â€ you know, they say, â€œCollege boy, stop, donâ€™t start in, theyâ€™re ignorant,â€ blah, blah, blah, â€œwe got to get along with these guys.â€ And then after that, when we got - whatâ€™s it called - the assignments for the latrine, or guard

duty, or mess, things were put up there that werenâ€™t very nice. â€œMoskin is a nigger lover. Moskin, the Christ-killer. sheeny - â€œ kind of one blasphemous word after the other. I was very upset. I finally challenged whoever it was, there were fisticuffs that went on, and he was a big guy, he busted me up pretty good. I got a few in. Iâ€™m not going, I tell the kids, with violence, butâ€¦it was tough in the south then.
And a lot of the young people today, you know, this is not a pleasant time, when I tell them the story, but I tell them itâ€™s important, because it had a mark on me. We were going over to fight the Nazis. weâ€™re the good guys, and I got guys on my side - that kind of thinking, it was very disturbing to me. I spoke up at the Coast Guard Academy, and a lot of the southern boys - I forgot they have a mixture there - afterwards came up and said, â€œMr. Moskin, youâ€™re an excellent speaker, and thanks for coming, but why did you have to go into that?â€ I said, â€œGuys, first of all, you werenâ€™t even born then, so Iâ€™m not putting the sins of your grandparents on you. But thatâ€™s how it was in the â€™40s. The problem I had with it, and I had to get over it, is that how can guys be thinking this way when weâ€™re going over to fight the Nazis? I wasnâ€™t prepared to get on a bus and sit next to a colored lady and have the bus driver - with my uniform on - reaming me out, because colored and whites were not allowed to sit together.â€
And no - they shouldâ€™ve prepared us for that, first of all. Couldnâ€™t drink at the same fountain, couldnâ€™t go to the same rest room. I had been brought up in the Fourth Ward in Englewood, where my father was a councilman. It was a very mixed ward, with colored, Jews, Catholics, Indian kid - it was amazing, and I learned at an early age that weâ€™re more alike than different. It may sound corny, but I - Maya Angelou, the poet, said that. People are more alike than different. And I tell that I felt - my best friendâ€™s mother was black, or colored at that time. My mother and her were friends. I never looked at the pigmentation of oneâ€™s skin, â€˜cause I was brought up that way. But apparently, I found out, thatâ€™s not the case all over, and it was very disturbing to me, and I had to get over it. And I did, but I might add that when I was in combat, I never encountered any of that. Well, the guy on my right flank, or the left flank, or my rear, was interested in I do my job, likewise he do it. We didnâ€™t care about what the color of your skin - didnâ€™t happen to be any blacks that I recall in the outfit, anyway.
Interviewer:
Well, this is still the time of the segregated Army.
Alan Moskin:
Thatâ€™s correct. But I mean, I think there were some in the Mess Hall - Iâ€™m trying to think back - but I donâ€™t remember any being in the outfit with us.
Interviewer:
Did any of the northern boys stick up for you in this little incident youâ€™re describing?
Alan Moskin:
Yeah. Not - not - they were more concerned about confrontation, and that I shouldnâ€™t make a big thing out of it. But Iâ€™m - I wasnâ€™t going to - I just - I wasnâ€™t going to let it go, and I challenged the guy eventually who kept putting the things up. We fought it out in Reveille, and they didnâ€™t mess around with me after that, â€˜cause he knocked me down, I got up, he knocked me down, I got up, or whatever. He figured I was crazy. I got a few in there. Sometimes you have - Iâ€™m not preaching violence, but Iâ€™m just saying, I felt I had to do something. It was just too much. And that was the culture in the south, and I saw that I wasnâ€™t going to change it. I remember speaking to a couple of the southern boys that had education like myself, and initially I said - ooh, I remember one of them had started I think in the University of Florida in Gainesville or something, and I figured he had a year or two like I did at Syracuse. So I started talking to him about, you know, weâ€™re born with white or colored. Whether youâ€™re white, I find - I just told you now - people are the same. And they were listening to me, and listening to me.
And after about five minutes, he said, the guy said, â€œYou finished?â€ He said, â€œYouâ€™re trying to tell me that those - â€œ again, he used the N word - â€œare the

same as me?â€ I realized then, you know, the emotions embroil the intellect. You could talk - that was how they were brought up. The blacks - the niggers, as they called them, were inferior - and I couldnâ€™t fight the war there before I fight the war, so. And I might add, I didnâ€™t fight with any of those guys. A lot of the kids ask me afterwards, because when I went home - which I did for a furlough three or four days - and then got shipped overseas, I wasnâ€™t with any of the guys that I told you about at Camp Blanding in Florida.
Interviewer:
So what did happen next? Youâ€™re shipped overseas to where?
Alan Moskin:
We went on furlough. We were shipped, went over the Atlantic Ocean in a Liberty Ship convoy - that wasnâ€™t joy either. Those things were like rowboats in the ocean. Everybody was seasick - ho, ho - I tell the kids, â€œBoy, they were ten days of hell; youâ€™re going to pray to get off that ship.â€ It was - they were bouncing all - everybody was going from both ends. We landed in Liverpool, England, and in England for a while. Then went across the English Channel into France, and thatâ€™s where we were in what they call a Replacement Camp, where they would then process you and send you up to the front lines, so to speak. And I was processed and then sent up to join the 66th Infantry Regiment, 71st Infantry Division, part of the famous Third Army, led by General George S. Patton. And there was some training, I remember, initially. This was, I believe, in February of â€˜45.
And then eventually we started to fight, and I remember the Rhineland Campaign and the Central European Campaign, and I remember battles in places like Frankfurt and -
Interviewer:
Well, letâ€™s talk about some of these battles, and then before we get to that, I want to know if you ever met Patton in the course of your -
Alan Moskin:
Yes, I did. Not personally, but a couple of times, he came up to the front. We got it from our Officers that Generals were not supposed to come up to the front. We got it from our Officers also that Patton didnâ€™t give a hoot; he was not a guy that followed orders particularly, used to get in verbal battles with Ike - which was General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commanding General, and also Omar Bradley, â€˜cause he never followed orders. But he was apparently such a great General that they didnâ€™t demote. All this was what I heard our Lieutenants and Captains talking about. But he loved us grunts - thatâ€™s what they called us. He used to - I remember he liked to march with us a couple of times periodically. He was very tough on the Officers. I remember they were fearful when they said, â€œOh, the Old Manâ€™s coming.â€ They used to shake, because he would be demoting them left and right, whatever. This is hearsay a lot, but I mean I was just a Private, then a Corporal, then eventually ended up as a Staff Sergeant.
Interviewer:
Did you see him, though; did you actually eyeball him?
Alan Moskin:
Yeah. Yeah, heâ€™d - he was - like heâ€™s smiling. He liked to walk with us. He loved the feeling of walking with us. You know, as I was an 18-year-old, God, to me he was bigger than life. He had this fruit salad that, I donâ€™t know, started here, went down here, and he had these ivory like pistols, always wore these ivory pistols on his side, had boots high, and he cursed - oh, God. I wasnâ€™t a goody-two-shoes, but every word, four-letter words, and â€œThe Nazis, Iâ€™m going to F-ing F those goddamned Nazis,â€ and he thought we liked to hear that, I guess, â€˜cause he used to ramble like that. But I remember he used to really - he would scream out, â€œIsnâ€™t this war great?â€ or something. â€œI love this war. God help me, I love it.â€ And weâ€™re scared a little bit. We want to go home, you know. He acted like, you know, and I have to tell you, the movie -
There was a movie with George C. Scott that except for the voice - Pattonâ€™s voice did not fit the persona. I hope heâ€™s not looking down on me now, because he would - but George C. Scott had him down pretty good. I guess they did research on it. I saw that movie

about four or five times, and he was just a real Army guy. I heard that he was pretty down low when he graduated West Point, and so maybe upstairs he wasnâ€™t an intellectual, but he was a good Army man and weâ€™d follow him anywhere. The only thing is, from what we got from our officers, we thought he mustâ€™ve been a little crazy, because they said, â€œHe keeps talking about Napoleon and the old-time Generals, like he was reincarnated,â€ so they were getting scared that maybe he had flipped, flipped out, but now when we saw him. He came two times with our Platoon; he was walking, and then he went, and so I mean, you know, I was very proud that he was such a strong leader.
And again, I remember that he kept us - a lot of times we were tired and exhausted, and our Officers said, â€œPatton said we got to keep moving. What do you think those Nazis, how they feel?â€ We get it a lot from what the Old Man was telling the Officers. But I did see him on a coule of occasions.
Interviewer:
Letâ€™s go back to youâ€™re a member of the Third Army, youâ€™re - where are you stationed then?
Alan Moskin:
With 66th Regiment, Infantry; I was, you know - our outfit, as I said, we werenâ€™t stationed. We were moving into various battles. We fought in Frankfurt, I remember. I remember the place -
Interviewer:
Weâ€™ll go through the battles one by one, then. What do you remember about Frankfurt?
Alan Moskin:
Well, itâ€™s - you know - I canâ€™t tell you -
Interviewer:
Canâ€™t do it individually.
Alan Moskin:
First of all, you got to understand, we - a lot of times we didnâ€™t even know where we were fighting. People think, you know, itâ€™s not like weâ€™re riding in the Jeep, and â€œOh, entering Frankfurt.â€ We marched, we marched. You didnâ€™t even see signs half the time. I got this later on, where we were, you know; it was from the Officers. We were forward. Oh, I remember them telling, â€œFrankfurt.â€ I remember Kohlberg and Bayreuth. I remember they were - a lot of them with bergs - Amberg, Regensburg - a lot of the German towns seemed to end with berg. But we were going from one place to the other, one place to the other, and -
When did you actually encounter combat, then?
Alan Moskin:
Well, we encountered, we were in very heavy combat in the Rhineland Campaign, and I remember Bayreuth in particular was - lost a lot of buddies on every one of these battles. Iâ€™m just one of the lucky ones. I mean -
Interviewer:
What were these battles like?
Alan Moskin:
Oh, it was all hell. I mean, the Nazis were - they were - they were well-trained. The S.S. in particular, and we were encountering a lot of these what they call the Hitlerjugend, the Hitler Youth. They were - I was only 18-1/2, I wasnâ€™t even 19; until the war ended, I was still 18. But they were 15, 16, and fanatical. We took some of them prisoners; they had hate, hate. The Waffen S.S. and the Hitler Youth to me were the real Nazis. The Wehrmacht, the regular German soldier, in my opinion I thought he was just fighting like we were fighting. I mean, he wanted to kill me, I wanted to kill him. But the Waffen S.S., they had a - the few prisoners, they had hate, they were nasty. And the Hitler Youth, I remember we were taking a lot of those prisoners, and I tell this story about this one big blonde kid - they all looked alike, by the way. To me, they looked like, almost like cloning, because they were blonde and blue-eyed.

And maybe it was the beginning of something that Hitler was trying to do, but most of them all looked alike to us. We all said, â€œGeez, theyâ€™re young and they all look alike.â€ But thereâ€™s one particular day, I remember this big guy, and you know, I wasnâ€™t ever big - I was 5â€™8â€, maybe 150 pounds - so he mustâ€™ve been 6â€™, 200. And we had him shackled, and he was walking this - Iâ€™m indicating towards you - and I was about ten feet to the right. And I was tired, and I was pissed because we had been on the line. I hadnâ€™t slept for, I donâ€™t know, 24 to 36 hours. And he took, made a turn, and he came right up to me and looked this close to me, right - and he starts spitting in my face. And he starts calling, â€œSchweinhund, schweinhund, schweinhund, Amerikaner schweinhund,â€ with the hate. Iâ€™m - salivaâ€™s coming down my face, and this big, blonde -
Interviewer:
Perspirationâ€™s coming down your face, you mean, is that right?
Alan Moskin:
No.
Interviewer:
Saliva; his saliva.
Alan Moskin:
He spit on me three or four times -
Interviewer:
Spitting - oh, I see.
Alan Moskin:
So it was just dripping down, and I was pissed, I was tired of this. Like I said, I hadnâ€™t slept. I lost some buddies recently. And heâ€™s spitting and cursing - I didnâ€™t know what it meant, but I knew it wasnâ€™t a pleasantry by the way he said it. I think literally it means â€œswine dogâ€ or something to that effect, but the hate and the attitude. So I remember taking my M1 rifle, which was our rifle then and never left my side - I still think it was the best weapon I ever had - picked it up, put it right against his right temple, and I had my finger, and the Major starts screaming out, â€œCollege boy, donâ€™t do it. Donâ€™t be - heâ€™s a damned - donâ€™t, donâ€™t - heâ€™s not worth it. Donâ€™t be a damned fool. Iâ€™ll GCM you, Iâ€™ll GCM you.â€ He was over, he was going to court martial me. And I tell that story to the kids because I came so close; I wanted to blow that hateful kid - you know, I was tired. But I thanked the Major, â€˜cause if I wouldâ€™ve blown him away, I probably wouldâ€™ve been in Leavenworth, Kansas, who knows what. But I remember the hate, the Waffen S.S. and the Hitler Youth in particular; not the German soldier.
And there was one incident that Iâ€™m sure I had P.T.S.D., by the way, when the war ended, but you got to understand, they didnâ€™t know what P.T.S.D. was then. What I remember is the term â€œshell shock.â€ They would go like, â€œSomething wrong with you, shell shock,â€ so.
Interviewer:
You actually were in firefights, then.
Alan Moskin:
Yes. This one, also, incident, I was a scout. Scouts go in ahead of the main outfit, they pair you up with another guy. They volunteered me to be a scout. Thereâ€™s no joy. Youâ€™re going ahead with the fire. Be careful we donâ€™t get ambushed by the - particularly the Hitler Youth, again. They were staying back while we were coming into a town, and up on the second floor ledges, and you know, knocking off a lot of our guys. And this one time I was fortunate; I got behind a Panzer tank, which was a German tank. My buddy was in the open, and this shooter from the second floor ledge shooting my buddy. He didnâ€™t see me behind the tank; I got a few rounds off, made a hit, he fell. We ran up. No pulse, heâ€™s a dead soldier; blonde, as I told you. Handsome, blonde, blue-eyed, another one, laying there, and nearby was his helmet. And inside the helmet was a picture of an elderly man and woman. When I say elderly, when youâ€™re 18, you know.

Couldâ€™ve been in their 40s or 50s, so I laugh now when Iâ€™m in my 80s. But elderly at that time, anyway, 40s, and underneath was scribbled, â€œWir liebe dich, Mutti und Vatti.â€ I knew enough Yiddish or German or whatever, that that was, â€œWe love you, Mom and Dad.â€ And even though the rational part of my brain said, â€œI did my job. I followed orders. He wouldâ€™ve blown me away if he saw me behind the tank.â€ I knew all that. That was the first time that up close, I literally saw somebody that - a lot of times in combat, youâ€™re shooting. To be honest with you, youâ€™re not sure exactly whoâ€™s hitting who, itâ€™s that far away. This time, I knew Iâ€™d killed that young kid - 15 - and I had a problem with that. That was one of the nightmares that I had for a long time. Not so much the fact that I killed him, but that - like the look of the mother and the father, â€œwe love you, Mom and Dad.â€ You know, he wasnâ€™t going - so I tell that only because I killed my share, and I did my job, and I think I was a good soldier.
But I have to be honest, I never enjoyed killing at all. It was a hard thing for me, and it left a mark on me for a long time. Killing is - I - the southern boys, a lot of them were brought up when they were kids shooting and fishing and maybe shooting guns and stuff more, animals. I canâ€™t speak for them. But I never had a gun in my hand before, and I learned how to use it in Basic Training. But when I first up-front knew that I killed somebody, that picture of that lady and that man, boy, I couldnâ€™t get rid of that nightmare. You know, Iâ€™m sure I had P.T.S.D. for a while with that and other things I did in the service, but I had to find my way through it.
Interviewer:
So how many; how many deaths do you think you were responsible for?
Alan Moskin:
Itâ€™s so hard, because sometimes, you know, you see bodies falling, guys are shooting, thereâ€™s all hell breaking loose. This one, I know for sure I did it. Thatâ€™s why Iâ€™m emphasizing. Iâ€™m sure, you know, that I killed my share, because I saw bodies fall from a distance, and I had my M1 sights on them, but I never really got up close that much until this time, and that picture of that man and woman was something that bothered me.
Interviewer:
Did you recognize - Iâ€™d recognize the youth from others then.
Alan Moskin:
Well, what happened is that we kept saying, â€œThese guys are so young.â€ And I heard, one of the Officers said something about the Germans or something, that - I forget the phraseology - but we knew that these were young Nazis, apparently, that were trained, you know, and particularly for near the end of the war more than in the beginning. And I guess -
Interviewer:
Why towards the end of the war they had them?
Alan Moskin:
I think they were running out of men, maybe.
Interviewer:
Yes. Yeah.
Alan Moskin:
So I guess they were getting - but, you know, we heard stories, and they got a lot of these young crazies theyâ€™re using to ambush us, you know, when weâ€™re coming into towns, leave them behind. And where some of the - Iâ€™ll be honest, some of the German civilians, you know, we had the interpreter, were telling us that when these, the Waffen S.S. and the Hitler Youth were retreating, they treated their people worse than their own people. They were raping, and so on and so forth, they says. Well, the interpreter was like they were fighting the S.S. and the Hitler Youth, because they were crazies. They thought they - they - you know, that they could do anything. They destroyed their homes. They took valuables from the people. Some of those German people were like they were happy that we were, you know, coming through as we did. Again, bear in mind I was 18; I wasnâ€™t a man of the world. I was following orders. I was a soldier. A lot of this was listening to my

Officers, the Lieutenants and Captains.
I remember once they wanted to give me a field - we were losing a lot of Second Lieutenants, because, you know, Second Lieutenants in the Infantry are guys up in the front. And the Captain said to me, even though I wasnâ€™t even 19 at the time, â€œMoskin,â€ he says, â€œyouâ€™re a good soldier. You want me to give you a field commission? Iâ€™ll make you a Second Lieutenant.â€ You donâ€™t understand. Itâ€™s a feeling to be an Officer was one side of me, ooh boy, I have to write home Iâ€™m going to be an Officer and my father would be proud. But then I got this old Sergeant OLLIE, he was an Army regular or whatever, about 35 or 40; you know, that was ancient when you were 18. And he grabbed me and - Captain said, â€œThink about it, Moskin. Let me know tomorrow.â€ Pulled me aside, heâ€™s - I canâ€™t - I donâ€™t want to use the language here, but every four-letter word. â€œGod damn it,â€ he says, â€œyouâ€™re not thinking about nothing. Are you stupid?â€ You know, he liked me for some reason.
And he said, â€œDid you see how many - can you do math, Moskin? Did you see how many Second Lieutenants we lost? Do you want to be next? Youâ€™re not going to be any - â€œ and then he reamed me out, so I told the Captain. I think he probably did save my life, because Iâ€™ll be honest with you, we lost another Second Lieutenant, I think, after that. You know, the Second Lieutenants. the First Lieutenants. I had a West Pointer that was very good in the - in the knowing the battles and things, but as a - he always used to, before he would say, heâ€™d always go to the Sergeant, who were regular Army guys who had been through it, and we all knew that. But he would always say, â€œSarge, what do you think, Sarge?â€ And if the Sergeant said something else, â€œI think youâ€™re right, Sarge; I was thinking about that.â€ Iâ€™m not making fun. Iâ€™m just saying, these were young guys, 21 when I was 18, so they were looking like to the Sergeant; heâ€™d been around. And we usually wanted to follow the Sergeant, because he knew his way around. He knew what to do, andâ€¦
Interviewer:
How much did you know - being Jewish, how much did you know about the way that Germany was treating Jews in the 1930s?
Alan Moskin:
Jews - we knew Hitler didnâ€™t like the Jews, but we didnâ€™t know to the extent of it. We just knew that, you know, from what we heard, people would come back - this was before the war started, I think, and this is they would come back in the â€™30s to America, and I heard my parents saying, â€œYou know, itâ€™s not good in Germany.â€ But not to the extent, just they didnâ€™t like Jews, you know, Jews are not treated very well over there. Thatâ€™s the level I knew, until we came across the concentration duty.
Interviewer:
Yeah. Tell me about this. You were there for the liberation of the sub -
Alan Moskin:
Sub -
Interviewer:
Sub-camp of Mauthausen.
Alan Moskin:
Thatâ€™s correct.
Interviewer:
First, for the viewers, explain what Mauthausen was.
Alan Moskin:
Well, Mauthausen was in Austria, was a known concentration camp.
Interviewer:
A death camp, really.
Alan Moskin:
A death camp, I guess. And again, at this time - got to remember, a lot of this is retrospect. We were marching on. We did not on our level, nor did my Officers on the lower level, know anything about -

Interviewer:
You just stumbled on it, sort of.
Alan Moskin:
Thatâ€™s correct. We didnâ€™t know about camps, â€˜cause a lot of the kids give me this argument when I speak to them later, â€œI thought you went over to liberate the camps.â€ I said, â€œNo, no, we did not,â€ and this is -
Interviewer:
And this is very controversial, right, â€˜cause F.D.R. knew there were camps.
Alan Moskin:
Somebody knew about them, â€˜cause those camps were going up in the â€™30s for years, not overnight, but I hate to tell you. But we loved Franklin Delano Roosevelt - I think I mentioned that before - everybody did. And after the war, I started reading about things about our great President, with the Saint Louis not being allowed to land, and -
Interviewer:
This was a ship that came from I think Hamburg and tried to land in the U.S., and -
Alan Moskin:
With all these people trying to find a home, and he refused -
Interviewer:
They tried to leave Germany before the Final Solution, and they were denied -
Alan Moskin:
Access, thatâ€™s correct.
Interviewer:
Access to the Americans.
Alan Moskin:
And they eventually had to go back, and I heard many of them died after they went back.
Interviewer:
Sure. They were sent back.
Alan Moskin:
Thatâ€™s correct. That was terrible. And also things that - I understand Morgenthau was in his cabinet, tried to press him to - my summary of that - Iâ€™m not going to go into it â€˜cause I get upset too much. We loved Franklin Delano Roosevelt; everybody did. I was so disappointed. In my judgment, it was just the Jews were not a priority to him. I think other things to him were more important. Youâ€™ve mentioned it before, and Iâ€™m a strong proponent that they shouldâ€™ve bombed those railroad tracks leading into Auschwitz, Birkenau. Innocent civilians wouldâ€™ve been killed; people get killed in wars, but a heck of a lot wouldâ€™ve been saved, in my judgment. I donâ€™t want to be a Monday morning quarterback, but I just feel we didnâ€™t do the right thing.
Interviewer:
Letâ€™s go back to what you found, though.
Alan Moskin:
All right, I will.
Interviewer:
So youâ€™re coming up on - youâ€™re just -
Alan Moskin:
Near the end of the war, yep.
Interviewer:
So weâ€™re talking about what month now?
Alan Moskin:
Oh, this is near the end of April; the -
Interviewer:
1945.
Alan Moskin:

1. The Nazis were, they were retreating. We knew they were retreating. We were

coming from the west to the east, and the Russians, who were allies, were coming from the east to the west, and we were squeezing most of the Krauts - thatâ€™s the term we used, among others, for the German soldiers, Krauts, Jerrys - we were squeezing them in between, and they were surrendering. In fact, most of them were surrendering to us because they were scared of the Russians, because we heard the Russians were not taking any prisoners. They had endured what the Nazis had done, I guess, to their families - we didnâ€™t know about that - so all these German soldiers were coming. We couldnâ€™t even handle them all. But I rememberâ€¦Iâ€™ll never forget the day. It was May 4, 1945. We were - we liberated a P.O.W. camp, prisoner of war camp, with R.A.F., almost all R.A.F., Royal Air Force, British fly boys; British fly boys.

Thin, but overall, you know, thin, very happy that they were free, and â€œThank you, thank you.â€ We were commiserating, you know, talking with them for a while. And for the first time, we heard, â€œHey guys, we heard rumors that thereâ€™s a camp for Jews a few kilometers down the road.â€ So I remember we all looked at each other, â€œWhat - camp for Jews?â€ I remember we were puzzled; what does that mean, a camp for Jews? We said, â€œOh.â€ So I think we were ordered to go toward Lenz, where there was still some fighting still going on, and we were, I remember, marching in this like in the woods. It was dank, there was still some - the ground was wet. And all of a sudden, there was the most offensive, nauseating stench you can imagine. Itâ€™s a smell that got into your nostrils, into your brain; I never smelled a thing like that.

We all looked at each other, what in the freak - what is that smell? And it got worse, and itâ€™s overpowering; so hard to describe, and when I even talk about it, you know, I can remember. And then I remember looking and there was a bunch of trees - it was like in kind of a forest area - and through the trees I looked at, I saw a barbed wire - like barbed wire fences. Up on the top, I remember big letters, â€œArbeit Macht Frei,â€ which in German, I believe means â€œwork will free you,â€ or â€œwork will make you free.â€ And that turned out to be the Gunskirchen Lager - G-U-N-S-K-I-R-C-H-E-N, a lot of people have trouble pronouncing it - Gunskirchen Lager, which was a satellite or a sub-camp of Mauthausen, where - for people who donâ€™t understand -

A sub-camp was where these big camps like Mauthausen and Dachau, when they got filled up, theyâ€™d have to take these, some of the people out and put them on a march to a sub-camp or a satellite camp. So these people in Gunskirchen, most of them had come from Mauthausen. Very little resistance, â€˜cause the Nazis knew we were coming. I think there was one S.S. soldier that wouldnâ€™t drop his gun; we had to take care of him. We cut through the barbed wire, we entered - as I said, this was the Gunskirchen Lager - and when we entered that camp, it was the most horrific sight. I can speak for myself, I canâ€™t speak for the others, but I think we all felt the same. It was the most horrific sight Iâ€™ve ever seen or ever hope to see. There were piles of skeletal-like bodies on the left, and skeletal-like bodies on the right - and I mean skeletal-like - bones, with no flesh. Those who were alive were so emaciated it defies description.

I mean I remember when some of them were coming toward us, looking heavenly with like, theyâ€™re like mumbling and praying in whatever dialects - we couldnâ€™t understand. Some were crawling. It was just unbelievable. They all had, their cheeks were all hollowed out, their eyes all like back into the sockets of their heads, hardly any hair, sores on their bodies. The stench I told you about. We looked at each other, we didnâ€™t - you know, we werenâ€™t prepared for this. These were civilians? And we all, we were actually in shock. And i remember hearing, â€œCigarette, bitte. Essen, bitte. Wasser, bitte - â€œ cigarettes, food, water. I didnâ€™t smoke, but some of the guys had their cigarette rations would take the cigarettes and hand them to these - Iâ€™m going to use the term â€œpoor souls,â€ because my Lieutenant used that term affectionately.

He kept saying - thatâ€™s how he referred to them, â€œthe poor souls.â€He gave these poor souls - and you had to visually see how they would take these cigarettes, and they started to try to pull the covering of the cigarettes off, and start pulling the tobacco into their

mouth, chewing it and swallowing it. It was -
Interviewer:
To eat something, right?
Alan Moskin:
To eat it. It was like - I never saw anything like this before. My eyes popped open. And then, then many of them also - this was also, this was bad. Many of them started to grab like their esophagus and their throat, and they were gagging and falling to the ground choking. So then the Medics started to scream, â€œNo solid food, no solid food,â€ because apparently when you starve, you canâ€™t swallow. We werenâ€™t doctors, but they were - they couldnâ€™t - they were choking if theyâ€™re trying to eat. So they - you have - Iâ€™m trying - it was mass confusion. Weâ€™re trying to help, we donâ€™t know. People are choking, falling to the ground. I remember my Captain screaming on a - you know, they had walkie-talkies, communication was not like today - â€œGet the hell up here. Thereâ€™s people dying up here. We donâ€™t - get doctors up here. Get physi - get them up here. We canâ€™t handle this.â€ It was very upset, the way he was talking.
Then some of them - some of them were like scared, and again, the Lieutenant was smart. He said, â€œThose guys, theyâ€™re scared of us, because they donâ€™t know who we are. They see a uniform. They see a uniform. Tell these poor souls,â€ he kept saying, â€œt ell these poor souls that weâ€™re Americans. Theyâ€™re free. Moskin,â€ he says, â€œwho can speak Yiddish? Who can speak Hebrew?â€ He knew I was Jewish. â€œMoskin.â€ I couldnâ€™t speak any Yiddish or Hebrew; my grandparents came from the Old Country. When they came in those days, they, â€œEnglish, English, English,â€ they wanted to learn. That was me, with the homework at home, and they were - if they spoke Hebrew or Yiddish, they did it in the bedroom, or not in my presence, so Iâ€¦but for some reason, I was able to say, â€œIch bin auch a Jude. Ich bin auch a Jude.â€ I had heard it. I donâ€™t know where. It came to me. It means, â€œI am also a Jew.â€ I think itâ€™s German. â€œIch bin auch a Jude. Ich bin - â€œ
For the first time, â€œOh, you Amerikaner.â€ There was only one other Jewish kid, somebody from Brownsville, that I remember; I forget his name. Herbie? We didnâ€™t know last names; you know, everybody had a nickname. But he was from Brownsville, I think. For the first time there were some smiles. They were like, â€œJude, Amerikaner Jude.â€ And I tell particularly about this elderly - again, I donâ€™t know how old, but he looked very old - he was like bones. He came up to me with his - tears were coming down his cheeks, and he looked at me like this, nodding. He was nodding his head, and then he went down to the ground, and he started to kiss - my boots were covered with blood and feces and vomit, who knows what I was walking in - everything. And I knew he meant well. I mean, obviously, he was - and matter of fact. But it just made me very uncomfortable. I never had anybody kind of groveling at my feet, so to speak, so.
And I picked him up under the armpits, and as I did, I brought him up. I looked at the back of the nape of his neck, and it was open, pussy, festering sores, and a lot of them had lice. Lice, they all had lice, you know, from the filth, and lice was coming out of his sores, and oh God, it was grotesque, and how I had the strength, with that smell and looking at that, that I didnâ€™t pull back. But I donâ€™t know whether God was looking down on me - Iâ€™m not that religious in that sense. But somebody gave me the strength not to back off. And when he came up, he kept crying and saying, â€œDanke, Amerikaner soldat, danke,â€ over and over again. I started to cry. You know, I was still an 18-year-old soldier, but this was very emotional, and I think this was the first time - the reason that I think that he knew about we were Jewish, because some of them had, still had that was it a star or yellow something?
Interviewer:
Star of David.
Alan Moskin:
It was a symbol of being Jewish. And I donâ€™t remember paying attention to that, but one

of the Officers said, â€œTheyâ€™re Jews. These are all Jews.â€ And I think also because the R.A.F. guys had given us a heads-up and saying there was a camp for Jews, â€˜cause at first, I never thought about whether they were Jewish or not initially. I just - to me, they were just human beings that was in such bad shape.
Interviewer:
How many were there?
Alan Moskin:
Well, far as you could see.
Interviewer:
Thousands.
Alan Moskin:
Yeah. Then we went to, were told to check out the barracks. They were like huts or whatever you call it, far as you could see, hundreds of thousands of meters, like two levels. Oh, the - you couldnâ€™t - smell was in there, and they were on top of each other, squeezed in like sardines. I donâ€™t know how - squished, and some dead, some in the terminal throes of dying, everywhere you look. Laying on the ground, dead. And I remember, a lot of them had that look; they were like plaintive, you know, with their - like help, they want help. They were so emaciated. The smell, you canâ€™t describe the smell. Everywhere, the dead bodies, the smell, the blood, the vomit, the dead bodies.
Interviewer:
Where were the guards? Were they still there?
Alan Moskin:
There was only one, and took care of him. They all - they knew we were coming. They - again, this is near the end of the war. They were running like rabbits, because they knew the war - some of them were surrendering, some were running. Again, this was right near the end of the war.
Interviewer:
Were there ovens at this camp?
Alan Moskin:
No. Didnâ€™t see any ovens.
Interviewer:
It was like a transport camp of a sort, was it?
Alan Moskin:
Yeah. But they starved them to death, so to speak. They were the - I heard there were bodies all over the place. We heard they didnâ€™t feed them. They gave water or soup, and that was what they got for the day. If you couldnâ€™t work any more, you fell over and died.
Interviewer:
How long did you spend there?
Alan Moskin:
Just a matter of hours, because we were still told to leave; they had to send up other people. Our outfit, we werenâ€™t prepared to handle it. I mean, we were in semi-shock just seeing all this, and a lot of people donâ€™t seem to understand, we didnâ€™t expect this. We didnâ€™t know this. It was a shock to us.
Interviewer:
Where does Mauthausen fall in the chronology of liberation of the camps? Had Dachau or Auschwitz or any of these others -
Alan Moskin:
I think those are the names you hear, primarily - death camps.
Interviewer:
Did Mauthausen precede the liberation of those, though? Was this the first camp to -
Alan Moskin:
No. No. From what I gathered, Mauthausen, was the day after the troops went into Mauthausen. All our - you know, this was just we were just one outfit.

Interviewer:
I see.
Alan Moskin:
Other outfits of the 66th liberated - Ohrdruf was one of the camps, I think.
Interviewer:
So at the time, you may have thought that this sub-camp was all there was, really.
Alan Moskin:
Yeah. I didnâ€™t - we didnâ€™t -
Interviewer:
When in fact, there were satellite camps everywhere.
Alan Moskin:
We started to hear that afterwards. Our Officer says, â€œOh my God.â€ And when I stayed in the Army of Occupation, I stayed there. They went by how many points you had, if I recall, and some of the guys that were in Africa, or the older guys, or guys that had families, they got priority. They were being shipped home. So I was one of the members of what they called the Army of Occupation, and I stayed there in Germany and Austria for one year. And thatâ€™s when I started to get more knowledge from other G.I.s, with pictures and photographs from survivors, all the horrendous photos. And then I wanted to be a lawyer; I also had the opportunity to attend the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials in Nuremberg, at the palace.
Interviewer:
Wow. Weâ€™ll head to that. You attended that.
Alan Moskin:
Yeah. I attended that. I had furloughs.
Interviewer:
Weâ€™ll get there in a second. So let me ask you, being Jewish yourself -
Alan Moskin:
Yeah.
Interviewer:
Once you heard that - or understood that this was a camp for Jews - and this was the carrying out of the so-called Final Solution -
Alan Moskin:
Uh. Never heard that term, either, till -
Interviewer:
Did it strike you with any, any more personally than if they had not been Jews? Let me put it that way.
Alan Moskin:
You know, it may sound funny to people, insensitive, but no. Maybe I was still too young. I never thought of it in terms of it being a terrible thing about Jews. I just through it was a terrible thing about one group of people treating another group of people like that. That just shocked me to the very fiber of my being. I just couldnâ€™t conceive how anybody could be treating people like this, starving them to death. And then I heard stories afterwards even worse at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, and listening to the survivors and the stories. Then, I think maybe later on, I started to feel maybe more a certain attachment to the fact that they were trying to - Hitler was trying to eradicate the Jews, just get rid of them completely.
Interviewer:
Now, were you, years later, living in the New York area, where there are many Holocaust survivors.
Alan Moskin:
Yes.
Interviewer:
Did you ever come across anyone who had been at that par - you did.

Alan Moskin:
For a long time, I did not. And then I went on whatâ€™s called the March of the Living, which is a group of students that go every year to Poland and Israel, as I understand it; this was 2005. They wanted me to go as a Liberator. There was a Rabbi at the Spring Valley Museum, Holocaust Museum, and I started speaking - and thatâ€™s another interesting story that if you want to get to it, I didnâ€™t speak about this for 50 years. Fifty years, I didnâ€™t say a word to anybody.
Interviewer:
Fifty years, you didnâ€™t say a word about liberating this -
Alan Moskin:
I did not speak a word about anything, because right after the war ended, I couldnâ€™t sleep. And I remember walking the streets in Austria and Germany at 2:00, 3:00, 5:00 in the morning, because they - I remember crying and sweating. I remember, they told me I was cursing, guys that were in the room, and that I was screaming, and so I got up and used to walk. You know, P.T.S.D., I never heard the term back in the â€™40s. I donâ€™t think anybody knew what that meant. All I remember, I said, if you got, you were shell-shocked, and I said, â€œIf you didnâ€™t fight your way through it, theyâ€™d send you to the - â€œ they used terms that my daughter - believe me, I heard - theyâ€™d call it â€œthe nut houseâ€ or â€œthe crazy house.â€ Crazy. I mean, you know, today, they canâ€™t believe they would use that terminology, but if you were a little - and I think back, even somebody maybe had cerebral palsy and twisted, they were sending people to where they shouldnâ€™t have been sent to, so I had to fight my way through it.
But so what happened is I was there for a year, and when I was ready to come home, I said I wanted to go back into civilian life. So I tell the story, itâ€™s like I had a key, and I locked up that part of my brain, I threw the key away, and I didnâ€™t want to talk about it, because I thought that by talking about it, I was going to bring back all those scary nightmares.
Interviewer:
So you never told your parents about this.
Alan Moskin:
No. Nobody, for 50 years; not a word to anybody about anything. I just said I was in it at the end of the war. The Germans were running, pretty much, retreating and whatever, and I mean, the change in them - they saw that the guys didnâ€™t want to talk about it, so nobody pushed me.
Interviewer:
They just - you didnâ€™t want to talk about the camp, or you didnâ€™t want to talk about the killings, either?
Alan Moskin:
Nothing.
Interviewer:
Nothing.
Alan Moskin:
Nothing.
Interviewer:
Anything having to do with the experience.
Alan Moskin:
No. Combat also. I lost a close friend that was blown, and I didnâ€™t go into that. You know, when you see your buddies get - one day youâ€™re talking to them, the next, theyâ€™re not in one piece - you think back of it, why it doesnâ€™t set you off all crazy altogether, itâ€™s a wonder, because itâ€™s something you canâ€™t describe to people. You come very close in combat. The band of brothers is a term thatâ€™s not used loosely. You become like a - I have a brother, but I tell him, â€œDonald, this is a different brotherhood.â€ I canâ€™t explain it. You just -
Interviewer:
You lost this friend, very close to you.

Alan Moskin:
Yes. Best soldier I knew, and best friend I had, and always trying to help the rooks, we called them. When youâ€™re on the line the first day, I donâ€™t care who you are, youâ€™re scared, you know. Youâ€™re not prepared. You have Basic Training, but all of a sudden, all hell is breaking loose in Infantry, and he was always trying to help the new guys, the right flank, left flank, you know, and I kept telling him, â€œYou got to watch your own rear end.â€ And this particular day, he stayed up too long, and Krauts were throwing artillery and mortars, and he lost his leg, and his insides were inside out, and he died. And I couldnâ€™t stay back with him, because the orders are you canâ€™t stay back with the wounded, you know. You have to keep moving forward.
Interviewer:
You were there when he was -
Alan Moskin:
Yeah. The sergeant said, â€œCome on, college boy, move forward; you canâ€™t stay back.â€ Well, I had to leave my best buddy dying in the crater in Germany, and thatâ€™s one of the things you donâ€™t get over. Another time, something at the top of my head, in the beginning of combat, the first week, and I literally reach up and tell the young people - itâ€™s not pretty, itâ€™s graphic - I had an arm, a blood-soaked arm with the fingers doing this in front of me, you know, with - on the wrist was a tattoo of an eagle. And I start screaming out, â€œWill,â€ I said, â€œWill C., Will C.,â€ â€˜cause I knew he had an eagle tattooed on his wrist. He was going to soar like an eagle - that was his big thing. And you know, youâ€™re speaking with a guy, and then ten minutes later, youâ€™re holding his arm, blood-soaked arm. I donâ€™t care how strong you are. That shakes you up. And any soldier, to me, that says he wasnâ€™t scared, to me is either a liar, or a nitwit, or a combination of both. My judgment is almost every guy is scared.
After a while, you get - I donâ€™t want to say get used to it, but you donâ€™t know whether your time is coming or not coming. Thereâ€™s no - it sounds like a clichÃ©, but I donâ€™t think thereâ€™s any atheists in a foxhole. I know guys that werenâ€™t - were praying, all kinds of - and no heroes are atheists. Thatâ€™s my judgment, what I saw. And itâ€™s not easy with guys, all of a sudden theyâ€™re gone, and I remember the Sergeant telling me - you know, Iâ€™m kind of a gregarious kind of a guy, you know, a blabbermouth, I guess; I talk, â€˜cause you can see I donâ€™t have any problem talking. When the new guys came up, like T.R., I verbally tried to make them comfortable. I said, â€œJust follow orders,â€ â€˜cause they were nervous, â€œyouâ€™ll be okay,â€ and everything. He did it more out on the field, which I said, you know, risking his life. And the Sergeant - the same Sergeant that I mentioned before, the didnâ€™t want me to be an Officer Sergeant - he took me aside and he said, â€œWhat are you getting - â€œ Hereâ€™s how he talked. â€œWhat are you getting so friendly with these guys, Moskin? â€ I said, â€œWhatâ€™s the matter with you? I want to be - whatâ€™s the matter?â€ â€œDonâ€™t get so friendly and donâ€™t be asking them so much about their families and things - â€œ like thatâ€™s how he talked. Iâ€™m like, â€œWhatâ€™s the hellâ€™s the matter with him, that cold - â€œ thatâ€™s the beginning. And I realized later what he meant. The more you got to know about a guy, the more he told you about whether heâ€™s married, or his wife just had a baby, or heâ€™s engaged, or whatever, and then he gets blown away, you start thinking about the things that he told you that heâ€™s not going to go home to. Thatâ€™s kind of a manifestation of your mind gets all - you know, itâ€™s so hard to describe. I probably needed a shrink at times to tell.
Interviewer:
What happened in â€˜95 that you opened up suddenly - or â€˜96, or whenever it was?
Alan Moskin:
The summer of 1995, literally almost 50 years to the end of the war in Europe - and I guess Japan ended in August. But it was June of â€˜95. I got a call from the lady at the Holocaust Museum and Study Center in Spring Valley. I moved to a new city, and I was a Jersey boy,

but when I got married I moved to a new city, late in â€˜91. â€œMr. Moskin, I heard you were a soldier with General Patton. Were you a Liberator?â€ Well, I was, says, â€œWhat? â€ No one had, you know. Yes, I was. â€œOh, God, Mr. Moskin, Iâ€™m going to - when can I see you? Weâ€™ll come out.â€ I said, â€œWhy, whatâ€™s going on?â€ â€œYou got to speak to the young people; you know what thatâ€™s going to mean? The middle school, high school kids?â€ I said, â€œHold on. Iâ€™m not speaking to anybody.â€ And I was probably rude, and I hung up the phone. She was very persistent; her name was Barbara Grau, G-R-A-U. She was very persistent.
And finally, â€œGive it a try. If itâ€™s too much for you, I wonâ€™t ask you - â€œ you know, whatever - â€œto speak again.â€ And I spoke for the first time, spoke for the first time at the Nanuet Mall, the community room or something, over in Nanuet, on Route 59 in Nanuet, nervous as hell. But when I started to speak, it just came out of me; it was like a catharsis, it was like a purging of all that stuff that for 50 years that I kept inside of me, and it just came out, and came out. And I can remember even now, saying - it was almost like a relief, in a way. And after, since that time, baby, they canâ€™t stop me know. Iâ€™ve been speaking all over the place. Iâ€™ve done Jewish Americans on TV, Iâ€™ve done Russian television, been on CBS Radio. Iâ€™ve been speaking at 125 middle schools or high schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, down to Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina.
Iâ€™ve been all over the place, because, as you know, I was 18. Iâ€™ll be 86 in seven or eight days. I was one of the kids in the outfit, so most of the Liberators - they canâ€™t find Liberators any more. Either theyâ€™re pushing 90, or they got Alzheimerâ€™s, or they passed away. And Westchester calls me, and Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan; theyâ€™re looking for Liberators to speak. And as I tell these young kids today, theyâ€™re the last generation; theyâ€™re the last generation thatâ€™s going to hear people like myself and the survivors and the hidden children in the Kinder Transport, because by the time they have children, letâ€™s do the math - you know, whoâ€™s going to be around to speak? Theyâ€™re going to get it like theyâ€™re getting it what Iâ€™m doing today, and other people; recording and writing books and things like that. And itâ€™s like a calling with me now. I just feel once I started - it was helpful to me, but to me, it was more important that the young people, who -
And I donâ€™t want to be down, I donâ€™t want to be on the down side here. But I have to tell you that Iâ€™m very disappointed when I speak to a lot of the young people, and then when Q&A comes, their knowledge of what happened back in World War II. I mean, I get questions that, from 16-year-olds, not 10-year-olds, that did Vietnam come before or after World War II? or Hitler, is he a good guy or a bad guy? I mean, itâ€™s just shocking to me. And I asked some of the teachers, I said, â€œWhat is going on?â€ I mean, Iâ€™m generalizing, and Iâ€™m sure itâ€™s not 100%, but itâ€™s a good portion of our younger people, donâ€™t have a knowledge of what happened. This war went on three and a half years, there was - best figure I got - about 400,000 casualties. Every life is too many, but what, Iraq, Afghanistan, what are we up to, 5, 6, 7,000 - 400,000, and I get, this is the answer I get in New York.
Same in Jersey - although I think Jerseyâ€™s better than New York. Jersey, I think, mandates the Holocaust in the schools, but. They get a thing from Albany, they tell me, the English teachers and the Social Studies teachers, or Trenton, the capital of New Jersey, and it outlines how they teach. I guess day by day, what they cover, and some of them tell me itâ€™s like one day or a day and a half on World War II, and on the Holocaust, a couple of paragraphs. I said, â€œThis is not right. Who is the bureaucrat that sets this?â€ I never got an answer to that. And Iâ€™m very proactive. I tell these kids, â€œI want kids to be upstanders. There are enough bystanders in this country.â€ Iâ€™m ready to go to Albany, Iâ€™ll go to Trenton. Iâ€™m not a teacher, but Iâ€™ll lead the pack. Why doesnâ€™t somebody find out why theyâ€™re not spending more time on World War - you know, I feel, I take it personal; 400,000, three and a half years?
Holocaust, 6 million? And a lot of kids donâ€™t know this: not just 6 million Jews, 5 million

non-Jews, Catholics, and Catholic priests, and Jehovah Witnesses, and gays, and gypsies, and those who like try to help their Jewish neighbor. And I speak along the route with a lot of Righteous Gentiles, and they donâ€™t get enough credit. Trying to help your Jewish neighbors, sticking your neck out, knowing your familyâ€™s going to get thrown into the camps? I mean, this stuff should be brought to the - I tell the kids, the important thing out of this, the reason I speak, â€œDonâ€™t hate. I saw enough hate. I know what hate does.â€ Some of these kids use the word hate. They donâ€™t mean it the way they do, but they use it; you know, they hate their vegetables, they hate - and I tell them - you know, I got a thing going - youâ€™re smiling. But in Westchester the other day, I think it was a - itâ€™s a big - itâ€™s much more diverse, let me put it this way, when I speak in Westchester, and Yonkers, New Rochelle; 80-90% black and Hispanic. And their eyes open up when I tell them, and sometimes I think theyâ€™re more into it than the Jewish Hebrew schools that I speak to.
But I started to go into the hate, I said, â€œGet rid of that hate, that hate.â€ I said, â€œYou know what, why donâ€™t you hug each other? Weâ€™re all going to hug each other instead of hate.â€ There was this black girl got up, just like that; she got up, and I think she probably had a little background as a rapper - Iâ€™m not into that kind of music. She started to go, â€œWeâ€™re going to hug - â€œ sheâ€™s not singing - â€œwe got to hug on hate, weâ€™re going to - â€œ youâ€™re laughing. You got to see the scene. It made joy to my heart. Itâ€™s a little catchy, and I said, â€œAnybody wants to give me a big hug afterward - â€œ every one of these girls, and guys too, came up. And I said, â€œWhen you hug me, youâ€™re going to smile. Iâ€™m not going to make you smile. Itâ€™s something catchy - hug, you smile.â€ A little thing like that, thatâ€™s getting rid of the hate. So I start doing that in some of the other schools; they like it, too. â€˜Cause I donâ€™t want to be to heavy on these kids, you know? My youngest daughter, Lisa, sheâ€™s on my - she says - When I see a kid that Iâ€™m talking about this - and I see my buddies dying in my mind, and I seen these poor souls that were lying in piles - and Iâ€™m talking, and I see, right there, a kid dozing, the blood boils. And my daughter knows me, Lisa, and she fears Iâ€™m going to go and hit the kid. And I have to control myself, because I feel so strongly about this that I just donâ€™t want somebody - then I got into a little thing about a black teacher later. Iâ€™ll just, you know - â€œMr. Moskin, you donâ€™t understand those kids that fall asleep. Were you ever in a ghetto?â€ I said, â€œNo.â€ â€œIn the ghetto they donâ€™t have any parents. Theyâ€™re up all night, thereâ€™s noise.â€ Sheâ€™s making an excuse that the kids fell asleep. I said, â€œLook, I donâ€™t care if theyâ€™re black, white, purple or yellow. I donâ€™t know anything about ghettoes or anything else.â€ I said, â€œI took it personal because the kidâ€™s falling asleep, and Iâ€™m talking about liberating people that are dying and my buddies dying.â€
She says, â€œI know, I know, but you canâ€™t get that way,â€ or something. I singled this one kid out. I went to the kid next to him, pointing, and just said - I meant to give him a knock to wake him up. So they said - my daughter said, â€œYou should ignore it,â€ and I have to ignore it today. Iâ€™m not going to reach every kid.
Interviewer:
Letâ€™s come back. You said that you had met someone.
Alan Moskin:
Oh yes, Iâ€™m sorry. Thatâ€™s what happens; I get off the track.
Interviewer:
Thatâ€™s all right. That was interesting, but I -
Alan Moskin:
That was the March of the Living, and this lady heard about the Gunskirchen Lager that Iâ€™m speaking. Sheâ€™s says, â€œOh my God, Alan, you were a Liberator of the Gunskirchen? My father was in the Gunskirchen Lager.â€ She was from Toronto. â€œYou got to come over and meet my father.â€ So to make a long story short, we made the arrangements, and I flew up there. She made a beautiful dinner, I met her father. Now,

unfortunately, he wasnâ€™t all there upstairs, that he couldnâ€™t converse as well as I liked, but we hugged, it was emotional. And they had invited three other people from the Toronto area that had been in Gunskirchen, and they came for the dinner. It was very emotional, and naturally, â€œThank you so much,â€ and we were talking and embracing. And since that time, I have met others, several others. One Jewish group knew somebody that was down in Florida, and they came to the Holocaust meeting; I met them, and they made arrangements for me to go down to Florida and meet him. And Iâ€™ve met several other now, just, you know.
And the thing that made me - I never thought of it in this term, but one rabbi - and I know Iâ€™m blabbing a little bit now, but things just come to me. One rabbi, when I was talking about there was a time when I was going through this mental business, with the thought I was going crazy or whatever, walking the streets, that I had guilt. And itâ€™s hard to describe, but there were times that I really felt that I didnâ€™t want to be alive; that I wanted to connect with my buddies, that I wanted to be dead. My mother, may she rest in peace, she said, â€œPlease, I donâ€™t want you to ever talk like that,â€ you know. But there was; whatever it is - maybe I needed a psychiatrist. There was something going through me that itâ€™s not right that Iâ€™m walking around, and T.R. like I told you about, my other, so many others, I wanted to be with them.
And this rabbi heard me. I said, â€œWhy am I alive?â€ I said, â€œIf I was 50 meters to the right or 50 meters to the left, I wouldnâ€™t be here.â€ And sometimes it just - itâ€™s hard to describe. Why? Why was I here? So he said to me, he put his hand on my shoulder - I think a rabbi in New York, town of Westchester, that I was speaking - and he said, â€œI know youâ€™re not spiritual to the extent that I am now. But I would like you to think that maybe there is a higher power that purposely saved you, so that you would be able to do the things that youâ€™re doing with the young people and tell them about what you witnessed, to make sure it never happens again.â€ And he said - he kind of got me, I started to break down a little bit, and everybody was sniffling and he did it beautifully. And then he said to me, â€œAnd you have to look at it that every life that you saved - â€œ When I told the story about this fellow up in Toronto, whose daughter went with me on the March of the Living - â€œit wasnâ€™t just this one person. It was the family that he begat, and their family.â€ And so - and that connection, very recently, a few months back, I got a call from a lady in Muncie, saw my name in the paper about Liberating the camp. And she, â€œMr. Moskin, I saw you in the paper. You liberated Gunskirchen. My father and - â€œ grandfather, her grandfather in Brooklyn - â€œwas in Gunskirchen. He wants to meet you.â€ I said, â€œOkay, but Iâ€™m not going to go to Brooklyn or whatever.â€ She says, â€œThatâ€™s okay.â€ I said, â€œLetâ€™s pick out a place.â€ I said, â€œCould you meet me at the Holocaust Museum with your grandfather? Thatâ€™s in Spring Valley,â€ not too far from where she lived. â€œFine, okay.â€ We made the date, made the arrangement. I figured Iâ€™m going to go in, she mentioned that she had some children, see the children and the grandfather. I opened the door to the Holocaust Museum. Thereâ€™s like 75 people, very Orthodox, with the, you know, the black hats and the - whatever the group is called.
Interviewer:
Yarmulke.
Alan Moskin:
No, more than a yarmulke. They got the - â€œ
Interviewer:
Oh, you mean - yeah.
Alan Moskin:
The long, you know - I never got that. But they wear these heavy black - everything in black. â€œOi,â€ like everybody, when I opened the door, youâ€™d think I was the Pope. I mean, â€œLook whoâ€™s coming, like a hero.â€ Or they come up to kiss me, and every - these were all the spin-off from the guy that I liberated. Not just this one lady, the granddaughter; all the cousins, the nephews, â€˜cause he had - you know, they multiply

pretty strong - I say that in all due deference. He had about ten kids and another ten - there was like - you couldnâ€™t get a seat in the place there, and I just couldnâ€™t get over it. I remembered the rabbi that told me that when you liberate the one, itâ€™s not just the one; itâ€™s a whole family. Thereâ€™s an expression, but Iâ€™m not good at those expressions.
Interviewer:
Letâ€™s come back to the year of the Occupation. So you were in Germany throughout the year.
Alan Moskin:
Austria and Germany both, yeah.
Interviewer:
What was it like? What was the devastation like in Germany those years?
Alan Moskin:
Oh, it was terrible. Most of the cities were bombed out. The only thing amazing - and I mentioned before, the Nuremberg - Nuremberg took a hell of a beating. It was bombed like crazy. But that palace where they had the trial somehow - I donâ€™t know - escaped. It was the Nuremberg Palace is where they had the trial of the big shots in the Nazi regime, you know.
Interviewer:
What did you do as an Occupier?
Alan Moskin:
What I did a lot was I went with an Officer, some Officers, to try to re-help these ones that survived, see if they could locate their siblings or parents. You have to understand that they were separated when they were thrown into the camps, many of them; they didnâ€™t know what happened to their mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters.
Interviewer:
Youâ€™re talking about the Jews in the camps.
Alan Moskin:
Thatâ€™s correct. They call them, it was a D.P., displacement camp. I think thatâ€™s - there were many of them, where they were trying to - you got to remember, some of these people, they had nowhere to go. I tell the young people, I said, â€œWhat would you do? No mother, father, brothers, youâ€™re alone. You got a rag on your body, no money.â€ They were to be taken care of, to be fed, in these displacement camps, but many of them wanted to know whether any other members of their family survived.
Interviewer:
But likely none.
Alan Moskin:
Oh, it was very difficult. Some had pictures; they had hidden pictures somewhere, under their feet. I donâ€™t know where, â€˜cause the Nazis confiscated everything. And most of the news that we would find out by going - we would ride from one camp, you know, to the where Auschwitz used to be, or Treblinka. The Nazis did keep records. Again, I was a Sergeant - I ended up a Staff Sergeant. The Officers were in charge. I was kind of just doing my, you know, a point man. I was doing my legwork, but they were going in, finding out what records they could find, and they were trying like heck to - they got as much information from a person. Most of the news was not good, and that was - on top of what I saw, to bring back telling a boy 17 or 18, or 15 or 13, or a girl, â€œYour mother - they died in Auschwitz,â€ or whatever. Most of the time, we couldnâ€™t find any information, which wasnâ€™t good, either.
Although I found out many years later that some of them did connect for remote reasons later on. But most of the news was not good; it was not good.
Interviewer:
And then how would you help these people get back on their feet, or did you?
Alan Moskin:

I didnâ€™t get involved with that, but I know there were organizations that were trying to get them - many of them wanted to go to - no, it wasnâ€™t that. It wasnâ€™t Israel; Israel was later on.
Interviewer:
Yeah.
Alan Moskin:
They wanted to go to England, the United States, Canada, you know, wherever. The Officers tried to say, â€œDo you have any relations in those countries,â€ because I think part of it, to get, you had to have somewhere to go, or a connection. Again, I was still just turned 19. I wasnâ€™t, you know, advanced in knowledge about that.
Interviewer:
Now, how did you get involved in the Nuremberg Trials? You hadnâ€™t had any law training yet.
Alan Moskin:
No. But I told you, I wanted to be - this is another story. My mother wanted me to be a doctor. My father was the mayor, and always was in touch with a lot of lawyers, and he was a frustrated lawyer, and he wanted me to be a lawyer. So this was before I was going to have to make a decision, you know. You go to college, then you decide where you want to go. When I saw many of these buddies of mine, the injuries, the horror of the injuries, which I donâ€™t want to get into too much, because itâ€™s just, itâ€™s so horrific to see guys that youâ€™re talking to one minute, and then in so many pieces the next. When I saw that, I had no urging to try to go to these things and do as I felt a doctor would have to do. I said, â€œHow can - â€œ in my mind - â€œhow can I be a doctor, when I canâ€™t stand to look at this sort of thing?â€ So that sort of leaned me to the decision then after the war ended that maybe my fatherâ€™s right; Iâ€™m going to be a lawyer. Wanting to be a lawyer, I knew Robert Jackson, I think, was our Prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial.
Interviewer:
Iâ€™m thinking a Supreme Court Justice?
Alan Moskin:
Later, but at this time -
Interviewer:
Thought he took a leave from there to go -
Alan Moskin:
Was that what it was?
Interviewer:
Yeah, to go be the Prosecutor.
Alan Moskin:
But he was, his name was known or something. My Officers told me, â€œRobert Jackson is well known.â€
Interviewer:
From New York - from New York State.
Alan Moskin:
Well, all right, so I guess maybe they knew I was, you know, a Jersey, New York, guy, whatever. So when I got - you get a pass, you get a furlough. I was there for a year, so I would get two or three days of pass - I would make it my business to go to the Nuremberg Palace, and thatâ€™s where I watched the goings on, and -
Interviewer:
Just from the spectatorsâ€™ gallery.
Alan Moskin:
I was a spectator. And you know -
Interviewer:
So you did watch Jackson do the prosecution.
Alan Moskin:

Yeah. You know, but a lot of it, you can be there for hours, and so much with the interpretation - they all got these headpieces on, you know, because thereâ€™s every language in the book. But I did see Goehring, and Hesse - they were sitting, you know, off there - and they all looked so pompous to me. Maybe, you know, at that time, I still had that, Nazis were starting to bother me. And, you know, Goehring later, some guy gave him cyanide pills, I think, and he committed suicide. But I attended there, but it was hard, because there was so much delay, and so much stuff with the interpretation, and the objections, but.
Interviewer:
So you werenâ€™t involved at all in the prosecution; you were just observing.
Alan Moskin:
No. Just as an observer.
Interviewer:
What was the courtroom like?
Alan Moskin:
It was big. I mean, it was a lot of people, and again, a lot of interpreting. A lot of it all over the place, with the -
Interviewer:
Any scenes from the gallery, where spectators would not be able to contain themselves, with Major Goehring?
Alan Moskin:
No. No, it was all - no, I didnâ€™t see any of that. No, I think it was well controlled. I think there were guards all over the place.
Interviewer:
How did Jackson comport himself?
Alan Moskin:
I thought he - you know, I thought he was excellent, you know, spoke very well and everything else, and you know, I was very impressed with him. And then, of course, as you said, later he became a Supreme Court, on the Supreme Court.
Interviewer:
So now, you were a witness to such - up close - to such incredibly important historic moments here - the liberation of the camps -
Alan Moskin:
Right.
Interviewer:
The Trial of Nuremberg, the end of the Second World War.
Alan Moskin:
And really, being 18 and 19, thatâ€™s pretty young, and as I said, it left a mark on me; no question it left a mark on me, and for 50 years, I just was scared that I was going to, you know, go crazy again if I brought it up.
Interviewer:
Did you dream about it at all, or -
Alan Moskin:
Yeah, I had nightmares. I had nightmares. I used to wake up and the first year in particular, sweats, and as I said, thatâ€™s why Iâ€™d get up and start walking. I knew I couldnâ€™t - I was scared to sleep. I was shaking and sweats, I mean, the sweats, and crying, and cursing, and thinking of my buddy, and then the guy I shot, and all the things went through my mind constantly, I mean, over and over again. And -
Interviewer:
Did you ever talk about it with any other soldiers?
Alan Moskin:
I was scared to talk about it to anybody, because I thought they were going to think there was something wrong with me, and I wanted to keep it - I probably should have. They

asked me, â€œWhat are you walking the streets there?â€ I said, â€œAw, I donâ€™t need much sleep.â€ I used to cover it up. The same thing when I got home. My brother said later, â€œYou said you were in at the end of the war.â€ Yeah. I wanted to minimize everything. I just didnâ€™t want anybody to be asking me questions, and they didnâ€™t.
Interviewer:
Do you still find it cathartic now to speak about it, or do you find it sometimes disturbs you, because it reawakens these stories?
Alan Moskin:
It sometimes does, when I - you know, when you talk about it, you see it again, you visualize it again. But thank God, you know, 67 years now that I donâ€™t have the nightmares I had. I asked my mother when she was alive - she passed away - did I? The one thing she kept telling me - it sounds weird. She remembers that I would get up - my mother was a smoker, so she used to get up at night, you know, and smoke. She would go, she walked, and I would stand in the kitchen, open the refrigerator door, and just stare and look at what was in the refrigerator. And she always said to me she couldnâ€™t understand, but she didnâ€™t want to say anything to me; she thought it would scare me. And I donâ€™t know why; maybe it was because to make me realize that I was - you know, you didnâ€™t look at a refrigerator when you were in the service. To this day, I donâ€™t know. I mustâ€™ve looked to see that there was normalcy; there was food in the refrigerator.
But that she remembered, that scared her. A few times, I think she said, she used to hear me crying out, but it didnâ€™t last too long. Like screaming out names that she didnâ€™t know who they were. Iâ€™m sure they were probably combat names or buddies or something. That, I did a lot, you know. They told me I would say something like, â€œIncoming, incoming, hit the hole, hit the hole,â€ kind of talk that we had, that we used to do, and you know, so. But you know, they told me thatâ€™s the only thing. But I do know that I would get up shaking and sweating, and there was something wrong with me. Thereâ€™s no question. I always thought that I was my own psychiatrist, you know; that I got it out and I did what I had to do. And probably needed somebody, but as I said, no one knew about P.T.S.D. in those days, just shell shock. And they sent some guys places I donâ€™t think youâ€™d want to be sent to that were probably just in worse shape than me, or didnâ€™t know how to control it.
You know, there was a story about Patton also that my Lieutenants told us, and later became big news. They didnâ€™t know about neurological stuff those days, and Patton was a real tough guy, and Iâ€™m sure you know about the fact that he was at one of these emergency places before he went into the hospital, and he saw guys with terrible wounds one after the other. And he saw this one guy who Iâ€™m showing now - Iâ€™m shaking and crying and saying - I got this from my First Lieutenant, who was there and was friendly with Pattonâ€™s Aide - and the guy was obviously something wrong with him he said, like a nervous wreck. And Pattonâ€™s, â€œWhat - soldier - â€œ Patton said to him, â€œSoldier, whatâ€™s wrong with you? Show me. Show me.â€ And then he didnâ€™t respond. He had no wound; he was just, he was out of it. And he says, â€œWhereâ€™s the wound on this soldier?â€ So the doctor tried to tell him, â€œHe doesnâ€™t have a wound. Heâ€™s - â€œ he couldnâ€™t even let him finish. â€œNo wound - â€œ
He had just come - according to my Lieutenant, guys had arms off, one guy lost his eye, brain damage, and he sees this guy - Iâ€™m not sticking up for Patton, but he doesnâ€™t show any visible signs. So he screamed out, â€œYouâ€™re a God damned coward,â€ and he says to the Officer in charge there, â€œI want this man to be sent up to the front line.â€ And my Lieutenant said the guy started to, â€œPlease, no, I canâ€™t fight any more.â€ He says, â€œGod damn it,â€ he screamed at him, and then he got so mad that he took his pistol, he said, â€œAnd get him out of my sight now or Iâ€™ll blow his God damned brains out,â€ word for word. Thatâ€™s what the Lieutenant said, because he felt he was a malingerer. anybody that said that they didnâ€™t -
Interviewer:

Thatâ€™s actually a scene in the movie that mimics that whole episode.
Alan Moskin:
Yeah. I didnâ€™t know about that until, until our Officer told me. And then another thing Iâ€™ll tell you, I donâ€™t know if that - Patton was at Ohrdruf, which is another camp liberated - I think if was the Fourth Armored, I forget what outfit, but in part and after the Third Army in Ohrdruf - Ike - this is Dwight Eisenhower, Commanding General Eisenhower. Ike, Bradley, Omar Bradley, and Patton went at Ohrdruf to see the piles of the bodies that I remember seeing. It was like skeletal - the stench - and they were lying on top of each other. And Old Blood and Guts - that was his nickname - was looking at those, all of a sudden turned around, and started to walk into the - it was, I forget, into the building or the adjacent building or - I wasnâ€™t there, but my Lieutenant was friendly with Pattonâ€™s Aide and got that. The Aide has to follow the General, apparently, wherever her goes; thatâ€™s the - they got to be with the General. He went in, and he went into the bathroom, and the Aide was banging on the door and he pushed.
Patton was throwing up all over the place, and he said to the Aide, â€œIf you tell anybody about this, Iâ€™ll bust you in rank.â€ And he never told anybody, apparently, until after the war ended; then the word got out. But Patton was so upset - they used the term â€œOld Blood and Gutsâ€ when you go see him, he was such a strong power - that seeing what he saw upset him. And I do remember that our Officer told me Patton was very upset when he saw these people in the camps, and also the Prisoner of War camp. â€œIâ€™m going to - â€œ he always, he used the term a lot, sons of bitches; that was his favorite. â€œSons of bitches - â€œ even said to us a few times. I remember when he was up there screaming out, â€œAnd if those god damned - â€œ Russkis, called them - â€œRusskis, if they start up, Iâ€™m going to kill those sons of bitches, too.â€ He said, â€œWeâ€™re going to fight them someday.â€ When you think about it, he was a little ahead of his time then. He said weâ€™re going to be in a fight with them - but he didnâ€™t like anybody. My Officer kept saying he hated, in particular, Montgomery.
He was always, â€œMontgomery, that God damn English - â€œ something. â€œHe thinks heâ€™s a hot shot.â€ I heard they both used to, you know, go at each other, you know, they - the only one that I do remember that our Officer kept saying that he used to rave about, â€˜cause he loved his tanks - that was another thing those Infantry Krauts didnâ€™t like - I get off a little bit. But I remember him screaming at us, â€œI donâ€™t want one of you God - â€œ no. â€œI donâ€™t care if a hundred of you grunts die tomorrow, you hear me? You donâ€™t lose one of my tanks. You got that, you S.O.B.s?â€ And we look at each other - a hundred of us can die. This is how he used to rant and rave, you know. But getting back to the guy that he said he was the greatest maneuverer was Rommel. He loved Rommel, â€˜cause Rommel apparently was a great tank guy in Africa, and he used to - and then our Captain kept saying, â€œI think there really is something wrong with him. He says, he talks about the old-time, Napoleon, and goes way back.â€
I think he was a, he used to study, you know. I wasnâ€™t into that, but the Officer said that he used to rant about, â€œIâ€™m doing what Napoleon wouldâ€™ve done,â€ and thatâ€™s how he would talk to them.
Interviewer:
Whatâ€™d you do after the war? After the Occupation, I guess, actually I should say?
Alan Moskin:
Went home. At this time, this was the summer - I was there two years. This was the summer of 1946. Went back to Syracuse University. I had started Syracuse, I told you; I had one year, so I went back to Syracuse as a junior, actually, when I was 20. then went to New York University Law School, went there and got my law degree. And then went back to Englewood. I was a bachelor for a long time, living the good bachelor life, and practiced law for about 20 years in Bergen County and Englewood and Hackensack, the county seat, so I was -
Interviewer:

What kind of law did you do?
Alan Moskin:
Civil litigation; I did mostly trial work. As you see, Iâ€™m a blabbermouth, so I used to like to be in front of a jury trying them. The only difference, I tell some of these lawyers today, theyâ€™re lucky. They got these paralegals that do all the leg work. Well, when I was a lawyer - they know my line already - we had to do all the leg work. I had to go out and this, the witness, the deposition. Now, they got these paralegals. But I like the trial work. The other stuff was tough, you know. I tell the people, they see Law and Order and all this stuff on television, somebodyâ€™s up, the next day, Supreme Court. You know, it doesnâ€™t work that way. Itâ€™s two or three years, if youâ€™re lucky, before you get to trial, so you have to do a lot of the stuff. But I practiced law, civil trial attorney, not criminal, â€˜cause I didnâ€™t want to get into that. I had one criminal episode, and that wasnâ€™t for me.
Interviewer:
Then you moved to Long Island after that, is that right?
Alan Moskin:
No. I moved up to Rockland County after I got married. I got married late in life, and then two daughters. Now I got seven grandchildren; both daughters have twins. And I moved to a new city in Rockland County, and then I went into private business, which was a big mistake; lost some money in various ventures, and eventually retired in the â€™90s, and speak now more than Iâ€™ve ever. Over the last 10-15 years, I started to speak a lot. Also, Iâ€™m very active with the Jewish War Veterans; Commander of the Rockland District. Just gave that up this past year because itâ€™s getting too much, and I did it for seven years. But i was involved and still involved with all veteran groups. The Coordinating Council is a veteran group in Rockland County of the V.F.W. - thatâ€™s the Veterans of Foreign Wars - Legion, the Jewish War Veterans, all the Legion groups. And we try to, you know, do the great things we do. I think we do a lot of good for the veterans, particularly today.
Thereâ€™s a big problem out there. A lot of these young fellows coming back now are all young, from Iraq and Afghanistan. They canâ€™t find jobs. Many of them are homeless. Many of them start drinking. Marriages are falling apart. I see this every day; itâ€™s very scary. I speak to wives who say, â€œWell, my husbandâ€™s not the same.â€ I say, â€œHeâ€™s not going to be the same. He came back from combat. Youâ€™re going to be patient; youâ€™re going to have to take - â€œ you know, and theyâ€™re going through a heck of a time. And weâ€™re trying to urge people like Nita Lowey and the other, and our local Congress lady, whoâ€™s now going to be in Rockland County - Eliot Engel before - and all the people, tell them they got to try to do something for the veterans that are coming out. Because the Vietnam guys, I mean, they, that was a terrible thing, what they had to go through. I mean, those guys werenâ€™t treated right, and I donâ€™t want to see the same thing happen with the guys back from Iraq and Afghanistan. You got to understand, World War II, I tell them - you may know, but a lot of the people I speak to, the young people - the country was 100% unified.
The patriotism was so strong, everybody - we were the good guys. The Nazis and the Japs and the - should say Japanese, I shouldnâ€™t use that term. But the Japanese and the Italian, the Axis, they were the bad guys. It was clear-cut. After Roosevelt speaks, the country was - God, you know? And thatâ€™s not the same now, you know, and the people are divided, we shouldnâ€™t have been there, we should be there. But these guys that are fighting for us, theyâ€™re not politicians, and I encourage everybody to support the troops regardless. You know, they didnâ€™t - theyâ€™re just doing their job. But the patriotism isnâ€™t there like that. I wish I could bring some of that patriotism back. Iâ€™m a long-time Giants season ticket holder, you know, â€˜cause I love sports, I played sports, and the guy - knew all of the guys there. When the flag came up, you know, most of them were veterans like me, and we stood up, tears were coming down our cheeks and the flag, and theyâ€™d sing. Now I go, and these young people with the hats, swigging whatever they, on the side, they got a big beer. Theyâ€™re not even taking their hat off, theyâ€™re swigging beer,

and the national anthem is playing.
I mean, that breaks my heart. I look at these young people, I say - Iâ€™m generalizing, I know. I donâ€™t say theyâ€™re all like that, but I see that, I say, â€œTake your hat off - whatâ€™s the matter?â€ He gives me the finger. Heâ€™s embarrassed, I guess. But they donâ€™t even know enough to take their hat off for the national anthem? I donâ€™t know whether itâ€™s the parents, whatâ€™s going on. I donâ€™t see the patriotism out there. And another thing, thereâ€™s too many minorities fighting now for this country. I believe in a draft. I know I may be in the minority, and I know a lot of the mothers want to, when they hear me talking, I say that, they donâ€™t like it. But mothers donâ€™t want their kids to go to war. But boy, I tell you, it was a cross-section of America. Didnâ€™t matter who you were, you got a draft notice, and unless you got out on a 4-F, which was a, you know, perforated eardrum, or a knee torn up, guys didnâ€™t - Iâ€™m telling you, guys who were 4-F, I remember, were hurt, were so disappointed they werenâ€™t going in with their buddies to fight. when I say that to some of the younger people today, they look at me like, â€œWell, whatâ€™s the matter, they crazy?â€
I mean, like - and it tears me apart. I wish I could bring that patriotism back, the love of the country, that flag. I tell you, my father and grandfather, in Palisades and Englewood when I was a kid, everybody - that flag meant so much, and you got that from your parents. I can go on and on. Iâ€™m going to tell you another thing with these young people; thereâ€™s no dinner time. I refer a lot of times, you know, I said, â€œYou know, at dinner time, weâ€™d sit and we - â€œ and they all look at me. And then the teachers say, â€œMr. Moskin, they donâ€™t know what you mean.â€ Because dinner time - I donâ€™t care who the father - mothers worked in the house, didnâ€™t work outside the house. Fathers would come home for dinner. Every father on my block had arrived. Dinner time, 6:00, 6:30, you sat around, dinner time, â€œWhat did you do in school today? What happened in the work?â€ You argue, you laugh, you looked at each other; didnâ€™t have that stupid thing that theyâ€™re looking down, texting and SCHMEK, whatever theyâ€™re doing today. You look at each other, and you talk, and you had family. A lot of kids, they donâ€™t even know. I say, â€œWhenâ€™s the last time you spoke to your father?â€
â€œI donâ€™t know.â€ They think itâ€™s funny. They donâ€™t - thereâ€™s communication. I go into a diner, I see a family - a mother and a father, a boy and a girl, high school age. They go in, they order. Iâ€™m sitting reading my paper. Iâ€™m just observing. After they order, the father got this small laptop, I guess youâ€™d call it; heâ€™s into his thing. This is dinner time. I donâ€™t know what heâ€™s doing. The mother is gossiping on a cell phone. The girl is typing, I guess youâ€™d call that texting - Iâ€™m not into that. And the boy is doing - theyâ€™re not even looking at each other. The whole meal, they didnâ€™t talk to each other. I said, â€œOh my God.â€ Now I know what they mean. They donâ€™t - thereâ€™s no conversation. Theyâ€™re all in their own world. I wanted - whereâ€™s the unity? I mean, Iâ€™m blabbing and I can go on forever, but I tell you, I love my generation. I think Brokaw had it right. And I didnâ€™t think about it when he said it, but the more as I got older, the Greatest Generation. We got it from our parents and our grandparents, and I wonder about these kids, what theyâ€™re getting from their parents?
Interviewer:
Well, thank you very much for coming in and sharing all this with us.
Alan Moskin:
Well, Iâ€™m just starting, but call me back. If Iâ€™m still alive, Iâ€™ll give you another mouthful. Thanks for having me. I appreciate it very much.