



Handout 6B: Why did Paul Schlisser agree to be interviewed?

For use with the lesson "Exploring Survivors' Testimonies via Found Poems"

Notes

This oral history excerpt is paired with Oral History Excerpt 6B for use in the lesson "Exploring Survivors Testimonies via Found Poems." The excerpt is from an oral history interview that Arwen Donahue conducted with Paul Schlisser in 2000.

About Paul Schlisser:

Paul Schlisser was born in Álmósd, Hungary, in 1935, and moved with his family to the Hungarian city of Debrecen in 1940. Schlisser's father was an American citizen, which enabled his family to receive protection from the Swiss Embassy. By December 1944, Schlisser and his family were living in a "protective house" in Budapest, Hungary in conditions Schlisser described as a prison. As Russian forces moved in, however, he and his family were forcibly marched to the Ravensbrück camp and then later to the Bergen-Belsen camp, where his mother died. After the war, Schlisser moved to Israel for a time, where he served in the Israeli Army, and in 1959 he joined his father in the United States. After immigrating, Schlisser also served in the U.S. and was eventually stationed at Fort Knox, KY.

Do Now:

1. Silently and closely read the oral history excerpt below.
 2. After reading, circle one word and one phrase that stands out to you.
 3. Be prepared to share your reasoning as to why you selected your word and your phrase.
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Arwen Donahue: What made you agree to talk to me?

Paul Schlisser: Well, I really don't know. I think probably the main thing that motivated me on that is I read about people saying it never happened, it's somebody's fantasies. And I'm here to tell you that it did happen. People are trying to change history. And if you don't learn no lesson from what happened, it can happen again. That was my biggest motivation of joining the U.S. Army, is I felt that the Russians weren't that much better than the Nazis were. They had the gulags, they had the camps. May not have been persecuting Jews per se, but they were prosecuting human beings. Probably the only force in the world during this period of time that could prevent something like that happening is the U.S. armed forces. And so that was my main reasoning for joining the service. I served in the Israeli Army. I fought in the Sinai Desert in '56. And so I've been through the wringer.



About the Source

Citation: Donahue, Arwen. *This is Home Now: Kentucky's Holocaust Survivors Speak* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 178.