

Good afternoon. I'm Bernard Weinstein, director of the Kean College Oral History Project on the Holocaust. Today, I have the privilege of interviewing A. Kevin Quinn, a liberator of Dachau. Mr. Quinn, welcome.

Thank you, Doctor.

I'd like to begin by asking you to tell us a little bit about where you were and what you saw. And then we'll go back and talk a little about your earlier life and what led up to your being at Dachau.

Yes, the thing that involves me in the Holocaust is my experience at Dachau, at a concentration camp, that was liberated on the 29th of April, I believe, 1945. And five days before that I had been sent down from Belgium. The war was over, and I was so. I was sent down to France, formed into a team, attached to the 45th Infantry Division, which was slated for Dachau. That's all the preparation I had.

I was sent in with the combat troops, found indescribable things, terrible things. Unfortunately, I was not able to get in and to get out. I was assigned a duty to remain there. And I remained at the camp for six weeks or so.

Who assigned you this duty?

Pardon.

Who assigned you this duty? Was it--

Well, I was under the command of the Seventh Army, General Patch's army, which pretty soon became the Third Army of General Patton. They switched areas. And Third Army was really in that central part of Bavaria, set up military government for Bavaria, take care of the occupation. And I was assigned to the Office of Education and Religious Affairs in Munich for all of Bavaria.

Was there anything in your background that made that assignment appropriate?

Yes, I think so and part of the reason I think that I was sent into Dachau too. Starting in about 1936, I started to study-- became a member of the Dominican Order, order of preachers, and started to study for the priesthood, started in '36 up to '41 when I left. And, of course, among other things, philosophy, theology, and language and whatnot, a good deal of Latin, a good deal of knowledge about the organization of the Church. I found that I used my Latin verbally, vocally, in Dachau, more than I thought, because there were a number of priests there, still there, and many of them were Polish. And that's the only way I could communicate. That may have been in the mind of somebody who said, well he'll be able to talk to them. So send Quinn along with the other people.

So you talk to them in Latin?

Yeah. Well, when you study for Dominicans, you learn a lot of Latin. I had nine years, I think, Virgil, onwards. So that was in my background. Also, the assignment as Religious Affairs Officer for Bavaria, that kind of an aftermath of my Dachau experience in a way, my job, meant that I the liaison between the American Army and any religious leader in Bavaria. Now, there were hardly any Jewish religious leaders left. But I had a cardinal in Munich, Roman Catholic bishops to deal with, an evangelical Lutherans. And a number of those kinds of clergy had been in and out of camps. Some in and never came out.

So I had a job of dealing with them. And I'm sorry to tell you that one of my jobs was to do whatever I could to get released-- it's nice way of putting it-- from their churches and their pulpits of some clergymen who were top level Nazis. I didn't like that, but I did that.

Another reason I guess I was there, they figured I would know how to talk to a bishop. I would know how to talk to a cardinal, which I did. So you see, my background and studying for the priesthood and knowing Latin had something to do with my being in Dachau. And I'm sure it had something to do with my having that job as a young captain in

Munich.

Can we go back a little bit. Could you talk something about your background, your own your background that led you perhaps into the Dominican Order.

Yeah, I think I can. I was born in New York City in 1918, the son of immigrant Irish people from County Sligo. And I grew up in a tenement, among poor people of every kind. I was familiar with Jews, with Germans, with Italians, with Greeks, and with Irish.

What part of New York did you live in?

The Bronx. Yeah, entirely in the Bronx. So growing up there, finding out when I became an adolescent, that I had two brothers also studying for the priesthood and one whom I admired very much, Jim, who became a Marine chaplain during the war, he became a Dominican. And I visited the-- we don't like monastery. We say priory. And I thought the life of study and work and recreation was great. And I decided I wanted to become a Dominican.

Were your brothers older than you?

Yes, I am the seventh son of a seventh son, which to an Irish person means I'm in for a lot of luck.

Let's hope so. Yeah, go ahead.

Well, at about the time I made my decision, I was in high school at Power Memorial, which became a big basketball power, some people will remember. And the teachers were Irish, every one of them, Irish Christian Brothers. And they were fanatic about two things-- English, drama, poetry, everything along that line, public speaking, what not, a great deal of language, science, also. But wonderful religious teachers. And although I thought that they would like me to join their order-- not priests, they're brothers-- and become a teacher, they encouraged me when they found out that I was headed toward an order which my brother belonged to.

And I had seen the life that they lived. I became an admirer of Thomas Aquinas, who was a Dominican. So next thing you know, I'm a Dominican.

Was it something your parents wanted you to do?

Absolutely not. It said about-- the reason I'm saying emphatic is that there's a saying that an Irish mother always wants her sons, all of them if possible, to become priests. Not my mother. She was smart enough to realize that that's not something that you push anybody to. They do it. As she said, God calls, not me. Not one word to push me in and not one tear when I come out. Everybody should have a mother and a father like that.

So the Dominicans sent me to Providence College. So I studied over with the regular college students. And then I came back after my last class and had four more hours. That's how I got my theology, my canon law, my moral theology, my dogmatic, everything that you can think of for four years.

Sent then and, what we call, the reception of the habit. They give you the habit that Dominic designed back in 1200 something. They put that habit on you. And they put you through a period of trial of a year, called a novitiate. You obey the rule. You follow the constitution of the order. He had one. And you try out that life, and see if you want to do it all your life. And if you find that if you don't, you're suited, God tells you in some way, or you become convinced, whatever, then you are free to leave. Nothing holding you back.

If you stay that full year and take vows, then you are bound by a promise to God for three years. I did not even take those vows. I know I could go. However, those men and that order and the writings of people like Aquinas left a mark upon me. They do.

So if I can jump ahead a little, Doctor.

Sure.

I don't know how this came to be. But when I was in Belgium, I think, around the time of the Bulge, I got a letter from my brother, who was a Marine Corps chaplain in the Pacific. He was on Iwo Jima and other places. He sent me a letter. And he said, if you get to Germany, would you look up one German Dominican whose brother is in the USA? And the name of this German Dominican, who was considered non grata by the Nazis, because he was a philosopher, theologian, they didn't like what he wrote, his name is Roth-- R-O-T-H-- Hyacinth Roth. He is the second man I met in Dachau. Like a miracle, I met him in Dachau, the second person, a man who I think is a saint.

He had been there since 1937 in bad shape, still alive. And when we came and subdued the guards-- a nice way of putting it-- and the war ended, I had left. I was told that Dachau was turned into a camp for SS. And Father Roth volunteered to be their chaplain. And I thought anybody who could do that must be a great, and I suppose I have to say forgiving man. Maybe he forgave.

Not much I have to forgive. Nobody shot me or hurt me or sent my father off to an oven in that sense. But he had suffered. He could do that. There are incidents like that burn that whole period of time, that six weeks, deeply upon me. I can't say I was shocked. I can't say I didn't know anything about what I would find. But I didn't know it as a witness, as somebody who saw the remains of what happened and talk to people.

So I can't say that I was merely shocked. I was absolutely devastated emotionally. But I was an officer. I had a command. I had a job to do. And I had to keep my head.

One of the things I wanted to do that very first day, the very first hour, was to locate two men that they told me were in that camp and they wanted them located as fast as possible and saved from some vengeance. And one was Pastor Niemoller, who was supposed to have been there. And the other one was Leon Blum, who I believe had been premier of the Republic of France. And that was my job.

As a matter of fact, that's how I bumped into people like Father Roth, Hyacinth Roth. And as about Niemoller, and they said he'd gone. And they had moved Niemoller and Blum out. So I didn't find them there.

But then after the first hour or two, no, less than that, I realized that we had pandemonium. People who knew who we were, knew they were free, and they were running all about weeping. Some, I'm afraid, falling down and apparently dying on the spot. I knew that I needed information about the camp. And I wanted to save some of the guards who were left from being shot by our men. And I could not control our men. The men I had, I could not control them.

How many men were under your command?

Oh, I think at that time I had with me only about six people. One man I remember, McGlinchey. Well, he was out of his head. He had a Thomson submachine gun. I had a 45 pistol. And I would have used it if I had too. But it's important to get prisoners for information, even then, especially then. But a lot of them died, because they were shot down by American troops who would not listen to me. They wouldn't have listened to George Patton.

So although I was emotionally-- I can't say upset, as if I didn't know what I was doing. I did know what I was doing. But I was shaken. Let's put it that way. But the men were either less prepared for that, or maybe they didn't have the duties that I had that kind of keep you going when you have a job to do. But they were-- around me anyway-- uncontrollable, absolutely uncontrollable.

If we can backtrack a little bit to the beginning of the war, the period of the war, did you get out of the Dominican Order at the time of the American involvement in World War II or before or--

Just before. If I remember, Pearl Harbor that was December '41?

Yes.

And I know the very day I left the Dominican was on the 14th of August 1941, because the 15th of August would have been the taking of vows. That's why I'm sure. And I left, went home, went looking for a job. Figured I would join the army or something pretty soon. Got a job teaching at Power Memorial. And I taught Latin and French.

Joined the Army finally then about a year later, 1942. Put into the Signal Corps as a private. And started to crawl my way up to officer candidate school and get a commission in 1943 in the Signal Corps. And all my military service on the continent of Europe from 1944 to 1946 didn't involve one communication Signal Corps job. It was always something else-- military government, occupation duties, assignment to infantry divisions, like this assignment that I spoke of, the 45th.

I went from Normandy-- not from D-day, thank God, but from 10 or 14 days after D-day through all the Normandy campaigns. Served with the French Armored Division at one time. Up into Belgium. Got caught in the Bulge. Got out somehow. And then about early April 1945, pulled out of First Army up north in Belgium. Sent the French, become a member of a team, which I later found out was called a Dachau Attachment.

So I was combat trained. Signal Corps men are. They're trained to fight as infantry. I knew weapons and how to use them. So every time I got a new assignment to an infantry division, I knew I might have to fight. And I thought when I was sent to the 45th, I would have some kind of a mission that might involve being a soldier, an infantryman. But then I found out it was a liberation team.

We didn't call it liberation. Liberator is a name given to us, maybe more than we deserved, later. Later. People will say to me, you're a liberator. At that time I didn't feel like a liberator.

I felt, though, I was convinced, not just emotionally, but up here, that what we were dealing with, that whole system of thought or lack of thought, whatever you want to call it that the Nazis had, were very evil. It was very malicious. It was a distortion of human reason and a viewing of people as Untermensch, as being not inhuman, but sub-human, that I knew about. The Dominicans told me that. Yes, I was well prepared from that point of view. So I went in with kind of assurance in my mind that whatever I was doing, it was a good thing to do. And I hope I'd be able to match up.

Did the Dominican Order teach about the nature of Nazism, of what it was--

Well, they did me. And that was between the years I was a Providence, for example, '36 to '40, before I went into novitiate, the habit, four years. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Remember, the Dominican Order is worldwide order. In a way, I'm proud to say that number of priests sent to camps or punished otherwise were Dominican theologians and philosophers. That's what happened to Roth. He didn't go out and carry a placard or denounce Goebbels or Goering. He wrote books. And he preached. And as a philosopher, when he wrote, it was for educated people that he wanted to get to point out that kind of code or way of life, culture, that the Nazis were trying to impose was in essence wrong, irrational.

And that's what a philosopher should do. He finds anything irrational, even though he might like it, but it's irrational, he will have to point it out. And so I had that, thank God. I had Dominicans who were German teaching me at Providence. I also had some Italian--

Were these refugees from Hitler or had they come here--

No, I don't think any of them were. I don't recall anyone who was, not at that time anyway. May have been and I might not have known it. But I don't recall that any was.

I met a Father Rubia who was Italian. Father Schmidt who was German. And they kept, as we say sometimes in the Church, keep your eye on the Bible and on the daily newspaper also. That's why I tried to keep up with both. No, I thank God for what those men did for me.

I'm not I'm not asking you this question to put you on the spot or to embarrass you or anything like that. But in retrospect, do you think now that you were perhaps better informed than some of your fellow officers about the nature--

Yes, I know I was. I get into arguments. And I couldn't understand why they would say what they would say. And pretty soon, it sunk in. Nobody had told them. I don't remember in this country up until the time I went overseas-- went overseas in 1944 on Lincoln's birthday. And even when I got to England, American officers, some were acquainted, knowledgeable, somewhat, about what I call the nature of this thing that had taken over in Europe, pretty much taken over.

But-- now this is hindsight. I'm looking back. And maybe I'm being a little too critical. But I do remember being taken aback. And we had a little group of officers, about four or five of us that went around together.

Was this in OCS or afterwards?

Oh, no, this is in England while we're waiting for the second front to fall. One, I remember, was Jewish, Jewish American officer. I'd like to locate him-- Perry Waldner. The others were not, one or two Protestants and a Catholic or two, I suppose. I remember Perry being the only Jewish officer there.

And now I'm looking back at it, Perry Waldner had a lot of information, more than we had. He was very careful about coming out with it. Now that I look back at it, that's a bad sign. Why would he feel reluctant to come out with it? Was he afraid of some of the bad traits that the American character has, culture had in those years, a Jewish complaint again or something like that? Could that have been at the back of his mind?

But when I read some of the stories of-- I'm not sure what was Stone or Saul Bellow--

Saul Bellow--

A short story about a Jewish man writing to his son in the service overseas and saying, God forgive me, but when I look at the obituary pages of dead soldiers, I'm almost satisfied to find a Jewish name. The way I read that was-- now, it's fiction. It's fiction. But good fiction since it's got some truth in it. That the words in Perry Waldner, if I don't do him any wrong, and I don't think I do, that if we had asked him more, he would have given more, because he would have felt that he could come out and just say what he know. But he had a kind of a feeling that he shouldn't be too, what we say in those days, pushy, intrusive, or what. It's an odd thing now, Doctor, until talking to you, it's been years since I thought about Perry Waldner and that.

Are you saying then that the Jewish soldier or Jewish officer was more defensive about his appearing mainstream American and not being too Jewish or not being too--

Some of that. Some of that. But also I've noticed that in the Irish too when they get among people that they believe are not sympathetic or even tolerant. And they might act that way too.

If you look at it today, do you think that was a mistake? Or do you think it was a necessary act of judiciousness and discretion and--

Well, I don't know. Those poor people-- from what I know now, the fact that this country could have done more to save people. I didn't know it at that time. But now I know it could have done more to save people and did not do it. Some commentators and critics have said, yes, that's because of this particularly Jewish organization was afraid of this and the other ones were pushing in that direction. They never could come to us.

But that's no excuse anyway. The president of the country at that time was FDR and then later on Harry Truman. And if I'm going to hold anybody at fault, it might be them. But then a politician would tell me, you're not being realistic. I had to run a whole country, and I couldn't have done any more than I did. So now I plead kind of maybe not ignorance, but I can't evaluate too well, too far back I guess.

Did you notice any bigotry in the army?

Any what?

Any bigotry or--

Oh, yes--

Racism or--

Sure--

Or--

What you would expect. People from certain parts of the country feeling about a certain race. And it would come out. And remember, the army was segregated at that time. Was not desegregated until Harry Truman did it. So there was a lot of that.

I will tell you that I worked for one man, whom I have no respect-- I hope he's not dead. I would have to say that. He suggested to me at one time-- he was my superior officer. And there were no fighting going on. No, it was after the war. To go up and visit a military cemetery, and we would count the Star of David's on the tomb and we would count the crosses. Well, why would he say that? Well, I pretty soon found out, he was trying to impress upon me that there were a lot of crosses and very few Stars of David. Well, sure, there'd be a lot of Anglo-Saxon and damn few native born Irish too, that kind of thing.

Unfortunately, that man came into a position of some power and shouldn't have, not an occupation duty. In dealing with the Germans after the war, we don't want any of that. We don't want to have any of that anyway, but certainly not in a man with that kind of duty.

He said this after the war was over in other words?

Yes. Now, I must tell you why I find that so offensive. And by the way, I let him know. Thank God, I let him know at the time.

When I was living in a tenement before I moved out to Queens, which meant I was under eight years old, I told you the kind of neighborhood we lived in, a real melting pot. We were poor. My father was a policeman. But policemen didn't make very much. My mother had eight children. She bore eight children in a cold water flat. Policeman's pay, tough. My father working hard, extra jobs, days off, vacation.

My brother got very sick, very, very sick. He had scarlet fever. He had heart damage. The doctor that my mother was calling upon to help-- she couldn't pay. She couldn't pay very much. But the doctor shunted her off and said call Dr. Nerenstone. There's a good name, Nerenstone. I remember Dr. Nerenstone coming. I remember what it looked like. A good looking man, nice mustache, very good Jewish doctor.

He not only took care of my brother, he brought the medication. He visited him frequently. He gave money to my mother. And he sent my brother to recuperate at a convalescent place and virtually all on his own money. I remember that, you see.

These are good people. When you went-- the poor Germans, I suppose, knew that too. Maybe the common German knew that too. But he sees cartoons of Jews as money lenders, greedy. You know the caricature. And I remember that about Nerenstone and that kind of person.

And I suppose-- oh, I have been accused of being entirely too partial to Jews, you know. I don't think I'm particularly partial to them. I argue with them as readily as I will with anybody else. The reason that is said about me is that

whenever the opportunity comes up and somebody says something that involves what we're talking about now, what happened to a lot of people, perfectly absolutely innocent, except they had the wrong blood, had the wrong parents. And I will say something. And it'll be very forthright. That's why I think they consider I shouldn't do too much in that. But they're wrong. I should.

Not to overdo it. But do it. That's why I'm here. That's why I was at Brookdale. I have a moral responsibility to testify to the truth. I know there are people who deny the whole thing or large parts of it. It didn't happen. It wasn't that bad, et cetera, et cetera. They're wrong. I'm a witness. They can talk to me. I can prove I was there, if necessary.

But that kind of person doesn't come to me, see. So when I say I feel that a moral responsibility to testify to it, I must tell you that I realize other persecuted people-- I may mention the Armenians. I certainly would mention the Irish sense of persecution is very much alive. And you can't just single out Jews and saying, look, you're too sentient. How many millions? Whatever. Even if it was only a thousand. But it was millions. So it's overwhelming. And as long as I'm around-- I am beginning to sound almost biblical-- I give testimony to this kind of thing.

What did you see when you went to Dachau?

Well, I remember right at the main gate, I remember one GI standing over to the right. There's kind of a little guardhouse, sentry box kind of thing, something like that, I recall. And I remember a German soldier, an SS man on the ground. And he had been cut up pretty well with a Tommy gun, which fired 45 caliber shells. And that soldier was still standing over him, ready if, I supposed, to do it all over again.

Was the SS man already dead or was he still--

No, apparently, he had been cut down just before I looked at him, just before I saw him. It's like turning your head suddenly like that, and I saw it. And he fell. And a lot of shooting going on in that particular area. And you can hear a fuselage of rapid shots from a submachine gun, you know, identify it right away. So I connected it right away. He's lying there, still moving a little bit. And I heard about 8 or 10 or 12 rounds go off, or whatever. That's the first thing I saw.

Well that didn't bother me. I had seen many dead soldiers, American and German, before that. But then, looking in through that gate, I was looking for the headquarters of the camp. And I saw what looked like-- I saw part of a marking on the building alongside, actually painted on it I think. It said, Verwaltungstelle SS-- it sound to me like headquarters, SS, so I started in that direction.

GIs were around me at that time. I grabbed a hold of one, that was McGlinchey, who had the Tommy gun. I needed him for protection in case somebody's going to shoot at me. I had only a 45. I needed a man with a rifle, a Tommy gun.

And on the way toward that Verwaltungstelle, that's why I felt I would find somebody who knew where Niemoller was, where Blum was. And I think the distance must've been about 500 yards across that open space. I was encountered first by a prisoner who spoke excellent English. The name was Ali [? Couchie, ?] he said. Newspaper man from Constantinople. He said, I'll be your interpreter. Well, my German was not too bad, but his was better. So I brought him along. He's the guy that pointed out Father Roth ahead of me. And I grabbed the two of them. I said, kind of stick with me. And got to the building where I found out the GIs were already pretty well cleaned it out of any Nazis.

And I turned around. And I forget exactly what I did after that. But before too long, I had picked up five or six suspicious looking people, in prisoner's garb that looked too healthy, too well-fed, too strong to be inmates. And I captured them. Then I brought them in, McGlinchey and I.

They turned out to be some of the physicians, the doctors, the medical men, who had been working on experimentation with prisoners, right across from the headquarters. In fact, I have a picture took out of the second floor window. It shows a command car that says, 45th Division on the bumper. Then the next meant one star, the assistant division commander, some soldiers hanging around, and a line of about 12 of these Nazi doctors, all in perfect formation and alignment.

The Germans had that kind of a passion for order, which sounds reasonable till you found out what the order was, the new order that they were going to bring. But that was funny, I noticed even the physicians. And later on, when some war crimes people came to interrogate them, I set up a little office on the second floor of that building. And they had an office down the hallway a little bit.

And it must have been the next day or that evening, I'm not sure. I can't recall exactly. I went into a room, and I found some of these doctor types, physician types, with their hands against the wall and a GI guarding them. I guess they were going to be interrogated by the war crimes people one by one. And one of them turned around, which he wasn't supposed to do, and lucky he wasn't shot the way the GI were, looked at me. And he saw I was an officer. And he appealed to me, why had he been treated like this? Because they weren't allowed to move, therefore they had urinated in place. He thought this was disgraceful. And he appealed to me to do something about it.

Well, I guess I must have been pretty stony faced. I asked him anyway, are you one of the doctors, forget the name, Arzt, from next door? he said, yes. I said, you want me to help you? You want me to relieve you? Just of standing against the wall? Look what you did. And he said, it was science. It was for science. That was the closest I ever came to killing a man in cold blood. Thank God, I didn't do it.

How did he say it? Did he say it with--

With perfect coolness and rationality, as if it should be clear to a reasonable man that it's science. Some science. Science does not justify what they were doing. Of course, it does not. In no way could it. And if it did, we would have to rethink our scientific system of ethics, I think. It would be abhorrent to us.

But I knew what was behind some of them. They were only dealing with subhuman anyway. See, that was the way out.

Do you happen to know what this man did specifically?

No. I don't. I wish I had been able to attend the trials at Nuremberg or be in on the interrogations. But I wasn't.

While you were at Dachau, did you happen to come across any evidence of what they had done in these medical experiments?

Not what a lawyer would call good evidence, I think. I saw the laboratories, which looked in many respects like a dissecting room, kind of tables that were apparently used as operating tables. And they were stainless steel or something, easily washed. If I had seen a tortured corpse there, that would be a little better evidence. But I didn't. I did not see.

I'm going on what was told me by people there, whom I believe. Somebody like Roth, I would believe him. Absolutely believe him. He was in there so long. And I knew he was a man dedicated to the truth, because he was that kind of man. He had that reputation as a philosopher and theologian in Germany, a high reputation in university circles. That kind of thing I would accept. Myself, no, I can't say that I saw anything with my own eyes that I could say that's good evidence of the exactly what they did. I read about it. And that part I believe. I accept on the testimony of good witnesses.

What about the prisoners themselves? What did you notice about them?

Well, as I told you, I met two individuals first, Ali [? Couchie ?] the Arab, or the Turkish newspaper man, I think, and then Father Roth, and talk a little bit to both of them on a day, which was really a crazy day. Later on that day, for some reason-- oh, I know what the reason was. Someone told me that the assistant commandant or the adjutant of the camp, the SS, was still in the camp in disguise. The disguise, it turned out, that he used was to put on that striped uniform.

And I remember going towards groups of men. I remember one group of men. And they had already made a little French tricolor. They were holding it up in the air. So my French was better than my German. So I went to them and started to talk to them. But as soon as I approached them, it was very moving. They all took off their hats, and they held it like this on account of me.



And I took that to be a kind of acknowledgment or a mark of gratitude that they were showing. But it's a very reverential gesture to make. And I tried to put them at their ease, talk to them about this commandant, whose name I can never remember. And I didn't write it down. But they said, that group of Frenchmen said, yes, they had heard the same thing too. And they were pretty sure of it, because others had been found.

Now, I don't know about that day or the next day, it may have been the next day. Still in that very open square, a lot of sunlight, beautiful weather, looking out of my office window, seeing a group-- it looked like a moving mob coming in the direction of the building I was in, the headquarters. And when it got a little closer, and I went down to find out what it was about, there was a man, looked very much a German soldier. He was gray haired, looked to be about 55 maybe, 50, 55, gray hair, still gray, military type mustache, very military looking in, however, prisoner's garb and a young Jewish boy right next to him.

Apparently, the young man had pointed him out to American soldiers. And they captured him. Trouble was the GIs had a hell of a time getting him into the building where I was, because the other prisoners were trying to tear him apart, to claw him to death. He was--

Was this the commandant or--

Assistant commandant or adjutant. I was never quite sure. Whoever he is I have his sword at home. But, see, they were ready to tear him apart with their hands.

The prisoners were?

Yeah. It must have been sometime later, because the GIs now were-- they had no love for any SS, not after the Malmedy massacre of our troops in Belgium. No. But by that time, I guess they realized that we had to have this guy alive and find out. Then the war crimes people took him under tow. And they questioned him about 30 feet down the hall from my office night and day about three or four days.

And I am sorry that they beat him terribly. Why should I be sorry? One of the reasons I was there-- for treating people, even him. Nuremberg and the court and the sense of justice of the civilized world, that's what I wanted, you see. I wouldn't have killed him myself. In combat, I would have.

You know that sickened me also. You can't become like them. Strictly speaking, was he a prisoner of war? Strictly speaking, he was a prisoner of war. So I'll give him his rights. I was also told I shouldn't have been bothered about that. You don't want to get to self-analytic about every one of your emotions. But you should know the reason for why you would do a thing or not do a thing.

By the way, they never got anything out of him. I remember telling the war crimes people, you will not get anything out of that guy. He was tough.

How did you see your particular job? And how was your job connected to or in conflict with the war crimes?

Except for my reaction to their method, no other conflict at all. I knew that my job, and then with two other officers who came up later, our job was to do whatever seemed necessary to put the situation at Dachau in order, bring in food, medical supplies, find out who was there, prepare to repatriate them, get information, wreckage, whatever. So that we could empty the camp.

So I remember somebody-- I was not high enough rank at that time to give the order. It was probably the Lieutenant Colonel Joyce later on brought in two mobile hospitals to take care of these poor people, who were dying right and left. And the GIs unfortunately had been feeding them rations, which killed some of them, as an act of mercy and it backfired.

So your job was essentially humanitarian?

Yeah.

As opposed to legalistic or investigative.

Well, a little of that too. The records that we had-- oh, investigative in a sense of what the war crimes people were doing, no, that was theirs, not mine.

Oh, I forgot to tell you something, Doctor. Picture comes back sometimes a little more clearly. Just before getting to that main gate that I told you about.

Yes.

I think it's the gate that faces east toward Munich. They had that railroad siding with cattle cars still on it. I don't know how many cars. I looked in. There were bodies outside. They were cattle cars. They were cattle cars with no tops on them. So maybe that's not a cattle car. They were almost all dead. They had been moved from another place or another camp and got sidetracked, left there apparently to die.

Then outside along the tracks, long line of them, they had been shot. And I reconstructed that to mean that some tried to escape and were shot down right in a nice line, right alongside the truck. I saw that before I got to the main gate. That was my first big shock, because somehow when I looked at it, I saw the whole thing. I said, there are people in there. Those aren't people destined to be inmates. They were not all dead in the car, by the way. I saw a twitch now and then. So pretty fresh. And then I saw fresh dead bodies along the railway.

Were there any that could still be saved? Or were they all--

I don't think a single one was saved.

We have to stop for a moment to change the tape.