

Q. You can start with your full name.

A. Okay. My full name is John Frank Dunn. My address is 147 15th St., N.E., Atlanta, Ga., 30361. I was born in Elk City, Oklahoma.

Q. Say that again....Elk City, Oklahoma?

A. Yes, Elk City, Oklahoma....on August 18, 1920. At the time of liberation, I was 25, in May of 1945. I was a student at the beginning of the war so I still had not chosen a profession. I did later on choose a military profession for 31 years and, of course, am now involved in records management, which was one of the specialties I learned during military service. I was in the 45th Infantry Div. and in charge of cemeteries, personnel, casualties, this type area...so I did have access to a lot of unusual sights and had responsibility for doing many unpleasant tasks, being in that capacity. I was in the 45th Infantry Div. - uh, this division first saw action in Sicily; we practiced off of Africa and then went into Sicily. Of course, we were told to kill or be killed, but this was the first time I had come in contact with many casualties behind walls or along the road.....

Q. You were told to...I'm going to ask you to repeat that - you were told to what? To kill or.....?

A. Yes, - uh, Patton and all of the commanders - they would drill this into the soldiers. When we're talking about killing, we're talking about the enemy. In other words, they had not seen any action yet and.....

Q. In other words - "kill or be killed" is what you said?

A. They were thinking that when they came across enemy soldiers - they just drilled it into them: Kill or be killed, kill or be killed - that was what they wanted them to have foremost in their minds, because otherwise, they would have been if they hadn't, so...I found this very difficult. Initially, you really have to toughen up your skin, your feelings.....and then the next worse thing after that was Enzo. We had so many casualties sometime....sometime we'd have over 2,000 from dark one evening to daylight the next morning; we had so many of them we just had long rows of people backed up waiting because we couldn't dig the graves fast enough.

Q. So that was a common sight for you really, after a while?

A. I can't say you ever get used to it - but it was something that had to be done and it was my assigned task, so I did assume responsibility for it and went ahead and did it. But it certainly was not a pleasant one and, in the heat of the summer with no sort of ~~air~~ ^{ventilates} facilities of any kind, it - uh - it, you know, makes people start going, "Ohhhh, ohhhh - what did I do to deserve this job?" Many of the people, or course, in graves registration did this, so it takes a lot of fortitude and a lot of turning real tough on the skin -- because it's either that or you'll go batty and have to be shipped out.

Q. You mentioned in your telephone conversation that you were involved in the Dachau area?

A. Yes, our division did take Munich and, of course, Dachau is near Munich so our division did uncover.....

Q. Were you aware of the existence of the Dachau camp at the time you came on it?

A. No, not really. Usually, ah - you know, we had been - our staff had been together about five years and anything unusual along the way, of course, would be fed into division headquarters where I was; once we received word of this, of course, most of us did go right on down because it was one of those things that you can't believe and, you know, you had to see it.

Q. You did receive word of it?

A. Yes, they sent word back that it had been.....

Q. How? Who told you?

A. It had...the, our _____ Battalion that had taken the camp, itself...they called back in to the Division G3 and.....

Q. The camp had already been taken?

A. Yes. And, of course, the division commander and all the senior people, obviously, would go down to something like this because....it's just one of those things that nobody who didn't see it would believe.

Q. Somebody came back to you and said: We took this camp....? How did you.....?

A. By telephone.

Q. Oh, by telephone.

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A. Yes.

Q. How did you get to the camp - personally?

A. We went in a Jeep from our location.

Q. Why?

A. Well, it's just one of those things that you just have to see to believe.

Q. Who told you that it existed? Was it a close friend of yours, was it just an officer, or.....?

A. Yes. All of our staff was very close and any of them would say, "I'm going down." I don't remember at this time whether I went alone or whether I went with....I probably went with someone, but....

Q. And it was just a trip you make from where you were stationed at that point to the Dachau camp.

A. Yes.

Q. You went by Jeep you indicated. Do you remember what you first saw as you entered the area?

A. I didn't go through the whole camp. The only place we went to was the area there where they had the ovens....where they were burning. And there stacked in front of the ovens were people....and, I don't know...I - I've always sort of referred to it - it looked like a stack of posts, the way they were stacked up, because even though they had been there for some time, there was no smell or anything because the bodies had just been starved and sort of shrunk up...or dried out, if you please - where there really wasn't anything except skin and bones, so there really wasn't any, uh.....

Q. There was no odor?

A. No, there was not.

Q. Now, coming from you, that's an interesting statement because apparently you were involved in, you said cemeteries and involved with burials.....

Q. Yes, because at the cemeteries it was terrible in the hot weather when you had many of the bodies waiting....

Q. So, comparatively speaking, there was not much of an odor there?

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A. No. No, there was none.

Q. Ahhh - you did not see the _____, the entrance way to Dachau?

A. Well, we would have had to have driven into the entrance to get into this place, but, really, once you see this sight, it causes you to forget about the others because a fence or a field or what have you would just be an ordinary, common thing, which you wouldn't remember after you see something like this.

Q. Ah - you've seen a lot of death before. Was this experience in your mind a separate experience from the other experiences you had with.....

A. Yes, it really was....

Q. Or did it become a separate experience in retrospect?

A. No, it was at the time, because it's two different things. In war, that's one thing, you know - planes fall, guns go off, people are out to shoot each other - and it's both sides. But this is a case where the ones doing it did have some control - in other words, this was a forced, I would call it, killing of people -- and it really had nothing to do with the war itself. It just occurred at the same time, but it is a totally different situation; plus the fact that these people, as you saw them lying there, their heads were still there. I remember there was one real good looking red-headed lady, but it - it was almost like looking at skeletons. In other words, uh.....

Q. Totally emaciated.

A. Yeah - in other words, it's a whole different situation and it creates something within you that's really separate and apart from the war. It has nothing to do with it. In other words, because this is something that you can visualize being carried on in a place outside war - really. Therefore, uh - it was more than killing. I think the big thing about it was the fact that the ovens were right behind it where they would burn them; even after they went this far - obviously, they were in no position to do any damage - and I think the other big thing about it is they were actually starved to death. Really - there are some real important things here other than killing itself.....starving a person to death, must be a terrible death - uh, much more so than the casualties in the war.

Q. Certainly. Do you remember the date you went into the camp?

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A. Well, we occupied - we did have some troops going into Austria - but we stopped and occupied Munich after it was taken and, uh, I suppose I could go back through my records - but it was very shortly before the end of the war. It was a matter of a few days.

Q. That was May of 1945?

A. That was really the last combat situation we were in - and, of course, there was no resistance at that time so it wasn't that difficult to take the city.

Q. I see. Were there any people walking around at all?..at Dachau, that you remember?

A. No....it wasn't, because the troops had just taken it so, uh...and in that case, although I didn't see them do it, I think later on there were some charges preferred against some of the people for murder. But, Patton, being the kind of general he was, he certainly would not ever permit any charges to be filed against anybody for murder in time of war, because that really isn't murder. Murder was being done at the camps, but not in the war. So, in those areas, the people I knew and talked to - even though the SS guards that ran the camp would throw out their hands and say "Comrade" - our people still went ahead and killed them.

Q. Did you meet up with any SS guards?

A. Well, not that I know of. I probably did. We spent an awful lot of time down through Italy; after Sicily, we went to Salerno and after Salerno, we hit Enzo and after Enzo, we hit Southern France.....so we hit four enemy beaches.

Q. You sure did. When you were in Munich, was there any time to meet with any of the German citizens.

A. Yes, I was. They seemed to be very nice people - a couple of families - uh, whatever little bread they had left, they were willing to share. And, of course, I'm sure it was a great relief to them that the war was over so I think it's, uh - it would be difficult, I think, on something like this to try to judge it against other German people because I don't think that any people in the world - I can't visualize them - the people as a whole, I think you'll always have a few people who could do this type thing - perhaps in all countries. But, I couldn't sense

any bitterness. Most of them were just so happy for it to be over, it wasn't funny. We stayed there quite a while; of course, we were close by. We had our Division headquarters, actually, in Dachau, which is close. And then, we later on, moved out on the Isar River, just below Munich and stayed in some of the government buildings there.

Q. Did you meet with any of these German ^{citizens} ~~prisoners~~ before you went to Dachau?

A. No it was after. You see we were not supposed to do any fraternization, I remember at the time. We were not supposed to have any dealings with ~~any~~ ^{the local} people.

Q. All right. Did you ask them whether or not they knew what was happening at Dachau? Do you remember any such ^{conversational} ~~question or~~ exchange taking place?

A. No, I really didn't have that kind of opportunity. I didn't have much contact at all because once we cleared the place, then the military government took over. I did, for the benefit of those that we had wounded in the hospital, I got a bus and I did conduct some tours of Munich for our patients - you know, our people that were wounded and in the hospital; some of the hospital personnel would also take turns taking a look seeing through Munich. So we got to see quite a bit of Munich, but to my knowledge, this was just never talked about or discussed - and really, not too many people got to actually see these before they were cleaned up. In other words, this was kind of Graves Registration Service - we tried to keep it cleaned up behind us as much as we could. Sometimes, if you would have a big battle or a big break-out or something, you would have a lot of casualties or maybe you couldn't get to them for a while - but in a situation like this, I don't know how long it took, but I'm sure it would have just been a very few days. Most of the activities were taken over by military government once we cleared the area of enemy troops.

Q. You went into Dachau, you saw these bodies stacked up like logs, so to speak..... you don't whether or not you were alone or with somebody. Did you share what you saw with anybody? Do you remember talking about it?

A. Yes, I took some pictures and I related it as we went along. But - I don't know - it's, ah - I just felt it's the type of thing that I would not have told my child-

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ren. It's not the type thing I would have talked about. I did talk to my assistant about it this morning after I hung up with you.

Q. After we talked on the phone.....

A. And he seemed very interested, but it's the type of thing that's almost too gruesome to talk to someone about it, you know....there's just some things that.....

Q. At the time that you were there.....

A. There's just some things that....that children, you know....it just not one of those things that I think is a good topic to be discussed.

Q. Well, it's even difficult to talk about it yourself and then to have that as a topic of conversation takes additional strength, I guess. But at the time that you were there and with your fellow soldiers, did you discuss what you saw? Do you remember?

A. No...no, we didn't do much discussion of it because everybody went....I did take some pictures while I was there, but those got lifted somewhere along the line.

Q. Never came through or....

A. No, they never came back. I think I loaned them to the chaplain to look at and I don't think he ever returned them to me. This was quite a shock for a lot of the chaplains, of course.

Q. If they hadn't see it, certainly....or if they were unaware of it, it's shocking to see. Ah...you're married, Mr. Dunn?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you shared this experience with your wife at any time?

A. Yes, I've talked to my wife about it - but I haven't discussed anything with the children.

Q. Did you see the Holocaust movie?

A. Yes, I saw parts of it.

Q. Did that bring back any...refresh your memory or give you any additional feelings in the light of today's political.....

A. Not really....not really because I think there would be difficulty of realism there. You know, movies are so fictional and what have you....seeing the actual

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thing, plus trying to relate that to a movie, I think is very difficult. There are other things I think one could relate, but something like this - well, there just couldn't be a substitute for me because a movie....there's no way that a movie could leave an imprint on your mind like your actually observing it....so, at least for me, there's a big difference between the two.

Q. Do you believe that the movie had validity, that certain basic.....

A. Oh, yes - certainly. There's no question about that.

Q. You have children, Mr. Dunn - did they see this movie, do you know? Are they living in Atlanta?

A. Well, we just have the one that's home with us and she's blind, so she didn't see it - but she heard it. She can do about as well hearing - better hearing - than most people can seeing.

Q. Probably very extra-sensory - certainly perception. Did you discuss this movie with her after she heard it?

A. No.

Q. We're just trying to get an idea about how much information you shared. Umm - your reaction to the German people...I think you gave us somewhat an idea of how you felt before. We're often told that no one was a Nazi....the people you come across, the German citizens....how do you feel?

A. Well, I think most of them, you know....

Q. How do you feel...or what was your experience at the time....or do you have any feelings?

A. Well, it was, of course, impossible to determine who was who....in the military, we would never have trusted a person as to whether they were or weren't as far as any kind of responsible position or trust them for a personal matter, as far as that goes. You really don't know under those circumstances who is and who is not, so...

Q. You can't take a chance?

A. No, you really have to treat them all the same.

Q. Were there any violent incidents that you observed?

A. You mean after the war?

- Q. Well, no - not really after the war, but around the Dachau area or even perhaps between the soldiers and the citizens. Sort of assessing the soldier's reactions..
- A. Well, no, not really. They court martialed several of the guys that were fraternizing with some of the women and that grew to be somewhat of a problem; so some of those that commanded stated that if they wanted to bring them to the club, they could and they would have to interrogate them to see if they were a Czech or a Pole or a Slav or what. There were tremendous numbers of displaced people, who were living there so....
- Q. Did you have a chance to talk to any of these....I don't know what your language facility is, but did you have an opportunity to talk to them or discuss.....
- A. No, very little. We moved into the German finance minister's quarters for our office. This was located just below Munich and they had very nice facilities, all the government officials and we enjoyed those. But the people they had for maids all seemed to be very nice. They also had a couple of orchestras. But they were a little nervous it seemed....the Germans in the band playing; especially if you would ask for a song that maybe was written by a German or - you know, they were getting away from the German songs and the German music....trying to stick strictly to playing....
- Q. So your life style was pretty nice there in the military once you took over the area?
- A. Yes, we were very comfortable. We stayed I guess a couple of months and we had to come back and go to Japan.
- Q. What did you do there in Germany at the time in your particular job?
- A. I was in the Division G1 and I left early to come back to Camp Bowie, Texas as one of the advance party to come back and get the post set up so we could bring in our replacements and get our training going and then be redeployed to the Pacific. Quite a few people stayed a considerable longer period of time than I did, but I volunteered to come back for redeployment to the Pacific. I don't know why.
- Q. (laughter) You don't know why -- a real military man. You were involved in cemetery procedures you indicated.

A. Yes, that is one of the duties - selecting cemeteries and the collection of bodies throughout the area that you go through to be sure that they get picked up and at the cemetery properly identified and buried.

Q. Did that include the bodies found at Dachau?

A. Oh, yes. Ah, not....we were primarily looking for military; we didn't get involved with civilians. This was a military government function.

Q. I see - you were not involved with that.

A. No, we were strictly sticking with military casualties.

Q. I see.....we're going to talk a little bit about religion. Did you consider yourself a religious man at the time you had this experience?

A. Yes.

Q. And your religion is?

A. Baptist.

Q. Ah....were there any conscious thoughts about God at the time that you viewed Dachau?

A. No. I was so young at that time that you see something like that and it sort of blanks you out....of course, I think I only went to one funeral from the time...up to 20 years old and that scared me to death, so it was really a traumatic experience for me the first time we come on the beach and saw all the dead people everywhere. It was rather difficult to....and I just didn't know at that time if I was going to be able to do it or not.

Q. Oh, I understand. Did you indeed think of asking to be released of your duties?

A. No, I didn't. That's where I ended up. I didn't ask for the duty and it was just one of those things where I ended up...so I just went ahead and somehow overcame it. I just figured I would have to be a lot braver than I was before as far as seeing something like this.

Q. A point of interest - since that time, do the funerals, etc. have the same impact on you?

A. No.

Q. A different experience. The question here is: did religion have anything to do with the way you viewed the prisoners at Dachau?

A. Well, I think it would. I think it all ties in to a person's views because of your religious teachings about this. Of course, really war itself is anti-religious no matter how you look at it - because still a brother is a brother and it, in my view, always has been. When you come down to the point that the command they gave us is either kill or be killed, you have to shift gears and get into a different frame of mind.....and now you have another job to do.

Q. That has to be adjusted in your own mind.

A. Uh huh - you somehow have to justify it or you can't go.

Q. Have you ever wondered if you would have kept your faith as a prisoner in the camps?

A. Yes, uh, I would have.

Q. Does your religion have any effect on your attitude towards forgiving the Nazis?

A. Yes.

Q. Based on....?

A. Well....there's not much choice, really, if a person gets into trouble and goes to prison - a murderer or what have you - they can only do so much time in prison or so much repentance. In other words, I think the time does come when you can't hold something like this against a person all their lives.

Q. Are you familiar with the statute of limitations?

A. Yes.

Q. And how do you feel about that? Do you think it should be abolished?

A. Well, I don't know. It seems to me that we're getting pretty well down the road now; it can't go on forever. I think there should be a time set, whatever it might be....whether it's now, ten years from now, twenty years - and when that time does come, why then, I think it's something that shouldn't go on. Actually, it's something that happened uh...34 years ago now. It seems to me like....while there's certainly no excuse for it.....that, uh - I'm not sure anything would be gained by punishing a person for an act that was committed 34 years ago. Maybe there would... I don't know, this is not an easy question.

Q. No, it takes thought in terms of forming an answer.

A. I think it would be according to the degree. If you did know that a person really

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was responsible, personally - and they could have said yes or no to a whole crop of people that way - and they were responsible for it, then, of course, I don't think that person should escape punishment as long as they live. Certainly, there are some gray areas there, but in that type situation, I don't care when it is - I don't care how old they are or even if they are sick; but as far as some of the others where, you know, they gray areas - then I'm not so sure.

Q. You're talking about Adolph Eichmann, Heinrich Himmler.....?

A. Those people who were in a position of responsibility and could have done something about it -- yes, I don't think there ever should be any mercy for those, no.....if they did it before, they'll do it again.

Q. Ah....did your experience change your political view in any way.....in the area of civil rights, the Viet Nam war, the Middle East?

A. Well, no, not really - but it makes you think that, uh....we certainly, even though we have elected officials, we certainly have an obligation both to ourselves, our people, and our country that, if we see somebody getting that far out of line, action needs to be taken....uh, even people making it into their own hands to not permit such a situation to develop to the point where people can, in fact, not do anything about it. So I think that's the lesson I learned from it is that you can't sit blindly by and let something like this come to pass. It's one of those things that grows a little at a time and people, I don't think, realize exactly what's happening.

Q. With the resurgence of the activities of the KuKlux Klan, how do you feel about that being permitted to continue, develop.....freedom of expression?

A. Well, I'm really hoping that this is just a little flare up for publicity as sort of the dying call. I really can't believe that this is resurging in earnest and that the people who are doing it really have earnest feelings in mind that this is a good move and that it should come back in and spread and take back over. I just don't see how it could possibly do it....really.

Q. Do you think we should take steps to combat their liberty of their expression?

A. Well, not now - but if this starts catching hold and you start seeing the organiza-

tion in several states and they do actually start causing casualties.....and you see it is the movement that can cause this.....then, yes - I think they should be moved in on. I think that something should be done about it.

Q. Do you think the Church should take on responsibility in terms of.....?

A. Absolutely.

Q. And also, in terms of education about the Holocaust.....do you think the Church has a responsibility in education?

A. This is right down the alley, yes. There's no way the Church, I think, can push this off to someone else. They have to assume their rightful place and, uh.... they play an important role.....sure do.

Q. How do you see yourself in educating to see that.....to prevent this from ever occurring again?

A. Well.....

Q. Certainly by sharing this with us now you have done a wonderful.....

A. I think that when the history is written.....I think that what has happened since World War II today.....I think that, as we look back on it historically speaking.....you know, with the Arabs and the Jews having their problems, but the great step that Sadat has taken - you go back all the way from biblical times up to date and I think he's very sincere.....nothing like this could ever have happened. ^{There} ~~this~~ is a great interchange....and, if you look here, we have blacks marrying whites - look at what has happened between the blacks and the whites, uh, over the last 20 years....just in the last twenty years. And I think that probably the communications of today, the television where they see all of these..... an example would be to take a youngster that grows up in these times and a youngster that grows up in my times - and you sat them down side by side and you start asking them these questions about their views on this, you are going to find a whole different situation. So I think that tremendous strides surely have been taken in so short a period. Look back and see that none of these things happened.. so many things that you wonder what happened....so many things. You wonder what happened from the beginning of time clear up to, let's say 1940 or '50.....in

all of our fields of endeavor....communications, education, television, in the the people's ^{rights} regardless of color or place. You don't hear any harping about all of these changes, but there have been tremendous changes and even religion....I remember my father was very anti-Catholic. In fact, my older brother wanted to marry a Catholic and he just put his foot down and stopped it, broke it up. He said that absolutely, there was going to be none....because this was sort of against our teaching. You know, this person figured that the priest was playing like God and people doing these things.....and they were really very much anti. With the coming of the automobile, the movement of people, television, radio - all of these things that all came within our time, then his children....well, I guess two of his grandchildren in two families have both married Catholics. And there's a tremendous interchange and you don't hear that any more in any of those families. So I think that the generation after....and the generation after us you're going to see even more of this so-called togetherness - respecting each other's rights. I am really glad that.....

Q. I detect a note of great approval of the change and the opening of communications between the two.....

A. Yes, I think it's a total package. And it's not only just here - it's all over the world. Everybody can share in this experience and we can learn more about each other....tremendous social changes here. I think, if there is as much progress made in the next 25 years as there has been made in the last 25, I think that the chance of things like this happening are going to be more and more remote. I hope they are. But I think there have been tremendous strides....I really do.

Q. There certainly have been many very, very drastic and rapid changes.

A. Yes - so there might be some slow downs with the Ku Kluxers coming back to show off or the Nazis getting publicity in Chicago, but I don't think a little handful of people.....maybe something like that might be even good to bring back a few memories. People can say, "Look at what can happen. This is how those things start." So this could be a helpful effect.

Q. Something negative having a positive effect.....you indicated before that this is

not something you would share with your child. How do you feel that sharing it with a child, perhaps, could be very advantageous in terms of not.....

A. I suppose it could, uh, when they get older...if they be old enough to understand. I don't think that this type thing is something you could share with a child. I don't think they could understand or comprehend it. You could tell them, but I think that would be about it. I know a lot of my father's hardships, when he made the run to Oklahoma back when they opened the plant - uh, he, I guess.....well, let's see, he...that was along about ~~1955~~ in '55 and he was born in '80, so 55, 65, 75... I guess he was about 75 before he shared some of their experiences...you know. For example, they had to live together in one room, two or three sisters and his mother. His mother died in 1905 - that would have made him 25 - from diptheria, and his sisters were sick and he would go into the little town and there would be drinking and gambling....and he would go see the doctor and tell him she was sick and the doctor would ask him the symptoms and say, "Well, there's no need for me to come; they're going to die anyway." And they had to put their foot down on you on the ground to hold you down and take pliers to pull your teeth....and all these kind of things. Just imagine the pain....they had no gas, they had no anasthesia, none of these things, and I suppose that these things left a real imprint in his mind. I don't know if he talked to the other children or not, I didn't ask him.....

Q. It left an impression on you, too.

A. I was old enough where I would understand it and that it wouldn't bother me. And I think that this other thing is even more than that. It's something that I think is very deep and hard to understand. It's a....it's a very difficult thing to talk about, really. I think you can talk to a stranger more about it than you can to your own children. I think it's more difficult to talk to your children.

Q. The fear of uh, you know, should my child ever have to go through something like this....is a fear we have within us.

A. Yeah, I suppose that's one of your inner feelings. I really don't know why there is a hesitancy to talk about those things, but - I think there is a hesitancy on people's part to talk about the real gruesome things and that's what we're talking

about there.

Q. I think we can almost visualize ourselves as possibly going through something like that.

A. Yes. That's right.

Q. Is there something that I haven't covered that you would like to share with us in this area of your experience?

A. No, I think that's about it. I notice that the only other thing that we had happen that bothered us was in taking the city of Schockenburg (sp?) there in Germany. There was a Major Frank, who was commandant of the city, and he did have it well fortified, but he didn't have too many troops. We had a terrible time taking that thing. We would encircle it, we would try and we would have to back up and then we would bomb it and try again. We couldn't get in, so we'd go back up and bomb it and throw artillery; we finally took it, but he had a lot of six, seven, and eight year old kids manning guns and, if they didn't hold the line and fire, he'd hang them. We saw several of them hanging when we went in. Of course, he was the SS type, but I think it was another example of the same thing. This is getting down on the whole, too, when you start taking children and murdering them for not standing up and defending the city.

Q. Did you meet up with him personally?

A. No, he was killed, but he sure held on to the last.

Q. You saw them hanging at designated areas?

A. Yes, but it wouldn't make any difference; he just wanted to make examples of them, I guess, so the other kids would get the message that they were not to let the enemy come in. They were, at all costs, to kill the enemy right up to the last person.

Q. And this was at Schockenburg?

A. Yes, I think he was a good example of the SS troops.

Q. I want to thank you very much for sharing this with us.....and yes, indeed, you are doing your job in educating others because you have shared this with me..... and I do thank you.