

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW OF PAUL GUMZ
by Herbert Jenkins, Interviewer, Dec. 8, 1978
(Dachau)

Jenkins: I am talking with Mr. Paul Gumz regarding the Holocaust program and his experience and activities in Germany during the war. Well, thank you, Mr. Paul Gumz, we appreciate you coming over this morning to give us some information on Holocaust program. I understand you had quite an experience during that time, so if you will give us your name and address and tell us what you know about it, we will appreciate it very much:

A. My name is Paul Gumz, I live at 4621 Lake Shore Drive in Pine Lake, Georgia, which is near Stone Mountain. I was born in 1922 on May 3rd in Chicago, Illinois. And I was just getting out of high school in '41 when Pearl Harbor came, and went in the army ~~was~~ in '43. Took basic training in Ft. Jackson, SC and went over and joined the 3rd Infantry Division in August of 1943 and went into Cassino in Italy and we were tied up there until December, at which time I attracted trench foot or frozen foot and was shipped back on Christmas Day to Rome, no, to Naples, and from Naples went over to Iran and North Africa where I laid on my back for months and was put on limited duty when I got out and joined a medical battalion in Sicily - Palermo, Sicily - and we went up the boot of Italy, back up to Cassino again, made the invasion of Anzio, went from Anzio, made the invasion of Southern France, on up, crossed the Rhine River to Germany. I guess about three weeks after we were in Germany and over the Rhine, we were stalled because ^{our} supply lines ~~were~~ ^{were long,} ~~and~~ had no gasoline, but we got a call and got gasoline -- that we were going to make a forced trip at night to a concentration camp near Munich.

J: Let me ask you at that point, Mr. Gumz, was that the first time you heard about the concentration camp? What did you know about concentration camps? At this time? Now, you are in Germany, and they said - "look, tonight you are going up there." What did you - what had you heard beforehand and what did you expect to find?

A: We just knew they had concentration camps. We didn't know what we would find, nor what to expect. We had been told that the reason we were going was that our Intelligence had gotten word that a trainload of prisoners was coming from the Low countries and was to be in ~~BOESINGE~~ Dachau that morning. And since we were a backup medical battalion, we were going in to take care of these prisoners on the train. That was our main job of going along. When we got to Dachau, they had blown the bridge across, they had a moat, looked like a river around it, and we were tied up until the engineers got a bridge across. When we got inside, the infantry had taken care of all the guards they could find. Our main objective was to head to the train, which we did. But the train arrived the day before. They had machine-gunned all the people in the car. There were approximately 100 cars, and approximately 100 people to a car. We had found one boy alive in all these people, and he died on us later in the morning. And I have photos of all these trains of boxcars to substantiate what I am saying. We then went and toured the camp.

J: Did I understand all these people on this railroad train were dead?

A: That's right, they were either frozen to death or machine-gunned one. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

J: What were their nationalities? Do you know?

A: Most of them, we were told, were from the Low countries... Yugoslavia, etc.

J: They were being brought to Germany?

A: That's right.

J: And they had either died from exposure or...

A: That's right, all they had on was a thin suit, like a pair of pajamas,

J: And there was 100 people to the car? And how many cars?

A: That's right. About a hundred cars.

J: You had 100,000?

A: Something like that. That's right.

J: That's terrible. But you saw that, your pictures here showed where you are unloading them.

A: That's right. There's all the cars, you can see bodies in all the cars.

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Q: And you couldn't *identify these people?*
They

A: *They* had no identification.

Q: You just understood they came from the low countries....tell us where you went from there. Then what did you do?

A: Well, then we went exploring; of course we liberated the prisoners in the compound; and to go back, we had a cook - come into our outfit that had been from Yugoslavia - and he was our interpreter. He had been on a merchant marine ship - A Yugoslavian ship which was torpedoed - and a destroyer from U S picked him up and brought him to states. They didn't know what to do with him so they put him in the army and they eventually got him overseas. But, anyway he could talk the language, and we got ahold of a doctor inside the camp and he showed us through the whole compound. Now, this Yugoslavian found a cousin of his, inside the camp, and miraculously he was still alive. I can remember where they slept, it looked like they had about 12 to 15 inches between slabs of wood, where they would have to crawl into to sleep, because all these people weren't fed very much.

Q: Were they segregated by sex or age?

A: By sex, not by age.

Q: By sex.

A: Young boys and so on. And he took us through the wards, and they had approximately I would say 25 to 30 young men that had come in the camp several weeks before that they had castrated - they were Jews, Jewish people, Jewish boys. They had castrated them, and I remember by electrodes *he pulled back the covers* they burned them all - and *And* he showed us.

Q: They were castrated, but they were still alive? Was there some medical treatment?

A: They were giving them medical treatment, yes, they were going to go to work in the camps. Now they would work them until they died. And he took us through a large room where they had two copper vats, where they experimented with *the* young men - I don't know how many gallons of water it held, but it was an enormous vat - and they would put the people in a swing and dump them in ice-cold water and then back in the hot water just to see how long they could live, I remember that vaguely. We then

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- A: out of there, of course. We couldn't take care of them, all these men, and we stayed there three days, but we weren't equipped to take care of all these people and they finally brought in these evacuation hospital *units to take care of them.*
- Q: There were no women in this camp... they were all male camps?
- A: I don't recall any. I think they did away with the women.
- Q: Sent them someplace else...? What was your...what did you hear... how many people did you think were in this camp? You found 100,000 bodies in the trains....
- A: I don't remember how many...
- Q: How big a place was it?
- A: It was an enormous camp, but we had... I am going to back to the first day now. We got *outside in* the afternoon, and the infantry still had not found the leaders of the camp, so one of the prisoners said that they had a row of houses along the one side of the camp where the cadre lived and so on, he said that *he thought* ~~there~~ they had a sub-basement in one of them that was hidden, so that infantry went in, and sure enough they found - I believe - it was four of the top echelon of the camp that they brought out.
- Q: That was SS Storm troopers - or were they...? Civilians?
- A: These were in the army, in the German army, but they were the leaders of the camp. Now the SS troops that they had as guards were mostly young boys, infantry killed them coming in, they were defending the camp, they were laying all over the place. And I have one insignia that I took off of one of the SS troops, there it is right there.
- Q: That's the insignia that the guards wore?
- A: That's SS Storm Troopers' guards... they had young boys, mostly, what the Germans called the pure *Aryans* ~~Aryans~~, the blond-blue-eyed, and these kids could, if one one of the prisoners or the inmates told us, if they would kill three prisoners a week, just on the spur of the moment, they would get a pass into Munich, which was just a few miles from there. In Munich they had a camp set up with pure - what

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A: they called pure ~~Angels~~ ^{Aryan} girls - and they would billet these boys with them. They had like a baby factory going on, Hitler's idea of he could eliminate everything in German except the pure ~~Angels~~ ^{Aryan}.... that's why he wanted blue-eyed blondes, but anyway, they brought out these four prisoners - these four officers of the camp - that were the elite or -- commanding officers and so on. And after you had seen everything going on in the camp, well we had been medics for how many years and got used to arms and legs off, but this was something else. They turned these officers over to the prisoners, and they just beat them, kicked them, and beat them and finally they were shot.

Q: They executed them on the...

A: Right out there on the ground.

Q: The prisoners themselves?

A: That's right. They got their revenge and everything on them, for everything they had been through.

Q: That's an experience that is hard to imagine, isn't it?

A: We didn't stop them.

Q: Oh, I know that.

A: We got into one side of the camp now, and they had two, enormous rooms.

And I can't go by size, they were enormous; in the center they had furnaces.

Now in both these rooms, bodies were stacked to the ceiling, and there are photographs to substantiate that, and here's the photograph...

Q: And these bodies...? Many of them had died, but most of them had been killed?

A: They all died of malnutrition, mostly. They always fed them a little water and soup, and worked them until they died. They go through and take out any gold in their teeth or whatever they needed and..

Q: But these... these guards that were given a pass if they killed three prisoners, any prisoners?

A: No matter...

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Q: And no matter about provocation, or how they did it?

A: It didn't matter.

Q: They must have killed hundreds of them.

A: Oh yes, thousands probably. There's a photograph of the ovens where they cremated them. You will see on the top, the one is closed, these,--- there are two of them closed -- there's the officers that they threw right on top of the pile. It was snowing that day also, it was cold, and there's the picture of the piles of clothing outside of the crematorium, or whatever it is called, you can see the snow on top of the clothing, and that's I in the center there.

Q: Oh, that's you right there?

A: That's right.

Q: You were a young handsome soldier, weren 't you?

A: Well, back then, that's how many years ago. There's a picture of the prisoners. Now in the yard, the exercise yard, they had ^{four} like crosses, they also had ^{four} Great Dane dogs ... and ^{I assume} they were Great Danes. This was sport for the guards and the officers. They would hang Jewish, young Jewish boys on these poles, and these dogs were trained to castrate these men in one bite. That sounds awful, but it is true.

Q: That's beyond your imagination --

A: That's true, because I seen the dogs, the infantry killed them and they were laying there.

Q: This you saw?

A: Yes sir. Now, they also had another room, and they were making at the time (and I don't have it, my mother has it), they were making at the time statue in porcelain, these prisoners were, of a German soldier it was to be for Hitler's birthday, which was coming up in a month or so, along with it was an invitation to his birthday party, going to all the high German officers; somewhere in a box at home, I've got the card, it is signed by Heinrich Himmler and it's an invitation to the birthday. Also in another room alongside of this, they made lampshades out of human skin, believe it or not.

Q: You saw that?

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- A: Yes sir. I seen that. - - Which went to the high German officials, they wanted them. We stayed there.... ah, this was all on the first day, as I can remember. The next two days were busy just trying to clean up and trying to ^{feed} these people and you couldn't ^{feed} them too much, because they hadn't eaten in so many years. You still didn't believe it, after you seen it.
- Q: What was the nationality of these people, generally? Were ^{there} any of them that you could talk to?
- A: Most of them were from Yugoslavia, Poland, etc.
- Q: No American soldiers?
- A: No, there weren't any American soldiers there, not in this concentration camp. I believe there were some German people.
- Q: And this was near Munich?
- A: Yes, it was near Munich, because the next town we liberated was Munich a few days later.
- Q: Well, of course the records show. About what year was that, do you remember?
- A: That would be '45, I believe.
- Q: 1945 - beginning of the end of the war.
- A: That's right, but it had to be towards spring, I guess, it was snowing out there.
- Q: And the bodies were cremated? And obviously they used all kinds of methods to kill the prisoners, but had no systematic way of killing them.
- A: Well, this was systematic, killing the ovens...
- Q: But yes, that was after he was dead, he was cremated?
- A: Oh yes, well, even off on one side, they had some gas chambers, but I don't know whether they used them primarily....they were using these people to work until they dropped dead.
- Q: And those that didn't drop dead, they killed many of them?
- A: Oh yes, they didn't like somebody's looks, they just killed them,-
- Q: Just shoot them?
- A: That's right. Everybody ran scared in the place. I don't think anybody was there for a year.

Q: How long did y'all stay there?

A: We stayed there three days.

Q: Did you find any more of the guards, or the people who were in charge? You found four ...

A: Well, that was all the young kids that were the guards...

These were the officers, they had all young kids.

Q: Did y'all take them in custody? Did you find...
the infantry

A: There wasn't one alive... ~~the infantry~~ killed everyone of them

Q: The infantry had been ahead of you and handled all of those?

A: That's right. When they went into the camp. But we were a medical battalion and we went in right after, but our main objective, as I said, was to hit that train.

Q: Well, you stayed there three days, and you had no preparation. You really didn't know what you were going to find?

A: Not in any way, no sir.

Q: That must have been a shock to you fellows.

A: Yes, very much so. The train was a shock.

Q: To start with?

A: Yes, that's right. And the rest of it was even worse.

Q: Did any of your people get sick? I imagine they did?

A: Not in our medical corps, no. We had been through quite a bit.

Q: But you were prepared for whatever it was...?

A: Well, not for that, but we didn't get.... WE handled a lot of dismembered soldiers during the years and we were a little hardened to that. After all, it was a job.

Q: You stayed there three days, and then what did you move? Did you leave these people?

A: They moved in an evacuation hospital unit to take care of them.

Q: The evacuation unit came behind you?

A: That's right.

Q: And relieved you?

A: Then we went out with the Infantry - as a unit, and it was very surprising

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A: in Munich... When we got into Munich, the people there were just as afraid of Dachau as anybody, the German people, and we got a hero's welcome...

Q: Did they know about it?

A: Oh yes.

Q: They knew about it pretty well beforehand?

A: ^{Oh, yes.} We were treated as liberators in Munich. I believe it was the only German city where we went into where we were.

Q: Where did you go from there?

A: From there we went on into Bad Reichenhall, which is up in Bavaria and up into Zingsheim(?) Austria, into Linz, Austria, and then came back into a town called Zimfein?, which is near Heidelberg, which we went in as occupation troops, and there's another story there.

Q: Was there a prison there?

A: No. We went into a building, a very nice building, modern building, three floors, the upper two floors were individual rooms with beds, wash basins, etc, and the main floor had dining facilities, and in the basement, they also had four big vats. With slings, again.

Q: With what?

A: With slings, and I went and asked the local townspeople, asked the farmer across the street (there was a farmer across the road) and he told me it was an old people's home, and if for example if your parents were too old to work any more, the government told you they would take care of them, and they sent them to this home, but in the basement, they done the same thing as they were doing in Dachau..they were putting them in ice cold water and hot water until they passed away, and then they ^{would send you a notice} that your ^{father or your} mother had a heart attack - very sorry.

Q: And then they burned the bodies?

A: Yes, they cremated them. But this was in another town, and they were getting rid of their old people.

Q: Well, that was the German people...?

A: German people, right.

Q: There were no Jewish people involved there.

A: This was the elderly, the German people, and I substantiated this with several of the women we had working for us in the kitchen. They told us it was an old people's home, and nobody ever went there. They were ridding the country of those who couldn't produce.

Q: Terrible, isn't it?

A: That's right.

Q: You saw it in operation.

A: That's right.

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: I stayed in ^{Zingsheim(?)} Zensyme (?) for about four months, and I went up into Heidelberg in the 7th Army - Headquarters Occupation Troops and stayed there until February of '46, and I then went to M ^{Morbous?}, which is in France ^{at a} ^{and} ^{Relieve Center} where I ran, was in charge of a hotel for married persons/females going on leave to Switzerland, and I stayed there until October of '46 until my tour of duty was ended and came home.

Q: Discharged?

A: December of 1946.

Q: You stayed there until '46 and then you came back to the states?

A: That's right. Chicago, Illinois.

Q: What was your reaction and the fellows that were with you? You moved into this thing and saw this brutality that was beyond your imagination...what was the conversation and what was your thinking?

A: Well, we were more accustomed to, I guess, you might say...

Q: Bodies....

A: Bodies and death and so on, but in the infantry, ... the infantry, uh, it hit everyone of those and they were really boiling over, they went on....

into I think that, from what the tone of it was

- A: anybody that shot at them, they were dead, that was their attitude. Our attitude, we were more on a medical side, and you couldn't hardly believe what you had seen, really, I mean it was there, but you couldn't hardly believe it.
- Q: Beyond imagination.
- A: I mean you just couldn't imagine.... here must have been, what, 100,000 or 200,000 dead people, and all of them were just skin and bones, you know, just nothing. Ribs.... that was the thing that stuck in my mind, they were all skeletons.
- Q: Did it, was your thinking at the time, that the German government was responsible for this, or the German people?
- A: Oh, the government, the government. I have talked to some people and they didn't know basically what was going on, really. And I think they were just as _____ as _____. You know their parents - some of them were gone - and so on, and they had seen what happened to some of their friends, who were Jewish people, etc. Personally, the younger German people were brainwashed thoroughly. They believed in this really. And you say, gee how can that happen? But it was a fine example several weeks ago with this thing in Guyana, where almost a thousand people followed somebody and committed suicide. So, it still goes on today.
- Q: Suicide, though, is one thing, but murder is something else.
- A: Yes, this was murder - plain out - _____ murder, but they had drilled into the _____ younger generation in Germany at that time with propoganda and continuous propoganda that they were the superior race and everything else was inferior and should not _____ be on this earth. Period.
- Q: And they had a responsibility to destroy it?
- A: Right. Especially for the Jews and the Catholics. That was their big thing.
- Q: They were after Catholics just as much as Jews, then?
- A: Yes, he uh... was anti-religious. They did not believe in God.
- Q: He thought he was God, didn't he?
- A: Yes, that's right. He was the God and the _____ fuhrer and something to the extent of Hirohito in Japan....when you die for the fuhrer, you go to heaven, etc.

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- Q: And millions of German people agreed with him and believed that also.
- A: Primarily the younger generation. The older generation that had been through quite a bit were glad it was over and didn't want any part of it that much. But the younger generation, they were thoroughly brainwashed into this.
- Q: After these many years, what is your thinking now? What is your reaction? What caused that? What can be done to keep it from happening again?
- A: I imagine what caused it was greed, primarily. One man 's greed. But, we have had how many wars since then? I don't know.
- Q: What do you think today ought to be done in and around Germany - the people... All those people haven't been brought to justice, many of them, I understand, escaped and some of the minor officials.... what is your thinking? Along that line? Well, what should be done today?
- A: I imagine some of them have been, have escaped; now most of those who have been brought to justice, of course, have been hanged for their war crimes, but I don't think you can blame a whole race of people, because I don't think the entire race of people was at fault.
- Q: They were just following the leader?
- A: Yes, I believe they were.
- Q: Well, Mr. Paul Gump, we thank you very much. We appreciate your giving us this statement. We appreciate the pictures. If we can borrow and make pictures of some of them, we will certainly return all the originals back to you, and again, we thank you very very much.
- A: You are quite welcome, sir.

HJ:rs

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