

**ESTEY, Hayden**  
**June 25, 1992**  
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### **Abstract**

Hayden Estey was born in Billerica, Massachusetts, on August 16, 1913. He graduated from Harvard in 1936 and was a second lieutenant in the ROTC. Before the war, he was a foreign correspondent in France. He was activated in the army and landed in Normandy in December 1944. In May 1945, he was one of the first men to enter Mauthausen, and he describes the horrors that he witnessed.

- :38** Hayden Estey was born on August 16, 1913 in Billerica, Massachusetts.
- :54** For two summers in the early 1930s, he went to a one-month Citizens Military Training Camp.
- 1:58** Hayden graduated from Harvard in 1936. Having gone through ROTC, he also was commissioned a second lieutenant in the army. His serial number was 0338697.
- 2:43** Until the German occupation, Hayden was a correspondent in France for Time Life. When the war broke out, he joined the army and was assigned to the 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, where he was acting operations officer of the artillery division.
- 4:08** Hayden landed in Normandy in December 1944. When the Germans broke through the Ardennes, he was sent to Bastogne as part of the relief force for the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, which was under attack in the Battle of the Bulge.
- 6:10** In May 1945, Hayden was in the Army force that entered Mauthausen Camp. Mauthausen was on the ramparts overlooking the Danube in Linz, Austria. The Russians were attacking from the east on the way to Vienna. Estey and two Soviet officers tried to contact the Russians, but the Russians did not want to respond.
- 7:30** Hayden describes being under small arms fire from the Mauthausen railroad station before the troops reached the camp. No one had any knowledge that Mauthausen was an extermination camp.
- 9:14** He recalls, "The place was a hell. People were running around all over the place. Prisoners were identifying and then killing Gestapo guards who were dressed in civilian clothes."
- 11:20** He describes the barracks.

- 10:32** He recalls, “Men and women were just skin and bones. To kill any prisoner, you just had to hit him or her.”
- 13:05** He describes furnaces with bodies lying in front of them. Everywhere there were stacks of bodies. People were so desperate and so thankful.
- 14:45** Hayden met a Navy lieutenant JG, who was in the OSS and had been imprisoned after parachuting into Austria. The lieutenant escorted Estey through the camp and was very helpful in identifying how and where people were killed and how meticulous and “typically German” records were kept of all the prisoners.
- 16:32** The methods used to kill people were unbelievable. Hayden describes a rock quarry with a springboard. Prisoners were ordered to walk on the board and jump down into the quarry.
- 18:23** Hayden recalls, “The smell of the camp was sickening.” His driver was hospitalized after one day in the camp. His unit was charged with trying to save as many people as possible.
- 18:50** After the war, Estey’s 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Division was inactivated, and he became the public relations officer for the First Infantry. He went home with the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division.
- 21:43** After the war, Hayden brought pictures to Paris for Time Life. His editor said that people did not want to see any more horror photos. “They had had it up to their ears.”
- 23:32** The German people were all in denial about the atrocities. Pictures were put on central bulletin boards in villages. One woman said, “to think that my son died for that.”
- The Germans believed what they were told, including statements that the concentration camps were R&R (rest and relaxation) camps for the soldiers.
- Hayden personally thinks that most of the Germans did not know about the camps. While in Germany, he organized visits of Germans to the camps. “These were very effective, and now people will never forget.”
- 26:59** He felt that Americans were not very interested, and he thought there was not much use in talking about his experiences. He even hid his pictures so that his children would not see them while they were growing up.

- 28:30** He states, “It took me many years before I could talk about what I saw without vibrating all over.”
- 30:33** He talked with a Nazi soldier but not about concentration camps.
- 32:04** Hayden states, “Getting the truth out is the most important thing that we can do. People have to be vigilant, trust basic values, and be sure leaders are doing something about them.”
- 33:26** He describes other nationalities in the camp, including German communists who had violently opposed the Nazis.