

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Richard Seibel
September 14, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Richard Seibel, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on September 14, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

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RICHARD SEIBEL

September 14, 1990

Q: Would you please state your name and your birthplace please?

A: My name is Richard R. Seibel retired Colonel in the United States Army. I was born and raised, and still live, in Defiance, Ohio. I was ordered to active duty from Defiance, Ohio, in 1941. I reported for active duty June the 9th.

Q: Okay. Would you give us little information about your background and your childhood in Defiance?

A: Well, I would say that my background is that of a normal school child, if you will. I played, participated in all sports. I lived with my father and mother. My father was born and raised in Germany, came to this country when he was 13 years old. My mother is a native Ohioan from Defiance, her ancestors were some of the original settlers in Northwest Ohio. I spent my entire life in Defiance. I was the director of purchasing at a factory in Defiance when I was ordered to active duty.

Q: Do you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, I have two brothers, and they are both deceased now. In fact, they both died in the same week. And so I had a funeral for each one of my brothers in the same week. Prior to that I had another brother and sister but they were deceased when they were very young so that I never knew them. They were about 2 years old, I guess, when they died. I spent my entire life...I joined the reserve unit and somebody said, "Why did you ever join the reserve?" And I said, "Well, I felt I owed an obligation to my country and my family and my God and that's the reason I was in there." They said, "Yeah, but if you hadn't been in the reserve, you would have never been in combat and war two." I said, "Well, that's beside the point." I joined the Reserve, no prior military experience and I did it all by correspondence, if you will, and association with the Ohio National Guard. And I received my commission as a Second Lieutenant. And that was in 1934. And then I remained in the Reserve, which was nothing at that time, until I was ordered to active duty on June, the 9th, 1941, 6 months before Pearl Harbor. I was then ordered to Fort Knox, Kentucky, which was quite an experience, I can assure you, because it was the training center for all of the selective service people. We trained all of these people for a period of 13 weeks. Then comes Pearl Harbor, and the roof fell in, if you will. Things changed completely. All the guards that had been on duty in the camp previously had only blank ammunition, and from that time on, they were issued ball ammunition. All civilian clothing was sent home, and the entire training was stepped up and it was changed from 13 weeks to 11 weeks because we were in a hurry, if you will. And that is when the entire military concept of training and combat and everything else changed, from that time on. I was sent on a troop train shortly after Pearl Harbor, probably 2 weeks after that to Fort Ord, California, with, as I recall, about 250 trainees who were being deployed to the Pacific. And the West Coast, they were scared to death. Believe you me, they were. They

felt that the submarines were going to come in, but they never did, of course. And so that was the beginning of extensive training for combat in World War II. Shortly thereafter, I was ordered to Camp Poke, Louisiana, to a new division, the 11th Armored Division. We started training in Camp Poke, Louisiana, with all new troops and from thereon, we went to Louisiana maneuvers and from there we went to the desert for desert training, and from there to Fort Ord...or Camp Cook, California, and then from there overseas to England, and from there to Continental Europe to meet the enemy. That is briefly my background and our training in England was prior to crossing the channel for combat, and we were ordered in the combat...we had crossed the Channel and landed at Cherbourg, and we were supposed to go to Nancy, to come up from the south, and that's when the ball changed. And so we were immediately changed from going to Nancy to go through Paris and up to the Meuse River to prepare the Meuse...all the bridges on the Meuse River for demolition. We were not to contact the Germans. The Combat Command A on our left was supposed to probe, and not to meet them in any fire fight of any kind. So we then crossed, and we went in through Neufchateau, Belgium. And it was shortly thereafter that we hit that Bulge head on and we got hurt. I don't mind telling you. But we had good people in our organization, well trained, and then we caught our breath, if you will, after that first engagement and continued on, and when through Luxemburg and Belgium, France, Germany, into Czechoslovakia, a short distance and back out, and into Austria, and that's when we wound up with Mauthausen.

Q: When did you first arrive in Austria?

A: In Austria? I don't know for sure.

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It probably was the latter part of April of 45 because we were stopped, and it was May the 5th, when the restraining line stopped us which is across the river from...we were across the River from Linz, Austria, in the vicinity of Erfurt, which was Hitler's birthplace.

Q: What did you say...what caused your stop at that point?

A: The international restraining line the agreement was made at Yalta between Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt where they divided Europe which Berlin Wall was a result, plus the occupation of all of Eastern Europe by the Russians. That, in my humble opinion...of course, that's all changed now, was that's the worst thing that even happened in Europe, was that international restraining line.

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Q: How did it come about that you came across the camp?

A: We sent a patrol out in a effort to keep in contact with the enemy or to contact the Russians. And since we couldn't go any further than the restraining line which was approximately a

mile or so on the other side of Mauthausen that's how we found it, because we were probing and that's about the best I can say is that in our attempt to keep contact with the enemy or contact the Russians, here was Mauthausen.

Q: What happened after you came across the camp?

A: We had this patrol and the patrol leader called in by radio and said that we have across something that we are not sure what it is. It's a big prison of some kind, and there are people running all over. I said, "Well, is there any combat or shooting of any kind?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, you return. Bring the patrol and come back." And they reported into the headquarters and told me roughly what it was, and so I reinforced the patrol and I went back to Mauthausen. And that is when I made a complete inspection and came back and reported into General Degar, our division commander and told him what it was, and it was shortly after that report that he said to me on the telephone, "Dick," he said, "You will return to Mauthausen and take command."

Q: What did your patrol tell you they found?

A: Just a lot of people, lot of bodies, lot of people running around. There was no control of any kind. These people were strictly on their own and no one knew what was going on or what the situation was. Really and truly. They were like lost sheep.

Q: So you went back to the camp yourself for the inspection. What did you see and what did you inspect?

A: Well, first of all, all of these dead bodies piled up, like cord wood if you will. Sick people, dying people, starved people. And you take to an American such a sight as that, you can't imagine it. Things like that don't happen, but they did. And so we were actually and truly...the people that were with me, they were all dumbfounded. And when we went back the second time, I went in and went into the headquarters and the Russian major who had been a prisoner in the camp. He was sitting behind the desk and through an interpreter, I asked my interpreter to ask him what he was doing there? And he said well, they were in charge of the camp. They were going to run it, and they had all ready established a tribunal for the death of certain people. I said, "Will you please tell him that this is in the American zone, and that we are here and we are occupying the camp and it's our responsibility and we're going to run it." And he still wouldn't leave. So I (laughing) I pulled my pistol out and I reached across the desk and I pointed it right in his face and through the interpreter I told him to tell that so and so that if he didn't get out of there, I was going to shoot him. And he and his party left immediately. (Chuckle) And so that was our initial on the takeover of Mauthausen. My interpreter who lives in London, England...he's a Czech. His name is Primisol Dovias, and he remembers that to this very, very day

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because he and I correspond rather frequently and he a short time ago was telling one of his Canadian friends about what had happened, and I had letter from this (laughing) Canadian relative to our takeover and Primisol's part of the takeover.

Q: Did you inspect the physical surroundings?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: What were they?

A: Terrible shape. The SS, when they left they disrupted the power plant. We had no lights, no power, no water, no sewage, no sanitation of any kind, and that is exactly what we found and we had to get that cleared up fast because of the health of the prisoners of the camp. Not only that, but my own people.

Q: What did you do to straighten it out?

A: I wouldn't allow any of my people to handle any of these bodies or clean up any of the feces that were around or anything of that nature. I had all the prisoners do it, and I got one person from each nationality. There were 21 nations represented in that camp. I got a representative from each nation to pass on my wishes and desires, if you will, to the people of his own nationality so that they knew what was going on. Now, I think it was the second day. I'm not sure about this, but a fellow came in...one of my people came in and said, "You better come quick. There's trouble out in the main compound." I went out and here's four bodies on the street with their throats cut. There was fighting among people so there was only one thing to do. We got everybody inside the buildings by force with bayonets if you will to clear the streets, to get inside. We started at 8 o'clock in the morning and with a representative of each nationality, we segregated that entire camp by nationality, got them...Germans altogether, the Russians together, the Poles together, the Czechs together, the Spaniards, the Italians, all of the Slavic countries. That stopped the political problems that we were having with the people in the camp because they were fighting among themselves, and so we put a stop to that real quick. We, fortunately or unfortunately, we segregated in internal prisons inside the main compound all the Russians and all the Poles. We would not let them associate with anybody else because they were troublemakers. And so ...there was a Russian General came in into the camp and he asked me why I kept our Red brothers locked up. And I said, "Well, General, ...by an interpreter..., of course, I said, "You tell your people when they learn how to act, then they can get out, but not before." So that's some of the problems that we ran into which we never expected because we thought we were the great white liberators you know, and we're doing a tremendous job for these people, but it took them a long time to realize that we were there to help them, not to hurt them.

Q: How many people did you have to administer in the camp?

A: Eighteen thousand in the camp at that time. We gathered up about 700 bodies, which we had

to bury. We had no identification of any kind, and we buried them in the old Sports Platz, which was the recreational area for the SS, playing soccer and baseball or whatever they played. The bodies, there were no identification on any of these people, and no one could identify any of them because some of them were in terrible condition. So we buried them in a mass grave, about 700. We put a cross up over each grave. Of course, they were buried without benefit of casket or anything because we had to get rid of those bodies. And from that time on, anyone who died in Mauthausen received a cross or a Star of David, with their names on it, and they were thoroughly and totally identified, but prior to that we couldn't do it. I would guess that there was something like 1300 people died while we were there, and they were all identified properly so that all records maintained their nationality and their name.

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Q: Did you bring in medical facilities?

A: We brought in two field hospitals. Huge installations! And anyone who had to be taken care of was assigned to these hospitals. Our medical records show that we had hospitalized, while we were there, about 5,000 people. And as soon as they were able to leave the hospital they left. And that's what we did until until the bulk of the people in the camp had gone home. Now when I left there and my people and I left, there was only about 3,000 or 3,500 people left. And they...the bulk of those people didn't want to go home. And there were quite a number of Jewish people left in the camp that did not wish to return to their homelands. In checking with these people, the older Jew wanted to go to Israel. The younger Jews wanted to go to the United States, to England, or to France. And so those...I don't recall how many there were, but those were the ones that were left and the other people just didn't want to go home. Period!

Q: Were these Jews that didn't want to go home or were these other?

A: Other people that just didn't want to go back to their homelands. A lot of them were afraid to go because of what had just happened and what they had been through. Until it settled down. Now I don't know...I do not know the results of the 3,500 people, but I know that I was told that they had in Paris, I think it was Paris, a displaced camp for Jews, and all the Jews that were left in the camp were all sent to this displaced camp in I believe it was in Paris. At least it was in France.

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Q: Were there any special problems that related to the Jewish inmates particularly?

A: No. I had no problems at all. In fact as I mentioned to you previously I did not recognize a Jew as a Jew. He was a human being just like anybody else and therefore he was treated as such. We did our dead level best for him to forget his past We put all of the Jewish

population in with their own nationality because I didn't feel that they should be segregated like they had been previously and so mistreated, that we put them in with their own people, all the Germans, the Hungarians or whatever they might be, whatever their nationality. They went in, but they didn't go in as Jews.

Q: Did any of the Jewish population have any feeling about that?

A: They did, but then they got over it. I had a lot of pressure put on me from the Zionist organization from Zurich, why did I do that?

Q: And I told them very plainly why I did it. And but they couldn't quite understand that. And I said, "Well, may I say that you people have been persecuted for which I am very, very sorry. But I don't want that to persist in this camp or have any feelings of persecution previously. I want your people to be a part of the rest of the world.

A: You told me a little story about a Hungarian Jew.

Q: Oh ..Yeah. A Hungarian came in. He spoke excellent English and he asked me, he said, "I want to ask you why the Jews are not kept by themselves in this camp." And I told him, I said, "Well you people lived outside the main compound in tents, cold and you were treated very, very poorly." And I said, "I don't want that to happen." I said, "You are human beings just like anyone else," and I said, "What's your nationality?" He said, "I'm a Hungarian." I said, "Therefore, you will be housed with the Hungarians, not with just Jews." Well, it took a little time for him to let that soak in. I told him, I said, "Now, I want you to understand this." I said, "I'm from the United States America." And I said, "If you lived in the United States, you would be an American." In my book, you'd be just an American. You're not a Jew, because this is your religion. Judaism is your religion. If you are in the United States, you'd be an American. Period!" Well, it took him a little while but he finally recognized my feelings and whether I was right or wrong, I stuck with it right down to the very end, and I would not change my position at all. Even though a lot of pressure was put on me.

Q: Were you aware of any dissention among the survivors in the camp within each nationality?

A: Oh, yes. The politics that existed between the different nationalities was unbelievable. I couldn't believe it and the rest of my staff, we couldn't understand why they were so-called fighting among themselves when they'd been under this horrible oppression, and here we thought we were doing them a

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good turn. We were saving them from the horrible atrocities within the camp. And it took us quite awhile to get that over, but finally ...finally they realized that the Americans were there to help them the very best they could possibly could.

Q: You said when you originally went into the camp you did an inspection. Did you find any hospital supplies? What kind of food supplies did you find?

A: Nothing! We didn't find anything. We found no supplies of any kind. No food. Fortunately, they were able to lead us to the potato, or the Kartoffel storage and that's the first food that we had served...was weak potato soup, the same as they've been getting, but we didn't have anything else. No medical supplies. Nothing. No clothing. Not a darn thing. So here we are, combat troops faced with a situation like that and it was very difficult for us I can assure you. In the camp was a very famous Czech surgeon. His name was Dr. Poloho. The Czechs told me that he was one of the most prominent and eminent surgeons in all of Czechoslovakia. A fine gentleman. And they told me a story about Dr. Poloho. He was called into the camp commandant's office. He was working practically as an intern. The commandant of the camp said, "I have a lieutenant who is seriously ill, and I would like to have you operate. And Poloho told him, he said...well, he said, "Gee, I haven't done anything like that in a long time." And he said, "I'd need some time to prepare myself for this operation." This lieutenant had something wrong with his stomach. Zierice who was the commandant of the camp, told him: "Well, you have 15 minutes to prepare yourself." He said, "Now, if this lieutenant lives, I will put you in the base hospital which is strictly for military personnel and you will be in charge of that, but if he dies, so do you." And so Poloho operated and he was successful and the lieutenant lived and Poloho was then transferred to the base hospital which was a permanent building in the main compound. He's a fine gentleman. I remember him well.

Q: Do you remember the conditions of the buildings that were in the camp and approximately how many people were living in them?

A: Well, the main compound....the only brick were permanent buildings were those of the structure for the base personnel or the camp personnel. That's the SS. For their administrative buildings. The crematoria, of course, the gas chamber. Those were all permanent buildings. The rest of the buildings were all wooden and that housed the prisoners of the camp. Down in the...below the main camp was a placed called the Sanitaets Lager. Sanitation, of course. Sanitation camp. And that was terrible, just awful. And so lot of people who had been in there,

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we moved up into the main camp and particularly when the hospital units came in, transferred them out of there. Then we burned the buildings down because they were just ridden with disease and vermin and insects, everything you can imagine, so we burned them down to get rid of it. Because we didn't want to subject our people and the rest of the prisoners in the camp to any unnecessary disease, plus the fact that we brought in, known in military terms as, a delousing unit. Everybody in the camp was deloused. Sprayed with DDT powder to kill any bugs that they might have on them and to prevent any further disease. The diseases were in the camp down below. You can name anything that you want to, and they had it. It was a terrible, terrible situation. The main disease, the main cause of death was typhus. I had no idea that typhus was as deadly as it was in Mauthausen and I know that our

surgeon that went with me....I took...I don't know....4, 5 doctors with me and our chief surgeon, he got ahold of me and he said, "You're going to get a typhus shot." And gee he gave me a shot (laughing) about killed me. But he said, "I don't want you to get sick." So typhus was probably the No. 1 killer of disease in Mauthausen. Of course, there was typhoid and...and everything else you can think of. Tuberculosis. It was terrible.

Q: You mentioned that there was a gas chamber; there was a crematorium, and there was administration buildings. Was there any other buildings?

A: Those were the only permanent buildings. The camp headquarters...I'm trying to recall in my mind now, as you went down the main street on the righthand side, there was a brick building and beneath that brick building was the gas chamber. The crematorium and believe it or not, a refrigerated room, and I said, "What in the world they have a refrigerated room here for?" They said, "Well, they would gas approximately 125 at a time in the shower room, and of course they were all dead in 15 or 20 minutes and they brought them out and the crematorium couldn't handle them that fast. So they had a refrigerated room where they put the bodies so that they wouldn't spoil.

Q: Did you inspect the stone quarry?

A: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed.

Q: And what did you find?

A: Well, the stone quarry was ...they call it a marble pit (chuckle) really. It was a series of steps that led from the main compound down into the quarry where the people would dig rocks and then carry them out. And they put them on their back in what they call a rucksack. It's like the children carry their books in today. They dig these rocks, then they'd take them up the steps. And if they faltered up, going up, they were immediately executed and if not, they were thrown over the edge of the cliff and smashed on the bottom. Now, those steps are called 186 steps of death and all of the people who died on those steps, they said that the steps ran absolutely red with blood. And speaking of the quarry...of course, I must clarify this. The things I'm relating to you I did not see, but this is all official testimony. It's not something that I have imagined or made up in my own mind. At one time there were 3500 Jews transferred from Auschwitz to Mauthausen and when they arrived at Mauthausen, they shoved them all over the edge of the cliff down in the quarry and their bodies were all smashed down in the quarry. Now that is official testimony and it is the record of the United States 3rd Army War Crimes Commission. Any of the scenes that I am relating to you was all given to the 3rd Army Commission who was up there and made a complete inspection of the camp and questioned all of the...not all of them, but a lot of the prisoners. So that is a part of their testimony.

Q: Did you talk to any of these people there who worked in the quarry?

A: Yes. There was ...well, in fact my interpreter Primisol Dobiuss was down in the quarry and one day they came in and some of the SS people came down and said they wanted volunteers...volunteers to go out and work on the hog farm. Anybody who knew anything about hogs, please step forward. Dobiuss. Now this, Dobiuss told me this. He volunteered to go and work on this hog farm. He didn't know a hog from a horse actually. He's a Jeweler. (laughing) He volunteered and they wouldn't take him. In fact, he showed me his leg. He's got a hole in his leg where one of the SS guards kicked him and badly injured his leg. They didn't take him. And he was so disappointed because he thought, "That's a way to get out of here." So they took 10 of them. They left the stone quarry and went toward this farm. And they got outside a distance and the machine guns on the tower opened up and

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killed all 10 of them. He says, "Now, I'm glad I didn't go." But the stone quarry was really a hard labor place. The stones were used in buildings and...and transported out of Mauthausen. Oh, incidently, outside of...between the...the gas chamber and the crematorium was a small room. And that was a special execution chamber for Seereiss(?), the commandant of the camp, and Eichgruber, who is a Gauleiter of upper Austria. When they had somebody that they wanted to hang or kill, they had it in their own private execution room. The guard...the fellow who is a Pole, who ran the refrigerated room as well as putting the bodies in the crematories, gave me a ring. It was an army ring. And he said it was from a lieutenant that had been executed by Seereiss and Eichgruber, and wanted to know if I would accept it and return it to...well, there was no identification, but I did take the ring and I turned it over to proper elements of the 3rd army.

Q: Were you able to tell any difference between how the Jewish population and the non-Jewish population was treated?

A: (Sigh) Prior to our being there, I would say that the Jewish element in the camp, they were brutalized far worse than the rest of the population. That would be my humble opinion.

Q: Did you have any forewarning that you were coming upon the camp at all?

A: None. None at all. We had no idea that there was on there, or what a concentration camp truly what it was.

Q: What reaction did you have to seeing the camp for the first time?

A: Unbelievable. It's hard for me or any of my people who were with me to express how they felt to see man's inhumanity to man if you will. Unbelievable! As I mentioned before, I'd seen dead people, but never anything like that. It's absolutely and totally unbelievable that people could treat people like that. And I guess a lot of it's still going on today. I don't know why or how people can be so brutal. After all, we're all God's children and to treat one another the way they treated people and supposedly 6 million Jews and supposedly another 6

million non-Jews for a total of 12 million. That's a lot of people! That's a lot of people! And they were (sigh) I don't know. That...today I still do not...even after all this length of time...anybody mentions SS to me, I have absolutely no regard, respect or anything for anyone who is an SSer because you didn't have to be an SSer. That's a volunteer outfit. And they...they had strong backs and weak minds in my humble opinion. I have no love...I've been involved in a few things. In fact one time I got a call from the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles wanting to know if I would, by telephone now, agree to speak to reporters from the Sun Times in Chicago. They had called the Simon Wiesenthal Center. They called me. I told them that I would be happy to talk to them, so they called the Sun Times back and then they called me. They had found a person in Chicago who had been a former guard at Mauthausen and they picked my brains, of course, over the telephone, but asked me what my feelings were and, of course, they published in the paper. But I absolutely have no sympathy whatsoever for any SSer. The German Weirmacht altogether different. That's a German GI. He was a soldier doing a job just like any American soldier. Not brutal, like the SS. I probably should mention this that in Mauthausen we needed help and lots of it. So we found out that there was a German POW camp outside of Linz, Austria. So we sent back and asked for specialists. Electricians, plumbers, sanitation people, mechanics and all that sort of thing to send up to help us. We got about 400, brought them up, and we housed them, took care of them; classed them as German prisoners of war. Had a captain. I'll never forget his name. Captain von Brum we started to utilize these people, and the first time that they showed they were attacked by the prisoners and therefore again we had to take some very positive action and explain to these people that they were there to help us to help them. That they didn't know any more about a concentration camp than we did. So that calmed down. But those German Wehrmacht...I told this Captain, I said, "Any of those people who do not behave themselves as soldiers, get rid of them." So he did. And he sent back...I don't know, 50, 60 of them. The rest of them all did a fine job, and they were dumbfounded actually at what they saw in Mauthausen. That was an experience with the German Wehrmacht.

Q: Do you know why the 50 or 60 were sent back? What they had done?

A: They were...I don't know. But they were not up to the Captain's wishes and desires, so he got rid of them, sent them back. What they did I don't know.

Q: Did you talk with the Captain as to what he knew about the camps before?

A: Yeah. They were surprised. And I believe them. They were surprised as we were.

Q: What was there reaction to seeing the camp?

A: Terrible. Same as ours. Now that's a German regular army soldier. And they didn't understand it all why such a thing existed. They'd heard of it. Yes. But not to the extent that they saw it.

Q: Now...

A: Go ahead, Sir.

Q: How long were you at the camp?

A: 35 days. I spent in the camp right there for a solitary 5 days. I was not exactly a prisoner in the camp, but I was there and I knew exactly what was going on. And relative to food, when we started out they have huge steam vats over in this one building, and the soup that they were serving was thin, watered soup. Well, my doctors told me, said, "Now look. These people have been on a severe diet, and you cannot feed them very much to start off with." So, as I mentioned, we found the potato storage, so we started out making very thin potato soup, same as they'd had previously. The most precious item in their diet was bread. You could get your throat cut for a piece of bread so big. They guarded a little bit of bread with their lives. We found an old bakery and we got some prisoners who had been bakers before and (laughing) you won't believe this, but you know all the Hullabaloo these days about oat bread and oats and all that sort of thing. Well, I think we originated that. Because we didn't have any wheat

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and we didn't have yeast. But we started making bread out of oats. And we baked thousands and thousands of loaves, but, of course, when it first came out of the bakery or off and out of the ovens, was just a mass of dough, not having any yeast or any curing agents of any kind. So we put it in a big warehouse and let it age until it dried out. As soon as that happened we started giving each prisoner a slice of bread. Oh, my. The most precious thing they could have had. Well, we kept building up our bread supply, so finally we got to the point where we gave them two slices. And then a quarter of a loaf of bread. And then a half a loaf of bread. And (laughing) they...they came in and said, "We don't want any more bread. We got enough." (laughing) We got a tremendous charge out of that, but then we found in Linz, Austria a warehouse of dehydrated vegetables which we started adding to the potato soup which enhanced it a great deal. Then the doctor said, "Well, they're coming along pretty good." So we started butchering horses, and we feed them horse meat, bread, dehydrated vegetables. Not soup, but dehydrated vegetables, and potatoes. And my oh my, what a change in their diets. And fortunately, none of them got sick, but yours truly, I sampled every meal of food that was served in that camp to make sure that what they were getting was good because I had supervisors in the kitchen, but the prisoners in the camp were doing the cooking. But my mess people, they were supervising so I wanted to make sure that what they were getting was good so I had a sample of every bit of food that was served in that camp.

Q: Where did the horses come from?

A: The countryside where...in fact, there were a lot of German army horses that had been driven ahead of the combat. And I was surprised to learn that the Germans used hundreds or thousands of horses in their units for transportation. The first time that we found that out was

when we were going toward the Rhine River and all of these horses, just hundreds and hundreds of them had come up to the river and, of course, the Germans took off and went across the river and here's all these horses. That was long before we got to Mauthausen, but that's where a lot of the horses came from, and plus any that we decided that we needed to take care of our people.

Q: Did any of the surrounding civilian population help?

A: They didn't help a nickel's worth except when we started burying all the bodies that we found, we went to the people in town and around and got their services to handle these bodies and bury them. And oh my or my, did that create

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a terrible outcry among the people and I know there was a dentist. One of them was a dentist. And my chaplain was my chief burial officer, and this dentist was giving him a bad time. He said he wasn't going to do anything like that. Now, Dave Kinsler was the Chaplain (Laughing). He hauled off and hit him. (Laughing) When Dave told me about, I said, "That's all right." But some of the people objected because it was a lousy job. Really and truly.

Q: You said you were there for 35 days. What caused you to move on?

A: We were transferred out from that particular part and I can't think of the name of the infantry division that came in and took over after we left, but we were moved down into the Austrian Alps to be on so-called combat occupation because the Werewolves were supposed to be starting up again down in the valley where we were going and we were to combat them if necessary, but it never happened.

Q: The new unit that came in, did they administer the camp as well?

A: I don't know. I lost all contact with it after...after we left I knew nothing of what went on.

Q: Any final comment you'd like to make?

A: No, except that I'm terribly sorry that it happened and I don't know how you can stop it really and truly. They're having miserable problems in the Middle East now and I'm a little worried as to what might happen there. The treatment of the Jew, I don't understand it to this day. Why? Just because a person was a Jew, why they were segregated. While we were there, there was a special ambassador by the name of Edward Pauling who was sent by President not Roosevelt, Truman to contact and make a survey, if you will, of the Jewish population and the elements around, and it was in Germany in particular. I have a letter from him at home thanking me for what...all the information and everything that went on while he was there. He spent a whole day interviewing the Jews in the camp. And he told me that in all of Germany, the best they could estimate, there were only 25,000 Jews left in the whole

country. That's that's extermination wholesale really. To this day, there are a lot of people that do not understand what the Holocaust was. A lot of them don't want to know. It's not very pleasant history. School children. My goodness gracious, I have spoken to hundreds and hundreds of school children about the Holocaust. Showed them pictures and everything else, and it's kind of hard for those children to believe that actually and truly happened. But somehow or other, the children of this world and the young people of this world have to be apprised of what happened so that it never happens again. It can't happen again because

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it...it more like...I just can't describe it. I...I truly can't because until you have been involved with a thing like the Holocaust it's very difficult to explain it to people and have them understand. Another thing that happened at Mauthausen with the Jews. They brought about 700 of them in and said that they were all dirty and they needed a shower. So they took them in a big shower room and they all had nice, warm showers and they brought them all out into the compound, the main compound. Nude and squirted them with a fire hose in very, very cold weather until they all died. And if they didn't die from exposure and shock the first time, they took them back in and give them more showers and brought them back out until they were all dead. Now, again, I didn't see that, but that is official testimony and I'm sure that if you're to check with any former prisoner of Mauthausen they could verify what I have said. A gentleman from New York...he is a Czech by the name of Boshak, who is a prisoner in the camp, a Czech, a very intelligent man, came to Defiance to see me. He'd been a prisoner there. He was a Czech and I think he was an attorney and he had married a lady and they lived in New York. But I had an interview with President Benes of Czechoslovakia, a wonderful discussion with him. And he was talking about Hitler and all the rest of the things and they used Mauthausen...they had sent a lot of radio and press people, magazine people to Mauthausen to write about it and question everybody and they used Mauthausen as a horrible example of Nazi atrocities. He was rather flowing and enjoying in his admiration for the American people. And this I gotta say. Do you know that there wasn't one solitary person, except two French nurses, that came into the camp that ever lent a hand. Not one other country in this world never helped at all in Mauthausen with any assistance of any kind. That's kind of hard to believe. (laughing) These two French nurses came in one night about 2 O'clock. (Laughing) I couldn't speak French and I had a heck of a time. Finally, some...found somebody that could interpret, and they were there to help with the hospital and the sick people.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't have anything else. I trust I haven't bored anybody with what I'm speaking of, but it's a long time ago and people have asked me, "How can you remember all of these things so vividly?" I said, "Well, it only happens to you once in your life time, and you can't forget a thing like that." People said has it affected you mentally or otherwise. I said, "No, I just...just one of those memories that you let go by."

Q: Appreciate the interview. You did not bore anyone.

A: Well, it's my pleasure to be here and anything that I can do to further the movement of the teaching of the Holocaust, I'm happy to do. I didn't mention this previously, but I was on the State of Ohio Holocaust Commission where we met once a month. I was there but it was primarily, I think, for educators, because they were working up a curriculum for the schools in the State of Ohio, and it was adopted and we all put a hand to it. It will now become a part of the educational system in the State of Ohio, the Holocaust. Which is good.

Q: Thank you again.

A: You're most welcome. My pleasure to be here.