

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Thomas L. Ward**  
**November 16, 1989**  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Thoas L. Ward, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on November 16, 1989 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 reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

## **THOMAS L. WARD**

### **November 16, 1989**

Q: Would you please like to give us your name, age, and where you are from please?

A: Yes Sir. My name is Thomas L. Ward. I am originally from St. Louis, Missouri. I was born in St. Louis, August 10, 1921. I was reared in St. Louis up until the time that I went into Service.

Q: What type of a family life did you have? What type of family? Large family?

A: I had...we had a large family. All my family were plumbers. They were in the plumbing business and we lived in the...at that time, we lived in Northwest St. Louis. My father had a shop in the basement. Years ago, all plumbers had their own shop in the basement, and I was cutting pipe, which they don't do today, when I was 9 years old, learn how to cut pipe. And I worked at the plumbing shop every Saturday with my father and my brothers did too. And we were raised in a Catholic Parish in St. Louis called Corpus Christie which is in Jennings, Missouri. I went to school there. I went to grade school there. I proceeded from that school, and then I went to Bomount High School in St. Louis, which is on Natural Bridge Avenue and after that, I...uh...I worked at a place called Famous and Byer, which is a department store downtown and which is still there, and I worked there until ,uh, well for a couple of years, and then I was...I went into the Army when I was quite young.

Q: How old were you at the time?

A: I was 21.

Q: 21. In what year was that?

A: That was...20...that was in 1941.

Q: 1941. Maybe, you could tell us a little bit about it.

A: No. I want to cut that. No. I was 20...20 years old, because I went to Fort Ralley, Kansas, the Second Calvary, which was a horse drawn outfit at that time, and we stayed there until, uh, uh, they broke the horses up and they made it all mechanized. And when I say mechanized, everybody went in different directions. And, uh, then I wound up on the West Coast...uh, with the 107th Calvary, and they eventually broke that up and moved us to Camp Hood. It's Port Hood now. The mechanized outfit. And from there, why, we became replacements. I hope I am not getting too fast. We became replacements while the war was on. This was after D-Day. I should summarize this a little bit. For the 3rd Calvary, which we...uh...we were replacements for the 3rd Calvary for the line duty men we called it see, when the boys passed and got hurt and killed, why we replaced that. And I...if I am going too fast or...

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Q: No, that's fine.

A: And then I would...we went to...uh...I hope I haven't left anything out.

Q: No. That's fine.

A: Then we went...and I was assigned to Troop F, which is the only...the rest of the squadron was accompanied, but this troop was Troop F. They called it Troop F in the cavalry. I'd like to emphasize the 3rd Cavalry was Patton's old 3rd Cavalry...a harsh Navy exec officer, General Patton, and he was quite...he was quite...he was quite interested in us at all times because this is his old outfit. We reconned for the 4th and 6th Army Divisions. We went through the southern route of Germany.

Q: What do you mean by the Recon Group.

A: Reconnaissance squadrons are squadrons that would go and find the enemy. Like the Panzer Division of some sort....an illustration of the Panzer. We could not fight it because we were light tanks and we would have to back off and back away and let the 4th and the heavy tanks at the port in the 6th Harbor come in and fight for us see. And we would...Reconnaissance Squadrons...that's what they called us....a reconnaissance squadron to find out where everybody was and how we would fight them, and then the Colonel...we were attached to the 20th Corps...uh...I wanted to get that in. And...uh...which we fought all the way in the south, fighting...fought our way through the south, literally fought our way through the south at all times, all day...many battles I was in. I mean, not only me, but the, this troop.

Q: I might ask what was the year that you went over to Europe?

A: Uh...Europe was '43.

Q: 1943?

A: Yal. March. Yal. or February. We were a replacement, if you know what I mean.

Q: What part of Europe did you go to?

A: Oh, we went by France, Germany, all the southern Germany, Cassell Uh, we just went all out. Well, once you...once you became a replacement, you went to replacement pool. And once you became a replacement, you were forwarded to that...to that outfit, and you were another man. You would take his place as a replacement in the troop. And we fought all through southern Germany.

Q: Who was your officer in charge?

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A: Captain Brennan.

Q: And how many men consisted of your little reconnaissance group?

A: Oh, there was...was quite a...quite a...it wasn't a small one. You mean of this one company? 250 people. That's only one.... Now a reconnaissance squadron is a group of companies, but our troop was one troop. We were the tank troop. They had armored cars, armored vehicles. They had half tracks, uh, light tanks, and we were the light tank for this here one...this here one group. We were only tank in this here one squadron, in 3rd Cavalry reconnaissance squadron. We were the only tanks, but we had...there were two or three other squadrons attached to 20th Corps that went a different route. We had this here...we wound up in Austria, and our commanding officer was Colonel Walleck.

Q: So the Germans were beginning to be pushed back?

A: Yes. They were fading back, and they...we had...we knew how to fight the Panzer see. Eventually you could not fight a Panzer tank because the bullets, shells and everything would hit the front. Uh...you...you...the just...you know, they would glance off, but then they would put concrete in front of the tanks so we would have to hit them on the side to knock them out. You would have to go around to the side and shoot them and knock the tracks, the half tracks off of them, and that's how you destroyed them, and then they started fading, and people started...the Vermax started to give up...you know what I mean...and everybody...the horse drawn, there was a lot of horses, and they were...dead people...I hate to get into this...were all over the place. I mean, you know, soldiers, horses and dead horses and just everything until... And we knew that we were...we knew that we were forwarding...we knew we had a hope then you know what I mean...and we could fight and fight much better and we didn't...we didn't come to that much resistance like we had for awhile there. We had an awful lot of resistance. And a German was a very good fighter. And the Panzer Division is an excellent fighter. You had to know what you were doing, because he could maneuver the tank, and there is an art of maneuvering tank. And anyhow we went in, and we passed, and we went through Austria, and we went into the...I hope I am not getting too fast.

Q: No. This is fine. What part of Austria did you enter?

A: Southern end. And...uh, this is where Ebensee and uh...Kamer...and we did not get to Wien...Vienna...they call it Wien in Austria. We did not get there. We stopped there at the concentration camp. Matter of fact, we were supposed to get a relief for awhile off the line, and that was the time that we did get our relief and, uh, when we ran into this forest... It was late at night, about 2:00 in the morning. We were driving. We never, generally never drove at night, and I never seen a battle at night. I never seen a battle at night.

Q: Is that right?

A: I never seen a battle at night and I better explain that why. Because to drive the tank you got to have some kind of uh, some light or something...I mean you can't just go down without something on and if you showed...there's a little strips of light, and if you would show a strip of light, you would be shot at. So that always bewildered me about people said they fought. Now I was out on patrol at night. I stayed out. And we stayed in farmhouses and everything else.

Q: By the way, talking about the farmhouses and the little towns that you came to, what was the reaction of the people?

A: They were...the farm houses over there...it was...some of the tanks...there was 2 or 3 times that our tank that we had we'd be going down the hill and we make a turn, and we slide into the farm house, and just knock a hole. You see the farm house...the people lived on top of the farmhouse, and the, uh, uh, cows and everything was in the bottom of the farm house. And they were good people there. They were good people and they...the Vermark, I don't believe wanted war. I don't believe they wanted war. I mean 2 or 3 of them surrendered to me, just walked up and surrendered to me. And, uh, uh, I don't believe...now of course the SS they were very staunch and they wanted to do everything what they wanted to do, and they are very cold hearted people I guess you might put it in that they cared about nothing, but only the father land and they believed that that...uh...we would have our hardest battles with the Panzer Division which was right close to the SS and uh, uh, they were hard. They were good fighters. I mean they are not...you could never take that away from them, they were very good fighters, and they fight to the bitter end, 'til they died, you see. And, uh, I lost a lot of friends in battle. I seen battle. I was in battle, and one of my dear friends who was one...was a tank driver...his name was Buckles...Captain Brennan told him a thousand times that when you go into battle, you buckle up. Down with the Buckles couldn't do that. He had to have his head up, and they blew his head off. And I have had a lot of friends of mine that died in... We would stay...I hope this gets to some of the old timers. If we would get into a farm house and it was vacant, and we got to sleep at night we would try to get in where...close up to where they shoot...if they were going to shoot that morning, they would shoot through the windows, and we would be under there avoiding them, you see. Avoiding the bullets, avoiding the bullets because they would shoot in, and they would go to the door on the other end, but we were close over by the war. Let me specify that. And it's a great feeling to get up in the morning, and you don't know if you are going to die or not, that you lived and that you...that you...it's just a great feeling when it was all over with that you can say you lived and we moved out many times early morning to go fight, but not fight at night. Not until that daybreak because you had to see what's going on, and you would...you could...uh...the...we would fight and then if it's too heavy, the big tanks would come in and they would make a diamond. And I seen a lot of American boys...I knew I was in that tank...and I knew there were American infantry men all around me, and they were...the only protection they had was that tank or a tank, and they were outside and I was in. However, if the tank was hit, one of our Lieutenants, Lieutenant Benslak, his tank was hit. He burned up in it. Everybody burns if it is hit properly enough. And see, these memories I have for 40 years. (sobbing)

- Q: No problem. There's some Kleenex. You are bringing back some memories and we understand that. As time went on, as you are getting closer and closer to the Heartland so to speak, did you begin to hear some of the stories about the camps?
- A: Yes, we did. But we didn't...we didn't...we knew there were...we were starting to get the stories from other people, but we never witnessed this until we got into this camp itself and...
- Q: What were some of the stories?
- A: Well, we sort of figured that the Jews were kept in concentration camp, you know, like Dachau, uh, uh, Auschwitz, and, uh, but these were all hearsay third party, fourth party things, and, uh, uh, we would hear that just like if our...our...uh...when we get mail, and they would. We would get...our mail would come up to us, you know what I mean, and "Did you hear about this? You know there's a concentration camp, you know, maybe up this way or 200 miles or 500 miles or something like that see." But it never phased me. I never...I never bothered about it. I never...I didn't...I was too concerned looking out for my own life, and everybody else was. When you are in war, you don't have to tell a man to clean his gun. He will take care of that. He don't want to be killed. And these are the things of life. And so but anyhow, we.. getting back to my story, we proceeded into Austria in the lower end where all the lakes were and the forests were and we were mostly on a...we were sort of like on a patrol unit, you know what I mean. Cause you can't fight too well in the forests, in the woods and everything. It's hard to go by, and these are facts. I know. I don't know what any other body said, but I know. So we went into this area, and we got there about 2 o'clock in the morning, and we started hearing moans, but the tanks always moved. You know what I mean, a little bit every bit, but we got into this area about 2 o'clock.
- Q: What is the area you are speaking of?
- A: Near the concentration camp I am speaking of. Am I too fast?
- Q: Ebensee?
- A: Ebensee. Yal. Ebensee, Austria. We were near there. We were on the outskirts of it. We didn't know it was Ebensee. I didn't know it at the time. So, uh, there were 3 of us, and the...and we started hearing these moans, and I said, "What is the world is that?" You know what I mean, and we heard human smells of like dead bodies. It's an odor that you won't forget. I don't care...there is no way that you will forget it. And I asked the one fellow, a Polish boy, I said, "Benny, what do you think we ought to do?" He said, "We can't see a thing. It's black out there." You know, the forests...you know, no lights or nothing. We'll just have to wait til sun-up to see what's going on out there. And I talked to another man, Ed Maser. I don't know where Ed is today. Uh...We did talk about it in Chicago in the in the 50s the last time I seen him. He was in Chicago. He was a New York man. I don't know

where he is today. I hope he is still living. Anyhow we went to...when sunup, we went and we seen this huge, huge...it looked like a fort...like the old time forts with all the logs up on them...they looked like telephone poles, that's how big they were now. I am not exaggerating that. But they were just lumber. I mean, they were just a tree cut down and put there. And I seen all of these...all of these watch towers...these towers around see...and I thought it was a prison at first. I would assume it was a prison, which it was, but not the one I thought. Then I told him...I says...I told Benny, I said, "There's no guards that are up in these towers," and that would be unusual. Everything looked like it was just...everybody skiddadled and ran or somewhere. So I said, "Let's take the tank." and we both decided we would take the tank and hit the gates. And the gates were loose, you know. They were really unlocked. These people were so out of it, you know, they didn't...they just didn't...they just didn't...I am talking about the inmates...they were just terrible. Well, when we opened it up, then we seen all of these people there, and they said and they would tell that they were happy to see us and everything and that, uh, we...it was hard. They asked for cigarettes. You don't...I can't...you can't visualize...you can't understand what these people went through.

Q: What did they look like?

A: Human...Let me see. I wanted to explain that. I am glad you asked that question. Their eyes were sunk in. Did you ever seen anybody with a cancer that was wasted to nothing? They were wasted to nothing. Absolutely nothing! They would bring these men into these salt mines. This was a salt mine. And they were...I would assume they were big men, and they would whittle them down to nothing, and they're.. They would not feed them. They would give them potato peelings, and, uh, that's what the inmates told us, and that, uh, they would have so much cubic, piece of bread, and the guards, who were ex-convicts of German...they were German ex-convicts ran these camps...I mean would...ran the barracks. They would come and ask how many people was there that the inmates would tell it, and we want half of that in the morning when roll call would come. And they...I went and I seen...from there, we proceeded...we tried to feed them, and we had to feed them under a guard, under an armed guard, a soup line, so they wouldn't get out and they wouldn't feed up their stomach. They didn't have...they were just bones. There was nothing to these people. It was terrible. And their stomach...they could only digest the soup. They couldn't...they didn't have nothing to digest. They didn't have no body, really. Anyhow, we got that...and if you would throw a cigarette down, 4 or 5 inmates would jump on that cigarette, a butt of a cigarette, to smoke that cigarette, see. And then we went into the barracks, and they were high and there were 2 men to each bunk. And then we proceeded and then they told us to go to the crematorium. 4 high and 2 to each bunk. The inmates asked us to come to the crematorium. We didn't know what we were going into. We were...they asked us, "Please come." I remember going into there...going to there, and then I seen one room. I would say there was 500 bodies stacked there. At least 500. I am not exaggerating. I took pictures of them in my album and if anybody sees this in St. Louis, I would like to refer to my album that I gave to the St. Louis Jewish Council on Ala Street in 1946 of January, when I was discharged out of the Army. But getting back to that, their tattoos was not on their arm. There were some on their arm. Displaced person! But these people in this...in this room...these bodies, I



should say, the tattoos were on their chest. And then we proceeded from that room to go to the crematorium, and they would put 2 people on a slab in this crematorium. They would have...they had operating tables there. They would take the gold out of their teeth...gold out of their teeth, and make rings out of them. And on the sign of the crematorium, it says, "My body would rather be burned than go into the ground, and they would push them into the crematorium to burn them, which they would be gone in 15 minutes or whatever it took them. Very quick! But on this thing, I know, I was trying to find a word for it last night and I found this word. Hitler wanted to exterminate the Jews and this is terrible, and God would not let that happen. I heard other stories. Not in this particular camp, in other camps down the years, that they would have the Jewish people go into a room and tell them that they were taking a shower...you probably heard this story...where they would gas them. And that's the God's honest truth. I know they did that.

Q: How long were you in Ebensee?

A: A month.

Q: A whole month?

A: Almost a month. A little less. In other words, I was attached to Major Kone, who was Judge Advocate Department when he came in for the pictures and everything and I was attached to his...I was relieved....I was taking pictures...which my pictures went to the Allied Supreme Headquarters, and went to the Nuremberg trial over that, and, uh, what I wanted to do...I wanted to leave a little legacy of this to remind the youngest Jewish children that it did happen because I witnessed it, and I was there. And their heritage is at stake and they should never forget, never forget, because 44 years ago as of this day I can look at it vividly that those persons...dead persons in that room...stacked... You don't forget those things. You cannot.

Q: Tell me, did the people...did you see the mass graves?

A: Oh, yes. We dug them. We didn't dig them. The...the, uh, people in Ebensee dug the graves, but I had...we got some...they had horse drawn carts open...wagons... There were no sides to it, and they put a lot of the buried bodies...put them on there to take them to there. And there was a hospital in Ebensee that came... However, they knew that there was a concentration camp there. They knew there was some kind of an inmate camp there because they knew it. They couldn't avoid it. You know what I mean. And however, they did come down to help. And there was a nun there that came to help and that period everything kind of got moved around a little bit there. You know what I mean.

Q: Did they volunteer to come in or did the commander?

A: We went to the hospital. And of course, they volunteered. That was technical...I am glad you asked that question. But we told them to come. We went to the hospital and told them

to come down there. But they came. They didn't object to it. It was sort of a volunteer I guess you would say, but at our request. And then the, the inmates caught one of the officers who was at that camp about a week later I guess, and they turned him over to the military authority and one guard they caught and they spread eagled him and stoned him to death, on the ground, so he must have been a...must have been a very bad man of some sort. And the nuns came there. Then they told us that there was another camp. Am I getting to far?

Q: No. Maybe before we get to the other camp... The towns people...did they deny what was going on there? Although they knew it was a camp.

A: That was a good question. I am glad you asked that. They knew it was camp. They did...let's put it they didn't want to be bothered. uh, They knew that that was a concentration...they knew that the Jews were in that camp. You couldn't help from knowing it. You take a place that large and working in the salt mines and seeing some of them people, they would have to go out. They would have to go to them salt mines under guard or something. You couldn't help from knowing it. But it seems they just didn't...they took it for granted that that was it. And I tell you another little thing that I would as of this day, I...I don't know for sure...I honestly can't say this for sure, but I could have sworn to this day that I seen one of the biggest officials near that camp. He was a young officer. And I don't want to get into that, because I don't know for sure. But faces don't change. You might get old, but faces don't change in years, and they...they said he knew a lot of things were going on in Austria, and to this day, I believe he did know it because I am sure he was...he was it was just there. I just know it, but I don't want to get into...towns brought into see the burial?

A: The towns people were brought in to made help bury the people, to dig, help dig the graves, uh, and bury them where they're were mass, which they did. But the most important thing, that hospital was a very. It's very grateful that that hospital was there, because they could help do the things that were supposed to be done.

Q: What was the reaction of the towns-people when they saw upfront the people?

A: Amazed. And...uh... They knew the camp was there. I don't know if they knew the crematoriums were there. I don't know. I would doubt that because that was in a secluded...this was a big camp. This was not a small camp. And...but some people would have to know. Some people worked there...in the town...you know what I mean. They would have to know. You can't get away from reality. There's no way in the world you can get away from reality. And whatever it is, they knew there were Jews in the camp. They knew that they were Jews because of the uniforms...of the costumes they had, and they had no use for a Jew. I don't...Hitler never had no use for a Jew. I don't...I hate to say it that way, but he wanted them...as I got back to the one word, he wanted to exterminate them all, and God won't let him do that.

Q: Were there other people there?

A: Yes, there were. Gypsies. Inmates of the camp. Uh,

Q: Maybe you can tell us a little bit about the Gypsies?

A: Well, they were kind of...there were...there were some there, uh, uh, and they worked and they were treated just like the Jews. I mean the same things, uh... I never got acquainted with them. Uh, I have one man...his name...I would like to put...inject this into this conversation. He was one of the finest photographers that I have ever seen, and he did that in real life over there. He helped me process some of the negatives and that, and his name was William Greenberg, and he spoke English fluently, but he was at the camp, and he said that he had relatives in Cleveland. I never found out if he ever reached his relatives. I don't know.

A: So he was an actual inmate.

Q: Yes, he was an inmate in there. I got him some clothes. (laugh) Took them clothes off of him (laugh) and got some clothes and let him look like a man again. And, but I wonder of these many years, many times, his face and his name crossed my mind.

Q: Where was he from before he was put in the concentration camp? His home town?

A: He was from Austria. He was from... Where was he from? I think it was Cassell. I am sorry. I missed that. But he was sent to Austria. So if he ever witness...if anybody wants to talk about Ebensee, maybe somebody will know that man somewhere along the...I hope he made it to the United States. He would be much older than I. I would assume he was maybe 30 years old at that time or maybe a shade over, and he made, uh, he made me...he helped me with this photography. And he spoke very good English, and that was a hundred plus there, you know what I mean.

Q: Tell me, did the Army begin to give them new clothing to wear aside from the uniforms they had on?

A: Not at...We...they were getting clothes, but not...not for a long time. I didn't see any with too much clothing. I got Bill clothing cause I just went out and got it (laughter) and got him some clothes and got him a bath and got, I hate to say it, deloused him. You know, they all had to be deloused and everything. But I did that for him. He was a nice gentleman and he was kind of close to me you know what I mean. Basically, he helped me all the time.

Q: So you were how long in...?

A: About a month. A little less than a month. Then we were pulled back and they pulled the whole outfit back, the 20th Corps. Well, before that I want to get into this other little camp down the road. Uh, we stayed there about a month I guess, a little less than a month. Cause

you have to remember one thing, we were a fighting unit. And there...then they brought a hospital unit in. This is interesting. Uh, one of the surgeons...uh...it was similar...a hospital unit...a field hospital, and this one surgeon was Major Douglas Stone, and he was a very good surgeon and I don't know if he is living today or not, but his father was a very good surgeon and I seen him in the 50s. I went to his...to see him in the 50s and we went out. He took me to lunch, and I never seen him since. And I want to look him up and see if he is still living. He would be...as I say, he had to be in the 70s today, but he had a practice. I went to his practice.

Q: So this unit came in to start taking care of the inmates.

A: That's right. He was the...he was a Major. And he was a very good surgeon. They took care of the...started taking what they had to do.

Q: So then you pulled out of there and went down the road?

A: We were told...No...it was not that far down the road, but we were told there was a woman's camp down there and we went down there and looked at it. But they weren't...they weren't as bad as this Ebensee. It was a little more humane in that camp. I mean, the women were a little more humane. You know what I mean it wasn't as bad. Now it was bad. Don't misunderstand me. But, uh, it seemed to me if I recall, they did eat a little better than that in this here women's camp and, uh, but there was quite a few people, women, in that camp. And I don't... Go ahead.

Q: What was the camp like? Was it surrounded by a wall, barbed wire?

A: This Ebensee as I was referring to again... did you ever see when you cut timber on a great big, when a man cut a big tree down, maybe 2 stories high (I have to put it that way. I can't say by the feet) I say 2 stories and there are timber like that in these areas. Well, that's how this here camp was. It was all wood. It was all these logs, made up all the way around this camp. It was just one tree after another put together.

Q: But that was in Ebensee?

A: That was in Ebensee.

Q: What about the other?

A: No. The other...the ladies was not like that. It was more openly, you know what I mean. There was a barbed wire around that little situation, that...

Q: What type of housing did they have?

A: They had barracks. They all had barracks. Oh, I say barracks. Yes, that was barracks. Yes, that's it. But not as bad as the one in Ebensee. You see, these barracks were 4 high, 2 men into the bunks, I would say, 4 high.

Q: Did you go inside the barracks for the women?

A: Oh, Yal. Yal.

Q: And what were the conditions there?

A: Well, now I...now I can say this. In the women's I never had too much association with that, only going down there twice and to see the... It wasn't as bad as the one in Ebensee and then I was pulled out to take the pictures and that was the last time... I was only there twice in camera.

Q: Were there bodies as thin as?

A: Yes, their bodies were thin, but some of them were... They ate a little better. Let's put it that way. They weren't as thin... These people in Ebensee, they were walking skeletons. That's all they were. They were just...it was terrible. I mean the men, you know what I mean. They would work them half to death. I mean, and then when this one person got out, then they would put another guy in there, strong, work in the mines and everything and just let him die and then they take him over to the... Some of these people that went to the crematorium, I heard that were still alive. I mean they were just unconscious, but you know, they were still living, you know what I mean, they didn't care. These people didn't care at all. You see these are the people that lived in Ebensee. They would had to know who could do these such horrible things to people, yet live in Ebensee you know. And the hospital would. Yal, I am sure the hospital would. They were experimental in a lot of things. So Ebensee was well assured that that camp was there, and what they were really doing.

Q: Did you find out what the purpose was of that camp for the women? Being so close?

A: I really didn't get in to much of the women camp. All we did, we took it and that was it. We just took it and we just backed off. Because we had Ebensee already, you know. We had that and there was nobody was going to object to taking the women camp now that the Americans were all there. They were...they were too dumfounded because they knew we would...we just took the camp. We just took it over you see. Just walked into the man, the Director of the Salt Mines, and arrested him, and told immediately he said...I'm a...I remember, you know, we don't care who you are. You are going to jail. Now you're going to be arrested and then they took the Director of that salt mine and they sent him...Major Cone did. They just took him and locked him...sent him back to the line...back to the...they were the MPs and that's all they did. And that was it. And they knew we meant business. And we went up to the hospital, and the nurses and everybody else came down. They were told...we told them to come. But, however, I know they know knew it. They had to know.

Q: What was the month and the year now when you went to Ebensee?

A: May.

Q: May?

A: Yal.

Q: Of 19?

A: 44? And I got out in 45. I got out 2 days before December 1945 and the war was winding down. But our outfit was scheduled to go to Japan. I mean over there. It's before the bomb that the President... But it was just...it was...right after that, Germany fell. Basically Germany fell, and it was all over with, the whole thing basically was.

Q: What was the reaction of the other men that you were with when they saw the same sights that you saw?

A: Same as...Same as I. It's horrible. And especially if you were Jewish in the American Army, like Ed Maser. He was no man to fool with you know what I mean, but he still kept his control and everybody else did. There was a lot of Jewish...there was a lot of Jewish fellows. A couple of Jewish officers from Detroit, but everybody kept their composure and even though they were Jewish religion.

Q: So then from there, what did your outfit do?

A: We were pulled back, and, uh, we had...we deserved to be pulled back to recoup and then all of a sudden they pulled all the way back to Lahare, which were the camp's Lucky Strike, or old gold they made these camps at, where they bring us back to the States and we wound back up to the States to..in..in Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

Q: Now the pictures that you took. You mentioned that they were sent someplace?

A: The pictures that I were sent to the Supreme Allied Command. That is where Major Cone, and then went to the Nuremberg Trial for prosecution and lock him up.

Q: Did you receive those pictures afterwards?

A: I had the album. I had the album. I made myself an album, and I gave that album to the St. Louis Jewish Council. That is the album that was in and...and..I think there is...I believe Captain Brennan had an album. We had them...I made it...a group...for the album. I made this one album especially for myself. But as a youngster, I thought I was doing a good turn giving it to where it should be going to...to the Jewish Council. That's what they call it...St.

Louis Jewish Council at that time. Now I don't think they call that anymore the St. Louis Jewish Council. It might be called...I don't know if that would have been... I didn't know too much about it at that time. But I do know that the St. Louis Jewish Council was in St. Louis on 8th and L on the 2nd floor, and I took those albums and I have never seen them since. And I really didn't...really didn't pursue it. Let's put it that way. I just...then I start raising a family and...and...you know, working as a salesman and everything went by the wayside. But I am pursuing it vigorously now, and I will go back to St. Louis again. I went twice, and I will go again. I believe though that album is there. Somebody has it that don't mean to have it. I don't mean...It might be just stacked away someplace. Some of the old timers, you know, might have who was on that Committee, but I feel that I will find it. And I want to donate it. If I find it, I want...I want it in the Holocaust.

Q: Just briefly again to go back to Ebensee, were any of the guards there at all when you?

A: Two.

Q: Two were there?

A: Two were there. The rest of them ran off. Everything ran...Everybody ran. The doctors and every. It was sort of an experimental thing in this here...this laboratory, you might call or whatever. You know, cause they had these...these, uh, uh, uh....they were concrete like slabs where they put the bodies on it and everything where they take their teeth...they take the gold out of their teeth and everything right near the crematorium and visually I am trying to put that in my mind again how that was. But the two were caught. The two were caught! The one was sent back by the MPs. The other one was killed on the ground by spreading them. The only 2 that I know of, that I seen. Cause...so, they told us all of them left 4 or 5 days ago...you know, 3, 4, 5 days ago cause they knew the war was coming to an end. Just a matter of time then, and, uh, they were, uh, seems like intelligence was coming pretty close there too, so they left.

Q: Did you get to know any of the other prisoners as closely as you did...

A: No. Uh, No, I didn't. I didn't. There was so many, and, uh, uh, they always wanted to talk to you, you know. But it's hard to say that these people were sickly, very sickly people. And I'll be honest with you. We never got too close to them. I mean we don't bodily, bodily wise too close. That's a horrible thing to say about a human being, but they had to be deloused. They had...you don't realize how bad it was. I am sure many of them were...had tuberculosis. Many things...there had to be something wrong with them, see, so we were...we kept...we kept a profile, but at a distance you know. We tried to be sympathetic, and we were sympathetic see. But anytime you have to take a group of people to feed them and they must be under guard to feed them, that's how...from when we first started so we could feed them and so they could get a little nourishment in them. And they were, you know, a hungry person will...well, they had to fight to survive at night time year. I mean,

they would fight or be killed or something. These are the things that I know. I know that this happened. I am positive this happened.

Q: How did the German prisoners stir up the inmates?

A: They just...they stirred them up at night time, they said. They would stir them up and get them aggravated at one another, to fight one another. The German inmates are ex-convicts. They were inmates, but they were sent to that camp as ex-convicts to work the people, and to do everything to downgrade them, just do everything, fight, argumental. You got to remember. These ex-convicts were eating 3 times a day, and they were big, bushy men, you know what I mean, and they would be in charge of the barracks and then...and then they would, uh, uh. Their thing, as I say before, was to destroy, destroy, and exterminate. That's the word I am using now, and that's the most appropriate word that I can think of. I don't know if it's appropriate or not, but it's to destroy the human being, and that's what this camp was all about. And they worked in the salt mines. When they were no good anymore, they would send them to the crematorium. Anybody that who is listening to my voice at this time who was in Ebensee knows what I am talking about.

Q: How many men were with your troop that went in?

A: Oh, the whole troop. Well, I mean the...uh...we surrounded...once we came in...when we came in and hit the thing, you know like when you Bibwack, we were bibwacking right close to it, then we came back and told Captain Brennan, and he brought the whole troop...I mean the troop now. That's what company meant, you see...to help because we needed...you couldn't...you had to have men in there. You couldn't...you are talking about thousands of people in there, and you know what I mean, going...when they are free...it's going...it's chaos. And you have to have some kind of control. And this is how we controlled it. We had to...we had to control it this way. And soon they realized what was going on, they...they cooperated, you know what I mean, because they wanted... They knew we were Americans, and they knew we were there to free them. So we reported back to Captain Brennan, he brought the whole troop in.

Q: The whole troop consisted of how many men?

A: Uh, this here...was 250 men and, uh, or maybe more or less, you know what I mean. We weren't full size at that time, but there could be a few more, but that is a company of men. And whatever it was, the whole troop went in there, and then the whole squadron came down, you know what I mean. They just...they just went around...surrounded the place. We had other companies in to help, because you needed it. You needed everybody. Everybody you could get a hold of. You needed somebody to do something. Everybody was working there to try to get...disinfect the place and filling and digging graves, and you can't realize what it was all about.



Q: Now under the direction of your troop, did the inmates themselves begin to help organize things?

A: Oh, yal. They helped. Once they found out...after maybe 48 hours, found out what we were trying to do, they tried to help themselves, you know what I mean, a little bit, trying to get organized and...and getting the dead bodies, and we did make the people in Ebensee come in there and help too. There were no...they worked, and they...we got that hospital to get in there, and as soon as the hospital got in there...but then...the hospital was there, but then the our field hospital came in, and you know, it kind of quieted down a little bit and everybody backed off, and everybody knew what's going on then.

Q: So the inmates were very obliging and tried to work with you?

A: At that time, yal. They tried...they knew we were here. We were...they knew we weren't trying to hurt them or anything, but we were trying to help them. But the first...that first 24 hours was chaos. You know, they didn't...they wanted...they were hungry, and they wanted...but you had to make that soup, and then you had to go back to delousing them, and many things, and it took some time, but we worked it out. The United States worked it out.

Q: So these are things that you will never...?

A: You can never forget it. See. It's still in my mind. I can talk it about it today, tomorrow, and the next day. And this happened 44 years ago.

Q: Yet some people today say it never took place.

A: Well, you're looking at a living history right now cause I was there. I know. I know. I don't know about Dachau. I don't know about Auschwitz, but I know about Ebensee. I know about Ebensee because I was there. I have seen it all. Every bit of it! Every bit of it! And maybe some displaced person might know me that I didn't, you know, when I was in my younger days. But I was...I know Ebensee. I know what it was all about because I was there. And I could never forget it! And just like the inmates in there, they will never forget the brutality they suffered was I, I could have been the same. If I had lived in Europe at that time, I could have...I am not Jewish, but it could have happened to me. It could happen to you. It could happen to anybody. But Hitler wanted to exterminate the Jews. That was...that was his main...more than anything else, he just...but you can't exterminate. God won't let you do something like that. It's not feasible and, uh, I believe God it was the man that said enough is enough, and today, I believe Hitler is in Hell. I say that I am sure he is. But I feel good that I made this. I feel I wanted to do it a long time ago, but I made up my mind in April of this year what I was going to do, and I want every Jewish person to know that it happened. As God is my judge!

Q: We want to thank you very much for taking your time to come. We know it's a long way from home, and we appreciate it very, very much.

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A: It's my pleasure to do this.

Q: Thank you very kindly.

A: Is that it? I hope I got it right.

Q: You did a wonderful job?

A: Really? I hope I did.

Conclusion of Interview