United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Curtis Whiteway
June 7, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Curtis Whiteway, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on June 7, 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 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.

CURTIS WHITEWAY
June 7, 1990

Q: Hi. Tell me... Uh, give me your name and when you were born.

A: All right. I'm Curtis R. Whiteway. And I was born in Newburyport, Mass[achusetts], in 1925. November 3rd.

Q: Tell me a little bit about yourself, and your advent into the Army. And, uh, then we can talk about your career in Germany.

A: All right. In 19...the December 1943, I was drafted, uh, into the, uh, Army. And then, uh, uh, we're at Fort Devens, Mass[achusetts].[1] And then, uh, couple of days later, taken to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for, uh, my major training in the armored forces. I continued on then, uh, after graduating there. Instead of going into the armored, uh, division, they took a group of us, uh, that were apparently high in the records of, uh, achievement; and they sent us to South Carolina, to the Rangers, where we received 19 weeks of very intensive training.

Q: Then you went overseas?

A: Then we went, uh, to, uh, Camp Maxey, Texas, and joined the 99th Division. Uh, there we were supposed to train a lot of the troops, and so on. And we went immediately over to England (clearing throat) by way of Boston. So from England, well, we trained for awhile. Invasion training. And then, uh, very shortly, why, we land...we went across the channel in LSTs and landed at Le Havre.[2] And we had a little bit of skirmishes there; but, uh, we moved inland, uh, into Belgium. And then we relieved the 9th Infantry Division on line, in uh...in around the area of Liège [**Flem:** Luik], Belgium.

Q: And then, what happened after that?

A: All right. Uh...uh, of course, we were totally green. We had a lot of experience, uh, there in, uh, training, but, uh, totally green to combat. And, uh, about a month and a half later, uh, on December 16th at dawn, the Germans attacked us with, uh, uh, over 10 to l of their prime German SS troopers, Panzer Grenadiers, the, uh, German, uh, paratroopers, and so on. And just simply overwhelmed us on what we now call "Hell's Corner." And, uh, like, uh, my company, uh, of--as I understand now--of approximately 216 men, there were only 29 of us survived. And then, uh, we, uh, managed to hold the line. We wiped out the 3rd Panzer Division[3]--uh, with...with great help of our artillery, of course. And, uh, then, uh, within

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[1] Located near Ayer, Massachusetts.

[2] This would have been well after June 6, 1944, since Le Havre was held by German forces until September 12, 1944 when it was captured by the British 1st Corps.

[3] This could not have been the 3rd Panzer Division, which served on the Eastern Front. Probably

about another month or so, why, we began getting replacements and were again ready for combat and pushing into Germany through the Siegfried Line.[4]

Q: Tell us what happened after that.

A: All right. We pushed, uh, into Germany, uh, forcing, naturally, the German army back, or...or just wiping them out. Uh, I'm making it sound a lot easier than, uh, what actually happened. But, uh, we...the main part is we came to, uh, Cologne [**Ger:** Köln]; and, uh, then switched, uh, south to, uh, the...one of our armored divisions had captured a bridge now know as the Remagen Bridge. We were immediately pulled out of the fighting in Cologne, and pulled south. And my battalion was the first, uh, of the 99th Division to arrive there. And we went over the bridge that night, under very heavy fire, took the [Epelloläi (ph)] on the other side--uh, which is a mountain there--and held it and until other troops could get up there. And we pushed inland, and made what is known as a bridgehead. It was in this bridgehead that we first came upon our first concentration camps.

Q: Tell us about that.

A: All right. The army (clearing throat) had never, uh, informed of ...us of anything about the concentration camps. Uh, so that we were not mentally prepared for anything. Uh, the first few camps, uh, that we came to, we were ordered--being combat troops, our mission was to fight and destroy the German army. So we would part, and go around these huge camps, and re-engage on the other side. In doing this, we came by...many times, the...one of the gates. And here, uh, uh--as I've learned or put together in the last few years--a handful of men would normally be detailed to go into the camps, unchain the people who were chained and so on, and release the prisoners. Uh, the rest of all the combat troops would, as I say, continue engaging the German troops. As we went by the gates, we would see, uh, handfuls, or, uh, quite a few prisoners--or, uh we now call them, survivors--would come outside the gates [and] be standing there as we were passing by, either on foot or on trucks and tanks. And they would be waving to you, and they'd be all smiles. And if they got a chance, they'd come over to you and hug and kiss you and shake hands. And this threw us off guard. Because now, when we saw all these smiling faces, we assumed that they were alright. And we just kept on going. The only ones to see any of the horrors in the camps, not... For us, not realizing that many of them were not physically able to come out of the gates.

Q: The Germans had already left the camps?

A: The Germans normally, uh, in my experience, uh, would normally stay in the camps--the

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he is referring here to the 9th Panzer Division, which served in the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 and suffered heavy losses there.

[4] English name for the Westwall, a fortified line along the western border of Germany.

guards--until we were approaching one of the gates. And they would withdraw out the back, uh, side, uh, opposite side, of wherever we were approaching. And what I...we've learned is that they would normally take selected prisoners--usually Jewish people--uh, out the back gates, and keep on taking them in forced marches, uh, further into Germany or into Austria. And they would continue then to try to kill them as fast as they could do that. Uh, we hadn't learned that at this point, uh, there. And so it was a very tragic thing, uh, to be able to permit the Germans to...to keep on murdering people like that. (Clearing throat) They usually beat them to death with rifle butts or...or bayonets, or just shoot them. But they...we also learned that they had to be very careful about not using too much ammunition, because they were going to need that to fight us. So we continued on fighting, continued past the camps--except for our handfuls of men that would go in.

Q: There many camps like that?

A: There were many camps like this. And we continued pushing north into Germany, until we came to a city called Giessen [Giessen is due east of Remagen]. And in Giessen--or in that area--uh, my group was selected to, uh...at nighttime, swim the river [this would have been the Lahne River], come in quietly behind the German guards and the engineers at the bridges, and quietly take them off. And then cut the, uh, cords to all the explosives on the bridges. At dawn, or about dawn, then our entire regiment or battalion came in on trucks and tanks quickly; and were inside the city before the Germans knew it.[5] Now, I was ordered to take my men and go down one of the main streets. We fought from building to building, house to house. But in this area was very different from many of the other areas in, uh...in Europe--and in particular, in Germany. Because we came upon the most appalling odor that I have ever smelled. And there's no way to really describe it. Uh, except to bring out the, uh, important points that, by now, in northern Germany like this we're all very experienced combat troops. We had seen all kinds of human misery. We were used to the odor of death, of, uh, flesh--burning flesh--and all this kind of thing. But this odor was, uh, very distinct, and very strong. We had to find heavy cloth in the buildings that we were fighting in, from the German soldiers; and hold it over our faces while we're trying to shoot. Because this...

Q: How large was this city?

A: Uh, the city was quite large. Uh, I would compare it, uh, with the size of Malden, Mass[achusetts]. Of, uh, say around a 100,000.[6] Somewhere on that idea. And, uh, as we pushed down on this particular area, why, the odor got worse. And we finally came to a big stone wall, and a huge ancient wooden gate. Upon top were barbed wire, machine gun nests. There was no soldiers there, at this point. Uh, apparently, each time we finally approached

[5] Giessen was captured March 28, 1945.

[6] Giessen had a population of 31,601 at the end of the war; by the 1980s its population had grown to 76,374.

the camps that the guards in the camps would not engage us. They would run instead. Unlike the Wehrmacht or the regular infantry. So, when we came to the gate, we knew we had some kind of a prison there. And we put TNT against the gate, and we blew it in. Ran inside, dispersed to cover each other, and engage what we knew would be the, uh, the Death['s]-Head--from experience, the Death['s] -Head SS troopers[7] uh, that normally ran these camps. And this camp was called Hadamar.[8] Uh, it turned out to be, uh, an extermination camp, not a concentration camp.[9] Uh, why I say that is because they weren't keeping the prisoners there for long periods of time and starving them and tormenting them and torturing them and terrorizing them, like in other camps that we would go into. As we burst into the camp and spread out, I saw in front of me a row of barracks. Wooden, one-story barracks. In front of the barracks, at that point, was a large group of...what we called in those days "slaves," for lack of any other word. Now we call them survivors. And they were standing there totally shocked at, of course, the explosion of the gate being blown in, these strange men in strange uniforms running in. And they didn't know who we were. Uh, I since learned, of course, that the Germans kept all the information, news, away from them. So that...thus not ever giving them any hope of surviving. I knew that these people were of no danger to us; so I immediately, being combat, turned my attention to the left, to the buildings. And I ordered my men to start going through the buildings and start cleaning them out--in other words, engaging the German soldier, the SS troopers. Uh, at that point, one of my men came for me. And he asked me...he says, "You'd better come with me." And he had a voice...his tone of voice was very serious. I followed him across the yard to a building; and as I, uh, observed, the building--to my best memory now--was a masonry building. The windows were all sealed up. Outside, as I can remember now, was, I believe, eight automobiles, all up on blocks. In other words, they were in permanent position. The wheels had been taken off. The exhaust were piped in through the wall of that building. And I... We couldn't really understand what this was. We went inside the door; and there's a couple of my other men there, standing there waiting for me. In the room....there was nobody in there, other than my own men. But there was human excretion, vomit, urine, blood all over the room. At this point we're looking around, somebody had asked me what was going on. And I really had no idea. I did not understand. None of us did. One of the men went over to the far wall, uh, as I remember to my left. And there were shower heads and faucets all over the wall. He turned them on. He called out to me; and he says, "What the Hell's going on here?" And I looked over questionly. And he said, "There's no water." And I just shook my head. I didn't know.

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[7] **Ger:** SS Totenkopfverbände.

[8] According to US military records, the 99th Infantry Division was in the immediate vicinity north of Hadamar on March 27, 1945.

[9] **Also:** "Facility E." A killing center utilized by the Euthanasia program from January 1941 until liberation in 1945. Served as a replacement for the Grafeneck euthanasia center, which closed in December 1940. According to Arolsen, the exterminations carried out here were of the mentally ill and patients with TB and took place mainly from 1944-1945. According to camp records, more than 10,000 people were killed.

And just about this point.... And, of course, you can imagine what the odor was like in this room. It was terrible. Uh, at that point, another man in a doorway motioned for us to come out into the back room. As we entered the back room, the room was filled with benches and...and, uh, uh, tables. And on the tables, there was thousands of gold wedding rings. And there were diamond rings--uh, engagement rings, or whatever you want to call them in Europe. Uh, there was piles of human teeth with gold filling. These were all being separated. And then it was obvious that somebody was in there counting them, and separating them. We still just began to understand; but really didn't under....understand what was happening in this camp, at that point. Uh, we went outside into the, uh, yard again. Only this is on the back side of the building, more or less. And here in front of me, I could see huge piles of human hair. I could see...as the Germans did everything very neatly, there were piles of boots, shoes, suitcases, eyeglasses. And I stood there looking at the eyeglasses. And I couldn't imagine how many thousands of people those eyeglasses represented, just sitting there in a huge pile. To my left was hay wagons--four-wheel hay wagons and two-wheel push carts, which were common in Europe. Only, these wagons all contained nude bodies. They were separated; but there was men, women, children, and even babies. All nude, all dead, all piled as high as they basically could pile them on these wagons. And I remember going over and looking at...fairly close. Especially at some of the children--which...which was appalling to us. They apparently had been just taken out of the building we just left, and been gassed. Uh, we...at that point, one...another man came to me. And here again he said, "You'd better come with us." And we followed them into another building behind. In the room, as we entered, here was bodies thrown at random on the floor. On the far wall.... And, of course, you can imagine the odor was absolutely terrible in this place. Uh, on the, uh, far wall was a battery of ovens. Big ovens. Uh, I never did count the ovens, but they were on fire. Some of the doors were open. There were bodies in the ovens, still burning. Uh, we were so shocked. And now we were beginning to understand that there was...this was some kind of an execution camp. Or as we now call, extermination camp. Uh, we left the...that room, and went out into the, uh, yard again. And still my men were scattering all over the place, uh...of course, looking for the German soldier; but now finding more and more, uh, things in the camp. I turned my attention back to the original group of the "slaves," as we called them then. And as I walked across the yard, I called out to them. And I noticed...for...for one thing, of course, the condition of these people. As I can remember, they were all men. And now I assume that they were like a burial detail to handle all the bodies. Uh, but they were in a horrible condition, uh, of starvation, of disease. The bodies...there was no flesh in their bodies. They were just skin...actual skin and bones. Their body odor was terrible. Uh, there...and no hair, or literally no hair, on their bodies. Their eyes sunken way back in their heads. And as I approached them, I also saw the yellow star of David, uh, on their clothing. And coming from Boston and all the ethnic, uh, areas, that I understood that they were Jews. I called out to them as I approached them. I says, "Does anybody speak English?" And finally, one man spoke up, uh, very much like a zombie; but he answered me, "Yes," in English. So I addressed him, uh, personally. And I came over to him; and I looked at him, and I said, "We are American soldiers. It's all over. Do you understand what I'm saying to you?" And he stood there frozen in place. He wasn't looking at me. He was looking over my shoulder; and he was apparently looking at my men, who were still...some of them running

through the buildings, uh, there. And then first thing...he wouldn't change his expression on his face, but tears started coming down his face. And then he started to cry. And he started to sob. And then he started to sob his heart out; and he fell to the ground on his knees. And he just cried his heart out. And I stood there, standing there watching him, and waiting. And after awhile, he regained his composure. And then he stopped crying. And then he spoke in Yiddish. Which I had heard many times in the Boston area, and I recognized what it was. And then he told them that we were American soldiers. Now, at this point, there were other Americans coming.[10] And I could see over in the background, in other gates or other areas of the camp, other Americans would come in. They began going through the hospital--because this was a camp under the K-4 program,[11] uh, where they were exterminating or cleansing their own nation, originally, and then went through many other peoples, uh, before they.... And then they finally were exterminating the Jewish people, at this period of time that we were there. And we then were ordered out of the camp to help re-engage the German soldiers. And we left the other Americans in the camp. They saw many other things that I or my group did not see. And then we...we continued fighting for that region. Uh, we pushed.... The best....

Q: They were killing right up to the moment...?

A: To the moment that we arrived there. Uh, which was something very, very hard to understand. Uh, but, as I mentioned, that, uh, in the camps we learned that they were taking prisoners out the back gates to continue that time of killing what they called "prime prisoners." And it took us a while longer before we would learn that fact, and then begin to outmaneuver them. (Clearing throat) And we continued pushing through northern Germany, to Kassel [approximately 60 miles northwest of Giessen]. And, uh...I believe that was about the deepest penetration; uh, when we were ordered to hold up. And then, uh, this was getting into an area that was declared by [the] Yalta Agreement[12] that would be Russian territory. So that now, other troops would come in and take our place and hold this line. We were pulled out; and we would turn and head south--toward Nuremberg [**Ger:** Nürnberg], Frankfurt[-am-Main], Würzburg, and that region. Going down through that area, we came to quite a number of other camps. Uh, there is no understanding in my mind, or...as to the difference in the camps. At that time of...of uh, the war, uh, there were slave labor camps. Many of them. Uh, there were, uh, of course, concentration camps--which I really wasn't realizing at that point--uh, that we were going into. Uh, sometimes, I would only just penetrate. Uh, we came to a camp called Ohrdruf,[13] as best as I can determine to this day. And now I'm starting to

[10] This was probably the US 2nd Infantry Division, which was in Limburg-an-der-Lahn to the south of Hadamar on March 27, 1945.

[11] The actual designation for the Euthanasia program was "Operation T4."

[12] An Allied Summit Conference took place in Yalta from February 4 to 11, 1945.

[13] Subcamp of Buchenwald; located in the province of Thuringia. Established November 1944 and apparently liberated by American troops on April 4, 1945.

remember more...just recently starting to remember more and more about this; putting together other facts from my own division, where we were at that time. But, as I can determine now, it was Ohrdruf.[14] And it was a small camp. We came right to the middle, apparently, of the camp itself--of the outside. There was nothing there in front of us but barbed wire. Behind the barbed wire, we could see into the camp. And there were bodies laying all over the place. There were some small buildings and so on. The odor, again, was terrible here. Uh, I radioed in to the captain, uh, that we had come to the barbed wire and some kind of a camp. He ordered all of us to turn left, and go around the camp in that direction. Apparently, one of the other companies was on our other flank would go the other direction. As we walked along the barbed wire and we kept looking in. Of course, we were in a very depressed mood, uh, looking at...at all these bodies laying there. We could see some were still alive, were still moving, even if they were only twitching, some of them. And we passed a gate. Whether it was the main gate, I don't know. But we passed a gate. And at that point, now other...all the rest of the company was, uh, was progressing the same way. Some [of] them--uh, American soldiers of our own, uh, outfit, and probably of our own company--were already inside the camp. Only a few. And, I believe, two men came over toward us and started waving us anxiously to come in to help them. So I radioed to Captain Pat,[15] or the company command, and told them that we, uh, uh, were requested [to] uh, help, uh, there. He gave us permission to move into the camp. So as far as I know that only my squad turned and went into the uh...to the camp itself. As we were walking in, as I say, there was bodies laying literally all over the place. And as I can remember, here again on my left as I was coming in, there was some buildings. And there was a gallows. And I can't distinguish in my mind at this point whether there was just one or more. And I believe there was more gallows. But there was no rope. It was...it was wire that they were using for a noose. Uh, during the short stay in there, one of the survivors--and there weren't very many as far as I know--had explained to me what the Germans were doing. There were pile...piles of bodies all around the gallows. And they were taking the prisoners, and making...forcing them to stand under the gallows. They would tighten the noose around and then they would adjust it up on top. So they would pull them up and stretch them, so only their toes would just barely touch the ground. And they left them that way. And as I can understand, as I remember the prisoner telling me--or the survivor--that it took something like about 15 minutes for them to die that way. And, of course, this was very disgusting to us, at that point. We were also looking... trying to look at other things that we were seeing in the camp. The...we were starting to wander among the bodies, to see if we could help some of them. And each one that I came to, I knew just by looking at them that they were beyond help. Uh, even...even...we didn't have any medics in our company. They had all been shot in the head by the snipers. And what little medicine we had.... Well, [there] was no medicine. All we had was bandages, by that time there. Uh, I came to...now as I remember, uh, a nude woman.

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[14] It is by no means certain, but US military records indicate that the 99th Infantry Division could have been in this vicinity between April 17 and April 21, 1945.

[15] Identified by Mr. Whiteway as Captain William Patterson of Miami, Florida.

And it was apparent she was pregnant. And I was standing there looking... And this is something terrible to me, in my mind. She had a rope tied around her legs. But it wasn't in a position where apparently the prisoners or somebody had tied ropes on her ankles and dragged the body out. And it confused me. Why would the rope be tied around her legs? And I was standing there pondering that, uh, fact, when one of the survivors in that camp quietly came over beside me. And he began talking very softly. And he told me; he says she was pregnant. And as the baby was being born, the SS troopers took her clothing off--or ripped her clothing off, I think, is the way he put it--and then tied a rope tightly around her legs. And then left her and the baby to die that way; because, naturally, the baby couldn't be born. And, of course, that upset me very, very much. In fact, I've had some...some rather terrible nightmares over it. And I remember then getting orders to leave the camp, while others.... There were now more apparently of the...the supporting troops were coming in. And they were coming in the camp, and they were spreading out with some medics. I can remember seeing some medics with their Red Cross armbands on. And we left; and we rejoined our company. And we began, again, in the combat. And we pushed south again. There were other camps that we came to. Other men went in and so-called "liberated" the camps and the prisoners. Uh, released them, or whatever. I can remember seeing just tidbits of different camps like that. And we kept on going. And now the German Army was disintegrating, so that they would disappear and pull back as much as 50 miles in... And, uh, then set up lines. We would come out of the woods. We'd come out of the buildings, and come onto the, uh, roads, and walk the roads until the points we'd re-engage the Germans. And we'd spread out and re-engage them again. Uh, in doing this, we came, uh, into the area of, as I now know as, Bavaria. And we were going up a mountain. And up at the top, all of a sudden...my two scouts were always up in front of me. And I was always the third man. Uh, the rest of the men were behind me. Uh, the two scouts signaled, and they hit the ground. I, uh, signaled for all the men to hit the ground, and...uh, for cover. And then I crawled up to where the two scouts were. And they pointed up ahead; and I could see some men up through the woods--quite a distance from us--that were running from tree to tree. They were very skittish. And observing them, uh, I assumed that they were of no danger, that they were not German soldiers. Because they had no helmets and they had no rifles. Uh, they... First, I thought they were women; because they had a long robe on them that went all the way to the ankles. Now, I've been able to understand that what they were was prisoners that were allowed out of that camp that we were going to come to. Uh, and they were on perhaps burial detail. Uh, but the idea of the long gown or dress on them was that they were hobbled, so they could not run. The bottom [of] the uniform or dress was very close at the ankle. But what they were doing there was they were hiding behind the tree. There was quite a few of them. And they'd look around, just like rabbits; they were so scared. Then, one by one, they would get up, pull up the skirts above their waist. And we kinda snickered, because here they were...we realized they were men. They were totally nude. The only thing they had for clothing on was this, uh, dress. And they would hold it above their waist; and they'd run and then dive behind another tree and drop their skirt. And as I say, it was kind of humorous, at that point. But they [were] working their way to close to us. So I signaled for the men to skirmish and get ready for a gun fight, just in case. And we were all camouflaged, and, uh, so on. Then these men worked their way fairly close to us. And all of a sudden, I stood up

and I challenged them. I almost scared the living daylights out of them. They didn't know we were there. They dived in behind the trees. And when they did, some of them started to cry, started to beg. Uh, one man finally came out. And I kept telling him in broken German, uh, "We are American solders." And, uh, tried to get them to understand that, uh, we were not, uh, going to harm them. And one man, in particular, came crawling out on his elbows and his knees--almost like a caterpillar. And he crawled quite fast. And he [was] working his way toward me; and then he turned around and put his hands up in the form of a prayer, and kept begging me in some foreign language, apparently not to kill him. And I tried to console him and uh...here again, tell him that we are Americans. He finally, suddenly, under... comprehended what I was trying to say. And he look...looked up, and said something in a foreign language. But... "American?" And I shook my head yes. He went like a machine gun across the floor, came over to...uh, in front of me. Now, he was breaking down. And he was shivering all over his body; and he started kissing the ground and started kissing my shoes, or my boots. And uh, then he wrapped his arms violently around my legs. And he was crying his heart out. And then he turned around; and he spoke in a foreign language to the others to come, and that it was safe. Here again, these prisoners were just like the ones back at Hadamar--in a terrible, terrible shape. So I asked them in German, uh...uh, "Wo ist der deutsche Soldaten?"--"Where is the German soldier?" And they pointed down. We... (Clearing throat) I'll skip the rest of that part of the story, uh, to get to the better points. Uh, we took them... I detailed one man to stay back behind, uh, and take them with us. And we, uh ...forward...made uh...uh, and went forward down the side of the mountain, then. Halfway down the hill, we could hear a strange, crackling noise. And now we're getting the same odor that we had smelled at Hadamar. Terrible odor. Only now, there was no cloth for us to hold over our faces. We suddenly came to a, uh...a big field in the middle of the forest, and right to the very edge. And I was standing there; and there was prisoners in front of me. And there was three groups. One group was coming up with hay wagons with bodies on them. As I remember, most all of them had clothing on. Uh, this is a very important point. Because I learned from President [Chaim] Herzog, uh, when I asked him, that "Why were some nude and some others not?" And he pointed out that, uh, the nude ones were usually Jews. Because they believed in their religion that the worst thing that could happen to them was to go to God in the nude. These prisoners, most of them were clothed, at that point. Or, the bodies on the wagons. And the prisoners were pushing the wagons up by hand. There was another group at that point coming in from the forest carrying six-foot logs. The first group, in front of me, was taking the logs and laying them on the ground, side by side. Then they were taking, uh, the bodies, and laying them across; and another row of bodies...uh, of logs, a row of bodies. And building them up, uh, approximately as high as they could reach; but approximately seven, eight feet high. And we're standing there, all of us shocked. My own men and these prisoners. They didn't know who we were. And I took a very close look at some of the pyres of all these prisoners and all these dead bodies uh...uh, there. Many of the pyres were on fire. And there were other pyres all over the field that were in all different stages of construction. And I was so shocked that I didn't talk to any of these prisoners. I just signaled one man [to] go round them up and bring them all to me. And then I just simply asked them, "Wo ist der deutsche Soldaten?" And they pointed down. So we headed down. We took the...those prisoners along with the others. Uh, the others I had detailed to go back

behind the lines with a, uh...I had a medic coming up to get them. Now, as we came down to the bottom into the valley, I suddenly come to a road that was going across me. Off to the left was some city. And most of my battalion was now throwing out artillery and throwing the mortar shells in. They were attacking the city. So I turned my attention to my right. And here was a huge camp. This was apparently the main road coming out of the city right straight into the main, uh, gate of the camp. There was two rows of barbed wire--electrified, as I can remember. And in fact, I'm sure; because we blew the transformer. There were towers--guard towers--on the outside. I signaled; I sent some up in the guard towers, and they disarmed the, uh, machine guns. Uh, a couple more men went over to the transformer. We blew the transformer. Then we blew the gate in. And we ran in, dispersed as usual; and I ran off to the left. I got...landed on my knees so I could watch my men, to make sure that they were doing things right and covering each other. And in front of me... This camp was called--as I now know it--Dachau 3B.[16] Uh, this...in front of me was a series of barracks. At the point that I landed on my knees, I could see behind some of the barracks; and there was a group of people. I believe that they were all male, but I'm not sure. They were all hanging; but they [were] hanging in grotesque positions. They weren't hanging by the neck. I pointed to Hopper[17] and another man: "Go over there and cut them down." So they left, uh, and I detailed a couple more men to cover them. And at that point, I, uh, made a run for the barracks in front of me, that was on a long, uh, ways to me. And the door was in the small part... end of the barracks. And in combat, you don't walk through a door. We dived through the door. Goggleye[18] dived over the top of me; and we come up all ready to engage somebody. Uh, as we got in, I was shocked; because there was nobody to fight. Instead, here was a whole series--all along my left side, all the way down--of bunks. Uh...I believe, but I'm not exactly sure...I believe there were three tiers. The prisoners were in the bunks--as many as they could get in them, all laying across the bunks. And we went into a, uh...a thing of trying to tell them that we were American soldiers. "Does anybody speak English?" And finally, one little, uh, Frenchman in the first row of bunk...uh, first bunk, uh, he asked me--in French, at first--if I was an American soldier. And he began to comprehend. And I told him.... And I couldn't understand why they wouldn't get out of the bunk...uh, or the beds. And, uh, so I told Goggleye, "Go over there and find out what the heck's the matter with them." And he told me...he said, "They're chained at the ankle." So we come over and took a look at them; and they had a heavy logging chain and some kind of an iron clamp on their

[16] It is clear from documentation on the movements of the 99th Division and from supplementary information provided by Mr. Whiteway that "Dachau 3B" must have been a sub-camp of Dachau. Research performed by Dr. Robert Kesting in the U. S. military records located at the National Archives in Suitland, Maryland, appear to indicate that the term "3B" was used to refer to the Mühldorf sub-camp of Dachau. This identification is consistent with U. S. military records, which indicate that Mühldorf was in the zone assigned to the 99th Infantry Division and affiliated units (i.e., 14th Cavalry Group/Armored and the 86th Infantry Division).

[17] Identified by Mr. Whiteway as Otis Hopper of Hartselle, Alabama.

[18] Identified by Mr. Whiteway as Ray Goggleye. Died in 1978.

ankles, every one of them. So I told, uh, the men, "Find the locks." And on the end of the locks... Not "find the locks," but "find the key." There was a big iron lock on each, uh, bunk. And he couldn't find the key; so I told him, "Okay, shoot the locks off." And, of course, we had to be careful where the bullet was going. But they shot...had to shoot the locks all the way down the barracks, through every series of, uh, bunks. And then all... instantly, all the prisoners were pulling the chains out quickly. And then they come over, and started hugging and kissing us and all that. We proceeded through the length of the barracks and went out the other door, and went into the second barracks. In the second barracks was exactly the same as the first barracks. But now, the prisoners from the first barracks were following me and my men. We burst in the door. This time, we walked in the door. The only thing that was different about this barracks was the condition of the prisoners. That they were on the verge of death. Here they were all chained. It was obvious that all food and water was shut off from [them]. And they were so weak. And the odor was terrible in this barrack. But they were so weak that they could not push themselves on their elbow. They were laying there and putting one hand out; and they.... Instantly, everybody in the barracks were looking at me. And they were begging in all kinds of foreign languages, apparently, for food and water. And everyone of us had different reactions. Now some of the guys were bumping up against me, coming in and being shocked. And I remember Goggleye was down on his knees; and being an Indian, uh, and a Catholic, he was giving the sign of the cross and he was saying some prayers. Somebody behind me was swearing, and he was, uh, promising revenge. Uh, a couple of the newer men turned around and went back out of the barracks; and they were vomiting. And every one of us, as I say, had a different reaction. And I got the strangest feeling that I wanted to understand, somehow, what a German guard would feel like in this barracks. So while everybody's standing there, uh... reacting, I slung my rifle over my shoulder and I stood up like a guard would do. And I marched all the way down the length of the building, and turned around and came back, as a German soldier would. And alls I saw was a whole handful of...hundreds of hands, literally, following me all the way up the barracks and all the way back, begging. And they wouldn't stop begging. As I got back to the end again, the little Frenchman--who was now my self-appointed interpreter.... He could speak five languages, as I remember. And he recognized somebody in the second bunk. And he ran over to him; and he turned around. He was pointing to me, apparently tell him that we were American soldiers and that it was all over. But his friend wouldn't put his hand down. He still had his hand out. So I saw the Frenchman put, uh, his hand down like this. And the hand come up again. And he wouldn't stop. And he didn't even recognize his own buddy, his friend. And it was a very, very emotional thing to...to see. And about at that point, we heard an awful ruckus outside. So we burst out both, uh, doorways of the barracks. And now, in the yard that was totally empty before, was hundreds of people. A sea of humanity of the prisoners from this huge camp that was beyond us. And I remember seeing men and women now here. And, uh, they... What had happened at this point, and what the ruckus was all about, [was] that Bob Riggs[19] and, I believe, Hopper had gone across the way to another barracks.

[19] Identified by Mr. Whiteway and in documentation as PFC. Robert C. Riggs--Army Service No. 42130776, SSN 069-01-0218--from Reno, Nevada. Died in 1978.

Q: Your colleagues?

A: These were my own men of my squad. I'm sorry. I should point there...there was approximately eight of us, at that point. And that's all I had left, uh, because of the, uh, casualties. And Bob Riggs, uh, was bringing 20 German women guards out of this building, and marching them across the yard toward...to bring them to me. And, of course, the German women were... were military woman in uniform--very huge, powerful women. Well-fed; which appalled me at the time, because of the comparison of all these prisoners being so horribly starved. Uh, it infuriated me to see these women so well fed at that point. And they marched in a military, uh, rank of two toward me. And all these prisoners were trying to get to them and kill them. I don't believe they could really hurt them. Maybe they could. But there was no.... Here again, there was no flesh in their bodies, no muscles or anything like that. Uh, we ran out between them. And we held our rifles horizontal, and we tried to hold this massive crowd back. At that point, uh, Whitey Hall[20]--another squad leader--was going by the main gate. And he saw we were in trouble; and he brought his men in--approximately eight or nine men--and he...they ran over and stood beside us, and tried to hold this crowd back. And I called out to...here again, Applegate--which was a very tall man--uh, and I told him...I says, "You take these women out of here, and get them out of the camp. Get them out of sight, so I can get control of the crowd." So he doubletimed the women out of the camp. Later, he come back and told me that he had marked them for war crimes. We were beginning to understand there was something very wrong in this camp. So in the meantime, once he got them out of sight, uh, then I started talking to the crowd. And I started telling them, "There's not going to be any killing. It's all over. You're free. Do you understand this?" And the crowd, of course, the...they were so infuriated at seeing these women that, uh...the...there was electricity in the air. The hatred, the bitterness was there. And it was very obvious. And so I kept telling them that I'm not going to permit any killing, and, uh, that "You're now free." But they couldn't understand this. And all of a sudden, in the crowd, uh, there was a lot of people talking very excitedly to certain people, which it turned out to be, uh, people who could speak English. And so they would interpret these stories. And they began--I remember this very distinctly--one of the first stories. There was a Jewish woman right out in front of me. And you couldn't tell very, uh, well a difference of a woman from a man in those camps. They were so badly starved that a woman's breast is totally dissolved by her body. So there was no hourglass shape, or anything else. They had basically the same clothing as the other prisoners. Their hair was shaved off their heads. Usually, I could identify by the tone of the voice whether they were male or female. And this woman spoke out; and--in English--and she started telling me. Uh, uh, she tried to describe what the German women--these German women-- were doing to these prisoners daily. That they would take a group of perhaps 20 to 30 prisoners, and march them in two ranks to a specific part of the camp where the slit trenches--the toilets--were. And now as I mentioned, there's no flesh on their bodies, so they could not physically resist anything. One German woman,

[20] Identified by Mr. Whiteway as Staff Sargeant Alfred Hall of Winchester, Kentucky.

as she described, would get down on her knees in front of a slit trench. She would reach up and grab two prisoners by the back of the head, force them down on their knees, force them to bend over. And then push their faces in human excretion, and hold them there until they smothered to death. All the time laughing. As well as the other German women, who were surrounding the prisoners. It was, uh...as she described it, was a daily game for them. In the meantime, all the prisoners in the two ranks had to stand there and watch. But also they had to understand that each and every one of them, this was going to be done to them before they were done. And they did this daily. Another person in the crowd called out. And they...uh, he was yelling something about the dogs, the dogs. And then he began talking about how the Germans--guards--some of them would be going with packs of dogs. And at any time, they would suddenly just point to one of the prisoners and command the dogs to attack that prisoner and tear him apart viciously. And as I have described to the kids in school today, as bad as it was, at least that person...it was over for that particular person. But for...the psychological thing that happened, and what the Germans were doing, was that they were putting the fear into all the others. So they had to think from then on that, "When is it going to be my turn?" The Germans, uh, we...we're learning that they could not simply just kill somebody; but they had to humiliate and they had to terrorize, all at the same time. There were many other stories. Another person in the crowd began calling out; and telling me, (clearing throat) here again, about the dogs. That in the winter, that the German guards would select a prisoner--man or woman. They were given--him or her--a shower, a hot shower. And immediately take them out of the shower nude into the yard, in the snow storm; and command them to sit there, surrounded, uh, by killer dogs who were, uh, placed...commanded to be on guard. And this prisoner... Now the guards would go back into the barracks and watch. And this prisoner had a choice of sitting there in the snow storm and freezing to death, or move and have the dogs attack them. And they went on telling me story after story. And finally, I put my hands up. And I told them, I said, "I've heard enough. I don't want to hear anymore. It's all over." At that point, as I can remember, a little Frenchman in the crowd began to sing quietly, very hoarsely, the..."La Marseillaise"--the French national anthem. As he began singing, then some others--spotted all through the crowd--began to sing along side of them. Apparently, they were French. Then, Bob Riggs came for me. He said, "You'd better come with me." So the rest.... These men.... Americans were still standing there, now that we had laid our weapons down. Uh, but at that point, the survivors--as we now call them--began singing other songs that...that I didn't recognize. We...Bob took me over to the barracks of the women guards. As we entered the room, the first room was a...what we in the army call a "day room." This is where, normally in the army, you would write letters, read, and relax. I was so shocked when I walked into this room that I pretended I didn't see it. And I turned my attention; and off to my right was a doorway and a hallway. And I quietly... And now there were some of my men, a couple of my men coming in; there was a few survivors coming in. Nobody at this point was talking. And I went down the hallway, and I looked into the bedrooms. And each one of the bedrooms was neat, just like a normal army, uh, room. Orderly. All the uniforms were hung up on the left. The bunk was made in a, uh...uh, military, uh, fashion. Everything neat, and in its place. Nothing was wrong. And this puzzled me. And I turned around, and I walked back out of the...away from the bedrooms, and back into this room again. And in the room was

tables all over the place. On the tables were lamps. Some of them had several lamps. The lamps themselves were made of human bones. The lamp shades were made of human skin with tattoos. I recognized that immediately. I walked over and was starting to look at different ones, and tried to comprehend what all these things I was seeing. The little French in...uh, uh, my interpreter now, the little Frenchman came over beside me. "Monsieur, do you understand what that is?" At this point, his face was covered with tears. And I said, "What...it looks like human skin with tattoos." He says, "Yes." He says they would find a prisoner with the tattoos, and hold him or her down out here in the yard in front of us. And then they, uh, would actually skin them alive, these women. He made a point that it was these German women. They would actually skin them alive, somehow; and then hand the skin to the prisoners, who had to somehow cure and make these lamp shades. On the walls all around the room were picture frames, all different sizes, with human skin and tattoos. On the shelves... Well, off to my right, a row of shelves along here, there were male sex organs had been cut off. All different sizes. I believe it was Bob Riggs, but I'm not sure. One of my men was down [at] the end, right by the hall door. And he just motioned to me, uh, with his head. As I say, here [we] was not talking. And I walked down to him; and he nodded toward this object that was in front of me. And I...I can remember just thinking, "A hairy blob. What is it?" Because I was only 19 years old at this time. (Clearing throat) Uh, "Monsieur..." The little Frenchman had come up beside me again. He said, "You know what that is?" I said, "No." And Bob didn't know what it was. He said, "That's a woman's crotch. They held her down, and cut that out of her. And preserved it, and put it right there." And I was pretty well disgusted. There were sexual organs--breasts and everything else. Male and female sexual organs, all over the room, all preserved. There were human heads. There were bones of different kinds, and... And by this time, my mind was becoming boggled with the things that we were finding in this room. And I left... At that point somewhere, Little Cheeco--one of my men, uh, an Indian--came for me. And he says, "You'd better come with me, again." And I followed him out of that room, leaving the other survivors and...and some of my men there. We walked out across the yard. At this point, the survivors were all still singing, uh, there. And we were approaching a small building that I took to be like a Red Cross building. A small first-aid building is what it looked like. Much like here, when they go swimming in the summer. I came up by the door--and by this time, I apparently been kind of getting used to the horrors that we were finding. And I called out to Big Chief--a six-foot seven Indian, uh, a huge man--was standing right in the doorway, with his back to me. And I called out to him, "Chief, what have you got?" And he just turned around slowly, and he looked me with the most God-awful look of shock on his face. And he couldn't talk. His lips were quivering. He was trying to say something, but he couldn't talk. So I saw an expression on his face; he decided what to do, and he took a giant step to one side, out of my way. And I entered the door, and I looked. Inside the room--as I say a small room--the Germans had erected some kind of a board upright, much like a sheet of plywood. And here, they had taken a prisoner and they had stripped him; and they had nailed him with spikes--common spikes with the heads on them--through his elbows and through his wrist that I saw. Nailed him like this, spread-eagled on that board. And I could see where they had taken apparently a scalpel, and they had cut his throat on the side here...his vocal cords somewhere. So he couldn't scream. So, in other words, apparently they...they did not give him any anesthesia. He was looking at

me and he was shaking his head; and he was begging with his little eyes, pleading with me. They had begun... They had already taken and cut open, uh, his chest, and taken his rib cage off. And I remember on the left side of, uh...of him[, his rib cage] was hanging on nails. They had taken some of, uh, his intestines, and hung them on the right on nails. And I could see his lungs--bluish and foamy-like looking--uh, pulsating inside of him. In other words, they... they were dissecting him alive. Experimenting on him. And I didn't know what to do. You know, some of the other men behind me coming in now were getting shocked like that. And I remember Goggleye saying, "What in the Hell are we going to do?" I said, "Get outside the building here." Because we...our radios--uh, the 536, we call it--uh, would not work inside the building like they do today. I said, "Get outside the building here. Call the company. Tell them what we've found." Which he had already been reporting, uh...everything. "And give them the name, the identification of this building in particular. Tell them, for God's sake, somewhere, get a hold of a doctor. A surgeon, in particular; to try to help this man." Then I ordered everybody to get out of that room, so that perhaps we could save him and not give him any disease. Because we were all filthy. And so I sealed the room...the room off that way. And then I went back to the, uh...the uh...group of the survivors. And this [was] a sea of humanity, of survivors, out there singing. And I began talking a little bit with them again, and telling them that it's all over. And it's about at this point that they began to understand that they were liberated. Because now they turned and started looking at each other; and there was tears coming down their faces, but there were smiles. They began to hug and kiss each other. And you kno...of course, European men, especially, will kiss each other. They began to take and hug each other...uh, and cry. And they started, a lot of them, locking their arms together; and they began singing. And it was very, very emotional thing to see. And as I say, it was the beginning of them really understanding that they were liberated.

Q: The SS men had already left the camp?

A: The SS were already...at least deeper into the camp; and were on their way out, uh, with, uh, "prime prisoners," out the other side. This is the first time that I can remember that we realized what was going on. That some of the other prisoners had, uh, told us that the SS--apparently through all the excitement and everything else--now one of us has asked them where is the...what...what happened to the SS there. And they told us, "They're going out the other side." So I...I remember radioing the company, and telling them that this column is going out the other side. The...we had orders then to leave that camp and rejoin the company, and fight for the city. So I called all the men together. We formed a line down the road, and we started marching forward out the main gate into the city. All the survivors were following us. As we reached the city....

Q: Let's stop at this point and, uh, then we'll continue later. We've got to change the film.

A: All right.

End of Tape #1

TAPE #2

Q: So you started out of the camp.

A: All right. Now, you must understand that an awful lot of these things that I have been describing is very, very difficult to talk about.

Q: Did you ever find out what happened to the man who was, uh, spiked against the board?

A: No. No, uh, that I did not. Uh, I have often wondered about that; and people have asked me about that man. Uh, we had to leave him in that condition. And (clearing throat) so we turned; and we started, side-by-side, walking down this main street with thousands of the survivors. And I don't... And I'm not exaggerating. This camp must have been huge. And they were all walking behind us, very quietly. And, of course, I turned around a couple of times; and I told them, "You people go back. Because we're going to start shooting now, and I don't want you people hurt." But they stayed right with us. And it was almost like a parade. And shortly, we came to the first houses on the outskirts of the city. And suddenly, a woman--a German woman--come running out the right hand side, uh, toward me. And she, apparently, knew that I was the commanding, uh, man in this group. She reached me and grabbed me by the shirt, and locked her hands into my shirt. And she began begging me. And she said, "I was teacher in America, in Cleveland, Ohio, uh, before the war." And then she looked around. She was scared. And she started telling me that she didn't know anything of what was going on in that camp. "I didn't know! I didn't know!" And I became rather infuriated at that point. And I turned around. Now all the...most of the European people are smaller than we are, except for the German people. And I turned around; and here's a sea of humanity. And I could see over the top of their heads. And I could see the camp, uh, which wasn't very far from us. I could see the gates. I could see the barbed wire. I could see the towers. And I could actually see the...the hanging ropes, where we cut all these people down. And incidently, in those ropes...Hopper had come to me, uh, earlier, and he brought me over there after they cut them down. And these people--most of them that had clothing on--they tied their wrists behind them, and then they hung them by the wrist backwards. There was two people, two men, that were nude. They tied their wrists behind them and...with piano wire; and then they took a hook of some kind, and they ran it through their privates. And they hung them upside down and left them that way. Which is an appalling thing to do to somebody. Anyway, this woman came to me. And she [was] telling...trying to tell me that she didn't know. The odor of this whole area was terrible. And then I turned back to her, after looking back at the camp and even seeing the ropes from this distance; and I slapped her hard across the face. I was infur...I was furious. And I called her a...a damn liar. And she fell to the ground, let go of my shirt. And she was crying. And we all walked around her and kept on going. All of a sudden...and I ordered my men then... Now, [when] we got to the buildings, I said, "Some of you guys start going through these...this building over here. Some of you guys start going through there." All of a sudden, the...the survivors themselves began running like mad. And I said, "Whoa!" I started yelling at them, "Whoa! Wait a minute! Come back here!" I says, "You can't go in there. There's going to be shooting. And they're

going to go there." And I says, uh...and I realized now, looking at this massive crowd that there's no way 16 of us are gonna, uh, control this mob--especially if they get excited. So I told them, "Okay. Go ahead. You help find the...the German soldier." "But," I says, "He's my prisoner. You bring him back here, and you put him right there on the ground. I'll stay right here." So I stood in the middle of the street. My men and the survivors started going through all the buildings, all the closets, and everything else. They found...actually found armed, uh, Wehrmacht soldiers, uh, and dragged them down the street. They were spitting at them. They were kicking at them, and all this; but they, uh, abided by my rule, and they brought them and threw them on the ground beside me. When I...I noticed that they would start getting excited and start talking like mad, then I would tell them, "Okay. Go find me some more, uh, German soldiers." And they'd take off and they'd start scattering, running again. When they did that, then I ordered one of my men to take these prisoners; and take them back behind and turn them over as prisoners. I didn't want a massacre here. We finally came to the edge of the city, after going through. There wasn't much of a fight in the city. The...most of everybody had deserted. And then Captain...uh, the Colonel of our battalion ordered us into the woods instead. Uh, which was normal procedure; because we knew once the German army found out that we had taken the city, that they would actually blow up their own city with artillery. So I turned around to the survivors. And I told them...I said, "Now, I want all of you to go back. We're going in the forest. All of you go back to the camp, where you're gonna be safe. Because now the Germans are going to shell the city, and blow...destroy it. And I don't want you people hurt." They abided; and they turned around. Uh, many of them throwing kisses to us, and that kind of thing (clearing throat) there. The... We went into the woods and dug in for the night. And then I started to walk from hole to hole. Little foxholes, two men usually in each hole. And I was checking for the positions, to make sure they were digging in the right position for defense and all that. As I came to each hole--and I'm standing up in the dead of night, and I'm looking down at the men--and I believe that every single man was crying. And they'd look up at me; and generally, the gist of it was that most of them looked up at me and said...asked me, "Why?" Of course, I understood what they were asking me. Why did the Germans do that to those people? And I had no answer for them. The next morning, or sometime during the night, we moved out. And we began engaging the German Army and chasing them through the woods. And, uh, we came to a huge valley. The entire battalion came to the valley. And the Germans were across the valley... and with ack-ack batteries. And they were firing...now firing at us. So that Colonel Hook decided that the only way to take them was to order us to, uh, spread out as far as we could, and stand up and walk across the entire valley. And which we did. As we got...uh, I had one of the points. In other words, the foremost troops in the group. And as we come to the edge of the, uh, hills and started to go up the hills, the Germans that were up there on the artillery guns began to desert their guns and run. We climbed up and began [to] overrun the guns themselves. And at this point, I noticed two of my new men, that, uh, just came into combat for the first time, had three German SS prisoners. The SS wore different uniforms entirely than the Wehrmacht did. And I noticed...at that point, I ran...began to run over to where they were. And I fired a shot at one of them. One of the SS troopers had his hands down like this. And I fired a shot at his feet; and I yelled for him to "Hands hoch!"--[to] put his hands high. And my two men began to call out, "Well, we got the situation well

in hand." And I told them they were crazy; that they were almost dead men. And I pointed out that the one SS trooper with his hands down low was reaching down to touch the buckle on his belt. It was a big brass buckle, with a Swastika and so on on it. Touch a button, the heavy brass buckle dropped down. Instantly, three little tiny barrels of 22 shots drop down and would fire directly into your belly. And we.... Thus, we called them "belly guns." And so all this time that I was chastising my men and teaching them this, I was watching the eyes--or the faces--of these SS troopers. They had the Death['s]-Head SS insignia on them. So then I knew by the expression on their face, that one...which one could speak English. And I addressed him immediately. And I said, "Were you men in this camp behind us?" And the SS trooper looked at me, and he realized I knew he spoke English. And he said, "Yes." And then I searched for a question. And I knew it was ridiculous for me to ask him why they put people behind the prison...behind barbed wire, why they tortured them and murdered them and all this; because of the attitude of the German nation at that time. So I finally decided; and asked him, "Well, why didn't you, at least, take care of the...treat the diseases in the camp?" And he look at me, and he stood erect. And he said, "Why should we? They were all going to die anyway." And I had everything I could do to control my temper, and not kill the three of them right then and there. So I reached out, and I grabbed the, uh...the, uh...the Death['s]-Head insignia off all three of them. I took the belly gun off the one; and I took another belt buckle off the...off a second one. And (clearing throat) with our morals.... And people have asked me many times since then, "At the scene, or leaving the camp... When you left the camp, why didn't you go into the city and shoot every German that you found?" And the only answer I have is that because the Germans--or the German SS troopers, in particular--became animals in those days didn't mean that I could lower myself to those standards. And that was a very, very important part, or fact[or], in those days: that we had to have something to stand by and believe in.

Q: Uh, did you interrogate these, uh, three SS men, uh, any further, or did they go off...?

A: No. Uh, we just uh searched them thoroughly and, uh, made sure that they didn't have any weapons, or any--like the SS normal...very often did--have, uh, TNT inside their shirts. And they...at times, they would actually blow themselves up--and you with them--as you searched them. But we, uh...we searched them thoroughly. And then, uh, I detailed one man to take them back as prisoners and turn them over to...to our company headquarters. And...and thus back to a prison camp. But they were marked as war crimes, as were the German women guards at the camp, uh, there. Uh, now, we really didn't understand what would happen to them from that point on. Except that they would...we hoped, would draw more attention than the other prisoners would, uh, that we would turn back to them.

Q: At that point, did you run into other camps, or other...?

A: Yah. Then we continued on that particular day, as I remember. And now we had learned, uh... In fact, we had overrun the column that had gone out the back side of that camp. I believe--and...and I'm assuming--uh, uh, but through certain other facts, that in this particular

column was Dov Shelanski (ph), who eventually became the Prime Minister of Israel.[21] Uh, I do understand, uh, that he was in this column being taken away and that the Germans were killing the prisoners as fast as they could while they were taking them back away from our line. Now, we had cut through and cut them off and...uh ...the men, as I can remember at this particular column, they uh... the men were coming down out of the woods and seeing and hearing the Germans shooting the prisoners. And perhaps...and they were bayoneting them, and whatever. I believe they shot everyone of those guards. They didn't give them a chance to surrender. But then they relieved these prisoners that were coming out of the camp. Now, we moved on; and we were coming to another camp not very far away, called Moosburg.[22] The quick, uh, history of Moosburg that it was designed as a Stalag [**NB:** Prisoner of War camp] for the airmen.[23] And they were normally treated rather quite well during the war, until this period of time. The camp was designed for 3,000 prisoners. Now, as we overran the camp, [it] held over 30,000 prisoners in it. Instead of having just airmen, prisoners from the Allies--that would be the Canadians, English, and the Americans--they now held a lot of Jews that had been taken away from the master camp at Dachau and Dachau, uh, No. 2 were in Moosburg. There were many of our own men [**NB:** from the US 394th Infantry Regiment], that were captured during the Battle of the Bulge, uh, were brought down on forced march. And they knew they didn't have a chance, apparently, to go by and go into Mauthausen. So they detoured them into Moosburg. At this point, we had....because of Dachau 3B, we knew that what the Germans were doing...that they were taking prisoners out the back gate. So our battalion that night made a "pincer movement"--as the Germans called it--attacked heavily, and one point broke through the German line. We came in during the night, behind the camp of Moosburg. In front, the armored uh...uh, battalion that was attached to us came in at the main gate. I understand that they had a bit of fight to begin with; and then they broke in and blew their way in the gate, and came in the front gate. Uh, then...uh, I and my men were given, shall we say, a little bit of a reprieve and told to come in the back gate. And we started finding some of our own buddies, that had been captured during the Bulge, in there. Uh, which was an incredible thing; because at this stage of the war and everything else, whether on purpose or design.... Uh, but all these men were horribly starved. These were American soldiers, Jews...as I say, there were other Europeans there. They were many... The... And we noticed distinctly that the British, Canadians, American airmen that were there were in much better physical condition. They were much better treated, whether by...by design or...or events, uh, there. The American soldier from the 99th Division, the 106th and the 28th Division that were brought in, in these columns were in horrible condition. And, uh, of course, as I say, we got a chance to talk with some of them. And I remember so distinctly some of the men talking to me excitedly. And they said, "Do you remember when we were back in Camp Maxey, Texas, and two orders were--when we were declared hot...." In other words, the outfit was fit for combat, and we were now going

[21] There has been no Prime Minister of Israel by this name since 1948.

[22] According to US military records, this would have happened around April 29 or April 30, 1945.

[23] Officially designated by the Nazis as Stalag VIIA.

to go to Europe in combat. Two orders came down from the higher command. Number one, that all men with tattoos would have their tattoos removed at their cost. No reason given for that. Now we had gone through Dachau, we knew why. But obviously, the American Army knew long time before what was happening to prisoners. Number two, all men in the line companies--now, roughly speaking, half the infantry, uh, divisions are behind the lines as intelligence, as supply, artillery, and all this kind of thing. But the linemen were the men who were going to actually do the fighting, were in the line companies, [and] all had to be circumcised. And I understand the 106th Division, which was formed about the same time we were, was treated the same way. Now, these men were describing in Moosburg what happened. "...that you remember back there, when we were circumcised?" "Yes, I remember." Now, when they were captured during the Battle of the Bulge and the Germans began examining them, they found these men circumcised--at the same period of time that the Germans are hunting all over Europe for the Jew, the only men in Europe at that time that were circumcised. And here they had black men. They had Indians. They had Mexicans. And they had all the different religious men were circumcised. And I would assume that they were probably dumbfounded. But they separated them from the other Americans. The Black men, almost immediately as soon as they captured them, they took them aside. And we're finding out now they piano wired their wrists behind them; and then they began to bayonet them, sticking the bayonets up under their throat here, through their privates, and through other parts of their bodies first, before they finally ran them through and killed them. And they left them.

Q: These were soldiers?

A: These were American soldiers. Black men. Uh, I have now been asking an awful lot of the ex-POWs the same question. "Have you, while you were an American soldier...prisoner of the Germans, did you--on the force marches, the death marches, or in the prison camps--ever see any American Black soldiers?" And every one of them, at this point now--and I'm getting an awful lot of letters in--every one of them answered me, "No." They've never seen a Black prisoner back in Germany. In the columns, as they were captured and taken back to behind the lines during the Bulge, the SS troopers who--most of them could speak English--began ordering the prisoners to expose their dog tags. So the American took the dog tags out, [and] hung them out. Immediately, the Germans started...uh, the SS trooper started going down, uh, the prisoners, looking at their dog tags. Your name is on it. There is a letter designat...on the top, designating your blood type; and on the bottom, there is a letter designating your religion. Every man with a letter H--"Hebrew"--was immediately pushed aside, and their heads were blown off right there. They were also looking for the man of German descent. Apparently, the Germans resented that they didn't go to Germany and join the German Army. But immediately in the columns, as I understand now from these men, they realized what was happening. They began--the Indians, the Mexicans, the men of dark skin--began swapping dog tags with the Jew. Other men, uh, Catholics and Protestant, began passing up their Bibles to the Jews. And thus, they could...many of them bluffed their way through. Uh, very close friend of mine--George Golman, from Dallas, Texas--uh, still had... Last year, when he called me from Dallas, and he told me: he says, "Whitey," he says, "you

know, I still have that Bible that saved my life." He said, "When the SS trooper came for me, he started to reach out for the dogtag. And I started telling him that I was a Catholic." And he says, "I can recite anything in the book. You open the page, and I'll recite it to you." And he bluffed his way; uh, and the SS trooper moved on. And thus this...these tactics saved a lot...a lot of these men's lives. It was an incredible facts that are coming out now, of what happened to those men. Now, I find with, uh, a lot of these men are telling me that as they...those who survived the marches--where they were brutalized, beaten, some shot, uh, a great many of them horribly starved. They picked up many of the diseases en route; and, of course, especially dysentery. Many of them probably died of dysentery. But those who survived to get to the different camps--such as Hammelburg. Uh, it's a key camp. As the survivors got into the camp, they were detailed so many men to a barracks in the prison camp. And this is a Stalag, now--for POWs. Not a concentration camp. And these men then were...went into the barracks and were assigned a bunk. Immediately, in came a group of German soldiers to each barrack; and commanded that the "Jew boys" step forward, is the way the termed it. The prisoners in there began yelling out, calling out to the men: "Don't do it! Don't do it!" Unfortunately, some of the Jews stepped forward. These are American soldiers. And they were immediately taken out. Now, others did not step forward and, uh, declare themselves. The men who declared themselves as Jews were immediately taken out of the barracks. They were never seen again. Over and over again, the other prisoners keep telling me this. Now, along came a letter from another man--uh, McCracken, his name is--and he was in the regimental, uh, medics. And he said he was among the men who liberated that camp of Hammelburg. He began exploring, after the excitement was all over; and he went into one particular building, and down into the basement. And here he found a room, as he declares, as a execution room. One whole wall covered with lead and bullet marks. At the base of the, uh, wall is a trench, to carry the blood, and a drainhole. We're trying to investigate much deeper into these facts, uh, as we go along now. But all these little facts are starting to come out, and put a much better picture of what was happening. But it was, uh, very strange to find an execution chamber in a Stalag.

Q: So, uh, from your, uh... After you left Dachau and went to the next camp, uh...which was...

A: Moosburg.

Q: Yah. The Moosburg camp. What happened after that? Did you...?

A: Okay. We then moved on out of the camp, leaving the prisoners behind. Uh, and then we were heading toward a city called Landshut, not very far from there. And, uh, here there was another camp. Uh, it was in our minds not significant. It wasn't a horror camp--at least, as much as I know about it. Uh, this camp at Landshut, uh, contained, uh, I believe, almost all English and Canadian, uh, troops. Uh, they had already been liberated at this point, as we were marching through; and a lot of the prisoners were coming out of the camps. And they, of course, waving to you as...as normal, and uh, even saluting us, and everything else. And it was, uh, a stage of glory, should we say, and happiness at this point. And we continued on by the camp itself, and we began... Now, this was on the border of Austria. And we that night,

uh, took over some farm houses. And then, uh, Captain Pat called me, uh, to his headquarters--that farm house he was in--and he told me... Now, he assigned me that I was gonna, uh, take a patrol into Austria. And this patrol, he says, "I'm gonna ask you to volunteer. Uh, and your men." Uh, he gave me the details. As best as I can remember now, uh, that I'm being assigned three tanks with rubber tracks. I'm to take my men on the top of those tanks, to protect them. We're to hit the German lines, uh, during the middle of the night. I believe that was about, probably, two o'clock in the morning. And break through; not fight unless we had to, but keep on going. Just fight our way through, and go behind the German lines. Keep on going down this particular road for approximately 30, 35 miles. And down in there somewhere was a bridge that I was to try to take and stop the Germans from blowing up. That was my basic mission. Thus, we did this. And as I believe to this day, uh, that, uh, a famous cartoonist--now I can't think of his name...uh, Bill Mauldin--uh, was standing in the background, in the kitchen at the time. And he came up; and he asked me...he asked Captain Pat if he could go on that patrol. And Captain told him, he says, "Well, that's not my decision." He says, "You'll have to ask Sargeant Whiteway." And I looked at him, and I said, "Well, you understand, this is apparently a suicide patrol. That we're not going to get any help for some time. I cannot protect you. You are a civilian, technically; and you can't carry any weapons, according to the Geneva Conference [Convention]. And I cannot protect you. I don't have enough men." He said, "I agree." He says, "I want to go with you." So he rode on one of the tanks. But I...I think I put him on the third tank. And uh...so we broke through the lines. We had a...we had a few gun fights, and...but we kept on going. And uh...or reboarded the tanks after we, uh, initially, uh, cleared the way. And then we rode all night, and through ...'til just about dawn. As I can remember, it was daylight when we came within sight of the bridge. And as we...then got off the tanks and we spread my men out to protect my tanks, and then we started to move up. And we got pretty close to the bridge; and the Germans there blew the bridge up in our faces. So now the mission was blown. Uh, the only thing I could do, there was a clearing--an opening, a little small field. And I told the tanks, I says, "Okay, pull in here. We'll make a big circle around you and dig in. And you guys dig the tanks in the middle of that." Which we did. Now, the Germans were coming in from all directions; and they totally surrounded us. And we could see them put a blockade up, uh, on the road, so we couldn't escape. And we were sweat...began to sweat. We stayed there for countless hours. And everybody's asking me, "What the heck are they doing?" I said, "The only thing I can think of..." And, of course, at times I was communicating with the tankers, who radioed back our condition. Uh, that the Germans were waiting to bring in "Tiger" tanks to blow our tanks up. And we had no defense against them. But we waited and waited; and finally, we could hear way down the valley an American jeep. They have a very distinct sound. And he was winding his way down. And so we kept looking there, and finally we could see him. And we started yelling to him to go back, go back. He approached the, uh...the blockade. The Germans opened up the blockade and let him in. We couldn't understand what the heck was happening. And then the two guys in the jeep drove right up to us through the German lines; and they yelled out, "It's all over! Forget about it. It's the end of the war!"[24]

[24] In the European theatre, the war ended May 9, 1945.

Q: While you were in Cherbourg, did you also run into some prisoners of war there?

A: Ok. Yah. After the war, and on our...so-called "on our way home," uh, for discharge. And we took over; and we were assigned occupation, temporarily, uh, in the city of Cherbourg, France. And we had 200,000 German prisoners there. And at times, uh, we would go up, uh, between--when we were off-duty, and so on--uh, on patrol, we would go up and we'd watch the Germans playing European football. As today, we call it soccer. And they were very good at it. But, of course, they had nothing else to do. So uh, they'd be out there playing; and then they come over talking to us, uh...uh, at the end of their games, and things like that. And, uh, they could...uh, some of them could speak English. Some could speak some English, and visa versa. We was already learned a certain amount of German. So we could communicate quite easily. And I...there was a colonel, a German officer, standing there. And I questioned him. I said, "You know, I'm very puzzled about one thing." I said, "Everywhere I've gone in Europe here, during the war and after the war, that I can find no young men. In France, in Belgium, over in Denmark, there's no young men. What happened to them?" And the colonel stood erect. And he said, "Well, we officers--or we Germans--occupying these countries had a problem. That we knew that there would be one group that would most resent what we were going to do to the civilians. That was the young men. So as we overran the towns, the villages, the neighborhoods and the cities, we immediately rounded up all the people. And we separated all the young men from 16...or 15 or 16 to 25, stand over there against a stone wall. We set up firing squads, and we immediately shot everyone of them, in every living country we went into. Voilà! No problem." (Clearing throat)

Q: Shocking!

A: Very shocking. Uh... But then I began to understand the German mind. Of course, there were many other things that came out of this. Of their attitudes of the German occupation of these countries, and so on; and their intimidation and their firing squads, and why, are there.

Q: In all your experience that you've already described to us, what were your feelings? What...what would you like to say about it?

A: All right. Of course, uh, after, uh...at the very end of the war there, we did overrun--right somewhere in that immediate vicinity--and only saw part of one of the Mauthausens. There was 42, as I understand now. And we saw some awful horrors there. And even, uh, cannibalism in the camp. But these... Like Dachau. And we were so shocked. And Professor Crawford asked me after the war, he said... Now, he asked me the same question about my emotions, how I felt...thought about it. And he asked me another question, "Did you men during the war--after you left the camp, or after the war, or even at home--talk about these terrible camps and these horrors that you saw?" And I suddenly realized, number one, that all this time I had been assuming that as we radioed--like, for instance, in Dachau--that we radioed back constantly all the things that we were finding to the company; to be reported, we assumed, on the, uh, daily reports of the military, that here they, uh...all the reports itself

would be turned in. But I also assumed that due to us communicating with the men behind us, that all of a sudden everybody in the battalion would be coming into the camp and taking a look at all these horrors that we saw. It didn't happen. Nobody came. And we were ordered out, to go help the battalion fight for the camp. I found out since that somebody in the division has deleted every single word of every camp all over Germany that we had entered. Every single word had been disappeared. Nobody seemed to care. Of the human misery, or anything else there. And this shocked me. But at the end of the war--without even knowing about this, but just assuming that everybody else around me and the company had gone in--it was so distasteful to remember this that we tried to shut it off. We did not ever talk amongst each other about one single word about any of these things that happened in the camps. From the shock, from all the human misery, uh, in France, Belgium....the misery among ourselves, the misery about all the Germans that we shot and left wounded on the ground, crying and begging...uh, to the German civilians who were bombed and fire-bombed. It was total misery all the time we were over there. So, by the end of the war, we became very, very bitter men. And it took us a long time to come out of this bitterness. Of the human misery. Not so much, uh, because of the war and what the Germans did, but the...all the misery that we had seen, of everybody. Uh, those are terrible, terrible memories. And for 40 years, approximately, I buried all those memories in my mind. When I came back home, I remember trying to tell some of the adventures, some of the things that happened to me. And everybody--my friends, my family--the minute you'd start talking about the war at all, they'd say, "Forget it. It's all over. We don't want to hear it. We don't care." And this... And I actually was even humiliated. "Oh. You were in the big one!" And things like that. And becoming embarrassed or humiliated like that, that you'd bottle the things up even deeper. So finally when Professor Crawford approached me the first time, and I began to remember some. When I first started to testify and talk about it, even for the first few years, I could only remember just so much. And it was all kind of jumbled, and locations were jumbled in my mind. After a while, all of a sudden, things started to straighten out. But I have not had a nightmare since. And that's a very big point, uh, there.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to, uh...to add.

A: Uh, there is so very many stories of human misery and so on. But pertaining to the camps...uh...

Q: You've been very, very helpful in this...in this very unpleasant recollection.

A: It is...very unpleasant. I hope that people can understand, uh, what it was like. Hmm.

Q: Thank you very much for coming and talking to us.

A: All right.

PHOTOGRAPHS

(1) Curtis Whiteway in uniform at Camp Craw, South Carolina, where he received training as an Army Ranger. He was 18 years old at the time the photo was taken.

(2) Surrender of Lt. Albert Ernst and 42,000 German soldiers [including guards from the nearby camp of Hemer] at Iserlohn, Germany, on April 16, 1945.

(3) Second view of the Germans surrendering to the American regimental commander of the 394th Infantry Regiment, Lt. Col. Robert Kriz, at Iserlohn, Germany, on April 16, 1945.