

Fagiolo, Romeo
English
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In this interview, Romeo Fagiolo, born January 29, 1922 in Washington, D.C., tells the story of his service in the U.S. Army during World War II. He comments on his army training and deployment and the attitude he and his family had toward him joining. He remembers his campaigns through Europe starting in France at the Battle of the Bulge, and then his movement across Southern France into Germany. He also remembers the liberation of Dachau including his observations there and his stay in Munich.

00:31 – 06:38

Fagiolo talks about his birth in Washington, D.C. on January 29, 1922; recounts growing up in D.C. and graduating from high school there in June 1941; remembers being drafted February 1943 for the army and his basic training at **Fort Hood**, Texas, which had then just opened; remembers the reaction of his parents to being drafted and his family's history in America; recalls his parents sending him off to basic training; mentions his progress at Fort Hood from training to teaching and his request for **Army Specialized Training Corp** (ASTC); mentions spending four months at **Texas A&M** before it was disbanded and being sent back to Fort Hood; mentions being placed in the infantry and training soldiers for one cycle before being sent to **Camp Gruber**, Oklahoma with the **42nd Infantry** Division; reports being in that camp from July-August until being shipped overseas in November 1944;

06:39 – 14:05

He lands in **Marseille** and then moved up and caught the lines; explains why his infantry was sent quickly and that he was sent immediately to **Battle of the Bulge**; recounts his first memories of Marseille and the civilians he encountered there including which flag they would choose to wave; recalls landing in **CP2** and meeting Bed Check Charlie, a German plane that would fly overhead at night; reports that he was sent over as a Corporal and became a Staff Sergeant after Battle of the Bulge at the end of January; remembers a close friend who died in the battle and tell the story of his last night; remembers fighting in an anti-tank that had been short on supplies and weapons; recalls being taken close to **Nancy** for three weeks after the battle until March to refill the ranks before leaving for an offense; reports that there was not heavy resistance through France; remembers crossing the **Rhine** on Easter Sunday in the south; recalls taking three or four cities.

14:06 – 24:25

He remembers coming into contact with German **prisoners of war**, explaining that they were always surrendering; tells story of being approached by a German soldier with a white flag who had a circular from Eisenhower encouraging him to surrender and promising good care; remembers that it was very hard to distinguish the age of German prisoners because they were dirty and hadn't shaved and that they would say they were Poles; recalls coming into contact with **civilian population**; explains that the difference between German and French civilians was that Germans were well-clothed and seemed to live a better life; recounts a story of a French

woman and her experience as a prisoner with poor treatment from Germans; recalls hearing that when French female prisoners were liberated they were scared to leave their cells; takes pride in American treatment of prisoners including giving them food and clothes; remembers that a reunion of soldiers the French woman came back to meet the soldiers who liberated her; recalls that once in Germany he got lost with his squad trying to get back to his line and a German gave him directions in perfect English and lead them back to their lines; tells that you could tell the war was coming to an end but you would hit pockets of resistance; reports that he did not lose many men during this time and that most losses were due to frostbite; recalls the miserable **conditions**, sleeping in fields, using the bathroom in the snow, and their fears; states they had good **billets**.

24:26 – 30:16

He reports not knowing anything about the situation of the **Jews**, except hearing about Germany's militarization when he was still in high school in Washington D.C. and that some newspapers reported they were torturing Jews; when asked how long it took to get from the Rhine to Munich, he says it took about three weeks but that in the infantry he never knew where he was or what the date was; says that he had no interaction with tanks in Germany like he did in France; tells that **battle fatigue** only happened when he stayed in one place, that it was easier to keep moving and that is what they did; says they always had steady movement, even when he had an ear infection he tried to get the medics but everyone was moving so fast it took him three days amidst shelling; explains that the shelling came from **Polish men** set up as a line of resistance behind German soldiers, so when Germans retreated the Polish were there with guns to fire on the American troops; reports that the Germans at that point were desperate and that could be why they put the Poles in artillery positions; recalls how when he was lost, he was in a similar position of desperation; tells that he has a detailed map of his route through France and Germany before getting to Munich.

30:17 – 32:33

He describes **Munich** as a result of the bombing; he describes his impressions of the city and the civilians there and the hard life they had; tells that the civilian routines to avoid bombings were very hard; explains that he always respected the German civilians but some soldiers weren't as liberal as him; tells a story of marching German P.O.Ws through Munich and the reaction of German citizens and his fellow soldiers; remembers that he had no malice toward anyone except if he had captured **Hitler**, which he had always really hoped for, like the Germans hoped to capture Eisenhower as a dream;

32:34 - 38:22

He reports that he went to **Dachau** before Munich and that there's bitterness because the 45th and 42nd both got there and try to claim they arrived first; reports that he entered Dachau from the south side and went through the **gates** because troops had been in front of them; tells his first encounter was the **railroad car** and saw fifty cars filled with corpses; recounts seeing a lady who had been on the train and gotten off with her baby and soon collapsed where he found them dead; feels disturbed by how much the people had to suffer; recalls having rode on the railroad cars in ideal conditions; remembers not knowing at that point when they came up on them who the corpses were; recalls entering Dachau and seeing many people alive but they seemed like they

were living dead; recalls that they lost 200 people a day after they left Dachau; reports that he did not talk to any of the people there as they were filthy and dirty and he would push them away if they tried to talk to him; recalls an instance of one prisoner approaching him; recalls pushing people away if they tried to hug him; reports that some prisoners were in better shape than others and they had to secure the camp and contain them because the prisoners had been very diseased and didn't want the **disease** to spread outside the camp; reports that the **medics** came in with blankets and food and took care of them but not for very long; recalls that his division did not see guards, but the **45th division** went into the barracks and killed 35 **S.S.** as the electric fence hadn't been turned on, making it easy for the troops to get in.

38:23 – 43:14

He takes pride in the fact that walking along the railroad tracks the G.I.s in front of him heard a moan, and walked along the corpses to find a man still alive and pulled him out and saved him, and then 50 years later in 1995 the man they pulled out came to a reunion in Munich and was now very wealthy; remembers that they did not expect to find the camp in the magnitude that it was, with **corpses** everywhere and the **crematorium** with blood mixed into the soil; recalls the **showers** that prisoners had to clean up that was shaped like an umbrella and very filthy; remembers that when they walked into the camp there were about 30,000 people, cites reading that figure in a book he gets his information from; reports that he entered Dachau on Sunday afternoon, staying in an office building; recalls that each desk in the office building had blue and black ink and that there was a bust of Hitler that all of his soldiers would shoot at; reports that he left Dachau the next morning when they were bringing in people from the **city of Dachau** and walk through the camp, denying that they knew anything about it.