

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Romeo Fagiolo
March 1, 2010
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Romeo Fagiolo, conducted by Ina Navazelskis on March 1, 2010 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Silver Spring, Maryland 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.

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ROMEO FAGIOLO

March 1, 2010

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Romeo Fagiolo**, conducted by **Ina Navazelskis** on March 1st, 2010, at **Leisure World** in **Silver Spring, Maryland**. Mr. **Fagiolo**, can you tell us a little bit about your background; where you were born; where you grew up; your family, and so on and so forth?

Answer: Yeah, I was born in **Washington, D.C.**, and I made a historic beginning. I was born the night that the **Knickerbocker** Theater in **Washington** collapsed.

Q: Oh my.

A: Yeah, that – they – the roof collapsed on the 28th, and I was born on the 29th.

Q: On the 29th of which month and –

A: Of January, 1922.

Q: And you grew up in **Washington**?

A: I grew up in **Washington**, I went to all school in here. I went to **Central High School** and graduated. And then I was – I graduated from high school in June of '41. So you know what I was doing on December of '42 –

Q: I can imagine.

A: k – or '41. So I had no education other than a high school education, and I was drafted in February of – of 1943, and I took my basic training at the infas – infamous **Fort Hood**, or at that time was known as **Camp Hood**. And the camp had

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just opened, as a matter of fact, we slept in the motor pool, because the barracks weren't ready for us.

Q: Can you tell us where was this camp?

A: Camp in **Texas**, in **Killeen, Texas**. And I – I stayed there for about a year. I took my basic training there, and I was sent to a s-school. When I graduated from the school, they kept me there as an instructor, and I stayed maybe six or seven months.

Q: How is it that you came into the army rather than one of the other branches of military service?

A: Well, that's my own fault, I wanted to go into the Air Force, and I took the Air Force exam, passed it. But I was drafted before the Air Force could get to me. And the rule in that day is, once you're drafted, you can't choose your service.

Q: I see.

A: Your service has to be picked prior to your induction.

Q: Are you the only son in your family?

A: Yes, I –

Q: Were there any girls?

A: Yes, I had one sister, who is now deceased.

Q: And your parents, when you were drafted, how did they respond to it? Were they upset, were they –

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A: No, they weren't, they – I – I think in those days I – I – we looked at it as an honor to go into the – into the army. And if you were rejected, or become a **4F**, it was really – I've seen men cry because they were turned down.

Q: Yeah.

A: But my parents were from **Italy**. They were born over there. They met while they were in the **United States**. And the oddity is that two sisters married two brothers. And they were – well, you know, we just lived here, and my father took me down to **Georgetown** and put me on the bus, and as he was walking away, I saw him cry, I had – I'd – I'd never – never saw – never saw my father cry too often. But I guess he was happy. But they were always good to me, I had a good family. And so I went to **Fort Hood**. And after I taught there for awhile, I tried to get out of teaching. I – I wanted to get into a – a lion outfit, which was a – not – not necessarily a fighting outfit, but do something other than just teach my whole career. So I put in for what they called **ASTP**.

Q: What does that stand for?

A: I-It stand for Army Specialized Training Corp.

Q: Okay.

A: And the purpose of that was, you would go to some university, get a degree from college, and upon graduation you were obligated to serve two years as an officer in

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the army. So I went to **Texas A&M**, and I was there about maybe four months, and they disbanded –

Q: The program?

A: – the program. So they sent me back, at that time was **Camp Hood**, and during the interim, the camp had changed from a – a tank destroyer, to the infantry.

Q: Why was it called an infamous camp?

A: Well, ni – because of the recent – the recent episode –

Q: Ah, that.

A: Yeah, that.

Q: Okay, because of that, okay, yeah.

A: But it – it – it's one of the largest camps in the **U.S. Army**. I think from one end of the spectrum to the other is like 26 miles. That's why it's a –

Q: Okay. So you're talking about a shooting that took place in 2009, but you were there half a century –

A: Before.

Q: – before. Yeah, okay.

A: So anyway, I ended up in the infantry, and I did one – I – I was a

[indecipherable] for one cycle, training soldiers. And then I got orders to go to

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Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, which was the 42nd infantry division. And I was in that camp, I think July or in August, and we moved out in – in November, probably –

Q: How large was the division?

A: It was – well, one infantry division usually consists of about 30,000 men.

Q: That's a lot.

A: Yeah.

Q: And – and you moved out in –

A: Well, then – then – then we were shipped overseas.

Q: In what time?

A: It was in November of '44.

Q: So, already after **D-Day**.

A: Oh yeah. **D-Day** had passed.

Q: And so where – where was your first European landing with the division?

A: In **Marseilles**.

Q: In **Marseilles**, okay.

A: And from there we went up and we caught the lines. And the reason they closed the **ASTP** is that they had lost more men on **D-Day** than – than we've advertised or reported. So they were short of infantry people. And when we went over, we were only the three infantry divisions. Artillery, the medics and everything else didn't

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come over until January. So when we got there, they told us we were going to a quiet sector, the whole alliance. Well, the quiet sector turned out to be the Battle of the Bulge.

Q: Oh my.

A: At **Bastogne**.

Q: Oh my.

A: So we lo – we were green soldiers and we probably made a lot of mistakes, but we lost a lot of good men.

Q: Can you tell me about what happened to you, what you remember from that time, where you were?

A: You mean from –

Q: When you were in these battles, when you were in the – you know, when you had landed in **Marseilles**, your first memories of what you saw.

A: Saw is just going up through **France**, which we – by that time had already been secured. And the thing I remember is the civilians, they had so set – two sets of flags. They had a white one and – and an American one. So it depend who was going by, which flag they would wave out of the window.

Q: Oh my. Oh my.

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A: But we landed, it was very cold. We landed at what they call **CP2**, which was a

—

Q: Mm-hm, what does that mean?

A: That was where they organized the — the soldiers at — at — once they co — you leave the boat. And that's where we met Bed Check **Charlie**, that was a German plane. They would come over every night, and that was a nickname that we gave them.

Q: Bad check **Charlie**?

A: Bal — Bed Check **Charlie**.

Q: Bed Check **Charlie**.

A: Yeah. He made sure we got to bed.

Q: Yeah.

A: Never fired on us, just flew over. So that was it, and then they — they rushed us to the front, and that's when we hit the — the Battle of the Bulge, the snow and the freezing weather, and —

Q: You were in that?

A: Yeah, I was in that. I went over as a corporal, and we lost so many men, that I became a staff sergeant overnight.

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Q: Were you – and how long did that battle la – well, th – for you, how long did that battle last?

A: That battle last until the end of January.

Q: So for – for –

A: For a month, five weeks.

Q: For a month, five weeks.

A: And my birthday is the 29th of January, and that was the date that they took us off the front, and that was my birthday present.

Q: Pretty good birthday present.

A: Yup.

Q: I remember when I lived in **The Netherlands**, there is a cemetery outside the town that I lived, maintained by the American military, and they had bring – brought in a lot of the soldiers who died in the Battle of the Bulge. Not only that battle, but a lot of others.

A: Oh, that [indecipherable]

Q: It was – and th-the hills are just covered, they're just covered. And f – very moving, very moving to walk around there.

A: It is, it is, it is. The first person that I lost when we hit the front, was wit – was an old timer, and he was drafted when he was 30, you know, and that was the upper

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[**indecipherable**]. And we became good friends. He was in the insurance business, my father was also, so we had a little common interest in that. Before we went overseas, we used to go to the **PX** –

Q: [**sneeze**] Excuse me, excuse me. I was going to stifle that one.

A: Oh, that's all right, that's all right. So anyway, we became good friends, we'd go to the **PX** and so forth. And the first night that we were in battle, I had a sleeping bag, it was down. And I got it on a raffle, cause they only gave one per platoon. So the first night we tried to bed down, I couldn't find my bedroll. And it was common in the army to say it was a midnight requisition, that somebody had acquired it. So anyway, the next day – his name was **Clifford**, he came over to me and he says, **Romeo**, I'm sorry, I grabbed your bedroll by mistake. Cause he knew it was mine, cause it was the only one.

Q: That was down.

A: So I said, that's okay, **Cliff**. But anyway, about three hours later, he was dead, so I always felt that he had his last night on this good earth, in my nice sleeping bag.

Q: At least warm, yeah.

A: Yeah. So –

Q: Do you – were you there when he –

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A: No, he was on another si – another gun post. We were in the anti-tank, and when we got there we were supposed to have three anti-tank guns, and three trucks. And we got no t – we had no trucks, and two guns.

Q: Oh my.

A: And then we lost his gun, the Germans fired a direct hit. As a matter of fact, it was told to me later that – that an 88 shell hit him in the head. And when I went there after it was over, there was a fellow called **Valentime**(ph), he had red hair, and there was red hair all over the guns and place. So anyway, that was his last night on earth, with my bedroll.

Q: Was that the first time you had seen such – you had seen –

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: – that sort of thing?

A: That was the first battle, the first. So after that, a-after January, after my birthday, we had lost so many men, they took us back and we organized this, and refilled the ranks.

Q: Where did they take you to?

A: I-It was in **France**, close to **Nancy, France**, and we – we were there about three weeks before they got all the men back together. And so we stayed there until

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March, the first of March, and then that's when we tried – had the offensive, that we went through the –

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

A: Yeah, well, that was really – the resistance wa-wasn't too heavy. But it was buth – y-you'd hit – certain times when you would hit little resistance and then you would go in reserve, and then the next day you might move 20 miles with nothing, no resistance.

Q: And was this already through southern **Germany**, or was this still in **France**?

A: Th-Th – no, no, we had – still in **France**, and we didn't cross the **Rhine**, and I remember it was Easter Sunday.

Q: At what point did you cross the **Rhine**, at what place? Do you remember?

A: No, I don't.

Q: You don't. But it was a – but probably in the south.

A: Oh yeah, it was south **Germany**. And then, and from that point on, it was just – we went through – we took v-various th – **Daun**, we took **Schweinfurt**, we took – we – we took th – three or four –

Q: Yeah.

A: – cities.

Q: Is it – did you come in contact with German **POWs**?

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A: Oh yeah.

Q: As you were coming along, yeah? As you were going there.

A: Well – well, they were surrendering, and the story that I always tell, we were in reserve, and I – they used to give us a chocolate bar to eat. And I was eating that, and I had a tap on my shoulder and I turned around. And it was a German soldier, and he had a white flag.

Q: And he wanted some chocolate?

A: Well, I guess maybe he did, but that he had a circular from **Eisenhower** encouraging the Germans to surrender, and that they would be well taken care of, and so forth. So, he was all alone, and I didn't know what to do with him. And luckily, there were other Germans coming from the front, quite a few of them, so I just told him to fall in with the rest of them, and that was the last time I saw him.

Q: Did he – was he young, or old?

A: Ah, ah, n – he – he wasn't young, but he wasn't old. You – I – he must have been 30 or 40. I tell you, their faces were dirty, they were beard. Y-You know, it was really to distinguish the age. And in those days, you know, e-every time we got a German prisoner, they always say, you know, **nicht schiessen**, you know, Polack, Polack, you know. Don't shoot me, boy.

Q: Don't shoot me, I'm a Pole.

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A: I'm a Pole. And that's what they would do.

Q: Yeah.

A: But –

Q: Did you come in contact with the civilian population?

A: Oh, a-as you go through the town.

Q: That's right. And was there a difference between the French and the German towns as you were going through them?

A: Yes. First of all, you could tell the – being a German, the civilians were well clothed. The French had nothing. Clothes, you could tell the difference, I don't know about soap and things like that, but once you hit **Germany**, there was a different class of people, and that they had a better part of the life. And some of the stories that the Frenchmen tell, it's a – you know, it's disgraceful.

Q: What did you hear? What were some of those stories that the – that the French were telling?

A: Oh, well I got – I got it in here, the – a story that – actually, this was in – in **France**, a lady that – they were in nor – **Norway**, and it was a fishing town, and they were sending messages to – to **Russia**, and **Russia** would send them to **England**, and the Germans caught them. And there were seven of them. So they took the men out and they want them to dig their own graves. So one of them was

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slow doing it, and when the officer, the German officer was pushing him along, he says, I'm in no hurry, I sh – he says, I know what I'm digging. So the German got mad and spit on him. And this – and the fisherman, with his spade, turned around and hit him with such force, that he actually decapitated him.

Q: Oh!

A: And of course, when he did that, that was the end of it, and the other Germans had killed the rest of them. And in retaliation, they took the wives, seven wives, and they took them to – to **Germany** and this one lady that she had a eight months old baby girl, and when she got on the boat, they took the baby from her, and the put it on a crib, in a box on the deck of the ship. And when she came out the next morning the baby was gone. And of course they assumed that – that they just threw her overboard. And she ended up as a – working fine wires for the German in some factory. And when they were – when she was liberated – I wasn't there, incidentally, this was told to me by, you know, another company, that those women were all in cells. They would open the cells, and they wouldn't come out. And they would tell them, you know, you're free, you're free. But they were just scared. They didn't know – i-i-i-it makes you cry, it really does. The people were just scared, they lived from day to day. They never knew when they were going to be the last day. They finally coaxed them out, and then the Americans, which I take pride of,

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the-they really treated those people. They gave them their own food and clothes, and they were well taken care of. And s-so it – after that –

Q: So, as soldiers, you were swapping these stories that you were seeing, you – that you were experience – yeah.

A: Yeah, well, you know, after [indecipherable] relates this one lady that they – that they had come across. And eventually, see, we have a reunion every year. And one year, they – they brought her over. She always wanted to meet the – the soldiers that liberated her. And she came over with her daughter. And – and she brought with her, she had a quilt – not a quilt, it was a – a blanket. And in – while in the cell, what she did, knitting, she knitted her family tree on the quilt. And she brought that with her, and it was old, and oh, but you could tell where she had spent hours just doing it.

Q: Doing it, yeah.

A: But the thing that amazed me, they were scared to come out. They were scared to come out.

Q: So do you remember the first time you had contact with German civilians? Was it memorable, or not really [indecipherable]

A: Well – well, see, the only ones that you really hit, is that you're going along, and the people on the street, they were – course, they had the American, and you know,

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you would wave, and maybe talk to them. One night I had an experience, I got lost with my squad, and I didn't know which way to go, and there was a – a German. So I started to talk to him, and he spoke perfect English. So I – I was trying to get to ma – back to my line, so he was telling me where to go. And of course, I was hesitant, because you know, you never know.

Q: Who is he, yeah.

A: But I asked him, I said, how come you speak such good English? So he said, I lived in **Baltimore** for 30 years. And he says that then he went back to his hometown and the war broke out. But he led us back to my lines, and he spoke perfect English.

Q: Wow.

A: He really did. But those are the only ones that you really meet. I – I sh – I hesitate, because a lot of times I've met people afterwards, and not – not during the war.

Q: Yeah, I'm interested in figuring, and getting a picture of, you know, what your – what your experience is as you're going along. You know, you're in **France**, then you cross the **Rhine** at – at Easter time, the towns change from poorly dressed people to very well dressed people.

A: Yeah.

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Q: You know, you find some prisoners of war. And e – I don't remember, is April in March or in – was Easter in a – in March or in April that year?

A: I think it must have been March –

Q: Okay.

A: – or probably – maybe the first of April.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And so it –

A: That's when General **Patton**, you know, made his – he urinated in – in the **Rhine**. That was his –

Q: His symbol.

A: Yeah, symbol of success. But after that it was – the war was – you could tell it was coming to an end. But then you would hit pockets, there was stiff resistance, so you couldn't relax, and y-you just had to be alert and watch, and –

Q: But you didn't lose that many men this time, after –

A: No, no, that I didn't. The – the second time, the only ones we lost were minor.

Most of my [**indecipherable**] was frostbite from – from the snow and all. And that – that was a miserable life, that – that was.

Q: So you're sleeping in the fields, or your –

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A: Oh yeah. Had no place to sleep, and – and I tell you, I don't mean to embarrass you, but I tell you the worst part was going to the bathroom in the morning. I tell you, you pull up your pants and snow all in them.

Q: It's – yeah, I mean it's –

A: Yeah.

Q: I – I don't want to imagine it, but where – what – what is a soldier's life? It's no fun.

A: No, it isn't. You actually become an animal.

Q: You felt that way [**indecipherable**]

A: Oh yeah, you live like an animal. You learn things that a civilian, an American civilian wouldn't recognize, but – you know where to take cover, get under bushes.

A-And you live – you live like an animal. You just pray from one spot to the other, and it's a – it's – it's a rough life. And not only worrying about dying, which I never did. My only fear was losing my legs, I never wanted to lose my legs. Death would have been –

Q: Preferable?

A: As many people in these camps, death would have been a blessing.

Q: Yeah.

A: A real blessing. And I haven't gotten to **Dachau**, I'll save that for last –

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Q: Yeah.

A: – but – but at that time, there was no resistance, occasionally, and then we always had good billets. If you were reserve, they got you good housing, or decent housing, and – which was real nice.

Q: Did you have – was there any news, or any thought at that point that something special had happened to the Jews? Was there any kind of –

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Nothing at all. The only thing that I knew, see, I was going to high school, and we used to get a paper, and he would have, you know, how many planes **Germany** was building every month, and this and the other.

Q: When you were still in **Washington**, you mean?

A: Yeah, still a civilian.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: You know, I was in high school. And I – and that's the only thing that I knew, and then the – they read you through the different religious [**indecipherable**] they would say that they're torturing the Jews, or doing this. But it – it – that was remote. You know, you were a 17 year old kid going to high school, and you did it for current events, you know, as an assignment.

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Q: Right.

A: And – and you re – you didn't have the feeling of it, as you did just reading it. And that made a difference, and a lot of them, they go – they got educated very quickly.

Q: So tell me, when you were – you crossed the **Rhine**, and wa – and it was April, yeah?

A: Yeah.

Q: It was April. And so there's – from the **Rhine** to **Munich**, it was – it took a month – took three weeks to get there?

A: Took, you know, about a month, because we were in – **Dachau** was taken the 29th of ja – April.

Q: Okay.

A: So, maybe it was in the latter part of March.

Q: Mm-hm. And –

A: I'm – you know, I'm – I always hate to give these interviews, because see, I was an infantry person. I-In our place, we never knew where we were, we never knew nothing, and it – the **G.I.s** always used to say, you know, someday we'll have to come back and see where we've been. And that's – that's what it was. And in – in time – you never knew whether it was Saturday, or Sunday, or – or if – i-i-it was

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just one day after the other. But in **Germany**, we – I was in anti-tank, which are less burdened, because we didn't have too many trouble with tanks, like we did in **France** and during the Battle of the Bulge. I mean, the Germans would come at you with eight, 10 tanks, so we were really busy. But when we started to move, and then the battle fatigue for me, was to stay in one place. Because the longer you stayed there, you would lose one man today, and another one tomorrow. And finally after a week you'd – you know, you would get jittery. But as long as you moving, and you going into new territory, and you just didn't have that fear that you had.

Q: And were you stalled a lot? I mean, between the **Rhine** and **Munich**, did you –

A: Oh no, it was a steady, steady movement. Steady movement.

Q: Steady movement, steady movement.

A: I – I had gotten a – an ear infection, and I tried to get the medics. **[phone ringing]**

Q: Excuse me.

A: Tried to get to the medics and you couldn't find a medic, everybody was moving so fast.

Q: Yeah.

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A: It – it took me three days. By that time my ear was, you know, it was – it's worse than an earache, cause I was in some shelling, which – well, that's another story.

But – but that's what it was, we were just moving along. And –

Q: But the shelling, nevertheless, happened during this moving along?

A: Well, ye – well, yeah.

Q: What was – tell me about that a little bit.

A: Well, the shelling was that the Germans used to use the p – the Polish men, they were set up the – the line of resistance behind the German soldiers. So when the German soldiers would retreat, those guys were already set in with guns, and that's the only thing they had. So they would fire.

Q: On the Germans?

A: No, they would fire on us. These were –

Q: The Polish?

A: Well, they were Polish, or at least they claimed to be Polish.

Q: Because the Polish we-were enslaved by the Germans.

A: I know it.

Q: So, I would be – you know, why would a German give a Pole a gun? He would –

A: They – na – no, no, they were firing the artillery, and whether they were actually firing them, I don't know, but they would dig them in –

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Q: I see.

A: – and they would get the ammunition ready, and they – they were doing it. And then, at that time, the Russian – the Germans, yo – I mean, they were desperate, you know, I mean, they took – just like with me with that German person I asked to lead me the way. I – I didn't know whether he was leading me right or wrong, but I was desperate.

Q: Yeah.

A: I had to take a chance. So I was – I did it right. And I had nine men with me, which –

Q: That's quite some repos – responsibility.

A: It really is, it really is. Cause some of them were – they were younger than I was. Some of them – yo-you know, it's – it's disgraceful, but when I was in the hospital just for a day or two, there was a fellow there, he was 18 years old, he'd been in the army, I figured it was less than a year, and he lost a leg. Hadn't been in the army. So – but that's it – but we went from one town to the other. If I knew you were gonna ask me that, I –

Q: It's okay.

A: I have sa – detailed map, it really shows where –

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Q: Oh, that would – that would be interesting to have in the future. You know, that we could have in addition to your interview, that we'd have the map that shows the de – you know, the route.

A: Yeah [indecipherable] **Schweinfurt**.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then, of course, **Munich** was –

Q: What would – was – was that –

A: [indecipherable]

Q: – was that – I mean, **Munich's** a huge city, so how – was it bombed, was it –

A: Bombed, it was – it was di – it was square blocks of rubbish. And my first – I had two impressions when I got into **Munich**. One was, I couldn't understand how one man would allow his citizens to go through the hell that they went through. And some of those civilians really had a hard, hard life. You know, I've had mothers tell me that, you know, they put the babies to bed, get them settled down, the air raid siren goes on, grab the kids, take them to the shelter, get them settled. All clear came out, take them back home. And that's only once, but when you do that every night for months, it's hard. It's very, very hard. So those – th-the civilians, even though they were Germans, I always respected the Germans, and I always respected the **Wehrmachts**. And some **G.I.s** weren't as liberal as I was, but I know when the

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war was over – where was I? I think it was in **Munich**. There, they were marching German prisoners on the street somewhere. And of course the German civilians all clapped, you know. And so the **G.I.** next to me said, what are they clapping for?

Q: Yeah.

A: Said, well, that's their men, that's their citizens, they're Germans like them, and you know, there's a certain honor between them. You know, I would do the same thing. But I never had any malice toward anybody. Except, I think if I would have ever captured **Hitler**, man, I would have –

Q: Yep.

A: And believe it or not, I really, really hoped for that.

Q: Did you?

A: I really did. You know, and it was a far fetch, I mean, you know, it's like the Germans capturing **Eisenhower**. It's a – it's a dream.

Q: He didn't let that happen. He made sure that he wa –

A: Yeah, he wa – he did the right thing, believe me, cause he would have ended up –

Q: Oh yeah. He knew what was coming.

A: Yeah.

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Q: So tell me, when you were in **Munich** and you're on your way to **Dachau** –
hang on a second. [tape break]

A: Oh, actually, it's reversed –

Q: Okay, first –

A: [indecipherable] **Dachau**

Q: – **Dachau** first, before **Munich**?

A: We went – yeah –

Q: Okay.

A: **Dachau** first. And – and **Dachau** was a two division, 45th and 42nd, and
incidentally, there's a bitter bitterness between the two.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yeah, they – one trying to claim who was first, who was – so it's – til this day
it's a –

Q: It's a controversy.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Which makes no difference.

Q: Okay. Can you hold on just a second please? Okay, tell me what you saw. You –
when you go to **Dachau**, tell me what you were supposed to do, and what you saw,

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and what surprised you?

A: Well, I came in from probably the south side, and I actually went through the gates, because the troops had been in front of us. But our first encounter, of course, was the railroad cars. And we came down there, and that was a shock.

Q: What'd you see?

A: Corpse. One just loaded, one car after the other, after the other, 50 cars, I think there were.

Q: 50 cars?

A: Of – of just –

Q: Corpses.

A: – corpses. And the sad things that you run into is they were coming down and there was – some lady had – who was on a train, had gotten off with her baby, and she no sooner got off the car than she collapsed, I guess, cause what we saw is they were dead. And she died, and the baby outlived the mother. And you could tell that she was grabbing her mother's breast, pulling her clothes away to – for something to eat. And then you see two of them dead, just sitting there, mother and whatever, they were. But the thing is, to think that they had to suffer, that's the part that – that is – that's unbelievable. And those cars that they rode in, see, I rode in those cars under ideal conditions, and it wasn't – it wasn't –

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Q: It was not ideal conditions.

A: It was not, oh no, not there.

Q: Did you know who those people were, the corpses, did you know who they were by that point?

A: Oh, there was no way you could have told one from the other.

Q: No, no, no, I mean by – did you know if they were Jews, did you know if they were Poles? Did you know why – you know, did you know who they were a-at that point, when you came upon them?

A: No, no, I didn't.

Q: You didn't.

A: But the assumption would be that they're Jews. I think the final calculations in their books, they'll tell you how many Jews were involved.

Q: But when you were going through there, and you're seeing this, you had no idea who these corpses were?

A: Just dead corpses.

Q: Just dead corpses. And then when you got into **Dachau**, was there anybody living?

A: Oh yeah, there were the – they – they had there – some of – some of the people were dead, living dead. I don't know if you ever seen a doctor when he tries to

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verify if somebody died, they pull the eyelids back to look in his eyes. Cause you can look in the eye and you can tell whether he's living [indecipherable]. And that's the way these people were, they just had a dead eye. They looked straight ahead, and they're nothing but skin and bones. And after we left **Dachau**, they were losing 200 a day. After we got there.

Q: What you – did you talk to any of them?

A: No. They were filthy and dirty. Some of the people come up and they would try to hug you, and I push away. And one thing that really bothers me, some lady, she must have had a bottle of wine, and she wanted to gi-give it, part of it to me. And she's starving, you know, and she wanted to give me part of it. And I-I – I ca – I mean, I couldn't drink out of it. I mean, it was just the filth, the smell, I mean, y-you just couldn't.

Q: Yeah.

A: No way. And some of them, I guess they fa – you know, they tried to hug you, and –

Q: Yeah.

A: And you – you just had to push them away, push them away.

Q: Did –

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A: But what I did, after we walked, this was the other part of our division, they had to secure the re – the camp. There were some prisoners who were in good shape – not good shape, but they were better shape.

Q: Better shape.

A: Course, the – all they wanted to do was get out. And they had to contain them, which wasn't an easy job to do.

Q: Why would they had to be contained?

A: Because they were all diseased, there was a lot of disease in the camp. They didn't want the prisoners running around in the streets of **Munich**, in – in a diseased state.

Q: And I can imagine that the prisoners couldn't understand, now if you're liberated us, how come you don't let us go?

A: Oh yeah, yeah. But – but what they did, th-they [**indecipherable**] they came in with blankets, they came in with food, and – and they took care of them. And they weren't there that long. They weren't there that long. I got a –

Q: Were there any guards that were there?

A: Oh yeah –

Q: Were there any Germans that you found?

A: – oh yeah, yeah, they – well, I didn't – our division didn't hit them.

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Q: Okay.

A: The 45th division, they hit the barracks. And they killed – they killed – I think there was 35 **SSs**, they never lived to tell the tale. And they had electric fence around the camp, that wasn't turned on, which made it easier for their – the troops in front of us. And then, the pride I take getting – walking down by those railroad tracks, the **G.I.s** in front of me, they heard a moan. And they climbed up, and they literally had to walk on corpses, I mean it. They finally get to this one fellow, and they pulled him out and he was still alive. And imagine just being in with a bunch of dead people, you know? And – but they got him on a **Jeep**, I saw that, and they took him away, I guess they took him to the medics. And the joy part of **[indecipherable]** is that in '95, which is 50th anniversary of the liberation, I went to it in – in – in **Munich**, this fellow that they pulled out came to that reunion.

Q: Oh my.

A: And I tell you, he was a hero. I think everybody –

Q: Oh my.

A: – and he – he had become a very wealthy person, doing – I don't know what he did, but he got involved in some business or something. But he was living, and you would never know that he came out of a –

Q: Pile of corpses.

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A: A pile of corpses.

Q: My goodness.

A: And my – you know, you ge – i-i – it's destiny.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, it's like in the army, you know, you – you advance, and this fellow gets shot, this one da – and you keep walking, you know. You – you can't explain that.

Q: What did you – what did you think, or do you remember what you thought when you were walking through here, because I don't – you know, you weren't expecting to see this, right? You weren't –

A: Oh no, you – we didn't expect to find a – a – th-the magnitude that it was. It was just – there was just corpse everywhere. And the thing I remember is that lady with the baby in her arms. I'll never forget that. And the other ones in the crematories, I went in there, and the soil had so much blood in it, that i-it had a purple brownish color. It just didn't look like dirt, but just from the saturation of the – of the blood.

Q: Of the blood.

A: It's just that, and the other one that I always remembered was the – the – the – the inmates had a – to wash up, if you want to call it that, it's like an umbrella opened up, and at the top, the water would come from the top, and come down and

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then it would all wash. But the dirt, the stench, the – ye – I-I mean, how could you go there and clean up? I mean, it was so filthy, you know, just oh.

Q: About how many people, do you know, were in the camp when – when you –

A: Close to 30,000.

Q: When you guys walked into it, there still were about 30,000 people in there?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They – I tell you, this book give it all – I mean, I – this is where I get it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But th-they broke it down – they broke it down by, you know, different people.

But the Jews were always the most. They were the largest number. I have to –

Q: Mm-hm. How long were you there in **Dachau**?

A: **Dachau**, I went in there that Sunday afternoon, and I stayed in the – we left, and I stayed in a building, it was an office building. And the two things I remember in there were – you know, they used to have red ink and black ink on the desk. And the **G.I.s** as they go through there, get the ink and throw it against the wall. And then they had a bust of **Hitler** standing there, and I think everybody that went by shot it. I-It was just perforated with –

Q: Holes.

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A: – holes. So [**indecipherable**]. And then I left that morning, and that's when they were bringing the – the – the people from the city of **Dachau**. Which people don't understand, but that's a very intellectual city. There's colleges there, and so forth, and being associated with the camp didn't help them at all.

Q: No.

A: But anyway, that morning they were bringing people in. Somebody – you – you want to stop?

Q: No, no, no, no, hang on a minute. Well, let's see. All right. But – okay.

A: But anyway, they – they brought them in.

Q: They brought them in.

A: They brought them in, and the women, you know, they would get their coats and walk through the place, and course they all denied that they knew anything about it. Nobody in **Germany** was a – was a Nazi, you know.

Q: Right.

Conclusion of Interview