

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Norman Coulson  
October 4, 2013  
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## PREFACE

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## **NORMAN COULSON**

### **October 4, 2013**

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. **Norman Coulson**, on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013, in **Hanover, Pennsylvania**. Thank you Mr. **Coulson** for agreeing to meet with us today to – agreeing to have this conversation, and thank you very much for the gift of your photo album, which we will talk about during the course of the interview. I'm going to start, like I always do, at the very beginning. We know – want to know a little bit about your – yourself, about where you came from, the – the forces that shaped you, and so on. So we'll start from the very first, basic question: can you tell me the date of your birth?

Answer: Yes, March 10, 1920.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In **Hanover, Pennsylvania**.

Q: Who were – can you tell me about your father's name and your mother's name?

A: Yes. My father's name was **Raymond P. Coulson**. My mother's name was **Aneta(ph) Weaver**, and they were both from **Hanover, Pennsylvania**.

Q: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

A: None. Oh yeah, I'm sorry; yes, half-brothers.

Q: You had half-brothers?

A: Mm-hm.

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Q: How did that happen?

A: My mother and father were divorced when I was two years old, and then they each remarried, and my father had one son, who was a designer for **Armstrong Cork** in **Lancaster** for 25 years. And my other brother, on my mother's side worked in a foundry. And I had another brother, **Raymond**, and a sister by the name of **Doris** who I have no idea where they are.

Q: Okay, well, tell me the name of the – the brother, the one who worked in **Lancaster, Pennsylvania**, his name was what?

A: **George**.

Q: And was he the second oldest after you?

A: Yes. He was the only one.

Q: He was the only one, okay.

A: On my father's side.

Q: And then when your mother remarried, she had three children?

A: She had – she had two boys and a girl.

Q: And their names were?

A: **Robert**, **Raymond**, and **Doris**.

Q: And they are in order of birth, that is **Robert** –

A: That's correct.

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Q: – was the oldest –

A: That's right, that's right.

Q: – and **Doris** was the youngest.

A: Correct.

Q: Who did – which one did you grow up with?

A: Neither.

Q: You didn't grow up with either parent?

A: No, neither one. I lived with my grandparents on my mother's side.

Q: Uh-huh. Did you know – did you know your parents particularly well, or not so much?

A: Pardon?

Q: Did you know your parents?

A: Well, I – I didn't meet my father until, I guess – 25 years old. And I met him at a – a dinner one day. And my mother I would see occasionally, maybe once a year as I was growing up. She'd come to my grandfather's house, her – which would have been her father. And that – that's the only contact I ever had with my parents, none.

Q: Well that's – that sounds pretty – that sounds kind of strange, when most kids do grow up with – with both parents, or at least know them at some – in some way.

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A: Well, yeah, well yeah, I didn't – I lived in **Hanover** as – as well as my father and my – my uncle had a – a large factory here where he made leather heels and soles, and my father was superintendent there. But growing up, I never saw him at all, never in my life, I never saw him.

Q: So the people who really – who raised you were your grandparents.

A: That's correct, on my mother's side.

Q: What were they – do – what was their names?

A: Pardon?

Q: Your grandparents' names, what were their names?

A: **Weaver**.

Q: **Weaver**?

A: Yeah.

Q: And your grandfather's first name?

A: **Edward**.

Q: And your grandmother's first name?

A: She was a step-grandmother. **Mara**, her – her name was, yeah.

Q: Okay,

A: And that's – that's who I lived with as – as I grew up, yeah.

Q: Were you closer to one or the other of them?

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A: Neither one.

Q: Neither one?

A: No.

Q: Would you say you were kind of lonely as a kid?

A: Not really, no, I was quite active. When – when my grandfather was a foreman in a – a wood factory, a mill, and I would take his lunch to him as a child, and I would go up into the drafting room above the office of the mill where all the drawings were made, all contractual drawings were made, and I got interested in – in architecture when I was 15 years old.

Q: Wow.

A: And then I – after I – while going to school I would be in the architect's office after school and Saturdays, and then of course in su – in the summertime, and that went on for a number of years, a-and then I met Mrs. **Coulson** in 1936. I started 1935 with the architect, and went on from there, and then I worked in a number of offices in **Baltimore** and **New York**, and so on.

Q: As an architect?

A: As an ar – as an architectural draftsman, that's right, and with **Rowan(ph) Park** company in **Baltimore**, which was a large real estate firm. [indecipherable] Mrs.

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**Coulson**, and we were married in – in – now I forget the name [**indecipherable**]

any more, but anyway, we were na – we were married in 1941, and I was –

Q: You were kind of young to get married, 21 years old.

A: Oh, I was 20 – 21, yeah, but my wife – Mrs. **Coulson** was only 19, but she was – she wanted to get married when she was younger, but her parents weren't too much in favor of that. But – they said she had to wait til she was 19, which was fine and dandy.

Q: How – what wa – what's Mrs. **Coulson's** first name?

A: **Betty J.**

Q: **Betty J.**

A: Yep.

Q: Okay.

A: Her last name was **Fahs, f-a-h-s**. So yeah, yeah, we were married, and then –

Q: Excuse me, I want to go back a little bit –

A: Okay.

Q: To your – to th – your earlier years. So, you went to high school – to grade school and high school here in **Hanover**?

A: Correct. But my – my senior year, my – I had a – an architectural – I mean, a shop instructor, who felt I had an opportunity to be in architecture. And anyway, he



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said, why don't you try to get more drafting time in, as a senior in high school. So I went to see the principal of the high school, and he said, I never heard of such a thing. So anyway, I got upset about this thing and I quit school, which was a big mistake. Anyway, I guess it was a mistake, I don't know. But I – I didn't finish my senior year. So I got a job with the other people, other offices and so on, til I was 23.

Q: Did you live at home with your grandparents?

A: Oh no, no, we lived with a few – a few years we lived as – it wa – oh no, only a few months with – with my the father-in-law and mother-in-law in **York, Pennsylvania**. And then I went into the service.

Q: And that would have been – what year did you go into the service?

A: 1943.

Q: You were drafted?

A: Yep, sure was. Yeah.

Q: Well, tell me, where was the first place you were stationed after you were drafted?

A: Fort **Mead, Maryland**.

Q: I see.

A: And I – I was in –

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Q: Excuse me, I – I have to go back, I'm so sorry, I –

A: Okay. That's all right.

Q: – but I – you were kind of skipping over the early years, and I want to find out a little bit more about them.

A: Okay.

Q: Here in **Hanover** in **Pennsylvania**, when it's 50,000 people now you told me, live in **Hanover**; when you were growing up, about how big was the town?

A: I'd say around 15,000.

Q: About 15,000.

A: Mm-hm, that's right.

Q: And were – were almost all of the people in town Christian?

A: Oh yes, yeah. More – yeah ri – they were – yes, yes. Yeah.

Q: And would have they been Catholic as well as Protestant, or – or was this – how –

A: They were –

Q: – how – yeah, who made up the town, who were the townspeople that way?

A: Well, most people were – were Protestant, Catholic. There was a – a small synagogue here, about 50 people I think it was. As – as a youngster I remember the synagogue, but there were mostly Protestant people, or Christians here.

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Q: Yeah. Did you know any Jewish people when you were growing up?

A: Oh yes, sure, yeah, quite a few. But I didn't – I – I really hadn't much contact with local – as a – as – growing up, after I – I got my experience as an architect, my – my time was spent oth – in other cities, like **York** and **Lancaster**, **Baltimore** and other cities. So I really didn't spend that much time in **Hanover**.

Q: Yeah.

A: Until I – and then I went in the service, and –

Q: But in the 1930s – in the 1930s when you're still going to school, I mean, that decade spans the time from when you're a young – still a young boy, to the time when you're already a young man, you know, the adolescent and teenage years.

Was – did y – was there much in your memory – do you remember about international events, and national events being part of – of something that you heard about, that – that people talked about?

A: Well, yeah. I – I was always interested in foreign countries, and I used – I loved to go to the – to the library in the aftern – day after school, and – and read all the city newspapers about what was happening. So we – we knew that –

Q: You knew about **Germany**.

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A: – **Germany** and **Japan** were – were – had the intentions for a war, and knew it was coming on to us, but at the time I di – it didn't matter too much, until I was really married, which would have been in the – in the early 40s.

Q: Mm-hm. So that's still before the **US** goes into the war.

A: Pardon?

Q: It's still before the **US** declares war on **Japan**, if you –

A: Yeah, right.

Q: – it was – yeah.

A: We knew about it, but there weren't that much information really available, as far as that was concerned, yeah.

Q: Okay. So let's go to Fort **Mead**. What kind of – what was your experience at Fort **Mead**? What did – what was that place for?

A: Well, that was – that would have been an army camp, and I was – I was inducted from **York**, and I was standing in the barracks one day and saw all these fellows coming in from **Hanover**, and I thought, boy wouldn't I like to be with them. So – so we – a few days later, I – after being on **KP** for a while, and I was cleaning one of the big pots one day, and somebody lifted my feet up, and I went right down into this big cauldron of – of tapioca pudding.

Q: Oh my gosh. Tapioca pudding?

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A: Yeah, right, yeah. I had to clean it out.

Q: Oh.

A: Well, somebody – I was standing on a little ladder and I was cleaning this thing out. It was a gra – a very big **[indecipherable]**

Q: Yeah.

A: And somebody picked my feet up, lifted up, and I'm down in this thing and I'm screaming and hollering, and – and can't get out. And somebody dumped it over, I got out of this – out of this thing, but anyway –

Q: Have you ever had any tapioca pudding after that?

A: Yeah, oh yes, I loved it, especially with raisins. But yeah. But ar –

Q: So you – you were able to join your – the – the fellows who came from the –

A: Yes. I was able to join those people with – in the – from **Hanover**, and somebody, about two o'clock in the morning woke me up and said, get your things together, you're go – you're gonna be moving out. **[indecipherable]** I just happened to get on the train with the fellows from **Hanover**, and we went to Camp **Edward, Massachusetts**, and I went up – I slept in the barracks that night. The next morning I walked down the stairs, and here is my ba – my brother-in-law **[indecipherable]** the next barracks. Fifty million people in the – in the service, and I end up with my brother-in-law right next door.

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Q: Well tell me, what – what camp was this in **Massachusetts**?

A: Well, that was Camp **Edwards, Massachusetts**.

Q: Camp?

A: **Edwards**.

Q: Oh, Camp **Edwards**.

A: Yeah, right. Yeah, yeah.

Q: And what di – you know, so – so how long were yo – how long were you in Fort **Mead**, do you think? Do you remember?

A: How long where?

Q: You were in Fort **Mead**.

A: Oh, only a couple days, really.

Q: Oh, I see, okay.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: So in Camp **Edwards**, what was the purpose of – of that camp? What was – what were they doing?

A: Oh, it's really just an induction camp, that's all.

Q: I see.

A: They – they – they – they brought people in there from all over the area, and they – they put them elsewhere, wherever they felt they were – could use them,

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that's all. And I ended up in a – an aircraft, nine millimeter aircraft outfit. I send – we were in the country for about a year, I guess, and then we were shipped over to **Europe**.

Q: And so you stayed at Camp **Edwards** the whole time?

A: Pardon me?

Q: You stayed at Camp **Edwards** for that year?

A: Oh yeah – well, no, we – we we moved down to **Long Island**, and from there we moved to **Sen(ph) Island, Georgia**, to – I forget the name of the camp down there any more, but anyway, it wa – it was **Georgia**, and we moved –

Q: And what kind of – yeah, and what kind of training were you getting?

A: Only with – I was – I – I was a meteorologist. So there was four of us, as a meter – what we do is make gas, and we blew up large balloons to send up so that the radar could track the – the balloon, and we put an aluminum kite on the bottom of the balloon, and that would rise up, and then the – the radar could track that, so that the guns would track wherever the radar would take them. Then the – the radar would pick up the – an airplane and then that would – the guns could shoot at it, so –

Q: Oh, I see, so this was what your job was, is to be able to – be able to read radar –

A: Oh yeah, right, yeah.

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Q: – in order for the radar to be able to locate where of – an enemy airplane could be.

A: [**indecipherable**] the – the – the balloons would rise, and then the radar would pick that up, and the radar would tell the guns where to – where to move. They were very large guns, they were je – 90 millimeter guns, which were a very big shell.

And there wa – wa – that's what – we used that for – so we went overseas as – as a – an anti-aircraft

Q: Anti-aircraft, okay.

A: Yeah. So we trained in **England** and – and for a few months. And there I met a number of architects who were there designing buildings already, and highways for after the war, and I met people there from the – the British architects' board, and we became very good friends. So a – I got –

Q: Where di – where in **England** were you stationed?

A: Where in **England**?

Q: Where in **England**, mm-hm.

A: Oh gee. I kn – I know the [**indecipherable**] there.

Q: Was it north? Was it up north?

A: No, it was – it was the more – more sa – we were close to **Manchester** –

Q: You were close to **Manchester**, okay.



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A: – **England**, yeah, that's right. We weren't too far from **London**. Never got to **London** though. I got into **Manchester** already. We were there only a couple of months, and then, of course, we went to **Europe**, and I got seasick.

Q: Were you part of **D-Day**?

A: No. No, we landed at **Cherbourg**, and went from there to about seven different countries, I guess. We were – we were hunting the Germans down, but we had something to shoot at for a while, but there's a [**indecipherable**] we didn't have any more airplanes, German airplanes to shoot at, so –

Q: Tell me, when you landed in **Cherbourg**, what – do you remember when you landed? Was that after **D-Day**?

A: That was about the same time as **D-Day**.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. So would have been June, 1944.

A: That's correct, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yep. And then –

Q: And from **Cherbourg** – I'd like to go into some detail here, if you – if you remember it.

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A: Yeah.

Q: From **Cherbourg** you were – you were –

A: Oh, we went across **France** and we were stationed right outside of the **Battle of the Bulge** because they were going to use our guns as field artillery. They found out that they were good – they were good guns for field artillery instead of – we had no gu – no German airplanes to shoot at. So then we – I never got to **Paris**, oh – even though it was only a few miles from there, went into **Belgium** –

Q: Were you part of a particular division, a unit, or – or larger military presence?

A: Yeah – no, I – yeah, we were in the – in the Eighth Army, about – yeah, it was only for a short time, eventually got into the Seventh Army for some reason or another. And after the – well, we were – we were stationed just outside of the Bulge there, and went for there to oh, a number of positions and then we moved south, just 50 miles from – from **Munich**.

Q: So you went first towards **Belgium**, a – you went through **France** –

A: That's right.

Q: – up to **Belgium**.

A: Right.

Q: Did you get into **The Netherlands**?

A: Yes, we were in **The Netherlands** –

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Q: Did you see battle at that point? I mean, were you involved in battles, or –

A: No, no. We w – we were just really moving around and looking for some – for airplanes to shoot at. That's – but there – there weren't anything to shoot at. So we – so we had gra – some great times together. One day somebody – one of the – some Germans told us that one of the banks had some – some – a lot of the cash in it, so they wanted some money, and so on, so we – these shells were like, oh, very large, and so we – one of the fellows took one of the guns and put it right outside the door of the bank, it shot right through the door, and through the – through the safe door, blew the safe all apart, and we got a lot of money, but it wa – it wasn't – it was all German marks or – that didn't mean much to us. We gave it to all the people, the neighbors.

Q: Oh my God. What town was this in?

A: Oh, I – I don't know.

Q: You don't remember?

A: I – I have a pi – I have a picture of it somewhere as a – but anyways, we – we decided we're gonna get – but we – we – every terri – country we got into, we had – had to exchange our money for – for marks or liras, or whatever it was, and –

Q: So when you were in this German town, the war was still going on?

A: Oh sure, you bet it was –

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Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And this was simply a town that was occupied within th-the territory that was being occupied by the allied forces.

A: Oh yeah, sure, yeah, ri –

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, right. But it wa – the war was moving pretty fast there for a while. Near the end, til I got involved with it, we were stationed like – as I said, about 50 miles from **Dachau**. And then I saw in, one morning I saw a – I noticed on the board, the bulletin board that somebody wa – was needed somewhere, ha-ha-had an architectural experience, and I volunteered. I had no idea where I was going. So somebody told me to pack my bags, and a guy – I jumped in a – in a **Jeep** with a driver, and lo and behold, he takes me to **Dachau**.

Q: Okay, before we get there –

A: Okay.

Q: – before we get there, from – you said you were in seven countries with the anti-aircraft?

A: Just about that, yeah.

Q: Okay. So we're talking **France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany** –

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A: Yeah, germ –

Q: That's four.

A: Yeah.

Q: Where would the other –

A: **Austria**.

Q: **Austria**?

A: Yeah. Northern **Italy**.

Q: Northern **Italy**.

A: But this was – this was later on.

Q: Okay.

A: I mentioned **Switzerland**.

Q: No, you didn't mention – so did you go to **Switzerland**?

A: Yeah, yeah, right, down the mountains, yeah, over –

Q: And is that still during war time, or after the war?

A: No, that was after the war.

Q: Okay, so, bef –

A: When we were at **Dachau**.

Q: Okay, so when – by the time you got to **Dachau**, it had been – you'd only been  
to four countries –

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A: That's correct.

Q: – of the seven.

A: Yeah, right.

Q: And do you remember where you were when the war ended? The day of lib –

A: Yeah, well, I was at **Dachau** when –

Q: Oh, so you got to **Dachau** before the war ended?

A: Oh yeah, sure, yeah, yeah. I – I wa –

Q: Do you remember the date?

A: The [indecipherable] got into **Dachau** the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, and I got there the 30<sup>th</sup> of April.

Q: Aha.

A: First – I'm sorry, the first of May.

Q: I see, okay.

A: Yeah. So it was only about three days after the first Americans got there.

Q: I see.

A: And –

Q: And what did you fi – when you first got there, what did you see, and did you understand what you were seeing?

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A: All I saw was a lot of dead people. At **Dachau**, anyway. I-I was told to go to this office building, which was really one of the ca – the gates where the architectural engineering office was. That was for doing my job, and that's where I met **Alfons Kamyczek(ph)**, who was a – who worked in the office for the German **SS** shir – the **SS** troopers, and –

Q: Who was this **Alfred Kamyczek(ph)** – **Alfons Kamyczek(ph)**, who was he?

A: He was – he was a prisoner of – from **Poland**, he was a prisoner for four years, he – he had picked them up when he was 18 years old, and he – they took him to **Dachau**, why I don't know, and while he was there, he learned to speak German and English. And he was in the architectural office, or the engineering office, where all the records were.

Q: And what was your job supposed to be? You know, when they asked for someone with architectural background, what do they want him for?

A: Well, the funny – funny part about it was, that nobody ever told me what to do. I

–

Q: Really?

A: Really, yeah. Well, things were moving so fast, you know. People were being shot, and it was – all kinds of things were going on, and – and at the time I was just happy to be in this office, and I would get things to eat that people – Americans

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were – half the Americans were already there, so their rations and so on were re – being brought in by the American army. And we were trying to get rid of all the SS people over there, and the war was still moving on. Th-Th-The –

Q: It was the final days, yeah.

A: Yeah, it was, yeah, it's exactly right, yeah. And –

Q: So – okay, so I'd like, again, I want to back up a bit.

A: Okay.

Q: When we get to **Dachau**, and this guy – yo-you're told to pack your bags, you're not told where to go, where you're going to be going –

A: That's right.

Q: – and you get – and you get to this place –

A: Sure, sa –

Q: – do you remember what it is that you saw, right at the gates? Did you remember any of that?

A: Oh, well, I – I saw the – the – there was a disarray. Nobody re – nobody really knew what they were doing, or what they were supposed to do, other than shoot the Germans.

Q: Okay, but did you – did you – did you understand where you were heading?



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A: Oh yeah, well I didn't – no, I didn't know. When – when I was told – I mean, I saw the – the bul – on the bulletin board, the notice that somebody was needed, I had no idea where I was going, or anything else. I didn't know who – where they were.

Q: Did you know that there were such things as concentration camps before –

A: No, I didn't know. No, I never – I never even knew that – I never even heard of **Dachau** before.

Q: Okay.

A: Sa – so, that's why I'm say it – it was kind of crazy, because I – I didn't – I haven't – I was foolish really for – in the service you don't volunteer.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I – I volunteered to do whatever they said, because it – I thought well, somebody needs an architect, or a mar – somebody with architectural experience. So when I get there, I meet this man, **Alfons Kamyczek**(ph), he's in the office as – as – he's just there. In fact, he lived there, as well, in the – in the – in the – it was in the building. So anyway, he told me what happens there, we ha – we were in charge of the – the water and sewer and – and then I ended up being the director to – to pick up all these bodies. And I said well, what are we go – what are we going to use, and anyway – and we ended up with an old tractor, a – and a – a trailer to pull

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behind the tractor. So we had to go over to the barracks where these people were di  
– if – if you –

Q: Were there still prisoners in **Dachau**?

A: Oh, my heavens, yes, there was 30,000 there yet.

Q: When you walked in there were still 30,000 people?

A: Oh sure, yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Q: Did anybody come up to you, of these – of the prisoners?

A: Oh – oh, yeah, why, sure, I talked to a – in fact, I have pictures of some of them, and yeah, I got to know quite a few of them, but those – there was a lot of people in the barracks that were dead, that we didn't know. If you didn't move, you didn't move your anything, you were considered dead. We had a – a dentist as a – as a doctor, so what could he do for us? And so nobody really knew –

Q: Well, did anyone give you an explanation of what you had come across? If you didn't know that there even had been such a place as **Dachau**, who – who explained to you why they were there, and who these people were?

A: Well, as I say, a pa – the – the – the – the American army was coming through, they were – they were getting all the guards together, and they shot them. In fact, I have some pictures of them shoo – shooting them.

Q: Did you see these executions?

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A: No, I took a picture of them, in fact, while they were going there. These poor guys were standing there with their hands up, and the Americans shot them anyway, it didn't make any difference; they were guards. But th-the German SS guarded the things, but when these people were – were dead, and they were either gassed, or whatever, into the crematory, they were – th-the – the Germans didn't – they didn't handle these people that were passed away or put into the crematory. They would get prisoners of theirs from the – from the barracks to come in and do all this work in the crematory. So they would move the bodies around with their bare hands and so on, and put them in the furnaces, or whatever. And – but they – the – the SS didn't do the – they didn't actually do any of the work, they just did the orders, it's – in other words, they directed the people what to do.

Q: By the time you got to that camp, were there any SS still there, or they'd all been either arrested, or escaped?

A: Oh, there ba – there were a lot of SS there, there were loads of SS there. We had si – 30,000 prisoners in the camp when I got there, from 31 different countries. And so, they were – they were told that they could leave. Well, they wanted something to eat, so they were eating American rations, and so on, and – but – but the thing is, a lot of those people couldn't even walk, they didn't know where they were from, they didn't know what they were gonna see when they got home, and the – this –

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the roads were just fi-filled with people all over the place, and the ro – other ca – other prisoners in other camps, they were also let go. And they were all, everybody was out in the street, walking, just walking, they didn't know where they were going. So – and there was no transportation provided for them, so – so you just – they – I don't know what ever happened to these people, I have no idea. I was just there in the camp, just happy to be – be there. And I remember one day some bird colonel walked in the office and said, **Coulson**, it's good to see you here, he said, I'll see you when you leave. And that was my orders. So I – I had been da – a couple of times during the year, I was to the commandants ca – to his house, which was located right in the middle of the camp, and I was there for couple drinks and so on, I guess we had some wine and so on, but that's the only – that's the only orders I had, and I was there for a year. And then eventually the – the war crimes trials came in t-to the camp, and they – and they tried the – the people that were still living. And the doctor was there that did all the experiments on these prisoners, poor souls, and they're treated like animals. Animals are better treated than these people were. And I met a lot of people. I met people from **Austria** and so on. I met a count there, and I met the other – the officers' mess – the American officers' mess had a – a German chef, who I had him – I don't know, and he and I became friends. So – so he wanted me to – to go half on a ski lodge down in the mountains. So one

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day he took me down to see the ski lodge, it was a beautiful place. Anyway, he said – I said, well, what are – what do I have to put into it to buy this? He said, well, do you ha – for half of it you're going to have to come up with 300 American dollars, with real, actual cash. And we said – I said, I'm not allowed to have American cash here. So he said, well, can you get it? And I se – I wrote to my wife and said, just send me 300 American dollars, which she did. And anyway, I said to this – this German chef that – but which was going to be my partner for the – the chateau. And – and I said, how am I gonna get my money out of it when I leave here, how can – how can I get my money? Cause there was no – no di – no transfer of money funds or anything else between the countries at that time. And anyway, he said I don't know. So I ended up selling my money on the black market and I did pretty well with that. But so – my 300 dollar – I don't know what these poor souls did with the American money. Most cases I sold it to the – the Germans, they bought most of the money, because Americans weren't allowed to have it.

Q: Well, tell me, for how mu – do you remember what the black market rate was for an American dollar?

A: Oh, I have no idea, I have no i –

Q: Okay.

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A: I have no idea. I sold cigarettes, which we'd get a carton of cigarettes every week, and I used to sell them. And I sent the money back, and after a while they were catching up to us sending all this money back home, so – so I – anyway, they decided that evwa – everybody would have to have a – the – a book that when you got your pay, which I got five dollars a month, and then they'd write down in that book, and – that you had – that you got five dollars in pay, so you couldn't send any more money back any more. We weren't allowed to send – send it back.

Q: So, I want to understand a few things about what you just told me, because some of it is clear, and some of it is confusing to me. You get to – you get to **Dachau** –

A: Okay.

Q: – you go into a building –

A: Right.

Q: – and this is, I don't know what kind of building. Was this an office building within the campground?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yes, some of the buildings are very nice, as there – some buildings were three and four stories, and well-built for the – the **SS** had used as a training camp, and then they switched over to just as a – as a se – a concentration camp, where they brought people in from all the – all over **Europe**.

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Q: Yeah, but the building that you went into, that you found **Alfons Kamarek**(ph) there –

A: Right, that was a –

Q: – what was – what was that building for?

A: Okay, that – oh, that's a large – that was several stories. That was – it was really one of the gates. The gate. In fact, there's a picture in my – in my book there. And we had about, let's see, one, two, three, four d – rooms, and I had an apartment on the – the third floor, where I slept. And – well, it wasn't an apartment, it was just a bedroom, really.

Q: And who – would a – who would have slept there before you did? Jur –

A: Oh, I – I would think it was – I think it was just empty space, as far as that was concerned.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. The – the first floor was all office area, and – and the American sold – soldier used to – was like a big eagle over the gate, right next door to us, and I used to hear this popping sound, and the Americans were – used to try to shoot the eyes out of the big eagle that were a-a-above the gate.

Q: So this was an iron gate, not a real – not a real bird.

A: Oh no – oh no, it was a big bird, the German eagle, or whatever it was –

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Q: Yeah.

A: – above the gate.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then – and the gate was down below.

Q: But it was – it was – it was a metal eagle.

A: Oh yeah, right, yeah –

Q: It was a metal eagle. Okay.

A: – oh yes, yeah, sure, yeah. Didn't know about plastic then.

Q: Yeah.

A: Or not much about them, anyway. So yeah, was a big –

Q: And so –

A: – big metal – yes, th-the eagle.

Q: – you – you got to know this – this Polish prisoner of war, whose name was  
**Alfons.**

A: That's right.

Q: And did he tell you anything of what had been going on in the camp?

A: Oh yeah, oh sure, he told me quite a bit about what was happening there, what  
had happened, and how he was treated, and so on.

Q: What did he tell you?



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A: If – well, if someone tried to escape somewhere – I don't know how they ever get out, I don't think the – I think there was a big wall around the whole round – the whole camp, so – cause the people in **Dachau**, which was only about a half a mile away –

Q: Yeah.

A: – said that they didn't know what was going on in the camp. They had all these – the commandants and the – the – the German officials and so on, lived in nice houses just outside the wall.

Q: I see.

A: So, I don't know, I guess the people in **Dachau** – I mean in – in the – yeah, the town of **Dachau** thought that was just a training camp for the **SS** there. That's was there from 1933, so up to – until the 40s, then it became a concentration camp, and the **SS** operated it. So **Alfons** told me almost what I had to do, what he was doing for years, was making drawings, and so on for buildings and things like this. And –

Q: What kind of – excuse me, I'm going to go into some detail.

A: Okay.

Q: What kind of buildings was he making drawings for? Within the camp itself?

A: Oh yeah, oh, everything was i – was in the camp, oh yeah. Yeah, right.

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Q: Okay. And what kind of drawings – what kind of buildings was he making the drawings for?

A: Well, there – there were – well, most of them were to house the prisoners.

Q: I see, barracks and things.

A: And – yeah, right, yeah, the barracks and so on, things like that. Or service buildings, and so on, maybe it's a place of – to house the vicious dogs and so on. So it – if somebody tried to escape, they'd send the dogs after them, or whatever, and then when they caught them down there, they'd shoot them, so – so there's not much chance to get away. But **Alfons** would tell me, many days, if somebody tried to escape or work – coming back from their work, outside the barracks, they all had to line up there, and they had to stand there until they caught this guy, and then, no matter what the weather was, if it was snowing or raining, or whatever it was, or heat or whatever, they had to stand out there in the street until they found them.

Q: Yeah.

A: And that was days [**indecipherable**]

Q: Here's another question.

A: – many hours.

Q: When you met **Alfons**, he was a prisoner, or he had been a prisoner.

A: He had been a prisoner.

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Q: And then you saw people who were in the barracks, who were still alive, but barely. Did **Alfons** look any different from them? Did – he was – was he just as skeletal and as mal –

A: No, was – the odd thing about it was that he – h-he was fairly dressed. I mean, he had shirt and trousers on. Where he got them, I had no idea. I don't know where he got them. But the – the prisoners, the-they – they're – they're – they're **[indecipherable]** next to rags when th – when they came in there, and they were always brought in on trains, closed boxcars and so on. Most – some of them were open, but most of them are closed, that way nobody outside, the civilians wouldn't know –

Q: Yeah.

A: – who was coming in there on the trains. And so that's where the death train was parked, somewhere outside our office. Everybody smelled this thing one day, and wondered what was going on. And when somebody opened the doors on, and that's where we saw these two guys that – two out of 400 that lived. So a friend of mine went down to – into the – in **Dachau** and got the mayor and I don't know who all, all – some of the officials, and brought them out to – to – to take these people off the cars that were there, the dead people that were there. And they had them – th- there was no gloves or anything else, they had to use their bare hands, he insisted on

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that, that d – that day, taking these people out. So what they did is they hauled them to the crematory and they were disposed of there, the bodies –

Q: So the mayor and other officials from **Dachau** were told –

A: From **Dachau** they br – he – he – he went in, collect all these people up and brought them out to the camp.

Q: Did you see that?

A: Oh yeah, sure, because th-the train was just a short distance from where our office was.

Q: And how did the mayor of **Dachau** behave when he was told to do this?

A: Well, he wasn't too happy about it, let me tell you, none of them were, cause they said they didn't know that this was happening. So – so anyhow, there's these 400 people, they're almost all dead, and – and it was just a horrible mess, and so they had to pick these people up and take them to the crematory.

Q: Was that far from the place where the train was?

A: Oh, it was maybe a block or two away. So th-they had to dispose of them, and they – they cleaned the cars up somewhat, and they just wipe them out, or whatever. They had [**indecipherable**] brooms or something that they had, and cleaned up the – the freight cars, but [**interruption, coughing**] Pardon, I'm talking too much.

Q: No, no, no. We'll hold on just a second.

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A: Pardon me.

Q: We can hold on just a minute. We can hold on. **[break]**

A: – at the – cleaning out the de – the death train.

Q: Yeah.

A: Okay.

Q: So when we're cleaning out the death train, you have all these sort of town officials from **Dachau** there –

A: That's right.

Q: – having to do this with their hands, saying that they didn't know what was going on –

A: That's right.

Q: – before, and not happy that they have to get themselves in –

A: And th-they had to clean these cars out there –

Q: Right.

A: – and – and dispose of these – the deceased people that were on the train. I have no idea where they were from. They were probably brought in from other camps. But, as the war was moving on real fast, the **SS** didn't want the Americans to talk to any of these people, but they were bringing people in from other camps, hundreds of people. They were probably bringing in from other ca – other areas, into

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**Dachau**, and then, of course, you try to get rid of them and you – and they were trying to take them to other camps from there. And the the Americans caught them because they were moving so fast. The war –

Q: So in other words, they – they were – they – the – the peop – the **SS**, which was in charge of the concentration camps –

A: Correct.

Q: – was trying to get – to keep them separate from their –

A: From the Americans talking to anybody –

Q: – from the Americans, yeah.

A: – or seeing – seeing what they were really doing there. But these people were lying in the – in the barracks and so on. Most of them were dead anyway, so the – like I say, if you didn't move, you were considered dead. So, we just pile them up and put them on the gurney, or whatever it was that we had there, and either took them to a – a – we – we got a bulldozer to dig a big hole, and you just pushed these dead people in the – the – you know, just –

Q: And who was – who was manning the bulldozer?

A: Oh, I had one of the –

Q: American?

A: – that was American –

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Q: American.

A: – that was American, oh yeah, it was American.

Q: Okay.

A: But it was – yeah, the Americans brought the – the engineers brought a bulldozer from some other camp somewhere, and we just dug a big hole and pushed them in. Was a sad day, but nobody knew who these people were. No had – nobody had any idea who they were.

Q: I can imagine that everybody was shocked.

A: Oh, well, it was just – that was the – the thing that I'd been doing the day, and that never happened, nobody di – they didn't really think anything about it.

Everybody was upset about it, I'm sure, because I know people tell me that when they saw these things that – that they couldn't believe that this was happening to anybody, any human being, how they were treated. At **Dachau** they – they did many tests there. The doctors would try different inoculations on the people. They put them in – they were testing a palette of – of uniforms there, and they – they put them in cold water, because if the power came down over the – the – the ocean between **England** and – and **France**, they would be in cold water. They wanted to know what – what kind of uniforms you should make for them. These tests were all done before we got there, of course.

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Q: Did somebody show you the places where these were done? I mean, is this – did you go to those places where –

A: Oh yeah, yeah, sure we went there, but that was all part of the camp, there were special rooms, and so forth, these tests were done. And – and they –

Q: I'm interested to find out what it is that you saw. In other words, did – did someone bring you around from room to room to explain, this is what –

A: Oh no, we just walked on our own. You just went wherever you wanted to go, yeah.

Q: Was there any place that you went, that looked kind of confusing, you know, what was this for, or what was that for?

A: Oh yeah, sure, yeah. Well th – one of the experimental buildings, you had to – where – where these tests were done, and so on, one of the tests I know they – they put these people in ice – in ice water, like in the – which would have been the ocean, and they put them in – they took these guys out, and put them in bed with two girls. They wanted to see if body heat was going to revive them. And I don't know why, because they wouldn't have them out in the airplane, it didn't make sense. But anyway, that's what they were doing. They were trying all kinds of tests there, different kind of – of diseases and so on. And of course you end up hanging the – the doctor who was in charge of all this.



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Q: Did you see him?

A: Oh yeah, I saw him, yeah, before their – I remember they took him to the war crimes trials, that's where I saw him, but I never went to the war cri – I didn't really care about what was happening at the – at the war crimes trials. They had all the – the German SS people over there.

Q: Were you – when you're telling me these things, what I'm not sure is, is this – this something you learned afterwards, when you were out of the camp, or di – someone told you when you were in the camp? H-How –

A: Well, I was – I was in the office most of the time. We were –

Q: Mm-hm. And what was your – what were you doing in the office?

A: Well, we were – we were making drawings [indecipherable] instructed over what to do and so on. You gotta remember, I was only 23 years old, I didn't have that much experience myself.

Q: I got that. I understand.

A: So – so –

Q: But I'm trying to get a sense of what your experience – not that you had to know everything.

A: Yeah.

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Q: But, for example, when you were making drawings in the office, since it was no longer a concentration camp, and people were being let go, what were you making drawings of?

A: Well, the thing was, what we were doing renovations, because they were – they were getting ready to have the war crimes trials there, just for those people that were in the camp. And there was a like a couple hundred people that were there, that were prisoners, **SS** officers and so on. And that's where they had the war crimes trials. And the doctor was there, and –

Q: Within **Dachau**?

A: In **Dachau**, yeah, right.

Q: So they didn't go to **Nuremberg**?

A: Oh no, no, not these people. These people were considered low class people.

Q: I see.

A: And they have – they held the – the – the – the hearings right there, and if the guy was guilty, we took him – or they took him out and hung him, and that was it. It didn't make much difference. So one day –

Q: So you – excu – okay, one day, mm-hm?

A: Some – some officer walked in, I don't know what he was any more, and he said they wanted a new gallows because when they hung these people, these newspapers

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were there and so on, and they would see these guys hanging there, down below the – the ba – the floorboards, they'd come through, and they'd take pictures of them. And so these peop – the American officers didn't want that any more, so they asked me to design a new gallows for them, which we did, and then all we did was put some canvas around it, so that the – the newspaper people who were there couldn't see or take pictures of these people that were hanging.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: So, it was – it was pretty crude when you really think about it. There was the – there was really no order. The object was just to get rid of these people who were running the camp, that was it, really. It was – it didn't make any difference – we had – some people would – would talk about other – they'd get information about their fellow workers and so on. So that's how people knew what their jobs were, because the Germans didn't want – and I don't know what I want to say here – they didn't want to – they didn't want their – their buddies to n – to know what they were – what they were doing when these pe – when the pri – the prisoners were there. So that's really what the war crimes trials were all about, you know, just – actually it was just a ha – it was really a farce when you really think about it, because they just wanted to get rid of these people that were guards there, of the – of the inmates, th – the pri – the prisoners.

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Q: Okay, I'm a – I'm a little confused here.

A: Okay.

Q: When you're in the camp, you have – you come in and there's still lots and lots of people.

A: Okay.

Q: And some of them are the former guards and – and those who were, you know, in charge, whether they were highest level or not –

A: Yeah, yeah, right.

Q: – but they were in charge. And now they are prisoners.

A: That's right, yeah.

Q: And the – and then you have thousands upon thousands of former prisoners, who they were –

A: Correct.

Q: Okay. And during the time you were there, did those former prisoners leave, or did they stay –

A: They were told to – they were told to leave, yeah, because we didn't want them there. We had to feed them, we had to take care of them and so on. We didn't – we didn't want them there any more because they'd just leave, you know –

Q: Well, did they, or did they stay cause they had nowhere to go?

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A: Well, some of them stayed there because they had nowhere to go, and I would – whe-when I needed help in the office, I would get drafts-people – I – in fact, I had two people, I have pictures of them, two drafts-people from **Berlin**, and they didn't want to go back to **Berlin** because the Russians were there, and the russ – and the Russians and the Germans hated each other. So these people stayed on there, I – I told the guys the fact that there was a front door right in our office that walked out on the street, that – which bypassed the gate. And I told them to go ahead and leave, and they said they didn't want to leave. So I –

Q: These were former prisoners?

A: No, these were – yeah, these were German prisoner of ours.

Q: Okay, no, they weren't former prisoners of the Germans?

A: No, no, they were – they were wi – I would get **[indecipherable]** we brought – we brought 4,000 German prisoners in to live in the camp after all the other people left.

Q: Got it.

A: They were prisoners of ours.

Q: Okay.

A: So anyway, I got two drafts-people out – out of the cage. If we wanted a plumber, or somebody to fix the plumbing, we got somebody out of the cage that

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was a prisoner of ours then, because we had prisoners brought in. And we had nowhere to take them, so we had to put them in there, some of them were a big – some people lived at the – the – oh, the racetrack, and they lived in the barns there, they had prisoners there. We didn't know what to do with them, so –

Q: So these prisoners, the German prisoners now –

A: That's right, all ours.

Q: – were coming in – of yours – of the American –

A: A-After these – after we got – we got some of the people out from other countries –

Q: Right.

A: – that were prisoner of the – of the Germans.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, so –

Q: Okay, did they live in the same barracks that the other prisoners have lived in?

A: No, they had – they had some – they had nicer buildings to live in, they didn't – they didn't stay in these – in these shacks that they were there.

Q: Okay.

A: No, they had better buildings.

Q: So the Americans – Americans housed them in better facilities.

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A: That's right, yeah, that's what they had to do. We had about 4,000 there. They were from **Hungary** and **Italy** and from all countries. They – they were – they were fighting against us. In other words, they were our prisoners –

Q: Right.

A: – and we took over them, and – and then – then we let them go, after a while, you know, if they weren't too important. They were from all countries, as well.

Q: So – so, were you designing anything else, besides gallows?

A: Oh yeah, well other buildings for remodeling mostly, it was – was. Course a lot of the buildings were already there, they were good buildings, some of them were three and four stories of brick construction, in fact. There were some very good buildings there.

Q: Did **Alfons Kanarek**(ph) stay with you the whole time, or did he leave?

A: Oh yeah, he was – no, he was there the whole time. Fact, he was there when I left, and I don't know why he didn't go back to **Poland**, but he said he didn't have any way to get there, so he wasn't going to walk. So – and there was no trains, there were trains, but – but they didn't want to leave there.

Q: Did he ever –

A: – because I would – I would get him food, and cigarettes and all that sort of thing, and some – and tobacco, and he loved that. So – so – and then we had other

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people there who knew where the sewers were, an-and the water, and supplies like that, who had been bordering as well. Fact, I have pictures of them there in the kitchen, and they were – they came – became workers for us. In other words, they worked – they were working for me. But they didn't – they didn't get a salary or anything, they just got the goodies that we could give them, that's all, you know.

Q: And they got food.

A: That's exactly right, yeah. And wine.

Q: Now, did you – a – a lot of people say that in those first days when – when the US forces came in, and – and the starving prisoners of the Germans, that is the – the victims –

A: Right.

Q: – of the concentration camp who were still alive, would ask for food, and they would eat it so fast that they would die from –

A: Oh yeah, yeah but –

Q: Yeah, did you – did you have those types of things happen?

A: I – I didn't really know. I – I – I was never involved with the people that were there. I don't know, I saw them, that's all. Because my work was really just in the office, in there with **Alfons** and some of the other people that were prisoners of the Germans, who worked on the water and sewer lines and things like that. So we kept



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them on because they knew where these things were. Otherwise, we wouldn't have known where anything was. And –

Q: Got it.

A: – so we kept them on, and like I said too, the people that I had from **Berlin**, they wouldn't leave because they – they again were – were scared of the Germans. They – I mean, they – the Russians.

Q: The Russians.

A: They – they didn't get along at all, not one bit.

Q: Did **Alfons** ever tell you his personal story of what happened to him, and how he happened to come into that office?

A: No, I don't know how he did it, I have no idea how they selected him, or anything else. He was just there when I got there, you know.

Q: Okay. Because it sounds – because it sounds from what you're telling me, he was in a rather privileged position for a prisoner.

A: Yeah, he was – he was a prisoner of si – of the **SS**.

Q: Yeah.

A: And as – like I say, they picked him up when he was 18 years old, and he was there for four years, so he was about my same as – age as I was.

Q: Ah, it's true.

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A: And we became good friends. But he was just there. But he was there when I left.

Q: Okay. And so your job was, if I can summarize it, if I can understand it, your job was to – was to provide the drawings for whatever renovations had to be done in the camp.

A: [**indecipherable**] renovations are – of new buildings, or things of that sort.

Q: Yeah.

A: But we didn't have that much to do really. There was a lot of playtime.

Q: Well, that's – wow.

A: Yeah. But I – I really wasn't interested – pardon me – I wasn't inter – really interested in what was going on, the pla – in the – the war crimes trials, I really didn't care. All I knew was that they had gathered them all up in these buildings and so on, the SS people, and they had their war crimes trials there. And whoever was there, most of them were hung. I don't think –

Q: Tell me, why do you call it a farce?

A: Pardon?

Q: Why did you call it a farce? I mean, you said that these trials were a bit of a farce.

A: Right.

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Q: Why? Why – what made it that way di – for you?

A: Well, the thing is that nobody wanted – wanted to talk about their buddies and so on, so that they didn't really have too much information. They knew that they were already there, they knew they were guards, because they got them out of the guard – the guard buildings. So th-they would – one prisoner might tell about what the other guy did, or something like that. But it really didn't make any difference; if they were guards, they were shot, and that was it. A lot of them were shot even before the war crimes trials came there, and – the Americans were so upset about what they saw there, cause they couldn't understand that these kind of things were happening.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they just got the guards out of the building, right, so one day, the – they let the prisoners out of the – out of the camp, out of – they cut the wire, and so on, or the gates, and let them out. And they went up in the towers, and threw these guards right out the window, which are like three stories high, or something like that. And so the – some of them were – they ga – the inmates killed them. The-There was some that I – that I never saw many women that were there, there were some that I ti – I took a picture of one day and – but th – I don't know where they brought the women from, I have no idea. That really wasn't a women's camp, it was mostly for

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men. I think they were brought in right before the end of the war, and the people – a lot of the women went into **Dachau** and smashed the – the windows. They had women's clothing hanging may – in there, you know, on a – some sort of a form or some such thing in the window. And they just take the – their clothes off, standing right there in the window and – and put these new clothes on that they got out of the – out of **Dachau** stores. So it was pretty –

Q: I wa – I don't understand this part.

A: Okay.

Q: So, former – former female prisoners –

A: Right

Q: – in **Dachau** –

A: – were let go out of the camp, so they went into **Dachau**, which is only like a half a mile away.

Q: Oh, the town, okay, they went into the **Dachau** town.

A: The stores, that's right, the town, and they just smashed the windows if they couldn't get in the store, if the door was locked, they just smashed the windows, and standing in there, take all their clothes off, the rags that they had on, and put the new clothes on that they found, you know, in the windows.

Q: I see.

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A: But anyway, I – I saw one of the girls was mistreated by someone of the SS officer, or some such thing. And she got a knife from a friend of mine and cut his testicles off, right there in front of everybody. So, they didn't care. That's what I'm saying, i-it was just a madhouse. Nobody – nobody knew – we knew that the Americans were in control, and the Germans had to listen to whatever they did. If they didn't listen, they got shot.

Q: Okay.

A: It didn't make any difference. You know, Americans can be cruel, you know, I – I've seen things that – that Americans have done that are just as cruel as any German ever did, but –

Q: Can you tell me about that?

A: Oh yeah, they did – they – they were bad news too, some of them. Especially the paratroopers. They were just young kids and they were – they were gung-ho, they would kill anybody that they can shoot. It didn't matter a – a bit. But anyway, **Dachau** was a – a mess. We got it cleaned up pretty well in the year I was there, and –

Q: You were there for a whole year?

A: Oh yeah, I – yeah, yeah. Yeah, I left –

Q: So you saw a lot in that year?

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A: Oh yeah, oh goodness yeah. But then a lot of things I didn't really want to see, you know, I – like I say, I didn't go to the trials. I never went to hangings. I – I just wanted to get out. You know, I was married and I wanted to – I was just a young kid, really, and – and this was all new to me. I could never imagine these things happening; how they treated other people.

Q: Tell me about – you know, you had your camera with you, what kind of camera was it?

A: Oh, I don't know, it's – well, the Germans weren't allowed to have cameras, knives, anything that could hurt an American.

Q: Okay.

A: And – but **Alfons** had his own camera, and that was one of our biggest problems. The fil – the film we got might have been old, and we traded it for cigarettes, or candy, or chocolate bars, or something like that. You couldn't walk to the grocery store, or – or a – a drugstore and buy film there, there wasn't a such thing. In other words, we get – we get film from people who already had it, and some of it was good, and some of it wasn't. Sometimes you'd give them a – a chocolate bar for a – a box of film, and it was no good, it was already exposed, as – so we got any kind of film at all that – that you could get your hands on.

Q: So you had a camera, and he had a camera? Both of you had – two ki –

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A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, we both had, yeah, we were – well, we were allowed to have cameras, but – and of course, **Alfons**, I don't know where he got his camera, I have no idea, cause I – he could speak German, so he could go out and talk to these people in **Dachau** and get things, and he was able to bring things back from the stores in **Dachau** [indecipherable] there, or steal or whatever he could do, you know, he'd just take it, you know, cause that – the Germans would give up anything because they – they just didn't want to be executed right there on the spot, yep.

**End of File One**

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**Beginning File Two**

A: – yeah, that was a bad year, I'll tell you. I – I was glad to get out of there

**[indecipherable]**.

Q: Well tell me – I know, but we're gonna dwell on it still a little bit, I'm sorry to say, because there are more questions. When you tell me things, that – more questions about it –

A: That's okay. I don't mind.

Q: Okay. So you would get out – you would get the film, but not everybody would want to take pictures. What made you want to take pictures of what you were seeing? Cause in the photo album you're donating to us –

A: Well, what it actually – well, everybody – **Alfons** did the same thing, you know, we'd pi – take a picture of the gate, or – or the – or people lining the – in the – the – the cadavers were lying in the – the – the – the pick-up trucks. We were – maybe we thought it was going to be evidence sometime, y-you know, that maybe somebody would want it, that's all. There was really no reason to – to take pictures, it was just that we wanted to do it, I guess for our own use later on. And – but I had those pictures laying at home for years, and never looked at them anyway. I – I –

Q: Tell me, how did you develop them there?



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A: Oh, **Alfons**, for some reason or other, he was able to do this in his office. I don't know how he did it, where he got the film. I mean, he had a little closet like where he would develop these film for me, and for him.

Q: Okay.

A: And that's the only two cameras that were in the office, you know, just his and mine. And then we'd get film all different sizes. A lot of times you couldn't use it anyway, because it was – you know, it was exposed, or whatever.

Q: Were there any pictures that you took that didn't get developed because the films –

A: Oh my heavens, yeah, loads of them. Oh, the film wasn't any good, a lot of it, you know, and – and so how would we know? We didn't know, you put it in the camera and then it came out black, or whatever **[indecipherable]**

Q: Yeah.

A: Cause there was no color, it was all black and white, and you know, th – the film. we'd – we'd borrow the film, you know, we – if we – we'd go into **Dachau** and talk to these people who we heard maybe had film. And then we'd say, well, we'll – we'll give you maybe – I couldn't speak German because **Alfons** could, so he was always the interpreter. So anyway, he would get **[indecipherable]** these people who had film, and then we'd give them whatever we had to give them,

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maybe C-rations, or whatever it was, just for the film, because they wanted to sell it. They wanted our – our things. They – they considered our bread as – as cake, and I liked their bread better, because it was dark bread. But our – all the fellows that I had in the office, they le – really liked our bread. They thought it was cake at times, cause it was white.

Q: Yeah.

A: And theirs is dark. But I liked the dark bread.

Q: Well, people do say it's healthier than – than white bread.

A: Pardon?

Q: People say that dark bread is healthier than white bread.

A: Oh, I – that's what I understand so, yeah. Oh, I – I used to – I loved that stuff, yeah. We – we'd gallons of – of peanut butter and grape jelly, and I'd put that peanut butter and grape jelly on this dark bread; that was really good, you know. But if you didn't have anything else to eat, I guess that was all right. But – but we had – we had **[indecipherable]** rations. Then after the Americans came in, they opened up the kitchen, and then we had good food that we knew – that was there. Well, I remember the – the Thanksgiving that we were there, I went over to the – where the other Americans were, where they were eating in the dining room, and it was Thanksgiving day, and somebody – one of the cooks in – American cooks told

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one of the German assistants to go get the salt. Anyway, he got the – the soapsud – the soap powder, and put that in the mashed potatoes. And – and everybody – everybody was standing out in the hall, they gotta get in the toilet [indecipherable] down – down the aisle there, you know, and fortunately I didn't eat any of the mashed potatoes. I – I – I was really glad I didn't after that, I'll tell you. But these guys were standing out there – somebody had gone in their pants, and everything else, you know. I didn't – they were eating soap in their mashed potatoes.

Q: Oh my God.

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh my God.

A: Aw, it was – but I – I say, you know, it was a rat race. It was just th – it was n – everything was turmoil, you know, for months, because there was really not that much instruction on what to do. All we wanted to do was get rid of the SS.

Q: And they did.

A: You know, get rid of the offi – get rid of the officers, get rid of the people who mistreated all these people for years, and just get rid of them, you know, and that was it. And I guess we each had our own little places to be, and that's where we stayed, and we didn't – we didn't make it – any noise anywhere, because if you did, you – you'd get into the trouble. So we – we didn't really –

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Q: So you felt – you felt that, you know, gi – if I can summarize this in the way I understand it.

A: Okay.

Q: Is that – that – when we're talking about those war crime trials, and what you mean is trials that took place within the camp of **Dachau**, for the camp of **Dachau**.

A: That's correct, that's all.

Q: That's all it was –

A: Yes.

Q: – it never went to **Nuremberg** or anything else?

A: Oh no, no, no, these – this was just to handle the people that were – that were officers or guards there in **Dachau**.

Q: Okay.

A: – the little people, not – no-no-nothing outside.

Q: And these German former guards and – and camp managers and so on –

A: Right, right.

Q: – were not talking – were not telling on one another.

A: Oh, that's correct, that wa –

Q: In other words, they wouldn't provide any evidence?

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A: No, nad – no information about somebody else. Maybe one time, maybe that somebody didn't like the other guy, or something like that, he would say, well, he did this or that, or he – he mistreated somebody, or something like that. Well, that was only recorded, and that was it. So it ended up mostly everybody was either hung or shot or whatever anyway, it didn't make any difference.

Q: Were these executions taking place on a daily basis?

A: Oh sure, yeah, after – after the thing got started right, yeah, because there was like – there were dozens of – of guards there, and the commandant and so on. And – and all these people, they had a lot of officers there, from the **SS**, and they were all tried there, right there at **Dachau**.

Q: Did any of the prisoners though, that they had mistreated, stay around to give testimony, or were they gone?

A: No, they – most of them were try to get out of the place. They didn't – they – they might have said some things about maybe certain ones that they were – they were mishandled by, but – but they ne – they are – there was – wasn't much – there were – there really wasn't much discussion about the prisoners. They were just glad to get out of that fence, and get out of them barracks. They would sleep anywhere in the buildings, or wherever they could, you know, summer – was warm at the time, cause we got there in May, and then we got summer, but then in wintertime it got

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cold, and but bo – most of the people were gone a – after I left – I mean, they were gone before I left, really.

Q: I was going to ask you that, I was gonna –

A: Yeah, yeah, most of them – well, the ones that had someplace to go, or the ones that could walk, they would go. Otherwise, you couldn't go, they just had to stay there, and we fed them, whatever we could do with them, til they finally did go.

Q: I see.

A: But they may have had friends or somebody, maybe they knew somebody, or they – they'd just walk into houses and throw the people out, you know, take over the house, you know, they were – pardon me, prisoners for – of the Germans for a while, and they just wanted to get out of the camp, just get out of there quickly as they could.

Q: So, in the local town of **Dachau**, they would – there were former prisoner who would go and –

A: Oh yeah, they –

Q: – empty out from –

A: Oh sure, that's right, they – you bet they did. And I – I understand now though, that a lot of of those people who were the – most of them are gone, they wouldn't – there was no discussion about what happened with any of these people. But the-they

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were going to **Dachau** and they'd steal food, or whatever, they – they'd just knock people down and take whatever they had. They – yo-you walk into the houses, hey, they were prisoners there, so why – they were glad to get out. So – so they had no idea what – what was going to be happening to them or anything else. So they – I – I could understand, if you were in **Dachau** and you were from **Poland**, you had a long way to go to get back to where – another country. And we had people there from 31 different countries. So, lord, they came from all around, **Austria** [indecipherable] you know, and who knows where. There were no Americans there that I know of, none at all.

Q: You – you – did you ever have any personal interaction with any of the prisoners, aside from **Alfons**?

A: Not really, other than what walked into my office, that's all, I had – I had no other contact.

Q: But I meant –

A: I couldn't speak German anyway.

Q: I'm not talking about the German prisoners of the Americans.

A: Yeah.

Q: I'm talking about the prisoners of the Germans. That is, when you s – the – the people who had been in **Dachau** for four or five years as prisoners.

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A: Yeah, right.

Q: Did you have any contact with those, with the victims of the concentration camp?

A: Not really, no, because I couldn't speak their languages, and I didn't know what they were saying anyway.

Q: I see.

A: You know, si – if somebody was **Poland**, I didn't know what they were saying. We had some Polish fellows working there, and they ended up – they – they started to speak some English. Or **Alfons** – most of those were – were friends of his, and he – they were all from – from **Poland**, so they knew how to get along with each other, and then **Alfons** would translate what they said to me, i-in – in English. So that was a big help to me, let me tell you. I w – I wouldn't – I don't know how I could have ever operated there without him being there. I cou – I couldn't have done it, no how.

Q: And – and his name, if I want to say it again, is **Kanarek, k-a-n-a-r-e-k**, something like that? His last name? **Alfons**'?

A: I don't know. I – I know it started with a **K**, but I don't know. It was **Kamyczek(ph)**. **Alfons Kamyczek(ph)**, I'll never forget his name.

Q: **Kamyczek**.



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A: And I never had any contact with him after we left there. Like I say, he was still there when I left. So I – I have no idea, I don't know his address. I used to hear from – from others – pardon me, **Erkar**(ph), from **Hungary**, who was a prisoner of ours who would come in and clean up my – my bedroom, and clean the office, and he would – if any cigarettes were – cigarette butts were around, he'd tear them apart and save the tobacco. He'd put them in a bag, and – to take back to – to **Hungary**. And he did write me, **Erkar**(ph), he had my address, and how he did it, I don't know, but he had my address –

Q: And he wrote to you.

A: – and he used to write he – to me, to send him silk stockings. Well, that was just when all women's s-stockings, what were they called?

Q: Well, stockings, sil – yeah.

A: Yeah, right, yeah simo – they weren't silk, wha –

Q: Nylon.

A: Nylon. Nylons were just coming out after the war, and he would write and tell me – he'd send me stamps and stuff like that. He was a postman in **Hungary**, where, I don't remember any more. And my wife and I used to get a kick out of it, she'd say, well, here's a – another letter for – for silk stockings or nylon stockings. And I'd send him a – we sent them a couple of times, and that was it, then he didn't

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write me any more. So I did all – I don't know whatever happened to any of these people, I have no idea. I just left.

Q: Well, tell me – yeah. Tell me about when you were writing, since you bring that up. You were writing to your wife and sending her pictures –

A: Oh yeah.

Q: – of what you saw. Did you explain in your letters what it was, where you were, and what kind of a place it was?

A: Never. She just knew where I was. It was an **APO** number, so she didn't really know where I was, she'd only see these pictures, you know –

Q: Did she ask you about them?

A: – and I told her – I told her I was in **Dachau**, that's all. I re – I really didn't want to upset her, beca – tell her where I was, because she didn't know if I was a prisoner or not, or what I was, you know, I was just there. But yeah, I wrote to her. You know, sometimes you get a whole stack of letters at a time. It might have been a whole month, you know, that you didn't get any mail, because everything had to travel by boat.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so you – you didn't –

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Q: Well there – in that photo album – go ahead, have a – have a sip – in that photo album you have quite a few very sad and disturbing, grisly pictures –

A: Yeah, right.

Q: – of – of bodies. Were those the – did you send those home as well?

A: Oh yeah, some of them were, yeah.

Q: Some of them – so she saw them.

A: Oh yeah, sure.

Q: She saw them.

A: Oh yeah, sure, oh yeah, yeah.

Q: So, by – by the time she got them, she must have understood where they were from.

A: Oh yeah, oh, I'm sure she did, yeah. I – I told her I was in **Dachau**, but that really didn't – you know, Americans didn't know where these places were –

Q: Yeah.

A: – you know, and there were – there were hundreds of camps. And so that was – that was just another place that I was. Like I – I wasn't supposed to keep a diary, and I kept a diary the whole time I was in the service. And again, those things were stolen, and so I had no – no – I would have known every time where I moved, and so on, but I didn't know. Oh gee.

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Q: So you – you kept a diary, and that was stolen from you?

A: Oh yeah, they [**indecipherable**] all three years were stolen that were all – that were all my time in the service. I had them all there together, laying on the bed, on my cot, and somebody stole everything I had.

Q: Oh. And that was still when you were in **Dachau**, or out of **Dachau**? That was –

A: No, that was in – I was in **Bremerhaven** then, to get on a boat. I was in dur – I was going from **Dachau**, which is in southern **Germany**, up to – up to – up to **Bremerhaven**, which is north.

Q: I see.

A: On the **North Sea**, and that's where we got a boat to come home.

Q: Okay.

A: So – yeah.

Q: Let's pause just for a second [**break**]

A2: – they – they –

A: He was one of the fortunate people that were there.

A2: But he – he was smart, and he –

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay, in that case, let me turn this on again, and tell me about the women who were prisoners of the Germans in the camp –

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A: Yeah.

Q: – who let others escape. You had mi – where was this –

A: Well, they were – they all wanted to get out of it, out of the camp as quickly as they could, yeah.

Q: Okay, so what about these particular women?

A: Well, they're – they were really – they were from – from different countries, and so on. Like, I only saw about maybe 20 or something like that, who were prisoners of the Germans –

Q: Okay.

A: – of the SS, brought in there from other camps. And – but I don't know. They – they – they couldn't do very much, they were – they were the same as everybody else, you know. They – they all wanted to get out, and I don't blame them.

Q: Okay. Hang on just a second.

A: Yeah, I gotta say they were – they were –

Q: Okay. [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, we'd – I don't know – I don't know where these women came from. I know they were brought in there from other camps, a-and – and but the – the SS would try to move them, whenever they could, but –

Q: Well, I –

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A: I got – I gotta say, it was – it was somewhat turmoil, you know. Nobody – nobody knew who did what.

Q: Why is it – I mean, I know that in some ways it sounds like it – it should be obvious, but why is it that you wanted to get out of there so badly, out of that – out of that –

A: Why did I want to get out?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Because I was just married, and one – yeah, I mean, I wanted to just get home, that's all. I saw enough, you know, and knowing – I didn't mind too much the travel, or wherever barracks, and so on, or the buzz bombs and stuff like this. I didn't – that didn't bother me. After I got to the camp – and I didn't dr – I didn't have bad conditions there, I had a real nice bedroom and – and I could get food whenever I wanted it, because Americans were in charge. I didn't – it – it really wasn't a hardship for me. In other words, I knew I had to stay there, and that was it. So nobody ever – nobody ever said anything about what I should do, or –

Q: You had no commanding officer?

A: No. And I was a lowly sergeant, yeah, yeah, ye-yeah.

Q: Who was the American who was in charge of the entire **Dachau** camp?

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A: Oh, they brought a couple different people in, different times over that year. Things were moving so fast. The war – the wa – when – when the Americans got to **Dachau**, and they had been to **Munich**, they were then moving on to southern **Germany**. In other words, they were trying to get down where **Hitler** was, down in the – in the **Alps** mountains. There – that's where they were trying to get him. So, after they moved – they left only a certain amount of – maybe it was only a hundred Americans there, for that year that I was there. The rest of them were already in battle, they were go-going, trying to get to southern **Germany**, get the war over with.

Q: So they thought – so they thought that **Hitler** was in southern **Germany**, but in truth, he was in **Berlin**.

A: Yeah, but he was – no, he –

Q: **Hitler** was in **Berlin**. That's where he committed suicide.

A: Yeah, but – but his – they were trying to get there where his house [indecipherable] was down there.

Q: Oh yeah. That's right, **Berchtesgaden** was right there, okay.

A: That's right. They didn't – they were trying to get down there, and – the Americans were, to finish the war off, because they knew that the – **Austria** was right beyond that. We didn't want to – we didn't care about **Austria**, we just wanted

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to get **Germany**, and get everybody killed out there we could kill, you know, that was it. We wanted to get out. Everybody wanted out, that was it.

Q: So tell me – tell me this, I asked this earlier. The end of the war was May eighth, I believe, or May ninth, one of those two days, '45.

A: Yeah, '45, but –

Q: Right. So you had been in **Dachau** nine, 10 days by that point.

A: Oh sure.

Q: Did the end of the – do you remember when you – how – where you were when the war ended, when you learned that the war was really over?

A: Yeah, but – but it really didn't di – yeah, wi – I was still there in th – in the office at **Dachau**, you know, it wasn't –

Q: It didn't matter to you.

A: No, no, it was nothing. It was just over, you know. Everybody was happy about it, but we had to get rid of all these people, we had to get into the war crimes trials, a-and all these things were going on there. So – and to me, I didn't really care what was going on, I just wanted out.

Q: Tell me, did you ever – ever have **R** and **R**? That is, an opportunity to go away from **Dachau** for days at a time to have a bit of vacation?

A: No, never.



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Q: No.

A: No, never. I was always there.

Q: Okay.

A: I remember when I went down there one day for that guy to look at that – that chateau in the mountains, that ski run. Sir – he says 300 dollars, and look at all this space. Oh my God, I thought, oh jeez. The guy can't possibly believe this is worth 600 dollars, but yeah, yeah. Well, 300 dollars would have been thousands to them, oh yeah.

Q: And after – right after the war, that's a different story.

A: Oh yeah, sure. Oh yeah. But see, I – I – I was smart enough to know – I was just – just a kid, but I was smart enough to know, how'm I gonna get my money back? I'm not going to sit here and watch this guy. I'm married. My wife's back in – in **York, Pennsylvania** for goodness sake. What am I gonna do here, how'm I gonna get my money out of this place? So –

Q: He hadn't counted on you being that smart.

A: Yeah, right, I di – I di – I was smart enough to know I – I'm not gonna get – I could have bought the place, I could have give him my money and so on, I might have owned it, maybe. However, I wouldn't have known what was going on

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anyway, you know. That wa – that was too far-fetched for me, that – that was way over my head.

Q: Tell me now, when – when you finally did leave **Dachau**, was that April 1946 or May 1946?

A: Yeah, it was – I got – I got out in April of – of '46.

Q: And did you go to **Italy** then, and **Switzerland** then, cause you mentioned –

A: Yeah. Yeah, wa –

Q: – those were two other places – what happened?

A: Well, we – we just took little tours. One of my – one of my American friends was supposed to collect food for the prisoners over there, which was a farce. And anyway, somehow he finagled a German command car, one of them big, open jobs that th – that the Germans had. And we had a – an **SS** officer and a **Wehrmacht** soldier. And the four of us used to take trips, and we were looking for food. So anyway, these two guys there, the – the German **SS** offer – and the funny thing was that he was from **Hanover, Germany**. His family had owned a – a – a – wheat mills and so on, they were grinders, they grind up for – for food, and so on. And I asked him one day how he – he could speak English, and he said – I asked him how he – he got into the service, and the **SS**. And he said, well, **Hitler** said, like the Boy Scouts were – had to go in this type of service, and – and the Girl Scouts were over

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here, and – and these groups were over, but a – he put them in important positions, but he ended up in the **SS**. And anyway, we used to take these trips down to the mountain – in the mountains, in the **Alps**, the four of us. The – the werman – German **Wehrmacht** guy, he would – he would drive, and sometimes I'd sit in the back with this **SS** officer, who we got out of the camp. We were able to take him out wi – you know, get in the –

Q: So, he wasn't tried? He wasn't somebody –

A: Oh no, no, he wasn't – I don't know how he got out, but he did. The both of them got out. Maybe I helped them, I don't know, but anyway, wa – but we can – we used to take trips any time down the mountains. And this one guy, the **SS** officer, he knew some German general's wife that lived down there, I forget what the town was, but it was occupied by the French. And they brought all these French Moroccans out of **Africa**, up there to the occupation army. And the – and I remember we were standing up there high in the window, we were looking down at these people, and these guys in their robes, and so on. And the – the Americans used to bring meat out there, big legs of lamb and stuff like that. And they have in the truck – there was no – there was no cooling –

Q: Right.

A: – and no – and no –

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Q: No refrigeration.

A: No refrigera – they just brought it in trucks, they throw it on the ground, and no – these guys would pick it up, they'd take it away and they just ate it, and so on. But we'd stand up in this wom – this woman's house, and we'd look down, see this stuff going on. But yeah, they – they a – they had hardly finagled that car – I – I still don't know how they ever got that car, I don't know. But my friend **Davros**(ph) asked me along. We went to a – a funny part, we went to a **Kraft** cheese factory one day, and got cheese. Another place this guy knew, whoever, could get eggs. Why we did it, I don't know. I don't know what we ever did with this stuff anyway.

A2: This is after that happened, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is this after **Dachau**, or is this while you're in **Dachau**?

A: Oh yeah, we tha – while we were in **Dachau**, yeah, yeah. I don't know where they got the car from, I guess it was from one of the officers had this car there. It was a big [**indecipherable**] job that was really nice. Big convertible. We'd ride around in that thing, oh yeah.

Q: Well, tell me about something else, cause you alluded to it before. It sounds like there was a pretty thriving black market going on after the war.

A: Oh yeah.

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Q: If you had – if you had money that you could exchange and get – what did you exchange it for, for stuff, or for local currency, whatever that local currency would have been?

A: Well [**indecipherable**] local. Well, we used to call – the Americans had their own money.

Q: Okay.

A: So, we used to call them cigar coupons.

Q: Okay.

A: Cause back in those days, when you go here to – to a cigar store or something like that, they give you coupons there if you bought certain products.

Q: Right.

A: So we used to call the cigar coupons, the American money.

Q: But it wasn't our usual dollar currency?

A: Oh no, no, no, every ca – every country and **America** had different. In **France** they had French money, American money. In **Germany** they had American money, but it wasn't real money.

Q: I see.

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A: It was just printed stuff that they had. Whatever country it was that was occupied, the Americans brought their money in, but it wasn't real money. It wasn't – wasn't cur – American currency.

Q: I see.

A: It was just printed stuff that they brought. That's why I call – we call them cigar coupons. But we could buy stuff with this. In other words, we could go to, maybe not a **PX**, but place where you could buy stuff.

Q: A commissary?

A: Yeah, right – well, it was – wa – it was – it really wasn't – that headquarters, they just had it like a little room, with stuff in it, you know, no store or anything like that. They may have had cigars, or pipes, or you know, things [**indecipherable**] guys smoke with or – or whatever. They might –

Q: So was it worth anything, this – this printed money?

A: Oh yeah, it was –

Q: I mean, worth anything that you could buy that was wor – that was the –

A: Oh yeah, you could buy a million things with it. The Germans would like to get their hands on it.

Q: I see.

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A: – because they could u-use the money too. Actually, the me – the German money wasn't worth anything, really.

Q: You mean – talking about the old **Reichsmark**?

A: I – like we – when we [**indecipherable**] that money wasn't any good to anybody really. It was just a souvenir. I se – I – I used to send money back, I had some million dollar bills and so on from – from the bank, and I'd send them to my wife home, cause her uncle used to save the stuff from different countries. He'd save this money that – you know, if guys would send him, cause he had a restaurant and – and – and they'd – they'd send him money back. So I sent him a million dollar bill one day. That was a –

Q: You mean a million **Reichsmark** bill, like –

A: No, real ri – yeah, but it wasn't – it wasn't anything anyway.

Q: Right.

A: It was just a souvenir really. Just a piece of paper.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, well, it was useless really.

Q: Well, about – so the – so you were able to exchange real dollars for this sort of printed American –

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A: Oh yeah, I could take my money, American money, and I could deposit. I could send it back, we had like a post office that we could go to. It wasn't really a post office, but you could take your stuff there. And we could exchange that money, we could put it in the book, and then we get that, I could send that home. Yeah. But like I say, they only – I only got five dollars, my wife got the rest of it. I guess [indecipherable] we had 30 dollars a month, a dollar a day we got, yeah.

Q: And so you would keep five for yourself and send 25 home.

A: Yeah, well, she was – yeah, she was working, so she worked in my – her uncle's restaurant, and –

Q: And – and going back to other stuff, what kind of activities were some of the soldiers, **US** soldiers involved in in the black market?

A: Really nothing, they just – they would gamble money. They'd gamble it to get the money, that's all. That's how they got the money, you know, was mostly gambling. Oh, some of them used to go to – to **Switzerland** and buy cheap watches, and sell them to the Russians for a high price. And – and anyway – and they all – the Russian money wasn't worth anything, I don't know why they ever –

Q: Did you meet any Russians when you were in **Dachau**?

A: Pardon?

Q: Did you meet any Russians when you were in **Dachau** that –



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A: I saw some, but I – I saw them, but I wouldn't have known that I – I met them – we were in a – before we – I got to **Dachau**, we were in a – ake – a training camp where they – they tested all their guns, and so on. And their – the Russians were coming in to take over, and I met some there. But nobody liked – even the Americans didn't like the Russians, even though they were on our side, that we didn't care for them. They were –

Q: Why?

A: In fact, I – my neighbor down the street here, he met some Russians, and he didn't – they didn't like them either. They – I don't know, they had their lifestyle, I guess, and us – and we – we couldn't – we couldn't get along with them at all. But I knew the Germans and the – and the Russians didn't like each other at all. They were – like these two guys I said were draftsmen, they didn't want to go back to **Berlin**.

Q: Did you ever get to **Berlin**, or not?

A: Never. Never got to [indecipherable] always seven miles away. You know, the thing was, I always – when we were at **Dachau**, there was – I always wanted to get out, you know, and I didn't take any trips that I could have gone out in – down the mountains, there were these guys, cause I knew the other American was with me. But we – I never took any – I could – I couldn't go on – I went to **Munich** a couple

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of times, and I liked the city. But that was mostly all gone anyway. The buildings were di – just ruined, everything was ruined.

Q: Tell me this: you arrive in **Dachau** in the last day of April in 1945. You leave the –

A: We got in in May.

Q: Or in May.

A: Yeah.

Q: The first day of May. You leave in April 1946.

A: Yeah, right.

Q: The **Dachau** you arrived in, and the **Dachau** you left from –

A: Let me see – wait a minute here. We got four – yeah, '40 – wi – May of '46.

Q: Oh, May of '46.

A: Yeah, 40 – '46. Trying to get my mind here together. I got – no, I got out in April. That wouldn't be right. I was still there in April, I got May – out in May of '46, yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. So that means you were really there over a year, just over a year.

A: Yeah, right, yeah.

Q: How had the camp changed in that year?

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A: Not very much. I think it's after – after the war crimes people got out, a lot of it was torn down, like I said about this man telling me a lot of – a lot of buildings were disposed of. They took all the – they took all the barracks down, I understand, everything.

Q: That's after you left.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: When you left, were th –

A: Oh, that was still there.

Q: Okay.

A: Everything was there.

Q: Were all the prisoners still there?

A: Oh no, a lot of them left.

Q: Was it an empty camp?

A: Oh yeah, pretty well, yeah, pretty well.

Q: Were there – were there still –

A: Only the people didn't know where to go, they were the only ones that stayed.

Q: And were there still German prisoners of the Americans there?

A: Well, there were some un – some German prisoners there yet, but not many, they were gone, they knew where to go. They – they knew where they lived, and so on.

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But these prisoners, the poor souls, they didn't know where they were from. They knew where they were from, but they – how they were gonna get there.

Q: So there still were prisoners from the concentration camp years –

A: Yeah.

Q: – when you left in – in May '46, who were still in **Dachau**?

A: Yeah, right. There were still some there because they didn't – well, a lot of them didn't know where to go.

Q: Right, right.

A: Th-They were confused, a lot of them were – well, they has spent a lot of time there maybe, and they – they were too confused, they didn't know where to go. And they couldn't walk, a lot of them couldn't walk. So I think eventually they took these people back. They just put them on American trucks and took them wherever they wanted to go, or something like that. That's what I understood, anyway, but I wasn't there when they did that, I don't know. They had to get rid of them somehow, you had 30,000 people, that's a lot of people, let me tell you.

Q: That's right.

A: And they had to get rid of them. So, the Americans didn't want them there, you know, they just wanted to close the camp up and get out. They wanted to get out as quickly as you could.

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Q: Did you see any of the physical artifacts of the medical experiments?

A: Yeah, I saw some – some lampshades that the commandant's wife made out – out of human skin in the – in the house [indecipherable] that stuff was still there.

Q: Was it in the house, or was –

A: Oh, it was in the house, yeah. The – the commandant's house was about in the center of camp, so we Americans took it over. I don't know who was in charge, I have no idea, but I know I was told to come there a couple of times, and I saw this stuff. There was still the – the – the furnishings were still there. Maybe they were gonna use it for evidence, I don't know. I had –

Q: What did – what did a lampshade made out of human skin look like?

A: Something similar to this, except it was darker, that's all. She has it stretched out, you know. Was more just straight things here, that's all.

Q: But it was like in a regularly furnished room?

A: Oh yeah, sure, like your living room, yeah, yeah. I remember some of the furniture and stuff they – they had – all that stuff was still there.

Q: How come the comma –

A: I guess he must have used it for evidence, I don't know.

Q: How come the commandant's house was in the center of the camp, but most of the SS officers live right outside?

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A: I don't know why. I don't know why.

Q: Okay.

A: But I know I was there three times, I was there. Maybe – I don't know, maybe –

Q: Was it awful –

A: I think his wife was there, too. I think he had some children there.

Q: Why – was it a place that was off limits to you during the time you were there, that you'd only have three times you'd have been there? Or was there just special occasions as to why you went to that commandant's house?

A: No. All the Americans are in charge of it see, so –

Q: Right.

A: – I was just told to come there one day for a meeting or something like that.

That's all it was. People gotta do this or that, or somebody's this – was there. You know, there's a couple of American officers there, and – but I was just one of maybe 10 people that were there, that's all. All Americans were there, only – only Americans were invited.

Q: Okay.

A: But, yeah, we were just still there. We were gonna do this or that, or we're gonna – we're gonna move here, or we're gonna open this kind of a building or something

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like that. There was no really big instructions. I think it was more of a – a ti-time to drink wine. That's about all, yeah.

Q: So tell me how – who gave you the order that you could actually leave **Dachau**? How did that happen?

A: You know, I don't know. Somebody – there was some there – well, the American officers were there, and some guy came in to – on the office one day and told me that I could leave. I was the only American there, of course. So, he said, get your things and – and come down to headquarters. And then we got on a truck, and went to **Munich** and got on a train, and went to – to **Bremerhaven**, and that was it. They gave us a ca – a quart of **Four Roses** whiskey when we got on the train. And the train was real cold because it's – it's three guys sit here, and three people over here, it's like – well, you know how they are, the coaches with, I think there's six people or something like that.

Q: Sort of like separate compartments.

A: Yeah. And I drank all my booze, I'm taking all my clothes off, I'm getting hot. These here guys are all sitting there freezing. Oh God, you know, I – I guess these were – this whiskey warmed me up, because that's the first I ever had any whi – any booze. But you know, I ha – the other people, they used to tell me, in the **Pacific**, they'd give them beer out there, Americans dis-distribute beer and all that sort of

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thing. I never got any of that stuff. We got – when we got on the train, somebody handed me a bottle of whiskey, and that was it. That's the only thing I ever got from anybody. We got a – a pack of cigar – I mean, a carton of cigarettes a week, that's why everybody used to smoke. But we got tobacco for a pipe or something like that, once in a while. But I never got anything that was given to me, other than that whiskey [indecipherable] on the train.

Q: So – so tell me this –

A: Let me tell you, by the time I got to mid-**Germany**, that booze was gone.

[indecipherable]

Q: So at **Bremerhaven**, where you on a military ship coming home, or –

A: We were on – we were on a troop ship.

Q: On a troop ship.

A: What happened, it was a freighter, really. The – the Americans would take German prisoners, and bring them back to the **USA** to work over here, on farms, in factories and stuff like that. They were really the fortunate ones, that when that ship came back, they'd bring these prisoners back, the German prisoners back. It was all painted, it was really – everything was nice and clean for us. So, we came back on ji – on – got on the ship, and, in fact I have a picture in that book, of me standing on the boat. And it took about 10 days to get home, I think we hit a storm or something



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coming back. But it was on a troop ship, but it was nice and clean, cause the Germans had painted everything, and it was, you know, it was neat. So they were using **[indecipherable]** in the **States**. But then I heard a lot of stories about prisoners back here that – German prisoners that were pretty well treated some – back here, I'll tell you. They had good – they didn't have to work on farms and factories and stuff. In fact two guys over here the other day, they were telling me about some of the prisoners that were – they knew people here who had taken care of them, you know, and brought them back. So they –

Q: And where did you sail in to?

A: **New York**. We left from **New York** on the **Queen Elizabeth**, that took us five days to get there. It was really fast. That ship traveled alone, it didn't go in a convoy like all the others.

Q: The **Queen Elizabeth** was the ship you came back on?

A: No, no –

Q: That's the ship –

A: – we came back on a troop ship.

Q: Oh a – that's what I thought.

A: Yeah, right, a freighter. But we went over on –

Q: On the **Queen Eliz** –

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A: – there were 21,000 **G.I.s** on there, and – and 4,000 crew and 4,000 civilians were on that ship.

Q: On **Queen Elizabeth**?

A: Yeah, right. Going over.

Q: Going to – uh-huh.

A: Going over. I never saw such a big ship in my life before we saw it. Well, I never saw a ship before.

Q: Yeah.

A: But anyway, we got on there, and boy if a – a torpedo had ever hit that thing, they'd a lost a lot of people, let me tell you.

Q: Yeah.

A: But it would zigzag like this, it – it goes like that across the ocean, because every six minutes the ship would change course, because it took seven minutes for a German submarine to get on target. And that's why they – they'd zigzag. And the last night out, before we came up the **Firth of Clyde**, that ship was really bouncing back and forth, because they said they had a – a – a notice that maybe there was a submarine close by, so there was – that was really a bounce around, but it was a nice ride. We went over in August, it was beautiful weather. And then we – we stayed up on deck most of the time. I slept on deck almost every night, because I

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knew I was down in **D** deck, so I – I never – I'd never get out of there. That was a – that was a full ship, let me tell you. All them big dining rooms were filled up with del – double decker c-cots. Some of them were three and – three high, you had to climb up there to get to them. I was fortunate, I had a nice cot down in – somebody was above me, I think, in – in one the state rooms. A nice ship, a big ship, let me tell you. A big boat.

Q: And when you got into **New York** harbor, having come back, did your wife meet you there?

A: Oh no, oh no, no. I had to go down to **New Jersey** to a – a de-depot there, an army camp, where some guy was – he'd – he was gonna sign us out. And he had only been the – in the service about two months, I think it was, and he said, don't you want to join the – the National Guard or – or the reserves? I said hell no, if you want to join, you go ahead and join. Let me tell you right now, I've had all the army I want. Yeah, he – he – he wanted me to sign up, I said no way. I'm not signing up for nothing, let me tell you. Nope. I ca – I came back on – then we got a train out of somewhere in **New Jersey** – no, I got a bus to **Philadelphia**, and then we got a train from **Philadelphia** to **Lancaster, Pennsylvania**. And – and the – the car, th-the car had a potbellied stove right in the middle, that's how he heated the car. Oh jeez.

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Really antiquated. Oh God, I can't believe that something like that happened. But that's the way it was, you know, yeah.

Q: And so your wife met you in **Lancaster**?

A: No way.

Q: No.

A: No. We had [indecipherable] on the third floor apartment, and I got a – a taxi to go home. Nobody there [indecipherable] me, no, nobody. Hell, nobody was there. I came home alone, yeah.

Q: Was she surprised to see you?

A: Sure was. She sure was surprised. I told her I was going to come home sometime, you know. Hell, we didn't have a telephone, and I – nobody had telephones, nobody – I didn't buy a c – I gotta borrow a car. Some guy was there with me. He worked in a ga – in a **Chrysler** garage in **York**, so he told me to buy a ca – a used car, cause cars weren't made during the war, and they – they only had the cars before the war, and they started making them after the war, but wa – there was – there was all used cars. And I had a big **Chrysler**, some beer magnate from **York**, he owned the car, and he traded in for something else. And I could actually lay out in the trunk of the car, was a one-seater. I could lay out this way, not sideways, I could la –

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Q: But lengthwise.

A: – that's how – how big the trunk was, I could stretch out like that, that's how big. **Beth**(ph) said, what in the world do you want with this kind of big car? I said, it's just a car, that's all. Just something to drive around, you didn't have anything. We sold our – we had a new **Nash** that we bought right before – about two – when I w – I worked in **Baltimore** and – and we had this **Nash**, and we sold it a couple hours before, cause she couldn't drive, so we sold it a couple of hours right before I went in the service. S-So, we had that money.

Q: So tell me about your post-war years.

A: Pardon?

Q: Tell me a little bit about the post-war years. Where did you start working when you came back?

A: When I came back?

Q: Mm.

A: Okay. I went back to my old buddy. We built a house here in **Hanover**, and I went back with my old architect friend here downtown, who I had known before that – before I got in. And I went with him for a couple of years, I guess it was. Then I got my license in 1950, and I – I was registered in five states: **New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania.**

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Q: Are – license for what?

A: As an architect.

Q: As an architect, okay.

A: And I have a license as a structural engineer just in – in **Pennsylvania**. I dropped that years ago, I didn't need it. But –

Q: And so, did you go out on your own then, or –

A: Oh yeah, I always had my own office, always. I did work for other people, then I did work for a **Baltimore** firm when they were doing the **Baltimore** City Hall.

Things like that, that sort of nice projects, yeah. And then I started getting into – into – into medical buildings, hospitals, [**indecipherable**] homes, retirement homes, that sort of thing.

Q: So mostly it was commercial buildings rather than residential?

A: Oh yeah, right, oh yeah. Well, things were busy then, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: Everybody was doing something, you know, and they were building all kinds of thing – I – I designed every fa – house in this town, and a lot of the buildings and so on. But in the last 20 years, my work has been from **Lancaster** east, in the **New York** or **New Jersey** and **Delaware**, and that sort of thing, I – I didn't do – I didn't do anything in **Hanover** for 20 years, at least, you know. But I came back here, I

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still had my contacts elsewhere. So I was still working – I worked up until a couple months ago.

Q: Really? Until a couple of months ago?

A: Oh yeah, right, yeah, sure.

Q: And you're 93 now, or 94?

A: Ninety-three. Don't – don't push it too far.

Q: Okay, okay, okay, I won't put more on there.

A: Yeah, yeah, but no, I had – I did work for this Amish contractor in **Lancaster County**, who we did work in new y – we built – all we built was foreign buildings; big riding arenas, stuff like that. He didn't want to build houses, always just – and I was quite busy with – just with him, doing these farm buildings, because everybody used to have a – had had a bar – a – a horse farm or something like that, a riding arena. I did for a psychiatrist over in **New Jersey**, I did all her farm buildings, and then she had a big riding arena, and she never – in the wintertime – but she never had to take the horse outside. In other words, they could go from the stalls – from the horse barn into maybe the – the – where they wash them down and so on, into the riding arena, and in fact I – we had a candy box in there for years, that she sent me with – with good candy in it. Yeah, we had a good ti – I liked her, she was a nice lady. Never saw her. Never sa – I never saw most of my clients, this Amish

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contractor handled everything. He'd just tell me what he wanted, and then I'd make the drawings, and send it to him, and he – he'd building the building, and that was it. So I – it was a nice arrangement where I tried – I wi – like I said, I was still working. In fact, she was in **Montana**, and I had a project here, some girls were here [indecipherable] and yeah, it – I didn't do the drafting, I had somebody else do the drafting. I'm one of them guys, I just [indecipherable] and check it out. Put my name on it, and that was it. Make some money on the side.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. I ba – yeah, people say, why you still working, you're 92 years old. I said, well, what difference it makes? That doesn't matter how, I gotta kick out of it.

Q: Yeah, exactly.

A: Sure. I don't –

Q: Did you ever go back to **Europe**?

A: Never.

Q: Never.

A: No, I'd like to have gone back, you know. I would a – I would have re – yeah, I talked to people, you know, with, like this guy here some weeks ago or days ago, had been back to **Dachau**. [indecipherable] he went in the 50s, I think, and 60s, and just he's – he gave me a list of what – what years he was there, and one of them



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was just this past summer, and I was surprised. And – but he said it – they're – they're all changed, they tear a lot of buildings down. It's not like it was at all, before.

Q: Did you ever talk to your wi –

A: It was bare.

Q: – when you got home, did you ever talk to your wife about that year in **Dachau**?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: In fact, a friend here ca – came in to see me, who I've known for 50 years, and he said, you never said you were in – in **Dachau**, til he read in the paper.

Q: And that paper – that newspaper article was this year, right? In June 2013?

A: Yeah, yeah, just recently, yeah.

Q: How did they find out that you were in **Dachau**? How did the newspaper people find out?

A: Yeah, right, yeah, I saw – I saw – and they called me, and he said, let's get together. And one day he called me from some mall out here. He said, how do I get to your house? And I went out to the garage to do something, and lord here he was. Yeah, I hadn't seen him for years, but I knew him for 50 years or so. 1954, I met him, yeah.

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Q: So, how did the newspaper people know –

A: I don't know. I don't know.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: This girl called me one day, and she said, I think you would have a story for us. And I'm all, what do you – what do you mean? And she said, well somebody told me that you had been in **Dachau** or **Germany**. And I said yeah. So, just a young girl, I don't think she was more than 22 years old, or something like that. She came here with a photographer, and – you weren't here then, I guess. No, you were still out in **Montana**.

A2: I was in **Montana**.

A: Yeah.

A2: I had just [**indecipherable**]

A: Yeah, right, yeah. And she came out here one day and we sat here and talked for a while at the kitchen table, and she looked in the pa – and the photographer was standing there, he had his camera standing right there at the table, and I had no idea that he was taking pictures, and he was taking pictures of the – the – the book, and other pictures that I had there. And lo and behold, one Sunday – somebody called me one morning, one Sunday morning, and he said, I'd like you to talk to some veterans about your experiences in **Dachau**. I'm, what are you talking about, you

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know? Here the newspapers was laying out there on the driveway, and I hadn't seen it yet, and so I didn't know what he was talking about. And I said oh, I don't – I don't make speeches. Then some woman called me one day to talk to – to a – a blue-head group. That's what my brother used to call them, it's like a – blue-heads. These women used to have their hair dyed blue.

A2: It's gray.

A: Yeah, right, yeah, well, it was blue. In fact, we talked about it the other day, yeah.

A2: It's some kind of rinse.

Q: Something –

A: Yeah. Yeah, right, it was a rinse they put over, sort of blue. Yeah, right. And my brother used – when he worked for **Armstrong**, he used to look out the office window, look down there at the **Brunswick** hotel, right downtown **Lancaster**, he called them blue-heads. He said, the blue-heads are out today, or something like that.

A2: We – that article was very well written. And we called her a couple of times to try to maybe – maybe she would want to coordinate something with you and come here, and she never called back.

Q: Okay.

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A: Mm. No.

Q: Well, I'm very glad that that young lady at the newspaper place did call you.

A: Yeah, I'm ri – I don't know how she knew, I really don't know. I don't know where she got her information from. I wanted to tell her what a good job she did, and in fact I wanted to tell her that you folks were going to come and see me, and – but she never called back. It's owned by another outfit, another newspaper in **York**, so maybe she works there as well, I don't know.

Q: Could be, but this was the local **Hanover** newspaper?

A: Oh yeah, right, yeah.

Q: What's it called?

A: "**The Evening Sun.**"

Q: "**The Evening Sun.**"

A: Yeah, you'll see it over that – that copy I have there.

Q: Okay.

A: But –

Q: Was there something I haven't asked you about that you'd like to add?

A: Not really, no, uh-huh, no. After the war, it didn't – wasn't no longer part of it, I just wanted to get out of there, that's all. I thought – to me it was a hellhole, you know. It was – it smelled so badly, the – you know –

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Q: Did the smell linger, even after it was cleaned up?

A: Oh, not too long, you – after tha – after that ra – you see, hell, people would – they'd be out there walking around, and hell, they'd just drop over dead, you know. They were half dead to st-start with, and you had to pick them up. Or there were these – these barracks, you have pictures of those – those beds that were woo – made of wood. There was no pads or nothing on them, you know, and if they were – if they were there, and they didn't move, they were considered dead. Cause we didn't have anybody that could know. We didn't have any instruments, or anything to do. You just picked them up and threw them out. Put them in the big – like a – what do they use, a – a tractor like thing to pull a – a trailer they'd put them on.

Q: That's –

A: We saw pictures of them there.

Q: Yeah. Well, I appreciate it, Mr. **Coulson**, that you've taken the time to go into such detail with me today.

A: Well, I'm glad, you know – you know, I – it's – I felt all along – my doctor used – in fact, I gave him the – those pictures, and he had them in his safe for a while.

Q: Did he?

A: And I thought well, nobody wanted them. And then my niece comes along and say – well she – she's a schoolteacher, and she's been to – to dak – I mean, to the

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museum a couple of times, and she said, oh, Uncle **Norm**, I'd like to have those photographs if you can. And I said well, I don't know what I'm gonna do with them, but the doctor already had them. So I got them back from him, you know, some months ago – weeks ago, really, and put them all – made sure they're all back in that book. I have a lot of other, but they're just of me in the service, not **Dachau**. And – but I'm glad that my wife saved that, and put them in that book, because otherwise I'd a – wouldn't have had anything. And we – it – I been carrying them around for years.

Q: Well, we really appreciate –

A: Never even looked at them.

Q: We very much appreciate it.

A: Yeah, but it's –

Q: Very much appreciate –

A: But then I thought like, well **Barb**(ph) said today, they really should be in a museum or something like that, an-and – and then [**indecipherable**] the newspaper article came out, and that's how your –

Q: The photography director called you. **Ginny**(ph).

A: Yeah, right, yeah, well she – some – somehow she learned about it, I think somebody must have sent her some information about it, and then that's how – and

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then of course she wrote me, and – and I – and we thought well, let's gi – get them to somebody, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A2: I thought it was so much more valuable coming from a soldier. He's not Jewish, and he was there, you know, so it's not like you can say, oh, they made it up.

Q: Right.

A2: You know? It really happened.

A: Yeah, right. Oh, yeah.

Q: It really happened.

A2: And so many people like to think it never happened, you know.

A: One of the neighbors here the other day, I – in fact, another veteran, who's in the 80s, he used to be – live in [indecipherable] he lives in **Maryland** now, and he came in, and wa – he took that article in the newspaper and framed it, it's hanging in here on the wall. He did a nice job on it, he really did. And – and he was such a poor soul, I'll tell you. And his son was in **Vietnam**, and he came in – and how he got a license I'll never know – he came in, he didn't – he was here for a half hour, he didn't say one word, he sat there with us. How he could drive I don't know. And

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he brought this man back the other day, and he had pictures, mostly of damaged buildings in **Berlin**.

A2: He had a picture of the bunker where **Hitler** and [indecipherable]

A: You know, and he said, well, they should be in a museum, but – but everybody has damaged buildings from **Berlin**, you know, it – it's not really a – a story to it.

A2: No.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, it's not like this death camp. **Dachau** is an entirely different story.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Well –

A: So, that's wa – that's the story kid.

Q: Thank you.

A: Yo-You're welcome.

Q: Thank you for sharing it.

A: Good seeing you, yeah, yeah.

Q: Thank you so – I will say now that this concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Norman Coulson**, on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2000 – 2013 –

A: Yeah, right.

Q: – in **Hanover, Pennsylvania**.



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A: That's it.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: You bet.

Q: Bye-bye.

A: Yeah.

**End of File Two**

**Conclusion of Interview**