

RG-50.031.0100

Summary

Earl Fein, b. 9/20/1923 Chicago, IL; was only child; was at the liberation of Nordhausen (Dora-Nordhausen); volunteered into Army; family from Latvia; bar-mitzvah, experienced no antisemitism growing up; hardships growing up in Depression; memories Pearl Harbor; basic training Ft. Riley, KS; (1943) shipped overseas, first landed in England few days, then to France, placed in field in pouring rain for 24 hrs. waiting for truck, then taken into military police; guarding at Eschweiler, German POW's that had been caught running from Russians, "happy to surrender to Americans"; General Terry de la Massa Allen, "very kind man, took every soldier & retrained them to fight the way he wanted them to fight...his own mess hall was open to everyone."; American soldier encouraging Earl to kill Gestapo POW, Earl resisting; Rabbi/Chaplain held services "once in a while"; entering Nordhausen "after it had been taken over"; from pile of bodies, ordered to "take out live ones and we'll work on them," trying IV's, "bit of liquid would kill, glimmer in their eye knowing they were liberated was the good part."; Nordhausen townspeople claimed they didn't know what was going on; to make them understand, General ordered people out houses & moved in survivors; Nordhausen's stench, disease; General forcing townspeople to walk through camp; Russians came in, "were taking watches off Germans"; several weeks in Nordhausen, housed in hotel, "so much liquor in basement, enough food"; hearing Germans had been ordered (before liberation) "to kill all Russian prisoners"; American soldiers getting sick going into Nordhausen tunnels; discussion of Nordhausen producing V1, V2 planes (hearing knock in their engines), also building of jet planes; hearing of slave labor "at stone mountain" (Kohnstein); returning to States, hearing about dropping of 2nd atomic bomb; work with father making bowling pins; marriage (1950); living in Lincoln Park/Chicago; son (Sam) born; work as factory rep; photographs (basic training Ft. Riley, Germany, American tank filled with concrete to serve as buffer, Chicago family/friends, Nordhausen hotel, war damage to Cologne, Earl in German uniform that he sent back to his mother who used it shock her friends; comprehensive photographic collection at Nordhausen Spring 1945, numerous photos of soldiers, medics, planes, damaged buildings, bodies stacked at crematory ("American soldiers put POWs in front of the firehouse"); Earl never had to shoot at anyone "I was glad."; interview ends with photograph of General Terry Allen, "a great guy. He deserves more credit - he did a lot."