

**Summary of Oral History Interview with the Fourth Army Liberators: Patrick Costrine,
Samel Durfey, Stephen Hord, and Joseph Dietrich
May 1989**

Patrick Costrine, Stephen Hord, Joseph Dietrich and Samuel Durfey were members of the 209th Buffalo Regiment, which had about 800 men. They participated in the campaigns in North Africa, Italy, Southern France and then Germany. They reached the concentration camp Dachau, near Munich, early in May 1945 but were not aware of what was going on in the camp. They had to wait two days before actually entering the camp until the medical corps had cleaned up the horrible stench that emanated from the area.

They were surprised by the first sight of the remains of many dead bodies, two gas chambers, and the ovens that were still operative although the guards had left or were captured. There were still about 25,000 prisoners alive. They were of various nationalities, and there were also political prisoners. Their estimate of the camp size was about 15 to 20 square miles. Their Army duty was to maintain order. They found several stacks of shoes and several bunkers where prisoners had been tortured and some were still screaming. It took six to eight weeks to remove the dead and take those still alive to hospitals. There are several photographs of dead bodies and of an attack dog that had been used for torture. Neighboring Germans assisted with the clean-up operations and claimed that "they did not know what had been going on inside" in spite of the stench that could be smelled for miles.

In July, they returned home, and many people found it hard to believe their stories. In recent years, there have been many books and plays about the Holocaust, and they feel that the events were properly portrayed. Unlike many others, these men did not find any friends or relatives among the survivors. They feel bad about the United States sheltering so many Nazis and helping some of them to escape to South America, for instance, Klaus Barbie. They did not hear about Dr. Mengele and his experiments with prisoners until after the war.

They believe that the Allies knew about the concentration camps but feel that bombing of the rail line could not have been effective because they could have been rebuilt quite fast.