

Summary of Oral History Interview with Donald Day July 1990

Both Morton Brooks and Donald Day were infantry men in the U.S. Army. Morton Brooks was captured in January 1945 near Strassburg and was a prisoner first in a camp in Bad Orb near Frankfurt and then in Stalag 7C in Eastern Germany. At the end of the war liberated by the U.S. Army Donald Day was captured in December 1944 and liberated by the British Army in 1945.

Morton Brooks says that the Germans found out that he was Jewish when the prisoners were processed. The Jewish prisoners were separated from the others but apparently received no different treatment. All had to do forced labor. Donald Day noted that their position became worse as they moved farther away from the front line. He was in a "multinational" Stalag in Neubrandenburg, where Polish and particularly Russian prisoner were used daily for target practice. The twelve Jewish prisoners then were taken to another camp near Austerlitz. They received little food and only little heat during the night. He received occasional Red Cross packages. The guards were not nice people and were not supervised. He was then twenty years old and formed close relationship with other prisoners but never received a letter Morton Brooks worked in the mines and also found no difference in treatment of Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners. The guards generally were from the home front, that is, they were either very young or very old. Toward the end of the war, the prisoners were marched for about one month always away from the attacking armies. They had inadequate food, and he shows a photograph of himself and another prisoner. Only about ten percent of the prisoners survived.

Toward the end of the War, the guards ran off and Morton Brooks describes his liberation by the U.S. 11th Army. Donald Day also was on a forced march to Schwerin in Northern Germany where he worked chopping wood. He met a German soldier who actually was a young and very frightened Polish boy who had been forced to be in the army. In exchange for a map, he gave him a letter stating that he had befriended an American soldier. A small group of the prisoners escaped and walked toward Hamburg when they were found by a British tank group. They then commandeered a German car and started to travel toward Paris. One night, while they stayed in a U.S. Army Camp, their car was stolen.

Neither man talked about their war experiences for a very long time. Morton Brooks got out of the Army from an Army hospital in December 1945 and still has intestinal problems. Donald Day did not visit Germany for many years. He found his trips very traumatic particularly a visit to the Warsaw ghetto. Morton Brooks and strong negative feelings against the Germans. He believes that the average German supported the war but also stressed that there always are good and bad people.

Donald Day and Morton Brooks were infantry men in the U.S. Army. Both were captured toward the end of the war. They describe their experiences as prisoners and their liberation by the U.S. Army (Morton Brooks) and a British tank group (Donald Day).