

OK? OK. We're ready.

OK, so we were starting to talk about the abandonment of the compound, and what happened, how you happened to come upon the 16-year-old training camp.

The military camp, or the German military camp?

Yeah. Are we ready?

All right, all set.

OK. How did you know that the camp was empty when you arrived?

Well normally when we just come up on some compound something like, that we would just break in, and see what was there. And they had vacated it, and of course they had vacated in such a hurry since we were moving them so fast at that time, all along inside the German line there, inside the Rhine towards Munich where they had left their equipment, their rifles and everything like that.

How did that was a training camp for boys?

Well, I'm not sure just how, unless there was evidence left there in the camp that it was for that. That's the only way I can recall that we knew that's what it was. But since he had the small rifles, the 22 Mausers, and equipment, we figured it was some type of training area rather than the main forces. That they were training these men to replace their others.

The boys?

The ones that had regular combat, Wehrmacht soldiers. With the young-- see the German army, they were calling everybody they could get. And towards the end, in '44 and '45, before the war war's over, they were short of everything. They were short of manpower a good bit as well as equipment. And as we'll talk later about jet fuel and things like that, they were short of that.

And in that way we had air superiority because they weren't able to get their planes in the air.

You had also mentioned you came across some other compounds.

Yes. During that time, when we were moving so fast that way, we came upon a kind of a compound, a stockade deal where they-- and I guess I was the first to break into it. They opened the doors. It was a wooden compound. And it was just stocked full of products from everywhere, food from all over the country-- from Denmark, even Norway. And they had everything from cheese and lots of cheese and liquors, and sardines, and just all kinds of food. And they were stocked high. They were stocked up high in this compound. You had to get up on things to get to some of it.

And after we had found it and opened it up, our trucks started hauling it to different ones, well, the other units in the area had decided they would too. So it was a wide open thing that everybody went to this compound and got the things, got the food and stuff out of it.

And then what happened after that?

Well, after we had left there, we went on. We just moved so fast that we more or less on our own, including when we got close northwest of Munich around Augsburg and in that area, which was still northwest of Dachau. We were still supporting more or less the 101st Airborne. But they were moving so fast that we had our own sectors of occupying, and we were more or less with the other artillery units. It was kind of a group, artillery group.

And so that's the reason when I and this liaison sergeant, Shozo--

Kajioka.

Yeah, Kajioka.

Kajioka.

Kajioka. I have a little bit the pronunciation wrong problem from being from the Oklahoma and from the South, some of these names.

A little different. But I was able to do pretty good during the combat, during the service. We was out ahead of the unit, and we came up on this-- the best I can remember it was still snow on the ground. It was still cold, although it was in March. And actually it was in April. It was late April. It was around-- supposedly, from word that I have, the best I can remember, it was the last of April.

Some say we liberated the camp or found Dachau on around the 29th of April. But it could have been a few days earlier, one way or the other. It wasn't later. But it could have been a little bit earlier, when we come upon this camp.

And of course, it was a fenced compound. And we were at a gate. And the sergeant, I've been told I can't recollect for sure. But he was the one that shot the gate open, and opened it up. And of course, there was not too many prisoners there that were able to get around too much. Because they had left on orders of higher command of Himmler. They had taken 8,000 of the prisoners, political prisoners.

Who took?

And moved them out of the camp.

Before you arrived?

Before we arrived.

Who took the--

It was under Hitler's orders. But it was Himmler, one of the head SS men had given him that order. And I have seen papers where that order was given on the 14th of April. So they moved sometime between April the 14th and the time we got there, they had moved these men out of there, around 8,000 of them, and moved them south, through Munich and on south.

So what did you find when you were there?

Well, what we found was that just there wasn't any guard at this gate where we broke into. And we found several people on the ground in bad shape, and not able to get around. But there were some that were able to move around. And when we opened the gate, they left. But they didn't go very far. As I read later, one of our boys said they went to a barn not too far from the camp itself.

Now this was just one section, or one gate of the Dachau concentration camp. And the best I found out, I didn't know at the time, just how I knew it was a large camp. And it covered miles or better. But I found out later that there was some other people that have said they had were the first ones to arrive at Dachau. But it was probably they were at some other section of the camp or the other gates, or maybe some of these outlying camps that were around Dachau itself.

This camp had been there so long and had handled so many political prisoners, that it had become a big, big operation, and the big thing for the German people, and of the cruelty of the way they were treating Political prisoners, especially the Jews.

Now, they had sections in the prison where they had other prisoners besides the Jews, like the Poles and the different ones. And like I was commenting to you here a couple of months ago, I read an article of a priest. I had the article. But I don't have it with me. I can't find it. He's still living he's a year older than I am. He lives close, about 150 miles from me there in Oklahoma. And he commented in his report to the reporters that he had left. They had taken him a prisoner in '40, in Poland, in Warsaw, and sent him to Dachau prison.

And he said he got a number. You see, most of the political prisoners, especially the Jews, the political Jews and political prisoners--

Well, the Jews weren't the political prisoners though.

Well, yeah, they were political prisoners. The Jews were part of the political prisoners. They called them political prisoners because they were of Jewish ascent, of Jewish ethnic background, and they were trying to get rid of them. That's why they put them in a camp like Dachau which was a death camp where they actually gassed them and there was gas chambers there, and then furnaces where they cremated them.

Did you see them?

I didn't see it myself, but I was told about it because I didn't get in there. I was a little bit too squeamish to go right in there.

But you saw something else?

Yes. And in there, where they were doing all that, they had, of course, there were a lot of them had starved to death and had been gassed, and they hadn't cremated and then just corpses. And they'd put them in these boxcars. And they had just boxcar loads of corpses what we found that they hadn't got rid of.

You saw that?

Well, I didn't actually--

[PHONE RINGS]

OK?

Go ahead.

OK, so Captain Taylor, you were talking about the boxcars. And if you could use the sentence that when you said you found them. Along at the gate after we had broken in and saw these men, I can't actually recall seeing the boxcars. But I was told about them. And that was the reason-- and being told the other things that I didn't see, was the reason for the next day I was called to go to a meeting of a higher echelon or group.

And best I can recall, it was a group of mainly the units that had been around in that section. A good bit of them were artillery units and other units that were moving towards Munich and in that area. And that's one of the reasons I think there's some misunderstanding on who just liberated what at the camp. Because there were different sections and different gates. And it was so large that some of us found one part of it. And then maybe somebody else come in from a different direction, or came in later.

What did they tell you at the meetings about the boxcars?

Well, at the meeting, it was discussed on what to do at the camp, and what to do with the boxcars, and the people in general that were there. And on the corpses and the bodies, they decided to dig trenches with bulldozers. Have the engineers dig bulldozer trenches, and bury them. Just dump them over, just dump the boxcars over into these trenches and cover them up.

Who told you to do that?

This headquarters. The meeting that I was at. Whoever was in charge of the meeting, I don't know. It was someone from Seventh Army or the 101st Division, one or the other. It was probably someone from the Seventh Army echelon who were taking care of the rear of what we leave behind. And of course, after the meeting it was decided that the units in the rear would take care of all this, and take care of the personnel that was left at the camp. Because we had to keep moving.

So we didn't stay in that area very long because we moved right on through Munich and right on. And as we left Munich, we were right on the Autobahn and we saw this hundreds of airplanes, German airplanes on both sides of the Audubon. They had one Audubon going through Munich at that time. And since then, as we know that you all been over there, there's several going every direction. But at that time they just had one main Audubon and it went south.

What did you see on the Autobahn?

On the Autobahn, we just saw all these planes on each side of the Audubon. And they had run out of fuel, and they couldn't get them in the air. So they had wrecked them where we couldn't use them. But before I left Munich after Dachau, I had seen just crates of jet engines which they had received that was going to use but they didn't have fuel to use them. So they just had to destroy their airplanes.

I wanted to take you back again to Dachau. Because you had said something to me about seeing the prisoners afterwards, eating along the side of the road.

Yes, well that was mainly down when we run into them down at [NON-ENGLISH].

[NON-ENGLISH]

Yes. Right there at Dachau, I was moving so fast around there and then I really didn't notice them doing that. But some of the-- I noticed some of the boys saw some of them wanting to get something from their messes, and also eating some meat off the dead cows and things. But we run on the same thing when we got down south of Munich.

OK. I'll talk to that, about that, in a little bit. I wanted to-- you had mentioned earlier in your tape about the smell when you first came across the camp.

Yes.

If you could talk about that a bit.

Well, it was just kind of a deathly smell, just odor. It's a kind of a when you come up on something like, it's hard to describe. That it was a deathly odor. There wasn't no one around outside. And there wasn't any Germans in that area.

So they had abandoned the camp?

They had, well, yeah. Well, the Germans, the civilian Germans weren't near there. And of course, the ones inside that were able to be moved by the SS had been moved, like I said, in that group of 8,000 that they had moved prior to the time we got there.

But it was an awful scene what we saw. But I really don't recall seeing too many of the people inside the prison that we liberated, that we opened up the gates for.

What were they-- do you remember what they were dressed in when you opened the gate?

Yeah. They were dressed in cotton gray uniform, gray clothing.

Men or women?

Mostly men. It seemed to me like most of the camp was men that was left there. Now later on, when we get down, describing the camp that they moved, I recall some women, some families in the slave camp down there. But at Dachau itself, it was mainly men.

And this personnel that I ran into that said he had to-- there were 1,500 of them in that section. He said there was guards at that gate. But they had put up their white flags when we liberated that. And this man wasn't clear just who was-- I tried to ride him and find out before I left this past couple of weeks to find out if he knew it was some of our men. But I never did get an answer from him. Of course, he's right old and he's a priest in a rectory there over by Tulsa.

And he said he'd been there five years. But the way he talked, he was treated-- they were treated much better than some of the political prisoners, in particular the Jews. They were treated a good bit better, the Polish, some of the Polish ones.

And did you yourself see any of the boxcars?

No, not as I recall. I knew about them and I'm not sure whether I actually saw them in the compound or not. Because I didn't really go in the compound that much. I didn't see any of the gas chambers or the furnaces. I didn't see them. I was just told about them and knew about them before I went to the meeting and everything. But I didn't actually see them.

OK, and you were with Sergeant Kajioka. Did you see?

Well, best that I can recall that's what they say. And I'm not sure who it was that I was with. I used the different ones went with me on recons, and were with me at different times on moving forward. And I've been told by some of the men that he was the one that was with me, and was the one that shot the gate, the lock off the gate. But like I say, my memory kind of fails me there.

As to who it was.

OK. And then the next thing you remembered was going to the meeting and having the officers there--

Discussion, yes.

--tell you about what to do with the boxcars. And then what happened? Where did you men go then?

We didn't stay there very long. We started moving through Munich and on south toward the Bad Tolz, and towards the south on the Autobahn. We were on the Autobahn. Because everything was so fluent then, and the war was just about over. See, because this was just about the 1st of May. And the war was just about terminating. And as we moved, there were just all kinds of Germans.

[AUDIO OUT]

Are we ready?

In two, one. OK.

OK.

OK.

You were talking about as you were going south then to Bad Tolz.

Yes. As we left to Munich on the Autobahn, we were moving quite fast and we came upon the town of-- it was not too

many kilometers or miles south of Munich, town of Bad Tolz and [NON-ENGLISH]. I can't pronounce that name.

[NON-ENGLISH]

[NON-ENGLISH], and as we came into the town, we were met by all these political prisoners, these enslaved people that had been taken from Dachau by the SS troopers under orders that I had stated that they had given for them to be moved. And I understand there was about 8,000 of them when they started from Dachau. But when we found them there was about 5,000 left. And they claimed the rest, the other 3,000, had been killed or died on the trip from Dachau down to the Bavarian Alps.

How far is that about?

Well, on the map. I have a map here. Am I able to? This map is in kilometers. And let's see. Where we are here.

I don't think it'll pick it up probably.

Yeah, OK. We're probably going to have to do it. Just-- we'll have to do it later, Captain Taylor. Because we're not going to be able to pick up.

See, from here down to here.

Oh, it's quite a distance. It's about 60km would be about 36 or 50 miles. It would be about 50 miles.

50 miles on that trip.

On that trip. And they had made it in-- they said they'd made it in about 10 days, I mean about six days. Before we got there. And the soldiers had left, the SS had left them in this village.

And what did you see?

What I saw there, we was going in along the roads there was dead horses and animals. And these people were cutting off hunks of that meat and eating it. And they were very malnutrition, and you could count almost all the ribs. They were very malnutrition, I mean they were in very bad shape most all of them.

Did they have clothes on at that time?

They had clothes on. Some of them had clothes on. Some of them didn't have upper clothes, because I recall seeing the ribs and everything, and the bones.

What kind of weather was it then? It was still kind of winter. It was still, it was still in early May. It was last of April or early May. See? It hadn't been long since we left Dachau.

So what was the weather like then would you say?

There was snow on the ground in parts around Dachau. There was still snow on the ground. And best I remember there's still snow there where we came upon these men. And they hadn't eaten for about three days, I understand. They just had been fed about half the time that they had been on the road from Dachau. They hadn't been fed about half the time. I guess they were short of rations, and the Germans were just starving them to death. And these boys would-- these men would come to our messes in our batteries, and want food. And, of course, we had given orders not to feed them, because we knew they couldn't hardly stand that kind of food.

But, of course, they got into the garbage cans and got and the men gave them some food. And some of them died because they couldn't stand that type of food, that rich food. Because they were in such a bad condition.

Did you talk to any of these people?

Yes, I talked to some of them. And we formed a kind of a camp. It was kind of a slave camp. We call it a slave camp. But it was from these prisoners. And we were more or less in charge of that camp there at the end of the war. And we had made arrangements, higher headquarters had made arrangements to send these people back, a good many of them to Poland. And I'm sure a lot of them were Jewish, Polish Jews also.

And I had the job of getting them ready to be moved, and also taking them to the railroad stations down in Austria, to be moved to Poland. but by the Russians. The Russians were in charge of the trains, and was in charge of the moving of the prisoners, because they figured that more or less it was in their sector since it was in Poland. They were going to Poland. And the Russians were really strict along the border, the boundary between where we were along there at Berchtesgaden and on down there in Salzburg and Vienna, along that line.

That's where we met the Russians. And they paraded up and down the river with rifles, and they wouldn't let us go over into their territory at all. They were pretty strict. And when we came to load these prisoners, these slaves, prisoners on the trains, they kind of objected quite a bit. And they were very-- it seemed to me like very rough with them. They wouldn't let them take anything, hardly anything, but nothing on their backs, or anything hardly. They wouldn't then take anything they'd picked up or anything with them.

Did the people want to go back to Poland?

Well, yeah. They were glad to go somewhere to get free. I mean they-- but they didn't have much. I guess they didn't have much say so where they were to go. Because they were all from some place like that. They weren't many of them from around that part of Germany.

Did you talk to any of them about how they came to be in Dachau, or how they came to be in prison?

No, except the fact that they were Jewish, and just being sent to these camps, being persecuted. And before we had ever reached Dachau, even when we were in Italy, we had heard of a lot about these persecutions and things that had gone on in camps. And a lot of them was individual persecution, where they would hang people, and things like that, in towns and things like that.

But this was nothing like that. I mean it was much more worse in my way of thinking in coming up on something like this.

Then what you had been led to believe?

Yes.

Were you given any orders about these concentration camps and what to do when you came upon them?

Now, I don't recall. I think we knew before we reached Dachau, we had been told by a higher authority that they were in that sector that we would probably come up on them in that sector. And of course, it was a surprise to me when I did get there. But in one way and another way, we were more or less expected and other units were too that they were located in that area. It was a pretty well known fact where Dachau was, since it was one of the oldest concentration camps in Germany.

And what do you next remember about the prisoners, or about displaced persons, or anything else.

Well, after we had placed them at the camp, after we placed them at the railroad station and turned them over to the Russians, well then shortly after that we were moved back north of Munich to at first to Augsburg, which is about oh, it's not too far northwest of Munich, northwest of Dachau. And we set up a checkpoint there to check the prisoners that were being released, the German prisoners. And I was told I was in charge of that checkpoint.

And we were told to look out for the SS troopers, the special-- the ones that were the most severe cruelty type people, of these special service people, the SSers. And we were told to let the regular Wehrmacht German soldier go on home. But we were told to turn back the SS and send them to a stockade, and send them to prison camps.

And we found several. The way we determined whether they were SSers or not, was they had tattoos or cut marks of the swastika underneath their armpits. And we would have to strip them down and check to see if they had this mark on them. If they had that mark on them, then we knew that they were mean, should be kept in prison.

And we maintained that checkpoint for I don't know how long, maybe two or three weeks. And then we were moved back to Donauworth on the Rhine, which is not too far from Augsburg from where our checkpoint was. And I don't think we held the checkpoint after we moved back to Donauworth. But we had it before we moved back to Donauworth, we had the checkpoint.

And in checking these prisoners, the SS, we'd been warned that some women SS people, as well as the men, and our men, some of our men, I recall one of the sergeants, I don't recall him by name. But he was in charge of checking the women prisoners for that marking underneath the breast, and they resented it pretty much being they had to take off their blouses to be checked. But I don't think he minded it.

That was just one of the occupations we had to do after the war ended. And then we were placed in the occupation there to look after the villages and the surrounding area.

I remember hearing about after you had been there for a little while, that one of the duties that you had was to try to find people who attempted to pretend that they were not SS. And you would come across those.

Yes. And I read not too long ago, I had heard one of our men, we had been warned that there was a high SS general or a big shot with the SS was loose, and was trying to get away. And one of our men had identified him, found him, and reported him, and they captured him. And the person that reported him got accommodation from the higher headquarters from our outfit for finding him.

Yeah, that was one of our main duties, that and taking care of the civilian population, and controlling the organization of the towns, and stuff like that. See, we were in charge. Of the villages and of the area.

And you noticed a lot of the people that had been imprisoned by the Nazis still there in other camps or what was done with all those people that you found, those 5,000 that were left?

Well that 5,000 is the ones I said it was in that slave camp that we sent back to Poland.

All 5,000?

Yeah. All of them was removed from when the war was over, which was just about that time, around May the 5th, the early part of May. They were released to go back. And they were more or less sent back in groups as a whole. And I remember the camp. It was pretty sickening to see them slaves and the way they had been living, and especially the ones that had come from Dachau themselves. They were in bad shape.

Where were they kept in the meantime before they were sent back?

There in a village and in that area, close to Austria by Bad Tolz, there by--

Were they living in houses or what were--

No, we just had them in a camp. There was just a big camp.

You mean they were put back in a camp?



Yeah. Yeah. That's about the only way we had to take care of them was in a camp. We had no facilities to put them in any barracks or anything, because there wasn't any. They just had to live out in the open, like we did. I mean we were the same way.

Was there any-- sorry.

We were on our way to Berchtesgaden in Austria and Salzburg, but there's some difference of opinion. I didn't think we ever got to that part of Austria before the war ended. But now later, before we left down there and before we moved the enslaved people, I did take a trip down to Berchtesgaden on my own. And I went from there, from Berchtesgaden on over to Salzburg in Austria, and then on over to Vienna, to Linz on the Danube to see. I had a cousin that was in the infantry there.

And I looked him up while I was down there. And then when we got back, when we got back to occupation at Donauworth, I'd done quite a bit of traveling on my own. I went up to Brussels, Belgium and Luxembourg. And well Luxembourg is on the way to Belgium from where we were. And I traveled quite a bit on my own, just looking, seeing what I could see.

You still like to travel.

I did get to Paris before I came home for three days.

And then how long were you at Donauworth?

We were Donauworth from about the latter part of July. I have a high angle on some of our magazines that we put out, the 522 put out, of August the 3rd. So I know we was there before August the 3rd. And I left the unit at Donauworth in September. And they said I had enough points or more than enough. And so I could go back home. So I left the unit at Donauworth in September. And the unit stayed there I guess till sometime in November or December, when they went to join the rest of the combat team.

So they still say separately all that time they were separate, the 522?

Yes, we were separate. All the time we were in Germany, we were a separate unit. And we were a separate unit all the way through Germany. Because the 442nd regiment, infantry regiment had gone back to Italy, when we left the Maritime Alps.

And what would be your overall man of your men?

Greatest. They really were. They were the best soldiers I've ever seen. Yeah, they were really good. And I'm not saying that just because I'm here with them. They've always known that I felt, a lot of them. They were good men. Of course, I was just one person myself. But it was a good fighting unit, and they performed the duties the best. And we were recognized all over the Allied armies had been one of the best units in the Allied armies in Europe.

We got more commendations and awards than any sizable any unit in the Allied theater, European theater. We had a lot of casualties. But in our unit, as an artillery unit, I figured we were exceptional in getting the recognition that we did.

And I wanted to ask you a little bit too about what happened when you came back to the United States and what you did with your life after.

Well, I came back in September. And I came back to Norfolk, Virginia, the same place we had left. And I stayed there about a week or two. And they sent me to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas, which is close to Oklahoma, to my hometown, where the wife was staying with her parents during the war. And I got released there at the camp. And rather than take any claim or anything at that time, I stayed in the reserve. And I remained in the reserve for a number of years, well actually to 1954, I stayed in the reserves.

And I've done some teaching in the schools in the reserve schools in Texas. And as well, but not too much of it, because I wasn't hardly able to do too much and my other activities. I went back as a petroleum engineer, doing my engineering work along the coast, working from Houston to New Orleans, about 300 or 400 miles. And I was working inland as well as offshore.

And then we have just a few more seconds. I wanted to just bring up about your Bureau of the Indian Affairs work too that you did.

Less than a few seconds.

Oh.

OK.