

-TITLE-ARTHUR PETERNEL  
-I\_DATE-SEPTEMBER 4, 1989  
-SOURCE-HAWAII HOLOCAUST PROJECT  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND\_QUALITY-EXCELLENT  
-IMAGE\_QUALITY-EXCELLENT VIDEO (PICTURES HARD TO SEE)  
-DURATION-47 MINUTES  
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH  
-KEY\_SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-  
-PERSONAL\_NAME-  
-CORPORATE\_NAME-  
-KEY\_WORDS-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-

1:01:06 Arthur's parents were born in Yugoslavia in the providence of Slovenia. His father, a coal miner, came to the U.S. in 1904. His mother joined her husband two years later and had ten children. Arthur's family was of Roman Catholic faith, and they attended church regularly.

1:02:25 Arthur's father became politically active on the local level in the U.S.. He became a judge of local elections and was also active in the coal miner's union. He was originally a Republican but changed to a Democrat because of their policies towards coal miners.

1:03:07 Arthur was born in 1915 during World War I. He went to public school in Wilcox(ph), PA. As Wilcox(ph) was a coal mining town, there were lots of different ethnic races. However, there was only one Jewish family that ran the local merchandise store. This family treated the town with great humility and admiration. Arthur played baseball with the sons.

1:04:12 Arthur formally completed high school. He did some post-graduate and attended several classes at Harvard. When the war began, Arthur was 24 years old, working as a construction engineer. He was eligible to defer the draft, but he chose to enter the forces.

1:05:22 Initially Arthur was assigned duties with a construction battalion and then later transferred to the Air Force as a construction engineer. His duties involved designing and constructing airfields. Arthur felt like this was an inactive role in the war so he volunteered himself into the ground force as a combat engineer.

1:08:15 Arthur received basic training at Camp Playburn(ph), LA Air Force training in Santa Rosa and Marchfield, CA and officers candidate school training at Fort Bellwar(ph), VA. He was not very politically active, but he despised the idea of what was going on in Europe, such as the invasion of Poland and what was happening to the Jews.

His information sources were the radio and the newspapers, however he admits that this information was not specific or ample.

1:09:00 As a first generation American with family still in Slovenia, Arthur states that his first cousins were executed for resistance to the Nazi regime. He had little political orientation in the U.S. military. He was there to perform a duty. Arthur supported President Roosevelt's lend-lease program in thought. He also shared the same opinion of Lindberg when during a visit to Germany, Lindberg forecasted what was going to happen there. He believed that the U.S. should have acted sooner.

1:09:30 Arthur's unit landed in Europe in 1943. In Italy his unit won a presidential citation for daring activity in the Casino front. As a combat engineer, he aided in the movement of the front line troops. He would go ahead of the combat troops and build bridges so as to make way for the tanks and troops. Occasionally he was called into the actual combat line. He served mostly for the 5th and 7th Army under General Patch(ph).

1:12:35 Arthur received amphibious invasion training south of Naples. He was in charge of underwater demolition. His duties involved destroying underwater obstacles such as mines to clear the way so that the amphibious boats could reach the beaches.

1:15:00 Arthur was a First Lieutenant in Europe. He describes the route the 7th Army took through France, landing in San Rafael where they encountered resistance and then through Grenoble, Nancy, and Sandier(ph). On D-Day, Arthur was still in Italy.

1:17:47 Arthur arrived at the German border during the winter of 44-45. He was vaguely aware of the concentration camps but not of any details. The existence of concentration camps were publicized, but not broadcasted. Stars and Stripes had more information about the concentration camps, but during the war they concentrated on combat.

1:18:45 Two of the Sergeants of Arthur's unit were Jews:Sgt. Stern, who received a silver star for heroic activity, and Sgt. Smuckler(ph) whose brother was in a concentration camp. Sgt. Smuckler found out later that his brother (27 years old) was held at Dachau in Germany. A day after the camp was liberated, Sgt. Smuckler found his brother there alive but incredibly thin and run down. He told Arthur that his brother looked like a sixty-five year old.

1:20:56 Arthur's unit came across Dachau on May 1st(apx), the day after it was liberated. The unit happened to stumble upon it during a reconnaissance mission. He had orders to find all possible bridge sights that had been demolished so that the U.S. could know what bridges to build and where on the route to Munich. As Arthur's unit approached Munich, they came across a demolished bridge and therefore had to chose an alternate route.

This alternate route went through Dachau where the concentration camp had just been liberated the day before by the 30th and 40th troops.

1:22:00 Photo #1 -- This photo was taken as Arthur was entering the camp. He was passing a railroad siding and came across a train of cars full of strewn corpses. There were also mangled and broken bodies in prison garb lying on the ground. One person's leg was amputated and wrapped in newspaper. Arthur was later informed that these people were being transported from another camp when the American forces overpowered the German forces. The Germans knowing that they were going to be defeated clubbed the prisoners to death.

Photo #2 -- This photo is of the camp. One can see several dead prison guards in the background. As the American forces closed in, the Germans tried to flee. However the prisoners broke out of camp and killed every guard they could find (about 55).

Photo #3 -- This is another photo of dead prison guards. These guards were killed out of complete hatred.

1:24:55 Photo #4 -- This is a picture of the crematory taken through an open gate. There were still many surviving prisoners around. It is a small brick building with lots of clothes outside. Arthur was told that the prisoners were instructed to undress because they were going to be washed before entering the compound. However instead of water, they were asphyxiated. Their bodies were then cremated.

1:26:45 Photo #11 -- This is a picture of the ovens. They were located in the back part of the building. Two or three bodies were cremated at a time in the ovens. The ashes were then pushed back and more bodies were introduced into the ovens. This process continued four to six times before ashes were removed from the ovens.

1:27:50 Photo #6 -- This picture depicts a pile of bodies of former prisoners. They were poorly fed and poorly taken care of. Eventually they had to be cremated because there was not space for burials.

1:28:47 The next picture is of a pile of clothing that the prisoners were instructed to take off before the showers.

1:29:26 The next picture is of urns holding the ashes of the deceased. The ashes were removed from the ovens and placed in urns. The relatives of the deceased were then notified of the person's death and if they wanted to pay, the ashes would be sent to the families in these urns. Those who paid more would receive a greater quantity of ashes. They were never actually the ashes of the deceased in question, but a mixture of various prisoners.

1:30:15 Photo #13 -- This picture was taken inside the building. There were still bodies that had to be cremated by the inmates. A man sat in a chair in front of the ovens whose job it was to determine when the ovens needed to be cleared out.

1:30:45 Photo #14 -- This picture shows the burial ground adjacent to the building . The unclaimed ashes were dumped in a hole and then covered.

1:31:10 Leaving Dachau, Arthur arrived at a suburban center where the German people lined the streets welcoming and waving to the American troops. Arthur talked to a German girl who spoke English. Arthur commented on what he saw at the concentration camp and said that it would never happen in his country. The girl replied that the German people had nothing to do with it. She had no idea about the horrors committed there. All she knew that it was a camp for prisoners of war. She was not allowed to discuss it with family or friends.

1:33:16 Arthur asked the girl about the bad stench in the air. The girl said that the smell would come time to time, but it would pass. Nobody in the town tried to find out what it was.

1:34:46 In the concentration camp, after liberation, there was a celebration with the inmates that had no where to go. The American Red Cross and Military doctors were there and gave medical attention to the liberated prisoners. Arthur was not present and had no other conversations with other Germans because he did not have the time or the authority.

1:38:15 Arthur stayed in Europe for the rest of the summer as part of the occupation troops, but he soon became bored. He asked to be reassigned to the Pacific, however the war ended so Arthur went back to the U.S. and was discharged.

1:41:30 Arthur says that he wouldn't repeat the experience for a million dollars, but he neither would take a million dollars for the experience. He never imagined that there were such people in the world that could commit the atrocities and horrors that he saw at the concentration camps. He is glad to have helped eliminate the source of these atrocities.

1:43:02 Arthur believes that all human beings deserve equal treatment amongst each other.

1:45:00 Arthur has great respect towards the role of the U.S. in the world. He believes that the U.S. is trying to better humanity, although U.S. actions are sometimes delayed. Other people in the world deserve as much as we (the U.S.) can give them.

1:47:15 Arthur us an internationalist. The rest of the world can not be ignored. Arthur hopes that he has helped even on the smallest level.

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