

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN, CLEVELAND SECTION

HOLOCAUST ARCHIVE PROJECT

Name of Interviewee	VINCENT COCHRANE	
Name of Interviewer	Sue Danford	Date 12/28/84
Name of Abstractor	Ruth Rubin	Date 5/27/87

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Vincent Cochrane was born in 1919 in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1937 and served until 1950. During 1944-45 he served in Germany. In 1945 he was a captain, and served as a commander of a medium tank company, and was present at the liberation of three concentration camps. These were in Ahlen near Hannover, in Gardelegen, and in Salzwedel. His unit stayed only about one hour until back-up units and medical units arrived. It took a while for the liberators to realize what they were seeing.

After his service he became an operating engineer. Currently he is on the security staff of Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

Vincent felt the experience may have helped him become more sensitive than he had been. He wanted to be interviewed to help make sure the Holocaust is never forgotten.

Vincent Cochrane

ABSTRACT

VIDEO 1 OF 1

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

VINCENT SERVES IN SECOND RANGER BATTALION FOR D-DAY

Independent battalion, highest officer, Col. Weber.

TRANSFERS TO 771ST TANK BATTALION

Attached to British army under Montgomery, 21st Army Group

HE SERVES IN 21ST ARMY GROUP

Was in Northern France, Rhineland and Battle of the Bulge.

RETURNS TO NINTH ARMY

Served in Central Europe, crossed the Ruhr River, Rhine River and Elbe River.

VINCENT SERVES AS CAREER SOLDIER

Was fighting against the German Army. Had no idea what was going on in Germany.

ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE ARMY

Little anti-Semitism present. Had many Jewish friends.

LIBERATES FIRST CONCENTRATION CAMP

Camp was near Hannover, Ahlen. Inmates made military clothing for Germany Army. Distributed K Rations, terrible mistake.

SHOWS PICTURES

Remnants of occupants of camp in Ahlen. Hannover. Women's camp - Salzwedel. Guards with whips.

LIBERATES CAMP IN GARDELEGEN

Only a few survivors. Inmates had been herded into buildings, and buildings were set on fire.

LIBERATES THIRD CAMP, SALZWEDEL

Camp was 30 miles north of Gardelegen. 3,000 inmates, all women: 2,700 were Jews, the rest were French slave laborers.

LIBERATORS' REACTIONS AND FEELINGS

Complete numbness and disbelief

MORE ON THE WOMEN'S CAMP

Most were survivors of Eastern camps; made shell casings.

VINCENT UNITS STAY ONLY SHORT TIME IN CAMPS

Units only consisted of eight men. They only stayed for approximately one hour until back-up units and medical units arrived.

VINCENT COMMENTS REGARDING GERMANS

Did not find a single Nazi in Germany during his tour of duty there from 1944-50. Germans could not understand why Americans did not fight the Russians, after the defeat of Germany.

VINCENT'S SIGHT OF FIRST CAMP IS MOST PAINFUL REMEMBRANCE

First camp was unbelievable. After they saw the machine-gunned bodies in second camp, they realized what they were seeing.

VINCENT'S THOUGHTS REGARDING HIS EXPERIENCES

May have made him more sensitive. He often thinks about the experience. "If you have not been there, you could not understand what it was like." Heard about National Council of Jewish Women project on the radio. Participated in order to make sure the world never forgets the Holocaust.