

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
Oral History Volunteer Collection

Summary of Interview with  
GEORGE LEONARD  
RG-50.106\*0136

Date of interview: January 10, 2001  
Interviewer: Esther Finder

**Tape 1 of 3/Side A**

George Leonard, a concentration camp liberator, was born on December 24, 1921 in Malden, Massachusetts. As a child George attended church and Sunday school. When he entered the war, he was agnostic, but the war experiences made him religious again. He entered the war with a personal agenda; he wanted to earn a college education and become a writer. Although today he is a novelist, after college he worked for the government in public service.

**Tape 1 of 3/Side B**

After George received basic training in Alabama for 12 weeks and training for Japan in California, he and his unit were sent to England. He became the company runner, staying close to the captain and lieutenants, translating codes and delivering messages. The troops were next sent to Belgium where they faced bloody, brutal battles and lost many men as they advanced to the Siegfried Line.

**Tape 2 of 3/Side A**

George continued his job of company runner, receiving the Bronze Star after being wounded. The troops traveled through parts of Germany along the Czech border and were ordered to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. George describes what happened there.

**Tape 2 of 3/Side B**

Nazi victims were given proper burials. Homes of ex-SS officers were used to house the troops. George describes finding five women living in one of these homes, who had escaped after the SS left the camp.

**Tape 3 of 3/Side A**

The kapos, prisoners with higher privileges, and inmates were put to live together. This created antipathy and hostility between the two groups. The Red Cross, voluntary groups, repatriation teams from other countries and Jewish organizations visited the camp. George stayed in the Mauthausen area for 5-7 weeks until he was moved to Spital am Pyhrn, Austria in late-July. He was told that he would be sent to Japan, but he was discharged a few days later. He left Marseilles for America on December 15, 1945.

**Tape 3 of 3/Side B**

When George came home his essay about Mauthausen earned him a space at Harvard University. He was discharged with a combating award, internment award, three battle stars, a unit citation, a Bronze Star medal and the Purple Heart. He married an American, Jewish woman whom he met around the Boston area. When he came home after the war he did not talk about his war experiences because he felt that nobody could understand. He talked with his children about his experiences.