

-TITLE-KENNETH COLVIN
-I_DATE-OCTOBER 27, 1981
-SOURCE-INTERNATIONAL LIBERATORS' CONVENTION
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-DURATION-35 MINUTES
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

The tape begins with a photo of Kenneth from his Army days, which is on the screen, with no dialogue, for about 16 seconds. There is then 48 seconds of blank screen, and no dialogue. These 64 seconds are taken into account in summarizing the interview segment of the tape, which therefore does not begin at 0:00:00.

00:01:04 Kenneth was a Corporal in the 515th Medical Clearing Company attached to the 3rd Army. The company went to various camps as they were liberated, giving emergency medical attention; separating the dead from the living and disposing of the dead; and feeding and medicating the living, who were malnourished and had tuberculosis. Kenneth worked as a "surgical technician" despite no real medical training. His unit had 12 men and 4 doctors.

00:03:14 His first camp was Braunau, Austria, at the site of a manufacturing factory. His unit gave plasma to hordes of prisoners, on whom it was hard to find veins.

00:03:54 On April 16, 1945, Kenneth's unit went to Stalag 6 at Hemer, Germany. There were 20,000 male prisoners there, and his was the only medical unit to enter the camp. They dusted the prisoners with DDT, and fed them. The prisoners were starving, drinking from mud puddles. There were piles of bodies lying around, waiting for cremation. Most of the 20,000 were Jewish. The Army did a survey of the prisoners' nationalities which was reported back to the 3rd Army headquarters. The unit: was there for two weeks.

00:05:34 Kenneth's unit then went to the following camps: (All spelled phonetic) Oberhoff, Iserlohn, Wells, Mauthausen, and finally, on May 19, 1945, they arrived at Ebensee. The unit stayed in the other camps for a short time each, but were at Ebensee for a long time. Kenneth describes the stone arched entrance into the camp and the crematoria which were right by the entry, with a chimney about 200 feet high. He remembers there were more than 1,000 bodies in front of the crematoria, with the gold extracted from their teeth.

00:08:34 Kenneth was assigned to be in charge of a medical ward set up in one of the barracks, where there were three men to a wooden bunk, and rows and rows of bunks. He wore a mask and washed frequently to prevent infection with disease. He says there was a lack of feeling and emotional connection or relation to the prisoners at all these camps. To relate to the prisoners would have destroyed the unit; they could only help so long as they stayed numb.

00:09:44 Kenneth finally began to relate emotionally to prisoners; he brought them matzah on Passover. He describes meeting a Greek Jewish prisoner named Nisso (PH?), who was an attorney and had been in the camps for 6 years; they discover that Kenneth's college roommate was a relative of Nisso's relatives in San Francisco -- part of humanizing process.

00:09:00 Nisso weighed 70-80 lbs. He wrote a testimonial describing his experiences from Greece to Auschwitz. He had worked in the coal mines in the camp; then he had been taken on a march from Auschwitz to Ebensee. Nisso did not survive much longer.

00:12:09 Kenneth describes Ebensee -- much of what he knows he found out from Max Garcia, a prisoner there, with whom he later became friendly. The camp was a slave labor camp, with inmates taken there from Auschwitz, Mauthausen, etc. Prisoners had a life span of 8-12 weeks there. 25% of them were Jewish. They worked 12 hour shifts on V1 and V2 missiles located a mile from camp in a cave. Often prisoners had no shoes.

00:14:09 Kenneth describes U.S. soldiers' attitudes: Experience was overwhelming, so soldiers didn't talk about it or else joked about it to cover up. 15 years later Kenneth had nightmares because of the experience; needed help to get over it. Two years ago he went back to visit KZ Freehof (PH??) in Austria and nothing was left but the crematoria door.

00:15:54 What the U.S. soldiers did in Ebensee. First priority was food. Liberating forces had already been at the camp, but theirs was the first "medical team" -- 12 people for 15,000 prisoners. Then sprayed all prisoners from head to toe with DDT to kill lice. Camp was a medical disaster.

00:18:24 The bodies were put in common graves by Germans who lived in the area. The U.S. soldiers once made the Germans face the grave and shot in the air over their heads. Sick humor, to deal with all the dead, who were faceless, just eye sockets.

00:20:19 DP camps were started up and prisoners who could went to them. Inmates began to be shipped out of the camps. Max Garcia, for instance, worked for the army, went to Holland, then the U.S.

00:21:19 Camp Braunau -- Discussing the condition of the prisoners, Kenneth remembers that when they first came to the camp they needed a guard to keep the prisoners in, because of their starved and crazed condition: they broke out and ran to a farm down the hill and ripped a pig apart for food.

00:22:09 Sam Tover, the army unit's food sergeant who was a butcher from Brooklyn, stole food from the army to give to the prisoners -- army rations. He later got a bronze star. The inmates often got dysentery and there were constant health problems. He recalls one inmate dying after drinking alcohol while Kenneth was busy suturing a puncture in another inmate's hand.

00:24:34
Some of the inmates were more hopeful than others, but none knew where to go after liberation. Kenneth spoke with them in Yiddish. Kenneth finally left Ebensee in early September; he was headed to the Pacific but they turned around and headed to U.S.

00:26:07 Kenneth describes how this has affected his relationship with his children. It has also motivated him to work in the Jewish community; he thinks only a strong Jewish community and strong Israel can prevent it again.

00:27:22 This segment of the tape is the interviewer thanking Kenneth and then technical problems being ironed out. Nothing substantive. What follows are photos by -- hard to hear -- possibly, Max Garcia? Good clear photographs.

00:30:27 Photograph of crematorium at Ebensee.

00:31:39 Photograph of entrance to Ebensee.

00:32:47 Photograph of camp inmates' hospital ward.

00:33:58 Close Photograph of a group of prisoners.

00:34:15 Photograph of corpses on a wagon.
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