

-TITLE-JOHN HALLOWELL  
-I\_DATE-OCTOBER 1981  
-SOURCE-USHMC INTERNATIONAL LIBERATORS CONFERENCE  
-RESTRICTIONS-  
-SOUND\_QUALITY-GOOD  
-IMAGE\_QUALITY-EXCELLENT  
-DURATION-25 MINUTES  
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH  
-KEY\_SEGMENT-  
-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-  
-PERSONAL\_NAME-  
-CORPORATE\_NAME-  
-KEY\_WORDS-  
-NOTES-  
-CONTENTS-  
Liberation of Dachau

00:00 John was born September 27, 1920, making him 24 at the time of the Liberation of Dachau. He was a staff sergeant in the 157th Infantry of the 45th Infantry Division.

01:14 As his company passed through Alsace-Lorraine, they began to hear rumors concerning the existence of the camps. Other Allied troops had already liberated some camps before they reached Dachau, but these extreme accounts were considered to be mostly rumors to the regular troops. On the day of liberation, April 29, 1945, they were forewarned by the officers that what they would see would be unbelievable. The first sight of the survivors made a huge emotional impact on everyone.

02:35 As they approached the walls of the camp, they saw a train consisting of 40 boxcars sitting outside the camp. Bodies were hanging out of doors and the field was littered with corpses that died after escaping the train. The bodies looked like skeletons in prisoners' clothing. When the assault began, the Germans were sitting ducks for the overwhelming American troops. The Americans had no fear as they climbed over the walls and killed or captured all the Germans within 45 minutes. John entered the camp in a Jeep through the gate that had been opened by the first assault troops.

05:15 Inside the camp, the inmates were enclosed on the left of the main road. Word passed quickly among the prisoners that they were being liberated by Americans, yet they remained largely without emotion. The troops had orders to keep the inmates within the enclosure to prevent disorder in the camp. John saw no women and children among the inmates. As an assault company, his unit was required to continue on to Munich the next day; they were relieved at Dachau by the 1st Battalion.

08:00 31,000 inmates were in the camp at the time of liberation. They appeared worn and thin, but fairly healthy. On one occasion, John escorted a Life reporter into the enclosure. The inmates were uninterested in the reporter, but fascinated with John and his uniform. Some of the inmates spoke English, and asked John his name and hometown. He felt proud. The troops were told to avoid the barracks full of typhus sufferers. They saw the gas chamber and crematoria.

11:15 Some of the camp inmates attempted to attack the German POW's, which consisted of SS troops and some very young soldiers. Some GI's were responsible for protecting the Germans from the camp inmates.

13:20 John left within one day for Munich. Although Eisenhower had issued a no-fraternization order concerning the German civilians, the soldiers spoke with them anyway at night. The soldiers constantly asked the Germans if they knew what had occurred at the camps. Even the citizens of the town of Dachau maintained that they did not know what was happening. John found this extremely difficult to believe. Concerning the brevity of his stay at Dachau, John believes he might have been lucky to not have to witness as much suffering as did those troops who remained at Dachau.

16:05 Even though he had been in Europe for months, John had never before seen so much mass death. The soldiers had gradually steeled themselves to death, since it is impersonal. Many soldiers tried to forget what they saw, but John has taken care to relay his story to his family.

18:20 John thinks that the role of the eyewitness is important, especially since those involved will not live much longer. All accounts, including his sideline role, must be preserved so this can never happen again.

20:00 John senses that man's inhumanity continues. His experience has sensitized him to other atrocities that occur in the world, i.e. Cambodia.

21:55 John sees the Holocaust as more of a human problem than one concerning only Jewish persecution. Although Jews wearing the Star of David were the majority in the camp, many other groups were also imprisoned. He heard many languages in the camp.

23:30 John's faith has not suffered because of what he witnessed and experienced in Europe.  
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