

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:07,410

2
00:00:07,410 --> 00:00:08,682
Just tell us when.

3
00:00:08,682 --> 00:00:10,140
And you know what,
if you could let

4
00:00:10,140 --> 00:00:13,320
me know when there's 10 minutes
more, and then five and then

5
00:00:13,320 --> 00:00:14,946
two.

6
00:00:14,946 --> 00:00:15,750
Two what?

7
00:00:15,750 --> 00:00:16,670
Minutes left.

8
00:00:16,670 --> 00:00:19,970

9
00:00:19,970 --> 00:00:24,520
This is Bonnie Gurovich
interviewing William Johnson

10
00:00:24,520 --> 00:00:31,060
of the 90th Infantry
Division, October 7, 1981,

11
00:00:31,060 --> 00:00:33,970
at the US Holocaust Memorial
Council International

12
00:00:33,970 --> 00:00:36,820
Conference of Liberators.

13

00:00:36,820 --> 00:00:43,210

Mr. Johnson, after you
landed in Europe at Le Havre,

14

00:00:43,210 --> 00:00:47,440

can you describe the direction
which your division took?

15

00:00:47,440 --> 00:00:50,500

Give us an itinerary of
where you went until you

16

00:00:50,500 --> 00:00:52,270

got to the concentration camp.

17

00:00:52,270 --> 00:00:53,280

Oh, boy.

18

00:00:53,280 --> 00:00:54,010

Let's see.

19

00:00:54,010 --> 00:00:58,840

We boarded forty-and-eights
and went into Metz.

20

00:00:58,840 --> 00:01:01,480

21

00:01:01,480 --> 00:01:07,340

And then they trucked
us into somewhere

22

00:01:07,340 --> 00:01:12,380

near the Siegfried Line.

23

00:01:12,380 --> 00:01:14,430

And at a place called
Hirschfeld, that's

24

00:01:14,430 --> 00:01:17,460

where I first started to fight.

25

00:01:17,460 --> 00:01:21,510

Hirschfeld, and then
on through Mainz,

26

00:01:21,510 --> 00:01:27,590

Frankfurt am Main, Hanau,
up through Fulda and a place

27

00:01:27,590 --> 00:01:36,640

called Ilmenau where Company
E ran into some chlorine gas.

28

00:01:36,640 --> 00:01:42,760

And I understand, or I
found out years later,

29

00:01:42,760 --> 00:01:45,010

that was not too
far from Buchenwald,

30

00:01:45,010 --> 00:01:48,080

although I didn't
know it at the time.

31

00:01:48,080 --> 00:01:53,830

And then from there, we
went to Hof and Plauen,

32

00:01:53,830 --> 00:02:01,750

and then down along the
Czechoslovakian border,

33

00:02:01,750 --> 00:02:03,520

the little towns and so forth--

34

00:02:03,520 --> 00:02:07,570

I don't remember-- until
we hit Flossenbürg.

35

00:02:07,570 --> 00:02:10,419

And then across the border
from Flossenbürg-- well,

36

00:02:10,419 --> 00:02:14,530
on down the border, and then
across later on to a place

37

00:02:14,530 --> 00:02:19,570
close to [? Klatovy ?],,
Czechoslovakia where I was

38

00:02:19,570 --> 00:02:20,920
on V-E Day.

39

00:02:20,920 --> 00:02:22,900
That's where we ended up.

40

00:02:22,900 --> 00:02:25,900
And did you encounter
any victims of the Nazis

41

00:02:25,900 --> 00:02:29,450
along the way before you got
to the concentration camp?

42

00:02:29,450 --> 00:02:30,110
Yeah.

43

00:02:30,110 --> 00:02:37,930
I liberated, on a personal
basis, a Yugoslavian.

44

00:02:37,930 --> 00:02:41,320
I can't tell you anything much
about him other than the fact

45

00:02:41,320 --> 00:02:50,290
that he was a farm slave
laborer, and when he saw me,

46

00:02:50,290 --> 00:02:54,070
he realized that
he was liberated.

47

00:02:54,070 --> 00:02:55,680

We couldn't talk.

48
00:02:55,680 --> 00:03:00,820
There was a language barrier
that was insurmountable,

49
00:03:00,820 --> 00:03:06,030
but he did make it clear that
he felt that I had done my part.

50
00:03:06,030 --> 00:03:07,030
Now he wanted to do his.

51
00:03:07,030 --> 00:03:09,340
He wanted my rifle
and for me to go home,

52
00:03:09,340 --> 00:03:11,920
and he continued in my place.

53
00:03:11,920 --> 00:03:14,330
Of course, I couldn't do that.

54
00:03:14,330 --> 00:03:18,243
And so I took him
to the CO to see

55
00:03:18,243 --> 00:03:19,660
if we could get
him to go with us,

56
00:03:19,660 --> 00:03:21,795
but of course, the
language barrier killed it,

57
00:03:21,795 --> 00:03:23,170
and that was the
end of that one.

58
00:03:23,170 --> 00:03:24,115
Where did this happen?

59

00:03:24,115 --> 00:03:27,370

60

00:03:27,370 --> 00:03:29,440

I can't tell you where.

61

00:03:29,440 --> 00:03:32,350

All I can tell you it was
after we were deep in Germany,

62

00:03:32,350 --> 00:03:34,030

had crossed the Main River.

63

00:03:34,030 --> 00:03:39,750

It was somewhere near Fulda
or in that area somewhere.

64

00:03:39,750 --> 00:03:41,620

I don't know exactly.

65

00:03:41,620 --> 00:03:42,450

Mm-hmm.

66

00:03:42,450 --> 00:03:45,240

Was it in the town,
in the country?

67

00:03:45,240 --> 00:03:50,860

It was in, let's say
a small collection

68

00:03:50,860 --> 00:03:54,880

of houses, farmhouses
where it formed

69

00:03:54,880 --> 00:03:57,550

a small nucleus of a
town, and then the farms

70

00:03:57,550 --> 00:03:59,740

were out either side.

71

00:03:59,740 --> 00:04:02,040
And what was this man doing
when you came upon him?

72
00:04:02,040 --> 00:04:07,480

73
00:04:07,480 --> 00:04:11,920
He was in the barn, and
we stumbled in the barn

74
00:04:11,920 --> 00:04:15,520
to check to make sure that
there was no Germans in there.

75
00:04:15,520 --> 00:04:19,420
We got two out of it
only because he told us

76
00:04:19,420 --> 00:04:22,660
they were in there
and where they were.

77
00:04:22,660 --> 00:04:24,880
How old a man was he?

78
00:04:24,880 --> 00:04:31,750
He was in his late
20s, early 30s,

79
00:04:31,750 --> 00:04:34,960
somewhere in that category.

80
00:04:34,960 --> 00:04:37,330
How was he dressed?

81
00:04:37,330 --> 00:04:38,890
He wasn't dressed too badly.

82
00:04:38,890 --> 00:04:43,510
He was not dressed in prison
garb or anything like that.

83

00:04:43,510 --> 00:04:46,570

And how did he respond
to seeing Americans?

84

00:04:46,570 --> 00:04:49,270

Oh, he was like my bodyguard.

85

00:04:49,270 --> 00:04:51,370

He wouldn't let
anybody go near me.

86

00:04:51,370 --> 00:04:54,460

He stood guard over me
all night with my rifle,

87

00:04:54,460 --> 00:04:56,320

wouldn't let anybody
wake me up for guard

88

00:04:56,320 --> 00:04:57,760

duty or anything else.

89

00:04:57,760 --> 00:05:00,070

Was that because you were
the first one into the barn?

90

00:05:00,070 --> 00:05:04,400

I was the first one
that he saw, yes.

91

00:05:04,400 --> 00:05:06,320

Were you able to
talk with him at all?

92

00:05:06,320 --> 00:05:08,300

Only through sign language.

93

00:05:08,300 --> 00:05:09,980

And what were you communicating?

94

00:05:09,980 --> 00:05:12,830

What was he communicating?

95
00:05:12,830 --> 00:05:16,760
He was so happy.

96
00:05:16,760 --> 00:05:18,080
He couldn't do enough for us.

97
00:05:18,080 --> 00:05:18,920
He got hot water.

98
00:05:18,920 --> 00:05:21,680
We took over the
farmhouse completely,

99
00:05:21,680 --> 00:05:25,700
and when I say "we," I'm
talking about the whole company

100
00:05:25,700 --> 00:05:27,080
and squad and so forth.

101
00:05:27,080 --> 00:05:31,070
This squad took over this
particular farmhouse,

102
00:05:31,070 --> 00:05:33,415
and he got hot water for us.

103
00:05:33,415 --> 00:05:34,790
And of course,
that was important

104
00:05:34,790 --> 00:05:37,640
because a hot cup of
coffee was hard to come by.

105
00:05:37,640 --> 00:05:40,700

106
00:05:40,700 --> 00:05:42,990
We all got shaves.

107

00:05:42,990 --> 00:05:47,080

This gentleman shaved
everybody who wanted to shave.

108

00:05:47,080 --> 00:05:52,060

It's hard to say, I had
a red beard and mustache

109

00:05:52,060 --> 00:05:53,960

because it was just
too difficult to shave

110

00:05:53,960 --> 00:05:56,270

with cold water.

111

00:05:56,270 --> 00:05:58,700

And where did you take him?

112

00:05:58,700 --> 00:06:00,220

What did you do with him?

113

00:06:00,220 --> 00:06:04,060

We turned him over to the United
States military government,

114

00:06:04,060 --> 00:06:05,890

and they took care
of him from there.

115

00:06:05,890 --> 00:06:07,750

He gave me a
souvenir which I have

116

00:06:07,750 --> 00:06:14,820

today, a Yugoslavian note, 20
something, which I still have.

117

00:06:14,820 --> 00:06:17,630

118

00:06:17,630 --> 00:06:20,160

Then you mentioned that

you liberated someone else.

119

00:06:20,160 --> 00:06:23,700

Oh yeah, a little
10 or 12-year-old

120

00:06:23,700 --> 00:06:31,080

redheaded Polish boy, he
and his German overseer,

121

00:06:31,080 --> 00:06:39,360

I guess, a woman who had
him working on her farm.

122

00:06:39,360 --> 00:06:41,490

And where was this
approximately?

123

00:06:41,490 --> 00:06:46,590

This was on the Czech border,
either just before we got

124

00:06:46,590 --> 00:06:49,720

to Flossenbürg--

125

00:06:49,720 --> 00:06:52,300

just what town I don't know.

126

00:06:52,300 --> 00:07:01,420

And we had taken this town and
we were on the one side of it.

127

00:07:01,420 --> 00:07:04,000

We had taken over,
commandeered a house,

128

00:07:04,000 --> 00:07:09,440

and we set up a machine
gun nest on the outside,

129

00:07:09,440 --> 00:07:12,810

double up the
fields and the road.

130
00:07:12,810 --> 00:07:18,150
And this little redheaded
Polish boy and this German woman

131
00:07:18,150 --> 00:07:20,220
came up the road.

132
00:07:20,220 --> 00:07:26,750
And we didn't
realize it until he

133
00:07:26,750 --> 00:07:30,020
was able to talk with
somebody in the squad

134
00:07:30,020 --> 00:07:34,670
that he was a slave
laborer on this farm

135
00:07:34,670 --> 00:07:38,820
and he was under this woman.

136
00:07:38,820 --> 00:07:44,810
So he said he wanted
to go back home.

137
00:07:44,810 --> 00:07:47,540
I don't know where home was.

138
00:07:47,540 --> 00:07:53,020
I don't remember, but we
gave her strict instructions.

139
00:07:53,020 --> 00:07:56,270
He said he had to go back
and pick up some things

140
00:07:56,270 --> 00:07:59,660
that he had, and we gave
her strict instructions

141

00:07:59,660 --> 00:08:03,290
that if anything happened to
him, we would be after her.

142
00:08:03,290 --> 00:08:05,900

143
00:08:05,900 --> 00:08:07,730
She wouldn't live to tell.

144
00:08:07,730 --> 00:08:10,670
What was her attitude
towards what was happening?

145
00:08:10,670 --> 00:08:11,930
In what respect?

146
00:08:11,930 --> 00:08:15,020
You mean the GIs, or the--

147
00:08:15,020 --> 00:08:16,520
Towards the GIs and
towards the fact

148
00:08:16,520 --> 00:08:19,670
that you were liberating
her slaves, so to speak.

149
00:08:19,670 --> 00:08:25,910
Yeah, she didn't know what to do
because she walked in the town

150
00:08:25,910 --> 00:08:28,320
upon us.

151
00:08:28,320 --> 00:08:32,330
And I don't think that she was
too happy about the whole deal,

152
00:08:32,330 --> 00:08:38,299
but the next day, he
came down with fresh eggs

153

00:08:38,299 --> 00:08:42,110

for us and everything else
that she had sent down, right.

154

00:08:42,110 --> 00:08:45,560

And he had his little
package of clothes.

155

00:08:45,560 --> 00:08:49,920

We gathered all the money
that we had in the squad.

156

00:08:49,920 --> 00:08:52,580

This is all the
liberated German money

157

00:08:52,580 --> 00:08:55,590

that we had taken
from all the POWs.

158

00:08:55,590 --> 00:09:00,350

We gave it to him and
sent him on his way home.

159

00:09:00,350 --> 00:09:02,620

I don't know whatever
happened to him.

160

00:09:02,620 --> 00:09:04,860

Never heard from him
or saw him again.

161

00:09:04,860 --> 00:09:06,950

I wouldn't know
him if I saw him.

162

00:09:06,950 --> 00:09:09,377

Did you ever know his name or
the name of [BOTH TALKING]??

163

00:09:09,377 --> 00:09:10,460

I never knew his name, no.

164

00:09:10,460 --> 00:09:11,840

I could not converse with him.

165

00:09:11,840 --> 00:09:16,310

One of the guys, one of
the other fellows could.

166

00:09:16,310 --> 00:09:18,470

How did he respond
to the Americans?

167

00:09:18,470 --> 00:09:19,860

Oh, he was delighted.

168

00:09:19,860 --> 00:09:21,830

He was delighted to see us.

169

00:09:21,830 --> 00:09:25,250

We wanted to turn him over
to the American military

170

00:09:25,250 --> 00:09:26,840

government, but
he didn't want to.

171

00:09:26,840 --> 00:09:28,490

He wanted to go back home.

172

00:09:28,490 --> 00:09:30,620

I don't know what he
found or where home was.

173

00:09:30,620 --> 00:09:31,880

I know it was in Poland.

174

00:09:31,880 --> 00:09:32,700

That's all I know.

175

00:09:32,700 --> 00:09:33,200

Mm-hmm.

176

00:09:33,200 --> 00:09:35,330
Was he Jewish?

177
00:09:35,330 --> 00:09:37,370
Not to my knowledge.

178
00:09:37,370 --> 00:09:40,400
Not to my knowledge.

179
00:09:40,400 --> 00:09:40,900
OK.

180
00:09:40,900 --> 00:09:43,090
Now can you describe
the approach

181
00:09:43,090 --> 00:09:45,220
to the concentration camp?

182
00:09:45,220 --> 00:09:50,830
It was early in the morning
and the sun had risen.

183
00:09:50,830 --> 00:09:56,530
And we were coming
down a macadam road.

184
00:09:56,530 --> 00:10:04,930
As things would have it, being
a scout as classification

185
00:10:04,930 --> 00:10:13,080
of infantry, I was working
the left point that morning,

186
00:10:13,080 --> 00:10:17,290
and we approached the
town of Flossenbürg.

187
00:10:17,290 --> 00:10:24,290

188

00:10:24,290 --> 00:10:26,840
There was no gunfire.

189
00:10:26,840 --> 00:10:32,380
We suddenly saw a
lot of white flags,

190
00:10:32,380 --> 00:10:34,330
and we proceeded up the road.

191
00:10:34,330 --> 00:10:35,410
And of course--

192
00:10:35,410 --> 00:10:38,950
Where were these white
flags hanging from?

193
00:10:38,950 --> 00:10:43,360
From the houses and
so forth of the town.

194
00:10:43,360 --> 00:10:46,660
It wasn't much of a
town at that time.

195
00:10:46,660 --> 00:10:50,680
And there was a stone
quarry on one side

196
00:10:50,680 --> 00:10:54,070
of the cobblestone
road, as I remember,

197
00:10:54,070 --> 00:10:57,070
and on the other side
was an Me 109 factory.

198
00:10:57,070 --> 00:11:00,160

199
00:11:00,160 --> 00:11:05,080
And at the end of the road
was the concentration camp,

200
00:11:05,080 --> 00:11:10,480
up above and to the right
of the stone quarry,

201
00:11:10,480 --> 00:11:13,780
above the stone
quarry on the right.

202
00:11:13,780 --> 00:11:16,510
Was it within walking distance
of the center of the town?

203
00:11:16,510 --> 00:11:17,920
Oh, yes.

204
00:11:17,920 --> 00:11:21,940
My goodness, yes, if you
can call that a town.

205
00:11:21,940 --> 00:11:28,450
I don't know how many
houses were there.

206
00:11:28,450 --> 00:11:31,870
I know I didn't see
very many German people.

207
00:11:31,870 --> 00:11:35,530
How did the camp look
from the outside?

208
00:11:35,530 --> 00:11:44,210
They had a double fence, like a
no man's land in between where

209
00:11:44,210 --> 00:11:49,427
the towers, machine guns could
train up and down or dogs

210
00:11:49,427 --> 00:11:50,760
could run, whatever they wanted.

211

00:11:50,760 --> 00:11:53,840

They had electrification wires
around, and of course barbed

212

00:11:53,840 --> 00:11:57,890

wire all over the place.

213

00:11:57,890 --> 00:12:00,370

I don't remember too
much about the buildings.

214

00:12:00,370 --> 00:12:09,500

I can't recall other than
going into the SS headquarters

215

00:12:09,500 --> 00:12:12,910

up at the end of the camp.

216

00:12:12,910 --> 00:12:14,290

I remember doing that.

217

00:12:14,290 --> 00:12:18,855

I remember going
down into the room

218

00:12:18,855 --> 00:12:24,750

or building where
they had the showers.

219

00:12:24,750 --> 00:12:26,610

Could you describe that?

220

00:12:26,610 --> 00:12:27,690

Could I describe it?

221

00:12:27,690 --> 00:12:34,030

222

00:12:34,030 --> 00:12:36,190

What did the building look
like from the outside?

223

00:12:36,190 --> 00:12:39,820
Just an ordinary brick building.

224

00:12:39,820 --> 00:12:41,650
And did you go inside?

225

00:12:41,650 --> 00:12:42,850
Yes, I went inside.

226

00:12:42,850 --> 00:12:45,520
And what did you
see as you came in?

227

00:12:45,520 --> 00:12:48,760
All I can remember
seeing are showers,

228

00:12:48,760 --> 00:12:53,590
but they tell me that there
were gas hoods in there.

229

00:12:53,590 --> 00:12:56,980
Now, I don't recall
seeing the description

230

00:12:56,980 --> 00:12:59,380
that the man gave this
morning or yesterday

231

00:12:59,380 --> 00:13:01,750
morning about the little--

232

00:13:01,750 --> 00:13:03,670
but it's possible
that they were there.

233

00:13:03,670 --> 00:13:08,110
I remember seeing showerheads
coming out of the walls,

234

00:13:08,110 --> 00:13:10,480
and they could have

been in there too.

235

00:13:10,480 --> 00:13:12,100

I don't really know.

236

00:13:12,100 --> 00:13:16,070

What were the walls made of?

237

00:13:16,070 --> 00:13:17,270

That's a good question.

238

00:13:17,270 --> 00:13:18,980

I really don't remember.

239

00:13:18,980 --> 00:13:21,020

Do you remember the color?

240

00:13:21,020 --> 00:13:23,730

The color.

241

00:13:23,730 --> 00:13:30,630

It seems to me it was a
drab gray or on that order.

242

00:13:30,630 --> 00:13:33,195

Were they tile walls
or plaster walls?

243

00:13:33,195 --> 00:13:37,670

244

00:13:37,670 --> 00:13:39,380

That, I can't remember.

245

00:13:39,380 --> 00:13:41,720

How large was the room?

246

00:13:41,720 --> 00:13:52,150

Oh, I guess maybe
10 foot by maybe 15,

247

00:13:52,150 --> 00:13:56,960
18 feet, something like that.

248
00:13:56,960 --> 00:13:59,620
What did the door look like?

249
00:13:59,620 --> 00:14:04,120
The door was a metal
door, as I recall.

250
00:14:04,120 --> 00:14:09,610
Were there any markings
inside the room, on the walls?

251
00:14:09,610 --> 00:14:11,340
Not that I recall.

252
00:14:11,340 --> 00:14:13,630
There may have been, but
I don't recall seeing any.

253
00:14:13,630 --> 00:14:15,430
How about on the outside?

254
00:14:15,430 --> 00:14:17,860
On the outside.

255
00:14:17,860 --> 00:14:20,500
On the door, above the door?

256
00:14:20,500 --> 00:14:22,240
I don't recall
seeing any of that.

257
00:14:22,240 --> 00:14:27,610
I know we found two parts of
\$1 bills laying in the camp.

258
00:14:27,610 --> 00:14:31,030

259
00:14:31,030 --> 00:14:34,290

I also remember that we
were under strict orders--

260
00:14:34,290 --> 00:14:38,850
I don't know who thought of
it, but under strict orders

261
00:14:38,850 --> 00:14:42,240
to give them none
of our K-rations.

262
00:14:42,240 --> 00:14:43,560
Was the reason given for that?

263
00:14:43,560 --> 00:14:44,170
Yes.

264
00:14:44,170 --> 00:14:45,450
What was that?

265
00:14:45,450 --> 00:14:46,767
We would kill them.

266
00:14:46,767 --> 00:14:49,630
Mm-hmm.

267
00:14:49,630 --> 00:14:51,250
Can you describe
the people whom you

268
00:14:51,250 --> 00:14:55,060
saw in the camp, the survivors?

269
00:14:55,060 --> 00:15:05,990
Well, as I wrote earlier, an
emaciated mass of humanity.

270
00:15:05,990 --> 00:15:08,210
That's about it.

271
00:15:08,210 --> 00:15:09,860
They were more dead than alive.

272
00:15:09,860 --> 00:15:13,120

273
00:15:13,120 --> 00:15:14,200
They were crying.

274
00:15:14,200 --> 00:15:15,340
Some of them were crying.

275
00:15:15,340 --> 00:15:17,440
Some of them had no
emotion whatsoever.

276
00:15:17,440 --> 00:15:27,790
They were so far gone, I would
say, because as I remember,

277
00:15:27,790 --> 00:15:32,530
after we moved in, we called
the medical units in right away,

278
00:15:32,530 --> 00:15:39,610
and we lost so many after we had
liberated the camp in addition

279
00:15:39,610 --> 00:15:43,270
to what had died as
we were liberating it.

280
00:15:43,270 --> 00:15:47,080
Even though there was no
gunfire, in their anxiety,

281
00:15:47,080 --> 00:15:51,250
they trampled one another
trying to get out the gates

282
00:15:51,250 --> 00:15:52,390
and things of this nature.

283
00:15:52,390 --> 00:15:56,843

And we had to try to confine
them, keep them within the camp

284
00:15:56,843 --> 00:15:57,760
so we could help them.

285
00:15:57,760 --> 00:16:00,880

286
00:16:00,880 --> 00:16:04,930
How did the American
soldier who came upon this,

287
00:16:04,930 --> 00:16:12,340
and he had to cope with
the disorder that resulted?

288
00:16:12,340 --> 00:16:15,490
How was he able to cope
with both problems,

289
00:16:15,490 --> 00:16:18,610
with his own feelings
and with the disorder?

290
00:16:18,610 --> 00:16:19,790
I don't know.

291
00:16:19,790 --> 00:16:23,650
I don't know how I coped
with it, speaking for myself.

292
00:16:23,650 --> 00:16:25,030
What did you do?

293
00:16:25,030 --> 00:16:26,140
What did I do?

294
00:16:26,140 --> 00:16:29,590
Yes, what action did you take?

295
00:16:29,590 --> 00:16:33,310

The only action that I
myself took in reference

296
00:16:33,310 --> 00:16:41,080
to these people was to try to
assure them that everything was

297
00:16:41,080 --> 00:16:44,590
going to be all right, my
action, because I couldn't

298
00:16:44,590 --> 00:16:49,630
talk to them, I couldn't
converse with them in any way--

299
00:16:49,630 --> 00:16:54,010
maybe only sign language,
and that's very laborious--

300
00:16:54,010 --> 00:16:57,930

301
00:16:57,930 --> 00:17:01,860
and turning them over to the
medics as quickly as possible.

302
00:17:01,860 --> 00:17:05,060
As I say, the medics were in
there right after we were in.

303
00:17:05,060 --> 00:17:07,680

304
00:17:07,680 --> 00:17:10,020
Were there men and women?

305
00:17:10,020 --> 00:17:12,030
There was men and women, yes.

306
00:17:12,030 --> 00:17:13,260
Children?

307

00:17:13,260 --> 00:17:20,700
I can't recall, but I recall
a pile of shoes and half

308
00:17:20,700 --> 00:17:27,906
of a cone, and I helped
the officer measure them.

309
00:17:27,906 --> 00:17:30,390
Now, I say shoes,
but actually, they

310
00:17:30,390 --> 00:17:34,335
were like clods, what
we call clods today.

311
00:17:34,335 --> 00:17:36,900

312
00:17:36,900 --> 00:17:43,080
The base was 30 feet across
and it was 30 feet high,

313
00:17:43,080 --> 00:17:48,460
and it was in half of a
cone, a conical shape.

314
00:17:48,460 --> 00:17:52,970
I also remember the ovens.

315
00:17:52,970 --> 00:17:57,350
I believe there was three
of them with a metal doors.

316
00:17:57,350 --> 00:18:00,230
We dragged the body out ,
this other fellow and myself.

317
00:18:00,230 --> 00:18:03,440
We believe, or at
least I believe today,

318
00:18:03,440 --> 00:18:07,490

that he wasn't dead,
but I can't be sure.

319
00:18:07,490 --> 00:18:09,780
You mean there was a
body in one of the ovens?

320
00:18:09,780 --> 00:18:11,928
In one of the
ovens, that's right.

321
00:18:11,928 --> 00:18:12,720
And you removed it?

322
00:18:12,720 --> 00:18:13,920
That's correct, yes.

323
00:18:13,920 --> 00:18:17,140

324
00:18:17,140 --> 00:18:18,990
Were you able to
tell the nationality

325
00:18:18,990 --> 00:18:20,310
of any of the prisoners?

326
00:18:20,310 --> 00:18:21,390
I couldn't, no.

327
00:18:21,390 --> 00:18:24,490

328
00:18:24,490 --> 00:18:27,920
And had any idea
how many there were?

329
00:18:27,920 --> 00:18:29,500
That, I couldn't
tell you either.

330
00:18:29,500 --> 00:18:32,080

Were there hundreds, thousands?

331

00:18:32,080 --> 00:18:32,790

Oh, golly.

332

00:18:32,790 --> 00:18:36,240

333

00:18:36,240 --> 00:18:39,570

I wouldn't even
begin to estimate.

334

00:18:39,570 --> 00:18:41,970

What were they wearing?

335

00:18:41,970 --> 00:18:48,620

Most of them were wearing
prison garb, the striped.

336

00:18:48,620 --> 00:18:54,800

There were some that had other
dilapidated clothes of sorts.

337

00:18:54,800 --> 00:18:59,030

Did anyone have particular
emblems or symbols?

338

00:18:59,030 --> 00:19:00,320

I didn't notice.

339

00:19:00,320 --> 00:19:01,730

On their clothing.

340

00:19:01,730 --> 00:19:04,190

I didn't notice.

341

00:19:04,190 --> 00:19:06,380

I can't say that there weren't.

342

00:19:06,380 --> 00:19:07,580

I didn't notice.

343

00:19:07,580 --> 00:19:13,550

How about tattoos, numbers or other symbols that they may

344

00:19:13,550 --> 00:19:18,110

have received as a prisoner identification?

345

00:19:18,110 --> 00:19:20,330

I didn't see any.

346

00:19:20,330 --> 00:19:21,230

I didn't see any.

347

00:19:21,230 --> 00:19:24,170

348

00:19:24,170 --> 00:19:26,240

Did you see any evidence that they might

349

00:19:26,240 --> 00:19:28,083

have been working in that camp?

350

00:19:28,083 --> 00:19:34,160

Oh, I took one of the other GIs and myself,

351

00:19:34,160 --> 00:19:38,400

being that I was involved in aircraft.

352

00:19:38,400 --> 00:19:41,120

We were under orders not to go in there, but we went in.

353

00:19:41,120 --> 00:19:44,750

We snuck in anyway, and I took him

354

00:19:44,750 --> 00:19:50,010

on a tour of that factory where

they produced those 109s right

355

00:19:50,010 --> 00:19:53,100

next door, or across the
street from the camp,

356

00:19:53,100 --> 00:19:54,660

or to the camp on the back end.

357

00:19:54,660 --> 00:19:56,850

I don't really know.

358

00:19:56,850 --> 00:20:03,330

And in the concrete floors,
this is something that

359

00:20:03,330 --> 00:20:06,540

struck me beyond all belief.

360

00:20:06,540 --> 00:20:10,050

The concrete floor
at the benches

361

00:20:10,050 --> 00:20:18,090

where these people worked
had shallows in them,

362

00:20:18,090 --> 00:20:21,320

or holes in them,
if you will, right,

363

00:20:21,320 --> 00:20:25,030

to the depths of
three or four inches.

364

00:20:25,030 --> 00:20:27,010

And it was hard
for me to conceive

365

00:20:27,010 --> 00:20:32,500

how somebody could work
that many hours at a bench

366

00:20:32,500 --> 00:20:35,710
and dig holes in concrete
with those clods,

367

00:20:35,710 --> 00:20:39,630
but that's what was
there in the floor.

368

00:20:39,630 --> 00:20:42,700
You felt that those holes were
made by the clods scraping

369

00:20:42,700 --> 00:20:43,820
against the floor?

370

00:20:43,820 --> 00:20:47,110
That's right, from them
moving their feet on the floor

371

00:20:47,110 --> 00:20:51,080
while they stood
there and operating

372

00:20:51,080 --> 00:20:54,610
whatever the case may have
been in the form of making

373

00:20:54,610 --> 00:20:58,290
these aircraft.

374

00:20:58,290 --> 00:21:00,530
Was the machinery in place?

375

00:21:00,530 --> 00:21:01,030
Yeah.

376

00:21:01,030 --> 00:21:03,300
Oh, yes, everything was intact.

377

00:21:03,300 --> 00:21:05,970
And you were able to
recognize what kind of work

378
00:21:05,970 --> 00:21:06,900
was being done there?

379
00:21:06,900 --> 00:21:08,700
Oh, yes, uh-hu.

380
00:21:08,700 --> 00:21:11,040
I saw what some
of the underground

381
00:21:11,040 --> 00:21:17,820
did as far as, for example, the
rivets to rivet the structures

382
00:21:17,820 --> 00:21:23,130
together, the first couple of
inches on these little kegs

383
00:21:23,130 --> 00:21:28,020
about so high, the
first couple of inches,

384
00:21:28,020 --> 00:21:31,050
all the rivets were
exactly the same.

385
00:21:31,050 --> 00:21:34,050
Under that, it was
a hodgepodge, so

386
00:21:34,050 --> 00:21:40,560
that after they use the first
maybe 1,000 rivets or 500

387
00:21:40,560 --> 00:21:44,150
rivets, whatever
it may have been,

388
00:21:44,150 --> 00:21:47,620
they had to stand there pick
out the right ones in order

389

00:21:47,620 --> 00:21:50,060

to get the right
ones for the job.

390

00:21:50,060 --> 00:21:53,780

391

00:21:53,780 --> 00:21:56,270

Were you able to speak
to any of the prisoners,

392

00:21:56,270 --> 00:21:59,260

communicate with them about
this particular aspect?

393

00:21:59,260 --> 00:22:02,210

Oh, I didn't let on
that I was in there.

394

00:22:02,210 --> 00:22:04,220

I was under orders
not to go in there.

395

00:22:04,220 --> 00:22:08,560

396

00:22:08,560 --> 00:22:11,860

How much area did
this camp take up?

397

00:22:11,860 --> 00:22:14,560

How big was it?

398

00:22:14,560 --> 00:22:17,160

I couldn't begin to tell you.

399

00:22:17,160 --> 00:22:24,520

I was there roughly two
days, three at the most,

400

00:22:24,520 --> 00:22:27,160

and I don't know how big it was.

401
00:22:27,160 --> 00:22:31,690
I know that the square
in town was dug up

402
00:22:31,690 --> 00:22:36,190
by the German people, and
all the people that we knew,

403
00:22:36,190 --> 00:22:40,180
or all the bodies
that were there,

404
00:22:40,180 --> 00:22:44,410
were buried in single graves
marked with white crosses

405
00:22:44,410 --> 00:22:54,860
and the names, the
sex, the religion,

406
00:22:54,860 --> 00:22:59,130
as near as we could find
out, was on all of them.

407
00:22:59,130 --> 00:23:00,590
There were several,
of course, that

408
00:23:00,590 --> 00:23:03,930
had nothing but male or female.

409
00:23:03,930 --> 00:23:05,090
We just couldn't.

410
00:23:05,090 --> 00:23:07,700
How were you able to
determine these facts

411
00:23:07,700 --> 00:23:09,200
about the dead people?

412

00:23:09,200 --> 00:23:10,570
I didn't determine.

413
00:23:10,570 --> 00:23:13,100
I wasn't involved in it.

414
00:23:13,100 --> 00:23:15,770
This was the military
government that came in,

415
00:23:15,770 --> 00:23:18,080
the American military
government that did it,

416
00:23:18,080 --> 00:23:20,990
and how they determined
it, I don't know.

417
00:23:20,990 --> 00:23:22,810
Did you attend the
burial ceremonies?

418
00:23:22,810 --> 00:23:24,020
No, I did not.

419
00:23:24,020 --> 00:23:29,180
I don't recall where
I was at the time.

420
00:23:29,180 --> 00:23:32,010
How do you know
about the burials?

421
00:23:32,010 --> 00:23:34,760
Because I went back to
the square and saw it.

422
00:23:34,760 --> 00:23:37,040
When was that?

423
00:23:37,040 --> 00:23:45,440
Oh, this was right in
the same time period.

424
00:23:45,440 --> 00:23:48,910
The camp, the official date
of liberation for that camp

425
00:23:48,910 --> 00:23:50,500
is April 23.

426
00:23:50,500 --> 00:23:52,960
Yes, I didn't know
that until today.

427
00:23:52,960 --> 00:23:54,120
I thought it was later.

428
00:23:54,120 --> 00:23:57,370

429
00:23:57,370 --> 00:24:01,640
How long after that do you
think it was that you came?

430
00:24:01,640 --> 00:24:04,120
How many days did you
spend there initially?

431
00:24:04,120 --> 00:24:06,640

432
00:24:06,640 --> 00:24:09,340
I was there two to three days.

433
00:24:09,340 --> 00:24:14,650
Now, during that period, the
military government came in,

434
00:24:14,650 --> 00:24:19,400
and during that period,
the bodies were buried.

435
00:24:19,400 --> 00:24:24,580
Now, you talk about a

ceremony or a funeral.

436

00:24:24,580 --> 00:24:29,110

I did not know of this
until you spoke of it today.

437

00:24:29,110 --> 00:24:33,250

Now, it had to take
place while I was there

438

00:24:33,250 --> 00:24:37,160

or while I was in the area,
but I don't recall it.

439

00:24:37,160 --> 00:24:38,782

Who dug the graves?

440

00:24:38,782 --> 00:24:39,490

Do you know that?

441

00:24:39,490 --> 00:24:41,710

Yeah, the German townspeople.

442

00:24:41,710 --> 00:24:44,350

443

00:24:44,350 --> 00:24:47,440

At the time I was there,
the military government

444

00:24:47,440 --> 00:24:51,790

issued an order that they had
to put in one day of eight hours

445

00:24:51,790 --> 00:24:57,230

maintaining that
cemetery every year.

446

00:24:57,230 --> 00:24:57,730

Mm-hmm.

447

00:24:57,730 --> 00:24:59,230

Did you see them
digging the graves?

448
00:24:59,230 --> 00:25:03,160

449
00:25:03,160 --> 00:25:06,850
In the back of my mind, I have
a vague recollection of it,

450
00:25:06,850 --> 00:25:08,692
but I can't be sure.

451
00:25:08,692 --> 00:25:09,192
Mm-hmm.

452
00:25:09,192 --> 00:25:13,200

453
00:25:13,200 --> 00:25:16,710
Right, OK.

454
00:25:16,710 --> 00:25:18,930
Did you have any
particular instructions

455
00:25:18,930 --> 00:25:24,040
about your dealings with
the survivors in the camp?

456
00:25:24,040 --> 00:25:26,700
The only thing we were told--

457
00:25:26,700 --> 00:25:33,210
we came upon it by sheer
accident, the same as so many

458
00:25:33,210 --> 00:25:34,350
others.

459
00:25:34,350 --> 00:25:38,610
We didn't know it existed, and

all of a sudden it was there.

460
00:25:38,610 --> 00:25:43,950
But we did get orders, as
I said before, no food.

461
00:25:43,950 --> 00:25:47,730
Now, I don't know who
is responsible for this,

462
00:25:47,730 --> 00:25:50,382
but don't give them any
K-rations because it

463
00:25:50,382 --> 00:25:51,340
would have killed them.

464
00:25:51,340 --> 00:25:53,090
There's no question
about it, because that

465
00:25:53,090 --> 00:25:55,830
was all concentrated food.

466
00:25:55,830 --> 00:25:58,950
Did you have any further
experiences after

467
00:25:58,950 --> 00:26:03,480
your experiences at Flossenbürg
with liberated people

468
00:26:03,480 --> 00:26:07,419
or survivors that you
feel might be important?

469
00:26:07,419 --> 00:26:11,550

470
00:26:11,550 --> 00:26:21,750
I can't recall at this
moment anybody or anything

471

00:26:21,750 --> 00:26:26,250

that I can remember when
I left Czechoslovakia.

472

00:26:26,250 --> 00:26:30,660

I remember a woman calling,
come back and see us.

473

00:26:30,660 --> 00:26:31,800

How'd you feel about that?

474

00:26:31,800 --> 00:26:33,180

I felt overjoyed.

475

00:26:33,180 --> 00:26:36,450

Oh, yes, there is one thing.

476

00:26:36,450 --> 00:26:39,300

Yes, I had a great fortune--

477

00:26:39,300 --> 00:26:42,990

I call it a great fortune--
because I ended up

478

00:26:42,990 --> 00:26:49,540

for one month at the
Nuremberg trials as a GI,

479

00:26:49,540 --> 00:26:55,210

and I stood guard on most of
the bigwigs from time to time.

480

00:26:55,210 --> 00:26:57,010

How did you feel
about that, John?

481

00:26:57,010 --> 00:26:59,120

I enjoyed it.

482

00:26:59,120 --> 00:27:01,260

I enjoyed it.

483

00:27:01,260 --> 00:27:02,440

Oh, yes.

484

00:27:02,440 --> 00:27:05,260

I don't imagine that you
spoke to any of the prisoners.

485

00:27:05,260 --> 00:27:06,050

Oh, yes I did.

486

00:27:06,050 --> 00:27:06,550

Really?

487

00:27:06,550 --> 00:27:07,570

Oh, yeah.

488

00:27:07,570 --> 00:27:09,520

And what was the nature
of your conversations?

489

00:27:09,520 --> 00:27:11,210

Well, one of them
started screaming.

490

00:27:11,210 --> 00:27:16,330

And I don't know if you know
one by the name of Funk.

491

00:27:16,330 --> 00:27:20,440

He started screaming one night,
and so I just opened the door

492

00:27:20,440 --> 00:27:24,460

and took the billy club off the
wall, told him in his language,

493

00:27:24,460 --> 00:27:28,140

if he didn't shut
up, I'd shut him up.

494

00:27:28,140 --> 00:27:29,100

Did he shut up?

495
00:27:29,100 --> 00:27:29,790
He shut up.

496
00:27:29,790 --> 00:27:32,080
He didn't say another word.

497
00:27:32,080 --> 00:27:33,930
What was their attitude
towards the trial?

498
00:27:33,930 --> 00:27:38,050

499
00:27:38,050 --> 00:27:43,710
I really can't express
that, because, well, I

500
00:27:43,710 --> 00:27:46,840
had an interesting experience
with Seyss-Inquart.

501
00:27:46,840 --> 00:27:48,376
I don't know if you know him.

502
00:27:48,376 --> 00:27:49,500
Mm-mm.

503
00:27:49,500 --> 00:27:50,000
No?

504
00:27:50,000 --> 00:27:50,860
OK.

505
00:27:50,860 --> 00:27:53,650
Seyss-Inquart was
the Austrian lawyer

506
00:27:53,650 --> 00:27:58,320
who worked behind the
scenes for the Anschluss,

507

00:27:58,320 --> 00:28:03,480

it was so called, of
Austria to Germany.

508

00:28:03,480 --> 00:28:07,740

And I had to take him one
night down to see his lawyer.

509

00:28:07,740 --> 00:28:10,440

He had requested it.

510

00:28:10,440 --> 00:28:13,320

And during the interview,
sitting at the table

511

00:28:13,320 --> 00:28:19,530

as I sit talking to you, my
prisoner0 sat on my left,

512

00:28:19,530 --> 00:28:21,240

Seyss-Inquart.

513

00:28:21,240 --> 00:28:23,640

And his lawyer was brought
in and sat on my right.

514

00:28:23,640 --> 00:28:29,010

And after they were
talking back and forth,

515

00:28:29,010 --> 00:28:33,480

I asked the lawyer in
German for the pencil,

516

00:28:33,480 --> 00:28:37,020

because I had to sign a slip.

517

00:28:37,020 --> 00:28:41,660

And he and Seyss-Inquart
turned white,

518

00:28:41,660 --> 00:28:46,160

and the reason I turned white
was because they realized

519
00:28:46,160 --> 00:28:49,850
that here, somebody sat
who understood quite

520
00:28:49,850 --> 00:28:53,870
a bit of German, and what
he was telling him was,

521
00:28:53,870 --> 00:29:00,200
blame Goering because they're
going to hang him anyway.

522
00:29:00,200 --> 00:29:02,790
Blame everything on him.

523
00:29:02,790 --> 00:29:06,110
What was the outcome of the
trial with Seyss-Inquart?

524
00:29:06,110 --> 00:29:15,940
Seyss-Inquart was hung
along with, oh, 12 others.

525
00:29:15,940 --> 00:29:18,030
Goering committed suicide.

526
00:29:18,030 --> 00:29:22,870
I don't know how he escaped
with that cyanide capsule,

527
00:29:22,870 --> 00:29:25,120
but he made it somehow.

528
00:29:25,120 --> 00:29:28,180
And the others, of course,
with the exception of Hess,

529
00:29:28,180 --> 00:29:30,820
were in for various years.

530

00:29:30,820 --> 00:29:33,790

Speer, I think, put in 20 years.

531

00:29:33,790 --> 00:29:36,820

Hess is still in.

532

00:29:36,820 --> 00:29:40,330

Hess, by the way, was
one of those fanatics.

533

00:29:40,330 --> 00:29:45,290

He would goosestep in that
cell for hours at a time.

534

00:29:45,290 --> 00:29:46,030

You saw that?

535

00:29:46,030 --> 00:29:50,410

I saw that, and I
saw one thing other.

536

00:29:50,410 --> 00:29:56,270

I was the only one that I know
of in American uniform that

537

00:29:56,270 --> 00:29:58,960

ever went up to the
visitor's gallery

538

00:29:58,960 --> 00:30:01,300

to sit in on the trials.

539

00:30:01,300 --> 00:30:05,080

I never saw anybody else.

540

00:30:05,080 --> 00:30:07,630

There were no other
American GIs in the gallery?

541

00:30:07,630 --> 00:30:08,130

No.

542

00:30:08,130 --> 00:30:10,540

No, I tried to talk
some of the people

543

00:30:10,540 --> 00:30:13,070

that I knew, some of
the GIs that I knew,

544

00:30:13,070 --> 00:30:17,740

and they said, hey, you're up
there 24 hours at a stretch.

545

00:30:17,740 --> 00:30:20,650

Why do you want to go
back on your time off?

546

00:30:20,650 --> 00:30:21,820

I was the only one.

547

00:30:21,820 --> 00:30:23,645

Why did you feel it
was important to go?

548

00:30:23,645 --> 00:30:24,145

Why?

549

00:30:24,145 --> 00:30:28,770

550

00:30:28,770 --> 00:30:33,370

History was being made
right before our eyes,

551

00:30:33,370 --> 00:30:39,010

and these were the people
that were responsible

552

00:30:39,010 --> 00:30:44,740

for me and millions
of others leaving home

553

00:30:44,740 --> 00:30:52,340

to straighten out a mess that
they had started, all right.

554
00:30:52,340 --> 00:30:55,080
That's why I was there.

555
00:30:55,080 --> 00:30:58,010
Well, it's our good
fortune that you

556
00:30:58,010 --> 00:30:59,850
have such a good
sense of history,

557
00:30:59,850 --> 00:31:03,680
and we thank you very much for
participating in this project.

558
00:31:03,680 --> 00:31:04,610
OK, Thank you.

559
00:31:04,610 --> 00:31:05,110
Thank you.

560
00:31:05,110 --> 00:31:08,570

561
00:31:08,570 --> 00:31:10,340
This is Bonnie [? Gurowich. ?]

562
00:31:10,340 --> 00:31:36,000