

-TITLE-WILLIAM JOHNSON
-I_DATE-OCTOBER 27, 1981
-SOURCE-USHMC INTERNATIONAL LIBERATORS CONFERENCE
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY-GOOD
-DURATION-50 MINUTES
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

1:01:00 William landing at Le Havre. Began at Siegfried line at a place called Hershville then travelled with the troops through Mainz, Frankfurt, Fulde, Illmanau (which was not far from Buchenwald), Hoth, Plauen, then down along the Czech border, and finally into Flossenburg and across the border close to Kletovi into Czechoslovakia.

02:40 They encountered and liberated a Yugoslavian working as a farm slave laborer somewhere deep in Germany near Fullde(ph.) around a small collection of farmhouses forming a nucleus of a town. He was about twenty seven and was not dressed in prison garb. They couldn't surmount the language barrier but his appreciation was apparent because he wanted to take the rifle and continue on the liberation front.

05:00 Out of gratuity the Yugoslav waited on the men. He stood guard over William because he was the first liberator to make contact. And he was so happy, that while the squad occupied the farm house, he got hot water for them to have a hot cup of coffee and shaved everybody's beards.

06:10 He was turned over to US military govt. Gave William as a memento, a Yugoslavian note which he still has to this day.

06:33 Also liberated a ten year old Polish boy. He was a slave to a German woman on the Czech border right before Flossenburg. Red headed Polish boy. Wanted to go back home. Couldn't find out where his home was though. The US army told the woman that if anything happened to the child they would come after her. Though she sent in fresh eggs with the boy, they could tell she wasn't happy with the arrangement.

09:00 When it came time for the boy to leave they gave him a portion of the currency they had taken from other German soldiers and sent him on his way. His home was somewhere in Poland. The boy was not Jewish to the best of his knowledge.

10:00 William was a scout working the left point early one morning as they approached the town of Flossenburg. No gunfire was exchanged. Many white flags hung from the house windows in the town. There was a stone quarry on one side of the road and on the other was a Emmie (ph) 109 factory. The camp was above and to the right of the stone quarry and was well within walking distance of the small town.

12:00 The camp had a double fence with a no-man's land in between where the towers and turrets surveyed the course made of electric and barbed wire. William remembers going down into the shower rooms. It was an ordinary brick building. Color of the walls were drab grey. The room was ten by fifteen feet in size. The door was made of metal.

14:50 They were on strict orders not to give out any of the K-rations because the infantry men in doing so would kill them. The survivors in the camps were an emaciated mass of humanity, more dead than alive. Some were crying and some were emotionless, they were all far gone. Many died after the liberation. They trampled one another upon realizing their eminent freedom.

17:28 There were both men and women. There were piles of shoes that were actually clogs. He also remembers the three ovens. They pulled a body out. It may not have been dead. Most were wearing the striped prison garb.

20:00 Will snuck into one of the aircraft production 109 factories to see it and in the concrete floors at the benches where the people worked there were shallows to the depth of three or four inches where they stood in their clogs. The motion of the feet on the floor carved out the foot prints.

21:33 All of the machinery was intact and it was apparent what work was going on. The underground resistance movement left their mark. The barrels of rivets were mixed so that after the first layer of apparently homogenous rivets, they got to the second layer and had to sort through which took time.

24:00 April 23 was the actual date of liberation of the camp. William spent three days at the camp and during that period the military government came in and the bodies were then buried. The graves were dug by the German towns people who had to put in one day of eight hours maintaining the cemetery every year.

26:50 Woman called to him when he was leaving "come back and see us." Also had the great fortune to end up at the N renburg trials for a month. Spoke to the prisoners. A man named Funk started screaming one night and he told him to shut up or he would shut him up.

28:00 Also had an interesting time with Sesinquot (ph), who was involved in the Anschluss. He was at the table monitoring the interviewing. Sesinquot and his lawyer were talking when Will asked for the pencil. They turned white because Will spoke in German which meant he understood all that they had said previously which was 'frame G"ring because he was going to hang anyway.' Sesinquot was hung as well as twelve others. G"ring swallowed NaCN and Hesse is still in prison. William actually saw Hess goose stepping in his cell for hours on end.

30:30 William sat in on the trials unlike his other contemporaries because he felt history was being made and he didn't want to miss the action taken against the men who had controlled his fate and the fate of others for ten years time.
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