

Interviewee:	<u>HARRISON</u> , Milton	Date:	August 18, 1987
Interviewer:	Nora Levin		
Audio tapes:	2 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Milton Harrison was a 19 year old First Sergeant in the Medical Detachment of the Ninth Armored Infantry Battalion of the Sixth Armored Division. In 1945 he heard about German atrocities from home but not in the army. On April 11, 1945 on the way from Mühhausen towards the Saale River, his unit encountered Russian Prisoners of War who had escaped from Buchenwald. From them they learned about this camp and that most of the SS had already left. A tank under the command of Captain Kiefer, with a total of four Americans was dispatched to investigate. Shortly thereafter, a small group of 28 men, including Mr. Harrison, followed. On the way they stumbled on the now unguarded "Little Buchenwald," a camp for mostly Jewish children between 10 and 14 years old who had worked at hard labor.

They were the first American soldiers to enter Buchenwald, and Captain Kiefer and First Sergeant Harrison reported the situation at Buchenwald to their superior officers that evening. When his group reached the main camp, the ovens were still hot. He inspected the camp, was shown a lampshade made from human skin and rows of bottles containing human parts which were part of Ilse Koch's collection. He describes the survivors' physical condition and their reaction to the liberators.

On April 12, the *Waffen SS* attacked Buchenwald with small arms and mortar. Two American captains and Rabbi Herschel Schacter were in the camp at this time, and called for assistance. With help from the 44th Infantry Battalions, the SS was overwhelmed on April 14th, and Buchenwald was declared a "non-combat zone" on that day and medical assistance began arriving. Generals Groh and Patton toured the camp and were horrified. Inhabitants of Weimar were ordered to bury the dead.

Mr. Harrison, who is one of the historical officers of the Buchenwald Information Committee of the Sixth Armored Division Association, stresses that only soldiers of Command A of the 6th Armored Division can be called liberators of Buchenwald. He cites several references to verify this claim. He describes the lasting effect seeing Buchenwald had and still has on these soldiers.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

United States-Army- Medical Detachment, Sixth Armored Division
World War, 1939 - 1945 Personal narratives - American
World War, 1939 - 1945 - Atrocities
World War, 1939 – 1945 - Germany
World War, 1939 – 1945- Psychological aspects
World War, 1939 - 1945 - Concentration camps - Liberation, Germany
Crimes against humanity, German
Liberator of Buchenwald