

Interviewee: KORNFELD, Bertram
Interviewer: Philip G. Solomon

Date: March 7, 1994

Audio tapes: 2 English
Restrictions: None

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SUMMARY

Bertram Kornfeld, born in Vienna, Austria in 1925, immigrated to the United States in 1938. In February 1944, he joined the U.S. Army and served in the 423rd Battalion of the 106th Infantry Division. During the Battle of the Bulge, he and his crew were captured by German soldiers in Belgium, near Malmedy. They were forced to march with many other prisoners for several days to a railroad, where they were crowded into cattle cars. When the train reached Koblenz, the locked cars were left overnight in a railroad yard where RAF bombers narrowly missed them. They arrived at Stalag 4-B, located between Leipzig and Dresden, in December 1944.

Mr. Kornfeld describes the bitter cold, the callous disregard of sick and dying prisoners during the transport, lack of food and water for two weeks and a limited prison diet thereafter. At his liberation in April 1945, he had lost 50 pounds. Despite his deprivation, he claims that the Germans observed the Geneva Convention in regard to American and British prisoners, but brutally mistreated the Russians. He depicts the Russian liberators of his camp as drunken Cossacks who slaughtered the remaining Germans, but befriended the prisoners by baking bread for them.

When Mr. Kornfeld and some friends fled and met American soldiers in Leipzig, they were given rich food, which sickened them and required a brief hospitalization. He returned to the United States and was discharged in December 1945.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War, 1939-1945, personal narratives
American prisoners of war

World War, 1939-1945, Prisoner-of-War camps
Liberation by Russian Army

Prisoners of war, American, in Germany
Transportation