

Interviewee:	<u>McCOOL</u> , William F.	Date:	October 17, 2002
Interviewer:	Marcia Goldberg		
Audio tapes:	3 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	No restrictions		

## SUMMARY

William F. McCool was drafted in January 1944, when he was 18 years old. He served in the 89<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, E Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon during World War II. He talks about his childhood, his army training, and his arrival at Camp Lucky Strike in France. He graphically describes his combat experiences in Germany and his brief capture and escape.

His unit encountered Ohrdruf while on a scouting mission for pockets of resistance, under heavy machinegun fire by SS troops. They fought their way into the camp. Mr. McCool describes the horrible conditions they found in Ohrdruf in great detail. The soldiers couldn't believe their eyes and many became ill. He saw a pit that served as a grave for 9,000 naked corpses and observed that starvation was rampant and prisoners were treated brutally. Medical help arrived almost immediately and the survivors were cared for by Special Services. The military provided seminars for the 89<sup>th</sup> Division to explain Nazi ideology and their plan for the annihilation of the Jews. Some members of the 89<sup>th</sup> Division interviewed survivors and it was revealed that two dozen Christians were also murdered there. Mr. McCool also witnessed the dead bodies of four American flyers, in uniform, who were shot by Germans.

Mr. McCool describes camp layout, gas chambers and ovens and contrasts the luxurious quarters of the SS and the camp guards to the horrible conditions of the prisoner barracks. He describes what happened when Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, Patton and Finley visited Ohrdruf, accompanied by reporters. His unit was ordered to bring the townspeople and the mayor and his wife to the camp. Mr. McCool explains why these residents had to know the camp existed despite their denials. After 2 ½ days in the camp, his unit left to capture the town of Arnstad. From the end of World War II to June 1946, he was on occupation duty, mostly transporting Displaced Persons back to their home country. He also served as a guard during the Nuremberg Trials, and describes the proceedings. He was discharged June 10, 1946, with the rank of sergeant.

Mr. McCool talks about his post-war life, his marriage and his family. He discusses that he started to talk about these events only after his granddaughter asked him to speak to her class. He reflects on how his service in World War II has shaped his beliefs and his values and explains that seeing Ohrdruf has affected him more than any other event in his life. He returned to Germany in 1976 and describes his reactions.

Note: Associated Material available through the Gratz College Tuttleman Library:

“The Liberation of Ohrdruf,” including personal accounts contributed by Mr. Mc Cool. (This was obtained during an interview with William McCool, on November 10, 2002)

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#### SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War, 1939-1945 - Personal narrative - American  
World War, 1939-1945 - Combat - Germany  
World War, 1939-1945 - Concentration camps - liberation  
World War, 1939-1945 - Concentration camp - Ohrdruf  
United States Army - Infantry Division - 89th  
Military occupation - American  
War crime trials - Nuremberg  
Atrocities  
World War, 1939 - 1945 - Psychological effect - American serviceman