

Interviewee: STERN, Arthur
Interviewer: Philip G. Solomon
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Date: May 15, 1990

No restrictions

SUMMARY

Arthur Stern served in Company E, 232nd Infantry, 42nd Division, U.S. 7th Army, during World War II. He relates a very brief encounter with a Jewish couple in hiding who were passing as Poles and had escaped from a work camp. He entered Dachau concentration camp on April 27th or 28th, 1945 to relieve another division. He was assigned to guard the women's area, then the gas chambers, until his unit left the following day.

He talked to some of the women in Yiddish and describes the physical and emotional state of the survivors. He was very impressed by an 18 year old girl he met there. She was from a well-to-do Czechoslovakian family, and despite her youth led and supported the other women. She told him how she managed to survive physically and spiritually.

He vividly describes his impressions when he entered the gas chambers and saw piles of bodies. Other soldiers told him about seeing box cars loaded with bodies and some survivors left to die by the Germans. He mentions why he can't believe that citizens of Munich didn't know what was going on in Dachau. He was part of the Army of Occupation in Austria after leaving the concentration camp.

Mr. Stern explains how he dealt with almost losing his faith in God after seeing the atrocities at Dachau. He feels that one redeeming factor were the few good people who helped. His own aunt and uncle, who lived in France, were hidden by French farmers, and their two children were sheltered in a convent.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War 1939 - 1945 - Personal narrative - American
World War 1939 - 1945 - Concentration camp - liberation
World War 1939 - 1945 - Psychological aspects
Dachau - Concentration camp - Germany