

We're rolling. So tell me where you were at the time that you came across victims in concentration camps. Just describe to me the day and what you saw.

It was late April, early May. We weren't too sure of the exact dates, but I know it was after the 28th of April. And was about the 1st of May. And this was after we had left Straubing, Germany. And probably somewhere around Wels, Austria. In that particular area is where we first saw-- where I first saw men was coming out of the prison camps, concentration camps.

What were you doing there? Tell me exactly. You were--

Yes, where I was, we were the 761st Tank Battalion, was assigned at that time the 71st Division. And my particular assignment at the time was a liaison officer between my company and the regimental headquarters. So I wasn't with the immediate front line. I was like in between the front line and the regiment.

So as the troops went ahead, and I would be used as a-- back in those days, you'd call it liaison officers. Is a relatively high-paid messenger in those days. Take messages from the front line back to the regiment. And from the regiment back to the front line, telling them what was going on. So that was my assignment at that particular time.

So now just describe to me how you were going along and what you saw.

All right. We had been alerted at that time that the frontline troops had gone through some prison camps and that there were a lot of prisoners who had been released. And we were warned, particularly, about feeding them. Said, be careful when they come on out.

So as we proceed down the road-- and this happens for days and days-- we would see them coming with the striped uniform. They were all real skinny, emaciated, and looked like they were starving.

So we they were warned not to give them anything to eat because all we had was those K rations. They were highly concentrated. And if they hate those things, it might kill them.

And all observed, they come in, and it was just dragging, coming in any way they could. And they were hollering either American or comrade, something like that. And as they approached us, and then we'd more or less wave at them.

And then make sure they got out, wouldn't run over them, and told them, keep on moving to the rear. Because they were coming from the front, and we're trying to move them to the rear area.

So they were coming towards you from where?

From the camps that were off the main road. We were told that there were a lot of smaller camps there in Austria, right at the Austrian-German border around that particular area. But you could see them all coming from the camp trying to, I guess, get back to the rear area or wherever they could get.

Because the Germans who had been chased out of the camp then more or less left them on their own. And soon as they were liberated, they started heading for the road and trying to go home, whichever direction that was. They wanted to get away from the fighting, at least.

And so what did they do? Were they walking along this?

Yeah, they were walking around like zombies or whatnot. I guess they really didn't know what direction. They knew that if we were going forward, it's best for them to go back. Because they didn't know where they were. I guess they had no idea of what city they may have been near or whatever. All they knew, they were getting away, and they were free, and were headed on to free area.

Did you talk to any of them?

No, I guess they-- at that time, we had no training in German or any other language. But all my little experience at that time had been strictly in the combat zone. So we had no language training. And I like to say, all they could say was American or comrade.

And you'd just wave at them. And you know, that's about all you could do was give them a smile and just wave. And that's all. That was the extent of our contact. Because when I saw them, we were on the move. It was no stopping to talk. We were just going to-- moving on ahead.

And what condition were they in?

Oh, they were all just skin and bones, and beards, and you know, they're dirty and extremely weak. Many of them, you know, they just-- they couldn't run or anything like that. They were just-- you could see that they could barely walk. They were just in bad, bad shape.

Did you and your friends who were with you-- did you talk about it? What kinds of things did you talk about, about having seen that?

Well, we in my position, we were really more concerned of making sure that these GIs wouldn't feed them, more than anything. Because they had been warned. And knowing how the American soldiers were, it's pretty hard, with all the stuff we had, not to give them something. And some of them did feed them.

But that was-- in my position, that was the hardest thing. And we talked about how bad they looked. We talked about that and wondered. We didn't know too much about all the camps that had been liberated, or really, at that time, all the atrocities that had gone on in the camp.

In fact, they were only men. Basically all we saw were man in this camp. I can't recall seeing any children or women at that particular time. That's all I saw were men.

Did anyone give them cigarettes or anything?

No, no. No way.

And who did you think they were? When they told you not to feed them, they didn't?

We knew that they were prisoners-- we thought they were just regular Polish, or German, or Jewish-Polish, or Jewish prisoners. And we knew what they were. But see, by being on the move, there was no standing around. That's the main thing.

We were concerned about not hurting any of them or letting them have them hurt themselves. Because in many cases, you know, they came so close to the vehicles, it wouldn't have taken too much for some of them to fall and get run over and whatnot.

I imagine people gave them cigarettes if they asked for any. But I don't think they-- didn't look to me that they were in a begging-type mood. I think the main thing [INAUDIBLE], and their freedom, and getting on down to some shelter, or away, at least, from that prison camp.

Did they look happy?

No. You mean about happy about getting out? It couldn't be reflected on their face. When they spoke, they spoke, you know, happy, glad you're here. But you could see where it was pretty hard for them to really smile. No laughing or anything like that.

I guess there were some smiles in the bunch. But they had a real solemn look. You could see that they were glad to be away. But they were not in a position to just be smiling like they had won a football game or anything like that.

Tell me-- you told Diana you were at a DP camp later. Tell me about that.

Well, about a year after the war was over, I was stationed in Auerbach, Germany, which was not too far from Nuremberg, between Nuremberg and what it's called? Grafenwohr. And I was commandant of a Polish displaced persons camp. It was run by UNRRA. UNRRA, they were civilians. They did the administration.

And I was there with one sergeant. We had about 15 German police. And then there were about 1,500 Polish displaced persons in the camp. They had their own, I guess, commanders and whatnot within the camp.

My responsibility was more or less to see that they were fed and that the camp was kept up clean. They had to make almost daily inspections. And went through, just make sure everything was all right. And to keep down a lot of complaints.

Because at that particular time, the people in the city were complaining about some of the displaced persons coming into town and doing things. Of course, naturally, they denied it, and they'd come back. And to keep peace between the German guards, who had the responsibility.

These weren't all German soldiers. But I don't know if they were civilians that were acting as guards for the camp. I might say, these were families, too. Now, that was family situation. And they were all-- where they were stationed were all German army barracks. And you had more or less like husband, wife, and children, all together.

We're just running out. I think we have enough. But let me ask you. Did you ever actually-- we're going quiet for 30 seconds and record room tone.