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Joe Kahoe interview 2/9/95
snap

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: sight..It was eh late April early May we weren't so sure exact dates, but I know it was after the 28th of April and about the first of May. And this was after after we had left _____Germany and eh probably around _____Austria in that particular area is where we first saw where I first saw uh members coming out of the prison camps, concentration camps.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: Yes. Where I was with we were the 761st Tank Battalion eh was the sign at that time the 71st Division. Eh, my particular assignment at the time was eh Liaison Officer between my company and Reg 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 be used as back in those days called a Liaison Officer is a well a high paid messenger. In those days take messages back from the front line back to the regiment and from the regiment back to the front line, tell them what was going on. So that was my assignment at that particular time.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: All right. We eh we had been alerted at that time that the front line troops had gone trough some prison camps and that that there were a lot a lot of prisoners eh

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who had been released and we warned, particularly about feeding them. To be careful when they come on out. So as we proceed down the road and this happened and this happened for days and days eh we would see them coming with those stripped uniform. They were all eh real skinny, emaciated, and the fact they were starving, so we were they were warned not give them anything to eat, because all we had were those K rations. They were highly concentrated and if they ate those things they it it might kill them. And all they'd comm'n they were just dragg'n, com'n in the way that they could und they were housed either in

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_____or comrades, something like that.
And as they approached us and we would more or less wave at
um and that make sure they'd get out, wouldn't run over um
and told them you know keep on moving to the rear because
they were coming from the front and were trying to move them
to the rear area.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: From the camps that were off the main road.
They we were told that there were a lot eh smaller camps
that in Austrian or right at the Austrian-German border
around that particular area. But you could see um coming
from from the camp trying to I guess get back to the rear
area, or wherever they could get because the eh Germans who
had eh been chased out of the camps and left more or less
left them on their own and soon they were they were
liberated they they started hit'n for the road and trying to
go home which ever that was. They wanted to get away from
the fighting at least.

SWB:

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JOE KAHOE: Yeah, they were walking like the walking around
like zombies. What not, 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 they didn't were
I guess they had no idea of what ah city they may have been
near or whatever. All they knew they were getting away and
they were free, free area.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: No, ah, I guess they we didn't at that time, we
had we had no training in German or any other language. My
little experience at that time had been strictly in the
combat zone so we had no language training. And I like I
say all they could say was American or Comrade, and you just
wave at them and you know that's about all you could do to
give um a smile and just wave, and that all that's the
extent of our conversation. Because when I saw them we
wanted to move. There was no stopping to talk. We were
just going mov'n on ahead.

SWB:

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JOE KAHOE: Oh, they were all just skin and bones and beards because you know that _____ and extremely weak. Many of them you know they just couldn't run or anything like that, they were just you could see that they could just bar barely walk. They were just in bad bad shape.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: Well, we, in my position, we we were really more

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more concerned of making sure that these GI's wouldn't feed um. Because they had been warned and knowing other American's solders were, it it's pretty hard with all the stuff we had not to give them something. And some of them, some of them did feed um, but that was in my position our hardest thing and we talked about how how bad they looked. We talked about that and wondered. We had, we didn't know too much about the all the camps that had been liberated or really at that time all the atrocities that had gone in the camp. Uh in fact there the only men, basically all we saw were were men in this camp. I I can't recall seeing any any children or women. That's all I saw was were men.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: No No. No....

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: We We knew that they were pris eh we thought that they were just regular Polish or German or Jewish or Polish or Jewish prisoners and we we knew who what they were. But see by being on the move there was no stand'n around. We were concerned about not hurting any of um. Or let them have hurt themselves because in many cases, you know, they came so close to the vehicles uh it wouldn't have take too much for some of them to fall and get run over and what not. I imagine people gave them cigarettes if if they asked for any. But I don't think, it didn't look to me that they were in ah ah begging type mood. I think the main thing were answered in their freedom and and getting on in some shelter or away at least from that prison camp.

SWB:

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JOE KAHOE: No . No. You mean about being happy about getting out. I you it couldn't be reflected on their face when they spoke they spoke you know happy, you know glad you're hear. But I could see 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 you could see that they were 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.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: Well, af, eh, probably a year after the war was over, I was stationed in _____Germany which was not too far from Nuremberg, between Nuremberg and _____. And I was Commandant of Polish Displaced Person's Camp. Inhale....it was run by _____. _____eh was all civilians, they did all the administration and eh I was there with one one sergeant. We had eh about fifteen German-Police and then there were about 1500 Polish displaced persons in the camp. They had their own eh I guess commanders and what not within the camp. Eh, my responsibilities was more or less to see that they were fed and that the camp was kept up clean. Make almost daily inspections and went to make sure that everything was alright. And to _____a lot of complaints because at that particular time that eh the people in the city were complaining about some of the eh displaced persons coming into the camp, eh into town and doing things. I suppose naturally at night and they'd come back and to keep peace between the German guards who who had the responsibility.

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These weren't oh German solders, but I thought they were civilians that acted as guards for the camp.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: I might say these were families too. Now, that was family situation and there were all where they were stationed were old German Army barracks. And you had more or like husband, wife, and and children altogether.

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SWB: CUT

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