

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Cardinale, Anthony

Date of interview: 7/30/1993

Summary: (Liberator)

Anthony Cardinale was born in Pittsburg, California, May 29, 1920. He was one of 10 children, 4 brothers and 5 sisters. He was brought up in a good family with a Catholic background. There was no segregation during his childhood. The community he was brought up in was accepting of every religion and race. "Love thy neighbor" was a value taught by his parents that is something he greatly believed in, especially throughout the war.

Before being drafted in the war, he only had slight knowledge of what was going on in the concentration camps. When Franklin D. Roosevelt drafted him in 1942, he was rejected because he was six pounds too light. After six months of preparing to make weight, he finally enlisted into the army. The war was important to him because "he felt that he needed a change of life. A young man's dream was to be in the army." During this time, he gained more knowledge of the concentration camps from the local paper in the service, *The Stars and The Stripes*. The paper talked about the progress in different sectors of the war and various concentration camps. This information opened his eyes to what was really going on in Germany.

In Camp Roberts, in San Luis Obispo, he endured physical training, as well as, learning how to shoot guns and throw grenades. From there, he was assigned to a regiment in Fort Louis, Washington, 115th Mechanized Cavalry where he was taught how to use the radio. Because his hobby was music, the army believed that musicians "had natural rhythms to operate Morris Code on telegraph keys."

In Germany, he entered one concentration camp, Dachau. In the distance you could see the tops of watchtowers of fenced in compounds. Before they even got close to the camps Anthony said that the smell was "annoying." Outside of the camps there were box cars that were full of dead bodies. The smell of the dead bodies and prisoners that hadn't taken showers in years could be smelled miles away outside of the camp. As the US army arrived outside of the camp surrounded by an electric barbed wire fence, they could hear the prisoners chanting "Americano." Cardinale was assigned to the radio in the jeep but this one time he was ordered to go into the camp and help out his fellow soldiers escorting the SS elite out of the camp. Marching the troops to the front gate, Anthony said that the elite SS German soldiers were very arrogant. Their physical appearance was tall and buff and their attitudes were like "here I am." Because the Germans showed little emotion to what was going on and what they were doing, Anthony felt pure hatred towards them. He disliked that the Germans said that they did not know what was going on in their towns. They knew but were just afraid to say anything because they would be thrown in the same camps.

Saving the prisoners was necessary for someone. Anthony was glad to be there to stop the slaughter of human life. After leaving he was glad about going to

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Germany during the war it gave him a better understanding of why they were there. He did have an emotional breakdown for six months and a loathing feeling toward the Nazis. But after these six months he opened up very slowly to his family about what went on during his time in the war. Even though he wasn't on the front line, the things that he saw will never be forgotten and will stay with him for the rest of his life. The thing he enjoys most about this experience is getting together every year with his old soldier buddies and talk about the experience. What one forgets the other will remember, laughing and joking about the old times."