

## Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

**Name of interviewee:** Deam, Bruce R.

**Date of interview:** 11/13/1991

**Summary:** (Deceased 1992)

Bruce R. Deam was born in St. Louis, Missouri on 7/7/1914. He grew up there and had a handful of Jewish friends, as he got older. He attended a military academy in Northern Illinois that is now closed. In the early 1930's, Bruce's Jewish friends had relatives and friends who wrote letters to America, or made it to the United States with tales of what was happening in Europe. From this early communication, Bruce was able to learn a little about what was happening in Europe.

In February of 1944, Bruce volunteered for the Merchant Marines, but at the same time, the army drafted him. At this point in his life, he was 30, married and had a son. He was not released from the draft board to go to the merchant marines, and sent to Texas for training at Ft. Hood. He was trained as a radio operator and rifleman before he was shipped out.

In Europe, his division had many battles as they made their way across the lands, many times not really knowing where they were. He fought in what he called the battle of the bulge on Dec. 16th, 1944. The US troops were outnumbered, and the Germans had better weapons and tanks. They eventually moved on to Balari, which was a town in Northern Czechoslovakia, near the German border. Here is when he experienced what he tells his stories about. His captain found out that within the last few days, 30-70 female prisoners of the Germans had been killed and buried only a few feet below in the ground in order to hide evidence. The captain made the local people in the town dig up the bodies and move them to the sides of a road. The soldiers were then supplied with small brooms used to wipe the dirt off the bodies of these dead women. After brushing hair, arranging dresses, body parts and such to be presentable, the captain made every person in the town walk down the road and look at the bodies of the women that they helped to kill. They were then placed in caskets and given proper burials.

From there, Bruce and his men moved to Gangkofen, Germany. They occupied this town and set up a guard around the perimeter. Here they stayed and did calisthenics, training, rifle practice and relaxed until they were allowed to come home. Once back in the US, Bruce was trained to go to Japan and fight, but then the war ended and he was released.

He then worked as a reporter and writer for the newspapers. Later on, he worked as a public affairs officer for NASA. Now he is retired and writes stories about his experiences.