

RE: ROBERT PERELMAN
INTERVIEWER: (From Chicago via Grossman, Judaica Museum)
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A My address is 11646 Wood St., Omaha, Nebraska. I was born September 15, 1921.
At the time of liberation I was approximately 25 years old. I had intended going into the Finance and stock brokerage business had the war not come along. And at present I am in the stock-broker business. I was with the 232nd Rainbow Division, 232nd Battalion of the 42nd Infantry Division .

Q What rank?

A I was a P F C, and we were involved in the liberation of Dachau.

Q Okay, let's stop for a minute.

A Well.... I... the General of our Battalion was on the southern flank.

? --- feel this way ?

Q Because ...

Aanswer your questions and things... We were on the southern flank of the ...of the American front, really we came through Marseille and wended our way down towards Dachau, Nuremberg... and I really didn't even know... where Dachau was... we were kept in the dark pretty much. We were just told we were going forward or moved to the left or to our right, and how did I know from those little towns?

Q That was what year?

A This was in '45... yes, and I remember we crossed the _____ River or the main river four or five times, so we were going down what amounted to where the main river used to go in a snake-like fashion and we were going down the middle of it, and everytime we knew it, we were crossing it over again. I wonder how many times we did cross it. But finally, we came down towards N urenberg. I can't remember now whether it was Dachau or it was north or south of Nurember. I think it was north of Nuremberg, if I remember right, and we didn't even know where we were going, but to bring the story up to what counts, when we got as I remember the camp, it was kind of a ... kind of on the outskirts of the town, and we came through the town and I remember

A what it's like in Omaha, and what it's probably like in Chicago... you get the smell like a packing house... just a stench in the air, and I didn't know for sure what it was. We would stop and we'd... I remember asking some German people what that was, and we finally found out that the Dachau camp was up ahead of us, and they, of course, the German people all pretended that they didn't know, they didn't know what was going on. And My God, there was no way you could not know that something was wrong... it was just ~~horrifying~~ horrifying smells. The smells... I can still smell it. But, and we were moving our Company. I was in the 2nd Battalion, Headquarters Company, which was involved with...communications for the ...between the three Rifle companies, heavy weapons Companies. _____ carry messages back and forth. We were right along with them, but we were ~~separate~~ a separate unit that worked with all four of the companies, and uh, when I actually got to the camp, the shooting had mostly stopped, but it was still in turmoil, if you know what I mean. The day, the first troops that hit the camp... I wasn't one of them that broke through the doors or anything like that, but I was in their _____ shortly thereafter, because I really don't ~~know~~ remember who (it was too far back) which company or which one got in there first, or ~~if~~ if we were in conjunction in there....I was a P F C following orders. But when I got up to the camp, there was this big wall around the place and there was ~~an~~ an open train, which to me looked like it was endless, which the tracks ran right alongside the opposite of the wall, and this train was made up of open... what looked like cattle cars and _____ cars and just whatever. There were bodies laying alongside the train, alongside the tracks there, and in their prison garb, and inside the trains ... and I have pictures which someone in our company took and gave us copies, and the trains were just filled with the interior of the train and every car you looked in was the same, it was if they had taken bodies. And you couldn't tell them - the men from the women - they were so emaciated, and they were laying just as many as you could get in the car. They were just laying there, and it was cold, I can't remember what time of the year, but I do remember it was cold. And I could remember thinking, yah... just being out in the night air with just pajamas on - must have been a terrible... you couldn't tell whether they had frozen to death or starved to death or what had happened. It was an endless train.

A And during the week after.... _____

Q Was there a lot of commotion? When you came?

A Yeah, the prisoners had realized that they were free, and some of them had attacked the Polish (I guess it was Polish) guards there, and they had cornered themselves up into a little group... they were, I guess, part of the world they came from, like the Polish in one place and ~~XXXXX~~ Czechs in another place, and the French in one place, and I talked to some of them as best I could. I was not fluent in Yiddish, but I could make myself understood, and they told me that had we not arrived when ~~we~~ we did, they would have been dead the next day. There was some Jewish people, horribly dirty and emaciated.

Q But they were anxious to talk to you?

A They were willing to talk to us, and they were more or less almost having a celebration as I remember it in their each little sections, behind the compound. They were n't letting them out, they were still trying to de-louse them, and I don't know/they were ^{if} de-loused or ... they wouldn't let them go, because they were so dirty.

Q Did you have any physical ~~XXXXXXXX~~ ^{orders} concern treatment of the prisoners?

A No. We... I don't remember ever receiving any kind of orders , although I never... the treatment that I saw from the American standpoint looked very good. I mean there were.. you just couldn't help but be ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ horrified at what we were seeing, and we went in, I went into the crematorium where the ... whatdoyoucall it...? The ovens were still burning, they were either three or four. I can't recall ... I remember ... I think there were five ovens and there were bodies still being burned. And on each side _____ bags of _____ and it was _____ from the windows big as this _____

Q About 15, you would say that?

A At least that. And the bodies were stacked up, just like cordwood. Probably 2/3 or 3/4 the way up the wall. Just packed in there _____ and I guess they... you almost couldn't tell a man from a woman, they were so well, you could put your hand around both legs, they were so emaciated, ...

Q Did their condition make it difficult for you to see them as human beings?

Did you...

A You must remember that I had been in infantry company and had seen lots of death prior to this. So, that was not new to me, and I had such a ...being Jewish, naturally I had such a hated feeling for what I...maybe not, but I loved when I saw a dead German. I just ... I felt that way, I... just despised it.

Q You mean the fighting of war?

A Yes. Right. And, so it was nothing to me - as much as spit on them, I just ... you can't imagine how brutal you get in your thinking, and I had absolutely no feeling for their dead..

Q For the German dead?

A For the German dead, I used to even destroy food, I hated them all so, that if we were moving and we couldn't carry food, I would take my bayonet and dart it into the can ...meat for example so it would spoil, and that was just to show you how bitter you get. At least that was the way I felt. I don't apologize for it... I...I felt that way, and I hated them with a passion. So, the only redeeming factor, I suppose, ~~was~~ in the camp, was your dead _____ whether it was for Jewish or for somebody else. That made me feel, well, maybe they are not Jewish...maybe they were someone else. Not that made it any better, because it was horrible, just horrible. It is just beyond human comprehension, and of course the guards were still there. They had them all rounded up and in one place they were standing there and they look moronic... half of them.

Q How did you get _____?

A The base still had them... guards, we could tell...

Others ... we were told that these were the guards. These were some of the guards.

Q What did they do... the guards?

A Well, when we were there, they were not doing anything, because the prisoners had taken over in the camp pretty much too. They had turned on the guards and they had them... I don't know how the guards got isolated, but they were kind of in a protective custody as I recall it now. They were in one section there, you know I saw them, but I

A did not go up and talk to them..., because #1 I couldn't talk to them, and #2 I was a P F C, I wasn't a General that could do what I wanted to do.... in camp.

Q Did you have orders regarding the guards? ... or anything?

A No. No...

Q How was the treatment of those guards? While they were in security?

A They were in protective custody... they were not being abused at all. I was wishing that something could happen to them, but no, they were in protective custody.

Q What about your dealings about ... how you would respond to questions.. what kind of people could do this?

A Well, no, being Jewish, I knew that you know... I was aware/^{from}before I ever went into the Army what mentality we were dealing with, it just didn't surprise me at all. They may have recruited... it looked to me just from ~~the~~ the people they had recruited, you know, moronic individuals to control this ... this camp. The and the dogs and everything else that was there, that ...

Q Getting back to the prisoners, you said when you got there, they were sort of celebrating it...they were going to be de-loused. Besides the de-lousing, was there any processing of the prisoners, or were they immediately free?

A No, you see, first you remember that we were on the , we had to consolidate the camp and we moved on. We were the Infantry. It would be the people behind us who would really come in and carry.... . You see a cartoon - why didn't you send home some of these nice souvenirs? Well, we had barely.... what we could carry... We just had to move on again, we were there just long enough to consolidate the place and then they pulled us out. I can't remember whether we were there one day or two days. I really don't remember.

Q You can 't remember sleeping there?

A No, oh no. No way in hell would I sleep in that place. I'd have gone out in the woods someplace ~~and~~ rather than slept in that hell hole. But, I just remember it was a huge place, and . There was no way I wanted to stick around there, ...

Q with prisoners at all?

Q Yeah, they were being fed as I remember. They were given rations from ... but as I recall it too, they had to be careful because they had not eaten properly and they just didn't dare... it was like a thirsty man being given ...

Q People were well aware of that, because there are very famous stories of people being given chocolate etc and dying from that.

A I do know that there was a tendency to want to give them something, but the majority of them were kept behind the fence, away from the ... in other words, the soldiers were not allowed to just go mingling around with all the people. They were.... some of them that we got to talk to, that would come up to the fence - like, see that's where most people talked to them, but they were behind, still behind ... in the compound. They couldn't just leave, some of them had gone and they wanted them back, because they wanted to make sure they were not carrying disease or they weren't so ill - so ill with neglect that they would die after they left. As I remember that they were, they were kept in a compound behind a fence, and they had, as I said, sorted themselves out into little cliques or groups or whatever, and... but I went up to the fence and tried to talk to a couple. I remember one of them was a woman...I think there were two men that I talked to , they told me their names, but I can't remember.

Q Did they have any special requests?

A No, they really had nothing.... they were just like ... glad that it happened, that they didn't have any.... I can't recall their asking for anything. I can't even remember where they.... I am sure if I had had some food, I would have offered it to them. But, we didn't carry food around with us, either when we were on a mission or some... we got our rations , but other than that, they set up a kitchen (in a place like that) to feed us. We were living off rations and I didn't have anything extra with me...

Q As you can remember there was no special request from them in terms of communicating or what....

A It was too early yet in the process... because I am sure that all came later on. After we left, but at the time, it was just, I am sure, a shock to them. You know we finally arrived after all this hoping...

Q Were there a lot of soldiers around camp... lots of guards? Or, had most of them run away..?

A No, there were not too many left there. Evidently the ... most of them had taken off. There were still some there, but there were not that many. How many did I see...25 or 30, maybe 35.

Q Do you know how many prisoners you saw?

A Hundreds, I would say - thousands. It's just.... oh just masses of them. You know, you don't try to remember at the time you are a young man, just look and see and go.... Lord there were over a thousand of them that had come down the Rhine _____ and they said that some of them had fled, had gone. I suppose that had gone... I suppose those that were stronger...

Q If you had more, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ The Army had given you no indication of what you would see in the camp... is that correct?

A No, they had prepared us for it. I don't think they really knew themselves. At least I don't think our Lieutenants and Captains and that thing, they didn't know any more than we knew.

Q So, the mood going in was really more that you were on another mission? As opposed... ?

A It was just another place up ahead there, and we were going to go in there.

Q You don't feel that _____ you were going to be liberating a camp?

A I don't really think so, I think they knew there was a camp there, but I... those guys they were same kind of Joes we were. They were out doing their job, they were ordered from higher-on, and they had a map, they had a map that we didn't have , they knew probably what the mission was, but at this time, I can't even remember knowing that for sure where we were going into, what it was going to be.

Q You didn't know...

A Again, I am talking with 35

Q But, it wasn't as if they really gave you an idea that ...? _____

A oh that I know, no, that I know. and as I said, the gruesomeness of death at the camps was nothing ~~κ~~ to me, I could stand the bodies at that time I ~~κ~~ was hardened. But the just... the people themselves, the bodies , I had seen people who had been killed in war, I had seen disemboweled... with their brains laying out and everything

A else from war, but these were healthy people, please you used to see, and to see these kind of people... Good God, they had just taken them like animals and were barbaric to them to the nth degree, it was just it was beyond comprehension, I had just never I first thought it was because of my Jewish background, but ... well, it was shocking to say the least.

Q How did the other people who were with you ... find... other soldiers?

A The non-Jewish soldiers were very sympathetic to the whole thing. There was no ... well, they appreciated the horribleness of the situation, and I never heard any anti-comments at that time. Or anything in a certain light or anything like that. Baloney that you get before people see this stuff. No, they all were completely, at least the ones that I was around, completely taken aback by it all, the horribleness of the whole situation.

Q Did they...? Once _____ did the Army help you at all? In terms of _____ or coping ... _____ you just had to move right on?

A No, they had no feelings (laughter to myself). Like when my mother died and I asked for leave to come home, well, they saidwell, _____ ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ that was what I was told... you have no leave, we need you here. So, they certainly weren't too... Nah! In fact, _____

Q Did any one in the group have a particularly strong reaction, or asked to be relieved of their particular job?

A No, I don't recall. You must remember these people were ... had been trained to be hard. The shivering and fears I had ~~were~~ when I knew we were going into combat were completely gone by this time... you are tired...

Q How long had you been in the army?

A Oh, I was.. I had been in the Army for three years, but we didn't go into actual combat until I think it was November, 1944. This was in '45, late in '45, May of '45 or April. That's all. There were, in your Infantry outfits were.... and I think....

Q The fears that you had in combat were ...

A Oh yeah, before. I remember I first went into real battle in ... we were just outside Scotsberg (spelling?), which was on the border, and the first night they brought us out in jeeps and/came forward in jeeps, and we were ^{we} ~~leaving~~ **RELIEVING** another company, and they

A put us into a large room it was cold, it was winter then, it was in November I think. I remember I had my overcoat on, and we just... it was a big hall, and we just laid on floor in this big hall and I could hear the shelling. A fellow came in, they had brought him in and he had been in some ____ it was scary. I was scared to death, I was shivering. I laid there all night and I shivered, I was shivering. I don't think I was cold, but I think it was a fear . And then they said that ... one time, they said they thought ... at the time of the Battle of the Bulge ...and we were very thin down there, we had hardly any troops behind us, we were stretched out for for a... _____ we were probably _____ this fellow came and told us about this German jumping _____ and not having ever seen any of this ...

Q _____

A I wasn't raised that way. So, what I mean is - by that time, I would have vomited had I seen all this. But then as you go on, you get tired and you get dirty and your beard grows and you walk and you walk and you ride and you walk and you eat, nothing much except you have double rations, and so by the time that you came to this, my hate and my _____ and my bitterness had built up, and you build a protective shield around yourself. _____ will be terrible.

Q So, besides the fact that there was a hardening, do you think that ;.. just because of the war, do you think that there ~~was~~ was anything else in terms of how you ... uh viewed the prisoners in terms of inner strength or faith that.... ~~XXXXX~~ Was there a chaplain attached to your unit?

A Well, I don't recall ever seeing him...
 Now take the first glimpse of actual war....the dead and allthat, and some one of them were really the people who I ~~remember~~ remember one of them, I even remember his name, Irish it was ~~his~~, he was a staff sergeant by the name of Potery, a little Irishman, and he was a cocky guy in this camp, and I always thought he would be just a great guy to go to war with, you know. That he would be tough and hard and all that, but he broke out and they had to make... to put him back in the kitchens working, because he just went to pieces, he _____ he couldn't take it, yet it was the quiet ones, the ones that didn't do a lot of talking were the ones that you could count on. I blamed my... I

credit my father more than anything else with keeping me stable all the time, and then

A keeping me in condition, _____ because he was a strong man and I admired him and inherited his stability, that's the way I felt. Because I was ~~inspired~~ in spite of the fears which I know that everyone had, anybody who tells you they are not afraid - have no fears that is baloney - it is just a matter of you buckle up your belt and you go ahead. But, well, the fact that you know, I was never never real religious, we didn't belong to a synagogue all the time and we kept kosher up until my father like they were ripping him off with the prices and that he could be just as good a Jew... we never had pork and shrimp and that stuff, we still, - we didn't buy kosher meat - but we .. other than that, we were kosher. Everybody has their own degree of observance, but we were... I was raised in a non-Jewish neighborhood, because my father had a little grocery store out there. But, yes, it's k you know...Why is he what he is? Because of his religion. He was always proud of his ~~relig~~ Jewishness, and we knew were Jewish, and we knew we had to fight at the school, someone there made a remark and we did. So, I .. he always ~~ya~~ told me you take life as it comes, so ...

Q In terms of your ~~own~~ general experience during the war, you always felt more as an American fighting against the German... ~~w~~ or was being a Jew part in terms of the persecution ...?

A No, I was always very aware of my being Jewish. I was the only, I think ~~I~~ I was... there were two Jews... I only remember two of us being Jewish in the company, maybe the Battalion, probably were a few more that I wasn't aware of. But, we were far and few between, you know. There was just a handful of us. I remember a fellow named Shapiro, I think he was from New York. Nice - nice guy, he was a sergeant. And I was ... I felt both - in their way. I don't think one ~~was~~ more than the other, I was very American, but I was also aware, I had a greater hostility than anyone else in the organization against them. I hated them with a passion; as ~~x~~ I told the kids , one time - it was in Wurtzberg (spelling?), and we were, we had just come across the river there ... and Wurtzberg (spelling?) kind of straddles the river. They were on the other side and kept us from coming across, and we started rounding up prisoners, and I was told to take them back to the compound. There were just a couple of them. So, one fellow drove the jeep and I sat on the front of the jeep, and I put a bayonet on my rifle, and I had them

A put their hands ... you know there were 10 of them.... arrogant, belligerent types, they started in on that, maybe they were scared, but I had them like this, and it was wintertime and I don't know how far we had to go...

Q You had their hands on their head?

A Surrender style and all... and so I made them get in front of the jeep, and I told that guy to keep the jeep moving at a pace they would have to keep jogging. They had their coats on and everything, _____ and ~~everytk~~ every time they slowed, I just used my bayonet and I would ram it into their rectum. I made them go _____ they just hated me. I just despised them. So, that was the Jewishness in me, see? Well, I should have said it is the Jewishness in me, because the Jewish religion doesn't teach that.

Q It was the response as a Jew...knowing that other Jews had been persecuted...

A Exactly. And so at times as I felt as a Jew, and at times I felt as an American. I enjoyed the fact of being an American, we were powerful, and we had the ~~equipment~~ equipment and we had everything I knew what we had to do...

Q You said you didn't know you were at camp that day, but did you have other information or were there hints or rumors about was going on with the Jews at that point? You had been overseas for a long time, how much information did you really have?

A We never.. you see, in our company it seemed like we were always fighting in some small town, some place that God only knew where it was, and it was wintertime and it was cold, and we never hit that many good-sized towns. Wurtzberg (spelling?) was one of the first good-sized towns. Most of the time I didn't know where I was, it was ~~x~~ like taking you out in a place where there is no worlds (?) and putting you down ... I didn't know where we were. I didn't know where we were. ^{going} ~~wxxx~~ I just moved in a column until we got to where we were supposed to go, and you didn't know where you are. The fellows weren't concerned ... we didn't hear anything about Jews.

Q You did know that there was persecution going on...?

A Oh, I knew. I knew everything, you know what I mean. Look, I was raised in the 30s when everything that I read ... it was in synagoguge, and you heard about it, and all this. Yes, I knew ..

Q By the time you were overseas, what kind of information had been _____ to you in terms of ...?

A The Army never said anything .. if that's what you mean? Hell, we even heard the "dirty Jew" comments in the camps lots of times, and well, I remember being falling out for ~~phamx~~ roll call and some ... we had a Jewish corporal that was kind of .. . I can't think of it, but when I was in the Army, but he was a pain in the neck anyway.... the kind I always felt ashamed of,.... some, one of the fellows in our ranks said something about "no wonder Hitler wants to kill the Jews" ... you know that kind of stuff. This guy from Chicago.... I still remember that , because I called him down right then and there.

Q So you had a general idea that persecution but you didn't know about...

A Well, I didn't...

Q But you didn't know, for example, what happened to the Polish Jews, and you know in the years 1939 - 41...?

A I didn't know any more from being in ~~xxxxx~~ the Army. Let me say this: I probably knew more when I was ~~ixx~~ civilian back in life, reading and going to synagoguge than I did afterI got in the Army. In the Army, that all vanished, and as far as them educating you, or telling you what's going on, or what to expect, they certainly did not. But I haven 't had any nightmares ... I was raised in the 30s what we were hearing and reading and seeing ... after all I lived with my grandmother who was in the ~~an~~ house, and ~~qjwn~~ when she read the Jewish paper and you know - I did know what was going on, but/I w~~xxxxxxx~~ went in the /Army, I knew exactly what was going on, but I didn't talk about it much with the other people... they weren't interested.

Q After you liberated the camp, where did you go from there?

A Only thing I know is that we kept on moving.... we went on down until we got to - I am trying to think of ... we started at Strassburg (spelling?) and ... Strassburg is on the border... I am trying to think ...I am trying to think of the town that was on the Austrian border... _____ we went on down until we hit Austria, that's all.

Q Did you see a lot of Germans in _____?

A By this time I had talked with them, and we would go into..... when we were advancing we wouldtake over a house, and lots of times I would talk with them. Sometimes I

A would kick them out of the house..I M enjoyed doing it.

Q Do you feel _____? ... blaming the Jews?

How do you... do you think you had changed?

A No, I don't think so. My fears were realized when I saw the camps. And a pretty hard one too. You would be surprised. I don't live in a dream world, I live in a world of reality, and always have. I was pretty much expecting the worst, and and I found it probably even more so.

Q How much longer was it before you ... uh out of the military?

A Well, * I didn't.... we pulled like garrison and occupation duty ... I started to leave for home in November after the war ended.... it ended, I think it was November 1945 when I was able to pull out and start going home - and so the war ended in May and I remember _____, so I spent about six months pulling garrison duty there, guard duty, etc. After the war, I talked to a lot of them, they all acted innocent, they didn't know what was going ~~on~~ on and all that bull.

Q You felt they had responsibility?

A Oh, they knew, there were all those people around Dachau, they knew what was going on, they didn't... Maybe I shouldn't blame them, maybe they were completely dominated, period, they weren't Nazis, but no way they couldn't know what was going on. Me... no Nazi... Me no Nazi. That's all you heard. I believed them about as much as I could, but _____ in a second. They all acted innocent, as if it was all somebody else. I guess _____.

Q During that period, did you see any of the Jewish persons who were released?

A Occasionally. But I had communication problem though. Like I say, I... it wasn't easy to converse with them, because like I say, I had been raised in a neighborhood that was not Jewish ,you know, we lived way out on the outskirts, particularly Gentile neighborhoods, so I could make myself known, I could make, but I couldn't make out what they were saying to me... unfortunately . Otherwise it would have been maybe I could have been more helpful or something.

Q Were they trying to get across special questions... _____?

A Mostly they wanted simple things... can you tell me where to get to here, how to get to there...like going in to get some food or something like that. But I don't remember

A any elaborate requests.

Q Did you feel that the Americans were doing enough at that time...? Prisoners... information...?

A I really never saw what happened to the majority of them. Like I say most of them were kept in the camps until the war was out. What they did was after we moved on... I never did know. It was only after the war that occasionally would I run into them, and most of them _____ I didn't have the time to .. maybe I was on duty at someplace or pulling guard duty or something. I was only a Private First Class, and it wasn't until after the war when we started going home that they made me a Staff Sergeant, but my daughter told me don't become an officer, I want you to come home, just take care of yourself, and that's what I did. I just didn't try to become anything ... I knew where I was going, I knew in what role I was going to be. To get ahead was...

Q When you got home to... U S, did you share some of these experiences with some of these people here...? Did you feel you could, or did you want to... or did you want to forget it? Did you try to block it out?

A I don't remember too many people asking a lot of questions, and I don't remember forcing my story on anybody ... I felt there were lots of ellows home with stories, yet I was never one to have these theatrical nightmares or anything. There were a few times that ~~s~~ I...

Q But you _____ shared your _____ with someone? Questioned you?

A _____ of course that was... I was ... you weren't around at that time... No, mostly blended back into life ...

Q When the TV Holocaust show came on, and everybody was talking about it? Did that, or any other incidents begin to bring out this information that would make you want to respond - or what...? Any particular event... to tell you a story, to let people know that this is what really happened? Or didn't happen?

A Well, I had several occasions where .. during my life... where people would question what really happened and all, and I always carried pictures with me... these pictures ... my company took them, if you like, and he had a camera and then he made duplicates for us and we would have them.

Q Those are the pictures as you entered...?

A This was one looking down into one of those trains - on the outside that I was telling you about?

Q Those are of the cattle cars of... open...

A Yes, like I say, I can't remember whether they were all the same kind of open cars but you could get out and it seemed to me you could look down from the top, there were no tops on them like four walls, but no tops on them... and that's... Here's another, here's a different car...

Q And they are all wearing their prison...?

A They are all in their prison garb..

Q Very emaciated.

A Uh huh.... here's a third shot of ... there were just ...cars after cars like that. There were some, there was one fellow that tried cutting his leg off, I suppose he had gangrene or he had something, and he tried with a knife to do something .. here's one alongside the tracks , fellow had fallen out of the... couple of them had fallen out of the... see them? By the tracks.

Q You can see the body along the side here... the tracks?

A Yeah... _____ and this is the ... here is a picture of the ... this/looking ^{is} into one of the ovens probably the center one.

Q Again, as you recall, they were still burning?

A There were bodies burning... .now this picture, it is kind of an upshot... I don't know whether when he took this picture they were... what was going on at that time... But when I got there, these oven doors were open, and there were bodies in there, and it was just.... They were driving them from these rooms, and they had to dispose of them you know what I mean... there were just so many of them, but there were either five or three (I think there were five of them like this), ...

Q Who was hauling _____?

A Well, they were either prisoners, you know that were forced to do this, or maybe by time I looked at them, maybe even the American Army had gotten controll of the thing,

- A Somebody had gotten control of them, because I didn't get in here just right away. You know this was a big camp; when I get in there, ~~they~~ there were people who had come to camp, I don't know ~~what~~ whether they were prisoners who were being ... burying the bodies to dispose of them, because the disease thing, the fear of all the dead bodies, just laying around, and those were shots of those two rooms that I am telling you about.
- Q Actually it looks a lot larger than 15 x 15.
- A Well, I think it was, I don't know.
- Q Because _____ very large rooms, and these are naked bodies.
- A Those ... the majority of them are naked. And they are just so emaciated, and so ... I remember ... you look at a woman or man, you almost couldn't tell which was which, even naked, just so bad...
- Q And it looks like they were waiting to go into the crematorium...
- A These rooms were the storage rooms, alongside the ovens there, there was smoke coming out of the chimneys and so ... I had a picture taken ... one of the _____ in my wallet or the purse, now... _____ I guess not. Well, these were all pictures that were taken at the time.
- Q So it was just _____ from time to time that you did feel that you were responding to other people in terms of telling your own story...?
- A Well, I have had occasions in these pictures ... came in handy many times..
- Q You carry them with you all the time?
- A I did for a long time, I don't any more. The only reason... just an accident that I have them this time, because I quit carrying them . When I am home working, I just carry them a money clip and I leave this in the drawer, but because I am was ~~was~~ coming here and would be carrying more money and more things, I picked that up , and they happened to be in there. So..
- Q But you did do that...?
- A Oh for years, for years I carried them with me.
- Whenever i was in a crowd and I got one of these wise apples that was shooting his mouth off or

Q ... you can't know, you were trying to just get back to normal... it really was part of your life...

A Oh, you can 't erase that... you can't erase that no matter what. You know, I was an outsider, mine was nothing.. the people that were in there! My Lord! ... it's still mind-boggling to me, and I still... and I don't scare very easily, but I'll tell you that kind of... being in one of those camps just scares me... scares the living timers out of me. I.. uh...anyone that could be in any one of those places deserves anything that is good that they can get out of the rest of their lives.

Q Do you feel, in fact, that... in terms of its impact on your life, that your experiences, either as a soldier, or as a soldier who was involved in liberating a camp, made a difference in terms of your _____political careers?

A No, not at all. I don't think so. I am a pretty hard-nose firm believer. I know what I am, and I know where I belong and what I... where I go. I have never backed up much to anyone, so.. No, I was just as Jewish before I went away as when I came back. And we have raised a very nice Jewish family, they know they are Jews and they know where they stand, and everything like that. We don't go overboard. I never did, anyway.

Q Did your own experiences as a soldier make you feel that you didn't want other people to be in wars? And di you, politically.... _____other wars?

A No. I ... I used to hear, in fact, the thing that used to... how shall I say this? I would talk to Jewish people... the older generation... when I came back, and they would say to me: ... we don't want a war, and we don't.... war is terrible and all that. I can't reconcile that. Where is terror" I know. But I can't still reconcile that as a Jew. If there hand't been a war, somebody hand't gone to war, we would have been exterminated. Now, it's a choice matter. I used to sit back and say.. hey, I don't want war.. I don't want war either, but ... I love apple piel, mothers and the flag, no war, but I am also realistic enough..... when I see the Nazis ~~on~~ on the marchin Skok~~ie~~ or the Ku Klux Klan

A would like to throw me in a burning pit if they could, then there is no kidding about it. You can close your eyes and say it isn't so, but they would like to exterminate you. Well, I am against war and I am against fighting and I am against ...standing up for myself. You gotta be prepared and someday there is going to be another war, and you can bet on it, unless it is just these people are meaner today than they were then. The only thing is they just haven't faced up to the reality. Because I wish there would not be a war. I wish I would never have to know any of my descendents are going to go to a war, but I am strong believer, that you had better be ready Israel doesn't want war, but Israel has had war, so you are not going to have war? What good does it do to say you are not going to have a war? And go on preaching against war? I don't know if I am coming across with the point I am trying to make... or not, but you got to be ready. But I hate war, I hate it with a passion. I hate the Army, it's degrading, by but/God as long as the world is made up the way it is, there is nothing.... You may share We are sitting here, we talk peace. We are well-fed, we are fat. We are living off the fat of the land here, we got clothes, we got homes, it is easy to be gracious and to be giving and all when you've got plenty. Who's starving? I used to see the people in France digging food out of the garbage cans...to eat, waiting for us to throw stuff out of our pans so that they could eat it. Or waiting for us to give them the things we thought were CARE food. Or prostituting themselves for whatever necessary... the men the women in order to live, to survive. How are we...go live that kind of a life, then you can judge what you will do and you won't do. those people don't think the war is bad, I'll guarantee you, they wanted to see a war. They wanted to see the U S come in. And I'd be the same way. I'd do anything I had to survive. I'll tell you something, when people say - I wouldn't do this and I wouldn't do that - but God Bless you, you are sure lucky that you have a choice that you don't have to do that. I saw people do things t they didn't want to do, but they did it, do things they hated.

Q When people say... how do you respond to people saying ... that the Jew didn't do enough or that they didn't attempt to survive? Based on your own ...?

A Didn't do enough! Do enough with what? They didn't have anything. The same people, go put them in a middle of a hundred people....let that same person tell you that. Go

A get surrounded by a hundred people, or a thousand people, all clamoring against him, and then start fighting his way out of there.... tell me then, that the Jew did not do enough. What were the Jews supposed to do? He had no army, no training, he had no anything. And he had the world hating him and not giving a damn whether he lived or survived. It's great to stand back and tell them the next guy that you didn't do enough. Are we doing enough today? I don't know. What's enough? How do you know how much you have to do? How did those old Jews, babas and grandmas and Zaydas? over there... What were they supposed to do? You had a few people making a living, they could flee Germany, they took everything away from them... everybody was against them. I think that the people who are saying that should get themselves, surround themselves like I say, with a thousand people clamoring for their hide ~~and~~ and then let's see how brave they are and how much they do.

Q Is there anything that we haven't talked about...that you would like to talk about?

A Once you told me that you wanted me to come down, I really don't know anything... I still feel that way, it's ...

Q Ah, but it is important....for historical date... this is a very personal viewpoint and experience...it is very crucial times. I do thank you, and we all thank you very much. Again, in _____winding up.

A You can see death and it doesn't bother you; the smell of death, the stink, the stench it stays with you all your life, you can't forget it. Like I say, I still don't have... I don't have any nightmares anymore, but/I do once in awhile....then my wife pokes me, but mostly... it is not like I used to have them, but the smell, the smell of that camp, and I guess it was at least a mile or a half mile away when I started smelling that camp, and you almost needed a gas mask in that place... it smelled so bad, and it was just dead bodies, and there is nothing worse than the stink of a dead body. That will never leave me. I am sorry to say it, but I wish everyone from them the loudest of people, I wish everyone could have had a chance to see that once. I think it would change a lot of their actions later in life. But, if it did anything for me, it probably just made me stronger, because I found I could cope and come back to a normal life and take it, but I feel so - so so small compared to the people that were in there.

A and had to live this life And be there... I feel like I WAS MOST _ THE MOST FORTUNATE of people to be on the outside, coming in... instead of being in there and having to be liberated. That is the horror story that I don't know how people can ~~xxxx~~ treat other human beings that way. And I just don't know. _____

Q Okay...

Transcribed
R. Scheinberg
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