

transcription of tape of thomas j. spruill

Interviewer: Lorrie Mell

Date: December 17, 1978

Camp: Dachau

LM: Okay

A: Well, my ~~name~~ name is Thomas J. Spruill

LM: I have a number of questions about that--we want on Thomas J. Spruill, and your address?

A: 1888 Foxglove Ct.

LM: And your date of birth?

A: My date of birth is Oct. 12, 1917.

LM: How old were you at the time that you were at Dachau?

A: 26 or 27, it was in 1945, and I was born in 1917.

LM: What were you planning on doing with your life at that point ⁱⁿ and time? What was your career goals at that point and time: What was your career then?

A: Well---actually I had been in the fighting since the invasion in Africa, and it had been such a ~~turn~~ turmoil until that particular time, I was more interested in trying to get the war over than anything else and getting back home. When I left to go over there, and I had all intentions in coming ~~back~~ back, I had planned to come back to the states and go into the dairy science---milk business.

LM: Okay===and what did you do when you came back? What is your present occupation?

A: My present occupation is with a loan company, I'm ^acollecting manager for a company here, a local company Blazen? financing services, and I have been with them since 1966.

LM: Did the war have any--make any difference in your change of occupation?

A: Completely---turn^d everything around. (laughs)

LM: Would ~~it~~ you like to tell me something about that?

A: Well I ^{had} studied in college the dairy science, my goal was to study in ~~the~~ milk products--It was very interesting to me because when I came back, things ~~were~~ ^{was} in such a turmoil, for it was in the late fall of 1945. I took General Patton's advice, he was the man that commissioned ^{me} over there, and stayed in because I didn't feel that we had this thing completely settled. I felt a lot like Patton felt-- he talked to us. We hadn't conquered our real enemy---I didn't trust the Russians, and I stayed in and came a company commander to a transportation company---and ^{then} a company commander in a military government company, and when I retired in '65, I was a commanding ~~officer~~ officer of an engineer company, and when I got out, I tried the insurance field for ~~xx~~ awhile. I wasn't satisfied with that, ^{it} it was kind of hard to get adjusted back, and I found this position with the finance company, and I liked it very much, plan to stay with them ~~till~~ till I retire again.

LM: What was your military unit?

A: Military units?

LM: Yes, what was the unit when you went into Dachau?

A: I was with the 191st tank battalion which was a supporting unit of the 45 Inf. division, and in World War II, they used tank units to support infantry groups. It wasn't like a huge armor division like they had in the infantry division. At that particular time when we reached Dachau, my company was in support of the 179 Infantry which was part of the 45 Inf. division.

LM: And what was your rank at that time?

A: I was a first lieutenant

LM: And you---was this Dachau the ~~only~~ only camp that you went into?

A: That was the only camp that I went into where we saw the actual---where they had actually burned, you know the bodies.

LM: What date was that when you went into Dachau? ^{Do} you remember?

A: It was the end of April. I think about the 28th or 29th, as well as I remember because ^{was} just before the war ended. It was a couple of days before we liberated Munich, we ~~were~~ ^{was} on our way to Munich then.

LM: Can you tell me something about what you saw when you went into Dachau?

A: Yes, ^(clears throat) actually it was ^a kind of a surprise.

LM: Surprise?

LM:A ^{Yes} We had heard rumors of places like Dachau, but me personally, I didn't think it could be possible, but, uh...

LM: What kind of things had you heard?

A: I heard that there had been mass killings, extermination, burning of bodies, you can't believe that ~~is~~ till you see it, and actually my group was going a mile or so to the left of the encampment really. Our objective was Munich, and we had two way communication radio, and someone on the ground forces had told me that we ~~were~~ ^{was} approaching one of their camps, and there were several hundred people, ~~is~~ ^{like} dead people. There actually weren't any fighting to speak of because it seem ~~like~~ ^{like} the people who were running the camp really had taken off. We kind of turn ^{ed} to the right and swung off in there, and there were some more American troops that had just gotten ~~there~~ there. Ground troops, some medical people that was trying to give aid to those people that were still alive, and I was so flabbergasted ^{at} what I saw, I noticed a huge pile of what looked like dead people, and when the tank stopped, I jumped out of the tank and ran up towards ^{where} this pile of dead people was, and when I realized what I was seeing, I just got deathly sick. Really wanted to throw up, but in a few minutes, I ran back to my tank and ~~got~~ ^{got} my gas mask, and got ~~my camera~~ a camera that I had in there and I went up and took some pictures of it.

LM: ~~Got your gas mask?~~ Got your gas mask? 'cause the odor was so bad?

A: Yes, it was terrible, I don't know how long the people had been dead, but a few days anyway. I took a few pictures of it, and went on around of the other side of the building, it looked like a bunch of bags, several buildings, there were a fence there, people were begging for help and.

LM: Was this the people that had been living in the camp?

A: Yes, well, yes, the people that ~~were~~ ^{were} in the camps. They were just starved to death. You ~~could~~ could see their ribs sticking out. No clothes on them hardly. Then, someone told me to come and look at the furnaces there where they had been burning. I went in there and I saw some of those big widebelts that, there wasn't anything in operation ~~there~~ ^{when we were there.} I think the people that operated them was gone. ^(clears throat) There was several long buildings ~~there~~ and each of one them had a furnace in there and the belts where they put these people on them. I went in and I saw big piles of clothing that they had taken off of them, glasses, dental stuff, and ~~saw~~ saw those belts. Came out and looked into the fence, ^{dead,} and there were some people laying out there, and there was a huge ditch along the one area that I was at, and it had a lot of blood in it. It was horrible. A big wall where, person told me they'd ~~would bring~~ ^{would bring} people out there everyday and line them up and shoot them.

LM: Who told you this?

A: One of the people that worked there. It was a civilian, they were very eager to surrender, and the ones who were there. They were begging us to take them.

LM: They were German civilians, or were they military----

A: ~~Yeah~~ Yeah, I-----

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LM: To your knowledge?

A: To my knowledge, they were military units, but they had on kind of a odd looking clothing. They had seemed---

LM: What do you mean odd looking clothing?

A: Uh, it wasn't ~~is~~ like the fancy German SS or the German uniform. I assumed they were, the ones that ran the machines or just----- ^{clothes} closed them or something.

LM: There were several houses there where people ~~lived~~ that lived near by that worked at the camp from which you---- you understood....

A: Yeah, there were several houses, there were people lived, and the American medical team just came right in and took over. I saw some of your pictures the other night and recognized very much. ^{it} ~~what~~ was in the paper. Now my group only stayed there, I don't think more than 40 minutes. We assembled and took off and headed for Munich, and after the War, and after they declared the war was over with, I was stationed in Munich quite some time, and I went back out there on two different occasions.

LM: Why did you go back out?

A: I couldn't believe what I had seen, ^{But} they had pretty well clean it up, and we couldn't go in, they had it pretty well barred ^{off} off ~~there~~ there then. From there on in

LM: You say they? The American Army?

A: Yeah, the American had sealed it off, uh, ..

LM: You say you couldn't, you went back several times, but you couldn't ~~believe~~ have believed what what you had seen? What, do you remember some of your feelings and thoughts about this?

- A: The thing that ^{hurt me the} most was the children that I saw. I think the women that starved, no clothes on, actually burning them. There was no question about it, the smell was something that I had never experienced anywhere, and I understand ~~it~~ that was one of the smaller camps. Of course, I didn't go to any of the others, as I say, I just happened on to Dachau, uh, because it was part of the war, and I just happened to be in that sector.
- LM: You say that you had heard about the death camps before, you didn't ~~XXXXXX~~ believe it and when you saw it, when you saw it just couldn't believe it.
- A: That's right, it was, I thought I had saw something bad in Africa in those camps there, but the sick people and so on, but this was just deliberate, I mean there was no cause for it, and then there were four train carloads of human beings that ~~were~~ ^{were} dead that we ~~XXXXXX~~ went by, stopped and looked in, uh, there ~~were~~ ^{were} an American ~~soldier~~ ^{as the ground} soldier, ^{he} told me that they were most Americans that had been brought there to be done away with and ~~left~~ ^{they had just been} left in the car and starved.
- LM: American prisoners of war?
- A: No, they ~~were~~ ^{were} American troops, the ground troops, see I was ^a tank, we were mechanize, we moved pretty fast unless we got stopped, but it was a mess, a confused mess, nobody was believing what they were seeing, you could just see the look on everybody's faces there, the ones who could stand it without a gasmask. I had mine on most of the time.
- LM: What did some of the men in your unit have to say about this?
- A: Some of them got so sick ~~that~~ ^{until} it ~~took~~ it ~~took~~ quite a while to ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ get them straighten out again.
- LM: Sick to their stomachs?

A: Some of them, there was a lot of crying ~~XXXXXX~~ going on. Most of us were young men in our midtwenties, and we had seen our friends killed along beside us, and all like that, but , we thought that was about all we could stand, but to see such a huge mass group ~~XXXX~~ like that , it, well all I can say -- it is the truth---I saw it.

LM: It happened?

A: ~~Yes~~, it happened.

LM: How ~~doXXXX~~ did--after you left the camp---~~what~~^{how} did some of the men in your unit seem to cope with their experiences?

A: Most of them ~~were~~^{was} pretty hardcore veterans by then anyway, most all of them. Just wasn't much talking about it.

LM: Did you talk about it?

A: No ~~xxx~~ ma'am, I didn't even write home about it, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ never even talk much about it when I got back here.

LM: Why did you agree to talk about it now?

A: Well I have been reading your articles in the paper----- and then I follow it pretty close just to see the how other people saw it the way I did, if I was just seeing ~~XXXXXX~~ things, imagining ^(clears throat) but ^{from} what I ~~X~~ read, it's true, it is true.

LM: Are you saying that you're still not believing what you saw?

A: Well,

LM Still finding it difficult?

A: I'm finding it difficult to believe it, but it actually happened because when you stand within 20 feet of about ---say 500 or more some people say there were several thousand, but I would say there were between 500 and 1,000 dead people, ^{that} ~~it~~ was there for one purpose and that was to be burned. Somebody murdered those people. I ~~XX~~ didn't see them murdered, and I didn't see them burned, I saw, I actually saw the belts, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ and I saw the furnaces that ^{the people, burned in}

and nobody can denied^y that who saw it.

LM: You said you hadn't talked about it very much, did you talk about it to anyone thru these ~~con~~^{inter}vening years?

A: Not in detail really like I talk about it^{here}. My son who is right over there now is 27 years of old, and he ~~hasn't~~^{never} heard me talk about it much. They saw the pictures that I took there. As I said, our son who is in^{the} service now---before he was home in Sept., he took some pictures that I had and put them in the album--I had no in-
~~XXXXXX~~tenion of --or-even talking to anyone about it---if I had the pictures, you would be welcome to take them, but all I have is the map showing that we were^{NT} right thru there.

LM: When you showed them the pictures, your children the pictures, or when they saw the pictures, did they qeestions about them? Where you able to answer their questions?

A: Pretty much the same as /answer to you, it was a surprise, I couldn't believe it, I saw it,. I got away from there as soon as I could. I didn't linger there too long, ~~after while~~ because it wasn't nothing to stand
anXX and look at.

LM: And yet you went back?

A: I went back after the war was over, a few weeks later to see if actually the stuff had been cleaned up, which it had from what we could see, but as far as getting in to the inside and going thru and taking a tour, there was any such thing as that at the time I went over there, it was pretty well sealed up and kind of a hush hush. My wife made a tour over there in, and she wanted to go see it in 1960. She wasn't able to get up there. The Germans would rather forget about it.

LM: Who sealed the camp at that time?

A: Uh, the American troops, forces went thru ~~there~~ there because

...they, at that particular time, uh, were, uh, interested in finding the key people who operated it. And there might be something there for evidence that they would need later. In fact, after the War ended, I was on a team lookin' for some of these people that we had got word that actually ran the camp or gave their orders.

Q: Did you find some of them?

A: Yess, ma'am. I don't recall their names, but they were brought back to Munich and, uh, tried and would up at, in the Nuremberg Trial, some of 'em.

Q: And you were out there trying to find some of these people?

A: We found--I was on a team that found two of 'em in Prague, Czechoslovakia. And incidentally, uh, two months after the War ended, uh, several hundred of the people that was in the camp at Dachau had been brought ~~into~~ into Munich and, uh, interrogated and separated like the Czechoslovakians and the Polish and the French and different nationalities, and were clothed by the Americans, ~~and~~ I was in command of a group of, uh, four truck loads of Czechoslovakians. It took 'em back to Prague to try to take 'em to their country, and when we ~~got~~ got into Prague, their, their own people threw ~~off~~ rocks and everything else at us. They didn't want us to...

Q: (picks up his sentence)...their own people...

A: (continues)...their own people didn't want us to leave 'em there. This is a messed up

Q: (interrupts) What was that about? Do you know?

A: They didn't want to take care of 'em, I don't think, the responsibility for takin' care of 'em. And Czechoslovakia was more or less, uh, tried to pretend to be a neutral, I think, country, ~~or something~~ or something, even though the ~~country~~ ^{country} was ~~known~~ as a Communist country. They, they just didn't wanna have anything to do with it. They thought that the Americans, I guess, should have to take care of 'em. I stayed in Munich several months after the War ended, and, uh, was in on the teams of, trying to get the people

back to their home countries and home towns. It, it, it, it was confusing and a mess.

Q: When--what ~~were~~ ^{were} some of the things that the prisoners ~~and~~ said to you, or the survivors said to you, during that time?

A: (exhales) Well, uh, I personally didn't, uh, have, didn't spend much time with any of the, the people that was being liberated because, as I said, it was a, it was massive confusion, and I was shocked and actually went by there out of curiosity. I, I was a combat troop, and ~~if~~ my objective was Munich, not Dachau. Dachau hadn't been mentioned, but we just happened, that was in our path, ~~and~~ there were other ~~troops~~ ^{troops} and officers and men who seemed to have ~~things~~ ^{things} pretty well in hand. ~~I~~ ^{that} was questioning people and makin' notes, ~~and~~ tryin' to help the ones that was beggin' for help and, uh, I took a few pictures and saw what I ~~was~~ saw and tried to keep my men, since I was the commander of the group, together and got 'em goin' as soon as I could. I, I, I really didn't ~~have~~ ^{have} any desire to stay ground. There wasn't any fightin' or anything like that at that particular time.

Q: What were you feeling about these people?

A: Well, I tell ya, my feelings about 'em. I, I was--I felt sorrow, very much sadness. And I, I was known as a pretty, pretty hardcore soldier at that time. I, I tell ya...and--but I broke down and cried. It was rough.

Q: You said when you came into the camp that the, by and large, the Germans were gone, the guards were gone, There were some people there...

A: (interrupts) There was really no resistance when I came in there.

Q: Want to try and get a picture ~~of~~ about who was there besides the prisoners and what their role was.

A: Uh...

Q: You told me at one point you felt some of the people worked there, that they were civilians, they ~~seemed~~ seemed to be civilians that worked there.

A: They...they...they, uh--I didn't actually see any, uh, uh, German soldiers when I was there. Uh...there was a bunch of the, uh, ground forces, American forces had already gotten there when I got there, and, uh, my opinion was they had ~~x~~ things pretty well in hand, because it, they were very well organized and, of course, I, I saw people that wasn't able to get up and walk. That was, if you walked near 'em, they'd hold their ~~x~~ hands up, you know, and say something. You couldn't understand what they was sayin'. There ~~je~~ was some, uh, women, uh, nurses. (slurs) There was some of our medical ~~xxxxxxx~~ people was there givin' what help they could give 'em.

Q: Yeah, that was the prisoners. I was thinking about the German^s that were in the camp.

A: Oh..the G...the uh...

Q: (interjects) But you mentioned before that you didn't think they were military, at least they didn't look like they military.

A: Oh! Yeah, you ~~xxxx~~ mean the one that ran the place, the guards and so on.

Q: Yeah, uhm, hum, uhm, hum.

A: They weren't ~~gixxxx~~ givin' any resistance or anything like that, They, the, uh--when I said a little while ago they had on odd lookin' uniforms and things; they wan't dressed like a German soldier or somehthin' like that. They didn't, any of 'em, offer to resist any of us goin' there. It seemed like they was all eager to, to--that it was over with, and, and, that it was in the hands of somebody else, and they didn't have anything else to do with ~~X~~it. That was my personal ~~opixxx~~ opinion.

Q: What happened to these ~~xxxxx~~ people?

A: They took them into, uh, into Munich, and uh, they were interrogated and, uh, questioned and uh, uh, some of 'em ~~x~~ was locked up and some of 'em they let go. We fed them. They brought in truck ~~x~~ loads of food to feed them because they--actually, I ~~xxxx~~ didn't see any food there that they was feedin' all

these prisoners. They, they probably had it there somewhere, but, you know, without being there any longer than I was.

Q: Did ~~xxxx~~ you see any incidents between the survivors and some of the German guards or civilians that were there?

A: No, I didn't see any incidents, Ah, at all when I was there, uh...~~xxxxxx~~ as I've said before, it seemed like the ones that wasn't prisoners and all starved to death were ~~seemingly~~ very ~~xxxxxx~~ eager to have it over with. And, uh...to give up and, uh, I couldn't understand what they said, and I didn't see any of 'em that could speak English, and I only speak English (laughs).

Q: When you went back, ~~xxxx~~ were there any other people, Germans, that had, from outside the camp, come into see the camp, although ~~x~~ you said to me you really couldn't get back in afterward?

A: Just my chauver and my, ~~xxxxxxx~~ myself in a jeep--we went up there one day out of pure ~~curios~~ curiosity, myself, and we looked, and the buildings were still there. The fences were still there, and, uh, and it was very quiet and peaceful.

Q: Because of the language barrier, you have no way of giving any of your impressions about the general German civilians ~~xxxx~~ ^{and} their reactions to this?

A: Well, I found that with those people ~~xxxx~~ pretty much the same as it was all over, ~~and~~ When we took a city, or went in, the German people, uh, as a whole, was more than hospitable to us, seemingly very nice and glad that it was over with. And it was just these old, hardcore, die hard, hard ~~xxxxxx~~ trained, uh, soldiers that ~~were~~ fought up to the last minute and then, when they throw their guns down, they were just as humble as the ~~civilians~~ ^{civilians} was. But, uh, in Dachau, I, I, I, I saw no resistance whatsoever from anyone as far as tryin' to keep us from doin' what we was doin', or the ones that was

in command doin' what

Q: (overlaps his sentence) Did they seem to have any feeling of responsibility for what happened at the camp?

A: No, no. Everyone that, uh, that I saw, uh, seemed to think that somebody else was, uh, told 'em to do it, ya know. In other words, they were innocent. As always, it is that way.

Q: What did you think?

A: I personally think that the ones that was, that was left behind there, uh, and that the Americans took, uh, were just, uh, more or less, hired killers by someone else, and either you'd do it, or we'll kill you, you see. Now, now that's my personal opinion, because there was, cases (stutters) cases where soldiers (stutters) ~~would~~ ^{would try} to surrender to us, and get almost to us, and they'd get shot by their own people from the windows to keep 'em from surrenderin' to us, but in this particular case at Dachau, I think that the, the key men, if there was any of 'em there, had gone before the American troops got there because we were drivin' fast, and the Germans' power, especially back, was already ~~xxxxx~~ broken. They had no resistance, a just little pockets. There was no big stand. There was no way in the world that they could stop us, because we was there.

Q: So the powers that be had already moved on.

A: That's right.

Q: A little while ago you were telling me that you didn't really talk about this for a long time, uh, very much. Did you ever have any difficulty with nightmares, either then or in more recent...?

Q: I did, uh, at some time afterwards there, but, uh, I haven't, uh--you know if you don't talk about these things, uh, you don't forget about 'em, but it don't come up so often, if you don't talk about it.

Q: So you're saying you did, at that point in time, have nightmares.

A: At that point, yeah, I did.

Q: While you still in service?

A: Oh yes, while I was there in Munich.

Q: And you didn't, did you never talk to a counselor, a doctor, about it?

A: No....I, uh,--it wasn't that bad, I didn't figure. Uh, I ^{had} prided myself as havin' pretty good nerves because of the experience that I'd gone through, Some of my own men had told me I either didn't have any sense, or didn't have any nerves, but, I was ~~human~~ ^{human} just like anybody else, because when somebody breaks down and cries when they see somethin' like that, they're human. (nervious chuckle) That's the way I look at it.

Q: It's a human reaction. Nightmares, then, disappeared after a while?

A: Oh yeah, uh huh.

Q: On their own?

A: Uhm, hum. ~~xxxx~~ I'd had em from other cases other than that, too. The first person that I actually knew I killed, I was sorry that I did it, and, of course, that, I think I had nightmares from that, too.

Q: I can imagine you would have. I want to turn this tape so we don't lose any of this. (tape changes sides)

Q: (beginning of sentence is cut off)...thoughts that you considered ~~xxxx~~ irreligious while you were there?

A: (exhales) No, all I could think about was wonderin' really, ^{"Why?" Why did this have to} ~~xxxx~~, ^{happen?"} ~~this had to happen~~. The one consolation about the whole thing really was that...go through your mind and thinkin', "Well, it'll soon be over," because even ~~xx~~ as smaller, uh, part that I was playin' in it as just a ~~kak~~ tank commander, uh, I felt deeply that, that we had 'em whipped. That it would just be a matter of days that the war would be over at that time. That was the main drive at that time. Of course, this, this, this was a quick shokck. I ~~xxxxx~~ mean, it, it just happendd real quick, and I don't know

how, how anybody could describe really--you see something goin' down the road and you see somethin' real quick that you shock right then, and you think about it for a while, but then you ~~kw~~ kinda of forget about it, if it don't concern you too much.

Q: Okay...did you have any thoughts about--or did religion have anything to do with the way you might have viewed the prisoners, in anyway? Was there ~~see~~ any religious aspects connected with ^{that} process?

A: I always tried to, uh...tried to be understanding with even the hard core prisoners, along the line we got them. I never, I never mistreated any of 'em.

Q: I was talking about in, at the Dachau camp.

A: AT, at, at that camp there. Actually, I, I didn't have any, uh, any actual, first-hand encounter ~~kw~~ with ^a ~~kw~~, with a German soldier there myself. ~~kw~~ As I've said before, we just happened by ~~kw~~ there, and somebody else seemed to have it pretty well in hand, and ~~kw~~ I, I was just more or less an observer, really.

Q: What about later when you ~~kw~~ were ~~kw~~ helping find some of the people that had, some of the ~~kw~~ German's that had worked at the camp. Do you have ~~any~~ any feeling about that in relation to religion?

A: Yes, uh, I, I had a certain amount, I have to admit, ~~kw~~ a certain amount of hatred for anyone that would do a thing like that. And, of course, we would be called in to a meetin' with ~~kw~~ our higher commanders, and they would explain to us their ~~kw~~ findings, and colonel so-and-so had, uh, directed this, that and the other, and now ~~kw~~ ^{he's a} dangerous man. We ~~kw~~ gonna try to find him, and we gonna help so-and-so try to find him. And, uh, they'd tell us what the charges would be against him, and what to look for. I'd have to admit, there's a certain amount of hate. I hate to use that word, but it's got to be there.

Q: I sort of hear some undertone that it's not okay to hate in the context of a religious background. Is that what you're kind of saying?

A: Uhm, hum. Well...I, uh (exhales), I'm a strong believer in God, and uh, I, uh--I'm a strong believer in lookin' out for my well bein' and my family's well bein', too. Uh...and, I'm not the type ~~xxx~~ that would say, "Well, if... if it...hadn't a ~~xxxxx~~ meant ~~■~~ to be that way, God wouldn't have let it be that way." Now, I'm not, I'm not that strong a believer in God. I believe in that (stutters) that we have ~~xxxxx~~ enough of forthought about ourselves and our fellow men to, well--to make a long story short, I've always tried to treat other people like ~~■~~ I^{do} want them to treat me. Now, that wouldn't necessarily be in combat. Uh, I'm not shootin' this guy 'cause I'd want him to shot me, and what have you. When you're fighting, you in a different world than you are back here. ~~xxx~~ And, uh, I didn't wanna be over there any more than anybody else. But we were trained that we had a job to do, and to do it, and that's, that's what I tried to do. But the question you asked 'bout hate towards...

Q: ..the Germans that were running the camps...

A: (continues)...running the camp...uh, you had to ~~■~~ have a little hate for somebody that'd do a thing like that. And you ~~■~~ felt sorry for 'em, too, in another sense. They--you, you just don't understand why people do things like that.

Q: Kind of wonder what kind of people they were?

A: That's right. Then you have to think that, well maybe most of those people had been trained since very small ~~x~~ childhood that that was a way of life. I don't think that they had ever been trained that, ~~■~~h, to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, so to speak. Their trainin' was different than what we had trained. Our training was, if you don't whip 'em over here, you gonna have to ~~xxx~~ whip 'em back there where your mother and your father and your children, what have you, you see.

Q: Do you feel the Germans just weren;t brought up this way?

A: I, I figured there were die-hardx ones wasn't brought up like I was.

Q: Ah, let's talk a little bit abo^ut your political views in relation to this experience, seeing Dachau. Do you think in any way this has influenced your political views?

A: Not really. Not really. Because, uh...actually, uh...when we liberated these camps, I think there was a lesson learned, not only by us, but by the Germans or whoever was runnin' them and what have^you, that, that, that, that's just not the way to do things. Now, we hear that there are such camps in other part^s of the world, but we have no pictures, no really proof of it. NOW these camps over there were ^annihilated and they've nev er sprung up again, and I hope they never will, and I don't believe they ever will. As far as my political v^{ie}ws of, uh, don't know exactly what ya mean on it--^{--I} but, I, I think we did our job, and it's finished.

Q: What about, perhaps in relation to civil rights. Have you ever thought ab out what happened in Germany, and about--and connected it in anyway with the Civil Rights Movement?

A: No, not necessarily. No, uh...actually, the^x, uh, trying to, uh, annihilate the Jewish religion or people, uh, that all stemmed from one man, in my opinion, Hitler. That, that was from his hate. And as x far as civil rights and things like that in this coun^try here, uh, my opinion there is there's just a lot of people, a lot^s of people that didn't want the minorities to come up and get equal with us. They had over there--is, in my opinion, is different than anything else. That, that one man made up his mind he's gonna do away with this race, and, and uh, he's tryin' to show the world how powerful he was. That's my opinion. I don't think that'll ever happen again.

Q: Let's hope it doesn't.

A: I don't think it'xll ever happen again.

Q: I'm not sure I ~~xxxx~~ understand how, how you see that as different. I know you do, I just I'm not sure I understand. You saw this as one man there in Germany, and the Civil Rights Movement, uh, trying to exterminate the Jewish race, and the United States as far as the race relationship...what's different about it?

A: Over here, uh, in this country, uh, it's far from one man that didn't want the, uh, Black race to get ahead. There was a lot of people that didn't want 'em to get ahead. And, thank God, uh, that we had, uh, Presidents and leaders that, uh, I think did the best they could to, to make it ~~was~~ equal as it is today. If we'd ~~xxxx~~ had somebody in Washington like Hitler was over there, uh, we could very well have had a revolution in this country, the Whites against the Blacks. But we didn't and I don't think we ever will.

Q: What would you say if any of your children said they wanted to be a Nazi?

A: It would hurt me very much. It would.

Q: Wanna tell me about that?, What you might say to them?

A: I would try to explain the them, uh, how fortunate they are to be what they are. Why would they want to change? Uh, this, this greed and this hate continuously is what, uh, it ruins nations, it ruins government, and it'd ~~xxx~~ ruin anything. You've got to have enough flexibility, and--you, you, I, I believe if there's kindness and understanding on both sides and a family is able to sit down and ~~disc~~ discuss and hear both sides, I don't think I, that, that a father or mother would, uh, would ever have to have, ever have one of their children say, "I wanna be a Nazi or a German."

Q: You find that the way you brought up your children, this wouldn't be an issue for you.

A: That's right.

Q: You said that you saw the problem in Germany as primarily Jewish persecution?

A: Hmm, no (exhales). That's in, in my opinion, I think that's the way it

started out.

A: Uhm, hum. Would you like to expand on that?

Q: Ah...it started out to try to, uh, do away with the Jewish population but then ~~xxx~~ ~~xxx~~ Polish people, after the uh, Germany failed in, in Warsaw and Russia, and uh France kind of turned against 'em, and Italy kind of turned against 'em, and when they started loosin' the war, it didn't necessarily mean, uh, exterminate Jews, it was anyone ~~xxx~~ that seemed to have gotten in their way, the Americans included.

Q: So you see this as more than just...
there

A: (interjects) Yeah, ~~it~~ wasn't just Jewish people at that camp. There was, there's several nationalities in that camp, and it's just anybody that, that got in his way or that disputed his way of thinkin'. Uh, he just threw 'em in there, and there was no law, no--they couldn't, uh...there was no way out for em.

Q: I wonder if there isn't a lesson to be learned ~~from~~ from that.

A: Yes, there, there, there's a big lesson, in my opinion, uh, that proved a big point. It, uh--I don't know how many people thought about it, but did you know if Hitler--if there had a been television back in those days and widespread news coverage as they have now, with the power that he had, and the power and the way he controlled that one little country wasn't much, wasn't much larger than the state of Georgia, he could have very well ruled this world. And...anyone that didn't believe in ^{him} ~~Hitler~~, why...they would've jsut been killed.

Q: I'm knot sure if I understand how television could have made the difference.

A: Vast news coverage. He could've got on television over there in Germany, and, and swayed a big portion of this country over here (speaks with excitement) and his way of thinkin'. Just like this, these, uh, church groups, ya know, uh, communes and so forth and so on...look at the power they can get. I'm just sayin' that, that these are small powers, but he had

big power. Those people over there worshipped him, enough of 'em worshipped him, so to speak, to do these things. Now there was a humble. There will always be that minority, humble group that, that, uh, has a soft feelin' that this guy's doin' wrong. But...he was thinkin' of nothing but power, really; he really intended to rule the world. That's his full intention, and why he picked on the Jews, I don't know. Now, some of my best friends that I've ever had were Jews, and, and why--it's always been a mystery ~~to~~ to me why people'll talk about Coloured folks and Jews when ~~there's~~ ^{they're} just people, and there's so many good in all of 'em, ~~and~~ there's bad in all of us. (chuckles)

Q: Do you feel a need to do something today to make sure that something like this will ~~not~~ never happen again, ~~because~~ 'cause you've already said television--e a man like this and television could have really done more? What can we do to ~~prevent~~ prevent this?

A: Uh, yes..we need to, we need to, uh, I hate to say censor this or censor that, but, I ~~think~~ think we should, we should be very particular about, uh, what we say and write about in, in, in--and these, uh--I think (stutters) they publicize things like these communes too much. Uh...there's always somebody ready to follow someone, regardless of good or bad, seems to me like, ya know...I don't think we should talk about it, ^{do} ~~so~~ much. I don't think we should write about it so much. I think that in the news media, that some of these people are so eager to put something on television and on the air before they know the facts about the thing, and people just seem to eat it up or follow along with it. I don't think it should be done ~~so~~ much.

Q: That's about news of thinkgs happening today. You feel the less talked about, the better.

A: I think the less talked about ~~it~~ it, the sooner we solve the problem, and let the people that's elected or put there ~~there~~ to solve the problem, solve

it to the best of their knowledge, and give them a chance before ya start to runnin' 'em down, so to speak. (chuckles) Ya know what I mean. I don't know if I make myself clear or not, but...

Q: Before you start running the people down that are supposed to be doing a certain job and taking care of the problem.

A: That's right. Yeah.

Q: Do you think there's any value in teaching about the Holocaust?

A: Absolutely. I, I think, uh, I think, uh, the whole world ought to know about it. I think that movie that they had, it, it followed it, uh, real, real good there....I personally think that it, it should have come out long before now. I think they waited a long time to, to, to really let the world what, what was there.

Q: Why do you think it took so long?

A: That is, is a good question. I don't know why. You know, sitting here watching that show that night, I was...

Q: (interrupts) You talking about the Holocaust now?

A: (continues)...I was thinking to myself--yeah (in answer to question)--why, why did they wait so long to show that...when it, when it happened. Now whether ~~it~~ it was our government or whether it was, uh, the television and the picture industries or whatnot, uh, whether they had all the facts, but, uh, I don't know why they waited so long.

Q: What do you think we can learn from this, something like that show?

A: Never let it happen again. It don't...you don't have to let things like that happen. Now those people over there in Germany, the majority of the, of the civilian people, personally I don't believe even knew the horrors that was going on. That's, that's how well, it, they, they ~~was~~ ran their affairs over there and their government. If that had been in this country here, everybody would've known about it two days after it started

with the news media like we have.

Q: You feel a lot of this was kept hidden from the German people, is that what you're saying?

A: That's right. That's right. And, uh, I don't think the people over here, some of them, I don't, I don't believe actually believed anything like that happened, and a lot of them will ~~xxxxx~~ never know how horrible it was, and thank goodness that they won't know. Really, you know, I, I ^{I, I} wouldn't want any of my children ~~xxxxxx~~ or my wife or nobody to see what I saw. I wouldn't ~~xx~~ want to see it again.

Q: And yet you felt the Holocaust show was a good thing?

A: Yeah, I think everybody ought to see it, ..even though a lot of it was, uh, --I didn't see anything like some ~~fo~~ it there. I, I think that they kind ~~xx~~ of stretched the issue on some of it, but the majority of it was right down the line, ..in, in facts. Whoever, uh, wrote that script on that thing had some pretty good information, 'cause I sitted here and watched it in-- 'course they didn't show anything just like I, ^{I mean} the way I saw it, but I mean, it was there, you know. The buildings and those furnishes and those piles of dead people and the trenches and all that stuff, uh, it ~~was~~ sure did make that look real....But, uh, I don't think ~~xx~~ that there'd ever be anything like that in ~~xxx~~ ^{this} country or in that country over there again. ~~xxxxxxxi~~ ~~xxxxxxxi~~ I just believe that, uh, I, I just don't believe that that'll ever happen again.

Q: Why not?

A: I believe we've learned a lesson. ^{I,} I believe that people have become more civilized now. I don't think that any country would let one man get that much power. ^{again} I believe that he, he would be assassinated by someone. I wouldn't do the shooting ~~xxxxxxxi~~, but I think someone would before they'd let him ~~get~~ that much power.

Q: That's quite a statement.

A: (chuckles) Well, I'm just ~~am~~ talking like I feel.

Q: You have very strong feelings about this.

A: Uhm, hum.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add that I might not have asked you that we might not have talked about that you might like to add to your record of your experience and your thoughts?

A: Not really because (clears throat)...actually, my experience there was such short-lived. I didn't really go into the deep details of liberating anybody, or I didn't do any shooting there or fighting, I just, uh, considered myself more as an observer than anything else which was a very short time, but I ~~know~~ know what I saw.

Q: And that's important.

A: And, uh (clears ~~throat~~ throat)...to tell you the truth, I didn't care about hanging around too much, and my radio was blasting ~~wide~~ wide open, uh, about this position and that position, and I had a job to do, and we were supposed to have taken Munich and that airport by zero hour, and we were losing time, and you don't win wars by sitting around and feeling sorry for somebody, and, and we had to get moving.

Q: You just had to move on.

A: And move on we did ^{and} ~~we~~ got the job done.