

TRANSCRIPTION OF TAPE OF DR. LEO PINE
Interviewer: Kaethe Solomon
Date: September 7, 1978 (10:00-11:30)
Camp: Buchenwald

KS: The reason for the project is to get the story from people such as yourself, liberators of the concentration camps, as you remember it, as you felt it, as much as you can share with us about your experience at that time.

A: Is this a Jewish thing?

KS: Absolutely not. It certainly involves the Jewish aspect of it because we know the holocaust has a separate meaning in that area, but it is a humanitarian project.

A. Now do you want things as I remember them, or as they might have been told to me also.

KS: A very good point. Any way that you can present them to us. To give you a framework, we are looking for what you were told before you got to the concentration camp area, what happened on your way there, what happened to you, what happened to your buddies that you were with, when you got there--what did you see, what were the reactions when you left.

A. O.K.

KS: By way of a framework for you...

A. I tell you: mices you wouldn't believe.

KS: Mices ^I ~~you~~ ^{Right.} wouldn't believe. O.K. You start anyplace your memory takes you to. ^{OK} All right. I'll interrupt for one minute. We need some questions answered for the record first, and one of them is your full name.

A. Leo Pine.

KS: Your address?

A. 1302 Bernadette Lane, Atlanta, Georgia, 30329.

KS: And your date of birth?

A. February 13, 1922.

KS: At?

A. Tucson, Arizona.

KS: Not a native Atlantan?

A. No.

KS: The location and name of your training camp before you went into the service, do you remember at all?

A: What do you mean by "my training camp"?

KS: Were you at a camp first in the United States, before...

A. I was in several camps. I got my basic training at Camp Siebert, Ala. Then I went to Rutgers University on ASTP...

KS: ASTP?

A. Ah, Advanced Training...something; I don't know, it was a government project.

KS: ^{whatever}
O.K.

A. Then I went to OCS for 4½ months at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, in Combat Engineers. From Combat Engineers I went to, oh, uh, 1201 (or something like this) ^{Combat} Engineer Group in Mississippi--I've forgotten the number of this, I'm sorry.

KS: That's o.k.; that's understandable.

A. And then I went from Mississippi, I was transferred to the 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion, and then I went over in October of 1944....I went over in October 1944 to Europe, and from the Boston port of embarkation, I went with the 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion.

KS: And your age at the time that you liberated--Buchenwald, I think, was your camp.

A. Buchenwald; uh, ^{it was before...} when did President Roosevelt die...uh, it was 1944 wasn't it?

KS: Well, Buchenwald was liberated in '45.

A. ^{times} O.K., so in '45, ^{or} I was 23 years old.

KS: And your prospective profession at the beginning of the war?

A. At the beginning of the war I had just gotten my B.S. degree in the College of Agriculture at the University of Arizona in Plant Pathology and Chemistry.

KS: And you were planning to..?

A. Get my graduate degree in biochemistry; I had already been accepted at the

University of Wisconsin, for a biochemistry degree.

KS: And your present occupation?

A. I am a biochemist.

KS: So you went through with your initial...

A. I went through a little bit of change, I'm really not a biochemist, I'm a microbiologist physiologist. I got my Ph.D. in physiology, in bacteriology at the University of California at Berkeley. But I got my masters degree in biochemistry at the University of Wisconsin.

KS: I see; so your period in the war did not disrupt your ultimate educational goal?

A. No, it didn't.

KS: Your military unit--that you were in at the time of liberation?

A. The 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion.

KS: And your rank at that time^e of liberation?

A. I'd say, first lieutenant.

KS: And you liberated which camp?

A. Buchenwald.

KS: That was the only one you liberated?

A. Yes; "liberated" is not the right word, because I wasn't in the actual liberation. We arrived 1 day after it was open, or 2 days after it was opened--we were supporting troops for the...uh...I was in Patton's Third Army and we were the supporting troops for his liberation of the...

KS: All right. So now we have your background; now we'll let you reflect on that period of your life...

A. O.K. I have no concept of geography right now; I didn't know where I was essentially--all I know is we were with the Third Army when we crossed the Rhine River. We went deep into Germany. Someplace in Germany, then, uh...I was told that we were coming close to...is it...not Auchen....but it was close

to...it's not far from Buchenwald. Well, we skirted around to the right somehow, and one night one of my officers, my commanding officer in my company, came that night. And we were all...we had just finished eating. As the Combat Engineer Battalion, we were with the Negro battalion--I was commanding officer of the Negro battalion---all of the enlisted men were Negroes, and as a result of whatever had taken place, we were operating as a Combat Engineer Battalion--in other words, we were building bridges, taking down mines, blowing up bridges, building all kinds of things, prison enclosures, and so we had the prerogative in the evening...~~in the evening~~ we had trucks where we would ride back from the front lines or wherever we were^{ed} and we'd go about 20 miles back and we had a bivouac area where we could eat and could relax; then the next morning we'd take off at 6:00 o'clock or 5:00 o'clock in the mornings or whatever it was. This night...this night that we'd finished our work and we had just finished supper and we were talking, and my captain said, "I saw something... this is unbelievable," he says, "I recommend that you go see it, but this one is really unbelievable." He said, "One of the outfits ahead of us opened up a camp for children." He said, "You wouldn't believe what we saw." He said--his name was Capt. Whitenight, in case somebody wants to check, he said, "This was a camp for Jewish children...the children were all 12 years old and below." He said, "The Germans knew that we were coming. They massacred all the children before we got there." ^{He said} It was absolute madness, there was no need for it--we would have liberated the children. But they're compulsive for some reason--they have to kill them. They kill the children by picking them up by the feet and bashing their heads against the wall. A bunch of the children they took out to the rear and they machinegunned and massacred. ^{He said} This is what I saw." He said, ^{he said} "You have no concept. ~~Now~~ we opened up Buchenwald today or yesterday, and if you've got any free time I give you permission to go and see what it is. Now this is a child's camp, separate from Buchenwald." ^{he suggested} Whatever the.... ^{whatever the...}

right (indicating a picture), I was about three years younger; I was about 19 or 20 at that time. But I had a heavy growth of beard and I was dirty and whatever it was that I looked like, I didn't look beautiful and I didn't look semitic. We arrived at Buchenwald, and there was a road leading in and a big gate coming down the front, and the gate said two things. The gate said "durch diesen schtern verboten", which means "Any passage is strongly forbidden". But now I am not certain in my own mind...there was a sign written in white, hanging above which I believe read, but maybe it was fed to me someplace else, I'm not certain--it was absolutely one of two things: Arbeit Macht ^{mein} frei or it read, and I'm quite certain this is what it read, "All those who pass through leave hope behind:" ^{and} I'm not certain--" ^{where was the sign} Arbeit macht ^{mein} frei was too simple a German for me not to understand it. ^{And} I remember, I ^{had} a little bit of difficulty translating the German, and so I think that it actually was the second one: All those who pass through leave hope behind. So we went through. My men got off the truck and they did the wrong thing, whatever they did they did the wrong thing...I walked through the gate and coming toward me in the striped suit, with what I called the striped yamaka on his head, was a walking...literally walking skeleton. Even though he was wearing these cotton pants, he had no cheeks on his ass, you know, he was just purely a walking skeleton. His teeth were ready to fall out of his mouth, and he was sucking lemon drops, and he walked toward me from a distance...he came toward me and he said, "Shalom aleichem" and look at that ^(his tears)...and I became a Zionist on the spot. And I said, "Aleichem Shalom.....how did you know?" And he said, "It takes one to know one."

KS: (weeping)...I cry with you.

A. And I mean, it changed my whole life. Because I can tell you stories of my childhood where ^{I had long} in university I had long, philosophical discussions with a

young Jewish boy who we brought over from Austria right after the invasion ^{where} and he talked about, he didn't want to be a Jew anymore, and I said, "You've got to be a Jew, there's no alternative." He says, "I can't believe in zionism." ^{And so we fought.} This was previous, in 1941 and '42, before I graduated, and I remember this boy's name and I remember the discussions, but ...at that instant I became a Zionist--there was no question. I knew ^{what} I was, ^{what} I was, and there was so question. So, we sat and we talked. Now I remember him sucking on these lemon drops with the teeth that were almost falling out, and I knew from my own scientific background, I said, "Aren't you worried about this---it'll make you sick." ^{I said} And he said, "No, they're good, they're good! I had some chocolate!"

KS: You spoke in German to each other?

A. We spoke in German, we spoke in Yiddish, we spoke in English, and he turns out to be a Dutch boy--he was a Dutch man or boy.

KS: A man or a boy.

A. I am going to tell you stories later. And so we talked, "What are you going to do when you come out?" Oh, ^{and} the aspect of the camp, because as we talked I have the recollection as we walked in over on the right hand side was ^{the} huge big buildings with the smokestacks and, of course, this very famous picture I saw--you don't always see it, but I saw it: the bodies were piled like cordwood clean up to my ceiling...all kinds, men and women, and they were there: they were grey, they were moldy, ^{they were} but they were dead. And on to the right, and he pointed to them and he said, "Look, I was next. I was due to go into the fires. I don't know why I lived so long, but I lived." And he was, he was right, he couldn't have lasted much longer. Now, I don't remember much discussions with him after this, except one incident. As we were talking, a child of about three years old came running towards us. He says, "Yankela, kena here" and the boy stopped, kind of like he was wild, and he looked at us. And he

said, " *Kantek,*

KS: "Do you want to go [→] with him?"

A. Yes. And the child looked at me and says, "Nein." And I said, "What do you mean?"

KS: He says, "They brought the mother in of this child...they brought her in when she was due to deliver. The Germans never killed a pregnant woman." I don't know how true this is--I know of experiments. He says, "They always let her deliver, then they killed her and the baby. She delivered that night when they brought her in, and we took the baby and we passed it to the back and this is Yankala -- we've kept it alive for three years." And do you know they made a movie of something like this--it never came to the United States, I don't think, but one of the other countries ^{I think} made a movie. Anyhow, he asked me to take the child. I was newly married, I wanted to take the child, but I was afraid because I didn't know where I was going, I was in combat--not in combat myself but in combat operations, I didn't know how I would take care of the child, and I said, "No, it's better--they are going to take care of the children when the Army comes in and we get it all set up, he'll be better off." I had the feeling the child was like a wild animal, a *vide chaya*. I mean, I don't know what it was. I don't really believe this story, because I went into the bunkers later and they all knew the child, but it's hard to believe! How they hid him from the Germans! Of course, they had ^{these} in the camps, in the barracks...they had these tiers, were only about two feet at the most apart, they were plank boards and they went way back, and it's conceivable, but how would they keep the baby quiet? ^{How...they told me...} He told me they fed the child from the potato peel gruel that they got. This is all they got--they got a soup made from potato peels. Ah, there you are; I don't know how they did it. And that's the story...and what happened to Yankela I'll never know, but I'm quite certain that this movie that they made deals with this child and I've always regretted that I didn't take him with me.

But, that's easier said than done, because in ~~that~~^{retro} respect, we were shipped back after ~~Weirath~~^{Roosevelt died} --we were occupation troops, I could have handled the boy, I could have taken him, because we didn't go into combat, but I didn't know what....(voice breaking)....

KS: There was no way of your knowing...

A. I didn't know. I didn't know. O.K. (Deep sigh)

KS: This man voluntarily related many of these stories--the one that had the lemon drops?

A. Which stories?

KS: About Yankala. He told you?

A. He told me--right then and there. I saw the child, I had the child in my arms... I really couldn't tell you how old the child was, but I'm going to say he was three years old, three to four years old. He was active physically, he was quite small and thin, but looked healthy. O.K.

KS: Why was he still there, this was after the third day of liberation?

A. Yes. There weren't any GI troops in there--there was one officer--we hadn't even sent in the...uh...he...uh...

KS: Medics?

A. The medics hadn't come in, nothing...^{had come in} O.K. So I left him for some reason, and I started walking from one barracks to the other....(sigh)...

KS: They were filled with people?

A. They were filled with people. Each barrack--apparently they ^{had they} put up flags--each barrack either had flags representing the dominant nationality....

KS: Buchenwald was a political camp.

A. Yes, it was a political....o.k. And there were flags there, representing each group, and I don't remember what the flags were and I don't remember how I stopped, or how....but, the moment the people recognized that I was speaking German and that I was Jewish--and how they knew I don't know anymore--except

maybe my German--when I was in Luxemburg ^{of Germany} they said my German was a "heiche Deutsche".

KS: A "high German".

A. Yes, however, I think the people in Buchenwald recognized what kind of German it was--it was a mixture of German and Yiddish. Anyhow, they got around me in huge groups and they started talking ~~to me~~.

KS: These were people that were still able to move?

A. These were people that were still able to move, they could come to me. Ah, I'll tell you that the stories are going to go on....(sigh...) So one young Dutch boy-- another Dutch boy--a Belgian boy--he was Belgian, started talking to me. What happened? Well, a young man, married, no children, living with his father, his mother, his mother-in-law and his father-in-law someplace by the woods; the Germans came, they captured him and his wife. In front of him they took his mother and father and his father-in-law and his mother-in-law and they shot ^{they shot them} them right there. And they took his wife and they raped her until she died. And then they took him and sent him to Buchenwald. And he said, "Why did they send me? Why didn't they kill me?" .."What are you going to do?".these are phrases now that are coming..."What are you going to do?" "I'm not going back to Belgium, I'm going to Israel." "Why?" "Because they're all anti-semites, they're all antiSemitic; the Belgians are not so bad, the Dutch are better, but the Belgians are not so bad---the worst are the French." (These are phrases now)-- "Why are you going to Israel, why don't you go back to Belgium" "There's nothing left for me; I am going to Israel." This was a political boy; ^{he said} we talked for a long time. He said, "It's not the end yet"....I'm getting goose pimples again....

KS: Yes, I feel it, too...

A. He said, "It's not the end yet--you're going to have to fight the Communists-- Russia--you're going to have to fight Russia. There cannot be any life living

between Russia and the United States." Well, I was young and politically naive--very politically naive, and I tried to argue with him but he was *he was* adamant.

KS: You had a lot of experience at the camp. There were large communist groups that visited all the camps.

A. *Yes*, yes; this I'll relate to you later. Because I realize this only in retrospect--at that time I didn't know. So, that was him. Then I was talking to them, there was a crowd of women around me--a crowd of men and women--and how one's conversation *came* through to me, I don't know, but she related the story, "*das he geschite*".

KS: "What has happened."

A. Yes. She related the story that when they were delivered to the camp they came out of the trains...they came out of the trains and one woman had a little five year old golden-haired doll with her--a child, a girl--and they lined everybody up, whatever they were going to do with them....(sigh)...(overcome with emotion)....

KS: This is hard.

A. (sigh)...and the guy that had, the guy that was giving the orders was sitting in a chair eating a chocolate bar, and he said, "*Komme here mein keint'*"

KS: "Come over here my child."

A. "*Haida zeig zewer keine unti*"

KS: "Don't be afraid."

A. "*Ye wilt gein zehr epes sein essen*"

KS: "I will give you something to eat."

A. The child was afraid, but eventually she came to him and he gave her the chocolate bar. He handed it to her, but when she reached for it he took a pistol and he slapped her hand, and she drew back and started to cry...(sigh)...

he repeated this through a period of three or four times; each time she went for the candy bar he slapped her with the pistol. Finally he said, "Nemein zin dehr chocelet" and he gave it to her and she grabbed it and held it in her hand to take a bite and he grabbed her and held her between his legs and pistol-whipped her to death. Everybody watched. That's all the story. That's all the story I remember.

KS: This was the mother of the child?

A. I don't know if it was the mother--it was the woman telling me the story. All of the people gathered around me and every single one of them had relatives in the United States. "Ich haba cousine, ze licht en Brooklyn. Ich haba bruder. Ehr licht en Cleveland. Ich haba dis

and it kept on going, except for one old white-haired man who was in very good physical condition for an old man, he kept saying, and it took a while for this to come through my head and I can't say the words good, but he kept saying *Meine bruder* ~~the~~ ^{de} Secretariat from the American Federation ^{of} Labor."

KS: My brother is the secretary of the American Federation of Labor."

A. And he kept repeating this. And finally, I turned to him and I said, "Geinig bruder est us?"

KS: "Your brother is what?"

A. And he said, "Yeh, ^{meine} ~~my~~ ~~brother~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~secretary~~ from ~~the~~ American Federation from Labor." And I said, "Yat ist deiner nom? Iena ^{vina}

^{hant Ehr gezeit} And he said, "Meine nomen est Louie Weinstadt. End my bruder is Harvey Weinstadt." And I wrote this down, and I wrote that night when I came back, I wrote a long letter, an extremely emotional long diatribe to my wife--who subsequently somehow lost this letter--they passed it from one member of the family to another and it got lost; but, she was a New Jersey girl, she had just gotten over strep throat, she had gone to Arizona to live in Tucson with my in-laws, and when she received the letter she immediately went to the ^{American} ^{with}

Labor..oh, whatever it is, the union--and she tried to find out---she was very politically astute, tremendously, but she didn't recognize the name, and so they went through their entire files and they found Harvey Weinstadt-- is it Harvey Weinstadt? When you called me the name came out of nowhere; Harvey and Louis Weinstadt. They found that he was the secretary of the Electrician's union in New York City. When she got better, she went back to New York, to New Jersey, and she and her mother called up ^{Louis Weinstadt immediately, not like but} Harvey Weinstadt ~~immediately~~ and said, "We would like to meet you; we have something personal we wish to discuss with you, ^{and} can we have an appointment?", without apparently telling him what this was about. They went to his office, whatever it was, and he said, "What's this about?" And she gave him the letter and she said, "My husband was at Buchenwald and he saw your brother, Louie, and he wants you to know that your brother is well and that he is fine physically, he looks good, and he'll be taken care of, and you should try to contact him as soon as you can." And he broke down and he started to cry, and he called up his mother and he said, "Mama, mama, Louie is alive and he is feeling well; now everything's o.k."Now, when I came back from the war and I was talking to my wife, she happened one time to ask me, "What did he look like, how was he?" I said, "Well, he was in great shape; he had white hair, he was an old man, about maybe 72." She said, "No he wasn't, Harvey Weinstadt is a man about 38-40 years old-- Louie was his younger brother.".....So I couldn't relate, I couldn't visualize.

KS: You lose the whole perspective.

A. The whole perspective changed completely. This is the only one I wrote to and the only one, although everybody else had names; I couldn't handle it, I just couldn't handle it.

KS: Did he ever come back to New York?

A. No;--I don't know--but I think maybe what you should do is check me out, because when the McCarthy era started, Harvey Weinstadt was one of the ten communists that the Eisenhower administration purged, and check me out on this, because

I want to know. My wife, who knew every senator, who knew everything, who read the paper, word to word, she said, "Leo! ^{she said} It's Harvey Weinstadt! He's one of the 10 communists!" Louie was a communist, and Louie talked to me about it. He was a communist, but he repeated what the Dutch boy said, "Russia and the United States have to fight." ~~I said~~, "Where are you going?" He said, "I don't know where I'm going--I'm thinking about Israel, but Russia, --I'm a communist, but Russia--there's no meeting. So he was a Jew and a communist. It's lucky that he wasn't a Jew, a communist and black, he really wouldn't have survived! All right....from there everything else is a jumble, except for incidents that I will tell you that will take place. I went back toward the gates, I left the people and went back toward the gates and met a white officer--I make this distinction--

KS: Because of your group that you were with.

A. Yes. And, he took me to the house of the commandant. The front door was locked, I was hesitant to walk in, but I looked through the window and I saw the magnificent ^{in what shades... uh, um...} light shades made out of tattoos. He took out of his pocket a wallet made of a woman's breasts, where the two nipples were like buttons, on the front, and he had been inside and he told me of many of the things, only which I saw from a distance, and this is all that I saw, but he told me about Ilsa Koch....was it Ilsa Koch?

KS: The beast of Buchenwald?

A. Whoever she was, and the stories---she and somebody else--didn't she run experiments where she tied the legs of pregnant women together while they were in labor, ^{pin} and they just died this way. Normally, they allowed the women to deliver and then they killed them, but in her case, no. And then the people took me through the gas chambers and I saw the whole operation.

KS: Who were the people who took you through?

A. I don't remember.

KS: These were not inmates?

A. Yes! They were inmates, these were inmates, and they told me; one guy showed me the elevators. They had the gas chambers down at the bottom, I think, and then they took the bodies and they put them in conveyor belts that took them to the top, but some of the people they wouldn't kill--some of the people they put on the conveyor belts and fed them right into the fire alive. Now this one was different--I didn't see gas chambers--they took the people into rooms, they had them bathe and take showers, and then they tied them with their hands like this (demonstrating), and they put them on hooks on the wall so they were hanging like this (demonstrating). You know, I don't know how much of this I remember ^{of this} as being true, ^{and I remember as being true} ~~accurate~~. They hung them like this and then they hit them with hammers or something and then they killed them; but on the wall you could see where the fingers and the fingernails had dug grooves into the wall--and I remember this. Then those of them that they hammered or clubbed or whatever they did to the bodies, they pulled out teeth with gold--they showed me piles of clothing that were still left there from this operation, and boy, they didn't stop this operation until the troops actually came in! ..(sighs)...And then I went up and I saw the ^{others, I saw} bones and teeth, and as I said, all the bodies.

KS: When you saw the bodies, did you look at them as human beings?

A. I couldn't---I can't look at dead people--^{and} I looked at them, but I couldn't study them. They were skeletons of human beings, piled one on top of the other. You couldn't tell the women from the men because there was nothing left to tell the difference. There were no breasts to speak of; the men's genitalia were grotesque in the living--I can't tell you about the dead because I couldn't look; some of the men were walking in tatters and the penis and the testicles hung like they were, you know, pieces of meat.....(overcome)...

KS: O.K.

A. Now by this time, I'm almost like a raving maniac.

KS: Do you remember how long you were in there?

A. It was almost from about 8:00 in the morning until about 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon.....O.K.....Now I went down into the dungeons, to the torture chambers.

KS: This was underground?

A. This was a building set to the left, if I remember correctly, and we went downstairs, I remember that---yes, I went downstairs--the crematoria was over to the right, the house was to the front and a little bit ~~over~~ to the left; the camps and the barracks were behind all of this. I was tired now and I was coming toward the front, so I went in to this. Well, ^{here} ~~it~~ was a new experience. When I went down to the dungeon....

KS: I want to interrupt you. Do you feel you can go on--is it too much for you?

A. Well, I'm gonna go on--I'm started now--the stuff is coming out--you know, I have tried to recall this and I couldn't.

KS: I don't want it to be too much for you now--we can stop and go on another time.

A. My face feels flushed. No, no. Now this was a new experience. We went down to the bottom, the lights were on and there were a bunch of dungeons, and in each one of these cages, or prison cells, were SS men that had been captured by the American troops or by ^{the} whoever captured them, they brought them back and they threw them in these cells. And in charge of these was a little baldheaded Dutchman that they called "Dutchie", and he was in charge of these guys and he had the same rubber truncheon, he said, that they had used on him and he was now using it on them. And he said to me as I went down, and here were all of my men and some other white infantrymen were watching us, there must have been eight or nine of my men.....

KS: Were they with you all the time as you went through?

A. No, no. Some of them were. I was by myself when I went through.

KS: You had said that each of them did their own thing.

A. Yes; and this Dutchman said, "Watch." Now there was another white officer there-- he was there.

(material lost when tape ended)

And it was hard to look at them because whatever they were, they were still men. So, one of the white men goes in and he uses his fists and he beats up on the guy. And I have to say...I was like an animal then, I was really out of my mind...and I suspect my black men were the same way. Anyhow, one of them turned to me--one of my black men--he said, "Lt. Pine, ^{he said} let me go in." I said, "All right--you go on in there, but I didn't say you could," and I couldn't stay to watch. Well, I walked out, and ~~then~~³ came back and picked up the men. Apparently he went in and he just beat one of these guys unmercifully. They said there was blood all over the place, and as he walked out, the white soldier that went in first took a rope and threw it to the guy and said, "Hang yourself." And he hung himself. And that was it.

KS: Were you able to physically go in there?

A. No, I couldn't do it; I wasn't that kind; I was wild, but I couldn't do it because I couldn't do it..that's all. And that was it. I don't remember anymore except I didn't see that scene, and I'm glad I didn't see the scene, but the other men reiterated what...I mean, it was true. Uh...one thing keeps going over my mind because it wasn't said ~~by~~ just the two men, it wasn't said just by the Dutch boy and by the Belgian boy, it was said over and over again, that the French were very antisemitic---they couldn't wait to become antisemitic; that they were all going--all the Jews were going to Israel, no matter what, and it was reiterated over and over again that the United States had to fight Russia, and I'm quite sure that they were right.

KS: In the light of today's political scene?

A. Right. In the light of today's political scene, there is no question in my mind that this is our big enemy and this is what we have got to take care of. Israel is only a pawn in this in this big show, ultimately. Anyhow, that's all I can remember except, as we walked out...^{of there} I remember walking on the streets someplace... was it Auchen?...driving through a town on the way back and stepping over dead people--dead Germans who were lying on the street and people would just simply walk over them and not pay them any notice. Death was now something that you don't look at and you just simply pass it over. ^{So} I remember two dead bodies on the sidewalk which were quite rotten, that people just step over ~~them~~ and keep on going. And that's it. That's the only stories that I remember of the liberation of Buchenwald. Now I can tell you other stories, but these are not related to Buchenwald or to the camp. They are related to the release of Jewish soldiers.

KS: Release of Jewish soldiers from...?

A. Apparently Jewish captured soldiers were treated differently by the Germans than American Christian soldiers, and I picked up a liberated British tommie when I was at Nurenburg. I was building prison enclosures at Nurenburg--this is beyond that--and he made the beautiful statement to me after I had put him up for the night and I gave him dinner and he slept with me in my room--British officers didn't treat British tommies the ^{way} American soldiers did, and rank had no meaning for me, so when I picked him up he had just been released from the prison camp and I put him in my room with me and then I took him to the officer's quarters of the MPs. They didn't like this--they didn't think that privates should be with officers, but nevertheless I brought him with me and he had breakfast with me and then I put him on the road toward England; and before he left he made the great statement. He said, "You know, I had a terrible time. ^{He said} I really don't care for the Jews, you know...^{I know} I am not a lover of the Jews myself, but the time that I had was

nothing compared to what these guys had in my camp, and of course, I should have cussed him off and told him what I was, but I didn't say anything and sent him off.

KS: How were---I am interested in some of the stories--the Jewish soldiers mistreated as opposed to the others?

Alright then I'll tell you another story
A. Well, he didn't tell me anything and I became so infuriated that I just didn't want to talk to him anymore and I said, "So long", and I just left. And that was it. I did have quite an experience one day later with German soldiers taken off the Blue Danube. We were capturing thousands of them now, they were giving up, and it was my job to build a prison enclosure for these that came in; we expected a couple of thousand, but, God!, they were coming in by the truckloads. And so, I had to get help. I only had my platoon and so I put some of the young German soldier boys--these were boys 15, 16, 17, part of the Volks ...I don't think they were real German soldiers...and I put them to work drilling post holes and putting up the barbed wire for the other men that were coming in. The days were hot...we weren't bringing in enough water to give them drinks--certainly they didn't have any water to wash with, and on the second day that they worked for me, their leader, a young ^{German} nice young boy...came to me and asked me in German and broken English whether they could go to the nearby river and wash. ... (long pause) ...and of course, I was only three or four days from Buchenwald, or a week--whatever it was, I don't remember--and I turned to him and I said, "Would German officers permit you, if I were a prisoner, to permit me to go and wash?" And he drew back, because I said it violently. And he said, "I don't know what our officers would allow." And I said, "I'll tell you what your officers would allow!", and I proceeded to tell him about Buchenwald from beginning to end. ~~The~~ whole group of men, there must have been eight of them or something like that, they sat there, and it was with horror---and it was obvious--they looked like I

had hit them between the eyes with my hammer---and they sat down, and they just-- then, as I walked by doing my work, later on, (I didn't let them go wash), I heard one of them saying to the other, "We're going to pay for the sins of Hitler," and the other one said, "I didn't know--I didn't know; we all joined, all of us joined." And of course, you know I was only 23 years old, I wasn't a man yet, but I felt sorry because, God damn, the kids ^{they} were right. If they knew, they didn't want to know. If they didn't want to know, they didn't know, and they were only a result of their time and efforts. And I had other experiences.

KS: Did you meet any civilians--adults--along the way?

A. Yes; none were Nazis.

KS: By their proclamation or by your assumption?

A. By their proclamation; but, just one week or two weeks before Roosevelt died ---and how do I remember this?---no^{no}, it wasn't Roosevelt--just two to three weeks before or a week before V-E Day--before this took place, when VE day came B-24s started ~~duking~~ ^{zooming} over our area--I don't know why---we had been sent back now to Auchen, to the occupation troops and to de-mine the area, that was going to be my first job. In this operation of cleaning up the roads and everything, I saw two thoroughbred dogs, not Airedales--I've forgotten what they were--so I stopped and went to this farmhouse and asked them, "Are these your dogs?" And they said, "Yes"--a man and a young girl--a young girl of maybe 19 or 20; ...and was there a woman?...yes, his wife was there. And they picked up the dogs and they said, "Oh, yes." And I said, ^{well,} "Could I have one?" And they said, "Please don't take them from us....please." And then they invited me to sit down. I was speaking German very good in those days. And so I said, "O.K." (I felt funny, because the rules were "no fraternization, absolutely no fraternization", but I did what I did.) And then they said, "Oh, she's going to have pups--you come back." So I came back, and I made a relationship of some kind with this

family. He had been a forester, but he was apolitical, and he refused to join

the Nazi party. He lost his job. His wife lost her job, and I don't know how they survived, but they had this house, and he did whatever he did and ~~they~~ got along--it was like a farmhouse. It wasn't in the farmlands, but it was suburbia. His daughter also refused and they sterilized her.

KS: She was sent to one of the camps?

A. I don't know---she wasn't in a camp, she was there.

KS: She may have returned.

A. I don't know. That's one story. The other stories are other things. Other stories dealt with going into homes near Nurenburg and discovering that, of course whenever we went into a home--whatever was left--we would go through the drawers. You know, we were living in a house, and I discovered in one desk-- a writing desk--a deck of cards in which the back of the deck of cards...I've seen all kinds of decks of cards, pornographic cards, cartoon cards...but these cards had all the atrocities on them. These showed a photograph of maybe five or ten men hanging from telephone poles; these showed bodies of people lying in scooped out graves, one after another. I never took the deck with me because I didn't want it.

KS: Playing cards?

A. Playing cards! Regular playing cards with pictures of atrocities; but this was Nurenburg. There were signs of the Nazi party all over Nurenburg. I didn't see signs of the Nazi party until I got to Nurenburg. Even on the Rhine River, I didn't see these. Anyhow, that's it.

KS: You left Buchenwald with your group of men, and most of these men you said were black?

A. All of them were.

KS: All of them were black. What happened when you left together. Did you share some of your stories--what you had seen?

A. No, no. ^{only} I didn't share it with them. ^{only E + H told} There was very little talk that I remember,

only the reiteration, and my sergeant, one of the men, said, "Lt. Pine, there was blood all over the place--boy, he let him have it!" They were upset by what they had seen, and that's all I can remember in words.

KS: And any visible reaction---of course, you didn't go through the camp with them-- that they may have had differently from what you had...?

A. *Nb.* No. *Nb.* nothing. They knew I was Jewish. I had a relationship with my men which was different than any other officer there; they knew I was Jewish--they respected me. I treated them as equals and they knew that, and there was mutual respect, both ways. I had my good men, I had my bad men, but whatever, there was ^{there was} no racial...^{there were} there were socio-economic backgrounds that were so totally different with many of them that some were southern Negroes, some were northern Negroes, some were--had a little bit of college education--one or two of them had--and so, this was where the communications might fall down, but they knew that we could talk. Before we even got there, they used to ask me, I used to lecture to them, "What in the hell are we fighting for? We're black and, hell, we got no black officers...we had 4 black warrant officers...and they were very angry men--the northern group was more angry--and I used to lecture. I said, "Whatever we're doing--we, the whites, are doing to you, you damn well better win this war because this is what you've got coming--you're nothing but an animal to this part--blacks, they don't even know what blacks are." When we went through German, we saw one black person, ^{1 was} a girl, a red-headed black girl, who was lining up to get a piece of bread with the rest of the Germans who were lined up to get a piece of bread, and they looked at her and they said, "God damn!, there is one!" But she was the only black that we saw in Germany.

KS: But there was no discussion?

A. There was no discussion, there was nothing relating, except they were upset, they were quiet, and of course, as I said, one of them, my sergeant, had had it.

KS: Dr. Pine, were you an Orthodox Jewish person?

A. I was raised---my mother was 100% Orthodox, my father was areligious, my synogogue in Tucson was conservative. I was Bar-Mitzvahed only insofar as I gave the two *brocha;* that you said when you went up to the *brich* but I didn't read from the Torah, I never learned Hebrew, but I always was a Jew because I was raised in a very anti-Semitic, hostile, Baptist environment.

KS: Was there an increase in religious feeling after this experience, or a decrease in religious feeling, as opposed to the Zionist feeling that you stated?

A. Religion had nothing to do with this. My religion is based on an emotional experience--experiences as a child, living, born and raised in the desert, true in the concept of the Jewish God, but not orthodoxy. I am a member of the Orthodox Synagogue here only because that's what's familiar to me--I don't feel comfortable in anything else.

KS: Did your experience lead you to question what is God all about?

A. Ah...you can't know; I couldn't do this; I couldn't do it...I didn't question... I...I...never questioned religiously....as far as I can remember, I knew that I was a Jew and I knew more now that I was a Jew. I knew I was a Jew no matter what, and that I had to be at peace with this, and as a Jew I had to be Jewish--that's being religious, and so I never questioned it. I never said, "How could He do this?" I didn't go through what Elie Wiesel did; now this might be my scientific background, it might be---whatever it is--I never questioned it. As a matter of fact, if I have to go back and think back from now to then, I have to say, "He did it on purpose; He did it to teach us a lesson. God damn, there are the goose bumps again." He did it...it wasn't...^(long pause)well, we got Israel, didn't we? We went back to the Holy Land.

KS: You feel there is a reason behind what happened?

A. Yes; it's unbelievable, but He did it.

KS: Your wife was informed all the time what was going on while you were experiencing this? You wrote letters back to her?

A: Yes, yes, I wrote many letters back; I wrote the incidents with the prisoners, I wrote....

KS: You don't have these--any of them?

A. My wife, 15 years ago, started to lose her mind and she was institutionalized fifteen years ago. Prior to her total loss of mind she took these letters which she had saved, and pictures and photographs of me in the Army, and these were destroyed, and all these letters were gone.

KS: I'm sorry....your children, you have children?

A. Six of them.

KS: ..You're shaking---so am I. (Laughter...both).

A. These are my children, (showing pictures.)

KS: How wonderful, how absolutely wonderful.

A. I married the second time; these are my two youngest boys.

KS: So we have four and two, is that what you're saying?

A. We have four and two. Here's one, two, three, four, five, six,..my oldest boy... three girls, three boys.

KS: Do they know?

A. My four children, oldest children of my first wife, know thoroughly. I think they know most of the stories, and I haven't started telling the little ones yet, but the little ones will know. The oldest one got his first taste of---Joshua, on the right, the ten year old---got his first taste of seeing on television a little bit of the Holocaust.

KS: Did you watch it?

A. I watched some of it. I can't...I can't really take much of it, but I make them watch.

KS: Did they ask you questions afterwards?

- A. No. The little one had no interest in it, he...it just didn't mean anything to him, but the other one is starting to recognize...they'll know.
- KS: What happens now because of your experiences in seeing what you can do in sharing with other people, your children, in a social environment...how do you feel about that? Among friends, do you share this background?
- A. Well, it depends on your emotionality, it depends on the point that you are trying to make. I don't use it socially...only when I am trying to emphasize a point or gain the emotional advantage, for example: I had a very upsetting occurrence and relationship with the family, with whom I was supposed to have a very warm ...let's put it bluntly...it's my *Machsteinus (inlaws)* of my son. Due to an altercation, I turned to him and I said, "I went through a f___ing war with ..and opened up a concentration camp, I don't have to go through this s___." So that's the only type of thing that I do with them. Occasionally, I will start in a social thing...I will start relating some of these stories, but my children, I have told them...they know (the four know)...these two don't.
- KS: You say they will? They have to be told? *It's important that they be told.*
- A. They will, absolutely...absolutely. Do you realize there are Jewish children who don't believe it? God damn! They ought to have their heads kicked in---and the parents! The parents should be beaten for permitting their children such a concept that these are lies made up by the intellectual Jew!
- KS: I...you had really...there's nothing much I can say, except to let you know that just by sharing this, making it part of recorded history from which our children can study and learn, hopefully never to repeat. *A: Well it's up to something can be done*
1: Unfortunately
- A. You know, you got Israeli teachers that come here to teach, Beth Jacob I don't worry about, but *Shavit* Israel, the Solomon Schacter--they have these intellectual brilliant Jewish children that stand up and these Israeli teachers who have lived through things---I mean, I just saw it, but they have lived through it! We had one teacher whose father was put in a dungeon in Rumania for eight years, and she's

they say it's a lie
trying to tell these children and they don't believe it--they think these are propaganda films.

KS: That's one of the reasons for our study.

A. Yeah, but you said it's not Jewish--I'm only interested in the Jewish.

KS: Well, we say it is not Jewish, but it is, ^{it is} certainly an effort to expose the inhumanity to humanity, because it was so pointed specifically...

A. It was so cold bloodedly and calculated...this is the unbelievable...it was mapped out, it was planned like I'd plan an experiment, like a business man runs a business...it was done....but all peoples became a part of it.

KS: ^{Right.} All people did become a part of it. Thank you for being so candid with us.

A. I would love to know if Harvey Weinstadt--if I got that information right. Was Harvey Seinstadt one of those ten?

(Tape ended)

D.A.