

>> Interviewer: Would you please tell me your name?

>> Berry: My name is H.S. Berry.

>> Interviewer: What does the H stand for?

>> Berry: Horace Berry.

>> Interviewer: All right. Horace, where were you born and when?

>> Berry: I was born in 1920 in Greer, South Carolina.

>> Interviewer: Did you live there?

>> Berry: Yes, up till I went to Clemson.

>> Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about your family.

>> Berry: As of now?

>> Interviewer: No --

>> Berry: Back then?

>> Interviewer: -- at that time, mm-hmm.

>> Berry: Well, I had a brother and a sister, and we were a small family, really.

>> Interviewer: Did you go to school in Greer?

>> Berry: Yes, I did.

>> Interviewer: Where did you go to school?

>> Berry: Greer High School.

>> Interviewer: And then?

>> Berry: To Clemson, and I was in the class of '41 at Clemson.

>> Interviewer: What did you do before you went into the Army?

>> Berry: Well, during high school, I had a few jobs on the side, not too many. One was taking care of a little fish pond where people fish, and the other one, I was supposed to help the clerk in the store, but I was too small to do that.

>> Interviewer: What year did you enter the Army?

>> Berry: I went in '41, right out of Clemson.

>> Interviewer: Right out of Clemson.

>> Berry: Right.

>> Interviewer: In what capacity?

>> Berry: As a second lieutenant. See, Clemson was all military at that time, and I'd say 99% of us went directly into service. In fact, I received orders to active duty before I got my diploma.

>> Interviewer: You went in as an officer?

>> Berry: A second lieutenant, yes.

>> Interviewer: And where did you serve at that time? Where were you stationed?

>> Berry: Well, initially, I went to Camp Croft for ten months, and then I went to Canal Zone for ten months. And I joined a battalion, and I spent the rest of my service in that particular battalion.

>> Interviewer: Stationed where?

>> Berry: Well, I was stationed all over. When we came back to the States, I went to Fort Benning and Colorado Springs and then California and then back to Benning and then overseas again.

>> Interviewer: What year did you go overseas?

>> Berry: '45.

>> Interviewer: And where were you stationed then?

>> Berry: Well, all over. We went after -- we were on the move.

>> Interviewer: Did you see any action?

>> Berry: Yes, I saw some action.

>> Interviewer: How did you happen to come to a camp?

>> Berry: Well, if I can explain a little something, we were -- the state of the war, we were part of the -- well, the 71st came to this camp, and 71st Infantry Division, and we were part of the Third Army, which was Patton's army. And the state of the war, the tank people were moving forward real fast, the enemy was retreating, and us in the infantry, we were going through what we called a sweeping operation. We'd go in the woods where we thought there was some small groups of the enemy and into towns, trying to prevent sniper fire and that type of thing. And then we went in one little town one morning and did our standard

procedure, and when we were leaving, we ran into some refugees. That's the first I saw of the people of this camp.

>> Interviewer: Where was this, in what country?

>> Berry: Austria, near Lambach, Austria.

>> Interviewer: Had you heard about what was going on in the camps?

>> Berry: No, not at all, nothing. We were just in the infantry, trying to survive from day to day.

>> Interviewer: And how did you get into this camp? How did you happen to get into it?

>> Berry: Well, we saw some of the inmates along the road when we were -- after we left this little town. And we knew they were prisoners. They had on striped clothes underneath all their ragged clothes. And they were starved, and there weren't many of them at that time. And some of us had chocolate bars, and some of 'em had cigarettes they gave 'em, and they ate the cigarettes. And the chocolate bars were too much for 'em. They got stomach cramps and just turned over, and unfortunately, some of 'em died right on the road. It was just too much for 'em all at once.

And then we went into Lambach, and I was assigned -- my company, K Company with the 5th Battalion, 71st Division, was assigned to protect the division rear CP, which we had standard procedures of doing certain things: guarding the bridges, certain places, and dividing -- guarding the rear CP. And we had a lot of German prisoners at that time. All the prisoners our division had been getting were sent back to the rear CP, and we had over 10,000 German prisoners at that time.

So I was told to -- this camp -- to go to it and bury the dead and send the living to a hospital in wels, Austria. I assigned my third battalion -- I mean, third platoon to go to it, and I didn't stay there all the time, but it was my duty to go by every once in a while and check on it. And there's some pictures in this book here that shows what was going on. And they were starved. They were literally starved. And some of 'em had knowledge enough to know what was going on, but most of 'em didn't. They were just sitting around dazed, trying to pick lice off themselves, and so --

>> Interviewer: About how big a camp was this?

>> Berry: well, the book says there were up to 18,000 there. Now, I don't know how I can verify that. But there were a lot of 'em there. I had no earthly idea.

>> Interviewer: How did you feel when you first came in?

>> Berry: well, I was -- I couldn't believe it. I just didn't know anybody could be treated like that. And this book relates that...this book relates that they were Hungarian Jews, distinguished doctors, lawyers, and elite type of people. And I myself couldn't understand why the Germans were trying to save 'em except for their knowledge and, if they were trying to save 'em, why didn't they feed 'em, but they didn't.

And this camp was all wooden. I don't remember seeing cement, no cement floors. I don't remember seeing barbwire. I don't remember seeing any steel. It was strictly wooden, and it appeared to me it was a temporary camp, made out of logs and slabs, slabs from a sawmill. But I don't remember seeing any fences.

But anyway, I don't know how long it took us to get 'em all to wels, Austria, that was living. And this book here will show SS

troopers -- we used only SS troopers to bury 'em. We made that as a point. Like I mentioned, we had plenty of those to go get, so we did. And under the direction of our military government, that is what I did primarily.

>> Interviewer: Could you describe a little bit of what the camp looked like?

>> Berry: Well, and as -- I keep referring to this book. You know, a picture is worth a thousand words. It was in a wooded area. It was in a thick woods. The trees weren't but about a foot in diameter, and you could be within 100 yards of it and wouldn't know it was there. And the latrine, they had 12 holes in an outhouse latrine. And most of 'em never did make it to the bathroom, and I understand they were shot if they had to get rid of anything before they got to the latrine. And the smell was unbelievable. It was just something you never forget. The inmates, or the prisoners, had tried to make little fires around and tried to cook something. There was a dead horse down the road that they'd found and tried to bring in and feed themselves.

>> Interviewer: Now, this was after the liberation?

>> Berry: This was after the liberation of this camp, yes. And this camp -- did I ever say? Gunskirchen Lager. And like I say, it's near Lambach, Austria. Now, where the name came from, I have no earthly idea.

>> Interviewer: About how many dead did you find there? Do you know?

>> Berry: There's no way to count 'em. They were scattered -- I'll relate to this book again. They were scattered all over the woods, and some of 'em tried to walk off and all. And of course

we buried 'em. We had the SS prisoners bury 'em in mass graves in the woods.

>> Interviewer: And these refugees were sent where? You sent the live ones somewhere, you said.

>> Berry: To a hospital in Wels, Austria. And we used our trucks to do it and our drivers. The SS loaded 'em. None of 'em were able to get up on the trucks. We had to help 'em get up, all of 'em.

>> Interviewer: Were there people around the camp when you liberated the camp?

>> Berry: None whatsoever. You wouldn't even know the camp was there.

>> Interviewer: About how far was it from a town? Would you have any idea?

>> Berry: From Lambach, I'd say about 2 1/2 or 3 miles. And incidentally -- I'm glad you asked that -- somebody along the line decided to send a group of us into Lambach and knock on all the citizens' doors and make 'em get out, the ones that were able, and marched 'em down to this camp so they could see it. And they weren't much -- women and children mostly. There weren't many men in the group. But they shook their head. I'm sure they didn't realize what was going on, the citizens didn't.

>> Interviewer: You said the smell was so bad. How far away could you smell it?

>> Berry: It depended on which way the wind was blowing. I'd say a hundred yards at least.

>> Interviewer: About how long did it take you to clean up the camp?

>> Berry: I don't remember that for sure. It was several days, and it may have been a week.

>> Interviewer: Then after this, the cleaning up of this camp, where did you go from there?

>> Berry: Well, I might intervene at this time, there was a...there was a fellow that was an art student, Norman Nichols, and he was sent to make sketches of some of the scenes at this camp, and they're in this book also. And then we went on to the Enns River in Austria, and we stayed there a few days. Then the war was over.

>> Interviewer: Did you see any of the other camps in Europe?

>> Berry: Yes, I went to Dachau after the war, and I have a lot of pictures of those too, and if I may, I'll get 'em to help me remind myself.

>> Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Yeah, we'd like to see some of those. Just hold them up. Put them up near your face.

>> Berry: The entrance of the buildings, I have several of those. They were elaborate buildings. These aren't the best pictures in the world. I didn't have but a camera that I'd borrowed, and the film wasn't too good. But these are the crematory where they burned 'em.

And first of all, here's a wall, and there's a stain across the top and a stain across the bottom, and I have another picture that's similar to that. They shot the prisoners that didn't want to cooperate, and they let some of 'em stand and some of 'em kneel. It was their choice, I guess, but it's such a choice.



This is another picture of the wall. You see blood stains here and blood stains there.

And as everybody knows, they had the crematory there and burned 'em. And I'm sure this is nothing new to most people that have heard of Dachau: they had this false room, no windows or anything, and they told the prisoners to undress. And the men and women were sent in there on a fake thing, like they was gonna take a shower, and they were gassed. And there's a room next door to it that was no windows and all that, and they piled the bodies in there till they got around to where they could burn 'em.

And another horrible thought I -- a horrible thing, I thought, here's a picture of a long dog pen, German police dogs -- there's a close-up of 'em -- that they helped guard the place. And they fed 'em by turning 'em loose in that room where these bodies were stored. And of course the bodies weren't burned very well, a lot of 'em, and there's a picture here showing, on top of a pile of ashes, there's a foot. There's a foot right there on top of a pile of ashes.

And like I said, it was a well-built building. I don't know if it was something that they transformed. See, here it shows...a good building with roofs and all like they have in Germany. Now, this right here, these boxes to put bodies in, I never did find what they were for. But right next to that, there was a room where they had taken some of the ashes and made little patties out 'em. I brought one home. And they put numbers on the patties, and supposedly, the Germans had sent those little patties in an urn to some of the family and make up some kind of story that they'd died this way or that way, but you know how they died. But anyway, they tried to deceive the people some way like that. I guess it was strictly for some of the propaganda that the Germans were real good at.

And there was moats all around this camp, and there were wire fences. It'd have been impossible to get out. No way in the world that a prisoner could escape from there.

>> Interviewer: Horace, how did this affect you?

>> Berry: Well, I don't really like to think about it, but it was part of history. It's inconceivable how people of one race could treat a people of another race in that way. It's just -- you can't believe it, but it happened under Hitler's regime. He certainly brainwashed a lot of people is all I know.

>> Interviewer: Were most of the American soldiers surprised when they went into Dachau?

>> Berry: Naturally, yeah.

>> Interviewer: Were there any live prisoners at all when you went into Dachau?

>> Berry: Well, some of the survivors were guides there. They told us about the gassing and the room and about the dogs and that type of thing. The dogs were gone when we were there, but some of the survivors told us all about this.

>> Interviewer: There were still a few survivors there when you were there?

>> Berry: There were a few, yes.

>> Interviewer: Had this sort of permeated throughout the Army, what was going on? Did many of the soldiers know?

>> Berry: No, not really.

>> Interviewer: Nobody had any idea?

>> Berry: Not really.

>> Interviewer: When were you discharged from the Army?

>> Berry: January of '46.

>> Interviewer: And you came -- and what did you do then? You came back home?

>> Berry: I came back to Spartanburg, yes, and I worked two years with the Clemson Extension Service and two years with the South Carolina Peace Corps Association, which was the largest peace co-op in the world at that time. It doesn't exist now.

>> Interviewer: Were you married?

>> Berry: Yes, I was married in '43, during the war.

>> Interviewer: You have children?

>> Berry: I have two boys and four grandchildren.

>> Interviewer: Horace, do you ever think about this, this experience?

>> Berry: I hate to say it, but you try to tune it off.

>> Interviewer: Did you ever talk about it to anybody?

>> Berry: Not really, no, hmm-mm.

>> Interviewer: Did you ever tell your wife about it?

>> Berry: No, I didn't. Of course she's seen the book and these pictures, but I just never have talked much about it.

>> Interviewer: Do you think it ever affected any of your thinking or your emotions?

>> Berry: Well, if you dwell on it, it will. Like I said, I just try to tune it off. Of course that's been long years ago, but I went to Emory and gave some information on this, and then I sent some information to Washington too. You know, they're building a national Holocaust building there in Washington near the Lincoln Memorial. I guess you knew all this. And I sent them some information, and I'll leave some here.

>> Interviewer: Thank you very much. Is there anything else you might like to say?

>> Berry: Not really, and I appreciate this opportunity of doing this.

>> Interviewer: We thank you so much for coming.

>> Berry: And I hope some of the schoolkids will realize what was going on there, and thank you again for this opportunity.

>> Interviewer: Thank you very much.

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