

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

HARRY ZASLOW

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Philip G. Solomon

Date: February 28, 1989

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Gratz College

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HZ - Harry Zaslow [interviewee]

PS - Philip G. Solomon [interviewer]

Date: February 28, 1989

*Tape one, side one:*

PS: This is Phil Solomon, interviewing Mr. Harry Zaslow for the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College. The date is February 28th, 1989. [tape off then on] Harry, can you please tell me where in Europe and in what unit you were serving before you arrived at the site of the concentration camp?

HZ: I was in a light artillery battalion unit, 105 millimeter guns, which usually was right behind the infantry. And we were not, our outfit was not attached to any one unit. The age of our group was between 18 and 19 years of age, and I would say that we would, we could compare ourselves to the Panzer units. Because during that, at the time of our battles in Europe, we covered--to give you an idea, backing up various different divisions and armies--we covered 4,241 miles, within a period of nine months of straight combat.

PS: That was through France, Germany?

HZ: Through France...

PS: And where did you...

HZ: France...

PS: ...hook up...

HZ: Belgium, Holland, and Germany. And mostly we ran the--north and south from Holland down to the Saar Valley and back, wherever we were needed. We backed them up with our light artillery.

PS: They were all 105 guns?

HZ: Yes.

PS: Self-propelled or...

HZ: No, they were not self-propelled.

PS: Do you want to continue your description?

HZ: Yes. Our unit was identified as the 283rd Field Artillery Battalion, and we had three batteries. Each battery had four guns, which made a total of twelve guns. I was in battery B. I was a surveyor, and also a cannoneer for our particular gun. To give you an idea of what our twelve guns did during that nine month period that we were in steady combat, we fired 45,361 rounds of shells into enemy territory. And we served under the French 1st Army in the Colmar area in February of 1945. We also served with the American 1st in Cologne, Germany in March of 1945, and we finally crossed the Rhine River with our Howitzers and Ducks [flat boats] and into the south of Stuttgart in Germany. And we saw many destroyed cities, suffering people, dead soldiers, American and German--and civilians. All of the horrors of war did I witness. On March the 26th, 1945 we crossed the

Rhine River. We were, again, we were among the first artillery units to cross the Rhine River again in the area of Worms, Germany. And in April, well, I'll stop right there.

PS: Harry, when you--after you started your journey starting in France, do you want to give us a little idea of your, the route and the major points that you and your outfit traveled?

HZ: Mmm hmm. Well, we assembled in England, and also Wales. And from there, by that time, the invasion of France had already begun and we were preparing to land in France on August the 10th, of 1944. And we landed on Utah Beach. And then, from, by that time Épinal was taken by the American forces and after that we started our way through, we went through Verdun, France, and Enkhuizen, Holland, and then we went into Bettendorf, Germany then into Colmar, France, which was, there was a very large battle there.

PS: The Colmar pocket?

HZ: The Colmar pocket, right. And, by that time, that was in February the 6th, 1945. And then we entered Germany for the first time in Bettendorf, on November the 21st, 1944. At that time that was part of the Battle of the Bulge and, luckily, I understand that about 100 American soldiers were massacred at the Battle of the Bulge by the German forces, and we were blocking, we were just north of there in Holland, protecting the flank, while the Germans then made a deep pocket into the American lines.

PS: Okay. Before you arrived at the site of the concentration camp, did you know of the existence of this particular camp that you eventually participated in the liberation?

HZ: No. I had no idea of any camp or the name of the camp.

PS: Also, before you arrived at the camp, had you heard anything at all about the mass murder of Jews and political prisoners, prisoners of war and so forth, in Germany and occupied countries?

HZ: Mmm hmm. I went into the army in June of 1943. The war had started September the 1st, 1941. And during that time, I was a teenager, and as a civilian I did not hear anything regarding any genocide or murdering of any people. The only thing I can remember was back in 1939 [coughs] excuse me, when I would hear Hitler by short wave radio, talking about what he was going to do for Germany and what he's going to do to the Jews. But it never entered my mind, the outcome, and the results as to what Hitler called the "Final Solution". But up until then I knew nothing about it. Prior to going into the army I knew nothing about it. While I was in the army, all through the training period, all through the combat time, *The Stars and Stripes*, the military mag-, newspaper never mentioned anything about it. I never read it in the papers or magazines or anywhere.

PS: Harry, when you arrived in France and proceeded your advance through France, Holland, Belgium, then into Germany, during that period did you see anything that, again, that gave you any picture of what was, what laid before you in the way of Nazi atrocities in France, Holland, Belgium, or...

HZ: The first Nazi atrocity that I heard about, which was very disturbing, and I will, I'll repeat myself, was when they just murdered 100 American soldiers in the Battle of the Bulge.

PS: Yeah.

HZ: They didn't even take them prisoner. They just murdered them. That was the first inkling that I had...

PS: Yeah.

HZ: ...of a German atrocity.

PS: And during that period, you saw no evidence of German atrocity against civilians?

HZ: No I did not.

PS: At that point.

HZ: No I did not.

PS: Then as you advanced, did you come in contact with displaced persons or prisoners of war? Did you...

HZ: This was in southern Germany. I did come across, while we were in, on the road going into our next battle site there was a man that approached me and it seemed like he had, he was, he broke out into his own freedom. And he didn't have any shoes on. And he approached me. He said, "You see that castle up there on the hill? I'd like you as an American soldier to go in there with your rifle and demand that they give me a pair of shoes." So I said to him, and in speaking Yiddish I was able to converse in German a little bit, and I said, "I'm sorry, but I can't break the law because I could be court marshaled for doing something like that." And, years later it occurred to me just in that one incident that here I was as an individual, as a soldier, who was also trained to kill in offense or defense, yet I had a conscience that I could not break the law. And here, later on, what I saw of Germany and how they broke international law, it, I, I just, it, I can't make any sense of it.

PS: Now I had pretty much the same experience, Harry, that with all the atrocities and cruelty that we saw, examples of German, you know, atrocities against humanity, still we had no--I can say that I never saw an American soldier mistreat a German civilian. We were pent up with anger, hatred, vengeance, and yet I never saw any American soldier--I think I'm proud to say that.

HZ: I would say the same thing. I was--it felt good to be an American soldier.

PS: Harry, next, can you please give us the name of the camp that you liberated, and its location? Also the date, if possible.

HZ: Well, on March the 26th, 1945, we crossed the Rhine River, and we were among the first artillery units to cross the Rhine a second time, in the area of Worms, as I might have indicated before. And we came, we fought our way into Munich, but not into the center part of Munich. It was a little town called Feldmoching, F-E-L-D-M-O-C-H-I-N-G. And in that area we saw many, many dead Germans and wrecked equipment and destroyed villages. And we ourselves, we were under tremendous fire from the German

88s. We could, we were in this open field and we could actually see the town of Munich in the distance. This was probably a suburb of it. Well that morning, I myself almost lost my life because an artillery shell landed about 30 feet from where I was. But I came out all right.

PS: A German shell.

HZ: A German shell, yes.

PS: That was in the area of Munich?

HZ: Yes.

PS: Then at that point were you aware of the concentration camp at Dachau?

HZ: No, I was not.

PS: You--it was that day that your unit and you personally saw the concentration camp of Dachau?

HZ: It was that, at that time, I don't know exactly whether it was on March the 17th, but it was around that time. We were in that area--we, and we did--by the way, we did, also we had to cross the Danube...

PS: Yeah.

HZ: ...in order to get into Feldmoching or Munich. And Feldmoching is in the north-east section of Munich, and it's, as I said it's a small town. We were there in that area from April the 25th until April the 30th of 1945. I cannot identify the exact day...

PS: Yeah.

HZ: ...when I saw Dachau.

PS: I, it was during that period. I think it was roughly around April 25th that Dachau was liberated. Can, to the best of your memory, can you describe the scene when you first saw the camp?

HZ: Yes. Well, after the Battle of Munich, we...

PS: At the time you...

HZ: For some reason or other, our unit commanders said that they would like us to go by a camp. I didn't know what the name of the camp was. So, we went in small groups and it might have been April the 25th. I mean, well, let me see [pause] I still can't identify the date that I was there.

PS: Yeah. Well, at that time, Harry, American troops had already been in Dachau, right? I don't believe there was any resistance when the first American troops went in and occupied Dachau, so this was, would you say a day, the same day, or...

HZ: Well, with hindsight, going back and reflecting on this, I would say that, yes, the American troops were in there before our outfit got there. It could have been the infantry, because we followed right up behind them...

PS: Yeah.

HZ: ...as light artillery. So, when we arrived there, in Dachau, there was no military personnel at all, from either side, either the Americans...

PS: Oh, no Americans?

HZ: ...or Germans.

PS: Or Germans?

HZ: No. No, none at all. But what I...

PS: When you were in the prison, the concentration camp of Dachau, you saw, there were still prisoners, liberated prisoners who were still there in Dachau, that had not yet been...

HZ: Mmm hmm.

PS: ...been sent to distribution points or, in other words, were there still concentration camp survivors still within the camp when you...

HZ: Yes. Yes I, there were, but if I might just back track...

PS: Yeah, sure.

HZ: ...before entering Dachau. When we drove up to the camp, we didn't, we did not enter the camp. There was a line of boxcars. It was two blocks long. We saw the doors were opened of all the boxcars. And the boxcars were filled with dead bodies, right from the floor right up to the top--on--one heap of bodies on top of another. And there were even, I'll never forget this because this picture remains in my mind up till today, it was where the, where the two boxcars connect, there was a man sitting in between the, where the boxcars connect, and he was sitting on the outside of it. And he was dead, of course. And one leg was cut off and there was toilet paper wrapped around the area of the amputation. And I was, when I saw that--there were about five other of my fellow soldiers there--and when I saw that I was, those boxcars, I was completely confused. I didn't really understand it. I didn't understand what I saw. I couldn't bring the story together as to why these boxcars filled with bodies were there. Of course, we know the story now, but at that instant moment it was alrea-, I was, in the morning hours I could not understand what was going on. But one of my fellow soldiers said to me, and we had been in training for two-and-a-half years, he said, "You see those dead bodies, Zaslow, Zaslow?" he said, "They're all Jews," he said, "and if you're not careful you're gonna land up in there too."

PS: This was one of your...

HZ: One of my buddies.

PS: Harry, you say, when you saw these bodies in the many, many boxcars, was it your impression that they were being transported to Dachau and died en route, or that they were bodies that had been, a peop-, of the concentration camp victims who died and they were--their bodies were put into the boxcars?

HZ: Well, I had assumed that they died while in transit...

PS: To, being transported to...

HZ: To, to be transported...

PS: Yeah.

HZ: ...to wherever they were going.

PS: Yeah.

HZ: And I still didn't understand why they--this was on the outside of the camp--and I did not understand what these boxcars, where they were going and what they were going to do with the bodies. And I'm, without--I would estimate that there were maybe about, for each boxcar I think there must have been about at least 200 people dead in each boxcar. They jammed them in like sardines. And there was about, I would say there was about, maybe a, seven or eight boxcars, times three, times three hundred...

PS: Seven or eight boxcars.

HZ: Seven or eight...

PS: Yeah.

HZ: Boxcars.

PS: Yeah, seven.

HZ: Yeah, which I estimate there must have been about 200 bodies in each one, so that would be like 1400 people.

PS: Do you think it's probable, or possible, that they were being transported from another area that had, was being overrun, were being transported to Dachau, in order to keep ahead of the American forces coming down into that area, and that they were probably on the--in those cars for many, many days with no food, no water, and actually were being transported to Dachau for extermination. And, of course, they obviously were exterminated in the boxcars.

HZ: Well, I can only go with the mind of a 19 year old soldier, and that's what I was at that time. Of course I'm very well-versed and knowledgeable on this problem, and of course I can make statements now, during the course of the past forty years as to what actually happened. I do know what happened. But what I'm trying to relate to you is the shock that I had, and the confusion at that moment when I saw it. Naturally they were being transported ahead of the Allied soldiers, ahead of the British and the...

PS: Yeah, that's correct.

HZ: ...the American soldiers. But we didn't know that. They--so, in hindsight I would think that what the Germans were doing was that they were trying to pull back even the evidence of the murder that they--the murderous acts that they did against the Jews and they didn't want the Allies to see it.

PS: And, you know, for a 19 year old boy to suddenly be confronted with sights like that, with no forewarning. You had no idea at all of what lay before you as you advanced into that area. So the shock must have been tremendous.

HZ: Yes.

PS: Then you were in the prison itself, right?

HZ: Well then we walked in...

PS: Inside Dachau?

HZ: Yes. We walked in through the gates of Dachau. And right at the entrance of the gate there was a Nazi SS storm trooper, pretty heavy built with a beautiful, clean uniform. He was lying dead on the ground. And I sort of like nudged him with my army

boot to see if he was alive or not, but he was completely dead. But I would assume that he was not dead for more than a few hours. That was the only German that I saw, an SS trooper.

PS: Within the camp did you see any survivors that were still...

HZ: Yes.

PS: ...within the camp?

HZ: Yes. We walked into the court of Dachau. I didn't see any of the lodgings of the inmates. I didn't see any, all I saw was there was a very large court, I guess like a half a city block, surrounded by buildings, four square. And there was a, I assume that there was German headquarters for the camp on one side, and then on the left and the right side, there were office buildings there and on the other side facing the headquarters was another building, which I did not realize what was in it. But it was the most terrible sight that I ever saw once I entered that building.

PS: Did you see in going through Dachau, did you see the instruments of death? In other words, the gas chambers, the crematorium, the...

HZ: The only thing that I saw was a room, there were three rooms. The middle room had three ovens in there. And we--the doors were open, and they were going full blast. It reminded me of a bakery shop, when one would put, when a baker would put a loaf of bread into the...

PS: They were going full blast at that time?

HZ: They were going full blast, yeah.

PS: They were still going.

HZ: I would estimate that we arrived maybe about three to four hours after the Germans were chased out.

PS: Oh, oh. I didn't realize that you had...

HZ: We didn't fight our way into the, we didn't fight our way into Dachau.

PS: Yeah.

HZ: What happened was that I can remember later, when the infantry, the American infantry chased the German soldiers, or the Nazis, out of Dachau, they went, they took flight into Munich for refuge, and for military protection under the German army. And that's why when our outfit arrived, that's why we had such a big battle with them.

PS: Yes.

HZ: But they--that battle was after they abandoned Dachau.

PS: Dachau, and went into...

HZ: And they went into Munich.

PS: Were there any bodies, any corpses still within the camp when you arrived there?

HZ: Yes.

PS: Any of the dead, in addition of course to the boxcars.

HZ: Yes. We entered this building which was on one side of the courtyard. As I mentioned before, it had three rooms in there. The middle room was the three ovens, and all three ovens were working steady. Now there were two with bodies being burned.

PS: Bodies were still in there?

HZ: Yeah, they were being burned.

PS: Yeah.

HZ: And facing the ovens, the room to the right was filled to the top with bodies. Some were old and decayed. There were many of them that were, many bodies that were freshly killed. And that was on the right room. And on the left room, on the other side of the room that had the ovens, it was the same situation. In fact some people were murdered maybe an hour, a half an hour before we arrived. They were just...

PS: That close. You were that...

HZ: They were right on top.

PS: ...that close on the heels of the fleeing guards.

HZ: Yeah. They...

PS: Now with your estimate of seven or eight boxcars with, you said upwards of 200 bodies in each boxcar...

HZ: In each boxcar, yeah.

PS: Which would we say, upwards of 1500 bodies just in the boxcars, can you give any estimate of the number of bodies that you saw within Dachau and the train, the boxcars?

HZ: Yes. Well, each room was about, I'd say about 10' by 12' in size. They had -and there were two rooms like that, on either side of the ovens. And the bodies were stacked, and they, the ceiling was about eight feet high. And the bodies were stacked about six-and-a-half, seven feet high.

PS: Those rooms were...

HZ: From wall to wall. Wall to wall with bodies.

PS: Those rooms were not the gas chambers?

HZ: They were adjacent to the gas...

PS: Adjacent to the...

HZ: No the, I didn't see any gas chambers.

PS: Oh oh.

HZ: All I did was, I saw the three ovens.

PS: Yeah.

HZ: That's all I saw.

PS: And the rooms where they had the bodies ready to go into the ovens.

HZ: Right.

PS: So your estimate could be pretty well up into many thousands just of unburned bodies that you saw there.

HZ: Yes.

PS: Did you have any responsibilities, had you been assigned any personal responsibilities in, any arrangements or transfer or anything to do with the few survivors that were still there?

HZ: I...

PS: In caring, in the caring or, either feeding or medical care or transfer of these survivors?

HZ: We were in Dachau for about two hours. And we didn't see any survivors that--well there's another description I'd like to give you. It's the one I saw in the courtyard.

PS: Yeah, sure.

HZ: The courtyard was spotless, absolutely clean. And it was--the camp was very well managed. And it was almost like sanitized. What a contradiction between having a clean, sanitary buildings on one side and having death on the other side. And I believe that the keep--the innkeepers, the Dachau innkeepers there--I call them innkeepers--what would they be called?

PS: The guards, yeah.

HZ: The guards, the people who worked there, the Germans that worked there.

PS: Yeah.

HZ: Yeah. In order to prevent any epidemic from spreading through the camp, which would include the Germans themselves, from what I saw, they worked very hard to dis-, to burn the bodies and dispose of them as quickly as they possibly could, working around the clock.

PS: It's surprising. Well, the reports I've had concerning most of the camps, that disease was rampant. The filth, that in the courtyards that you described, that bodies, even the--some of the survivors were just laying there in their own filth. So you found very sanitary conditions on the exterior of the buildings?

HZ: I was in the area where...

PS: Of the courtyard.

HZ: ...the Commandant would...

PS: Yeah.

HZ: He was running the camp. They were running the camp.

PS: Right, yeah. Like a parade ground.

HZ: Like a parade ground, right. I was not deep into the...

PS: Yeah.

HZ: ...into the camp itself. I didn't see any of the quarters where the inmates slept or anything like that. I didn't see bunks.

PS: Harry, did you have any personal contact with living survivors, and if so, could you give me a reaction of prisoners who had just been, you'd say liberated two, like two or three hours?

HZ: Yes, well, we had another experience when we first walked in there, into the courtyard. The--my description of the ovens came second, but I'd like to tell you what I saw first.

PS: Yeah, surely.

HZ: Okay. In the courtyard there were about 18 men, lined up in military fashion, standing at attention. They did not--some of them wore like half uniforms, German uniforms. Some of them did not. There were about I'd say about 14 or 15 inmates that were there, and they, those inmates had these, this lineup of the people, these soldiers, they had them in, they had them lined up standing at attention. And from the...

*Tape one, side two:*

PS: Harry Zaslow. Harry, will you continue?

HZ: Sure. Yeah. When we entered into the courtyard, there was this big fellow, and he was speaking Polish. And he looked pretty healthy. But he was an inmate himself, and he just, when he saw me, he said, "*Amerikanski!*" And he just embraced me so hard and so tight that my helmet fell off of my head. And he invited us into the courtyard where these 18 German soldiers were standing at attention. But later on, I found out that they were not German soldiers. I believe that the SS troops, they were in charge of that camp too. There were SS soldiers there. These were SS soldiers, but they were not German. They came from all over Europe. And the 18 that we saw lined up there, they were Polish, they were French...

PS: But they were serving in the German SS?

HZ: They were, that's right. They were serving the German SS and they were probably managing the Dachau camp. And the inmates, I'm very much surprised even till this day that, when they were liberated, those, within those few hours, I was really surprised that they really didn't murder those...

PS: Yeah, most...

HZ: Those foreign SS troopers.

PS: I'm surprised to hear that too, because most of the reports we've had is that those German SS or guards who did not escape fast enough were just, you know, literally ripped to pieces. There were some exceptions. In fact we've heard there were some guards quick grabbed uniforms that, you know, the striped uniforms of concentration camp inmates and tried to escape. But the inmates recognized them and...

HZ: Really.

PS: ...killed them.

HZ: Well, I don't know why the inmates there treated them, allowed them to continue living. Maybe it was because they knew that these troopers, these SS troops were not German. And maybe that influenced them not to kill them. Or they could have, they probably were mistreated but not, maybe not to the extent that an SS German trooper would do.

PS: Was there any verbal communication between men within your unit and these SS guards who were lined up?

HZ: No, we just watched the military procedures. They were putting them through various movements, military movements. The inmates were ordering these SS guards--I call them foreign troops...

PS: Right.

HZ: They were ordering them to perform various military movements. And if they did not respond in a military fashion--as an example, one of them, I guess they told him in German, at least they had, and they said, the inmate, one of the inmates said to the

eighteen lined up, "If you, if any one of you just flick your eyes or your, you will be beaten severely." And so they couldn't even close their eyes. They had to stand there at attention. But one of them did not. He fluttered his eyes, and they pulled him out of rank, and they pulled down his pants, and they whipped him severely. And we were observing that.

PS: Well at that point, Harry, didn't the American command take over and consider them as prisoners of war and take them into custody as PWs?

HZ: I think we were there before then.

PS: Oh, oh.

HZ: We were--I would say that at the time, at the moment that we were in the camp, it was utter chaos. It was a matter of the inmates at that moment taking control of the camp and of the guards, whoever remained there. And when we arrived, there were no American military police. There were, there was nobody that was official to take over the camp.

PS: You were really on the scene very early.

HZ: Yes.

PS: Which means, at that point, naturally you did not come equipped with food and medical supplies to treat the survivors. Had anything come into the camp prior to your arrival for the survivors, for feeding and medical treatment?

HZ: I didn't see any of that.

PS: Probably not.

HZ: But the inmates that we saw were well-fed. There must have been an arrangement between the camp commandant and these inmates where they were the enforcers of the prisoners...

PS: Yeah.

HZ: ...in the camp. So they were in pretty good health.

PS: Yeah. Among the survivors, did you see any children?

HZ: No I did not.

PS: No children. Did the experience of seeing these prisoners have any affect on your feeling about being a part of the war and fighting Germany?

HZ: Well when I, this was the first that I heard that a civilized nation like Germany, the first that I *saw*, not heard, but *saw*, that a civilized nation like Germany, who's known for its high technology and culture and I had known about the Germans from the '30s that they were--that it was a great nation. And I was really shocked to see what I saw, that it was absolutely--it was worse than barbarian, the way they treated those people and the way they had the, they committed absolute genocide in the 20th century. But I'm trying to--what I'm--my description here, I'm trying to describe not what I know now, but what I saw and heard in 1945.

PS: Yeah, I agree with you, that my own experience, there was many, many instances and periods of genocide prior to World War II and the Nazi atrocities. But we always I think ascribed it to areas of the world we considered uncivilized. They were

savages. But here, as you say, was a country like Germany, this was probably one of the most highly developed societies and cultures in the world. They were best, I mean their educational system and you know, their production. And yet, if it happened there it can happen anywhere.

HZ: Yeah. I'd like to tell you now, that's the end of my story with Dachau. I don't know any more than that.

PS: Very good, but what we...

HZ: That's probably enough.

PS: Yeah.

HZ: But I would say that around the camp of Dachau according to my memory, there were beautiful homes, mansions, all the way around. And there were very wealthy people that lived there. And, they saw the smokestacks running but...

PS: Either they...

HZ: Either they were helpless to do anything or they just ignored it.

PS: Now, when you saw Dachau, or in the hours afterwards, were you aware at that time, did it enter your thinking that this was only one of many, many concentration camps, that what you were looking at was multiplied many, many times with the Treblinkas and the Auschwitz and Buchenwald? Did you have any idea at that time that you were looking at only one of many, many concentration camps?

HZ: I didn't have any idea about it at all. And neither did...

PS: None of us did really.

HZ: No.

PS: In your own mind, can you explain German decisions that led to the setting up of concentration camps?

HZ: Well, there was the Nazis who were one of the most antisemitic group of people that history has ever known. They set out to solve the Jewish, what they, what Hitler called the "Jewish Problem". And it's just unbelievable that he would solve the problem by murder and genocide.

PS: Do you think, Harry, that most of the, your buddies in your outfit had about the same reaction as yours with the sights that they saw there? My implication is that you being Jewish, that whether others felt the same degree of horror committed against humanity in general.

HZ: Well, I had to set up a self, psychologically, and be in combat and seeing many dead, people killed, German soldiers, Americans and civilians. In order to keep my psyche and my psychological balance, I had to sort of like detach myself from all that was happening, because if I did not, I would not have been able to go through it, what I went through. And as an example of what I just said, when we left Dachau back to our gun emplacement--which wasn't too far from Dachau--it was lunch time. After seeing a sight like that, smelling the burning bodies and the sight of it, I forced myself to have lunch,

because I said to myself, "I can't, I've got to keep going. I can't have this affect me in that way where I wouldn't survive myself."

PS: After you left Dachau, you did not see any other concentration camps, right?

HZ: No.

PS: Did you see, like going, did you continue south of Munich?

HZ: Yes.

PS: Did you see, say going through southern Bavaria, south of Munich, did you see survivors in the woods just wandering, survivors of concentration camps in their striped uniforms, just wandering through the woods looking for food or, probably afraid to go into any of the villages because they didn't know how many, how, whether or not there'd be SS there. Did you see any of the remnants of survivors, starving in the woods?

HZ: It's, you know, really amazing that you ask that, because I saw nothing. And the reason why I saw nothing, looking back, is because there were very few survivors. If there was, if there were like a couple hundred people would have been able to escape from Dachau after the Allied armies came in, naturally we would see them. But there were hardly any survivors at all.

PS: Harry, we've covered, I think we've covered this subject very thoroughly. Is there anything at all that you would like to add to your testimony?

HZ: Yes, I would. Just for a little foresight, as far as antisemitism is concerned. When I was in basic training I did not identify myself as being Jewish. I said I, my parents came from Russia. I said I was a Russian. I did it purely as an experiment. Not to hide the fact that I was Jewish, but I wanted to experiment. And then, while we were, at the end of our basic training, Rosh Hashanah came along, and our group, our battery, was being punished. And it was on the night of Yom Kippur. And the sergeant said, "Everybody here has to wash down the floors." They'd been washed down so many times the floors were bleached already. They were practically white. And he said, "Everybody get into their fatigues." And Zaslow's getting into his uniform, and the Sergeant--into his dress uniform--and the Sergeant asked me, "Where are you going, Zaslow?" I said, "Well, I'm, we have a Jewish holiday. It's the evening of Yom Kippur. And even though the battery is being punished, I feel that it's more important that I go to services." And I picked myself up, and I started to walk out and I said, "Sergeant, I'm sorry. Whatever you want to do with me, after I come back, you can take action against me." But I felt confident enough that living in a democratic country and being in a democratic army, that if this subject would ever have come up by the fact that here, a Jewish soldier, his friends were being, his comrades were being punished, and here I walk out on them, and I'm not willing to take that punishment as well. But nothing happened.

PS: No repercussions?

HZ: No, there was no, there were no repercussions. That was one thing about antisemitism, there wasn't any that I saw. I walked down this aisle. There were beds on both sides, there were about fifteen beds on both sides of the bunk. And everybody just

stood there motionless and watched me as I walked down the aisle and out of the building. And I went to Yom Kippur services that night. The other experience that I can tell you about antisemitism which I experienced, was at, during the closing days of the war. We were assigned to guarding the German prisoners. And there was a German stockade, and there must have been a couple thousand German soldiers in that stockade. And there were American posts, lookout posts, at a high level, which guarded them 24 hours a day. And our unit was assigned to do that. And I climbed up the steps to the tower about 3:00 in the morning. And I took my position to watch the--to just make sure that everything was in order with these German, captured German soldiers. I looked down at the railing, and I saw on the railing carved out with a knife, "Zaslow is a dirty Jew." And I said to myself, "How ironic this could be. Here we went into Germany to erase Nazism and murder, and a very bad people, and I would say that American, some American soldiers were just as antisemitic." And I come to, it comes to my mind right now that if they had a chance, they could do just as good as the SS troopers.

PS: They would do the same thing.

HZ: They would do the same thing. And that really hurt when I saw that, because we were on the same side.

PS: And live within your own unit.

HZ: Yes.

PS: Harry, we thank you very, very much for your most valuable testimony. This has been Phil Solomon interviewing Mr. Harry Zaslow for the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archives. Harry, this will become, this tape will become a permanent part of the Archives, and we thank you very, very much we thank you.