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Joe Kahoe interview 2/9/95

snap

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: sight..It was eh late April early May we weren't

so sure exact dates, but I know it was after the 28th of

April and about the first of May. And this was after after

we had left \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Germany and eh probably around

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Austria in that particular area is where we first

saw where I first saw uh members coming out of the prison

camps, concentration camps.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: Yes. Where I was with we were the 761st Tank

Battalion eh was the sign at that time the 71st Division.

Eh, my particular assignment at the time was eh Liaison

Officer between my company and Reg Regimental Headquarters.

So I wasn't with the immediate front-line, I was like in

between the front-line and the regiment. So as the troops

went ahead be used as back in those days called a Liaison

Officer is a well a high paid messenger. In those days

take messages back from the front line back to the regiment

and from the regiment back to the front line, tell them what

was going on. So that was my assignment at that particular

time.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: All right. We eh we had been alerted at that

time that the front line troops had gone trough some prison

camps and that that there were a lot a lot of prisoners eh

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who had been released and we warned, particularly about

feeding them. To be careful when they come on out. So as

we proceed down the road and this happened and this happened

for days and days eh we would see them coming with those

stripped uniform. They were all eh real skinny, emaciated,

and the fact they were starving, so we were they were warned

not give them anything to eat, because all we had were those

K rations. They were highly concentrated and if they ate

those things they it it might kill them. And all they'd

comm'n they were just dragg'n, com'n in the way that they

could und they were housed either in

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_or comrades, something like that.

And as they approached us and we would more or less wave at

um and that make sure they'd get out, wouldn't run over um

and told them you know keep on moving to the rear because

they were coming from the front and were trying to move them

to the rear area.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: From the camps that were off the main road.

They we were told that there were a lot eh smaller camps

that in Austrian or right at the Austrian-German border

around that particular area. But you could see um coming

from from the camp trying to I guess get back to the rear

area, or wherever they could get because the eh Germans who

had eh been chased out of the camps and left more or less

left them on their own and soon they were they were

liberated they they started hit'n for the road and trying to

go home which ever that was. They wanted to get away from

the fighting at least.

SWB:

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JOE KAHOE: Yeah, they were walking like the walking around

like zombies. What not, I guess they really didn't know

what direction, they knew that if we were going forward,

it's best for them to go back, because they they didn't were

I guess they had no idea of what ah city they may have been

near or whatever. All they knew they were getting away and

they were free, free area.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: No, ah, I guess they we didn't at that time, we

had we had no training in German or any other language. My

little experience at that time had been strictly in the

combat zone so we had no language training. And I like I

say all they could say was American or Comrade, and you just

wave at them and you know that's about all you could do to

give um a smile and just wave, and that all that's the

extent of our conversation. Because when I saw them we

wanted to move. There was no stopping to talk. We were

just going mov'n on ahead.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: Oh, they were all just skin and bones and beards

because you know that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and extremely weak. Many of

them you know they just couldn't run or anything like that,

they were just you could see that they could just bar barely

walk. They were just in bad bad shape.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: Well, we, in my position, we we were really more

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more concerned of making sure that these GI's wouldn't feed

um. Because they had been warned and knowing other

American's solders were, it it's pretty hard with all the

stuff we had not to give them something. And some of them,

some of them did feed um, but that was in my position our

hardest thing and we talked about how how bad they looked.

We talked about that and wondered. We had, we didn't know

too much about the all the camps that had been liberated or

really at that time all the atrocities that had gone in the

camp. Uh in fact there the only men, basically all we saw

were were men in this camp. I I can't recall seeing any any

children or women. That's all I saw was were men.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: No No. No....

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: We We knew that they were pris eh we thought that

they were just regular Polish or German or Jewish or Polish

or Jewish prisoners and we we knew who what they were. But

see by being on the move there was no stand'n around. We

were concerned about not hurting any of um. Or let them have

hurt themselves because in many cases, you know, they came

so close to the vehicles uh it wouldn't have take too much

for some of them to fall and get run over and what not. I

imagine people gave them cigarettes if if they asked for

any. But I don't think, it didn't look to me that they were

in ah ah begging type mood. I think the main thing were

answered in their freedom and and getting on in some shelter

or away at least from that prison camp.

SWB:

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JOE KAHOE: No . No. You mean about being happy about getting

out. I you it couldn't be reflected on their face when they

spoke they spoke you know happy, you know glad you're hear.

But I could see you could see where it was pretty hard for

them to really smile, no laughing or anything like that. I

guess there were some smiles in the bunch. But they had a

real solemn look. You could you could see that they were

they were glad to be away but they were not in a position to

just be smiling like they had won a football game or

anything like that.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: Well, af, eh, probably a year after the war was

over, I was stationed in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Germany which was not too

far from Nuremberg, between Nuremberg and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

And I was Commandant of Polish Displaced Person's Camp.

Inhale....it was run by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_eh was

all civilians, they did all the administration and eh I was

there with one one sergeant. We had eh about fifteen

German-Police and then there were about 1500 Polish

displaced persons in the camp. They had their own eh I

guess commanders and what not within the camp. Eh, my

responsibilities was more or less to see that they were fed

and that the camp was kept up clean. Make almost daily

inspections and went to make sure that everything was

alright. And to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_a lot of complaints because at

that particular time that eh the people in the city were

complaining about some of the eh displaced persons coming

into the camp, eh into town and doing things. I suppose

naturally at night and they'd come back and to keep peace

between the German guards who who had the responsibility.

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These weren't oh German solders, but I thought they were

civilians that acted as guards for the camp.

SWB:

JOE KAHOE: I might say these were families too. Now, that

was family situation and there were all where they were

stationed were old German Army barracks. And you had more

or like husband, wife, and and children altogether.

SWB: CUT

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