

August Storkman

Tape 2 of 2

Question: Liberated a camp?

Answer: It was obvious that local civilians had no idea what had gone on there.

Question: So when you liberated this camp who brought the?

Answer: The message went all the way back to SHAEF, Supreme Headquarters, Eisenhower, and even before that Patton said get those sons of bitches in here and let's see what is going on, and like I say there were some that had to know, but there were also a bunch of people that had no idea.

Question: And you say it was men, women and children.

Answer: People right here. Take a group and you didn't take 50 or 100 but you took 25.

Question: What was some of the reactions?

Answer: Oh they were horrified. Lots of, most of the women were crying all the way through, men were trying to hold it.

Question: Was the camp removed enough from town that out of sight out of mind or?

Answer: Well, it was removed a little bit but it was more like a factory. The people that were there too busy small talk, small town. They are the same people that really didn't realize how bad Hitler was.

Question: Had you realized how bad Hitler was prior to?

Answer: Oh had an idea, of course until we got into the war why, it began to be a little more obvious. Also being on the West Coast we were thinking more in terms of the Japanese.

Question: Again, that's where geographically, it is interesting, I mean I talked to somebody who grew up in Kansas, World War II?

Answer: so?

Question: what about rationing? Didn't have rationing. What about this, that, didn't exist, and I never thought about Gig Harbor that you got the naval shipyard, you had Fort Lewis, you had McChord, so you're right in the middle of.

Answer: And there are so many other things. You say the navy shipyard, what about Bangor, Manchester, Keystone.. Keyport, you keep on like that all these other installations and while they are not all big there is still a bunch of stuff going on there.

Question: See, that's where you know if you're old enough, the war did have a real fear of being attacked

Answer: A huh.

Question: and as you move further away less and less which is you know what communications were that period versus today where before it happens we know where, who is going where in Afghanistan, I mean it's a crazy world in that way.

August Storkman

Tape 2 of 2

Question: I talked to one veteran and they liberated one of the camps and he said that for him that was the hardest part or one of the most powerful parts. He said they had all been (inaudible), you know, the end of the war and they were joking around and all of that and before they got there they could smell it and he said as they got there everybody went silent.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: He said they could talk about everything else in the war but when they got there they did their stuff and it was amazing what it did just shutting off all conversation and everything. It is a travesty. I mean its like anything, I've heard some people say well war is not people against people it's governments or a person you know but who do you hold animosity towards?

Answer: Well, if there is somebody shooting at you aren't you going to stop and figure now why, how come, right quick you shoot back.

Question: When you went over did you have a vision about who the war was against other than that you were protecting America?

Answer: Well, I suppose you could say protecting America, but it was more of my feeling in some fashion get out from under Hitler and his ilk. The Japanese they weren't oh the individuals were worse, it was a strange, strange feeling.

Question: Now I'm making an assumption, are you a religious person? If you are, my question would be, did you face a religious dilemma going into battle or I've heard people say better thee than me.

Answer: I'll have to admit I was rarely moved that way, I had other things to do.

Question: Stay alive for one thing.

Answer: I caught hell and I should have caught hell from my family because I wrote very seldom but when 3 or 4 guys will crawl over to your fox hole and say here can you censor this? We had to censor everything. I was a little too careful I think. Lot of them made it right, mark it down that it was checked, but I would look a little bit and then I could lick it, seal it and send it. Well after 3 or 4 fellows or 5 come in and you don't have that kind of time you're thinking of something else, I should have but I didn't.

Question: That's the thing, it seems to me if I'm in the middle of a war, I'm going to have other things I'm taking care of. What was your rank?

Answer: I was a first lieutenant.

Question: First lieutenant.

Answer: Probably the worst job in the army is being a platoon leader.

Question: Why so?

Answer: Well, if you're doing it right you're out leading. The thing they teach you at Fort Benning School for Boys, follow me, and that's the way so often have to be. You look and why don't you? If you're doing a job right it's no fun.

August Storkman

Tape 2 of 2

Question: Was one of your jobs, did you ever have to write letters home to families?

Answer: I didn't do that, especially by the time I got there the original cadre, the original group, there were only 2 or 3 out of the original company. They were all changed, so we didn't form any real close relationships and only once and this was after I was back and I'm still ashamed of how I wrote it, but there was a notice in American Legion magazine. I don't know if you've seen one of these magazines or not but they have Comrades in Distress or like a bulletin board and this one here was a fellow, parents wanting to know if anybody had met their son and wanted to know if you knew him where was he, you know. They wanted something more, and so I saw that and I read it out loud and everybody was there said well you are going to answer, so I did, but instead of spending the whole letter on him there was hardly anything I could say because there were four replacements that came up that night and they hardly got to know, they were in my platoon, they hardly got to know the platoon sergeant, the platoon guides, or the squad leaders, or me, and we took off the next morning that is when we were in the skirmish line after we got done I was wandering around looking at all the people where they were and about that time the battalion commander came along in his half track and he said where did all these guys come from and who do they belong to and I said they belonged to me. AAAA, do you want to check some names? There were four fellows right there that came up last night, you can get their names from the first sergeant, anyhow, when I started to write the letter what do you say. I saw your son long enough to get his name and I'm sure the rest of the people in the platoon took care of him, I mean, how much can you say, but I should have, I feel bad that I'm sure the letter they got was far from satisfactory.

Question: Let me see if I understand right, he was killed?

Answer: Yeah. All four of those replacements were killed.

Question: That again, I mean, what do you say in a situation like that.

Answer: Yeah, I'm sure, but a little bit of, you wouldn't have to go into preaching, but it would've been nice to put a few words together.

Question: Did you have friends that you lost in the service with you?

Answer: Not with me. I was so far away from, I went to Europe in an infantry unit, so many from where I came from were, a whole bunch of them worked for Morrison and Knudsen, just a whole bunch of them, so they went that way.

Question: After that you ended up being the Yankee, didn't you?

Answer: Yeah, yeah, and the other thing too, somebody from Napa, Idaho, near Boise, you Mormon, everybody wanted to know, oh, are you a Mormon?

Question: That's like they say if you're from Utah.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: I'm from a family of sever, oh, are you a Catholic?

Answer: Oh gee.

August Storkman

Tape 2 of 2

Question: Do you think, and thank you for sharing that part about seeing the bulletin board and how do you respond to a parent and again looking back hind sight is always 20/20, oh I should have done this differently, do you think there is any message to be left with generations that you and I will never meet about World War II from your personal view?

Answer: I feel a little on the futile side. There are things that should be done, but, why don't you, I feel kind of frustrated, an exercise in futility. Don't get caught up in whatever. Well, it hardly has to do anything, but my mother got caught up in the business of, who was on the senator that got caught up in the witch hunt for McCarthy, she was again American Legion Auxiliary, she was again at a national convention and here he came in carrying a brief case and a couple of guards following along and put the brief case up in front of and he went into his speech and mother was taken by this speech, why he was right there and in that brief case he had all those letters and I said mother he probably could have had yesterday's newspaper in that brief case and you didn't see it besides if it is super secret he isn't allowed to have it out like that and it kind of shocked her, well, I think there is a lot of that sort of thing. People are taken in by, again I'm digressing, the business of the music man. That spell binder, I'll have his....

Question: Trouble right here in River City. I think it has to do with there are people with positive charisma and people with negative charisma and somebody that can bring in people like that and get the lather rabid activities going again.

Answer: Yeah. I shouldn't but I think of Tim Iman. We're on an entirely different subject but there is a what a parallel, yeah.

Question: The more things change the more they stay the same.

Answer: Well, have I give you enough or too much, or?

Question: No, quickly, the medals you have, you have the Purple Heart.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: You got that for being wounded.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Silver star?

Answer: There's commendation stuff in there sort of a story about it, but the Distinguished Service Cross is the 2nd highest next to the Congressional Medal.

Question: Where did you get that?

Answer: Again in Europe, well right about the time we were in this thing with a battalion commander, oh near the little village of (Schmierofen?) hard to find, not too far from Kassel, then the Silver Star was not too far from Kaiserlautern, and I'd have to go back and look at the village for the Bronze Star, then well the rest are participation.

Question: Yeah, those are different theatres?

Answer: The one for the European theatre, two battle stars, and then there is a well, read them off there, mainly that you were in a place and you participated. Each one of those

August Storkman

Tape 2 of 2

important to me because each one of those was worth five points and after you get so many points then you get shipped home except that they didn't count officer's points.

Question: It is interesting because you talk about half hazard the medals and I look at those with a bit of awe and respect for what you did and I think some people would put that into the hero classification, the people that went and fought for the freedom's we have today, but it sounds like for you, I assume you take pride in them.

Answer: It's nice to have and it's nice to have people know it but beyond that I have a very close friend, he's just that far behind me younger, and he has been in the last few years more than just a little kind and he came up with a thing about a week before you called me, he wanted to talk to a friend of his who is with the News Tribune, he says you've done so many things there should be some recognition just for being, he said I'd like to get you some notoriety. I said the last thing in the world. Well, he said, think about it Well, I thought about it and I called him. I said, Alex, it's nice but let's just go back to having our lunch every Wednesday noon and giving each other a bad time, and besides well then I got your letter and I said besides I have got this and I have already said haven't I about the gal from British Broadcasting Company, ok, all of this occurred right about the same time, well, I said, I've got enough. Let's go I want to get another glass of beer.

Question: It's amazing how it all comes into play at the same time, you know, for us interviewing the vets has been a real honor. We've been real fortunate in being able to have conversations with people especially some it's real interesting some are very modest with it, some they live by whatever they have done forever, then as I started interviewing I found out and I don't mean to disrespect them but they weren't somewhere, I mean they have their stories didn't hold water, which I felt sad about that, but I've talked to some of the most humble people when I wonder what they did, but the one CB that I talked to, Don Newby, said no no, the heroes are the ones that have a white cross somewhere and didn't come home.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Well, I'll get you out of mike so you can go down to lunch on Wednesday.