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Albert R. Panebianco oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, September 5, 2008

Albert R. Panebianco (Interviewee)

Michael Hirsh (Interviewer)

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[Transcriber's note: The Interviewee's personal information has been removed, at the request of the Interviewer. This omission is indicated with ellipses.]

Mrs. Panebianco: Hello?

Michael Hirsh: Hi, this is Michael Hirsh calling.

Albert Panebianco: Oh, Mike, I'm sorry. I know I've been on the sick list, just about getting over this flu.

MH: Oh that's no fun.

AP: How have you been?

MH: I've been fine. How are you?

AP: Good.

MH: You doing better?

AP: A little better, Mike.

MH: Is this a good time to talk, or want to wait a few days?

AP: Well, if you could wait a few days, I would appreciate it. What would you want me to get for you, Mike?

MH: I just want to hear about your experiences liberating the camps.

AP: Well, as far as Dachau, you know, we started off on the morning of the twenty-ninth [of April 1945].

MH: Hang on one second—is it okay for you to talk now?

AP: Yeah, sure.

MH: Let me just turn the tape recorder on.

AP: Okay.

MH: Why don't you give me your name and spell it for me, please.

AP: You want that now?

MH: Yes, please.

AP: My name is Albert R. Panebianco, spelled P, as in Paul-A-N, as in Nancy-E-B, as in boy-I-A-N-C-O.

MH: And your address, please.

AP: The address is....

MH: And your phone number I have; it's....

AP: That's correct.

MH: And your date of birth?

AP: 12-26-22 [December 26, 1922].

MH: And how old were you when you went in the service?

AP: What was I? Eighteen or nineteen, eighteen or nineteen. I had just come out of high school.

MH: And you went in where?

AP: I went in—I'm just trying to think. I went down to the naval base; it was in Philadelphia [Philadelphia Naval Shipyard]. And then they sent me to Fort Meade, Maryland, I think it was.

MH: So what year was that, do you guess?

AP: Well, forty-one [1941]—I guess it was forty-three [1943].

MH: Just tell me your story.

AP: Let me begin with where we started, because you're mainly concerned just with the Dachau liberation. We started off in the morning at 7:30, and Lieutenant Colonel Felix Sparks was our battalion commander.

MH: This is April 29, forty-five [1945].

AP: April 29, forty-five [1945]. And he was given orders that we were going to go down and take Munich, Germany. While we were in the process of doing that, he received another call and told him that Camp Dachau was right in front of him and be prepared to take over Camp Dachau and not let anyone in or out of the camp after he seized it. Now, that—what happened after he got that account, Company K, that I was with, we were riding tanks. And we were moving pretty fast. And Company L was going toward the town of Dachau, which is right adjacent to the camp itself. That's why people couldn't believe that people in that town didn't know what was going on with the—

MH: Camp; yeah, none of them ever knew anything.

AP: That's right.

MH: They didn't see it, they didn't smell it, they didn't hear it.

AP: They didn't smell it and I don't know how they couldn't have smelled it, but that was it. So, as far as we were concerned, we were already ahead of L and I Company. There were three companies, K, I and L. I Company was in reserve. Well, when Colonel Sparks got this information, he took I Company out, because he said that was the only company he had left. And they were going to liberate the camp. That's how I Company got involved with the liberation.

MH: Your rank was what?

AP: I was a staff sergeant.

MH: How did you happen to be riding tanks?

AP: Well, you see, when they don't meet much opposition and they feel they got a little leeway to go, they'll put you in tanks or trucks, just that you could speed. They did that when they made the invasion of southern France, also.

MH: So, what unit were the tanks from, do you remember?

AP: Oh, the tanks—well, they gave the colonel a full complement. He had the 191st Tank Battalion with us and he had medics with us, and he had forward observers of artillery

with us. Oh, he had the full complement that he would be able to—if anything turned up, that he would be able to take care of it. So, he was pretty well stacked.

MH: So, you're now on the tanks, and you're heading toward Dachau.

AP: And we're heading toward Dachau. All of a sudden, we do an about face and now we're coming back. We already traveled, and we were coming back because we were to the left of the camp. The camp was liberated by I Company, and they must have radioed us and told us, "Hey, come on back." To make a long story short, the three companies were back that night in Camp Dachau. L Company was in the town. What we had to do was take a step on the side of that town, and you were in the camp. So, the three companies were there that night, and then the following morning, K Company, which I was with, was assigned to take over guard duty in Camp Allach, A-l-l-a-c-h. It was a political prison camp there, and I had—I had charge of the women's section.

MH: Was that adjacent to the big concentration camp?

AP: Not adjacent to. Now, I don't recall exactly the distance from Dachau to that camp. But this is where all this confusion has come about, that the people say they liberated Dachau and this and that. But there were so many of them.

MH: Dachau had more than 200 sub-camps, I understand.

AP: Yes. I don't know if it was 200 but yes, they had a lot of sub-camps, as a consequence. But this one, we pulled out the next morning to go to Camp Allach; that was the original Dachau concentration camp. It was built in 1933.

MH: Tell me about it. The next morning, this is April 30—

AP: Yes, yes.

MH: So you were still on the tanks?

AP: Oh, no, no, no. We had them going back to Dachau that night, that afternoon. And then we stayed there that night.

MH: Did you go into the camp?

AP: Oh, yes.

MH: Well, let's back up then. On the twenty-ninth.

AP: All right, on the twenty-ninth. Well, this is a little hazy to me; it's a long time ago.

MH: You're entitled to be hazy.

AP: I know we went back into the camp, and some of the things we saw and the odors and what have you, I'll never forget. But, hey, everybody tells you that.

MH: But tell me about it. I mean, you went into the camp—Sparks had already gone in?

AP: Yes.

MH: And by the time you got there, the shooting was over?

AP: Yes, yes.

MH: So you went into the outer perimeter area and the inmates of the camp were still locked up in the central portion?

AP: Well, some of them were, and because they had a variation of prisoners in there. They had SS troopers in there, and they had a couple of our Allied boys, who could smell 'em, even though they changed clothes, some of them. You know, to say they were SS troopers. But we had a couple French men that could practically smell them out and know who were and who weren't. But as far as going into there, we just went in there—in fact, I can't even remember where we slept, believe it or not, that night, if we slept on the outskirts of it or we slept inside. You know, I'm getting old.

MH: That's okay. But what did you see when you went in?

AP: Well, when we—when I went in there, the most I can remember is we saw all these bodies laying around. And I can remember that they had some of the people—they bulldozed long—I'll call them trenches, long trenches which were to bury the poor souls that were dead at the time. They were going to have a mass burial. And they took a bulldozer and just ran it right down the line and had the people do it there, had them take their bodies and dump them down in that—what do you want to call it, a ditch or what have you. Had a mass burial.

MH: Did you watch this going on?

AP: Yes, yes. That was heartache.

MH: How do you take in a sight like that?

AP: Well, you know—you know, there's write-ups that you probably read already about how some of our men killed the men against the wall. What people don't realize, there's an old expression: "War is hell." People, when they're sitting in Washington or they're sitting home in their nice, soft chairs in their living room, don't realize what goes on in a man's mind when he sees things like that. Even animals are treated better than that. And, you know, that will live: that will live with each and every one of us that was there for the rest of our lives till we die.

MH: How do you absorb it, how do you process it? I mean—

AP: Well, I don't know—did Dave Israel get in touch with you?¹

MH: Yeah, I've talked to Dave Israel.

AP: All right, he wrote that book that—

MH: Right, *The Day the Thunderbird Cried*.

¹ David Israel was also interviewed for the Concentration Camp Liberators Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is C65-00063.

AP: Yeah. You know, when you go—I joined them at Anzio at beachhead [Operation Shingle] the later part of February in forty-four [1944]. And I was one of the oldest guys of the company; in fact I was very fortunate to get hit on January 15 of forty-five [1945].

MH: You said you got hit?

AP: Yeah, that had nothing—that was before, shortly before we got to Dachau. And it's a good thing—they call it a million-dollar wound. I got hit in the mouth, knocked a few teeth out with shrapnel. And I spent a month in the hospital in Épinal, France.

MH: Where in France?

AP: Épinal, É-p-i-n-a-l. In Épinal, France, I spent a month there. And of course, it was a godsend because on the twentieth of January, there were five or six rifle companies taken prisoner, American rifle companies. So anybody—this was at the town of Reipertswiller. Anybody who was at the town of Reipertswiller, there was only two people that came out of that. That got back to the friendly lines again. The rest were either dead, they were wounded, or they were not wounded but they were POWs. You know. So, I was out of there for a month; and then I went back to the company, and of course, like I say, five or six companies were taken prisoner. So, they were pulled troops from other outfits to replace those people that were taken prisoner or killed and what have you. And of course, we had a whole new organization. In fact, they were even calling about 10 percent of troops from rear echelon groups, which I felt sorry for them, who were there four years already when we were at Reipertswiller; and unfortunately, a lot of those fellows were killed, too. Now, they were killed at another town called Aschaffenburg, which was still ahead of this Dachau camp.

MH: Let's go back to being in Dachau and talking about—what's going through your mind when you're seeing this?

AP: When you're seeing this, you say to yourself, "Can this be true?" Can another human being do this, take them, kill 'em, starve them and put them in—I'm thinking of, oh—

MH: The ovens?

AP: What?

MH: The ovens?

AP: Yeah, the ovens. Right. And put them in there and try to do away with them that way. It's terrible. It's something that—and this is why even today I had thoughts of what's happening with our election right now. But I don't want to go on that tangent.

MH: When you walked through the camp, did you go into the buildings?

AP: I—we didn't. Our Company K did not go. We were milling around inside the camp, but not in the buildings, because we got there a little later than most of them. Because we had a little distance to travel, you know, to get back. The camp was already liberated when we got there.

MH: Right. Did you talk to the prisoners?

AP: No, I did not. I did not talk to one prisoner, no. Well, I absorbed a lot of sights, I can tell you that.

MH: Tell me about some of the other sights you saw.

AP: Well, when you see men with their skulls crushed, and you see just skin and bone, and they're thin and their faces are sunken in. It's a feeling you get: hey, it'll stay with you, like I say, until you die. It's horrible. And the odor that comes out of that place, it was terrible. It was terrible. The buildings I went and looked—very, very nice to me, you know, that the German officers—their quarters. That looked pretty decent to me.

MH: Had you been told anything about the camps before you got to Dachau?

AP: No. Not a thing. All we knew, we turned around and they said, "We're going to Dachau." That's all I know. Where Dachau was—we were taken about as Sparks was. 'Cause he even admits he didn't know what a concentration camp was. Neither did anybody else. And he didn't know until he was on top of it.

MH: Tell me about the next day when you went to Allach. Was it Allach, A-l-a-c-h?

AP: Allach, yeah.

MH: A-l-a-c-h?

AP: A-double l-a-c-h.

MH: A-double l-a-c-h. And that was just a—

AP: It was like a political camp. In fact, I'm trying to think of his name—there was a fellow there, when I got to that camp, there was a fellow there who was a political, an East German political prisoner. And he was a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. And you know, I worked with them and tried to locate that guy, and I couldn't locate him.

MH: He was a prisoner?

AP: Yup, yup. And he boasted to me, he says, "Look at me." He says, "I'm a cook here." Which struck me as funny. But he was a cook in that camp. One of the cooks, anyway. And then he said, "I know what I was doing—I had to eat."

MH: Did you run into people from the 42nd Division there?

AP: No, I did not run into anybody from the 42nd Division.

MH: It's sort of funny. I'm looking online right now, and it says liberation of Allach, and it talks about "Allach was liberated by the 42nd Rainbow Division on April 30, 1945."

AP: Well, can I say something? I say, don't believe everything you read and half of what you see. Because this still goes on today, that there's a feud going on between the 42nd—

MH: And the 45th.

AP: And the 45th. And that's why I—I didn't thank him, but I asked him in a fairly nice way; at that time, he was Brigadier General [Felix] Sparks. I knew he had written this article, and I said, "Do me a favor: grant me the permission to put that article on my

computer site,” And he said “Al, go ahead, you’ve got my permission.” If you read that thing—

MH: I’ve read it.

AP: You’ve read it. I guess you’ve read it a couple of times like I have. And that will give you a true picture. Sparks is the guy (inaudible).

MH: Right. So tell me more about Allach.

AP: All right. When I was going, the first one I ran into was this writer from the *Chicago Tribune*. And then I went inside the camp, and they gave me a section, and I bring men in and they made me sergeant of the guard of this certain part of the camp. And it was the female section of Allach. Okay? Now, a woman came out from one of the barracks—she spoke English very well—and she had one arm missing. And she says, “Do you see this?” I said yes. She said, “Well, this was from American artillery.” But she held no malice against the American forces, she said. “This was a gift, as far as I’m concerned.” Then she took me right to the entrance of one of the barracks, and I tell ya, I’d have gone further than the entrance, because she was telling me they had no sanitation facilities, no nothing. And yet, that section of the camp looked spic and span to me. You know. But the woman, she says, “They gave us nothing here. We had to make everything.” And she said, “These poor girls have gone through hell.” And that was—that’s all I did there, just so I posted guards around just to make sure that part of the camp remained peaceful and no uproars.

MH: The woman who had lost an arm, had she lost it recently, or had—?

AP: I would say she had lost it—it could have been maybe at the beginning of the war or middle of the war. It was all healed up.

MH: Oh. Because the story online says during the night of April 29 or 30 that the camp was attacked by U.S. artillery. They were shooting—

AP: No, she was healed. Yeah.

MH: So, you walked to this one building, but you didn’t go in.

AP: No, because I had no desire to go in, to be honest with you, because there were all women in there. Now those people—to make a comparison between Dachau and Allach, there was a big variation there. Evidently, those people were getting food or something, because they looked pretty good to me, compared to like before in Dachau. You know, you look at those people who were skin and bones and you look at these people, they looked pretty decent.

MH: Were they wearing the striped uniforms?

AP: She wasn't, no. No, she didn't have—she had a regular woman's garment on, a dress.

MH: So, what else did you do inside Allach?

AP: Well, that's what I had to do, just walk around and check where I had men posted, to make sure everything was okay. That was my job. Why we were there. Now, we were only there, I guess three days. And then L Company and I Company were already in Munich. And then we were relieved by—I forget the outfit who relieved us—and we then joined the two companies, I and L.

MH: But your company did spend three days at Allach.

AP: At Allach.

MH: Tell me more about—what did you do during those three days? Where did you eat?

AP: Well, now that I don't even remember. That, I can't remember. I don't know. I guess we ate K rations. I can't remember eating any food other than K rations.

MH: Do you remember any conversations with your buddies?

AP: No, the only one I remember was when I talked to that fellow who was a reporter for the *Tribune* in Chicago. That's the only one—and the woman that spoke to me.

MH: Were there bodies at that camp, too?

AP: No, no. I didn't see any.

MH: Was it a work camp, or were they just being held there?

AP: No, I think it was a camp where they took them out each day and marched them somewhere or transported them somewhere to do specific jobs.

MH: What about the German guards? Were they all gone by then?

AP: Where, at Allach?

MH: Yes.

AP: Oh, yeah, yeah. That was clean, because there was another outfit there just before us that we replaced.

MH: And they took care of any of the German guards.

AP: I would assume so.

MH: What—tell me more about your conversation with that woman. What else did she say?

AP: Well, she came up to me. She must have been a leader of the group or something. Because she saw me walking up this big, oh, flat piece of concrete. It was like a big concrete pad—I guess that's where they fell out, in the morning or turned in at night. And she came out, and I said hello to her and she said, "Hello." And she did tell me her name, but God knows what it was. But anyway.

MH: Do you remember what country she was from?

AP: No, no. But she spoke English very well, I tell you that. And she told me about how unsanitary conditions were in that camp, especially in the woman's section. And I could understand what she was telling me. And I said, "I'm sorry to hear that." She said, "Any piece of cloth that we could get, get a hold of, we would." And I said, "Well, I'm sorry to hear that." She said, "To keep the odor down, we tried everything, but what are you going to do?" Her conversation with me was rather brief, also.

MH: There, you're seeing people who are not the walking dead. Is your reaction to them any different than at the main Dachau camp?

AP: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Yes. I mean, Allah I could say, you know, it was like a jail. And the people looked nourished. They didn't look like skin was just covering their bones, you know. And they could walk and they could get around. But when you go in Dachau, oh, that's a different picture altogether. Different picture altogether.

MH: Was that the last camp you were in?

AP: Allah? Yes.

MH: How long after that did you go home?

AP: Let me see—I was transferred. They came in with the point system at the end of the war. And the point system was that if you had so many points, you could stay over. If it had an exceptional number of points, you came home. And so I had seventy-four points, so I didn't have enough points to come home, but I had enough points to stay there. And of course they transferred me to the 9th Infantry Division. I tell you, I lived the life of Riley. The best, the best time I spent when I was in the service. I was able to eat out of china dishes, you know. That's a big event. But my duty there was to ride with a driver; we were hauling water. They weren't gasoline tanks, but they were containers of water. And we were getting water here and taking it there or what have you. So that was a pretty good job.

MH: When did you return to the U.S.?

AP: Let me see. I was discharged—home on October—I went in, in March. I believe I was discharged October forty-five [1945]. October forty-five [1945]. I went in March of forty-three [1943], that's what it was.

MH: And you came home to where?

AP: We went into New York, I think.

MH: But you were discharged, and your home, again, was—?

AP: No, I was discharged at Fort Meade, Maryland.

MH: And you went back home.

AP: That's right.

MH: Do you remember the first time you tried to tell people about what you had seen in the camps?

AP: To be very honest with you, even my family didn't know I was in the service. Of course I hadn't married; I was still a single guy. But even after my children were born, they didn't know I was in the military service until I started to go to reunions, which was after I retired, you know, from work.

MH: So, you never talked about—?

AP: Never talked about it. And the only reason I talked about it then was when we went to these reunions, they were—these fellows, you know, that knew me and what have you.

MH: Why didn't you talk about it?

AP: In fact, I just wanted—just to forget about the whole thing. It wasn't something you would want to remember, let me put it that way.

MH: Did you have nightmares?

AP: No. No, thank God, I was able to keep my own. You know, you spend over a year in the field, every day, and you're pretty fortunate just to get hit one time. We had guys who got hit six times. You had fellows who came in and asked me how long I was with the company, and I'd say, "I'm not God, I could be hit while we're talking here." So, I wanted to keep the space you're supposed to keep between each other all the time. You know, they thought I was an exception to the rule. I guess they were right.

MH: So, what was your civilian business? What did you do?

AP: Oh, I was in the insurance business. I got employment with Prudential Life Insurance and sold insurance. Sold the intangible.

MH: But that's a job where all you do every day is talk to people, and you never talked about being in the war?

AP: Never.

MH: And what you saw.

AP: Never. Never. Like I say, I can't even remember when we—I knew when it was, it was eighty-four [1984]. I tell you what, eighty-four [1984] when I retired. Before I retired, it must have been about eighty-six [1986] or 1987, I started to go to the reunions. From that point, even when I came home, and my little nephews, I gave everything away. I said, "Take it, here's my jacket—you can do anything you want with it. Here's all these medals, you could have them." And that was it.

MH: And yet now, you keep up a pretty good website.

AP: Yeah, well, let me put it this way: If it weren't for my grandson—I think of him as a kid, but he's out of college already. If it weren't for him, we wouldn't have a website. Because when I went to the computer in the latter part of ninety-seven [1997], I could find very, very little about the 45th Infantry Division. The 45th Infantry Division was a division that wanted to get the war over with. They wanted to fight it, get it done, and go home.

MH: Didn't they all?

AP: Beg your pardon?

MH: Didn't they all?

AP: Well, let me put it this way. Let me elaborate a little bit. There were outfits that wanted a lot of publicity, always wanted to be in the spotlight. To give you an idea about Dachau, between the 42nd and the 45th, the 42nd Division needed a feather in their cap somewhere along the line. And since they were not that old overseas, getting this liberation to be General [Henning] Linden was a feather in their hat. Now, you go to Dachau, you'll find plaques for the 20th Armored Division, you'll see plaques up there for the 42nd Division—what's the other one? The 20th Armored, the 42nd—oh, I'm trying to think of the other one. You'll see three plaques hanging there. You'll see nothing for the 45th. And let me tell you, I didn't know it, but I got into the middle of this thing, and this thing was going on way before I thought about it. And there was literature and correspondence ceiling high. And the 45th wanted nothing to do with it anymore, because the 42nd had approached the 45th to join them and accept a plaque, and the 45th said, "No way." That was it and it stayed that way.

MH: So, why'd you get in the middle of it?

AP: Well, I got in the middle of it because I (phone beeps) about that. I didn't know that that had transpired before I got involved. But then when I contacted the hierarchy in Oklahoma, which is the 45th Division's home, I began to find out what transpired before I got involved. And I—you know, there's an awful lot of politics, even during war, believe me.

MH: How—could you put a finger on how seeing what happened at Dachau might have affected your life later on?

AP: No, I cannot. I cannot. Because I tried to let it—I didn't want to dwell on it. And I felt if I dwelled on it, I wasn't going to be worth much for the rest of my life. I tried to erase it out of my mind. Not an easy job.

MH: Did you have to battle to do it?

AP: Yes, I went out and married a real nice gal, married sixty years and had three children and eight grandchildren, and I count every day as a bonus day that I live.

MH: Because you could have died in the war?

AP: Yes, yes. In fact, I often thought the people don't believe. And I say hey, that's all right. You don't have to believe in what I believe in. But believe in something, because if you don't believe in something, I tell you, you'll be in sad shape later on in your life.

MH: You're a religious person?

AP: I wouldn't say I'm a religious fanatic, but I believe. Listen, when we pushed off on Anzio, three of us went out on this little ravine and they had everything zeroed in with artillery, the Germans did. The three of us dove into this—looked like a big shell hole, that's what it looked like. And I'm in the middle, and here's Jerry (inaudible) on one side and this other fellow—I can't remember his name—on the right of me, right? After it quiets down, I get up and I look, and those two guys looked like a butcher butchered them. Here I stand up, not even a scratch. Now, you know, you see things like that—that's what makes me believe.

MH: Do you ever—a lot of people question whether there could be a God if God allows things like Dachau to happen. That never entered your mind?

AP: Well, no—here's, this just goes to show you. Here's Velting, one of the fellows who was killed in that artillery hole. Here's a fellow, he read his prayer book very day. Nice kid, from Michigan. And he's buried over there in the American cemetery—I was there twice, you think I could think of it? Anyway.

MH: You went back to Dachau?

AP: Yeah, I was back. In fact, I was supposed to go back in, this last anniversary. And I couldn't make it because I was operated on, and it was one of these things. I was between a rock and a hard place. If I didn't get the operation, I could maybe walk out the door and topple over, that was it, no chance of calling 911. And if I was operated on, these are the litany of things that could happen to me—I could go blind or I could become paralyzed, all beautiful things.

MH: What was wrong?

AP: I had what they called a thoracic aortic aneurysm. And these operations aren't that—they didn't perform that many in a year. And most of the time, you know, this is what happens. So, I've been in a wheelchair ever since; that happened July of 2003. Nearly five years in a wheelchair. But these are things that happen, and you know, if I hadn't moved down here, I would have never known—never know that I had an aneurysm.

MH: How'd they happen to find it?

AP: I beg your pardon?

MH: How did they happen to find it?

AP: Oh, I had a problem—I had recurring polyps of my nose. And when I came down here I had to find a fellow that could take care of my nose. I went in there, nice doctor—Dr. Hann, I think his name was, or Mann, Dr. Mann. And he I says, “Well, if you're going to tell me that I have to get another operation, forget it.” He said, “Do me a favor anyway, let me get an x-ray.” I said, “I'll do that.” Forget my nose. They found that aneurysm. Now how, I don't know.

MH: And the reason you're in the wheelchair?

AP: Yeah, 'cause I was paralyzed from the waist down. Now, I didn't even know what the word “therapy” meant. You start to take it, but you know those girls really helped me out a lot. At least I could walk with a walker—not too long a distance, but I could walk with a walker, you know. But it's something. But my poor wife has paid the price for this. But hey, talk about belief!

MH: How do you deal with people who say the Holocaust never happened?

AP: Ach! This is why I will continue until I die, that if I could put more articles out, that I will. Whatever I could write and put it—at my age, your mind doesn't work like it used to.

MH: How old are you?

AP: Eighty-five.

MH: You are eighty-five, okay.

AP: And I'm one of the younger guys. Most of them were older than me. But I—with that thing that I printed up on my buddy Sparks, that will stay on. And I have from my grandson who helped me out with this website; hadn't been for him, we would have never had the website.

MH: Have you actually ever confronted anybody in person who said it didn't happen?

AP: No. No, no. Now there's a question—I don't know how I would react. Sparks gave a spiel down in Washington, D.C. that I attended. His main title was, "Don't tell us that it never happened," something like that, something like—it was like, "Don't tell us that it never happened, because we were there." Something like that.

MH: But you're not sure how you'd react.

AP: How I would react?

MH: Yeah.

AP: I think I would become furious. "You're out of your mind," or something like that.

MH: Anything else that comes to mind?

AP: Not offhand. No, this will give you a little insight or something. I had a friend who moved down here to North Carolina with his son. I gave you his name—his name is Anthony Cardinale.²

MH: Actually, I'm going to see Tony on March 1.

² Anthony Cardinale was also interviewed for the Concentration Camp Liberators Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is C65-00016.

AP: You're going to see him? You're going—oh, you're in Florida.

MH: I live in Florida.

AP: Tony is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet. That other thing I did, his son moved here and shortly after he lost his job and then he moved down where they are now, in Florida. But Tony was with the 42nd.

MH: Yeah, I'm surprised you talk to him.

AP: You know what, I wish he lived here. Here's a guy you will really have to meet to appreciate him. He's one hell of a nice guy.

MH: How did you happen to meet him?

AP: I'm just trying to think now, what happened. Hold on a minute. (to Mrs. Panebianco) Hey, hon, how did we get in contact with Tony Cardinale? You what? No, how did we meet him? Yes. Oh that's what it is.

One of the guys who e-mailed me told me that he was living down here, and he gave me his address or his phone number. And I called him, and we went out and had lunch together one day. And then shortly thereafter, they moved.

MH: He told you the story about the train?

AP: Yeah. Yeah. Because you know, he showed me a picture. He said, "You know, if that guy wasn't in front of me, right there, you would see my face."

MH: But that's an amazing story at the train, to find somebody alive.

AP: Yep, and when you see all those bodies, and you see somebody move. Man, that's enough—that's enough to shake you up.

MH: Some people don't actually believe that they found anybody alive there.

AP: No, this is it. But like I say, war is hell and if I told some stories—which I won't tell—I know people wouldn't believe me. So why the hell—what's the use in telling it? And there's a lot of guys who won't—all that stuff—and there are some guys, you can't shut 'em up. You know. They won the war by themselves.

MH: Right. If you think of anybody else that I should talk to, please send me an e-mail.

AP: All right. I was going to find out who you had. You got Tony Cardinale, and you got Jim Bird?

MH: Yes, I haven't spoken with him yet.

AP: All right. You got Tony Cardinale, who else did I give—Weiskircher.³

MH: Russ Weiskircher I've talked to at length. Had a long talk with him. He was pretty close to Sparks.

AP: Yeah. And not only that, but he and I went over on the same ship. Would you believe this?

MH: He and you went over on the same ship?

AP: Yeah, we were on the same ship, and he was assigned to Company L, and I was assigned to Company K. And it was the wee hours of the morning, because they had just taken a terrible beating on Anzio. They thought they'd be pushed back into the sea. And they needed, so there was a ship that went over with 5,000, and we were part of that 5,000. Forget what they trained you for. All they needed was somebody who was breathing who could hold a gun.

MH: Did you ever run into a guy named Irv Rosenzweig; they called him "Rosie"?⁴

³ Russel Weiskircher was also interviewed for the Concentration Camp Liberators Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is C65-00145.

⁴ Irv Ross, né Rosenzweig, was also interviewed for the Concentration Camp Liberators Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is C65-00118.

AP: No. No. Was he with the 45th?

MH: He was with an artillery unit that was attached to the 45th and made the—he was in North Africa and made the landing at Anzio. He only lives ten minutes from me, and I've had long talks with him, and he showed me pictures that he took at Dachau.

AP: Jim Bird, he got hit—Jim Bird, I think he got hit four times while he was there. So I count my blessings.

MH: You take care of yourself.

AP: All right. Nice chatting with you.

MH: I enjoyed it a lot. Thank you very much.

AP: Bye-bye now.

End of interview