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## Ray W. Peterson oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, June 12, 2008

Ray W. Peterson (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.]

**Ray Peterson:** Would you like me just to tell my story and then you can ask questions, or how would you like to do it?

**Michael Hirsh:** That'd be fine but first of all, let me get your name. It's Ray, P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n?

RP: Yeah, Ray, W. on the initial, P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n.

MH: Your address, please?

RP: ...

MH: And your phone number?

RP: ...

MH: Do you have an e-mail address?

RP: Yeah....

MH: And your date of birth, please?

RP: I was born the twenty-seventh of August, that'd be 8-27-25 [August 27, 1925]. I'll be eighty-three in August.

MH: Okay. Why don't you tell me your story, and I'll come back and ask questions.

RP: Ask some questions? Okay, I came to the 63<sup>rd</sup> Division out of the Army Specialized Training Program. I had qualified for that, but if you're an historian of any matter, you know that the ASTP and the Air Cadet program were discontinued. An awful lot of Air Cadets came back to ground forces as well as ASTP. Hundreds of thousands of us went to the combat divisions. The planners of World War II determined they were way shy of men in order to win the war in Europe and bring about the invasion and so forth, so we were all transferred into combat outfits. I ended up in Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi, after going through some ASTP and all that good stuff. Basic.

When I got to Camp Van Dorn, I first served with a line company, and a few weeks after I was there, I was told I'd be in intelligence and reconnaissance platoon, an I&R platoon. I don't know if you're familiar with what they are or not, but we were an I&R platoon for the 255<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. And, of course, our whole purpose in being, Mike, was—I call it “the eyes and ears” of the regimental commander. We were to cooperate out in front of the lines an awful lot of the time, trying to gain information and intelligence on the enemy. And we did this a number of ways: We manned observation posts, if we were someplace where we could do that. Or we did a lot of Jeep patrols and then, of course, a lot of foot patrols trying to gain information.

When I got to Van Dorn in the I&R platoon, I was made a Jeep driver, so I was trained in operation of vehicles along with all the things that go with an I&R platoon. And in the I&R platoon, we had seven Jeeps, which we could pretty well transport the whole platoon. There was three squads of about nine in each squad. We were a little different than a regular platoon. And then, of course, we had the lieutenant for a platoon leader, and he had his own driver and stuff like that. Anyway, that's what I trained at, and we trained at Mississippi and finally arrived at an operational point where we were considered combat ready. Went overseas—

MH: When did you go overseas?

RP: Went overseas in November of 1944, from POE [port of embarkation] New York, and we were on a convoy. It took us fourteen days. Went through the Straits of Gibraltar and landed in Marseille, France. And we went outside of Marseille into a (inaudible) that was kind of a Delta staging camp, and there we waited until we got all our equipment and of course got our Jeeps off and got all organized. And then we headed north, where the invasion had taken place prior to us getting there, and they'd gone up—had met the forces coming in from the Normandy area, too. So, we traveled up this road, and finally we were in the area of combat and went into the—we didn't actually go as a division; just the three regiments went. Division artillery and all that stuff came later. We were assigned to other divisions to get some combat experience, and so—

MH: As your platoon or separately?

RP: We were—as a regiment. We were assigned to—my particular [regiment], the 255<sup>th</sup>, we went to the 100<sup>th</sup> Division, and we were around Strasbourg when we first entered combat, and we gained a lot of experience there. And then, of course, it wasn't too long after we had gotten there that the Battle of the Bulge took place, and an awful lot of our men from our division were taken north to join Patton's outfit and try to liberate the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne division that was encircled up at Bastogne. But, anyway, we were operating on a big long front at that particular time, because we were really—I think they just went down the lines already called, and about one out of every ten guys was told they were going to go to one of the Patton divisions.

Anyway, the long winter came on, and it was a bad winter in 1944, as you probably remember from history. So, this more or less stabilized our position. We did get together as a division after artillery and everybody else, support troops, came over. I guess that would've been sometime in January or early February. And then in early February, the spring started to kind of break in Germany. It was still pretty wintry, but we jumped off into attack. And I followed the 63<sup>rd</sup> all the way through. We were doing our thing all the way, patrols and trying to get prisoners and all these routine things.

MH: What area were you in at this point?

RP: At this point, we were in the area of Strasbourg, France, if you know where that was, and we went north and east from there, made a big loop up through Germany. We crossed over from France into Germany fairly quickly, went through the Maginot Line and through the Siegfried Line, made a big loop up to the north, came back down past Cologne and that area and headed in almost the direction of southeast during the spring months of 1944. No, I take it back, 1945. It was 1944, but now it's 1945 because it's

after the first of the year. Then we had all the typical experiences as a combat division. We encountered a lot of different enemy types. Some were SS troops, some were just regular Wehrmacht troops, but—

MH: Was there a difference fighting them?

RP: Yeah, it was completely different. The SS were more highly trained, more vicious in the tactics they used and this kind of stuff, so we had experience with both of them. The other two regiments, of course, were the 253<sup>rd</sup> and the 254<sup>th</sup> that made up our division. And we had the Blood and Fire patch; I don't know if you're familiar with that, but it's interesting how that came about. It had a sort of a—I'd say shaped—it has a point and kind of rounded on the end: a dagger with blood on it and all that good stuff. It came about as a result of the meeting of President Roosevelt with Winston [Churchill]—I can't remember whether the Russians were there or not. But anyway, out of that meeting that they had at Casablanca, they were—the edict went out that the enemy would bleed and burn. And so, somehow, somebody designed this patch for us, and we became the Blood and Fire division.

MH: Until then, you didn't have a patch?

RP: No, we had a patch. That happened in 1943, so we had the patch before, when we became organized as a division at Camp Van Dorn. The cadre for the 63<sup>rd</sup> came from Camp Blanding, Florida, and then it was formed as a division in Camp Van Dorn.

But anyway, we progressed pretty much, as I say, south, after we turned south; we went pretty much south and east somewhat. Went down, they had a couple of combat divisions on both side of the course; as I recall, the 45<sup>th</sup> was on one side and the 36<sup>th</sup> was on the other, and we finally got down to about the time of April. Now I'm getting into the Holocaust stuff and how I got involved in this.

And we were doing fairly well by the time April came around. Spring was—had arrived, and we were having a lot of successes in the combat that we were involved in. And we were going down through, oh, some of the places you'd recognize I guess would be—I don't know if you'd recognize Wiesbaden and Karlsruhe, and all those kind of places like that. And we were proceeding in a southeasterly direction, almost turning south at times. And we got to April 28, 1945, and this is the day that my experience with the first Holocaust comes about.

This particular day, myself, being a Jeep driver; Hearl Hager, being the scout; and oh, boy, his name evades me, the radio operator. I keep forgetting his name. I'll get it for you here in a second. Oh, William Turanski.

MH: How do you spell those names?

RP: T-u-r-a-n-s-k-i.

MH: And the other man?

RP: H-a-g-e-r, Hearl, H-e-a-r-l, Hager. Let's see, I believe Hearl and I were PFCs and Turanski would be the (inaudible) T-4, about the equivalent of a sergeant. Anyway, that constituted a platoon type of thing where we'd do reconnaissance.

On this particular day, we were proceeding south towards Landsberg, and we were on a highway that parallels the Lech River, L-e-c-h, Lech River toward Landsberg. We had no idea exactly what was going to happen to us this day. Our orders from the regiment commander, Colonel Hatcher, and our platoon leader was Virgil Walters, was to do reconnaissance to the front of the regiment. The situation on the battlefield at that particular time was very fluid. The German troops were pretty much in full retreat, and they would stand and make some resistance, you know, but the line companies, they were using two-and-a-half ton trucks, and we were leapfrogging them down the highways, trying to catch up with the Germans.

But our orders—I say, the two or three of us—was to do reconnaissance to the front of the regiment. We didn't have any idea what exactly was going on, but one of our primary missions was also to try to determine who was to the left flank and the right flank, because we were advancing so fast that it was the feeling of our commander, General [Louis E.] Hibbs, that maybe we would get attacked from the sides, from the flanks. So, our orders were to try and determine if we had plenty of troops on the right and left of us.

So, that's what we were doing: we were going to the right and the left, and we made contact with our regiment, which was the 254<sup>th</sup> to the left of us, and we found it was a tank outfit, the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored, to the right of us, so we were all right as far as friendly forces on both sides of us.

MH: This is the 63<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division?

RP: 63<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division.

MH: The only reason I ask is that I'm looking at my list of liberating divisions that came from the Army and the Holocaust Museum in Washington, and they have Landsberg on April 27 with the 130<sup>th</sup> Infantry, the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored, the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored.

RP: That's where it's erroneous. That's the point of the story I've got to tell you about. They got honored—they got attributed for it, and I'll tell you how we finally got our flag there. It should be in the Holocaust Museum now, because we proved to them it was on the twenty-eighth that Landsberg was liberated. But it became a big controversy, and everybody wanted to take credit for these kind of things, right, for some reason or other. But, anyway, as we approached going toward Landsberg at this time, we hadn't arrived at Landsberg, had no idea there was such a thing as a Holocaust, and I don't know at what level military or governmental levels knew about this thing. Maybe President FDR and those kind. I don't think Ike did. I'm not sure about him. I know Patton didn't.

MH: They knew about it as of the lib—I can look at the list—they knew as of April 4, when Ohrdruf was liberated, and on the twelfth, Eisenhower went there.

RP: When the Russians started to hit them first, and the four Poland areas was run over by the Russians first. They learned about them then, but we were not aware of any being in the American sector. Anyway, as we were going down this road parallel with the Lech River, we noticed this enclosure [*sic*]. Looked like a typical barbed wire and type of enclosure, low-built huts. But the curious thing about this, Mike, is I never had anybody tell me this before, was that being the Lech River was nearby, they had taken and built a moat around this particular whole compound, and the only way you could get in through kind of an arched bridge that went up over the moat. There was no other entrances whatsoever.

But, anyway, we saw this, and so we thought, "Well, what in the blazes could this possibly be?" It had buildings that resembled tarpaper shack-type things, and they were low built. And we thought, "Well, it's all barbed-wired in; we can't get in." The only way you can get in is up over the thing, so we went up over there, and this is when we first encountered the Holocaust-type of situation.

MH: Were the SS troops still there?

RP: No, they were gone. There wasn't a guard to be seen. They'd all taken off toward the south, and we had no idea of what was there. We went in, and we saw the typical sight that I'm sure you're aware of. The dead, half-dead, naked, some clothed in striped garbs and laying on these crude type of bunks that they had, and it was a typical type of thing that I'm sure you've seen pictures of.

MH: Let's take it slower. Did you drive in with the Jeeps or did you have to walk in?

RP: No, we had to walk up—we drove in with the Jeeps to this arched bridge that went up over the moat.

MH: Was this on your side of the river, or did you have to cross the river first?

RP: No, we could not cross the river. The Lech River was completely—all the bridges had been dropped by the Nazis, either air power or blew them up. There was no bridge across there. But our troops eventually, on the twenty-eighth, did cross the river on boats and go into Landsberg city itself.

Now, the one I'm telling you about here, the best I can research this thing through a lot of people I've contacted and the literature I've got is, we went into what I would call "Kaufering IV." There were four Kaufering sites, I, II, III and IV. This particular one was Kaufering IV, best I can determine. And there were around 7,000 to 8,000 concentration-type people in this camp. A lot of 'em were Hungarians, as I found out, but they were typical concentration types, and they were using a lot of them as slave labor in Landsberg itself. But there was a camp in Landsberg also and, like I'm saying, our troops—and I'm not sure if it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion or 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, went across the river on some boats and got into Landsberg. And matter of fact, they also—well, you're well aware that this is Landsberg where Hitler was imprisoned, also, and his little fiasco. Anyway, it was a big camp in Landsberg.

Now, here's where my story ends fairly quickly, because we had radio contact with our lieutenant and also Colonel Hatcher. So, we radioed back and said, "We don't know what we've come across here, but we found these 7,000 or 8,000 people in this camp"—we were estimating there were that many, anyway—"that are in dire need of help, and we don't know what they are or what the place this is." And so, our lieutenant, in consultation with a colonel, said, "Well, you get out of there, because there's more than likely a lot of disease in that situation you're trying to describe to us, and we'll take care of it." And he said, "Besides that, you're supposed to be on patrol in front of the regiment, so get out of there and get on your way."

So, that was my encounter with the victims at that time. Now, we proceeded on our patrol down further. Now, this was on the twenty-eighth, morning of the twenty-eighth of April 1945. We were not relieved until the next day, by the 103<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, which is part of the 36<sup>th</sup> Division. Now, somehow, they and this 10<sup>th</sup> Armored and the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored claim they were in there before we were, but that is not true. And the way I found this out, Mike, was I visited Washington, D.C., and I went to the Holocaust Museum with the intention of trying to find out some history about the 63<sup>rd</sup> and its relationship to the Holocaust. And I got permission to go to the archives and the library there at the museum. Have you ever been there?

MH: I've been there once, but as a tourist and not as a journalist.

RP: Anyway, I got permission to look through their records, and they showed me all the records they had, and lo and behold, the 63<sup>rd</sup> is not shown as one of the liberators. I said, "Well, there's something wrong here." They were showing me it was liberated on the twenty-ninth and the twenty-seventh and a lot of kind of stuff, and I said, "That is simply not factual. We went into those camps, and if they'd had been there first, why wasn't there a bunch of American medics and other GIs around there trying to help these people out?" There was not a soul to be seen in the camp when we entered, this Kaufering IV, and there was no opposition in Landsberg camp. They were completely by themselves, and that particular camp, I'm told that some of the—I don't know what's the proper terminology, concentration "inmate" don't sound right. But victims, anyway, had left the camp and were wandering throughout the city in Landsberg. This was not true in the one we went in, entered into. They were all within the confines of that camp when we got there.

So, I became very critical of this, and I think maybe the Holocaust is a bad thing to want to have credit for, but I always felt, Mike, that credit's due where credit's due, okay? So, I started a little campaign. I wrote an article in the *Blood and Fire* magazine, which is a little monthly thing—not a monthly, but a thing the 63<sup>rd</sup> has put out practically ever since we disbanded. And I wrote a thing in there and said my experience at the Holocaust library and that we didn't get credit for this, and this little article stirred up a whole bunch of people in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Division who had experienced similar things to what I had had.

The end result of this was that we had a fellow, Clinton, by the name of Clinton, and he stayed in the military after the war and he finally rose to be a colonel. And he lives in the Washington, D.C., area. And he said when he got involved, he says, "I'll handle this thing if you'll give me the facts. I'll take this to the people that's in charge of the Holocaust Museum and see that we get this record cleared up." And he did. He got all this information we assembled out of these 63<sup>rd</sup> guys that experienced these things, and he took it in and convinced them. And to this very day, I haven't been back, but our flag

better be there, because I was assured by him that we are now credited with the liberation of Landsberg camps and the other camps in that area on the twenty-eighth day of April forty-five [1945].

And as you're well aware, Dachau was one of the main camps, and that dates way back to Hitler's time when he was imprisoned right there—he was already there. So, Dachau, from what I was able to determine, and I know it's true, was the center camp of all this area. My research showed there was about thirty-two camps that surrounded Dachau, and Dachau was the extermination camp, as you're well aware; they had the ovens and everything else. And these feeder camps (inaudible) like we were in fed the people into that particular area if they were gonna be exterminated, and of course the others were—a lot of them were labor camps and things like that. So, there were actually thirty-two camps that surrounded Dachau, and this is the one where we went into. Now, let me see. What else can I tell you about this?

MH: I have lots of questions.

RP: It's question time if you want to question.

MH: Let's back way up. When you said you went through the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line, what do you see there?

RP: Well, the fortifications were still there in the Maginot Line. Of course, the Germans had overrun this when they—actually, they made an end run on the Maginot Line. They went up north and didn't actually have to attack the Maginot Line, but they made an end run on France. Anyway, when we got there, the Germans had taken over the Maginot Line, and the big emplacements or fortifications were still there, so we had to fight our way through the Maginot Line before we got to the Siegfried Line.

MH: So, you're fighting through pillboxes and bunkers?

RP: Yeah, and big fortifications of all kinds. I don't recall there being a lot of big guns still in place in those things, but I don't know, but the Maginot Line was a huge fortification thing: went for miles and miles and miles across France and Germany's border, and was built up considerably and had huge underground railways through the thing where they could transport the troops back and forth along that whole line. Now, we went through there, and I can't recall; must've been January when we first encountered the Maginot Line, I'm sure, and then of course the Siegfried Line was on the other side.

MH: How far apart are the two?

RP: Golly, I can't remember that, Mike, for sure, but the one would've been on France's side and one on the German side. But I don't know exactly how far they were separated.

MH: Do you recall them being within sight of each other or are they miles apart?

RP: I wouldn't think they'd be in sight of each other, as I remember. But it might vary, you know, based on where you were, because when the Allies start to advance, they hit the Siegfried Line in the north much before we hit it in the south. And, see, that thing kind of made a— it wound back, as I recall, toward Switzerland and clear down that area of southern France. And so, it could have varied in width, depending on where it was actually built.

MH: How did you adjust to combat? Was it what you expected?

RP: Well, I think it was real opportune for us to be assigned to another regiment, our whole regiment being assigned to another division. I believe that was a real boon to us, because it gave us the experience of troops that had already been through it, and I think that was real helpful.

MH: What do they do, bring people from the other units into your platoon level?

RP: No, we joined them. We actually joined them and operated with them. In other words, we were operated as an I&R platoon of the 100<sup>th</sup> Division, one of the regiments. And our line divisions also became under the control of the regimental commander of the 100<sup>th</sup> Division. In other words, they were line commies [commanders] themselves went into combat with the line divisions of that division, and we likewise cooperated with the I&R platoons and the recon troops. Because those recon troops were always involved with the division, too.

MH: At one point near—well, starting in early 1945, I think in that area of Germany there were a million and a half Americans. I don't have the numbers right in front of me, but just a huge number of Americans. Did you ever get the sense that every square foot of ground had an American on it? Or were you guys spread out that far?

RP: Well, I don't exactly—tell me again exactly what you're saying.

MH: That there were so many American combat troops there in the last, well, starting—

RP: Thousands—hundreds of divisions, stretching clear from England across the Channel there, clear to the Swiss border. Now, we were operating, of course, by this time, in southern Germany, which was Bavaria. And we were heading straight for the Alps. As a matter of fact, when you're in Landsberg, you can see the Alps, the Swiss Alps, and this Berchtesgaden is where Hitler had his retreat, and this is where the war ended. And some of the elite divisions got to go to—they pulled us out; I guess we weren't elite enough. But that's where we were headed, and had they not pulled us out, that's where we would've ended up, because the 82<sup>nd</sup>—101<sup>st</sup> Airborne got into Berchtesgaden itself, and I think the 82<sup>nd</sup> was close by, and also these divisions I'm talking about, they were—they had come up from Italy and were kind of considered the elite. They got to go into the furthest reaches of where Berchtesgaden—

MH: Those were the divisions that had already been fighting for years in the war.

RP: Yeah, they came up through southern France, or actually, started out in Africa, some of them. Came to Italy and then came up across. And then, of course, the others came across the Channel. There was a lot of pictures taken of the camp we were in. We had our own Signal Corps people, and they went in the next day and took some of those pictures, and I do have a few of those. And they're typical concentration camp, pretty gruesome type stuff, you know.

But one interesting thing was that in the Landsberg camp, they actually made the mayor come out there and stand in the middle of all those corpses, and then they had the people come out from those towns—because here's another thing, Mike, I don't know if you've gotten into this, but the Germans denied completely the existence of these camps. And how they could live within a short distance of those camps and see those people being used as slave labor and then in the death camps seeing the smoke rise out of those chimneys and the ashes and everything else flying out, how could you not possibly have known this was going on? And I'm sure that General Patton, General Eisenhower, General Patch and all of those knew this, and that's why they had these people come to these camps and take a look and actually bury a few of those unfortunate people, to get a feel for what they had done. And as you know, Dachau was in existence still today. It can be visited and is pretty much intact.

MH: You said earlier that there was a difference fighting the SS versus the Wehrmacht. What was the difference?

RP: Well, I think they were more highly trained. They were more vicious. The pistol—the attitude that were built into them. The SS troops were the elite troops. They were supposedly these blue-eyed, blond, Aryan-type race, if you understand what I'm talking about. And so, they had the attitude that they were better than anyone else. And so, they had this attitude that they were gonna win, come hell or high water, so they fought harder. And then of course, toward the end—the Wehrmacht troops were the older men and young kids. They had fourteen, fifteen, sixteen year old kids that were on the front lines, and they had older men that were there also. They lost a lot of troops, as we did, but their numbers were much higher because, as you're well aware, there were 50 million people lost their lives in World War II, so you're talking about a lot of people.

MH: When you got into a battle, could you tell who you were fighting?

RP: Well, yeah, we had intelligence information. It didn't take very long to figure it out: as soon as you got some prisoners and you could identify who they belonged to. And the intelligence was pretty good in finding out through prisoners who they belonged to.

MH: If we can come to the time you're approaching the Landsberg camp and you see this, do you remember what kind of day it was? You said it was in the morning.

RP: Yeah, it was a spring day, and as I recall, the weather was pretty darned good. It was a pretty nice, clear day, and we were going pretty fast down these roads, trying to keep up in finding out what was going on. Now, I don't know if you've run into this in your research, but General Eisenhower and the other troops, his staff, felt that, as we pushed the Germans back into more or less a cramped area against the Alps, that they would regroup completely in what they called a "redoubt area." So, we expected we would get a pretty vicious counterattack from that area as they regrouped. But it never happened. They were surrendering by the thousands toward the end, and we just sent them down the road toward the end, and that was it. And you couldn't even take so many; there were so many prisoners.

MH: When they're surrendering in that number, do you take all their weapons away from them?

RP: Yeah, that's another thing, an I&R platoon I recall vividly. If I had a nickel for every rifle stock I'd broken, I'd be a millionaire. As we would arrive in town on our patrols,

we'd get a hold of the *Bürgermeister*, which we're sure was equivalent to a mayor in our towns, and we'd give him about thirty minutes to have all the weapons of that—all the civilians to bring all the weapons and anything else they had into the—where the *Bürgermeister*'s office was, like a mayor's office. And so, within thirty minutes, we had all the weapons rounded up, and we just took and broke the stocks on them.

MH: How do you break the stock on a rifle?

RP: You just whack it against a building. Whack against the building, and the stock breaks off. And then sometimes we'd bend the barrels. So, we'd made them completely useless as far as a weapon goes, and we used to have some of those beautiful shotguns that they had, but that's the only way we could be sure that no one was going to take reprisals on us while we were in the towns was to disarm them, which we did. And I suppose maybe they did similar things to our guys. I don't know. I was never a prisoner, so I didn't experience that type of thing, but I'm sure they took all their weapons away. But these were mainly civilians, but they had a lot of military weapons, too, for some reason, that were laying around the town there, so we had both military and civilian weapons that we destroyed.

MH: When you first saw the Landsberg camp, did you smell it, too?

RP: Well, my wife asked me that this morning, because she knows I've been talking about this and was going to have a talk with you. You know, I cannot recall that, but when I look back on it, you couldn't possibly have not smelled that, the hideous conditions that existed in those camps. And I know that other GIs have said the horrible smell that existed in the ones they went into, but I do not remember. I don't know why I don't remember.

MH: I want to take you into the camp. You park the Jeep before you go over the bridge?

RP: Yeah, before we went over the bridge. It was a footbridge.

MH: You dismount—oh, it's a footbridge? Okay, so you dismount the Jeep, and how many guys are actually going over this footbridge?

RP: The three of us.

MH: Just the three of you?

RP: Yeah. We liberated that whole camp. Myself, Turanski, and Hager.

MH: How did you know you're not gonna get, you know, enemy fire?

RP: Well, I suppose they would've been there in some form of defense perimeter, you would think. I don't remember there being any towers or anything, so they apparently were just some kind of a perimeter defense of that camp. I think Dachau had some.

MH: Dachau had towers. But no towers that you saw here.

RP: No towers in the one we went in Kaufering IV.

MH: Was there a gate that was still closed?

RP: I don't remember a gate being in there, because once we got over the footbridge, over the moat—I'd call it a moat—we just were right amongst the buildings.

MH: Are the inmates wearing the striped—

RP: A lot of them had stripes, a lot of them were naked, a lot of them were dead. A lot of them totally emaciated, still alive, and—

MH: Do they come up to you?

RP: Yeah, they came up to us, and they were afraid of us. They didn't know who we were.

MH: What do you say?

RP: Well, you can't communicate with them to start with, and we didn't know what to do with them. And I don't recall whether we offered them some of our rations or not, but

that would've been one of the worst things we could've possibly done to them. And they found that out when the medics and supplies started to arrive to those camps, Mike. They tried to feed those people, and they simply could not take food. They were so starved by then that when you gave them food, they couldn't handle it.

MH: I know medics told people it would kill them.

RP: Yeah, it'd kill them, it actually killed them to give them—so, they had to bring them back slowly.

MH: Did you go into the first building you came to?

RP: Yeah, we went into the first building we came to.

MH: What was that?

RP: It was just a line of—I call them tarpaper shacks. They were low built, and inside they had wooden—well, not actually cots but they were, you know, like kids have, twin beds and type stuff, only racked up. Some of them were laying in those, and some of them were, like I said, half-dead, just laying in the aisle ways. But I don't remember, like other people at other camps I've heard about, the people that were able to come out came out. But we didn't encounter anybody on the bridge or near the bridge at all. They had not left the camp, and that's why it makes me think that maybe the guards had not been gone too long, that they were still very frightened to come out much, because they were—stayed inside the buildings.

MH: What's going through your mind when you see all this? This has to be a sight that nothing can prepare you for, and certainly nobody did prepare you for it.

RP: Well, no, we were totally unprepared for it; and like I said, I don't know what level command knew about these things, because we weren't warned about it.

MH: Would a warning have made a difference?

RP: I don't know. I really don't know, Mike. I don't know whether we would've been any more prepared for what we saw than just going in cold. I don't know whether it

would've made any difference whether somebody had warned us about it. But at least we would've made had some idea of what we were looking for. But to just stumble on it was a total shock to us, because we had no idea there was such a thing in existence.

MH: You were in radio contact with your superiors?

RP: Yeah, our platoon leader.

MH: What's the first radio message you send?

RP: Well, we said, as I recall, he would've said, "We've encountered some kind of a barbed-wire camp here, and it's got all kind of dead, living, partly living people in striped uniforms. And there's a huge amount of them here, but we don't know what they are." I imagine that's about what he would've said. As I recall. And, of course, our lieutenant was the eyes and ears of Colonel Hatcher, and so I'm sure he was right there with him at that particular time, and that's when they told us to get out of there. They were afraid of diseases, and I'm sure there was typhus and everything else in those camps.

MH: When you tell you to get out, how fast do you get out?

RP: Pretty darned fast. We didn't hesitate to get out at all, and we just went on our patrol, continued south from there on our patrol, and we were on patrol until the next morning. And the plan was, of course, if you understand how one division relieves another division, but what they do, they simply overtake you, and then start infiltrating through you until they're up in front, and then you're relieved.

MH: You literally park along the side of the road?

RP: Yeah, you're just overtaken by their troops, and then you fall back. And so, on the twenty-ninth of April, we were overtaken by the 36<sup>th</sup> Division, and we just had orders to retreat back through Germany and to take up occupational positions, and that's what we did. We retreated back into Bavaria. We went back, oh golly, probably 150, 200 miles before we finally stopped. And of course the war was pretty much over in the next—what? Thirtieth? Thirty-first? Is May—thirty-one days in April—thirty days in April, so, about nine days, it was all over.

MH: Do you remember the conversations the three of you had after leaving Landsberg?

RP: I can't recall what we would've said to each other, nope.

MH: Did you write home about it?

RP: I don't think I wrote my folks about it at all. And I didn't say anything to anybody about this for many, many years.

MH: Because—?

RP: And one thing I've gotten involved in, one of my granddaughters was a fifth grader, and she has a teacher, had a teacher and is still a teacher in that particular school—Bates Elementary School here in North Ogden, and she's very conscious of this Holocaust stuff. And she thinks it's important that these younger generations understand what went on, so about April of each year, she starts telling them—reads a book to them about the Holocaust and actually shows them some films about it. And then she—my granddaughter was in her class and she got telling my wife about it, and she said, "Well," told her, she said, "Did you know your grandpa liberated one of those camps?" and she said, "No." Her eyes went very big, and so she went back to her teacher the next day and said, "My grandpa was involved in the Holocaust."

So, before I knew it, I was rounded up and asked to come over to talk to the fifth graders. I guess this has been going on now for ten years, I suppose. I go over every April, near the end of April, the first part of May, and I talk to a combined group of fifth graders, about 90 to 100 kids at a time, and tell them about the Holocaust. So, that I try to do, and I'm getting a little old for it, I guess, but I still try to do that. Still got pretty good health, Mike, and so I try to do this every year with them.

MH: Was talking to her class the first time you spoke about it?

RP: I think so. I have a lot of memorabilia from World War II, and I had it stowed away in the basement; they were just in boxes and stuff. And my son saw some of it one day, somehow, and so he got asking about this, what all that stuff was all about in the boxes, and that's about the first time I ever talked anything about it, and that would've been—oh, I don't know, he was probably ten years old. That'd have been probably 1950s, 1960s, seventies [1970s], sometime around there, the first time I ever talked about it. But the Holocaust itself, I don't think I told my family anything about that for many, many years. I think the first time that Maureen, my wife, got involved was when we went back

to Washington, D.C., and I took her to the Holocaust Museum. I don't think she knew anything about it prior to that at all, so that would've been 1990s when we go to Washington, D.C.

MH: Did going to the museum cause this stuff to come back up inside your head?

RP: Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was very realistic; the museum is well put together. A lot of people think it's a horrible experience to go through there, which I guess it was intended to be. It's not a pleasant experience to anybody to be aware, and I still can't get straight in my mind how any one person could be that inhumane to another human being. It just blows my mind that anybody, even with a Nazi-type of attitude, could as a—even a GI Nazi—could be that so intolerant and so that inhumane to another person.

MH: The thing I'm coming to grips with is the Germans recognized they were losing the war—I mean, the order went out that no prisoner should be surrendered alive to the Allies.

RP: That's true.

MH: And they just launched on intensifying the extermination of people. In some of the camps, the last thing they did going out the—the SS did going out the gate was massacre people.

RP: That's very, very true, and in Dachau—I don't know if you—are you familiar with the history of Dachau liberation?

MH: Um, I'm smack in the middle of the battle between the 42<sup>nd</sup> and the 45<sup>th</sup>.

RP: Okay, they both claim to—(laughs) They both claim that they got their first.

MH: Yes.

RP: And I don't know who was there first, but have you got to the part where there was a pretty—the guards were still there in Dachau.

MH: Some guards were there.

RP: Some of the guards were there, some guards were there. And you heard about the massacre—

MH: There's a bunch of different stories about the massacre at the coal bin. I've heard a number of 17 dead and I've heard 400 dead.

RP: I think the 400 is more accurate, because the GIs went pretty much berserk when they saw that at Dachau, and there was an awful lot of Nazis killed before they got them stopped. I say, "Good for them." I think if we would've encountered the guards, we'd have done the same thing. I'm sure we would've, because you can't encounter something like that with the—with some kind of a hatred coming forth at you real fast like. Now, in the Landsberg camp itself—that was in Landsberg city—they actually set the huts on fire before they left.

MH: They locked the prisoners inside and tried to burn them to death.

RP: And set fire to the huts. These that we were in, I didn't see any evidence of any fire. And like I'm telling you, I think—I don't think that the guards had left an awful long time before we got there. I think those ones that were capable of moving around would've come out of there, come across the bridge. But that's my feeling about it.

MH: Did you feel strange just leaving it?

RP: Well, I didn't know what to do. The colonel said, "We'll take care of it," and they did. They got medics and food down there very shortly. And of course by then, the 36<sup>th</sup> Division was passing through that area also, and they, of course, claim they were the ones that entered the camps first, and that's not true. Like I say, we finally proved that to the Holocaust people through the records we had and everything else that that was not true. They were not the first in there.

MH: Is it possible that the 103<sup>rd</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored and the 12<sup>th</sup> Armored were across the river at the other Landsberg camps?

RP: Yeah, it's very, very possible, because like I say, there was at least thirty-two camps, major camps, and I don't know—

MH: There's hundreds of Dachau sub-camps.

RP: Hundreds of them. If you've ever seen a map with all the camps that stretch clear from Poland over into France's borders and south into the border of Switzerland and north to the sea up there, there was hundreds and hundreds of camps all over the place.

MH: I'm actually looking at the list, and it says on April 30, Kaufering Camps, 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry.

RP: What's the name of that one?

MH: It says "Kaufering camps, 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry."

RP: I don't remember that one. Maybe they encountered that one further on down. I don't remember anything about the name, but of course there was different kinds of camps. Some were extermination camps, the death camps.

MH: And some were slave labor where they worked them to death.

RP: And some of them, and I feel like one of these Kaufering camps was one of these medical experimentation camps.

MH: What makes you feel that?

RP: I've heard and read about the records they were able to uncover. They were doing medical experiments on the inmates.

MH: But you didn't see any evidence of that in any of the buildings you went into.

RP: No, didn't see anything in our camp. No, I think they were—I think these people, if they were capable, they were taken across the river and worked in factories and stuff in Landsberg itself. But the ones we saw, I don't know how any of them would've been able to do an awful lot of labor.

MH: Were you a religious person before you went to war?

RP: Yes, I was a—I wasn't completely active as a teenager in my religion. I did the things that normally would do, but you gotta remember, I grew up in the Depression time, the Great Depression time, and as a young boy, and we had it rough. And the thing that happened to me on Sundays, the reason I didn't go to church, was, I went over to my grandpa and grandma's, who lived about five miles away from where we lived, and they had a farm. And so, they had animals and gardens, which we didn't have in the place I lived. They invited us over there on Sundays to have dinner with them, so instead of going to church on Sundays, that's where I found myself was over at my grandpa and grandma's.

MH: This is also in Utah?

RP: This was in Idaho.

MH: Idaho, okay.

RP: Yeah, Idaho. I was born and raised in Idaho, came down to Utah as a senior in high school. And so, I don't remember attending an awful lot of church, but I have a Christian understanding of all the things at that time. But not as a young man, being totally committed, you know, of what I understood.

MH: Did your experience in war or your experience seeing what people can do to each other have any impact on your level of religiosity?

RP: Well, it made me understand that people can be very vicious, and I guess that the Nazi regime had such huge control over the people that it's unbelievable to me that they could, through propaganda and military control of them, the SS troops and the Brown Shirts and all that stuff, they can control the mind of people. The old saying of Nazism is, if you tell people the same thing often enough, they'll believe it—and they did. And, of course, he promised them the moon, a thousand years of a Nazi regime that was going to rule the world, and you and I wouldn't be talking on the telephone today.

MH: Not in English, anyhow.

RP: Not in English, and I don't suppose they would've tolerated me. I would've been a dead duck in a hurry because of my affiliation with the military. And like I say, we'd have been speaking a different language, I'm sure. I don't know exactly what would've been the outcome of this country, but the Japanese and Germans would've divided it up somehow. And you and I would have a completely different existence than what we've got today.

MH: What did you do when you came back?

RP: I came back—of course, I wanted an education, and the GI Bill, Mike, is one of the most wonderful things that ever happened to this country. I don't know if you've looked into that, but you cannot—without looking at it, it paid for itself many, many thousands of times in the technology that came out of the GI Bill and the advancement of the technology that took place from 1945-forty-six [1946] through the next twenty years of our generation. You can't believe the things that—all the advances that took place, and it's because the people became educated. They went to school. The GIs, for the most part, took advantage of the GI Bill. They got themselves degrees and advanced degrees. I can't name a technology that didn't advance as a result of their education. So, that is one of the finest—and not because I got advantage of it—I'm saying that was one of the finest pieces of legislation that Congress ever passed. It advanced this country through no ends. I can't believe how fast, in the next fifty years after the war, all the technologies that you and I experienced, even in your day, medically, engineering-wise—you name it, it was there.

Are you still there?

MH: Yeah, I'm here. Yes, I'm listening.

RP: I thought I had lost you anyway. I'm getting on a soapbox. But I wanted an education, so as soon as I got home, as soon as I could, I got enrolled in college—

MH: Where?

RP: With Utah State.

MH: Okay.

RP: Utah State University, and went—in ASTP, the thing that I was going to do there was engineering. It was a concentrated two-year engineering program, four years concentrated into two, and then you got through that school, got a commission as a second lieutenant in the engineering corps of the Army. So, I was always interested in engineering, so that's what I went into at Utah State. But I also went to ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] at Utah State. I thought I'd—I thought I might be subject to another—I didn't think that was the end of the war that would ever take place, so I thought, "Well, I did it the hard way last time, as a ground troop. I'm going to see the other side of it," so I enrolled in Air Force ROTC. And I got me a commission in ROTC three weeks prior to Korea. So I got me a commission in the Air Force.

MH: Were you called up for Korea?

RP: Well, that's another story. We were in a slight depression when I got out of school in 1950, and jobs were a little hard to come by. I had a lot of resumes out. They didn't come into the college like they do now, and the universities, the colleges, didn't interview people; you had to go out on your own and do it. So, I had a lot of resumes out to companies, but there was not an awful lot going on. But I made contact with the Air Force somehow; I don't exactly [remember] how I found out, but they were building up as a result of Korea. I found out there was openings in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and it was in the air training command, the Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, so about eight of us from Utah State applied, and we were accepted as technical training instructors out there. And so, that's where I ended up in 1950—going out to Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, which was a technical training school for the Air Force.

I thought, "Well, I won't be here very long. I'll be on my way somewhere," and they did contact—made contact with me, the Air Force did, and they said, "We want to know what you're doing. We're thinking about recalling you in the Air Force," so I told them what I was doing, that I was a training instructor in the Air Force training Korean airmen, and they came back and said, "Well, we think you're probably doing as much good or more training these airmen than you would be if we recalled you to the active Air Force," so they left me there. And so, I stayed in the Air Force Reserve, but I never went into the Korean War.

MH: I'm trying to think of there's anything else. You worked as an engineer for most of your life, then?

RP: Yeah, I got tied up with the military, and all my adult life, I've been tied in with the military. I worked at Hill Air Force Base here in Ogden, Utah, for my career. And retired from Hill Air Force Base after—I transferred back from Francis E. Warren, back to here,

because all of my ties were back here and all my families and so forth. So, I transferred back here, and I put in a career here at Hill Air Force Base. It's still in existence today.

MH: How many children did you have?

RP: I have four—I have four sons and a daughter.

MH: And you've been married how long?

RP: We just passed our anniversary on the twenty-eighth of May, and so we've been married sixty-one years.

MH: Congratulations.

RP: Thank you.

MH: Anything else you can think of? You said there were pictures that you had.

RP: Yeah, they were taken by the Signal Corps people of the Landsberg camps.

MH: Are there any pictures of you over there?

RP: Not at the camp.

MH: Anywhere.

RP: Yeah, I've got a lot of pictures.

MH: Could you find one of you that you could send me that I could use?

RP: Yeah, I can do that. I've got one just of me. I've got quite a few that were taken in Europe. I've got some—

MH: You don't have any of the three of you in the Jeep, do you?

RP: I've got one when we're in the Jeep, let's see. Yeah, I know Turanski's with me in the Jeep after the war. And, see, I was in the Army of Occupation for a year. I didn't come directly home after the war. We were retraining to go to the war in Japan, and in the meantime, when the war ended in August, my division was disbanded and came home on its own, and all of us who didn't have sufficient points, we were assigned to other organizations in the Army of Occupation. I ended up with an I&R platoon in Frankfurt, Germany, and we were part of the Eisenhower's SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] headquarters. I had quite some experiences with them there that's quite a tale to tell about—I got involved with the German scientists, if you can believe that, with V-1 and V-2 rocket scientists on assignment there.

MH: You mean finding them and bringing them to the U.S.?

RP: Yep, that's what I did.

MH: How'd you feel about that?

RP: Well, at the time, I couldn't understand, because it was all secret. You want to hear this story?

MH: Sure.

RP: Okay.

***Part 1 ends; part 2 begins.***

RP: By August of 1945, my division had come home to the United States, and I was transferred again to the 100<sup>th</sup> Division for a little while, and then I ended up in the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, and that's a real old famous regiment. It's been around for hundreds of years. And we were part of the SHAEF headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany. We worked just barely through the fence with SHAEF headquarters was where we lived, and we took a lot of orders from SHAEF headquarters, from Eisenhower's headquarters. And on October 9, 1945, I was called up to my first sergeant's office, and Mastrengelo was his

name, became a judge in New Jersey. That's what the education got him. And he's dead now, but Mastrengelo was my first sergeant.

MH: Strangelo?

RP: Mastrengelo, M-a-s-t-r-e-n-g-e-l-o.

MH: Okay.

RP: And he called me in the office there and said, "Peterson, you and one other medic are going with me, and we're going on a top-secret message—mission. I've been fully briefed by the colonel as to what we're to do, but I am sworn to secrecy. I cannot tell you and the medic what we're gonna do other than you just follow my orders, and we'll do what we're told to do. What we're gonna do is, we're going to—we've ordered forty boxcars"—not forty, twelve boxcars. They were 40 and 8s—you know what a 40 and 8

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MH: I know what a 40 and 8 is, yes.

RP: "We've ordered twelve boxcars, and we're gonna take these forty men and their families, and they're displaced persons," he says. "That's what they are, displaced persons, and we're gonna take them from Frankfurt"—it was really Hanau, the station we left from, which is a suburb of Frankfurt—"and we're gonna take them down to southern Bavaria on these 40 and 8 cars, take them and their families, and we're gonna take them down to Landshut in Bavaria. And there, we're gonna turn them over to another military organization, and then we're gonna come back home. That's it. That's all we need to do." So, he says, "We're gonna get on this kind of a train, and we're gonna take them down there."

So, lo and behold, on the thirteenth of October, we went over to Hanau, loaded these people on these 40 and 8 boxcars, and I don't remember exactly how many members—there were quite a bunch in their families, because they were mostly older types. And there was forty men and all these women and kids. And the thing I couldn't understand, Mike, was I thought, "Well, here we've got millions of Europeans scattered all over this country as displaced persons trying to get back to their homes. Why would the Army single out forty of these guys and their families and provide them transportation down to Landshut?" Well, to make a long story short, we took the train, and I've got routes of all where we went and all this stuff, through the towns, and we got sidetracked because we were displaced persons, supposedly, and so they'd put us on the sidings and we would

stay there. Finally, it took us quite a while to go this distance from Frankfurt down to Landshut, four or five days, I believe it was.

Anyway, we took them down there, and we turned them over to an armored outfit, if you can believe this, and they were in Landshut there. Then we got on the train and came back to Frankfurt. Now, this is mid-1945, if you can believe this, Mike, and I only—the only way I can explain this was, I must've went on leave about that time. I got leave, and I went to Paris. I remember that and it must have been an extended period of time. But anyway, fifty-eight years later, I kept track of Mike all this time. We wrote to each other and exchanged Christmas cards and all that good stuff. And so, he wrote me in 1998, I guess; anyway, it was fifty years, 1998, when he did this.

MH: Who's writing to you?

RP: Mastrengelo. Christmas card. And he said, "Do you remember when we took Major [Wernher] von Braun, Dr. von Braun and the forty scientists and their families down to Landshut?" And I wrote back to him, and I said, "I do not know the foggiest idea what you're talking about." So, he said, "Well, I thought you knew all about this. Our names and everything appeared in the *Stars and Stripes* that we did this. I've got all kinds of documents about it." And I said, "Well, you better send them to me, because I don't have the foggiest idea what you're talking about."

So, he sent me all these documents over the years, and it showed where we ordered the twelve boxcars, 40 and 8 boxcars, and we had orders exactly what to do. And he said, "That's what we did." It was Dr. von Braun and forty of the scientists that eventually came to Texas was the ones we took to Landshut, and they did. They left their families in Landshut. Forty of those plus—I looked at this, too; it was 132 that actually came over here, and 118 stayed and came in illegally. They were Nazis. Came in as illegal immigrants into Texas at Fort Bliss. And that's where they started their research.

Now, I don't know if you know the story of the missiles, the V-1 and V-2 rockets that they developed. This is one of the secret weapons that Hitler kept promising his people was gonna win the war.

MH: They were building them, I know, in underground bunkers.

RP: Underground factories, couple of mile-long factories. I've even got pictures of those where they were building these beasts. They rained down on England and Antwerp and all those countries. Anyway, we were able, through their efforts, brought sixteen tons of

documents over here of the research they had done on the rocketry. Now, the Americans have a little reluctance to admit this, but Dr. von Braun and those scientists he brought over are the ones that got us to the moon and got the thing that, finally, equaled the *Sputnik* rocket that they sent up, and he's the one that did it, along with Americans, of course. But the technology came from those German scientists. Plus, they fired all these V-2s down there in White Sands rocket and got a tremendous amount of information about missile rocketry out of those. And that's how we got all the missile technology, and they went down to Huntsville, and that's where it all was developed. And we had some rocket experience through Goddard, a guy named Goddard that did some research on—his was more solid fuels than they were liquid fuels like the Germans did. But, anyway, that's what it was. Those forty were V-1, V-2 rocket scientists.

MH: There were their Nazis and our Nazis.

RP: They were Nazis. In fact, Dr. von Braun was a major in the SS. He had a commission in the SS. Now, von Braun was a very brilliant individual, and he was a complete visionary when it came to rocketry and space explorations. He could see way in the future on that stuff. And I give him a tremendous amount of credit for not only our explorations—he got us to the moon and beat the Russians there, there's no doubt about that. That Saturn V was his baby.

MH: Right, but how many slave laborers did he kill in the process in Germany?

RP: A lot of them, a lot. Whole lots of them that worked in those factories were slave laborers, and he killed a lot of them. And I think that he had some implications that he was, like you say, guilty of some of these things. On the other hand, he had to have gone along with this, because he was directly under the control of a general that was in charge of all the rocketry programs for the Germans, and I think you're well aware, also, that when they overran Peenemünde—you familiar with Peenemünde?

MH: No.

RP: You know what I'm talking about?

MH: No.

RP: Well, this is where all the rocket scientists were situated on the Baltic coast there. That's where they developed all these secret weapons. A Messerschmitt 262, which was

a jet rocket airplane, they had one of those, too, but the Messerschmitt jet that harassed the American Air Force came from that same facility as well as the V-1 and the V-2 rocket, all came from Peenemünde, which is on the Baltic Sea at a secret facility there. The British were the ones that became aware, first through intelligence, that this is where all this stuff was going on, and they finally—I can't recall exactly, but they bombed that facility heavily and killed some of the scientists and a lot of slave laborers, but Dr. von Braun and most of them got out of there, and that's when they moved to the underground facilities in the Harz Mountains of Germany.

And this—what was I going to say? Anyway, that's where they developed all this stuff, and that's where we were able to recover 100 of those V-2s that were brought over here and fired down at White Sands. And some of the V-1s were actually fired out here in Wendover Air Force Base in Utah, a lot of the V-1s were fired there, and that, by the way, is where the atomic group was trained, at Wendover, that dropped the atomic bomb. The V-29. Now what else can I—?

MH: Nothing. What I'd like to do is send you an e-mail so you have my address, and if you could find a couple of photos from World War II of yourself that you could send to me, I'll scan them and send them back.

RP: You got a preference of what kind you want?

MH: Um—

RP: Do you want photos of me in my uniform or do you want one in the Jeep?

MH: One in the Jeep would be good, or a close-up of you in your uniform. If you're carrying a rifle, that'd be good. Something that looks like it was in a combat environment; and then if you have a current photo of yourself.

RP: Yeah, I could do that. I could probably do that.

MH: Okay, and then I'll scan them and then send them back to you. I'll send you an e-mail, though, with the address; that's probably the easiest way to do it.

RP: I'm probably gonna link up here—now, I'm taking all this information off of a thing here in the *Blood and Fire* magazine, and you must have contacted them and said you needed—you'd like to contact people from the 255<sup>th</sup>. Did you do that?

MH: I actually have a researcher who's been contacting division associations of a lot of the divisions that were—

RP: You made up quite a nice write up on you here and about your Vietnam stuff and so forth.

MH: Yeah, I provided all that information—

RP: (inaudible) your e-mail and phone numbers and everything is on here.

MH: The address is there, too?

RP: Hmm, let me get my—I can see a long ways off, Mike, but I can't read close up. Hold on.

MH: Okay.

RP: (inaudible) He's collected thousands of pictures, both in our training and in our combat, and so forth. Tommy, it's on his website, and I can probably give that to you. I won't take time right now; I'm here for two hours now.

MH: Okay.

RP: But he has a website, and I'm sure he has a lot of historic—and we have an historian attached to the 63<sup>rd</sup>, so evidently, you have a man that works with the 63<sup>rd</sup> Division Association.

MH: Somebody contacted them for me.

RP: Okay.

MH: But again, if you know—what I'm really interested in doing is talking to liberators who are still with us about their experience.

RP: Yeah.

MH: Okay?

RP: Well, I probably didn't do too much, 'cause I was in and out of there pretty fast.

MH: It's okay.

RP: But I did a lot of research on it after the war.

MH: Okay.

RP: All right?

MH: Thank you very, very much. I appreciate it.

RP: Well, I appreciate talking to you.

MH: Okay. Bye-bye.

RP: Bye.

*End of interview.*