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Dallas Peyton oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, July 18, 2008

Dallas Peyton (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.]

Michael Hirsh: First of all, can you give me your full name and spell it for me, please?

Dallas Peyton: Dallas, like in Texas, Peyton, P-e-y-t-o-n.

MH: And your address?

DP: ...

MH: Your phone number is....

DP: That's correct.

MH: Your e-mail is....

DP: Correct.

MH: And you were with the 20th Armored Division?

DP: Yes, I was.

MH: And you were with the guys who liberated Dachau?

DP: Yes.

MH: What's your date of birth, sir?

DP: January 29, 1923.

MH: Just tell me a little bit about where you grew up and what you were doing before you went in the Army.

DP: Well, I grew up in a small town in western Kentucky, Paducah, and I guess just had a typical kid's experiences through high school. I graduated in 1941, and then that fall, I was going to—well, I did, enrolled in a college there in western Kentucky, which was Murray State Teachers College, I think, at that time. I was there when the December 7 [1941] incident happened, and I think nearly all the guys there signed up, and some got in a military program that would allow you to continue your school until they need you. And in the Army, that's what they call the ASTP, Army Specialized Training Program, that they would put you back into college, of course, and when you graduated as a second lieutenant and engineers, and that's what I signed up for. And in June 1943, I guess, yeah, I was called to active duty and I went to camp in Alabama for basic training. And from there, I was sent to a school—what was the name I went to in Alabama? (asking wife) Well, for heaven's sake, right now I can't think of the name of the school.

MH: It's okay.

DP: Where all the boys were, and I stayed there, and then in the spring, I was sent to Camp Campbell, Kentucky, to the 20th Armored Division. The 20th Armored Division, at that time, they were training replacements for the armored divisions in Europe. And when I got there, they were about in the middle of a cycle, so when that cycle was completed, all of them that'd been there the full time were shipped off overseas to replacement depots to go where needed, and I had to stay there and go through the full thing. By that time, we got filled up with other people from this ASTP program, and we went through the whole cycle of training and maneuvers, and then the entire division

packed up and went to France. We got into Le Havre just about the time of the Battle of the Bulge.

MH: What kind of tanks did you have?

DP: Now, you asked me something I don't know. I was in the infantry, so I was in a half-track.

MH: Oh, okay.

DP: But they did have tanks. I'll tell you something later where you can get that information.

MH: You were in a half-track, that's like a truck with two front wheels and treads in the back.

DP: Yes.

MH: What's the purpose of that vehicle?

DP: Well, they're not as likely to get bogged down with those tracks as they would with just wheels, and they were armored to some extent. And I was in a machine gun squad. I was one of the two machine gunners. And my machine gun was mounted on a pedestal right behind the driver, and over where the passenger seat would be was a (inaudible) ring with a .50 caliber machine gun there that the squad leader used. And the other machine gun was on the back.

MH: You were on a .30 cal?

DP: Yes.

MH: So, they get you to Le Havre, and then what happens?

DP: Well, we stayed there—it took a little time to get the people off, but it took quite a while to get all the vehicles and stuff off, the tanks, half-tracks and everything. And when we did get off, we went to Belgium and we guarded the POWs they'd captured from the Battle of the Bulge. And they just had barbed-wire fenced areas with vehicles surrounding them, which would turn on their lights at night to light it up. When that was over, from there, we went into Holland and eventually crossed the river into Germany on pontoon bridges at night. And we were—the average division was in the Army Reserve unit, and lots of time we would travel at night to go do something if one of the infantry units got hung up, and most of the time we got there, it was all taken care of anyway. And we went across Germany pretty much the same way, and then—

MH: What was your first combat?

DP: First combat? It almost was a mortar in my lap. We were in the convoy going somewhere, and a convoy at that time was a tank and an infantry was married to each other, each protecting the other, the infantry from the tanks and the tanks for us. So, shooting started up on the fourth column. We stopped, and we were on an overhead bridge for a railroad. It was down through a cut, and there was a mortar round landed in that railroad track over on the left side of us, and then we started telling that driver to get off that bridge, and he said, "I can't, it'll tear up my distance." They were—they had to keep those vehicles at a certain distance. He had a square painted on his windshield, and when that tank was in that square, he was the correct distance, you know, to keep one round or something from getting two vehicles. Then the mortar lit over on the other side of in there. At that time, we were getting desperate. We told him to move, he started, and my machine gun, I told you, was mounted behind him. I fully loaded that machine gun and pointed it down at him, and I said, "You get us off this bridge or I'm gonna blow you outta that seat."

Well, he brought us off the bridge before that mortar man out there could fire a third round. Someone called to see where they were coming from, and they were firing on him, so he set up a white flag. But knowing how those mortars worked, that third one would've been right in our lap. And then we had a mission to go capture a little town; we traveled at night, and we were supposed to take it in the morning.

MH: What was your unit? You were in the 20th Armored, but what was the unit you were in?

DP: I was in A Company of the 20th—of the 70th Armored Infantry Battalion.

MH: Of the 75th?

DP: Seven-zero.

MH: Seven-zero, okay.

DP: Yeah, 70th Armored Infantry Battalion. And then Combat Command Reserve. They had combat command—in reserves. So, we were the division reserve. (inaudible) We got off the half-track, we had to stop and get it repaired, and then we'd take off while everybody was gone, so we took off driving at night with little blackout lights, which doesn't mean much more than a lightning bug. And we approached—we come—it was getting daylight. We come up to the town, we drove on through the town, got out on the other side, and we decided we were gonna stop and fix breakfast, which we did. We were out there cooking our breakfast when we heard the rumble of the armored coming, and up over the hill came a little scout car, with a 37mm cal like a stake and he finally pointed it right at us. We told the driver, "Quick, turn the half-track sideways so they can see that white star," which he did. And they came on up. They were attacking the village we had come through.

MH: They were attacking the village you'd already taken?

DP: Yeah. We didn't see a single German in there. But, yeah, that was one of our funnier instances, but it could've been a bad one.

MH: Yes, it could've.

DP: And later on, we were going to take another village down near Munich, and we got pulled off that detail. They gave it to another battalion, and we went on down and that's where we come up—saw this death train. I suppose you may have seen pictures of it.

MH: I've heard of it. You guys were—what the Army history books says is that you were spearheading the 42nd and the 45th Infantry Divisions.

DP: We were all about—there were three divisions that had elements that hit Dachau about the same time. About the same day, so yeah, and they're the ones claim they were there first.

MH: And they're still fighting that battle.

DP: Yeah, that'll die when the last one of whosoever of the three units survives: they can claim they were and nobody'll argue with it.

MH: Tell me—so, did you know that camp was coming up?

DP: No. Well, this village we got pulled off of, one of the other units went up to it and they approached it, and there was white flags and white sheets everywhere hanging out. So, they got the lead elements, got in about the middle of the town, and the Germans opened up firing on them, and they killed the colonel of that combat command. His driver was shot. And when they got them all out of there, they called off and called in the artillery and the Air Force, and they flattened that town, literally flattened it. And Lord knows what they did. In the meantime, we went on down the road; we saw this train setting there with all these dead bodies in it.

MH: Did you get off the half-track to look at it?

DP: No. Not then. We went on down, and that's when we found Dachau. Much of what happened in Dachau, most of it, I don't remember. I guess it's all blocked out except two things that I've seen for the last sixty years. One of them was that train, and the other's when we got inside the camp and saw two of these what I call "walking skeletons" were shuffling along, one in front of me and the other coming toward us, and those two guys stopped, stared at each other for a few minutes, then screamed and run together, hugging, kissing, hollering and crying. Up until that moment, neither knew the other was still alive. And I can see that right now.

MH: You describe them as "walking skeletons."

DP: I'm sorry?

MH: You describe them as "walking skeletons."

DP: Yes.

MH: Were they short people, tall people?

DP: They were just normal people, but they just had been worked to the point of death. On the wrought iron gates of that concentration camp, and I think on most of them, it said “*Arbeit macht frei*,” which literally means “Work can set you free.” And I always first thought that was kind of ironic, and then I realized it’s true. They work you to death, and then you’re free. And that’s what these people were left there when we got there—

MH: When you went into the camp, did you go through the big gates, the Jourhaus gates?

DP: Yes.

MH: You left your vehicle outside?

DP: Yes, our vehicle’s outside at that time. Our vehicle—one got in the main gate, a tank, and we—this was a little after everything settled down when I was walking back in there and saw these two people.

MH: Were there any instructions that your commanders had given you about going inside?

DP: Not that I know of. We didn’t know what it was, and the other elements—other things I read about units that come up on these things, they didn’t know what they got into and didn’t know what they were.

MH: Right. When you walked inside, had the infantry guys gone in ahead of you from the 42nd or 45th?

DP: I don’t know.

MH: Did you see other American soldiers in there?

DP: Oh, yeah, there was Americans all around the place.

MH: What time of day was this?

DP: Well, let me tell you this: a few years ago, the Bavarian state government had a sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Dachau, which was 29 April 1949—no—

MH: Forty-five [1945].

DP: Forty-five [1945], and my wife and I and two other couples from the division, we went over there to see that. And while we was in there, we got familiar with some of the Dutch people, and one Dutchman asked me, “Do you know when you got to Dachau?” and I said, “I haven’t the faintest idea what time it was.” He says, “I know. You got here at 17:15.”

MH: How did he know?

DP: I had it wrong, sorry, fifteen—yeah, 17:15.

MH: That’s 5:15 in the afternoon.

DP: That’s when he got liberated. That’s how he knows. I’ll get back to that in a minute.

MH: So, you’re walking around inside the camp, and you see that incredibly emotional moment between those two inmates.

DP: Yeah, and then others—there were inmates in there. Some of them, I’m actually wondering for a long time if we killed any. You see these people that haven’t had anything to eat for years, and we had all C rations, and you know how concentrated those food things were. And I wondered how many times they were given those C rations, which I’m sure they ate, the way they were starving, and their constitution couldn’t handle that kind of a sudden food.

MH: I think there are many stories about GIs feeding the people and the people dying as a result, until they were told by the medical officers, “Don’t give them anything.”

DP: Yeah, I’m sure that happened.

MH: What else did you see? Let me ask you, when you watched those two men, what did you think?

DP: Just, well, I was feeling happy for them, and as I said, I knew then that I don't know whether they were related or knew each other—or just knew each other. That they did, but I don't know if they were related or not, but they were sure happy to see somebody that they knew or was related to that they hadn't seen since captivity, and the place in there was just—the conditions were just bad.

MH: Describe it to me, 'cause I'd like to see it through your eyes.

DP: Well, there was about forty-some-odd barracks in there, and the inside was just—let's see, one, two, three, four-high bunk beds, which were just wooden frames, wooden floor in the beds, and that's what they slept on unless they could scrounge up—which I think most of them did, from the looks of it—paper boxes or anything to put some padding down there. And that's what they lived on. And there was a crematorium at Dachau. It still is. Dachau is now a museum; it's been kept open.

MH: Did you see the crematorium in 1945?

DP: I don't know. I don't know whether I did or not. And let me go back now to this reunion. I mean—yeah, reunion. They put a very elaborate show on, the German government, the Bavarian government did: it lasted about four days. My wife and I went there, and I went there a day early, and we went out to the camp grounds. I wanted to go out there and see what kind of memories I could revive, dig up. I was sitting on a little concrete wall, and my wife's out taking pictures somewhere. And this young woman walked up to me, and said, "Were you here in 1945?" and I said, "Yes," because I had on my cap and jacket. And then she started to ask questions, and said, "Should we leave?" and I said, "No, I'd rather have you here to talk to." About four or five guys came up there. We talked for about a half-hour until they said they had to go, that their tour bus was leaving. They were American GIs on tours over there to see that place. So, I didn't know the government was doing that, but apparently they did. Oh, boy.

MH: It brings it back, doesn't it?

DP: Yeah, and after the war was over, I went back to school at the University of Kentucky and joined the reserves when I got discharged, and after two years in there, taking advanced ROTC, which I took because they paid about \$20 a month, which was

big money then, and I got a commission, second lieutenant in the Signal Corps in 1949. So, I said, "Well, I think I'll go back in the Army, probably as good as anything else popping up now." So, I did. Stayed until I retired in June 1940—sixty-six [1966].

MH: You retired in June of sixty-six [1966]?

DP: Yes. I was in Fort Huachuca. And one of the vacation trips we had, I took the family over to Dachau. I wanted them to see it. And my oldest boy, who's now about sixty-one or so, he told a story a couple years ago that I had never heard before. And he said when we got up to the gate, I was staring those words, and he said they went on inside, and he looked around, and I was not there. So, David and I think his next-oldest brother come back to the gate looking for me, and they said when they got there, I was standing there, looking in crying. And he said, "I know now what I didn't know as a kid: that my daddy was sitting there looking and seeing 1945." And he was probably right. That was an emotional roller coaster ride, going back there.

MH: What pulled you back there?

DP: I went back as soon as I knew they were going to put this on. I wanted to go back, I wanted to see. And mostly, I wanted to try to revive my memory of what I saw. That didn't help much, but I had never told my wife or anybody any of this what I'm telling you. I think it was 2002, one of my grandsons called me. He was teaching history in a Christian academy, high school, and he said he had three history classes, and he said, "We're in the World War II part." He wanted me to come as a guest lecturer on the three classes on what I did in the war. Well, I didn't want to do that, no more than the man in the moon, but at the same time, I couldn't tell my grandson no. So, I went over there with him, took a few things that I had. One of them was one of those Nazi flags that I took down over a fire station somewhere in Germany. I still have that thing. And I started talking to these kids and didn't do bad until I got to Dachau, and then from there on, I was crying more than I was talking. And thinking at the same time, these kids are thinking, "You old fool, up there crying," but when I saw the looks on their faces later, I knew that wasn't so.

The second class was a repeat of the first one, and then we had lunch. And we started the last class, and got a few minutes, a knock came on the door, and Matt went up to the door, and it was another history teacher. Her class wanted to come in and see that. During the lunch hour, what transpired in those first two classes went all through that school, and her students wanted to come in, which they did.

MH: What city was this in?

DP: What what?

MH: What city was this in?

DP: Here in Tucson.

MH: In Tucson, okay. Go ahead.

DP: And they were there, and it was just a repeat. I cry more than I talk, and because it's the first time I'd ever let any of it out. And since then, I got in Fort Huachuca, they were having a Days of Remembrance, and they wanted anybody that was a survivor or liberator. I called up and talked to them, and they found I was a liberator, so I went down there for two or three days. And when I was down there, I met about five or six survivors of the Holocaust. One of them, his name was Saul Rozner. He came up to me first, grabbed me around the neck, hugged me, kissed on the cheek, and he says, "That's thanks, but it's a little bit sixty years late." So, Saul and I got pretty chummy, and we made talks together. We made a radio talk show host here in Tucson one Sunday, and several places. Saul's gone now, but he had a brother in Dachau that died the day after we got there.

And that got me started going, and I started working with these survivors of which there are seventeen, I think, around here in Tucson and around. And I have made talks in three Jewish temples and I don't know how many schools now. I don't remember, but I finally got where I can talk without crying, and when we were at the first reunion that I even went to of the 20th Armored was in 2005, and that was in Washington, D.C., to coincide with the dedication of the Army Memorial. So, that was the first time I went there then. And that was another emotional thing, to go there. While we were there, we went to the Holocaust Museum. Have you seen that?

MH: Yes, I have.

DP: Yeah, that's quite a place.

MH: Why do you think you kept it bottled up inside you for all those years?

DP: I'm sorry?

MH: Why do you think you kept it bottled up inside you for all those years?

DP: Too bad to talk about or even think about. Just—and a lot of my other buddies, I found out, in the armored division. I even run across my assistant machine gunner lately, and he's said the same thing. His wife never knew. In fact, Howard just died here just very recently. And his wife said, "He didn't say anything. First thing I knew was one of the girls coming home, talking something about the Dachau," and Howard said, "Yeah, I was there. I helped liberate it," and that's the first he'd ever said. So, I guess nobody went back and talked about it.

MH: Do you have any fear that what happened there will be forgotten?

DP: Well, that's what the Jewish survivors kept telling me, "Don't let this ever be forgotten." And they said, "You have a story to tell," and I said, "I do not." They finally convinced me I did, and I guess I do, because I have been busy with this ever since about, well, aught-five [2005]—the last five years, anyway—I've been doing this. And I've got where I can pretty much go through one without crying. One high school, I told the guy I was a liberator and had been talking several places, one of the survivors piped up and said, "Yeah, he cries a lot, too."

MH: (laughs) That wasn't very nice.

DP: Huh?

MH: I said, that wasn't very nice.

DP: Oh, yeah, Lily was just teasing me.

MH: What do you say to the kids that impacts them the most? What is it that affects them the most?

DP: (coughs) Excuse me. (coughs) To impress upon them that they don't let something like this grow. If they see it, speak up, speak up, because there was a German Lutheran minister that made a poem while he was in Dachau.

MH: Reinhold Niebuhr.¹

DP: Huh?

MH: Niebuhr.

DP: Yeah. You heard it. “When they come for me,” well, I recited some of that in my speech to the kids, and “the next time they come, they may be coming for you.” That’s how I usually end them.

MH: How long did you spend in 1945, how long did you stay inside the gates at Dachau?

DP: I think we were there no more than a couple of days, and we went on.

MH: That’s actually a long time, compared to what most people did.

DP: Yeah, then we went on to Munich, and set there and watched the artillery bombard that place until we could go up there and clean it out.

MH: Where were you on V-E Day?

DP: On what?

MH: On V-E Day.

DP: Somewhere in Austria. I don’t remember where.

MH: When you first saw the train outside the gates, what do you think?

¹ MH means Martin Niemöller, to whom the famous poem “First they came...” is attributed. Reinhold Niebuhr was a German American theologian and philosopher who wrote the Serenity Poem used by Alcoholics Anonymous.

DP: Well, at first, I thought it was people in there, and then I realized, “No, that’s not people. They’re just thrown in there like little logs in a car,” that’s—could see ’em then. And then we didn’t stop, we kept going, and I don’t know what I thought. Shock beyond belief.

MH: Were you a religious person?

DP: Yes.

MH: Are you still?

DP: I’m sorry?

MH: Are you still a religious person?

DP: Yes.

MH: How, if any way, did what you saw affect the way you feel about God?

DP: Well, that’s another story.

MH: Tell me.

DP: Let’s save that for a while.

MH: Okay.

DP: After we got there, we didn’t talk. And when I got back to Germany in aught-five [2005] and realized that the German people, my age at that time, was in a denial state. There was no such thing. It never happened.

MH: When was this? That “There was no such thing, it never happened.”

DP: At the time. I remember when we had stopped somewhere for a day at some small town, and they had discovered one of those mass graves. And they had the German POWs go over there and dig it up, open it up, and the American military government marched everybody in that town, with no exceptions except maybe the children, out to see that open pit full of bodies, to realize, "There it is."

MH: This was after V-E Day?

DP: No.

MH: No.

DP: It was before.

MH: Before, but after you'd been to Dachau?

DP: Yes. Well, no, I don't think so; it'd been before.

MH: So, you saw this happening.

DP: Yeah, I didn't go out there. I didn't want to see it. But I don't know that any of our people did, but it was right near where we were. I don't know, it was something.

MH: Did they have to force the German people to go look at it?

DP: Yes, they did.

MH: At gunpoint?

DP: Yeah, they made 'em go look at it, then I think that happened in various places where those things were, they made the people go out and look at it. So, you cannot honestly say, "It never happened." The Germans of today's young generation, they want to know.

The ones right after, in mid-times, kind of indifferent. But now the youngsters today, the Germans, they want to know what happened.

MH: It would be—if I had been in your position, it would be difficult for me to look at German civilians having seen Dachau or the other camps and—

DP: No, I had no problems. When we went back in 1945 and—no, I got stopped out on the streets in Washington, I was walking there, from people. And then when we were there in Germany, the people realized that, yes, it did happen, and Dachau is now a museum. All the barracks except one have been torn down, but their foundations are there with a marker, memorial for the barrack's number. And the crematorium is still there.

MH: But in 1945, the German civilians who lived near many of the camps said, “We don't know anything. We didn't know it was there. We didn't see it. We know nothing.”

DP: Pretty much so, yeah.

MH: It would've made me very angry.

DP: Well, yeah, it did, but there's not much you can do about it. But, yeah. And in a way, I guess, I can understand if I was them, I wouldn't know about it, either. Didn't want to admit that we'd ever done such a thing.

MH: So, come back to the question I asked you about God.

DP: Okay. In November, December, about like that last year, I had a vision—not a dream, it was a vision. Because in dreams, things happen haphazard, and this other was very logical. I was walking through a tunnel, but it wasn't really a tunnel, to me, it was like a huge drainpipe that I could stand up and walk through, to a light out at the end of the tunnel. When I stepped out into the light, there was the gates to heaven. St. Peter and Gabriel were there. One of them, I don't know which, ran over and closed the gate saying, “You may not enter”—yeah, big deal, huh?—and said, “Your time is not yet here. Go back and finish the job.”

And as he said that, I'm now immediately standing in a hospital room, looking at about a ten-year-old boy propped up in a bed. The boy had on a heavy blue jacket with a brown

fake fur collar, and the longer I was standing there looking at him, and I realized, “That’s me I’m looking at.” And that was the end of the vision, abruptly. Just like that. So, I didn’t know what it was all about, and I’ve prayed kind of a whole lot from that time up to tell me what the job is that you want done. And then on May 4, a Sunday, I had an engagement with the youth at our church that we go to.

MH: What church do you belong to?

DP: Catalina Methodist Church. And the youth minister had given me that time for that night, so I got there a little early, and they were on the lawn playing some kind of dodgeball game, so time to go up, so they had to go upstairs. Iron stair steps. Stair steps and I don’t get along too well. Two of the boys helped me get up there, and I gave the talk. I had a short question-and-answer period. And then the youth minister started off on something else, and I told my wife, “Come on, let’s go,” because I told her after that, “We’re going out to the Outback. I want a blooming onion and a steak.”

MH: What talk did you give?

DP: To the kids? The same one I give to all of them.

MH: About Dachau?

DP: Yeah, about Dachau, what I saw, what I did. Pretty much the same thing. And then when I got to that stairs, two of the big boys came up immediately and pretty much carried me down those steps, and I thanked them, and I said, “I can get out to the car okay now,” because my wife was driving. She and I walked out to the curb to the car, and I stood there and just kind of put my hands on top of the car waiting for her to go around the other side and unlock the door. When I heard the door lock click, I opened the door and got in the car and sat down. The minute my butt hit that cushion, the lights went out. I was unconscious. Which threw my wife into a panic, and she was telling me some of the things. She was trying to rouse me up, and got people, three or four people coming around there to see what’s going on.

The next thing, after I hit that cushion, I remember hearing a female voice that says, “I’m calling the meds,” and out again. And then I remember when the paramedics got there, they had two vehicles, and one of them come around to the door, opened the door and said, “Can you turn around put your feet out of here so we can get to you better?” I did. What they did to me then, I don’t know. I don’t remember anything. Next thing I remember was getting on that gurney, and they put it into the ambulance. And my wife

wanted to say something to me, and the medic said, “No, we don’t have time.” The next thing I ever heard after I got in there was hearing him tell the driver, “We’re going code,” meaning red lights and siren.

And I don’t know what they did, but there were three people in there working on me (inaudible) code, and the other thing I did hear a conversation when they called into the ER room, telling them what they were bringing in. (coughs) Excuse me.

MH: Okay.

DP: What they were bringing in. My blood pressure was eighty over twenty; pulse rate was twenty-two. That’s why they were in a hurry.

MH: I hope they—I hope they hurried a lot.

DP: Yeah. Then I remember in the ER room one time, I asked did I have a heart attack, and a female voice said, “We don’t know yet.” The next thing I know, I’m upstairs in the cardiac intensive care unit, and my wife and a couple of the boys had got there that night. The next morning, I called in the head chief—the big doctor for the surgery unit, I guess, for cardiac. He came in with all of his students. This is a teaching hospital at the university, teaching hospital. And all his students, they liked to go around and make their rounds every day. And he was asking them questions and talking to them, and he told me.

He said, “You definitely did not have a heart attack,” and I said, “What caused it?” and he said, “Old age.” So, he explained to me about the four chambers of the heart and four valves and said, “The only thing working in your heart was the two lower valves.” He said, “We’re going to put in a pacemaker.” I said, “When do they do that?” This was Monday morning, and he said, “I hope we get it done some time tomorrow.” Well, the lady doctor in charge of me, she came in, and they put it in that Monday evening about five o’clock. And then Tuesday, well, I woke up and they said, “Well, you don’t need ICU anymore. We’re putting you down in the regular cardiac ward.” So, I stayed in there a day or so ’til they let me go home.

And that is my contact. To me, I said, “Okay, I have no doubt of what my job is. I was just finished talking to the kids, and I got in the car, and I passed out.” And come to in the hospital, and that was all timed perfectly. I didn’t fall down those stair steps; I didn’t fall down in the church yard going to the car, where I could hurt myself. I passed out when I was in the car, seated. And to me, that was just—and my family even admits, like

one of my sons said, “Well, the more you think about it, the more logical it gets” that that what is what I’m to do, is go out—the program I’ve got most schools out now, so I’ll probably won’t get much until this fall. But that’s my contact with God. That’s how he answered my prayers. I’m convinced of that.

MH: That’s good. I’m glad you’re okay. This was just two months ago.

DP: Yeah. Very recent on that. In fact, I had booked a tour to fly to England and get on a cruise ship and go all around all the British Isles and stay there for a few times, had it already booked. And the kids got too worried and convinced Mama that what if something happens while you’re over there? Well, she got to worrying so much, I didn’t pay much attention to the kids, and she got to worrying so much. And I said, “Okay, we’ll cancel it, because if we go over there, you’ll be scared to death I’m going to fall, and you won’t enjoy it anyway,” so I canceled that tour. Lost what we’d put down for airplane tickets, but got the rest of it back. So, yeah.

MH: What business or profession did you have most of your life?

DP: I’m sorry?

MH: What was your job for most of your life?

DP: Well, when I got out of the Army and came back and got discharged (inaudible), I worked for a contractor that had a government contract for a while, and then I started doing my own little lamp repair work. Lots of people here in the South, they go down to Mexico and buy these tin lamp fixtures and wall brackets, chandeliers, everything, and bring them back over here, and they get wired up for a fixture. So, I opened up my own little shop, and that’s what I did for about twenty-five years, I guess, working on that.

MH: That’s after you retired from the Army?

DP: Yup, and I closed that up in December 1999. I don’t even do that anymore.

MH: How do you like retirement?

DP: Oh, it's just fine. I also belonged to the Tucson Police Department: they have a civilian group, the Police Assist group, where our job primarily was helping fund a search-and-rescue within the city for people that get lost, children or sometimes senile old people would get out and walk away and find them. And I've been doing that for about thirty years, last November. So, yeah, I keep busy.

MH: That's good. Can I ask you, do you have a photo of you from World War II?

DP: Nope.

MH: Nope? What about a photo when you went back to Dachau?

DP: Oh, I can get you some pictures; in fact, I made a DVD over that whole thing.

MH: What I need is a—if you have it, is a good still picture of you in Dachau. If you want it with your wife, that would be okay too, but something that shows where you are.

DP: Okay. You know about the 20th Armored Division? I think it was about two years ago, we published a history book written by the son of one of our members in the war. It's a magazine size and almost an inch thick, and I think they're \$25 a copy. If you're interested in one, I can contact the people that's got them and you can work out if you want to buy one.

MH: Okay, what I'd like to do is, I can send you an email that has my address and phone number and everything, and if you could put me in touch with those people, or put them in touch with me so I can get a copy—

DP: I can do that.

MH: Okay. And if you could find a good photo of yourself that shows you at Dachau, when you went back on one of these trips, I'd appreciate getting a good copy of that, and I'll scan it and then return the original back to you.

DP: No, you can keep it, because I'll—it'll be a copy of some that I have.

MH: Okay, just so that it's—just make sure it's a good picture of you, you know, so we can see you there.

DP: Yeah, I will.

MH: Okay.

DP: When we went through the Holocaust Museum, up there somewhere with my kids, it got out that I was one of the liberators, immediately they turned me into a room where there was a man in there making video talks from people, and he made one with me. And that is on the Internet.

MH: Okay.

DP: And the book that they sold.

MH: Okay.

DP: Yeah, I can get you a picture.

MH: All right. But you don't have anything from back in the nineteen—you know, the nineteen—the army days, in the forties [1940s]?

DP: I don't think so, but—

MH: Okay.

DP: I'll look, and if we do, I'll enclose it.

MH: Okay.

DP: I'll wait 'til I hear from you on this other, and then I'll contact—

MH: Okay, I'll send you an e-mail right after we hang up.

DP: Okay. And I'll have it in the morning.

MH: Okay. Mr. Peyton, thank you very, very much. I appreciate you taking the time, and I know that it's an emotional thing to talk about this; it has been for most of the men I've interviewed. And so, I really appreciate it.

DP: Well, you're welcome.

MH: Okay, sir. Have a good evening and stay healthy.

DP: Thank you, I will. I'll hear from you later.

MH: Okay. Bye-bye.

End of interview