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Sal Salvio oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, 2008, date unknown

Sal Salvio (Interviewee)

Michael Hirsh (Interviewer)

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Michael Hirsh: Okay. Let me just read it. Your name is Sal?

Sal Salvio: Yes. Sal Salvio.

MH: S-a-l-v-i-o.

SS: Right.

MH: And you live at....

SS: Right.

MH: And your phone is....

SS: (laughs)

MH: And what's your date of birth?

SS: November 8, 1919.

MH: Nineteen nineteen [1919].

SS: I'm an old geezer.

MH: An old geezer. Most of the people I'm talking to are old geezers, and I just had my sixty-fifth birthday, so I'm getting up there, too.

SS: Oh, you got a lot of time yet. I was bouncing around when I was your age.

MH: From your lips to God's ears. When I was up there, we just had another grandbaby.

SS: I just came from my post. I just left the post. I got home from the post.

MH: Oh, okay. So, where were you growing up before you went in the Army?

SS: Where was I what?

MH: Where did you grow up?

SS: Oh, in Astoria.

MH: In Astoria.

SS: In Queens.

MH: Okay. And what were you doing when you went into the Army? What were you doing as a civilian?

SS: In the service?

MH: No, before you went into the service.

SS: Oh, I was—I had all different types of jobs. It's hard to say, mostly mechanical work.

MH: Okay. And were you drafted?

SS: Oh, yeah.

MH: So, where'd they send you?

SS: First, I believe, I went to Kentucky, and then to Pine Camp, New York. That was the main camp, Pine Camp.

MH: Kentucky—you went to Fort Knox?

SS: With the 4th Armored Division.

MH: Okay. And Pine Camp, New York—you were already with the 4th Armored?

SS: I'm trying to think where we made up the armored division. It's a long time.

MH: Yes. How did you feel about getting assigned to armor?

SS: How was I what?

MH: How did you feel about getting assigned to an armored division?

SS: Well, I'll tell you, it was a little scary at first, but you learn after a while. So, I wound up being a tank driver.

MH: Okay.

SS: I drove an M4 tank.

MH: How long does it take to learn how to drive one of those things?

SS: Well, when you're a regular driver of anything—you know, it's two sticks you have to operate actually to steer. I don't know. Were you ever in a tank?

MH: I've never been in a tank, no.

SS: No?

MH: No.

SS: Oh, all right. It's like a truck, but it steers with two levers, a right and a left lever. You push that back, the right one, if you want to make a right turn; you push the right lever back. And the same with the left: either right or left. You know?

MH: Okay. Were you—I mean, a lot of people think about tanks as being steel coffins.

SS: They were. They were. People are right. You never know when you're gonna get hit, and then when you get hit, there's no outs. You don't get out of a tank, once—especially [when] the Germans had the 88. They went right through the side of our tank, the shells, you know. When the shell comes in, it bounces all over inside. It rips everything up, you included, when you're in a tank. It's very, very bad, very bad.

MH: So, you were around when other tanks in your unit got hit?

SS: What?

MH: You were around when other tanks in your unit got hit.

SS: Well, I didn't get hit directly, you know, on the side. I got hit a couple of times on my bogey wheel. They're called bogey wheels: those are the wheels that are inside the track

of the tank, and once them things get hit, it disables the tank. You gotta jump out and look for cover.

MH: Tell me what it's like when you get hit. What happens?

SS: Well, what happens is very scary, because you gotta try to escape, you gotta jump out. Sometimes some of the tanks had the bottom of the drop—there's a plate in the bottom of the tank, and it's got a lever. You push the lever and the plate falls down to the ground, and you can get out. But sometimes, you don't have a chance to do that, and you look to get out any other way, so you gotta jump out through the turret. You know what I'm talking about, what a turret is?

MH: Yes, of course.

SS: That's where—the gunner is inside that turret. The driver and the co-driver are in the front part of the tank, and the only way you could see is through the slit—through a slit. Am I boring you with this?

MH: No, no, no, no, no! You're not boring me at all. Go ahead.

SS: The only way you can look through the slit to see—while you're in combat, that is. Otherwise, you could adjust your seat to come up: your head comes out of the front end of the tank. Understand?

MH: Yes.

SS: There's like two covers in the front, over your head. You push the cover up, and you push a lever and the seat brings you up enough where you could see all around. Then, when there's shells flying or artillery's coming in, you drop yourself down and you close the hatch—we call it a hatch—and you're in cover. So, myself and my assistant driver would both get down and take shelter. Then we left it to the fellows in the turret, where you had the machine gun and your cannon, you know, sticking out. We had to depend on them to take care of us.

MH: When a round hits the bogey wheels, what's it feel like and what's it sound like?

SS: Oh, you don't feel anything, 'cause it's below you. All it is that the tank quits going, 'cause it's all broken up. The wheel—the bogey wheels go, and the track comes off the bogey wheel. That's it. You just gotta—if you're actually firing at each other, you know, the German tanks—they had a beautiful tank. The Germans had a very terrific tank, and the bigger gun. They had the 88mm, and we had the 75mm with a short barrel, which wasn't too good. They had the 88 with the long barrel. The longer the barrel, the further the projectile would go. You understand?

MH: Yes.

SS: So go ahead. You gotta ask me the questions.

MH: So, when you get hit, I mean, is there a loud explosion inside? You go deaf?

SS: You what?

MH: Is there a loud explosion inside?

SS: Closure?

MH: Explosion.

SS: Oh, no, not unless—not if it explodes in the tank. It has to hit the gas tank on the side of the tank. But, actually, when you're in combat, you don't fire with—what do you call artillery, combustion? It's armored piercing. These shells that got on the front of the armor is armored piercing, so it would go through the tank; of course, that's the only way you're gonna knock out a tank. When that thing comes in, if you're in there, forget about it. You're dead, you're gone, the whole crew; except sometimes the driver and the co-driver jump out, and those guys are stuck in the turret. You understand?

MH: Yeah.

SS: Once that shell goes in, that's it. They had a tremendous—that gun was terrific. It went right through our armor, like two and a half inch [thick] armor. You understand?

MH: So, that has to scare the crap out of you, being in one of those things.

SS: What?

MH: That has to scare the hell out of you, being in one of those things.

SS: Oh, you have no idea. You have no idea, really. Anybody says they weren't scared—(laughs) you really worried about it, every little—no matter where we went through the towns in Germany. When we went through some of the towns there, you never knew when you were gonna get hit, because they had their guns hidden all over the place.

MH: You remember the first tank battle you were in?

SS: We were in so many; it's hard to say.

MH: An early one, when you weren't a real vet?

SS: I'm trying to think of some of the towns we were in. You know, right now I can't even—

MH: That's okay.

SS: In fact, I was reading one of our books, and it was bringing back some of the memories that I'd forgotten, you know. It's hard to remember exactly where we were, but it was the main—see, we had a tremendous—well, at the time, he was only a major. He turned out to be one of the best. And my commander, Major [Edward] Bautz; his name was Bautz, Major Bautz. He was very good, very, very intelligent. He took us around and told us what to do, 'cause like I said, when you're in a tank, you don't see anything. You can hardly see anything, only that little slit, while you're in combat. But him himself, the commander, he's up in the turret sticking out. I seen where some of those commanders—they didn't have to be a colonel or a major, they could be like a first sergeant or a buck sergeant as a commander. I've seen a couple of guys cut right in half, hanging out of the turret, their bodies chopped right in half, just strings holding 'em. If you would see some of that, it'd make you sick.

MH: Did you know Albin Irzyk¹?

SS: Who?

MH: Albin Irzyk? He became the battalion commander.

SS: He what?

MH: He became your battalion commander at one point.

SS: What was his name?

MH: Irzyk.

SS: Irzyk? Not really.

MH: He went on to become a one-star general.

SS: What was his name?

MH: Albin Irzyk. I-r-z-y-k.

SS: Gee, not really. I can't believe that—

MH: He was the battalion commander when you got to Ohrdruf.

SS: Ohrdruf? In Ohrdruf?

MH: In Ohrdruf, yeah.

¹Albin Irzyk was also interviewed for the Concentration Camp Liberators Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is C65-00062.

SS: A commander? A battalion commander? He was a battalion commander?

MH: Yeah.

SS: No.

MH: He was a lieutenant colonel by then.

SS: Oh, well, they all got—see, these fellows, most of them come out of West Point, and they come out as first lieutenants. We got a couple in our outfits, and they all turned out to be like majors and lieutenant colonels, all the different denominations. Jeez, let me—could you take a second and wait?

MH: Sure. Yeah.

SS: What the heck was his name? Oh, did you hear of Abrams?

MH: Yeah, Creighton Abrams.

SS: Aha! That's the guy. He was, I think, the best general that—well, he wasn't a general when he was with us. Him and I used to trade cigars. He'd come in, like I told you, as a first lieutenant, and he turned out very—you know, got promoted fast. I think he was a major when he left us, and became a four-star general.

MH: He became Chief of Staff.

SS: He was the greatest—I don't care, they can say anything about Patton. Patton was this, Patton was that. This guy, in combat, you never saw a man so intelligent and made you feel so safe.

MH: What did he actually do that made you—?

SS: Abrams tank. He was the best, Abrams.

MH: Tell me what was good about him.

SS: What was good about him?

MH: Yeah.

SS: Everything! He was good with the men, he was fair, and he was intelligent, let's put it that way. He saved us, I believe—see, Patton wasn't in all the battles we were in, you know. He came later. But Abrams was right there with us in combat, actually fighting with us. I was in the second tank, Dwight's tank—in the second tank. He was always up in front. Usually they don't do that, these big shots. They ride back, like the second or third tank. We had about eighteen tanks in our battalion, or so. You know what I mean?

MH: Right.

SS: And he would be right up in the front. You never heard of Abrams?

MH: Yeah, of course I did. When I was in Vietnam, he was the Chief of Staff of the Army.

SS: There you are. That's when he left; he left us. But when he left us, boy, you could wanna cry. He was so great. Well, I liked him. We used to swap cigars. He used to come over to me and ask me if I had one, and he'd come over and say, "You want a cigar?" you know. He was already, I think, a major at the time. But he come in as a kid, a first lieutenant, from West Point.

MH: Tell me about going to the concentration camp, to Ohrdruf.

SS: Oh. What do you want to know? It was horrible, I'll tell you that much.

MH: Tell me from the beginning. When did you first realize it was there?

SS: Well, we didn't know where we were going. We were told that—they don't really tell you everything in the beginning. As we're going, we're going through the woods. I don't even know where the heck it was. We're getting fire, gunfire, you know, artillery and whatnot. We break through the woods and then we got into a clearing, and we looked. From a distance, all we could see was chimneys, you know, smoke coming out of chimneys. And that was it. That was the camp, the concentration camp. We went in right away to save whatever we can—you know, the people.

MH: But you didn't know what it was that time, did you?

SS: No. Well, you know, they didn't tell us they were gonna go for that. They didn't say, "Oh, we're gonna go to this camp, concentration camp," and so forth. It was best sometimes that they didn't tell you, you know what I mean?

MH: Yeah.

SS: So, we got in and we see this big, big camp with barbed wire all around, high fences, and smoke coming out. When we went in, we could see a lot of activity, a lot of the Germans that were escaping, running away from us. You could see them running around, actually. Then, nothing was there except the prisoners, and they were laying all over the place. They were starving to death: they were all bones, that's all, skins and bones. We went over, tried to help as many as we can, give 'em food or something. You couldn't even feed them. They were gone. You know what I mean?

MH: Yeah.

SS: Oh, it was horrible, really horrible. I never seen anything like it. I never thought—who would have thought to see anything like that? We thought that there wasn't such a thing, but there was. It was terrible.

MH: Did you see a lot of dead bodies when you got there?

SS: Oh, forget about it! They were all over the place! The ones that were alive, they really were—they were dead, but they weren't dead. You understand what I mean?

MH: Yes.

SS: They were ready to go. There were hundreds of them, all over the place. We went into the building where they had the big furnaces, and they had these, like, metal—like a stretcher, but out of metal. They would put the bodies on that and shove 'em in, into the fire, and then pull the what-do-you-call-it out, so that—it was all iron, anyway. You could see—the things were laying all over when we went in there. They were doing away with a lot of the prisoners then, when we went in. You understand?

MH: Right. Were there still shots being fired when you went in?

SS: I didn't hear that.

MH: Were there still shots being fired when you went in?

SS: No, no. No, 'cause once we got in, they took off. There was no firing. We had—you know, we fired into the camp, 'cause we know that there were Germans in there, and we never got a chance to even capture any. Well, a few of them that were sick themselves, you know; we got a few. But it wasn't worth it anyway, 'cause all those people that—there were hundreds and hundreds of them laying around, dead bodies and bodies piled up. You oughta see, like, little mountains or hills of bodies—I got a few pictures of them; I wish you could see it—with arms and legs sticking out. All dead, big piles, like.

MH: How old were you at the time?

SS: I went in, I think I was twenty—I forgot, twenty-two or twenty-three. Twenty-two, like that. Yeah, about that.

MH: About twenty-two?

SS: Yeah.

MH: I mean, that's a hell of a sight for a young kid to see.

SS: We were young kids, you know. Whoever saw something like that? It was bad enough trying to survive, trying to live through the thing, without going into this camp and seeing that. That destroyed us altogether. Really bad, really, really bad.

MH: How did the guys react to it? What do you do? I mean, what do you say to your buddies?

SS: Oh, we all felt—we couldn't believe it. You couldn't believe it, let's put it that way. You say it isn't so, and we're standing there stunned. We're stunned to see this, you know. We ate good and everything in the service; we had everything good. Then, when you see these bodies—most of them were Jewish people. They just took 'em and slaughtered 'em. They took them out of the towns—did you ever see the pictures of the railroads that took all these people from the towns?

MH: Yeah.

SS: They put 'em in these boxcars and everything, telling them they're gonna go to a different state to live. Everything, kids, women, men. Put 'em all in there, and then they would drive them—I mean, not drive them, but the train would take them right into the concentration camp. They had barracks there. You ever see those barracks? Oh, boy! Terrible!

MH: Did you go into the barracks?

SS: They're just like wooden planks, like for beds, and they put 'em in there. Got a couple of (inaudible) in there, and put them to work for labor until they just couldn't take it anymore, and they'd just pass out. The food was very—they got very little food, very little. Then they just laid around. They couldn't use [them] anymore, and they couldn't get rid of 'em fast enough in the oven. Put 'em in the oven: gone. Really bad. When they put 'em in the oven, they weren't alive, really; they were actually dead. And there was piles over there ready to go in.

MH: Did prisoners come and try to talk to you?

SS: Did we? Oh, yeah. Some of them come over to hug us and everything. We had—the only ones that were really in good shape, pretty good shape, were the ones that were, like—their own people that were prisoners to them. You know that I mean?

MH: Oh, the kapos? The guard?

SS: The what?

MH: They called them kapos.

SS: Whatever, I don't even remember what the hell they call them. But those were the only ones that looked in pretty good shape. That's how they survived, by going against their own people. You know what I mean? Not against them; they were forced to do it. You couldn't blame them, really. Well, it was horrible, really, really—you wouldn't believe it. I still can't believe it! (laughs)

MH: Were there any chaplains with you guys?

SS: What?

MH: Were there any Army chaplains with you?

SS: Army what?

MH: Chaplains. Priests?

SS: Oh, the chaplain?

MH: Yeah.

SS: Uh, not really.

MH: I was just wondering if you ever had—if a chaplain ever talked to you guys about what you saw in the camps.

SS: No. I don't even remember. I don't remember seeing any chaplains. No.

MH: Okay. So, how long did you stay in the camp when you went in?

SS: Oh, not too long: a couple of days, that's all, 'cause then we had to leave again. We had to go; we were still in combat.

MH: When you went in that first night or first day, did you stay in the camp that night or did you go out of the camp?

SS: No, we had to take positions, you know, and guard the camp for counterattack, if they were gonna counterattack while they were taking—well, they were going through our offices, taking whatever they had to do there to clear up before we left. Then we had to leave some people there, which we got a lot of the town people to come in and help out with the prisoners that were still alive.

MH: Were you there when the town people were brought in and made to come in and—

SS: Oh, you wouldn't believe it!

MH: Well, try me.

SS: They brought the people in. They made them march through the camp, thousands of them lined up. We just went looking. We were stunned to see all these people. Who were these people? They sent in one of the outfits—it wasn't ours, the fighting outfit, but guys that were with us, and they sent them in to get all the people in town. No matter what they were doing, they had to leave and come to the camp. When they marched in, they wanted to show these people what the Germans did. And, oh, my God, some of them were screaming and crying when they saw all these bodies piled up. People were fainting—the women; some women were fainting. Some of them, they didn't give a damn, I don't think, either; but some of them were good people. They had to be good people. Some of them passed out in front of us there after what they saw. You know, bodies around, piled up, and some laying there and some looking up at you. They're like skeletons, looking up at you, like waving. You didn't know what they were doing, but they were out of their minds, like they didn't know what they were doing. And these people watching, seeing that, the commanders wanted them to see what they did to these people. It was terrible, really, unbelievable.

MH: A lot of these people were the same people who said, "We didn't know what was going on."

SS: That's it! A lot of them said, "We didn't know this. We didn't know. Nobody knew nothing." But they all knew what was going on. These were all neighbors; that would have been the vicinity.

MH: They had to smell it.

SS: And some of them worked in the camps. You know, civilians; they worked in the camps. But we don't know who worked or who didn't work; there were so many people there.

MH: What was the smell like?

SS: The what?

MH: What was the smell like?

SS: You know, it's a funny thing. It wasn't that bad.

MH: Really?

SS: Really. 'Course, they were burning up the dead, you know. Just the smokestack; you smelled the smoke, but you didn't realize what was blowing away, like. Those were high chimneys they had. Actually, it stunk a little bit, but not like you would think, to see all these bodies around. The ones that you saw around, they were still alive; they weren't completely dead. You know what I mean?

MH: Yeah.

SS: And what they were doing, they were putting the ones that were dead in the oven and burned them up.

MH: Okay. And who came in to take care of the survivors?

SS: Oh, I don't know. The rear echelon guys, you know. We were up in the front. I guess we had a lot of trucks coming in with personnel, American soldiers and whatnot coming in. Of course, we had to leave; we couldn't stay there anymore. We had to go to our next—oh, then we—oh, that's right. I forgot what town that was in. We headed for this town, and before we got there we hit a lot of 88s on the road, so we had to get off the road and ride in the woods. Get off the main road where the guns were, you know. We came upon a big, big area, and that's where they had—like we have the West Point here? That's what they had there. They'd never had any idea that we were coming in. It was all official German generals and whatnot, the majors.

There was, like, a school. It was a tremendous, big area. And when we got in, we all jumped out of our tanks—everybody, from all the tanks—and we surrounded the whole area and we went in and got them all out of their barracks, brought 'em out half-dressed, right in a big field, all of them, all the officers. Then our intelligence department, they came and did their job, whatever they had to do. All these guys, they were surprised that we were there. Oh, it was early in the morning, that's what it was, real early. I think it was daybreak when we first went in. They never expected us. Unbelievable.

MH: You remember the name of that place?

SS: No. I got it here someplace, in one of my books. Now that we're talking, I'm in my room, my bedroom, and I got—I'm looking—hold it. This thing here, General Patton's talking with God, something like that. I don't know if you heard of that.

MH: What was it?

SS: Oh, miraculous. General Patton's miraculous talk with God.

MH: Oh, okay.

SS: Did you heard of something like that?

MH: I've heard of that.

SS: I got a book in front of me now with that headline. I'm not the most intelligent fellow to speak to, but—

MH: You're doing fine.

SS: Let me see. I wish you could be here; I'd give you a lot of this literature. You know that?

MH: The one thing I would like—do you have a picture of you from World War II?

SS: A picture of me?

MH: Yeah.

SS: Well, I'm looking at my wall now, (laughs) and I see a picture of me. Now that you remind me, could I have been that young?

MH: Yeah.

SS: I got a picture.

MH: From Germany?

SS: I don't know if it's from Germany or from a camp. Before I went into combat, maybe.

MH: Yeah. I mean, it's a good picture of you?

SS: A what?

MH: It's a good picture?

SS: Oh, yeah. It's a little photo, like half of my body. At the time, I was a T-4. You know what's a T-4?

MH: What is that, a technical sergeant?

SS: Yeah.

MH: Yeah.

SS: Well, all of the tank drivers—this one here, I was a T-5, before I became a T-4. See, T-4 is one rank higher. It's like—T-5 is like a corporal, T-4's a sergeant.

MH: Oh, okay.

SS: Only it has a T under the stripes.

MH: Right, I know it.

SS: Were you in the service?

MH: Yeah, I was in Vietnam. I was an Army combat correspondent in Vietnam. I was in the 25th Division.

SS: Oh, that's great. I got a lot of stuff here. Oh, my God. You know, it's a funny thing. Before you called—now, do you have the time?

MH: Yeah.

SS: Before you called, I was looking through the medals, my medals. I didn't find what I wanted, and I was looking and looking, and then my wife got the call and she's calling me. It's funny. I just left my post a little while ago.

MH: What, Legion post?

SS: Just—oh, what time is it now?

MH: Four—

SS: Around an hour and a half ago. We had lunch and everything; you know, we have all the guys.

MH: Was this the American Legion or VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars]?

SS: The what?

MH: American Legion or VFW?

SS: Oh, no, the Veterans of Foreign Wars. All my buddies—you spoke to Harry Feinberg²?

MH: Yeah, I was at the reunion—

SS: He's great. He's great. He is intelligent. He could remember everything.

MH: Yeah, I went back to his house.

SS: The what?

MH: I went to Harry's house.

SS: Oh, really?

MH: And did an interview with him.

²Harry Feinberg was also interviewed for the Concentration Camp Liberators Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is C65-00041.

SS: Oh, great. The nicest guy you want to know.

MH: Yep.

SS: Nicest, a real gentleman.

MH: But he wouldn't play the harmonica for me.

SS: He was the greatest harmonica player.

MH: Yeah, I know.

SS: He played with the Rascals.

MH: I know.

SS: The Harmonica Rascals?

MH: Yep.

SS: Yeah.

MH: So, if I want to borrow a picture of you from the Army, could I do that? And then I'll copy it and send it back to you.

SS: Yeah, you could do that. You have to give me your address.

MH: Okay. Do you have email?

SS: I'll let my wife write it down for me.

MH: Okay. Let me ask you one more question.

SS: Yeah?

MH: What'd you do when you came back from the war?

SS: Oh. Well, I didn't work for about eight or nine months, maybe.

MH: Were you wounded there?

SS: Huh?

MH: Were you wounded?

SS: Yeah, but—I went to first aid, and I stood there overnight. I don't know why they even kept me there; it was just a little—oh, on my leg. I forgot. A piece of shrapnel, just a little—but they wanted everything to be reported, so I did that, and they sent me to the medics. When I got there, I said, “What am I doing here? I don't want to get—” I was afraid I was gonna leave my outfit; you know, I figured they're gonna keep me there, and the next thing you know I'm gonna wind up with a different outfit. You don't wanna do that when you're in with the guys.

MH: Yes.

SS: So, what I did, I heard that my outfit was gonna pass through, and I took off without telling them. I just put my clothes on and I took off. That was it. I got back with my outfit, as the outfit passed. I got myself and another guy from another outfit. We both did the same thing. As my outfit passed, I saw my tank go through and so forth—the column, you know.

MH: Yeah. What do you do, just flag 'em down and jump on?

SS: I just waited there, and my Colonel Abrams, at the time, he saw me and he went like this, like “What are you doing here?” you know. He didn't expect me. But they kept going, and then a half-track in the rear—they were going pretty slow. I ran after the half-

track and I jumped in the half-track, and they were all my buddies in there. You know, I knew 'em all. And we kept going, until we got to our next destination. I forgot where we were going. Then I saw the colonel, or the major, and he asked me how come I did this? "You shouldn't have done that; you should have told them you're leaving," and all that. I said, "Yeah, I know, but they wouldn't let me go." He was proud of me, anyway, that I came back! He liked me a lot. So, then we just continued, and went. He said, "What happened to your wound," and I told him, "It was just like a little scratch on my knee," you know. I had a hole in my pants. Unbelievable. A little piece of shrapnel just must have passed. But they wanted everything to be reported. That's what I did, but it was stupid that I even did that. I should have just kept quiet altogether. But I didn't get no report on it or anything.

MH: So, you didn't get your Purple Heart?

SS: No. (laughs) I could've got worse than a Purple Heart, (laughs) 'cause I really didn't do the right thing by taking off. To me, it was, 'cause I wanted to be with my outfit, you know.

MH: Right. Did you see any other concentration camps?

SS: Any others?

MH: Yeah.

SS: No, that was the main one.

MH: That was the one.

SS: Even though we knew there was something, some other ones. What was the other ones? You know their names?

MH: Well, there are a lot of them.

SS: Yeah. Well, the ones right where we were, like Ohrdruf, near there, anyway. But it was horrible to see. Oh!

MH: Did you ever have nightmares about it?

SS: What?

MH: Did you ever have nightmares about it?

SS: Well, sort of. Not real bad, but—you know, when you're a young kid, it's terrible. You have no idea.

MH: When you came home, did you try and explain it to your family?

SS: Did I what?

MH: When you came home, did you try and tell your family about it?

SS: Oh, not really. At that time, you didn't even want to talk about it, really. You know? Until later on, when people start asking you this; then you had to tell them.

MH: So, did you describe what you saw to people?

SS: Did I describe that to them?

MH: Yeah.

SS: Oh, yeah.

MH: How did they—

SS: They wouldn't believe it. (laughs)

MH: That's my question. How did they react to it?

SS: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. They said, "Oh, it can't be, it can't be." But it was. It was bad, I'm telling you. Now that it's all over with, and at my age now, I start thinking. How could that be? What kind of a world is that? How could you treat a human being like that? Oh, those poor people. It was horrible. You know what? I don't know at the time, but first I thought it was all Jewish prisoners. But it was not, it was a lot of different: Czechoslovakian, what other—

MH: Polish?

SS: Polish, a lot of Polish. I should have mentioned that first, because there was—I mean, maybe just as many Polish as there was Jewish. The majority of them were the Jewish prisoners. Oh, it's unbelievable. What else, Mike? I wish you were here.

MH: I think that about does it—you didn't have any pictures of the camp, did you?

SS: I got—it's a funny thing. I have some, something. Could you—you got time, Mike?

MH: Sure. Yeah, go ahead.

SS: I got a thing about the Battle of the Bulge, or the Battle of Bastogne. You heard of that?

MH: Of course.

SS: Huh?

MH: Yes.

SS: Bastogne, we went from Bastogne to C-h-a-m-p-s, Champs, with the 101st Airborne. They, I think, got encircled over there, and we freed them. They landed there, and that's a big story. Jesus, I got a lot of articles here. Jeez, I could send you 'em.

MH: Don't send me articles. What I'm looking for, though, is if you have any pictures.

SS: Well, like I told you, I have to look for the pictures of the camp.

MH: Okay.

SS: You would love to see that, describing the death of people. All right?

MH: Okay. Are these pictures that you took or that somebody else took?

SS: Oh, no. Somebody took them, and I wound up with them somehow. I don't know how.

MH: Okay. All right. Well, I will send you an envelope.

SS: What else?

MH: That's about it. I can't think of anything else.

SS: Well, if I see anything that's interesting, I'll send it.

MH: Okay.

SS: Besides that. All right?

MH: Thank you very much.

SS: Thank you, Mike.

MH: Okay. Bye-bye.

SS: Take care.

End of interview