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American Witness: Buchenwald

0 Background
Buchenwald

In England 1. heard they were political dissidents. 2. did not hear about conditions 3. did not hear of Death Camps. 4. Auschwitz, in Germany, first heard about these camps. Thought this was first liberated by western army

Jews: undesirables... Called by Germans; Jews and Gypsies.

First indication of what Camp was like
Seeing it for first time
No knowledge of it before

5 min April 10, 1945 Tuesday
Describes that day
General Patton orders American soldiers to be given guided tours of Buchenwald. Inmate as a guide... Polish doctor who spoke English.

10 min Told not to offer food and water to prisoners.
Describes Jewish quarter: Jewish Sgt. with him confirms they were Jewish.
Conditions: how people looked; odor
Physical description of barracks. Saw Garden of(?)
Wife of camp commandant Called the Bitch of Buchenwald

Saw ovens---7-8 feet high---door with gas pipes under it--
ovens still warm

20 min Description:
Bodies stacked like cords of wood
Saw eyeball move on body he thought was dead

UNRA U.N. Relief Agency flying in medical people.
"bodies" given instructions to kill these people

He would guess he saw 1,000 corpses

Pet cemetery for Elsa's animals

Gatehouse: Barracks for SS; quarters of Commandants and Elsa. Furnishings with lamps, 1930 vintage; shades of human skin. Could see tattoos.

25 min 1955 her trial

Saw one dead SS soldier. He had been shot.

Still cleaning up camp when I saw it.

The tour lasted 2 hours.

American engineers bulldozing side of hill where bodies were buried they couldn't burn. Lime, smell... Estimate 60,000 buried there, and not all Jews.

A Czech prisoner (non-Jew) told them how Jews were eradicated.

- 30 min Saw gas chambers. Description. General Patton orders that Germans from Weimar were to view camp... 5,000 people.
Forced the Germans to tour the camp: How could you (Germans) plead innocent.
Mayor and his wife committed suicide.
Think the Germans ignored it because healthy inmates brought down to Weimar to work. slave labor to work for war machine.
- 35 min A friend saw Dachau; they compared notes.
Feelings about SS. Attitude held: all Germans guilty
- 40 min Incidents: American soldiers killed SS
Americans knew about massacres by German of American POW

General Patton publicized the camp. He was a very religious man.
Some Americans in Buchenwald.
- 45 min Shock at seeing prisoners. 22 years, not prepared. Eyes sunk in their heads. Description of physical conditions.
Separated out women; only saw men's barracks

Role of liberator: Need of medical supplies. Saw Red Cross planes.
- 50 min Orders not to fraternize with Germans. Pamphlet issued... told about contact with Germans. Told to have no discourse.
Some information about DP people and process. Stories about Russians who had to be returned to Russians.
DP's that were healthy were allowed to leave camp on their own, but didn't go anywhere. - Signs of SS covering.
- 55 min Heard stories about food distribution, sanitary facilities. Saw some latrines.

What kind of people do this?

TAPE 2

Personal Reaction to camps: Made me reflect on God. We felt God was on our side.
Have German belt buckle that said, God is with us.
Saw no religious activity in camp.
Personal reaction to witnessing.