

JIM TOWNSEND

May 25, 1995

Interviewer: Peter Merry

Notetaker: Ann Solov Walker

Minutes

I was born September 23, 1923. When I was a senior in high school, I volunteered for the ski troops. May or June of my senior year, I was sent to England. The 90th Division in infantry in 1944. We were told "real things were happening". Stepped onto Normandy beach, I went from excited to scared. St. Lavell, town, was wiped away. Went with the 4th armored to France.

- 5 Description of General Patton. Description of people in Luxemborg and S. France.
- 10 Battle of the Bulge, you wanted to go home and get out of this alive. You were scared. Description of friend who was shot at Baston. Got order one day to rescue a prison camp, not far from Baston. It was Buchenwald. We could see down on it. We stopped three or four miles outside to see how to attack this camp. We couldn't see any movement. It was April. Drizzling and wet.
- 20 Gate house. Two fences. Stopped fifty yards waiting for the fire. We went for the gate and the other squad covered us. No fire. Saw these "freaks" running around in P.J.'s; eyes went way back, elbow knots, barefoot, skinny. "What the hell is this, what are these creatures?" They were people and were starving to death. We were told not to feed them. Other two squads around the building, there were people stacked up.
- 25 Stink was terrible. People like wood piled up. Never seen anything like these things. I didn't know who they were. There were no German officers. We were there for 2 to 2 1/2 hours. Made contact with medical group. Sight I'll never forget. They were very quiet, no expression. They (survivors) would just watch us. Most of them didn't have shoes.

JIM TOWNSEND (continued)

30        Eyes you'll never forget. I could see into the building, but never went in. Stayed on the tank. Left camp after 2 1/2 hours, headed toward Prague. Went to S. France, time off before we went home. Received President's award for Buckenwald. "No denying what I saw. People who deny it, I would like to bottle the smell".