

Robert Swift  
Oral History Transcript

Robert Swift: Gunskirchen was one of the—it was a death camp. We had concentration camps. Most people don't realize there were two different kinds of camps. The concentration camps were where they fed them, took good care of them because they wanted to go work somewhere. Toward the end of the war, things were getting simmered down, and they set up these—they were basically death camps where they sent them to starve to death.

And Gunskirchen was one of the biggest ones. And Gunskirchen, well, I was one of the first ones in, and they were stacking bodies and they were dying up to 30, 40 a night, just from starvation. I have a picture of one of them, one of the guys who was one of them in that stuff I gave you.

And he said he probably had three days before he would have gone. He was that close. And at our reunions, we've had a lot of them that have come to our 71st Infantry Division [reunions]. The one in New York—in fact, I'll send you a DVD. We did a DVD that is them and us—it's the people that were in prison and us as the liberators.

It's unbelievable.

Historian: Did you see anything like that, at Dachau while you were there?

Robert Swift: No, not Dachau. I didn't see anything at Dachau. No, no, no. We were just in and out. Never, never really in the Dachau. We were outside of Dachau on the hill, and the ambulances were parked at the door.

Historian: When you entered the camp and you saw all of that death ... what was that like? What effect did that have on you?

Robert Swift: Well, I lost my sense of smell for about three years. There's nothing you could do, but just work with what you've got to work with. And when you go into, well, like these people, we didn't know it originally because we had C rations, K rations and all that good stuff, and they were hungry.

So you'd give them a C ration and within hours they would be dead—their system could not take it. The only thing you could give them was a soup or IV. And we did IVs on so many. Thousands. You wouldn't believe the IVs. It was the only thing you could do.

Historian: How long were you there doing the IVs?

Robert Swift: Just a matter of weeks, then we turned it over to the next group coming in, took over. But we got it initially going.