I-097
DAVID SALTMAN
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SCOTLAND, 1922 **PORT: GLASCOW**
AGE 9 **RESIDENCES: GLASCOW**
US: STATEN ISLAND, NY

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It's Thursday, September 26, 1991, and I'm here in Ellis Island with David Saltman, who came here through Ellis Island from Scotland in 1922 when he was nine years old. So it's very nice to have you here, Mr. Saltman.

SALTMAN: Thank you.

LEVINE: And I'll begin by asking you your birth date and the place where you were born.

SALTMAN: I was born on October 25, 1912 in Glasgow, Scotland.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember, you came here at nine years old, so do you remember anything about Glasgow before you left for America?

SALTMAN: I do. I even recall the actual street address, 184 Main Street. For some reason that name sticks in my mind.

It was an apartment house, but I don't know why, but I remember it. I remember Queens Park where we went as children, and . . .

LEVINE: What are your memories of Queens Park? Do you have specific . . .

SALTMAN: It was a nice place, and the thing that I recall is that it was a nice gentleman teaching us young children how to tell time on a watch. (they laugh) That I recall.

LEVINE: And do you remember games that you played as children in Glasgow?

SALTMAN: Not really. I don't remember any games. I just don't.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, how about the apartment itself? Can you describe it?

SALTMAN: Not too well. We, it was my mother and father, and we were six children, of which I am the youngest, and that's about all I can remember. Of course, I went to school. I remember getting lost in Glasgow as a youngster, just wandering off, not knowing where I was and how I got home, I don't know, but I got there, and that's really about all in that respect.

LEVINE: Now, what was your mother's maiden name?

SALTMAN: Sophia Ziontz, Z-I-O-N-T-Z.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And your father's first name?

SALTMAN: Was Gilbert.

LEVINE: Gilbert. And how about your brothers and sisters, maybe starting from the oldest and going down.

SALTMAN: The oldest child was Lillian, and going down below her was Mary, the next is Gertrude, and then we had twins, Martha and Morris. They were twins, and then I'm number six on the list.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you were the baby in the family.

SALTMAN: I was the baby in the family.

LEVINE: Now, were you closest to any particular member?

SALTMAN: Well, my older sister used to hold me by the hand and take me around mainly, but I guess I was cute, as all children would be at that young age. And I remember we took a family picture somewhere just about coming over here. In fact, I still have that. I have something of the picture, not the whole one, but I have a couple of items on that. I think I put them on slides just for memorabilia.

LEVINE: Now, this was a picture taken in Scotland?

SALTMAN: I'm sure it was in Scotland just before we left, yes.

LEVINE: What were the circumstances around your deciding to leave Scotland?

SALTMAN: My father always suffered from asthma, and it was very damp there. And he was thinking between coming to the United States or going to South Africa. He preferred South Africa, but my mother had relatives in the United States in the New York area, so we came to the United States, for which I'm glad.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, what did your father do for work when he was in Scotland?

SALTMAN: He owned a wholesale lumber yard. By trade he is a carpenter, he was a carpenter.

LEVINE: And then did he continue that trade here?

SALTMAN: Yes, he continued as a carpenter. He built, he had a fair amount of money. He built a couple of small apartment houses in Staten Island. Actually he built three of them, and then during the Depression of the 1930's he went broke completely.

LEVINE: I see. Okay, well, we'll get to that part later. But

how about when you were deciding to come to the United States? Then your father came first?

SALTMAN: My father came with my older sister as a visitor to see how he would like it, and he stayed with relatives in Staten Island. In fact, even before we came he had built, started to build one apartment house right away. And we followed, my mother followed with the other five children later. I remember the name of the ship, if you want that.

LEVINE: Yes.

SALTMAN: The T.S.S. Cameronia, sailing from Glasgow to New York, which, of course, stopped at Ellis Island and let us all out, my mother and five children.

LEVINE: Now, was that, when you came on that ship was that, did you come steerage, did you come in a cabin? Do you remember what accommodations you had on the ship?

SALTMAN: I don't recall. I would say it was very ordinary accommodations and that's about all I can remember. It certainly wasn't in first class.

LEVINE: Was it in a cabin?

SALTMAN: I don't recall. For some reason I do not recall.

LEVINE: Okay. So your father came here and was here for some period of time before you and your sisters and brothers and mother came?

SALTMAN: He was here about nine months when he sent for us.

LEVINE: I see.

SALTMAN: And he decided this was the place where he would settle.

LEVINE: And now was it your mother's relatives that he, uh . . .

SALTMAN: Yes, it was my mother's relatives.

LEVINE: . . . was with in Staten Island?

SALTMAN: Yes, right.

LEVINE: Okay. So how about the getting to, what port did you leave from?

SALTMAN: We left from Glasgow.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. And did you, do you remember packing up, getting ready to leave?

SALTMAN: Not too well.

LEVINE: Anything that your mother . . .

SALTMAN: My mother bundled all of us, and off we went.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that your mother brought that, you know, she had from Glasgow once you got here?

SALTMAN: Nothing. I would say they just didn't bring anything, or just plain ordinary clothes. No furniture, nothing like that. We just came here, and our father was waiting, and that was it.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you thought, as a child of nine, when you were coming on the boat to come to this country?

SALTMAN: Well, it seemed like a long voyage. That's all I can remember. Then, of course, when we got to Ellis Island it was very, very crowded, and a lot of hustle and bustle. And I don't know how long we stayed. I'm sure it was a couple of days. Then somehow or other my father came and got us and brought us back to Staten Island. (break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay. We were talking about the voyage and arriving at Ellis Island.

SALTMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: You say it was very crowded, and you remember that

part.

SALTMAN: I remember the boat being very crowded and Ellis Island being tremendously crowded.

LEVINE: And then were you, you were there for a few days. Do you remember why you were retained there?

SALTMAN: I don't know. Perhaps my father didn't come to sort of claim us, if you will. I recall that.

LEVINE: Do you . . .

SALTMAN: I recall the Great Hall downstairs. That was the big place where everybody seemed to be milling around and coming with baggage and everything else. I recall that. That's about all.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you thought or felt when you were in this kind of situation?

SALTMAN: Yes. I thought Ellis Island was horrible and I couldn't wait to get out of there. That's about, I remember that. Just very anxious to get out to a settlement in Staten Island where my father was going to be.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

SALTMAN: I don't recall it.

LEVINE: Okay. So then you, your father did come. Do you remember that meeting when your father came to Ellis Island and met you and your family?

SALTMAN: Not exactly. I don't think he met us. I don't know if he met us at Ellis Island or he met us at the tip of Manhattan. I'm not sure which. But somehow or other he did finally meet us, and we all went together. And we got to Staten Island somehow, obviously on the Staten Island Ferry. And that was all at that point.

LEVINE: Was it, do you recall the reunion with your father?

SALTMAN: Not really.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, so then you settled in Staten Island.

SALTMAN: Yes. And that's where I stayed and went to school.

LEVINE: Now, apparently your family had moved to Scotland. When did your family settle in Scotland to begin with?

SALTMAN: Well, I recall my father had sort of run away from the military service in Russia. I say Russia because he was born in Brestlatovsk, and so was my mother. And we say Russia because that certain area between Poland and Russia as the map changed

over the years. But they were all trying to escape from military service. And why he settled in Scotland I don't know, except that I heard many stories of people who came over, went on a boat and it seemed forever, and the first port that the boat stopped on they got off and thought that that was the United States. I don't know if that was the case with my father, because certainly there was nobody in Glasgow to meet us. And yet on the other hand there was another family we were very close with by the name of Barron, and they were over there, too. And somehow, or we met them. We met them in Scotland, but they, again, their folks also came from Russia.

LEVINE: Now, when your father came from Russia, was he travelling alone, or he was with his family?

SALTMAN: Well, he had to come with my mother because my oldest sister was born around 1902.

LEVINE: In Russia.

SALTMAN: 1902. Uh, yes.

LEVINE: I see. I see.

SALTMAN: So they had to come together. They had the one child.

LEVINE: I see. So this trip to the United States was really a

second resettling for your father and mother.

SALTMAN: That's right. That is correct.

LEVINE: And your oldest sister.

SALTMAN: That is correct.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then how long was your mother and father in, were your mother and father in Scotland?

SALTMAN: Well, I would say they were there (he pauses), oh, about eighteen or nineteen years.

LEVINE: I see. I see. Now, did your father, do you recall your mother and father talking about Russia or Poland, what their life was like there before they left?

SALTMAN: No, except that they hated anything military, and when I wanted to join the Boy Scouts and put on a Boy Scout uniform they didn't like it a bit. They called that military and they were very much against it. I still stayed in the Boy Scout uniform and stayed as a Boy Scout in Staten Island and grew up there. But anything that seemed to be military, they definitely didn't like it.

LEVINE: Do you know their attitudes about the military, what it was that they were so, why they were so against it?

SALTMAN: Well, because it was all conscription in Russia, and that's why, I'm sure that's why my father came here, to escape from being drafted. And that was through many, many people. Of course there was also an awful lot of anti-Semitism in Russia and a lot of persecution, and I'm sure that had a lot to do with it also.

LEVINE: And you feel, you think your mother and father experienced that first hand?

SALTMAN: Yes, I do.

LEVINE: I see. Now, how about when your family got to Scotland? Do you think that there was anti-Semitism there as well, or not?

SALTMAN: As far as I'm concerned there was none.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So that played no role in them leaving.

SALTMAN: No, I don't. I take a different viewpoint. It's got to be pretty extreme before I accuse anybody or anything of anti-Semitism, (he pauses) and I encountered no such problem.

LEVINE: I see. So then did your mother and father speak Russian, or did they speak Hebrew, or . . .

SALTMAN: I would say they did talk Yiddish a lot, and then of course they learned, they learned English. My father read the Jewish paper called The Jewish Daily Forward. That was his main newspaper. But as far as I'm concerned, of course, we were in Scotland, and we learned English from the beginning and, with a Scotch accent, of course. And that was it.

LEVINE: Did you learn Yiddish, did you speak Yiddish at home?

SALTMAN: They did talk some Yiddish at home, but I did not.

LEVINE: I see. Okay. Well, is there anything else that you can think of that was a carry-over that your family kept as kind of tradition that they brought from Russia?

SALTMAN: From Russia I don't recall any traditions of anything like that. That was a place to forget.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. Was your father also being a carpenter in Russia?

SALTMAN: I suppose he was, because that was his trade. And when he came over here he, besides doing these building, he did, actually he was quite a cabinetmaker, a little more on the refined side, a little more on the artistic side. And he did work on the Staten Island ferries when they were building those in Staten Island. And he was doing more of the artistic work,

the cabinetry.

LEVINE: I see. Now, was he in business for himself?

SALTMAN: Yes, he was.

LEVINE: Okay. So then you started school, you had been in school for a few years when you were in Scotland, and then you came to school in Staten Island. Is that right?

SALTMAN: That's right. And the transition was strange, and I do remember that when I say strange, because my brother and sister were two years older than I, and when I came they gave us a test, we were only one grade apart in school. And that was strange to me, but that's the way they did it. Obviously they gave us intelligence tests and aptitude tests and whatever, and they decided where we would go.

LEVINE: I see. Now, do you remember your impression of the school as contrasted or compared with the school in Glasgow when you got to school here?

SALTMAN: No. Of course, I went to elementary school, P.S. 16 on Staten Island. I remember that number. And that's about all. And then I moved along in that, along the elementary school, and went to Curtis High School in Staten Island, and graduated from there, by the way.

LEVINE: Then what did you do? Did you work along when you were going to school, or did you . . .

SALTMAN: I would say that my first job was as a messenger for Western Union in Staten Island.

LEVINE: And how old, about when did you do that?

SALTMAN: I would say until I was about thirteen. I did part-time work that way.

LEVINE: I see. Now, would you say that your family was comfortable? I mean, were you financially comfortable, or was it necessary for the children to work earlier, to help out with finances?

SALTMAN: We were comfortable at the beginning. But we came, for some reason we came over, my father come to the United States and Staten Island first in 1921, and he already started to build these small apartment houses. And actually, as I say, he built three of them. Then came the Depression. He had a partner, and he lost it all. And just to keep going he, and also he suffered from asthma quite severely. And he took a, he started a grocery store, and that was a means of livelihood there. Not great by any means, but that's what he did.

LEVINE: So in other words was his asthma any better as a result of coming here versus being in Glasgow?

SALTMAN: I would say, I couldn't see any difference because it was still pretty damp on Staten Island. Of course, my mother had relatives there and relatives in Brooklyn and the Bronx, mainly in Brooklyn, two sisters in Brooklyn. That's maybe why they settled close by.

LEVINE: So your mother's relatives had come from Russia?

SALTMAN: Yes, that's right.

LEVINE: I see. So the community that you lived in on Staten Island, was it a lot of immigrants, or not particularly?

SALTMAN: Not too much. We, as I say, this Barron family that we were very close with, we were children in the same area growing up together and our various respective ages. They also had a large family, and so we were friendly with them in Scotland. And strangely enough they came to the United States also, after we did, and we were friendly with them still.

LEVINE: Really. And where did they settle?

SALTMAN: They settled in Staten Island. They settled in Staten Island.

LEVINE: I see. So then after your first job as a messenger for Western Union, what did you go on to do for work?

SALTMAN: Well, I was in school then. When I graduated from Curtis High School I went to City College, CCNY, they called it in those days, and went there a couple of years. The Depression got the best of me, and I had to go out to work, and that was very difficult. Not difficult working, difficult finding a job. And I managed to go, take odd jobs here and there, and I tried to form a career for myself. But I did not, I went to City College for about two years. I left and went back again for another year, and then left it again and that was the finish of it.

LEVINE: And what did you decide to do, then, for your career?

SALTMAN: As a career, when I was going to high school I was thinking of medicine, and I'd started to take a first term, or year of Spanish, and I switched over to French because they felt that was more the language appropriate to a would-be medical career. And that, really there was no career staring me in the face until I kept bouncing around, and until I finally joined a publishing company in 1940. I left them in 1941 to go into the service in May 1941 and, of course, left the service at the end of 1945.

LEVINE: And where did you serve in the service?

SALTMAN: I was in the European theater of operations, which means we started in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

LEVINE: And is there, how do you, I guess, could you describe just briefly what you did in the service?

SALTMAN: I did better than that. I've written quite a bit of memorabilia in that direction. I went in on May 8th, 1941. I volunteered for the draft. I left my employer expecting that war would break out between the United States and Germany. We had, obviously had (?) at that time between Franklin Roosevelt and Great Britain, and I was sure war was going to break out. So I came expecting it as a permanent stay, nothing temporary. I had no illusions on that. You want me to go on? When I went on through, I went through Camp Landing, Florida as a first training base with the 35th Field Artillery Regiment. And because I was one of the older men they had a campaign back in the early fall of 1941 of sending people home after the age of 28. And three groups of people after the age of 28 went home, and I was still there to be the last one to, the last group to leave. And I was then scheduled to leave, and on Sunday, December 7, 1941 . . . (he pauses) (he is moved)

LEVINE: It's okay. Just take your time. Have a drink of

water.

SALTMAN: In December 7, 1941 I went to Jacksonville, Florida to buy a return ticket on the train home. The radios were blasting away about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. When I heard that I knew this was the day that I had been long waiting, expecting, and I turned around, didn't buy a ticket, and went right back to camp and just waited. And I did the right thing because the MP's were rounding up all soldiers in the town and sending them back to camp, and everybody who was over twenty-eight was sent right back to the unit promptly. And then, of course, immediately after that they started an officer candidate, officer candidate review board, and I went on the first group from the Artillery Brigade, and was examined, graded and so forth. And rather peculiarly, while I was waiting for a call after I had taken this thing, the first call came in January 1942. I was not in the first group. I was not in the second group. I was not in the third group. And by April 1942 I was getting a little restless and I went to my commanding officer, regimental commander Colonel Barnes, and asked him why I had not gotten a call to leave. And he took out the lists that the brigade had formed, the brigade composed at that time of three artillery regiments, and he looked up and down the list, and looked and looked and couldn't find it, and finally in

exasperation he started again at the top of the list and he went down slowly, and I was number ten on a list of a hundred and fifty. So he told me to file another application. And, which I did, but by that time the original application came back. We could never figure out how the United States Army keeps back somebody who is a naturalized American citizen, as I was under my own right, and yet held me back from going to officer candidate school, although I was previously a citizen of the United Kingdom. Not a citizen of Russia, for whom we had no respect, not a citizen of Germany or Japan, but the United Kingdom, with whom we are allied. So I went to officer candidate school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma in June 1942. I graduated from Fort Sill in ninety days. That was what they called the ninety day wonders, became a second lieutenant, and they assigned me to a tank destroyer battalion. I asked them why I wasn't assigned to a field artillery unit and they said, "You're too old for field artillery so we had to put you in tank destroyer." Actually the tank destroyer command had just started the school. It was a new concept. They needed officers. They had nowhere to get them, and quite a few other officers were there from the artillery school just as I was until they started to graduate the tank destroyer command officers, and they joined the unit. So I went through the, most of the war with the tank destroyer battalion in European

theater. When we went across it was a very memorable journey. We went across on a, one of the so-called "liberty ships." And I was quite impressed by the amount of armament, and there was a navy officer on board, and I said, "What is this? What's going on? This seems peculiar." And then he told me that he was there as a guard ship for a troop convoy. And so I worked out a deal with him, since he had a limited amount of personnel, that we would take some of the personnel from the tank destroyer battalion and put them on watch at night for submarines. We had our submarine alert practices generally at dusk, because that's the time when submarines generally surface. But more important than that we started out from New York Harbor with a convoy and we had a right lead ship. Three days out another convoy came out of the dusk from Boston and joined us to form a large convoy, which I understand was the largest convoy that ever went to Europe. Our ship was still the right lead ship of the convoy. Along the line, after the various drills, one time we could sort of feel something peculiar in the air that sounded like the real thing. And it certainly was when the navy started putting out deps charges, as they suspected, a submarine. We didn't see any evidence of having caught any, but I understood later on that somewhere the submarine had penetrated somewhere in the heart of the convoy and sunk at least one or two ships in that convoy. The convoy peeled off, when it got to the British

Isles it peeled off to different ports. Our ship went directly to Cherbourg, France, and that was our first sight of what the war was about, all the wreckage that we saw. And, of course, we debarked on smaller landing ship, landing ships, and went to the coast of Normandy, and that's where we started our campaign.

LEVINE: Perhaps we can pause here just for a second to turn over the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SALTMAN: I'm writing a supplement now.

LEVINE: Great. Okay. So then you arrived at Cherbourg, is that it?

SALTMAN: We arrived at Cherbourg, and I was finance officer for the trip, which is a menial's job. I got rid of a safe that had been entrusted to me, which I never even looked at. I got rid of that at Cherbourg and, of course, the unit was put on sort of guard duty to guard against German attacks from the neighboring Jersey and Guernsey islands temporarily until they decided to deploy us. Perhaps we were there not too long, several weeks. And then we were moved north to a town of Geilenkirchen, Germany.

LEVINE: Could you spell that one?

SALTMAN: G-E-I-L-E-N-K-I-R-C-H-E-N. That was up in north Germany. We were attached to the British Second Army at the time, because they were right on the border of American Ninth Army. And we were attached to them for a short while. And, of course, the activity, when we got up there, was very heavy, and we, it's just a strange sight to see German planes flying over, strafing, dropping bombs. You see American planes flying over, and for some reason you never see the two get together. One came, one went, and you don't know why the two didn't meet each other in mid-air somewhere. But anyway we went to this Geilenkirchen, which is about on the border of Holland, and somewhere near a major town of Maastricht, M-A-A-S-T-R-I-C-H-T, Holland. And I recall as we were being led into Germany to the beginning of the Siegfried line, the motorcycle that came to us just got lost. And he was leading a whole group. So I stopped the motorcycle and said, "Do you know where you're going?" He said, "No." I said, "Then get behind me and I'll try to figure out where we're going." And as we moved along you'd get along to a very narrow area, and while I was riding in a jeep, which was small, behind me were a whole bunch of these tank destroyer vehicles mounted with generally M-10 tank destroyers with 75 mm guns or 90 mm guns. And when they come along to a small ray

they change the map of Europe, because the first tanks started on a high bank, and by the time we got through coming along we made a new road out of it. But anyway, we got to the front and started off right in the heart of the Siegfried line in Germany. I can recall and really never forget Thanksgiving Day 1941, I'm sorry, 1944. I'm sorry, because we were there after, of course, after the war had started, after the Invasion of Normandy. But on Thanksgiving Day 1944 we were on the Siegfried line, and I had my first hot meal standing up inside of a German pill box. The word pill box is what they described as a very strong concrete fortification built by the Germans, which was certainly capable of thwarting any direct tank shells, it was that strong. But we fought our way slowly, bit by bit, as we penetrated the Siegfried line, and I went on to the Rur and the Rhine River and so on.

LEVINE: Now, so you were standing in this fort that you had captured? Is that where . . .

SALTMAN: Oh, yes, yes. And we were there, we made a battalion command post out of that. At that particular time my assignment had been gone from my platoon leader and a tank destroyer company I had become, first it was battalion intelligence officer, but because of other problems they made me a liaison officer with the infantry, with an infantry regiment, for the

tank destroyer battalion. While we were up on that line around December 1944 I had gone to Holland to take a shower at a coal mine and as I came back I checked into my radio and, just to check in. And a commanding officer got on and barked quickly.
(he pauses)
"Silence your radio and return immediately. Out." I wondered what happened, and as I was heading back to the battalion area the battalion was heading in the opposite direction. So I turned around and made a U-turn and got on the, behind the rear end of the line. And, of course, we found out later on that the Germans had invaded Belgium, and our mission was to reinforce first army, to contain the attack. (he is moved) We got into the town of Marche, M-A-R-C-H-E, Belgium, not too distant from (?) and the other popular areas in the so-called Ardenes Forest. It was very cold. There was plenty of snow on the ground. And this was the first time when I saw the American army on the defensive. Division headquarters pulled back. We stayed forward and the Germans had been in that town the night before. All civilians were sleeping in the cellars because of shelling, and we took, in fact, I took an upstairs place. There was no problem there. You can't very well pitch tents in congested areas, but there was plenty of shelling and it got so heavy when the, when it got so bad that the glass in the room had just shattered right in front of you. You know that those shells are

coming a little too close. So I went down to the cellar for the rest of the night, as far as I could get to the cellar, more like on a stairway, because it was just crowded down below, but then we continued on there, and slowly we repelled the German attack and straightened out the front line. It was very hectic. Everything was moving very fast. Tank destroyers got hit, were immediately replaced. And it was so cold, I recall, that the water in my canteen froze. The temperature was about twenty degrees below zero in the Ardenes Forest in Belgium. Well, anyhow, we straightened out the line, and when we did that I went back up to Ninth Army, 13th Corps, and I was transferred to the Sixth Tank Destroyer Group. This was a break for me because I had always wanted to get out of the battalion. You couldn't get a promotion there. You just had to do what you could. And I got to the Sixth Tank Destroyer Group and then, then a final push, the corps commander decided that he would try to do what had been done in third army successfully, so I was chosen to, as one of the liaison officers, to be attached to the Fifth Armor Division in a final push to the Elbe River, which has long been in East Germany. I asked for Combat Command A because I figured that would be the one that would see the most action, and I was correct. That was commanded by a brigadeer general, while the others were full colonels. And we moved along across the, across the rivers. First they flooded the Rur River and delayed

our movement for a couple of days over to the Rhine River. We built, of course there were no bridges, but we built pontoon bridges. And this was, these were bridges that were manned by combat engineers to shoot any floating mines that may be in the river or any other suspicious object. And this was a one-way street twenty-four hours a day crossing the pontoon bridge into the main area of Germany from which we would launch the final and main attack for the end of it. When I got to the Fifth Armored Division, Combat Command A was in Division Reserve. So for the first day Combat Command B and Combat Command C moved forward. Combat Command A was in reserve and I was rather unhappy because it was just too far behind. But finally the very next day Combat Command B and Combat Command C stopped. Combat Command A just roared up their tanks and off we went, passing through both B and C, and Combat Command A took the lead to the Elbe River. And we were the armored spearhead for the corps unit and followed by two infantry divisions. And, of course, we were very successful in moving fast. And, of course, again one of the many strange things was to keep going. They never stopped. They just kept on going, and German soldiers were passing alongside of us with a hand over the head. They had gotten rid of their helmets and their guns, but we couldn't take them because we're not equipped to take prisoners any more than they were in Desert Storm. Our tactics were to get to the

objective as quickly as possible, and prisoners were out of the question. We just couldn't do that. That was not part of our mission. But it was the more difficult mission of the infantry which were coming up behind us anywheres from twenty to forty miles behind, and they had reason, good reason to swear at us because it was not entirely clear in their area, but we accomplished our objective. I recalled when we got to an airfield, and as we amassed six German planes, in a period of two hours, tried to land on the field, never dreaming that the American forces had ever moved that fast to reach that area. But they did, and we shot down every one of them. It was a huge brand of fire, and of course one of the impossible things, one of the planes which caught fire and careened out of sight crashed into one of our armored vehicles, killing all of the crew, and that you cannot help. Anyway, we reached the Elbe River and waited for the Russians to catch up to us. Day after day I would stroll up to the river, look at it. I still would see no sign of activity, no sign of the Russians. But perhaps I ought to backtrack just a little bit. As we got to the Elbe River I talked to the commanding general of the Combat Command A, since I was a corps liaison, and I said I would try to get back to them, say we really needed reinforcements badly, and I says, "We'll never be able to take that bridge." He says, "You can be sure they won't let us take that bridge. They'll blow it

up." And sure enough, as I was turning my radio on, which is a huge, tremendous thing in a half track vehicle, there was a loud explosion. The general's aide came rushing up to me. They had blown the bridge right in our face. Later on the able-bodied Germans, rather than surrender to the Russians, were able to swim across this wide river, about as wide as the Hudson River, and try to surrender to the Americans. But in about a week or ten days the Russians finally caught up and stayed put. We could easily have gotten on to Berlin in this situation. Winston Churchill said, "Let's shake hands with the Russians as far east as possible." But Eisenhower held up the entire front, knowing that we would give up this sector of Germany to the Russians according to the agreement of Franklin Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at Pottsdam. So we sat there in an area, a large area that later became East Germany. It could have been a lot shorter if we decided to hold the ground that we had taken. But political agreements take precedence over any military tactics. So eventually we gave this area over to the Russians, moved further west, moved further back, and then we occupied our sector in Bavaria, which was the mission of the American forces. At that time, of course, all units were disbanded, and I was, I was given an assignment with the provo marshall officer, third United States Army, which was commanded by General George Patton. The job I took over was prisoner of war hospital, (he

is moved) prisoner of war hospital security officer for third United States Army. They called that the District of Columbia because it was an area of military hospitals, German military hospitals, ranging from Munich south to Salzburg, Austria. And the headquarters was in Badtolz, B-A-D-T-O-L-Z, with an umlaut on the O, and General Patton took over a headquarters that had been held by the German Wermacht, W-E-R-M-A-C-H-T. He made that his headquarters in the town of Badtolz. And even through the occupation phase even today there is still a military headquarters in that same area. So my mission, of course, was to supervise the, see that these prisoners of war who were in hospitals and disabled, my mission was security control, typical enough. And in part of that time I went over to Dachau, the camp of, that infamous camp where they had a lot of American DP's, or displaced persons. As I went through that camp and I went into one of the, one of the furnace areas where they burned bodies, you could see footprints on the wall. I repeat, on the wall, not on the ground, where they had stacked bodies high. And I had the mistaken impression that one of the reasons why the Nazis had starved Jewish people was so they could get them so skinny that they could fit into those very narrow furnaces. It just happened that those were the narrow furnaces that I saw, but there were others that were much larger. But, of course, starving them to death meant that they could cremate them easier

after they gassed them. But anyway we cleaned out Dachau, and we got all the displaced persons out of there, that had been done by American forces, and we filled it with German S.S. troops.

LEVINE: Go ahead. Yeah, go ahead. There's still time.

SALTMAN: We filled up with German S.S. troops. I had gotten to the commander of the hospital, who was a full colonel in the German army, and he spoke very good English so we were able to talk. And as we got pretty friendly he told me a story that I have never yet seen in any of the history books, how did Germany start World War II. It was not started by Adolph Hitler. World War II was started by some elite Germans who were never satisfied in the Athletic Club in Berlin. They were plotting to revive Germany as a military power. This full colonel, a medical doctor, was offered the job of being chief of all the medical forces, medical German forces. He refused. Instead of being a full colonel he could easily have been a major general, but he turned it down. And so you can see where this, of elite, and the Athletic Club in Berlin started this whole thing. They were the power behind the throne. When they choosed Hitler, that was their mistake. He was supposed to be a front man. But he so fired up the German people that he pushed everybody else in the background, and of course the rest is history when you

have a madman who thinks he can conquer the world and was not able to do so.

LEVINE: Well, you have so much feeling still connected with your military experience. Do you think part of the fact that your family came from Russia and then was in Scotland and then came to the United States, and then you serving in the United States Army, do you think there's some connection, or how do you feel, I guess, about . . .

SALTMAN: No, I wouldn't say so. I had, as a youngster I had gone to a Citizen's Military Training Camp in Plattsburg, New York. Back in 1929 when I went into City College of New York I joined the ROTC and because I didn't graduate, I did not graduate as a second lieutenant. So when 1941 came along I had to start at the bottom of the ladder as a recruit at $21 a month. And I had to work my way up from there as a recruit to corporal, to sergeant, then to officer candidate as a second lieutenant. I left the army as a captain exactly four years after the time that I went in, I left with the rank of captain.

LEVINE: It's kind of interesting that your father left Russia initially so that he shouldn't go into the army, and yet you really played a big part in being a soldier in this country. Did your father have any regrets about that?

SALTMAN: No, he died before I went into the service.

LEVINE: I see.

SALTMAN: My mother died in 1928 and my father died in the '30s. He was not alive when I went into the service. It wouldn't have made any difference anyway. That was my, that was what I did.

LEVINE: I see. Well, is there anything else that you'd like to mention about either your military service or your coming here as a youngster and being an American citizen?

SALTMAN: I became an American citizen, probably the first one in my family, even though I was the youngest. I decided to do so even though my family, for some reason, were hesitating a little longer. At the age of nineteen I applied for first citizenship papers. At the age of twenty-one when I was eligible I became a fully naturalized United States citizen. I believe that was around 1933 in Staten Island.

LEVINE: Do you know why you decided to do that where the rest of your family was hesitant about it?

SALTMAN: I don't know why they were hesitant, but I was in the United States and I said, "This is the country where I'm going to spend the rest of my life," as I'm doing now. And I didn't

make any mistake. Actually, from the military standpoint, when I went to Fort, when I was separated from the service in the fall of 1945 I transferred categories from, shall we say, the active army of the United States to Army Reserve and that was it. So technically I have not been discharged. I have still stayed in the military in one way or the other as a reserve officer. And when I was retired as a reserve officer, which was compulsory at the age of fifty-three, I was a lieutenant colonel. And that, I was forced to retire. That was the law. And I have stayed in it as a retired officer subject to recall in case of any national emergency, and it still continues to this day.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, that's a very, very wonderful story, and I thank you very much for sharing it with us. I've been, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I've been here today talking with David Saltman, who came through Ellis Island at the age of nine in 1922 from Scotland.