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Question: And each time, I assume, different memories come about.

Answer: Yes.

Question: ok. Now we're back. So, just the idea of no sleep, no food, cold, wet.

Answer: Yeah. It was, like when we'd stop in, during the day, in the barns, they would lock us up in these barns and we'd crawl up in the hay, and the first time we did that, my feet were so cold I took my shoes off and stuck my feet way down in the hay thinking I'd be insulated and be warm down there, and fell asleep, but you'd be asleep for awhile and pretty soon you'd wake up your feet aching from cold. They were still cold down in that hay. Well, when they finally told us to get down on the road again, my feet had swelled and I had a hard time getting my shoes back on. So after that I never took my shoes off again. And the only food we got while we were on this long march into Germany.. was we'd steal, I don't know what they were, rutabagas or what, but we called the cow beets, they fed their cattle, and we'd steal some of those and I'd have one of those in my pocket and I'd chew on that once in awhile and that was all I had for food.

Question: Did you have to sneak that? I mean, did they scold you if they caught you.

Answer: Yeah. Although one village I remember we went through and it was still daylight a little bit, some lady was reaching out her window kind of looking up and down and would hand out an apple as we went by. I suspected she mighta had maybe a son that was a prisoner in this country or something, but the guy next to me, he got one of these apples, but I didn't, and I'm telling you, listening to him eat that apple just drove me bananas. It just, oh, that was hard to take. I kept watching him and he was getting close to the end and I says, would you save the core for me? And he didn't leave much on that core. And, but he gave me what little bit was left of it, and I never eat an apple again without ever, when I get down to the end of that it comes all to mind.

Question: It's interesting, because I always would have thought from movies and all that that prisoners, the biggest thing on their mind would have been girlfriends, or things like that, but all of them that I've talked to, you just touched on what they told me, one of the things that kept them alive and thinking about was food.

Answer: Food, that's right.

Question: If I understand right, Lawrence Schwizow it was flapjacks.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: And he still today every morning has a stack of pancakes and syrup. I mean, you know, 50-some years later.

Answer: When we were in prison camp, when we finally got there, why, we'd sit around and talk, it always was about food. It might start sometime with some guy talking about going out with his girlfriend to do something, but immediately it was go the restaurant and he started talking about the food. And we all had our fantasy of what food we were going to get when we got home. If we could have, we'd all died

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if we got home too quick, I'm sure, because we would have done ourselves in eating. My fantasy was, I was going to buy either a quart brick of ice cream, put one of those big chocolate bars on each side and make a sandwich out of ice cream and chocolate! Everything you thought about was something that was really rich, you know, something that was really going to crave, cure that hunger, or the other thing I always liked, blackberry or boysenberry pies. But I'd go to the bakery and buy a whole pie and put a quart of ice cream on top of it. That's one of the sad facts of life is that you can't catch up. You can't realize your fantasy.

Question: And do you have any idea how many miles you hiked?

Answer: No. I don't know. I've driven it since then, but it was all the way from the Diekirch Luxembourg. I walked all the way to the town of Limburg, east of the Rhine.

Question: So can you give me a ballpark idea? Cities here, how far, just a ballpark. Like from Olympia to....

Answer: Oh, it was , hmm, it's hard. Everything's so different there, it's hard to visualize, because you go through so many little. Like here, if you go from say from where we live in Belfair to Olympia. In the old days the old highway used to wander all around, it seemed like a long ways. Now you whiz down here in a few minutes on the freeway, so it's hard to visualize what the mileage was, because we went through mostly like little back roads and wound around all over up and down through the valleys down across the Moselle River and up the other side and down across the Rhine, and I just don't know what. It took us about two weeks to make the march.

Question: Long way long distance.

Answer: hmmmhmmmm.

Question: Now as you went through these villages, were a lot of them still standing?

Answer: Yes. Yes. They were most, most of those little villages weren't harmed in any way. The big cities, as we were marching in there, you know, it was nighttime. You could see all around entire horizon, to the east of us, and even north and south, the whole sky was aglow with the red flow from the burning big cities. And that's what I used to think of ...that was as close as I was getting into the valley of the shadow of death. What I was virtually witnessing was the death of a nation.

Question: The little towns, the villages that were still standing, were they functioning?

Answer: Yes.

Question: I mean, was it like, except for prisoners marching through, it was like the war wasn't going on?

Answer: Oh, a lot of times when they'd come through they'd come through a little village, a lot of people would be standing out alongside the road and watching us march through, and likely the ground was frozen, the snow was frozen hard, and the Germans in their hobnail boots, and when they would come through the city,

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these German troops marching us would fix their bayonets and really start strutting, you know, and then they'd slip and fall, and go down, calattery bang, clang, you know. Well, the first time we all laughed, and they came up swinging rifle butts, and we thought, No we better not laugh anymore. But after that, we just grinned to ourself inside and think, because we had composition soles in our shoes. We didn't slip like they did. But that was kind of one of those little sources of satisfaction to us that.

Question: So they made a parade out of you then.

Answer: Yeah. They would, they would, 'cause that was the difference between combat troops and non-combat troops. The combat troops treated us better than these troops did, because they were fighting the war with us, I mean.

Question: That mutual respect and understanding.

Answer: Yeah. We were their enemy and this was their only contact with us, so...

Question: Did the civilians treat you, that were along the street. Were they yelling things or were they just lie....

Answer: Just watching us, but we were, you know a lot of times they would stop us in the town or maybe our guards would go in and get a cut of hot coffee or something to eat and left us all standing in the streets, and people, a lot of us had dysentery, you had to pull your pants down and go right there in the street in front of all these people watching you. So it was kind of a dehumanizing aspect.

Question: When you finally got to the camp. Now you ended up at which...

Answer: The first ah, stop I came, got to was at Limburg It was Stalag 12A, and we had, at our last stage we went across the Rhine River, they marched us down and put us on a big barge, took us across the river on a open barge with a tugboat pulling it across, and why I really was fearful that some fighter plane would see us and that really would've done us in, but we made it. And when we finally got to Stalag 12A, got just inside the camp just about the time it was dark, and they marched us into this, a great big white, like a circus tent, in there, and inside there was, the ground was just covered with snow and packed down like ice, and they walked, marched us in and left us standing in there all night long, after we had been walking all day, for days and days, and 'cause you couldn't sit down on that ice, and so you just had to stand all night. And then when daylight finally come, the German officer finally showed up outside with some other men and they told us that we would come out and would have to come up to this desk and give them our name, rank, serial number, and our organization that we were from. Well, this was taboo. You're not supposed to tell that, only your name, rank and serial number, and there was one big tall MP from our division who was right up front and he objected. No, We don't have to do that. And he wouldn't do it. And this old German officer says, I vill show you what happens when you disobey a German officer! Pointed to one of the men and said Take this man out and shoot him. Well, they stood him off to the side, and then there was still a big hubbub. Finally, they said, Will all the men from such and such a unit over here. All the men from the engineers over here, all the men from artillery over here, so forth. Well, it's the same thing, they were going to find out. So I was way in the back, and I just spoke up and says, Go to somebody

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else's unit, and I went to the engineer's unit. But after they had got all separated into units, then they counted them all, put us all back together then, and took us over to this old so-called barracks, which was nothing but a shell of a building with just a thin scattering of straw on the floor. There was, almost wasn't enough room for everybody to lay down on the floor in there. And they didn't shoot the guy. They finally brought him in after it was all over. But he thought for awhile he was going to be shot.

Question: Was it a work camp? Or was this just a clearinghouse?

Answer: No, it was just a big prison camp. And they had...it was a permanent prison camp, and they had men of all nations in there and lots of Americans, and, 'scuse me a minute, uh. But we weren't there very long. Everything was froze up. Sanitary facilities were just terrible, almost non-existent, and we got fed one little can of watery cabbage soup a day and that was our food. After about 4 or 5 days there, they lined us all up and marched us out and we got right down to the main gate of the prison camp to leave again and 4 P-38s came over and were dive-bombing the railroad yards down in Limburg which was about 2 miles from us, I guess. So we waited then until the P-38s got done and left, and then they marched us down to the railroad yard and put us in boxcars. I didn't know it at the time, but a lot of guys were already down there in those boxcars when it was being dive-bombed. And they got us all in those boxcars and they had us jammed in those boxcars so tight, that you had to sit there with your legs drawn up to ya. And everybody was just packed like sardines, and then they left us sit there, and the train didn't move for a long time. We kept worrying that some planes would come back and get us. Well, eventually we did start rolling and, but it was very slow and jerky and they stopped many times places, and the only way we had, there was a little ventilator way up high and we'd boost one guy up every time the thing stopped so he could look out through the slots and see where we were, see where what was going on. And we looked out and saw that the guards were running away, why, we knew we were going to get attacked again. And this happened several times, but fortunately we never got hit, and uh, the only way we could relieve ourself was to urinate against the crack in the door on the box because they never opened it. And there was one can, there must have been a 100 men in this car, one can and it was full immediately, and the poor devils that had to sit next to that. But you could sit just so long and by then we had already been a prisoner almost a month, and we were pretty skinny and your legs would go to sleep, 'cause you didn't have any meat on your bones, you're sittin' there. So you'd stand up when your legs started to go to sleep, and then after you stood for a while and had to sit down again there wasn't room to sit down. Everybody had just kind of expanded a little, you know, with the pressure off, and you had to really work your way down in to get a place to sit again. And this is the way we went for 4 days. No water, no food. The only food that I had in that 4 days was before we got on the train they gave us 3 little cakes of cheese that were about the size of a snooze can, about that big around and about that thick. That's all I had to eat in 4 days and no water. They say you can't go that long without water, but we did, and we finally, then we got.. pulled into Neubrandenburg there up north of Berlin, and uh, opened up and let us out. Boy, when I slid off of the boxcar to the ground my legs almost didn't hold me up. And I'd been so.. I hadn't had a bowel movement in, I don't know, weeks now, and I had hemorrhoids from sitting on that cold floor and lack of everything else so bad I was really in pain, couldn't hardly walk. And as we walked out of the railroad yard we passed another train that they were unloading Russian prisoners that had been brought in, there we saw them unloading results of cannibalism. Those Russians had been in their cars

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longer than we had, and we had to walk about 3 miles out to the prison camp Stalag 2A, and when we got in there, why, the guys had some pieces of Red Cross parcels left and they gave us some food from it, and they said, Go very easy on that, and I thought I did, but boy when that food started working and my insides started working again, I thought I was going to explode. Oh, man, I was tied up in knots. It was terrible, and food in this camp was, uh, when we first got there was what we called Grass Soup. Looked like someone had pulled weeds out of something and put them in some boiling water. And sometimes we got a couple of little boiled dirty potatoes still with the skin and dirt on them, and we'd get one little chunk of bread about that thick about once a week, and that bread was made with sawdust. They used wood flour, and down in the bottom of the loaf of bread you could actually get fine chunks of sawdust, and it was hard to eat even fresh, but we'd try to make that little chunk of bread last till we'd get our next piece the next week, and by the time, after a few days that stuff was just as hard as could be. One kid actually broke his tooth eating it. It was that hard.

Question: Do you have any idea what weight you were down to at this point?

Answer: No. When we arrived at this, uh, prison camp, the first thing they did was run us into a building and they said they were going to fumigate our clothes and give us a shower. Well, we were a little concerned. We thought we might be the ones gassed and the clothes might be the ones to get washed, and so we took all our clothes off and put them on racks, and when I got my clothes off, I looked down at myself and I looked away real quick. I thought I was looking at somebody else. I did not recognize myself I was so skinny. Then I realized, Hey that was me I looked at, not somebody else. But I had that first feeling, you know, you didn't want to stare at this other guy with his clothes off, and I looked away. And I, That was me! And looked down and, Holy Smokes! That kind of worried us a little bit, but...

Question: 'cause you probably hadn't seen a mirror or...

Answer: No. Nothing.

Question: Your face, your body, or anything for

Answer: No, we hadn't had our clothes off there for a month, and when they finally, they'd take out a little group and we never saw them again. We were still concerned whether we might. We were aware of the fact that the Germans had these concentration camps where they were gassing people, you know, and this is getting kind of worrisome, you know, 'cause we didn't see anybody when they got through, and finally when my turn came, they put us in this big square room that was lined with galvanized sheet metal. It was real high, you couldn't reach the...you'd see these spigots way up there in the overhead, and they told us, you know, to stand under the thing, and the water would squirt on and we were to soap up and then the water would turn off and after awhile we'd get another shot to rinse us off. Well, we were still concerned whether there was going to be gas or water coming out of that thing. And so apparently when they turned the water off they must have drained the water out of the pipes so it would keep it from freezing, because when they turned it on first thing you heard was this little swish of air, and we thought oh, oh.. it is gas! And then there wasn't a damn thing you could do, there was no, everything was too high up, and the door was shut and locked and it was kind of momentarily pretty scary until the water started, and it just barely got you wet, almost enough to get soaped up, and then wait for it for another little squirt

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came. You almost didn't get enough to get rinsed off. And that was our so-called shower. Then we went out in this little room where we saw the other guys, and then they brought our clothes in that supposedly had been gassed. Well up to that time, we didn't have any lice yet. We got, I think they were keeping the lice in this camp pure, because it was this is where we got the lice and the bed bugs.

Question: Was the shower warm or cold?

Answer: It was warm.

Question: So that was probably the first time in a month that you felt warmth by this time?

Answer: Well, it wasn't really warm, it was lukewarm, but it wasn't chilly cold, it was tolerable, let's put it that way. But it wasn't a nice warm shower.

Question: oh. And then you got your uniform back.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: It came through and with lice and bed bugs and...

Answer: Yeah. But we didn't have them then, yet, but as soon as we got into the barracks, well then we got our bed bugs.

Question: Do you know, was this prison camp built as a prison camp?

Answer: Yes.

Question: It was.

Answer: It was built, I think, by Russian and Polish prisoners early in the war, like in 1939. But by now, it was pretty ramshackley. It was a very depressing looking place. There was no color at all in it, and in our barracks, it was just big old 3-tired wooden bunks with just some wooden slats in there and a little thin bag, burlap bag of straw for a mattress. And, uh, between the two ends of the barracks, there was originally a wash room, but there was no running water in it because everything was shut off because of the cold, and there was no heat in the barracks, and, like I say, the food was lousy. But eventually we did get Red Cross parcels at this camp, and that was a Godsend. I always feel like I owe the Red Cross my life because if it hadn't been for that, we'd a been like the Russians. The Russians had no Red Cross parcels. And there would be about 6 dead Russians out in front of their barracks every morning. And they would, the Russians would come through our compound and go through our garbage, like where we had a Red Cross parcel, and we'd thrown away a can, there was nothing in that can, but maybe there might have been a little grease where you had a can of corned beef or something, and they would pick up that can and they'd run their finger around and get that grease off and lick it and that was what they would.... I even saw one of them pick up a...cigarettes were in very short supply for those who smoked, and when they smoked them, they smoked them down to the bitter end on those. And I remember one guy throwing those down, and outside of our barracks there was a latrine at the end of it that was always overflowing around on the ground. I remember seeing this Russian picking up this butt out of this latrine overflow and pick it up and put it in his pocket. He'd

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save every little bit until he got enough tobacco out of there to make something to smoke. They were in pitiful condition.

Question: So did the nationalities. It sounds like you had an American barracks and a Russian barracks, but did they intermingle?

Answer: No.

Question: So they, you were kept separate then?

Answer: There was a British barracks, too, right alongside, and even the British kept to themselves.

Question: Not because they were forced to.

Answer: No

Question: It was just natural migration.

Answer: hmmm,hmmmm. Kind of we went over to the British barracks one time and were going to try to swap something from our Red Cross parcel with something...somebody said they had some good jam or something. And when we... the British... everything British was better than everybody...they wouldn't trade!

Question: It's amazing. Some things won't change in war. The British always think they're.... I mean, even that aspect of the war, the fact of getting a Red Cross package. I mean, as you hear these stories there becomes this very surreal aspect of war. You're our enemy, we're going to capture you, we now have these rules. The Russians we captured, they don't...their people don't send them Red Cross packages, so we aren't going to give them. The Americans are sending, so you only get the American one, the British get the British ones, so it's this...it's hard to understand, having not been there.

Answer: It is. It is. That's what always bugged me was, so they captured us. We're not fighting them anymore. Why do they have to take the war out on us now and treat us like this? What are they gaining by treating us like this?

Question: What did they have you do in the camp?

Answer: They would take us out on various work details, uh, like go out and cut some trees. I remember one time they had me cutting big Linden trees on the road coming into this camp. Cutting these down and cut them up into pieces, and uh, every morning, see one end of our barracks was what we called the sick barracks. Guys who had sickness or wounds or something. And the barracks that I was in was the able-bodied one. Well, they would fall us out every morning for roll call and they'd line up the sick barracks in front and the healthy ones in the back. And then after they took roll call, they would excuse the sick barracks to go. Then they would come over to the able-bodied groups standing there and pick out men and take them on a work detail. You didn't always get on one, but mostly you did. And in behind us was this huge outdoor latrine that was like a concrete tank above ground or a basement above ground with this building on top of it, and inside was all these little square wooden like boxes with a pyramid top and a hole on each of the 4 sides of the pyramid. This was your latrine, and it all fell into this great big tank like

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underneath. Well, they would excuse these sick people and they would turn and they would go right back through our ranks and half of us would go with them to the latrine, and then we would set up here in this latrine and the old guards would run through there trying to pick out who was not sick ones. I remember kind of just sit there and look sad and say, Ich ist krank, which is, I am sick. They couldn't understand why we would do this and they kept doing this every day. They wouldn't learn, and when they would finally have enough guys and line them up and start marching them out to go to work, guys at the tail end as they went around a corner of a building would quick disappear, fall out. And the guard would get down to the main gate and he'd tell the guard down there he had so many men to take out. So then he'd have to count them, and verify it and they'd come up with a different number than what the guy told him he had. So then the two of them would...and I learned to count German very fast there because I could hear these guys and it was almost hilarious. We would, and we would bug these people like this every way we could and they could not understand it. So one night a German officer came in and they made everybody come along out in the aisle way down through all these bunks and this German officer walked up and down in here and lectured us for a whole hour. Only a few guys knew German. The rest of us didn't know what he was talking about. Finally when he got all through and left, somebody said, Well, what was that all about? And they guy says, He just said basically You're soldiers, why don't you act like soldiers. They could not understand Americans not wanting to follow orders. A German is a very regimented good soldier. He did what he was told! We didn't. Under these circumstances.

Question: Not by the enemy.

Answer: Yeah. Well, we were bad enough even with our own, but that German could not understand that attitude of ours at all. He just couldn't understand it.

Question: How long were you in that camp? Quite awhile?

Answer: I was there about 6 weeks, I think, and as the weather was still pretty cool and was getting toward April now, and we were concerned that, boy when things do get warmer around here, this place is going to be ripe for sickness and everything and we wanted...thought we should get out of there. And we'd heard about guys who had been taken out to what they called Arbeits Kommandos, where they took you out and kept you at a work site somewhere. And some of them we heard were good, some of them were bad, but my buddies and I in this one little quadrangle of bunks, we decided. One of my buddies here was a kid that I had been with in basic training and went to ASTP at the University of Alabama with, and there we parted company when I went to the Air Force. And then I was just sittin' in this thing one afternoon when in come some new guys and who should walk in but this old friend of mine. We both looked at each other and said, What are you doing here, you know? He thought was off in the Air Force and. So any rate, we got together and got to thinking, this, maybe we better volunteer for one of these Arbeits Kommandos and see what comes of it. So we did, and finally one day they chose us, about 6 of us were marched back downtown to the railroad station and put on a regular train. The train was made up of passenger cars and freight cars and every other car was either an open flat car or a gondola with an anti-aircraft gun mounted on it with a crew, and but the passenger cars were like the ones in the old Western movies with the open platform on the ends of the cars. It didn't have a closed vestibule like our trains had, and we got up on that and that's where we were going to have to ride, outside. And so the guard and the 6 of us were standing out on this

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little platform. Well, it was cold out there, but I figured if planes ever attacked us here, well, at least we could jump off of this thing. And so it wasn't too bad a deal that way. But after we'd ridden there quite awhile, it was getting pretty darned cold, and the old guard he opened the door and pushed us inside. Well, inside was standing room only and there was civilians and Germans troops and everything else in there. Well, those German soldiers weren't going to have any part of us in there with their civilians, so they pushed us out. The guard was trying to push us in. The guys inside won, so we rode for a while longer outside and it was kind of like a streetcar almost. This thing stopped and let people on and off all along the way. And eventually enough people got off that we finally got inside to sit down, and by the time it got dark and we were still riding, it was still in the night, got pretty empty in there. But eventually the thing stopped out in the countryside. We didn't have the foggiest notion where we were, and where we were going, and the old guard marched us off up a road, and we were coming through the big open farm fields and there was poplar trees all on each side of the road. We walked up into this big kind of a quadrangle of buildings and it was a farm, a big...it looked just like something out of *Gone With The Wind*. It was a big old, like a mansion up at the end and the farm buildings down around. And then we saw this one barn with a little barbed wire fence around one corner of it, and I thought, that's where we're going. And sure enough, it was, it had been the pigsty in the barn. It was all a masonry barn, which was nice and tight, but it had been cleaned out and whitewashed, so it was pretty decent in there, and it was warm, because the barn was warm. And it was the best quarters I had as a POW. And we worked there out in the fields each day where they had potatoes lined up in long rows in winter storage in the fields. They'd been covered with straw and dirt and we were digging out these piles of rows of potatoes and throwing them into a big rotary sieve that grated them in little potatoes, medium-sized potatoes and big potatoes. I didn't know it at the time, but this is what they were using those potatoes to make rocket fuel, alcohol. We thought it was we were feeding, we thought we were not helping the war effort here. But as, for a POW, this was the best place that I had ever been, treated the best. And there was a bunch a Russian slave labor women working in the fields along with us. And we could steal enough potatoes here so we had plenty of potatoes to eat. We had heard, you know, that we could eat better out at these places, and we did, because we had, but it was nothing but potatoes. Just potatoes. And, but we had almost all you could eat. And on when Good Friday came and Easter Sunday they didn't make us work those days and they did throw in a chunk of tough grisly, I don't know what kind of meat it was. So those two days we had something else in the potatoes. And, uh, but the weather was starting to warm up. This was April, and we were getting, spring was coming, you know, and we were starting to come alive a little bit, and so when we were working out there and these Russian women were, we'd see them head over to a little clump of bushes there to do their business over under, we'd holler out at them, We know what you're doing. We know where you're going. Well, they caught on to that right quick, though. They seemed to enjoy our horseplay attitude, and so when they'd see us heading for something, why, they'd just mimic it right back at us. They didn't know any English, but they knew what we were saying. And so, the guards were pretty tolerant here, but that one day they kind of got ticked off that we were playing too much with them and we found out that their rations were cut because they didn't produce enough work that day, so we had to be a little more careful after that. And then one day when we had been doing that too, the guard came up and took my dog tag and looked at it and wrote the number down and some of the other guys and the next day they took us out and took us back down the railroad tracks and got on that train again and they took us to another Arbeits Kommando, which is, I don't know, it was a little. I didn't ever know

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where the farm was I was on, but...oh, one other incident here at the farm that was pretty unusual. There was a funeral in town and this man that ran the farm we called the chef. He and his family went to this funeral, and they had a big fancy horse-drawn carriage just like you see in the movies, and they went to the funeral and here they were wearing their big 'ole silk top hats and all dressed in this big carriage and we really just felt like we were back in the days of Gone With The wind. We were the slaves in the field and there went the master in his carriage. It was just like a mind warp. It just kind of blew your mind that this was existing.

Question: Just seeing the picture you just painted, that's the picture I saw as you told it.

Answer: uh, huh.

Question: I mean, a plantation.

Answer: yep.

Question: And here were the slaves working the plantation.

Answer: Yep. That's just the way we felt.

Question: Wow.

Answer: These poor Russian girls. They had a Polish traitor, who carried a big bullwhip and kept them in line. But they didn't bother with us Americans because we had our own guard and he was in charge. But anyhow, when we left and went to this other Arbeits Kommando, and it was a little village of Krümel and we knew where that one was, but it, there they put us in like an old brick house and they had cycle bars from mowing machines cemented in the windows for bars. And here we worked in the woods cutting trees and packing out wood. And life here wasn't as pleasant, but we still had all the potatoes we could eat, and that's all we had was potatoes, and. It's not a very pleasant thought or thing the wife always gives me heck for talking about it, but we ate all the potatoes you could just eat and eat. You never satisfied, you know, so you just bloated yourself with it. And then one day out working and we'd go over to do our business in the brush, and it just looked like a cow had been there. It would flow out and was almost the same color as it was when we ate it. And anyhow, I'd been in there and you'd go in and squatting down on the ground and the thing would spread out and when it got to your heels you'd move over and start another pile. And I'd been in there quite awhile and this guard came looking for me. And he looked in and said, du scheiße ein (uhr?). And I pointed to 3 piles and I moved over and I started another one. He just shrugged his shoulders and left. But that was the way we lived, ate, and lived, and so we worked there quite a long time at various places, and we begin to see a little air activity, and I remember one day an old Junkers 88, one of those old tri-motored corrugated Fokker transports come flying overhead, pretty low, and a Russian fighter was right after him, and we could see the tracers from that Russian fighter going right through that plane and ricocheting off the wings and I think they eventually must have killed the pilot, because the plane finally nosed over and disappeared behind the trees and pretty soon you heard this big ca-wang, you know, and it hit the ground, and a big column of smoke came out. And another day we were working, cutting wood right across the lake from a German airfield, and they had the German jets, the ME-262s on there. That was mind-boggling. We'd never seen a jet. And it was just fabulous.

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It come right over us real low, no propellers just whoosh. It was unbelievable. And another day when we were working there and we saw a flight of B-17s coming over, and we all just quit working and just sat down and watched the first plane come over and drop these pathfinder bombs and they all came in and bombed and we just sat there like watching an air show. And when the bombers got through some P-51s came in there and strafed the field and even the guard, we all just sat there and watched. And another day, why, they had us building a roadblock in the woods in a swampy area, and we heard a, what sounded like a P-51, roaring around real low in that area and we got excited and the old German saw us and he said, It's Deutsche fighter. And pretty soon we heard him strafing and we just turned to the guard and, Oh, ya, ya, Deutsche fighter! The next instant, why, here this 51 came right over the road right where we were working and his wing tips were practically cuttin' the treetops, and we could look right up in his canopy and see the pilot's face. Oh, that was the most wonderful feeling, 'cause here the war was actually getting' right to us. And each day, why, we started to begin to faintly hear artillery in the distance, and, I don't know, I could hear, like sometimes when the weather's just right you can hear the artillery out here at Ft. Lewis? Well, that's the way I remembered that from when we lived here in Tumwater, and I...that's artillery in the distance. And each day it began to get a little louder and a little louder. And one day when we came back out of the woods.. back to our village of Krümel for the night, there was a lot of German troops in the area and, something's happening, something's coming up. And the next morning when the old guard opened the door, unlocked the door to our room. Usually he said sie arbeiten. This time he said something entirely different. I asked this one kid, what did he say? He says, You want to go meet the Americans, or do you want to wait for the Russians? And we had never trusted them, and we said, Tell the bastard to go to hell. We'll wait for the Russians. And he mumbled back something and it was, You'll all end up in the salt mines in Siberia. And he left and a few minutes later he came back. They were going to take us to the Americans whether we wanted to or not. And they tried, he tried, the guards marched us over to the main road through the area, and it was just a bedlam of activity. It was loaded with German troops, civilians with wheelbarrows, bicycles, wagons, carts, household goods, everything you could imagine on that road. People were fleeing ahead of the Russians. We even saw one whole group of people from a concentration camp sitting there beside the road. They were just like zombies. They didn't even know what was going on. And the place was just utter bedlam. I've never seen such a horrible mass of humanity in my life. And the guards, everything was kind of blocked at this. It was kind of a crossroads there, and so there was a German officer directing traffic here, and our guards went up to him to tell him something I don't know what, but pretty soon I think he told him to take us back where he got 'em, 'cause that's what they did. They came back, turned us around, we went right back, right back to where we'd been kept. As soon as we got there, our guards disappeared on bicycles, and we were free to do what we wanted. Well, there were German troops all over the area, and I remember the one German was sittin' there on our doorstep. He had a pair of little field glasses on him. Well, I still had some cigarettes from a Red Cross parcel, so I got this other kid who could speak German and I said, See if you can buy his field glasses from him for a cigarette, so he did, and I bought those field glasses. And we took off and went off in the woods where we'd been working and there was a big depressed area in there, and some of these Russian women prisoners came out there with us too, and we built fir lean-tos in there, and we figured we'd spend the night out there, wait till the Russian army came through. We didn't want to be in the way if the Russians and Germans collided, and so we stayed the night out there and the next day we could hear a lot of traffic, and this one kid he borrowed my glasses. He was going to look and see

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what it was. And pretty soon he came back and there was a German officer with him and the German officer looked and saw what we were and, 'cause he had spotted this kid. It's a wonder he hadn't got himself killed. Uh, he told him, Stay where you are. Stay out of trouble. And then he left. Well, pretty soon the noise sounded different, and we couldn't stand it and we, what's going on, and so this kid took off again. I said, Well, don't you lose my glasses. But pretty soon he came back. This time he had a Russian soldier with him. And first thing he did was, Any you guys got a watch, don't let this guy see it 'cause he don't care who you are, he wants a watch! So anyhow he came in and these Russian women, they just fell all over him 'cause he was their hero, and they apparently told him about the old German chef that took care of all of us people, and pretty soon he left, and pretty soon he came back and he was riding the chef's horse, wearing the chef's boots, dangling the chef's watch. He'd found him and they had done him in. So when we left there and walked back into Krümel we went by the lake and here we saw his body floating in the lake. And so we didn't know really what we should do now, and so we decided we'd go into the next biggest town and see if we couldn't find a, some kind of a Russian headquarters or something and find out what we were supposed to do or where we should go. And so we did and we finally found schoolhouse and there seemed to be something going on there, and we went in, and this one kid that could speak Polish could speak pretty well with the Russians, and so they explained what we were and what we wanted. And he just asked them what we should do. They just held out their rifles and said, Come fight with us. Well, no thanks, we thought we better get our way on back to the Americans. So they told us that the Americans were waiting for them at the Elbe River, and so we stayed there for that night and we, 6 of us found bicycles and the other 6 guys got a horse and wagon, and we took off then and followed the Russian Army going west. That was an experience following the Russian Army. Then there was some Yugoslavian women there who latched onto us 'cause they were afraid of the Russians and they wanted to travel with us. Well, they ended up hoggin' the wagon and the other guys had to walk. And where the Russians had killed Germans along the road, they left them right on the road like road kill, ran right over, just, and every time these Yugoslavian women would see this and get sick, and we'd have to stop. Well, after one day of that, the next morning, that night they stayed in one house and we stayed in another one. The next morning we got up early and left without them. And so we followed the Russian Army for 4 days, and when we went through one little village we stopped for lunch and we looked around and we found some eggs and fried them and cooked them and we saw this one Russian grab a German girl and take her into a house and raped her. And when he came back over and some of the guys asked him, Why did you do this? And he said that the Germans had burned his folks' farm, killed his parents, and 17 Germans had raped his sister and killed her. He was out for all the revenge he could get. And while we were all cooking this other old Russian was telling us something, 'course none of us could understand him. He was just a goin' away and we were kind of ignoring him, still cooking and trying to fix something to eat, and all of a sudden he pulls out his pistol and fires two shots. We all hit the floor. He was just trying to make a point, I guess, but it scared the heck out of us. But it was quite interesting following the Russian army. And at one village we came to, we found a whole line of Russians lined up and they were taking turns riding the few bicycles they had found. And they didn't know how to ride bicycles. They had, they were like kids on Christmas morning! They had, these people had grown up. These real poverty-stricken peasants, you know, they didn't know about anything almost, and it was hilarious watching them trying to ride these bicycles. So the 6 of us who knew how to ride, had bicycles, we couldn't resist showing off. We did all the tricks that we knew as kids, 'cause we'd stand up on the seat and ride and get up and ride

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sidesaddle, turn around and ride backwards on the handlebars, did everything we could...and they were just dumbfounded. And there was a young Russian officer who come by and saw us. He thought we were circus. But when he found out we were Americans, he was just tickled pink! And he had an all-chrome bicycle, beautiful thing, and he said that he had American equipment that he was so proud of, and he wanted to show it to us and he wanted us to join him out where he had, he had 3 tanks bivouacked out on the edge of town. So we started to follow him on this old rutted road. The only way you could ride would be to get on there and go as fast as he could and then he'd hit a rut or something and he's take a spill and we'd wait while he picked himself up and got going again, and we got out here to where he had these 3 American tanks and as soon as he got there he gave some orders and the men there kind of disappeared for a little bit, and he was showing us his equipment, and he explained that the only English he knew he got out of the manuals for this equipment, and everything was Dodge, Studebaker, Dubres, which was excellent. And, pretty soon his men came back and they had served us a fried chicken dinner, all on fancy German china. They had a little 'ole crank-up phonograph they cranked up and had German records playing Deutschland Über Allen and they had apparently brought a safe out there and broke it open 'cause there was German paper money scattered all over the place. And I had picked up a great big. I think it was a 100,000-mark note. I was going to bring it home for a souvenir, and in the course of the, well, we ate there. This one Polish kid was conversing with them, and the Russian men were kind of, somewhat reserved, you know like they didn't really know what they should act toward us like. Till finally they asked him, What were we going to do when the war, when we got home? And the kid told him, Well, we're going to find a good girl and get married and raise a bunch of kids. Man, those guys just exploded with happiness. Oh, they just, then they were just slap your back, you know, and they couldn't be more friendly. That's just what they wanted to do, too. But we thought that was kind of unusual, you know, after somebody saw what how the Cold War developed, we realized that they had been already fed a bunch of propaganda about Americans, and the Russians did not want them to mingle with Americans. Because this Russian officer, he had looked so forward to meeting the Americans, and he was so disappointed because they stopped him right there and wouldn't let him go any further. So anyhow, we continued on and we eventually got to the Elbe River and there was a big bridge across the river, of course, we couldn't get across, we didn't know any. Now what do we do? While we were pondering what to do next, why a Belgium POW came along and he said there was an American river crossing up the river about 3 kilometers. Ok, so we headed up that way. And we'd gone a little ways and still was wondering if this was where it was, or a wild goose chase or what and we met a German civilian and we asked him. Oh, yes, just right here, he said. You can leave the horse and wagon with me, he said. You won't need it anymore. Well, if you want the horse and wagon you come get it. Well, we took off then, and we noticed he was following us, so we thought maybe he's right. And just a little while over across the trees along the river there above him we could see an American flag. And you've probably heard an awful lot of statements about how, what the flag means and how wonderful the sight of it is, but I can tell you that that never looked better to anybody than it looked to us at that time. That was the most wonderful sight you ever saw. That was, represented home and everything. Well, the guys on the bicycles, we were peddling as fast as we could go. Couple of them had flat tires and they were rattling on the rim on the old gravel road, and the old horse and wagon we had that horse at a full gallop. And the 'ole wagon was just a bouncin' and flyin' and we got up there and there was a kind of opening and we turned into this opening and tied up at the river's edge was a big ocean-going yacht. And over in this other

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corner of this opening was a Russian band all mounted on horseback. We come rollin' down in there and there was 4 GIs there, two of them were passed out cold on the beach, and pink vomit. They'd been drinking with the Russians. The other 2 were standing there looking after them. And we come down there and, Hey, what are you guys standing here for? Why didn't you come get us, you know? And they said, Well, this is far as they would let us come, they said. And we said, let's get on that boat and get across and get on the other side. Oh, don't do that. He said, There's American General entertaining and Russian General. We'll get you some transportation. So they went up on the boat and they radioed across and they sent 2 assault boats with outboard motors over, and we got on those and they took us across the other side and then we were finally in American hands again.

Question: How long a period was that, from the time you were captured to...

Answer: From the time I was captured till my liberation date was 4 ½ months. It seemed like 45 years. It was the longest period of my life. I look back now and think, That wasn't so long, but boy it only takes one day of that kind of life to make too much.

Question: Now you showed some letters your Mom had tried to write you, but the letters were returned.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So they, for a long time, your Mom didn't even know you were alive.

Answer: They didn't know I was alive all the time. It, they allowed us to, in the prison camp, they allowed us to write a letter and a post card, and then when I was on the farm I did, too, and uh, none of them got out until one letter got out. Apparently the American advancing army had liberated something and found them in somewhere and sent them out. And one letter got home just about a day or two before the actual war ended, and that was their first knowledge that I was alive, so somebody told my mother to go tell the Red Cross. So she did. Well, the Red Cross apparently informed the Army, the Army sent the folks a telegram saying I was a prisoner of war, but the war was all over.

Question: I love the efficiency of the military sometimes.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Wow. So how long did it take you to get home then?

Answer: A month.

Question: So another month now.

Answer: We stayed, from this place they hauled us by truck to the town of Hildesheim and we waited there at an old airport, and old German airfield in Hildesheim and that's where I lost that 100,000-mark note. Some gypsy stole it from me. Then they flew us out of there in C-47s to Camp Lucky Strike in Le Havre and we waited there about 2 weeks, and while we were there they offered us a 3-day pass to Paris or a 7-day leave to England, and, but if you took this, you'd get on the end of the list to get on the boat. Darn few guys took it. Almost no...we did have...

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When traveling, in our group when we were following the Russians and working in the Arbeits Kommando, we had one Frenchman and one Englishman, both who were posing as Americans, 'cause they figured when the war was over, they were going to get sent back to America and that way they were going to come here. Well, when we got across the Elbe River and they loaded us into trucks to take us to a place to feed us, a British officer walked over to the truck and he says, I say there, are there any British lads in there? The Englishman couldn't stand it. He popped up like a jack-in-the-box, spouted off his name, rank, and unit. The officer says, Come with me, and that's the last we saw of him. And then when we got to Camp Lucky Strike the Frenchman, he couldn't resist. He took the 3-day pass to Paris and we never saw him again. But then we waited there, like I say, for about 2 weeks. They put us on an old liberty ship, not a liberty but a victory. An old slow freighter. It took 2 weeks to come across the Atlantic, and then we got into New York, and we were there for about a day and then they put us on a troop train to come back to Ft. Lewis. That took about 4 days. So by the time we got home, we'd been pretty well fed.

Question: Pretty well fed and your body starting to adjust now.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: That had to be pretty hard on your body, too.

Answer: It was. And, uh, like I say. All those things we dreamed about eating, now. You just couldn't accomplish it. You couldn't do it. There were a few guys that I know that ended up in the hospital because they couldn't handle the eating. But I made out alright. They sent us home with a 70-day temporary duty, and all this time I was, when I got to New York, I could have got a telephone home, but I was afraid to. I was afraid that there might be bad news. I was worried about what might have happened at home, and I didn't want my dream shattered, I guess, or something. I really don't know. I just couldn't do it. And so when we finally got out here to Ft. Lewis, I still didn't get on the phone. They processed us pretty fast, gave us our some temporary money to last us, and give us our orders, and soon as I got that in hand, boy I hopped on a base bus, there, and out to the highway and started hitchhiking, and some GIs come along and picked me up and brought me to downtown Olympia. We got to downtown Olympia it just felt like you crawled into a nice warm comfortable old bed. To see everything familiar and realized I was back home again. Oh, what a feeling I had. I couldn't stand it any longer, then. I finally went to a phone and called up and my Mom answered the phone and, man, I was so happy 'cause she was the one I was worried about how it was going to affect her. She says, Where are you? Are you in New York? She says, We just got a telegram from the Army just the other day saying that you would be on your way shortly. I said, No, I'm downtown Olympia. Can you come get me? Yes. Well, I was over by on the east end of the 4th Street and I walked over to by the corner of Sylvester Park. By the time I got there, they had driven from Tumwater, and, oh, what a wonderful feeling. It was one of those moments you'd like to have last forever.

Question: Were there other siblings in your family? Were you the only child?

Answer: I had a sister, and she was married and her husband was in the Army, but he was a medic in a quartermaster outfit, and most all my cousins were all in the service, too, but none of them went through what I had to go through.

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Question: Do you carry any of that with you today? I mean, I know you do...a life experience. I gotta switch tapes, here, just one moment.