

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,680

2
00:00:04,680 --> 00:00:07,530
This is the United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral

3
00:00:07,530 --> 00:00:13,530
History Interview with
Milton Shurr, tape 3, side A.

4
00:00:13,530 --> 00:00:19,290
One thing, going
back to Buchenwald,

5
00:00:19,290 --> 00:00:22,650
the different groups,
they had little cliques.

6
00:00:22,650 --> 00:00:25,830
They had cliques just
like any prison or so on.

7
00:00:25,830 --> 00:00:32,310
And obviously, the communists
were highly organized,

8
00:00:32,310 --> 00:00:35,010
and they apparently
were in charge

9
00:00:35,010 --> 00:00:37,830
of the distribution of food
and clothing and things

10
00:00:37,830 --> 00:00:39,381
like that that mattered.

11
00:00:39,381 --> 00:00:43,530

12

00:00:43,530 --> 00:00:45,470
We had no control over that.

13
00:00:45,470 --> 00:00:52,080
There was no real way
because, again, you know,

14
00:00:52,080 --> 00:00:53,520
if your indigenous staff--

15
00:00:53,520 --> 00:00:57,670
it was just the four officers
and seven enlisted personnel,

16
00:00:57,670 --> 00:01:03,150
and a bunch of Dutch and
Ukrainian hangers-on.

17
00:01:03,150 --> 00:01:05,730
You really had no
control over things,

18
00:01:05,730 --> 00:01:10,780
and you made use of
the system as it went.

19
00:01:10,780 --> 00:01:13,380
And this seemed to
work pretty well.

20
00:01:13,380 --> 00:01:18,210
The only thing that
occurred that I thought

21
00:01:18,210 --> 00:01:20,820
that was unfortunate
was the fact

22
00:01:20,820 --> 00:01:24,810
that the communists ran amok
and grabbed all the valuables,

23
00:01:24,810 --> 00:01:27,040

you know.

24
00:01:27,040 --> 00:01:30,480
But other than that,
this system seem to work

25
00:01:30,480 --> 00:01:35,780
and the people were
generally satisfied.

26
00:01:35,780 --> 00:01:40,400
As some of our foreign officers,
liaison officers, were leaving,

27
00:01:40,400 --> 00:01:45,197
we had Polish, Belgian,
a couple of French.

28
00:01:45,197 --> 00:01:47,030
I think we had this
French team of [? wax ?]

29
00:01:47,030 --> 00:01:48,930
who didn't do anything.

30
00:01:48,930 --> 00:01:53,710
And well, the
Polish officer left.

31
00:01:53,710 --> 00:01:55,830
He and I were very good friends.

32
00:01:55,830 --> 00:01:59,700
He gave me his
portable typewriter,

33
00:01:59,700 --> 00:02:02,580
and he said he put
me in for a medal.

34
00:02:02,580 --> 00:02:05,670
Well, since the
government-in-exile never

35

00:02:05,670 --> 00:02:09,199

got authority, I never
got my Polish medal.

36

00:02:09,199 --> 00:02:13,050

But anyway, the thought was
very kind and appreciated.

37

00:02:13,050 --> 00:02:16,080

38

00:02:16,080 --> 00:02:22,150

There were a lot of interesting
little incidents along the way,

39

00:02:22,150 --> 00:02:31,440

but I remember one time,
another first lieutenant

40

00:02:31,440 --> 00:02:33,180

called me in and
said, why don't you

41

00:02:33,180 --> 00:02:35,100

help me put together
a few binoculars.

42

00:02:35,100 --> 00:02:39,440

So we went into
the binocular unit

43

00:02:39,440 --> 00:02:41,820

where they had small
parts, and we put together

44

00:02:41,820 --> 00:02:44,210

a few binoculars.

45

00:02:44,210 --> 00:02:47,850

They weren't too good,
but I had a couple

46

00:02:47,850 --> 00:02:51,600

that worked pretty well,
that focused pretty well.

47

00:02:51,600 --> 00:02:56,230

So we were trying to
do things like that.

48

00:02:56,230 --> 00:02:58,740

And I picked up some
books, pictures and things

49

00:02:58,740 --> 00:03:03,390

like that, and much of that I
turned over to the Holocaust

50

00:03:03,390 --> 00:03:08,460

Museum, including there was
a very interesting picture

51

00:03:08,460 --> 00:03:13,590

of a young man being led into
the woods lined up, blindfolded

52

00:03:13,590 --> 00:03:15,470

to be shot.

53

00:03:15,470 --> 00:03:18,450

And there were about
four pictures, I think.

54

00:03:18,450 --> 00:03:23,910

And the back of it said
Nur, only for Germany, only

55

00:03:23,910 --> 00:03:29,400

for the official
service, war service.

56

00:03:29,400 --> 00:03:31,950

I got a call from the
Holocaust Museum wanting

57

00:03:31,950 --> 00:03:33,420
to know who was that person.

58

00:03:33,420 --> 00:03:34,860
I said, I don't know.

59

00:03:34,860 --> 00:03:37,285
I mean, that was just
pictures I picked up.

60

00:03:37,285 --> 00:03:38,160
And I had some books.

61

00:03:38,160 --> 00:03:42,330
I had a Mein Kampf
book that was probably

62

00:03:42,330 --> 00:03:46,170
produced in the millions,
and apparently, it

63

00:03:46,170 --> 00:03:48,970
was presented to
every married couple.

64

00:03:48,970 --> 00:03:52,640
And this was one of the
officers at Buchenwald,

65

00:03:52,640 --> 00:03:54,390
so I thought it had a
little significance,

66

00:03:54,390 --> 00:03:56,050
I felt like, right.

67

00:03:56,050 --> 00:04:00,240
Among other things I turned over
was a little aluminum airplane

68

00:04:00,240 --> 00:04:02,550
about like that, a Stuka.

69

00:04:02,550 --> 00:04:09,940

And I turned it over to them
an ashtray from a truck piston.

70

00:04:09,940 --> 00:04:12,480

It was about this
round, this high,

71

00:04:12,480 --> 00:04:17,459

and they soldered some
cigar rests on it.

72

00:04:17,459 --> 00:04:21,120

And the back was says
the name of the deputy,

73

00:04:21,120 --> 00:04:25,950

[GERMAN] whatever it was, Fitz.

74

00:04:25,950 --> 00:04:29,550

So those are some of the
kinds of things I turned over

75

00:04:29,550 --> 00:04:35,580

to the Museum, along
with, I said money,

76

00:04:35,580 --> 00:04:40,960

a number of clean patches I had.

77

00:04:40,960 --> 00:04:44,220

What's interesting is
that the Seventh Day

78

00:04:44,220 --> 00:04:48,710

Adventists at Buchenwald were
the servants to the SS people.

79

00:04:48,710 --> 00:04:49,835

They used them as servants.

80

00:04:49,835 --> 00:04:53,040

81

00:04:53,040 --> 00:04:54,780

There were three
stone buildings,

82

00:04:54,780 --> 00:04:57,540

and they have
pictures of it, really

83

00:04:57,540 --> 00:05:04,620

sort of a good, middle-class
type of residence.

84

00:05:04,620 --> 00:05:08,620

And most of the officers
lived in one of them.

85

00:05:08,620 --> 00:05:12,600

And since I came late, I
didn't have a room for myself,

86

00:05:12,600 --> 00:05:16,260

so they gave me a whole house.

87

00:05:16,260 --> 00:05:23,340

And so I put up a cot and a
bed roll in one of the bedrooms

88

00:05:23,340 --> 00:05:27,660

upstairs and put
a lock and chain

89

00:05:27,660 --> 00:05:31,650

so I could have some security
in the room, my possessions

90

00:05:31,650 --> 00:05:32,415

and things.

91

00:05:32,415 --> 00:05:36,600

I had a little trunk

there with a few things.

92

00:05:36,600 --> 00:05:37,660

That's how I lived.

93

00:05:37,660 --> 00:05:40,260

Went down for breakfast
at the other house

94

00:05:40,260 --> 00:05:46,200

where the mess for our
units was taking place.

95

00:05:46,200 --> 00:05:51,610

So it was a very
busy period for me.

96

00:05:51,610 --> 00:05:54,850

And I was always under
stress because you

97

00:05:54,850 --> 00:06:02,380

had to outmaneuver the Germans,
the municipal authorities

98

00:06:02,380 --> 00:06:07,720

getting food, and constantly
looking, constantly

99

00:06:07,720 --> 00:06:12,870

searching for food and
clothing for our people.

100

00:06:12,870 --> 00:06:17,290

And that's why I never
got into the minutiae.

101

00:06:17,290 --> 00:06:19,860

Here, I was delighted
to see the Red Cross

102

00:06:19,860 --> 00:06:23,040

workers, delighted to see the

Joint Distribution Committee

103
00:06:23,040 --> 00:06:24,990
people, and give them jobs.

104
00:06:24,990 --> 00:06:29,580
And that was the way I
operated, and probably, it

105
00:06:29,580 --> 00:06:31,860
was a function of
the fact that I'd

106
00:06:31,860 --> 00:06:34,020
been in community organization.

107
00:06:34,020 --> 00:06:37,080
I'd worked with a lot
of different agencies,

108
00:06:37,080 --> 00:06:42,720
and I was able to
develop priorities

109
00:06:42,720 --> 00:06:44,550
on a community basis.

110
00:06:44,550 --> 00:06:50,700
And I felt that the interviews
that I gave originally,

111
00:06:50,700 --> 00:06:53,670
for example, what we
were down in Bethesda

112
00:06:53,670 --> 00:06:57,040
making the videotape,
here comes some fellow who

113
00:06:57,040 --> 00:06:59,400
was a soldier of
[INAUDIBLE] Army,

114

00:06:59,400 --> 00:07:01,290

and he'd visited a
concentration camp,

115

00:07:01,290 --> 00:07:05,610

and his testimony was, oh
my god, it was so terrible.

116

00:07:05,610 --> 00:07:09,120

I never saw anything worse
in my life, you know,

117

00:07:09,120 --> 00:07:09,940

stuff like that.

118

00:07:09,940 --> 00:07:13,950

Well, it makes good
copy, but you're not

119

00:07:13,950 --> 00:07:17,220

doing anything for the
good of the party in terms

120

00:07:17,220 --> 00:07:19,590

of the survivors.

121

00:07:19,590 --> 00:07:25,740

And I just couldn't talk
to these people who were

122

00:07:25,740 --> 00:07:28,470

survivors who wanted to go.

123

00:07:28,470 --> 00:07:35,040

They heard that they had their
sister in the Bergen-Belsen

124

00:07:35,040 --> 00:07:35,910

or some other place.

125

00:07:35,910 --> 00:07:38,760

And everybody wanted

to go everywhere,

126
00:07:38,760 --> 00:07:43,020
and we had no means of
sending them anywhere.

127
00:07:43,020 --> 00:07:46,270
Theoretically, they could
walk out of the camp,

128
00:07:46,270 --> 00:07:50,250
but they stayed around camp
because there was food there,

129
00:07:50,250 --> 00:07:52,980
and protection.

130
00:07:52,980 --> 00:07:56,730
And that's the
difference between

131
00:07:56,730 --> 00:07:59,560
the different personalities
of how they operate.

132
00:07:59,560 --> 00:08:02,310
I don't know how they
operated the other camps.

133
00:08:02,310 --> 00:08:06,030
It was a terrible experience.

134
00:08:06,030 --> 00:08:11,430
For about 30, 40 years or more,
I just couldn't talk about it.

135
00:08:11,430 --> 00:08:16,650
We visited Israel
on one occasion.

136
00:08:16,650 --> 00:08:19,410
I remember there
was an opportunity

137
00:08:19,410 --> 00:08:25,420
to visit the Vod Hashem there,
and I just couldn't do it.

138
00:08:25,420 --> 00:08:30,270
And I practically never
talked about Buchenwald.

139
00:08:30,270 --> 00:08:31,860
When did you start
talking about it?

140
00:08:31,860 --> 00:08:37,140
Well, when they were building
the Holocaust Museum.

141
00:08:37,140 --> 00:08:40,919
Of course, they knew from my
bringing over some objects

142
00:08:40,919 --> 00:08:43,860
and so forth that
I had been there.

143
00:08:43,860 --> 00:08:47,400
I had a call from
somebody on the staff who

144
00:08:47,400 --> 00:08:55,680
said that Station 9
wanted to interview me

145
00:08:55,680 --> 00:09:00,360
about the Holocaust,
and would I do it.

146
00:09:00,360 --> 00:09:03,720
And I said no just like that.

147
00:09:03,720 --> 00:09:06,810
My wife said I should
call them back.

148
00:09:06,810 --> 00:09:10,320
And she said, you have a
responsibility to society.

149
00:09:10,320 --> 00:09:11,530
You were there.

150
00:09:11,530 --> 00:09:15,450
You saw these things
and you can verify them.

151
00:09:15,450 --> 00:09:17,730
And so I said, all right.

152
00:09:17,730 --> 00:09:20,310
So I did, and so
I was interviewed

153
00:09:20,310 --> 00:09:26,490
by a young man from Channel 9
for about a half hour or so.

154
00:09:26,490 --> 00:09:28,640
The museum hadn't been open.

155
00:09:28,640 --> 00:09:34,110
It was in this process being
built, and it was put on TV.

156
00:09:34,110 --> 00:09:35,760
Well, we went out of town.

157
00:09:35,760 --> 00:09:39,260
I never did see that, but
friends of mine have seen this

158
00:09:39,260 --> 00:09:41,590
and just thought
it went very well.

159
00:09:41,590 --> 00:09:45,100

But after that, I was
able to talk about it.

160
00:09:45,100 --> 00:09:47,640
It was sort of like a catharsis.

161
00:09:47,640 --> 00:09:50,200
And sometimes my wife thinks
I talk too much about it,

162
00:09:50,200 --> 00:09:52,430
but that's neither
here nor there.

163
00:09:52,430 --> 00:09:55,050
So you've been talking about
it for about six or seven years

164
00:09:55,050 --> 00:09:55,650
now?

165
00:09:55,650 --> 00:09:57,410
Yeah, just about
that, since that time.

166
00:09:57,410 --> 00:10:00,670

167
00:10:00,670 --> 00:10:03,380
Well, no.

168
00:10:03,380 --> 00:10:04,470
The Museum opened in '93.

169
00:10:04,470 --> 00:10:07,370
Yeah, well, this
was from '93 on.

170
00:10:07,370 --> 00:10:07,870
Oh, I see.

171
00:10:07,870 --> 00:10:09,340

Yeah, so it was about
three years of time.

172
00:10:09,340 --> 00:10:11,590
Yeah, up to that time, I
couldn't talk about it.

173
00:10:11,590 --> 00:10:17,680
It was a very painful
experience for me

174
00:10:17,680 --> 00:10:19,920
and probably it was
painful than I realized.

175
00:10:19,920 --> 00:10:24,980

176
00:10:24,980 --> 00:10:28,460
You had to take a
professional attitude

177
00:10:28,460 --> 00:10:33,190
as to the pitiable
state of how people were

178
00:10:33,190 --> 00:10:35,260
and what was going on.

179
00:10:35,260 --> 00:10:39,440
And one of the things they
did-- and I have some pictures

180
00:10:39,440 --> 00:10:42,800
that were taken of that.

181
00:10:42,800 --> 00:10:46,930
Some time, oh, some
few weeks or months

182
00:10:46,930 --> 00:10:51,340
maybe after the
liberation, the inmates

183
00:10:51,340 --> 00:10:55,420
themselves, the prisoners
themselves put on a show.

184
00:10:55,420 --> 00:10:58,030
What they did is
some of the artists

185
00:10:58,030 --> 00:11:00,540
began to develop posters.

186
00:11:00,540 --> 00:11:03,670
Some had exhibits
of whipping chairs

187
00:11:03,670 --> 00:11:06,640
and other devices of torture.

188
00:11:06,640 --> 00:11:09,610
And they put them up at
different parts of the camp.

189
00:11:09,610 --> 00:11:11,650
And I took pictures of them.

190
00:11:11,650 --> 00:11:15,760
And why somebody doesn't
use that material

191
00:11:15,760 --> 00:11:20,170
because it was basically from
the experience of prisoners,

192
00:11:20,170 --> 00:11:26,450
for example, that one big sign,
"50,000 dead, Buchenwald."

193
00:11:26,450 --> 00:11:32,220
When we arrived here about
15,000 survivors more or less.

194

00:11:32,220 --> 00:11:35,610
And it was a terrible thing.

195
00:11:35,610 --> 00:11:40,780
And Buchenwald, really,
as far as camps go,

196
00:11:40,780 --> 00:11:44,620
it was mild compared
to what went on

197
00:11:44,620 --> 00:11:46,230
in these extermination camps.

198
00:11:46,230 --> 00:11:51,500

199
00:11:51,500 --> 00:11:53,740
As I said, and it
probably-- and Buchenwald

200
00:11:53,740 --> 00:11:57,410
was used from an
architectural standpoint.

201
00:11:57,410 --> 00:12:00,630
They used some of the
way, the layout and so on.

202
00:12:00,630 --> 00:12:02,850
But these, the camps
at Auschwitz and so

203
00:12:02,850 --> 00:12:06,500
on were many, many times larger.

204
00:12:06,500 --> 00:12:10,280
And they were really
efficiency systems

205
00:12:10,280 --> 00:12:13,520
of getting bodies
into the gas chambers,

206
00:12:13,520 --> 00:12:19,420
moving the bodies towards
the crematoria and so on.

207
00:12:19,420 --> 00:12:22,240
And it was just everything
done by wholesale a lot.

208
00:12:22,240 --> 00:12:25,190

209
00:12:25,190 --> 00:12:32,090
So that in some sense the
situation in Buchenwald was--

210
00:12:32,090 --> 00:12:33,800
well, it wasn't mild.

211
00:12:33,800 --> 00:12:37,910
It was-- there wasn't blood
flowing in the streets,

212
00:12:37,910 --> 00:12:40,580
literally, as it was
in the other place,

213
00:12:40,580 --> 00:12:43,880
although some terrible
things had happened there.

214
00:12:43,880 --> 00:12:49,820
Anybody looking at that wall
seeing these meat hooks, people

215
00:12:49,820 --> 00:12:54,800
who have in their torture were
scratching into the walls,

216
00:12:54,800 --> 00:12:57,920
digging into the walls and see
these grooves in the walls,

217
00:12:57,920 --> 00:13:00,410
you know, it doesn't
take a great stretch

218
00:13:00,410 --> 00:13:04,880
of the imagination to
think what had happened.

219
00:13:04,880 --> 00:13:08,770
And the prisoners used to
tell us what was going on.

220
00:13:08,770 --> 00:13:11,690
It was incredible.

221
00:13:11,690 --> 00:13:15,610
Of course, having been a science
and biology major and so on,

222
00:13:15,610 --> 00:13:17,690
I mean, being in
public health, I

223
00:13:17,690 --> 00:13:19,190
was probably a
little less squeamish

224
00:13:19,190 --> 00:13:21,530
than most people would be.

225
00:13:21,530 --> 00:13:25,580
But it was pretty bad,
pretty brutal, pretty brutal

226
00:13:25,580 --> 00:13:28,070
experience.

227
00:13:28,070 --> 00:13:31,720
And the gypsies, there were a
lot of gypsies incarcerated.

228
00:13:31,720 --> 00:13:33,422

I told you about
Seventh Day Adventists

229
00:13:33,422 --> 00:13:34,505
who were used as servants.

230
00:13:34,505 --> 00:13:37,680

231
00:13:37,680 --> 00:13:42,720
The gays had their
pink triangles.

232
00:13:42,720 --> 00:13:47,270
I don't know what
things happened to them.

233
00:13:47,270 --> 00:13:48,840
Were they held there as well?

234
00:13:48,840 --> 00:13:51,430
Oh, yeah, oh sure.

235
00:13:51,430 --> 00:13:53,730
Again, you know, that wasn't--

236
00:13:53,730 --> 00:13:58,140
Germans thought they were,
you know, worthless people .

237
00:13:58,140 --> 00:14:01,950
And they were segregated.

238
00:14:01,950 --> 00:14:06,090
And then you had
these various groups.

239
00:14:06,090 --> 00:14:08,640
Was there much interaction
between the groups?

240
00:14:08,640 --> 00:14:11,430

241

00:14:11,430 --> 00:14:14,940
were the Gypsies and the
Seventh Day Adventists

242

00:14:14,940 --> 00:14:15,810
interacting at all?

243

00:14:15,810 --> 00:14:20,820
Or were they mostly
kept in their own areas?

244

00:14:20,820 --> 00:14:23,190
Well, there'd be nothing
to keep them apart.

245

00:14:23,190 --> 00:14:27,960
You know, within the barbed
wire, the double rolled

246

00:14:27,960 --> 00:14:30,930
barbed wire, electrified
wire, you know,

247

00:14:30,930 --> 00:14:33,090
people could mill
around and probably did.

248

00:14:33,090 --> 00:14:37,500
No, I'm sure there
was conversation.

249

00:14:37,500 --> 00:14:41,680
Although, as I said, the
Russians, the communists

250

00:14:41,680 --> 00:14:45,430
had a hard inner core which
helped them to survive

251

00:14:45,430 --> 00:14:46,680
a little better than the rest.

252
00:14:46,680 --> 00:14:49,560
Because they were able to
seize things and control them.

253
00:14:49,560 --> 00:14:52,560

254
00:14:52,560 --> 00:14:56,370
And I suppose there were
some favored individuals who

255
00:14:56,370 --> 00:15:00,060
were being like trustees who,
you know, did the Nazi bidding

256
00:15:00,060 --> 00:15:01,590
and so on and so forth.

257
00:15:01,590 --> 00:15:02,760
That I don't know.

258
00:15:02,760 --> 00:15:04,245
But I was surprised
that happened.

259
00:15:04,245 --> 00:15:07,320

260
00:15:07,320 --> 00:15:13,680
But generally, the people were
fed about 600 calories a day.

261
00:15:13,680 --> 00:15:18,300
And that would enable
them to survive physically

262
00:15:18,300 --> 00:15:21,000
for about six months.

263
00:15:21,000 --> 00:15:25,890
If they became ill, of

course, they would die sooner.

264

00:15:25,890 --> 00:15:29,730

There was no
medications of any sort.

265

00:15:29,730 --> 00:15:31,020

And go ahead.

266

00:15:31,020 --> 00:15:34,590

When you came in, were you
conscious of how many calories

267

00:15:34,590 --> 00:15:35,910

they were being fed?

268

00:15:35,910 --> 00:15:38,370

And did you try
to slowly increase

269

00:15:38,370 --> 00:15:39,530

how much they were eating?

270

00:15:39,530 --> 00:15:42,090

Or, I mean, because
it could be--

271

00:15:42,090 --> 00:15:45,380

it could be more harmful
to eat too much right away.

272

00:15:45,380 --> 00:15:48,160

Were you conscious of that?

273

00:15:48,160 --> 00:15:53,790

Well, no, no, emphatically, no.

274

00:15:53,790 --> 00:15:58,710

Although I was conscious of
the problem, some of the people

275

00:15:58,710 --> 00:16:02,620

who were so debilitated
by starvation,

276
00:16:02,620 --> 00:16:06,360
they were put to a kind of
impromptu field hospital.

277
00:16:06,360 --> 00:16:08,070
And they tried to
revive them, you know,

278
00:16:08,070 --> 00:16:11,010
in terms of injecting
fluids and things.

279
00:16:11,010 --> 00:16:13,110
And some they did,
some they couldn't.

280
00:16:13,110 --> 00:16:17,430
But generally, it was
pretty tough going.

281
00:16:17,430 --> 00:16:19,080
Yeah, sure they [INAUDIBLE].

282
00:16:19,080 --> 00:16:26,580
But you've got four officers,
seven listed personnel.

283
00:16:26,580 --> 00:16:31,260
You know, you can't spoon
feed a starving population.

284
00:16:31,260 --> 00:16:33,900
No, you had to take
things since they

285
00:16:33,900 --> 00:16:35,130
had to regulate themselves.

286
00:16:35,130 --> 00:16:36,670
You couldn't do it.

287
00:16:36,670 --> 00:16:38,840
It was impossible to do it.

288
00:16:38,840 --> 00:16:41,310
And the name of the
game of survival.

289
00:16:41,310 --> 00:16:44,220
And the only thing
we could provide

290
00:16:44,220 --> 00:16:48,270
is protection and try to
get food into the camp

291
00:16:48,270 --> 00:16:51,160
as much as we could.

292
00:16:51,160 --> 00:16:56,790
And just imagine, you
know, a handful of people

293
00:16:56,790 --> 00:17:01,040
running a tremendous
system like that.

294
00:17:01,040 --> 00:17:03,460
Fortunately, you know,
there was an ongoing system

295
00:17:03,460 --> 00:17:08,069
of cooks and bakers and
warehouse people so on.

296
00:17:08,069 --> 00:17:13,710

297
00:17:13,710 --> 00:17:15,750
Somebody showed their
appreciation to me

298

00:17:15,750 --> 00:17:19,230
by giving me, apparently,
a leather coat,

299
00:17:19,230 --> 00:17:22,020
a short coat that
was worn by, I guess,

300
00:17:22,020 --> 00:17:26,589
people on these sea patrols.

301
00:17:26,589 --> 00:17:28,640
And it was a high status thing.

302
00:17:28,640 --> 00:17:30,990
The communists all
had them, you know?

303
00:17:30,990 --> 00:17:33,115
And one of the communists
gave me or somebody else

304
00:17:33,115 --> 00:17:34,740
gave me a coat
[INAUDIBLE] they gave me

305
00:17:34,740 --> 00:17:38,010
a coat which they appreciated
the fact that here I

306
00:17:38,010 --> 00:17:41,655
was, you know, going
all out on their behalf

307
00:17:41,655 --> 00:17:45,750
irregardless of nationality,
religion, or what have you,

308
00:17:45,750 --> 00:17:47,890
you know?

309
00:17:47,890 --> 00:17:54,490
So I suspect, I talked

about the Czech fellow who,

310
00:17:54,490 --> 00:17:58,800
wanted me to partake his
hospitality, his family, yeah,

311
00:17:58,800 --> 00:18:00,327
I think the
prisoners appreciated

312
00:18:00,327 --> 00:18:01,410
what we were trying to do.

313
00:18:01,410 --> 00:18:05,630
Because they were so
eager to find food for us

314
00:18:05,630 --> 00:18:07,740
and tell us where it was.

315
00:18:07,740 --> 00:18:12,320
This was our own
information outfit.

316
00:18:12,320 --> 00:18:15,580
They were part-- we were
all working together.

317
00:18:15,580 --> 00:18:18,690
And they knew we were
using our authority

318
00:18:18,690 --> 00:18:22,365
to seize goods and
products on their behalf.

319
00:18:22,365 --> 00:18:27,480

320
00:18:27,480 --> 00:18:29,490
I think there was a
good deal of conflict

321

00:18:29,490 --> 00:18:32,970

among the different groups
for various reasons.

322

00:18:32,970 --> 00:18:37,560

But they were able to
mix and move around.

323

00:18:37,560 --> 00:18:41,280

But I suspect that they continue
to stay in their barracks,

324

00:18:41,280 --> 00:18:43,640

which were pretty miserable.

325

00:18:43,640 --> 00:18:46,290

Although they probably weren't
as crowded because, you know,

326

00:18:46,290 --> 00:18:48,660

almost immediately,
all the Germans left,

327

00:18:48,660 --> 00:18:51,600

all the Allied people left.

328

00:18:51,600 --> 00:18:55,980

We found records that indicated
some number of American fliers

329

00:18:55,980 --> 00:18:57,720

had been picked up.

330

00:18:57,720 --> 00:18:59,600

And their records of--

331

00:18:59,600 --> 00:19:04,260

these records were all
destroyed by the looting

332

00:19:04,260 --> 00:19:06,690

by the communists and so on.

333
00:19:06,690 --> 00:19:08,460
But we did know there
were some Americans

334
00:19:08,460 --> 00:19:13,620
and some other allied
military personnel.

335
00:19:13,620 --> 00:19:16,290
Probably as many of
them died, I don't know.

336
00:19:16,290 --> 00:19:18,840
We have no way of knowing.

337
00:19:18,840 --> 00:19:21,750
There were records
but, again, we

338
00:19:21,750 --> 00:19:27,090
didn't have any way of knowing
of handling this stuff.

339
00:19:27,090 --> 00:19:29,100
It was just beyond
our capability.

340
00:19:29,100 --> 00:19:30,780
It was a small team.

341
00:19:30,780 --> 00:19:32,580
And we had a limited function.

342
00:19:32,580 --> 00:19:37,050
Fortunately, our team
had a good experience

343
00:19:37,050 --> 00:19:39,540
running displaced
persons camps that

344

00:19:39,540 --> 00:19:44,330
particularly enlisted personnel
and everybody knew what to do.

345
00:19:44,330 --> 00:19:48,330
And everybody was, you
know, was self-operators.

346
00:19:48,330 --> 00:19:52,290
This one did that this, this one
did this, so forth and so on.

347
00:19:52,290 --> 00:19:56,580
My only job was to make sure
that there was good morale.

348
00:19:56,580 --> 00:19:59,790

349
00:19:59,790 --> 00:20:03,720
For example, at a time
when we were in Belgium,

350
00:20:03,720 --> 00:20:05,390
all the officers and
enlisted personnel

351
00:20:05,390 --> 00:20:08,460
ate at one long table,
Officers at one end,

352
00:20:08,460 --> 00:20:09,810
enlisted on the other.

353
00:20:09,810 --> 00:20:13,380
But we had some of
our Ukrainian girls

354
00:20:13,380 --> 00:20:18,960
who were part of our
cooks, cooking team.

355
00:20:18,960 --> 00:20:21,210

They would serve
the officers first.

356
00:20:21,210 --> 00:20:24,000
And enlisted men would
get served secondly.

357
00:20:24,000 --> 00:20:28,590
And so on of the ringleaders
of among the enlisted personnel

358
00:20:28,590 --> 00:20:31,320
came to me and said,
we just don't like this

359
00:20:31,320 --> 00:20:32,340
and so forth and so on.

360
00:20:32,340 --> 00:20:35,490
So I said, well, I said,
the only thing I could do

361
00:20:35,490 --> 00:20:37,380
is have them serve you first.

362
00:20:37,380 --> 00:20:40,410

363
00:20:40,410 --> 00:20:45,060
And when all efforts that you
can have all the seconds you

364
00:20:45,060 --> 00:20:49,740
want and only when all the
seconds have been tended to

365
00:20:49,740 --> 00:20:52,250
will they offer the
officers seconds and so on.

366
00:20:52,250 --> 00:20:54,270
And that's the way
it was, you know?

367

00:20:54,270 --> 00:20:58,450

And I got the liquor rations,
PX rations and stuff like that.

368

00:20:58,450 --> 00:21:01,050

So the morale was pretty
good among the men.

369

00:21:01,050 --> 00:21:04,410

But they were often--

370

00:21:04,410 --> 00:21:05,940

they were all individuals.

371

00:21:05,940 --> 00:21:07,350

They were all hardworking.

372

00:21:07,350 --> 00:21:09,210

They all did their job.

373

00:21:09,210 --> 00:21:14,990

And we all had a good time,
you know, despite the stress

374

00:21:14,990 --> 00:21:17,450

that we all were under.

375

00:21:17,450 --> 00:21:20,935

And that's pretty much how
it worked, how we worked it.

376

00:21:20,935 --> 00:21:23,640

OK, is there anything else--

377

00:21:23,640 --> 00:21:24,810

I don't know.

378

00:21:24,810 --> 00:21:26,660

Well, I suppose there is.

379

00:21:26,660 --> 00:21:29,530

I could talk forever
on the subject.

380

00:21:29,530 --> 00:21:35,940

But it was a
traumatic experience.

381

00:21:35,940 --> 00:21:38,720

And I would just as soon not
have gone through it, you know,

382

00:21:38,720 --> 00:21:42,050

in retrospect.

383

00:21:42,050 --> 00:21:43,710

OK, well, I thank you.

384

00:21:43,710 --> 00:21:46,170

Well, you're very welcome.

385

00:21:46,170 --> 00:21:51,050

This concludes the USHMM
interview with Milton Shurr.

386

00:21:51,050 --> 00:22:09,000