

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ALBERT MILLER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Philip G. Solomon
Date: October 14, 1994

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Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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AM - Albert Miller [interviewee]

PS - Philip G. Solomon [interviewer]

Date: October 14, 1994

Tape one, side one:

PS: This is Philip Solomon of the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College, interviewing Mr. Albert Miller. The date is October 14th, 1994. Mr. Miller, can you tell us where in Europe and in what unit you were serving prior to your capture?

AM: I was with the 303rd Bomb Group, 358th Squadron of the First Air Force located in Mulsworth [phonetic], England. We flew out of there with the 41st bomber wing and we flew 35 missions before we were shot down.

PS: Starting about what date, Al?

AM: August the 4th was my first mission to the Pas-de-Calais in France. We hit some of the robot bomb bases there. And we were shot down on November 21st, 1944, 35 missions later.

PS: Yeah. So you flew combat strategic flights August, September, October, until...

AM: Bombing.

PS: Yeah, November. Now during this period, Al, your targets were mostly, this was, in other words, D-day was June the 6th, 1944, so you were flying a few months.

AM: June the 6th, 1944.

PS: June, yeah, yeah. So your flights started, your combat missions, roughly about two months after the invasion of the French coast of Normandy.

AM: August the 4th.

PS: Yeah.

AM: Approximately [unclear] weeks later.

PS: Yeah, and at that point the, I guess the British, Canadians and Americans and French had advanced pretty close to the German border, I would think, at that point in time.

AM: Well they had already crossed the Maginot Line if I'm not mistaken...

PS: Yeah.

AM: You know, the Siegfried Line. I think Patton was pretty well into Germany by that time.

PS: Yeah.

AM: And the incidents that occurred prior to that that caused a lot of problems for the United, for the Allied forces, was when McNair was involved with that smoke screen that was laid down as a barrier between friendly lines and the enemy lines. And the wind blew...

PS: Yeah.

AM: The smoke screen. And unfortunately our bombers hit our own lines.

PS: During the period, Al, that you were, between the time that you started your flights, combat missions, and when you were shot down, did you during that period observe anything from the air that would have given you or any members of your crew some evidence of the existence of concentration camps?

AM: Well I think I made it clear that we flew at approximately twenty to twenty-five thousand feet, or probably higher at times, depending on the weather. I had very little opportunity to look down below. We were concerned mainly with fighters. I as the radio operator, discharged chaff, which was a metalized strips that combated ack-ack, their cameras and their instruments to pick us up. But other than that I had no knowledge whatsoever of anything like that.

PS: Your action on the B-17 bomber, was it, you were navigator? Bombardier?

AM: Radio operator gunner.

PS: Yeah. Do you know, now neither you or anyone in your crew had ever observed anything that would have given you any kind of inkling of what was going on in Germany? Out of your base, were there any reconnaissance flights, like photo reconnaissance flights being flown?

AM: We were a bomber group, Phil, and what we got as far as observation was in our briefings, we were told how well we hit the target, how well we missed it. But there were no other reconnaissance that was reported to us.

PS: Yeah. And you were, there was never anything mentioned about targets to hit or targets to beware of, that is a possible existence of concentration camps?

AM: It never entered into...

PS: Either to--hit approaches, railroad tracks? There was a pattern I understand, a pattern that showed up, you know, in all concentra--the pattern of railroad tracks going in? There was nothing said about the existence of this, either to go after it? There was never a mission to your knowledge?

AM: Marshaling yards and railroad yards, yes.

PS: Yeah.

AM: Came under target, our strategic bombing. But nothing that concerned concentration camps or...

PS: Right. And during this period, either before your shipment overseas to England or prior to that, did you have knowledge, did you hear of the existence of what later became known as the Holocaust?

AM: Well, I was a civilian until March, or until April the 26th, 1943. And we had exposure through different speakers and filming that was brought to our synagogue and to our Jewish groups as to what was going on as far as they had knowledge of.

PS: With this knowledge then, when you flew, when you started to fly combat, and always the possibility of being captured, being shot down and captured, you carried, did you carry anything that would identify you as being Jewish?

AM: I carried my dog tags, of course, and I insisted that I would keep them. Because we were briefed that if we were caught without any identification, we could be held as spies. We could be held as political prisoners. So I did not give them up at all. I kept them right through my imprisonment.

PS: And during the period that you were flying combat, and knowing that if shot down and captured alive you would be identified as being Jewish, did you give very much thought to the results, the consequences of being a Jewish prisoner in the hands of the Germans?

AM: I did, well I gave it thought. We all did, what would happen to us and how we would fare. But if I can take a moment now to give you an incident.

PS: Yeah, sure.

AM: It never occurred to me that I would be identified as Jewish and stamped as such and handled accordingly. I thought I was an American soldier doing my duty as they had people who were captured by our Allied forces. So what happened, when I was picked up after being shot down, we were brought to what they call a *Dulag*¹ *loop* [phonetic] for interrogation. And as I sat in front of the off--well it was just a field, a sergeant, Feldwebel as they call them, who interviewed me, and he started to poke questions at me as to what we were flying and what bombs we were carrying, other military information that he sought, and I kept repeating, "My name is Albert Miller, technical sergeant U.S. Air Force. My serial number is 35777588." And I didn't go beyond that. And he kept poking and firing the questions at me. And he got madder all the time as I refused to answer them until with a sudden shot, with a mighty big, he was a big six-foot-five man, he hit the desk with a terrific shot and I almost fell out of my chair. But he said, "Do you know Sergeant Miller, we do not like the Jewish people here! And we will give you to the Gestapo if we don't get the information that we want." I said, "You can do whatever you want, threaten me, whatever you want. My name is Albert Miller, technical sergeant," and so forth. And that's as far as I went. And that's the only threat I ever had as a Jew.

PS: You were shot down over Germany, Al?

AM: Our target was Merseburg, Germany. And it was synthetic oil plants. We had dropped our bombs, followed the information off the target, and then we were hit. We were hit over Merseburg, and then we limped westward towards the Allied lines by ourselves. We fell out of the formation. We were down to about 14,000 feet and our navigator who was, actually the bombardier who was flying as navigator, made a mistake in his navigation and he took us right over the city of Frankfurt, Germany. 14,000 feet over the city of Frankfurt. It's like being over Philadelphia with 300 anti-aircraft guns firing at one plane. That knocked us out of the sky, and that's when we were down and captured.

PS: Was your crew captured intact? How many members were there?

AM: Well, there were nine members flying. As I recall, when I was picked up and marched to a shelter, an underground shelter where we were held all and banded

¹Possible: Dulag acronym for *Deutsches Untersuchungs Lager* - German interrogation camp.

together, I recall seeing about six of our members. And I was told that our ball turret gunner never was recovered. Our tail gunner came through, but they didn't know where he was. They saw his chute open. And the third was our navigator, who, as I was told, when he left the plane as it was falling and breaking up, pulled his chute too quick. The plane got ahold of his chute and burned him up and he fell to the ground. And the proof was that when I was interrogated, his dog tags were laying on the interrogator's desk right in front of me. William Coucher, New York City.

PS: When you hit the ground, were you first recovered by German civilians or German military?

AM: It's a very interesting story. I came down in a field behind some farmhouses. There's a town called Oberursel, right near Frankfurt, Germany. I landed in a muddy field. It had rained a day or two before that. And the chute fell all around me. I struggled. I had a terrific wound. I was hit across the forehead. And I bled profusely, but it had coagulated and caked up on me. And I staggered to my feet. As I turned around to see where I was, and I looked around to see, try to get my bearings a little bit, I saw a crowd of civilians coming up with sticks in their hands, and starting to throw rocks and stones at me. And I turned around with the idea of running away from them as fast as I could. And there were three German soldiers coming up towards me with their rifles and their bayonets on. And they surrounded me and kept the crowd away. And from that point on they marched me to this shelter and then we went on to the *Dulag* and on to the *Stalag* [*Stammlager*, POW camp for enlisted men].

PS: Were you alone at that point? Were any other members of your crew...

AM: I was alone when I was captured.

PS: Yeah.

AM: They had all strung out all over the sky. I didn't know where they were or if they made it. But when I was marched to this shelter, we came around what was a little abutment, or a little wall I think. And I walked right into these six buddies of mine.

PS: Right.

AM: All sitting there with very disgruntled, frustrated expressions, looked very scared. And I looked at them and we hugged each other and then kissed each other.

PS: Yeah. Were there any other Jewish boys in that group?

AM: Not in my group.

PS: Yeah. You jumped at roughly about 14,000 feet?

AM: We were shot up, blew out of the sky completely.

PS: Yeah.

AM: And God was with me all the way.

PS: So as you descended in the parachute, could you observe your other, the other members of the crew?

AM: Prior to being shot up as badly as we were, I could see chutes that they had left the plane...

PS: Oh.

AM: And that were all over the air. I could see about five or six chutes. But then all of a sudden all hell broke loose and fragments of the plane were flying up at me. I guess some of the *ack-ack* gun fire was all around me. And I got hit and was pretty dazed. I just held on to the shroud lines as tightly as I could. And as I came down, I was warned not to, to dodge whatever trees might be coming, I might be coming down to, because I could get hit in the groin and get hit pretty badly. So I started to pull up my legs with that thought in mind, but the ground was coming up so fast. Depth perception absolutely is nil when you're in that position. It came up so fast I just straightened my legs out, hit the ground. And I had my air boots on which are this thick. I hit the ground with a thud and a thing, and I just fell backwards and then rolled forward. And it took me a minute or two to pull myself together to see what was going on, as I said. I got rid of the chute all around me. And I started looking around me. And I saw the people.

PS: Had you ever parachuted before?

AM: Never.

PS: Either forced or just in...

AM: Never.

PS: Practice?

AM: Never. This was the first experience.

PS: So really the three members of the German, they were *Wehrmacht*? German Army...

AM: They were German military, and they came up, they actually protected me from the crowd. And then in their German they said "*Haben Sie Pistole?*" which meant do I have a pistol?

PS: Yeah, right.

AM: And I said, "*Nein, nein, nein.*" And he said, "*Kommen Sie, kommen Sie, mit mir.*" [Come with me.] And they marched us, as I said, they marched me to this shelter.

PS: And it was there that you met your, what, six other members of your...

AM: I met my buddies from the...

PS: The crew?

AM: The did I say the ball turret gunner wasn't there? The bombardier wasn't there, and the waist gunner wasn't.

PS: They were both officers and...

AM: The bombardier was an officer. The other ones, the ball turret gunner was a staff sergeant, and the waist gunner was a staff.

PS: Then, from that point on, now if you would care to tell us a little bit about the processing, the procedure. At what point were you--did the subject of religion come up?

AM: Well, when we were taken to--we were at this shelter. They finally gathered us together with the remnants of our parachutes, which they put into a wheelbarrow. And

our engineer, who was a technical sergeant, was--his shoes came off. He was ordered to push that wheelbarrow through the muddy streets. There was a little snow around and ice. But they are muddy, rocky streets. And he had to push that wheelbarrow in his bare feet.

PS: How far was it from that point of that, to your point of interrogation and...

AM: I would say it was two miles. He pushed that, and he was staggering and falling over. So I went over to him and tried to help him a little bit. The, one of the guards who was walking with us, one of the German guards that is, took the butt of his rifle and hit me across the back and said, "*Geh weg!*" which meant of course, "Get away from him. Let him push it himself." But he struggled through and he got this chute there, not that it meant anything. I don't know what they did with it. But it was about a two-mile walk. We got there into the place of interrogation. They walked us in there, stood us around for a few minutes, and then they put us each in a separate, solit--room in solitary. And then we were called in for interrogation little by little, one by one.

PS: At that point when they marched you the few miles to the point of interrogation, had many German civilians gathered out of curiosity?

AM: They were all along the roadways throwing stones at us and spitting at us and calling out the German curse names. "*Schweinehund! Tot,*" [dead] which of course you know...

PS: You [unclear].

AM: And it was not a pleasant thing but we struggled through it and...

PS: And you feel had it not been for the German military that they probably would have attacked you and God knows what could have happened.

AM: Because they had sticks and big clubs and they had rocks. After all, we had just bombed their homes! Of course, it was in the Merseburg area, but it was an enemy plane. And look how long they had been undergoing that steady bombing between the British at night and the American and Allies during the day. So they were pretty well upset, I would say.

PS: Al, you say the town was Merseburg? That was your target?

AM: Merseburg was our target, yes.

PS: Yeah.

AM: The synthetic oil plants in Merseburg...

PS: Could you spell that for us, Al?

AM: M-E-R-S-E-B-E-R-G [Merseburg]

PS: Yeah.

AM: Merseburg.

PS: And you were shot down over, in a town close to Frankfurt.

AM: Frankfurt am Main. It was the big town of Frankfurt.

PS: Yeah.

AM: It's one of the metropolises in Germany.

PS: Yeah. So, where you had the interrogation, can you repeat to the points of, in your interrogation the first time that religion was mentioned, was when the sergeant, the interrogator, he was speaking English, of course, right? And he made mention of the fact that you were, that he knew that you were Jewish, right?

AM: I had my dog tags with me.

PS: Yeah. And his, he made threats to you which you ignored as far as acceding to his commands. Then from there, Al, the other members of your crew who parachuted along with you were in other rooms within the same building. Was your group then rejoined after interrogation?

AM: No, we were--I was in solitary confinement for eleven days.

PS: Well, at that same building?

AM: Same place, yes. What their system apparently was, was to put us through these pretty rough military people who were not officers and not refined to a point that they could talk with a little bit of diplomacy. They were just rough. They were challenging us and they, at least me, and they threatened me with that one incident there where they would turn me over to the Gestapo if I didn't reveal. But of course I stuck to my guns come what may, and about four or five days after that, they had me taken into an office where I could see it was a far different thing, where it was an officer, a Major. And he sat in an elegant office there, and he offered me a drink, and he spoke to me like a gentleman. And he says, "Sergeant, we know that you have a daughter that you have never seen. We know that you have a lovely family. And I know you want to get back to see them as quickly as you can. And being a prisoner, the possibility of repatriation is very great, and all we want is a little cooperation. And if you can tell me what your bomb load was, what your original target was, at what height you would attack that, drop the load, bomb." Then he asked a few more questions like that. I says, "Major, you're a gentleman, the first gentleman I met in Germany," I said, "but I cannot reveal anything." I am technical sergeant Albert Miller and my serial number is so-and-so. And that's as far as I can go." And he tried again and again, but after two or three days he let it go. And he says, "Sergeant, you'll go back to your room and then we'll see what develops." And that's the last I saw of him or any other interrogator. From that point on, about, as I said, eleven days elapsed. And we were all brought together into one big room. And [unclear]...

PS: Oh, this was your crew.

AM: Our crew and...

PS: Yeah.

AM: Other captives.

PS: Oh, oh.

AM: And I could see our crew. I could see some other fellows from the group who were shot down. And from that point on they had sought--but one of the most thrilling things that I encountered at that particular meeting--is it O.K. to go on?

PS: Go on, yeah.

AM: Was a limey, one of the English--apparently an officer of an English crew--who addressed us. And he says, "Gentlemen, I want you to realize that you are Allied soldiers. And these son-of-a-bitches cannot touch you or harm you in any way within their laws of the Red Cross, Geneva Convention, etc., etc. So I want you to realize that and keep your strength. Keep your face up. Keep your head up. Show these sons-of-a-bitches that we're gonna beat the hell out of 'em!" It was a [unclear] speech.

PS: And yet, despite that assurance...

AM: Right, with all the Jerries [Germans] standing around there, "We'll show these bastards!"

PS: And yet Hitler, I think it was after the bombing of Dresden, the saturated bombing of Dresden, where Hitler actually gave out the order that all airmen held captive be executed.

AM: I couldn't, couldn't relate to that. I really wou--probably at the time I was a captive.

PS: Oh this is, yeah.

AM: We were liberated May the 1st by the Russians. So I--whatever that time was around.

PS: Yeah, well this was right after the saturated bombing of Dresden, when Hitler enraged, gave the order that all, I think, all airmen held captive be executed. And I think bef--one of, I think, was it Himmler, who refused to carry out the order because the Germans had just been, I believe, pushed back at the Battle of the Bulge and they were afraid...

AM: I was a P.O.W. at that time.

PS: Yeah, yeah. Now, you were then, we go back to Sunday where you were all assembled and the British officer...

AM: Yeah.

PS: Oh, first Al, was this a headquarters of *Luftwaffe* or German Army?

AM: Well, apparently it was of the *Luftwaffe*, because we were all airmen. As I say, the town was Oberursel. And it was just outside of Frankfurt. And it was from that point on that we were sent up to the final *Stalag* up in the Pomeranian, or near the Polish border.

PS: You were sent as a group?

AM: Well, they sent groups at a time.

PS: Yeah.

AM: It was by railroad. And we were placed into these railroad cars and, of course, they had a load of men. There was not enough room for them to sit or lay or stand comfortably, so we did the best we could. And we laid down on the floor and they had little shelves up. Some of us laid up there. And one on top of the other until we got to the town of Wetzlar, which was a processing center, at which point they took us out and they gave

us food and they gave us clean clothing and permitted us to take a shower and clean up. And from there we went to our final...

PS: How many days, how long was it, the, were you...

AM: That was at least a four day trip.

PS: Four days on the...

AM: At least for four days, on the train.

PS: On the train.

AM: And that was going to the *Stalag*. The trip out of there was a lot worse.

PS: During that period, they were not, they were like boxcars and...

AM: Well, they just--the train that took us up there were regular passenger trains.

PS: Oh.

AM: It had the compartments that you, you know, you probably are acquainted with from the European style of compartment.

PS: Yeah, yeah.

AM: And the aisleway and the compartments. And we, as I said, piled in four or five, six in the compartments and on the shelves and on the floors and the walkway outside, and did the best we could to make ourselves comfortable.

PS: Were they officers and enlisted men together?

AM: Our men, yeah. Our men were all officers and enlisted men.

PS: Yeah.

AM: Then when we got to Wetzlar we were separated.

PS: Were there any other Jewish prisoners to your, were you aware of any others who were Jewish?

AM: I didn't have a chance to.

PS: Yeah.

AM: To really, to go into, no, I never did. I knew, of course, in the prison camps where we were, interesting stories. And it is, a coincidence is that I'm gonna meet one of them tomorrow down at Baltimore where he's staying in a nursing home. I'm going down and meet with him and his family, which we have done. We've been seeing each other for forty years or more.

PS: He was with you in the prison camp or...

AM: Yes.

PS: Part of your crew...

AM: He was there in the *Stalag*.

PS: Oh, oh.

AM: I met him there in the, a very interesting story there, too.

PS: Also Air Force? He was Air Force?

AM: Yeah, he flew three missions.

PS: Oh.

AM: He got caught. His parachute landed in the tree! And he rolled over, a big tank with 155 mm gun pointed right at him! And they got out and they said, "Hey, for you the *Krieg* [war] is over!"

PS: They wish they had been in the same position, I bet. [tape off then on] So Al, you're now in the *Stalag*. Was this strictly for Air Force prisoners?

AM: Air Force prisoners.

PS: Yeah. Officers and enlisted men who...

AM: It was *Stalag* Number Four, if I re--yeah.

PS: And the area was in Poland, you say?

AM: Grossye-Tychów if you know the area. It's in the Pomeranian section of Germany, north of Stettin, up near the Polish border.

PS: Could you possibly spell the...

AM: The, Grossye-Tychów?

PS: Yeah.

AM: G-R-O-S-S-Y-E, hyphen, T-Y-C-H-O-W, Grossye-Tychów [phonetic]. And then they had another name they referred to on occasion. It's Kiefehyde [phonetic], K-I-E-F-E-H-Y-D-E, Kiefehyde.

PS: Now that was still November of 1944, right? No that was...

AM: Yeah, well, it was 11 days after the...

PS: Oh, right.

AM: 21st. It was approaching December 1st.

PS: And the war ended May the 8th, 1945. So you then were held captive through November, December, January, February, March, April and May. Now, during that period, were you in the one prison camp the entire time?

AM: No. We were taken up there, and we were there through the early part of January. At that time the Russians were moving in into the area and the threat of them overrunning our camp was very great so that they, the German hierarchy, informed us that we would have to leave the camp and be taken to another camp. So it was one very bitter cold day, I think around January the 10th, the 12th, somewhere around there. And the snow was up to here. And they marched us out and lined us up, and then they marched us--with dogs as our accompanying us to the railroad station which was, give or take, about a mile away where we were, at which point we were assigned a car a little group in front of each car. These were the freight cars, what they referred to as the forty-and-eights.

PS: Oh, forty-and-eights, yeah.

AM: Yeah.

PS: Forty men...

AM: Forty men or eight horses.

PS: Yeah, eight horses.

AM: And we were lined up in front of them. And then each of us--and then they were--they gave us a Red Cross parcel, one for every eight guys. One, it was a ten pound

parcel, which normally we were getting one full parcel when we were in the camp. One for every eight guys. So this had to be distri--whacked up in [unclear]. [tape off then on] When we were given them, we were told to get into the car. So they had a little step up into the car, and we got into the car, and they kept coming into the car. Now these cars, forty men? There was about 55, 58 men piled into it. You couldn't sit down. We were standing up. So one of the guys says, "Why don't we sit down?" So where you gonna sit? We were in those cars for four days and five nights. One bucket among fifty-some men, one bucket. You want to take a leak, they have a little whatchyamacallems, wired windows in the corners of the car. You take a leak into a, one of the cans from the Red Cross [unclear] they had the powdered milk, which, Klim we used to call it, reverse of milk.

PS: Yeah.

AM: And we emptied it into a little container, some sort, and then we'd take a leak into the can and throw it out the window.

PS: Out the...

AM: But the guys were sitting, we were standing. You couldn't move away.

PS: And this was four days of...

Tape one, side two:

PS: This is Phil Solomon interviewing Mr. Albert Miller for the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College. This is tape one, side two. Mr. Miller, we were discussing your trip in the forty-and-eight cars, forty-and-eight, the expression used, I think, well, during World War I when most of the troop transport was by railroad. Now this was what time of the year? You say you were in...

AM: Just around January the 10th.

PS: So it was cold.

AM: Cold, very cold. And the snow was piled up.

PS: And naturally in these cars there was no heat.

AM: No heat.

PS: So you suffered...

AM: Sure, we had our coats on and we huddled against each other. It was interesting. Now referring to our tags or to our references regards Jewish, in *Yiddishkeit* and all that, I have the tendency to sing. And some of my buddies loved to sing. So we sang a few songs on the way, "Show Me The Way To Go Home" and things like that. We were about two days out. We were running out of material more or less. So I said, "I'm gonna sing, *Yiddische Mama*." The guy said to me, "Are you crazy? *Yiddische Mama* among all these? They'll break open the doors and take you out and shoot you." I says, "Let them shoot." Then all the gentile guys around said, "You want to sing *Yiddische Mama*, you sing it! And don't give a shit for any of them!" Those bastards. I did. I sang it, and it was just great.

PS: Right. Did anyone join in with you and...

AM: Well my friend Moe Friedman with me to visit and then there was Marty Silverstein from Brooklyn. He was the one guy that said, "Sh-," he said, "should shoot these guys," I mean, "Sing for these bastards. Let them know that we can laugh right in their faces! Come on baby! Sing it for me!"

PS: There were no guards within the car itself?

AM: No, there were not. It was horrible conditions.

PS: Were you fed? Did they stop...

AM: Only the Red Cross parcel that we had because it was those four days. We got to a marshaling yards [phonetic] on the way. We were going, heading for a place called Barth. It's out on the Baltic, on a peninsula jutting out into the Baltic, just north of Berlin. And that's where we were heading. So on the way about two days out we came into a marshaling yards [phonetic]. And we begged, we hollered, we pleaded. "We got to take a crap! We want to get out of these cars for a few minutes! Leave us have a little breath of fresh air!" And finally they stopped the car, and they let us out--in full view of all the citizens of the village--and they said, "That's your toilet. You wanna go? Right there. Whatever we had to do, we did it right there.

PS: Al, going back to the few months you spent in the *Stalag*, your original point, during that period, you saw no Jewish prisoners who were treated other than, who were segregated or sent elsewhere? To your knowledge, there was no segregation? No Jewish prisoners who were removed and sent elsewhere?

AM: Not at this first *Stalag*. But when we got to the second one, and we were assigned our barracks, when we looked around we saw certain people that we can see, and we asked what was happening. We asked a few of the people that were close. The guards sometimes were a little friendly, just like you have a foreigner here. So he was a little friendly. [tape off then on] And he would tell us, "There is another camp which we are preparing for the time when we want to separate the Jewish prisoners of war from the others. It's not occupied as yet, but we are preparing for it." And that's as far as I knew about segregation or anything like that.

PS: That was told to you by a...

AM: A Jerry guard.

PS: A Jerry guard.

AM: Yeah.

PS: But as far as you know, it was never carried out?

AM: It never materialized. It never came about.

PS: And you did know of the presence of two, three or four other Jewish prisoners besides yourself?

AM: Oh yeah, Moe Friedman, as I said. Well Marty Silverstein went someplace else. But Moe was with me all the way through. And...

PS: [tape off then on] Al, going back to your period in the first *Stalag*, which was November, December, through January, your own personal experience and your observation, do you think that the Germans adhered reasonably well to the terms of the Geneva Convention?

AM: Concerning me, I...

PS: Yeah.

AM: Have no fault with that at all, because we were handled accordingly. According to how the transportation was bringing in the Red Cross parcels, which, as I said, one time was one package per man, which was about ten pounds of food and assorted items. But as the transportation was being shot up, and an example is when we were on the train being transported from one place to another, they would pull the trains in under a tunnel while an air raid was in progress. So, while that was all taking place, the food parcels were dwindling down to a point where we were very bad off. We just had a small share of a package among ten, fifteen men. And we used to raid the officers', the German officers' commissary. Outside of the commissary were potato peelings that they had put out of there from their kitchen. We used to raid them and bring buckets of it back to our barrack, wash them up, clean them up, and salvage the peelings as best we could for food. Other than that,

we got one bowl of what they call *Ersatz* [substitute] soup through the day, and maybe two pieces of black bread.

PS: So you really depended on the Red Cross packages.

AM: Absolutely. Oh, absolutely.

PS: How often, you say a ten-pound package, per...

AM: Ten-pound package of assorted foods...

PS: Yeah.

AM: Like, well let me try to think, I have a...

PS: Were the foods mainly for the purpose of subsistence? They, I mean it wasn't like pleasure food, like candies or fruits or...

AM: Well, there were some little delicacies in there, and smoke supplies. In one package you'd find a pipe maybe, a package of tobacco, when we were getting individual packages. This is a log.

PS: Oh, yeah.

AM: Do you want to hear more about this now?

PS: Oh yeah, sure.

AM: This is a log. I was, at the first *Stalag* I became acquainted with some British prisoners of war who were taken at Dunkirk...

PS: Wow, back...

AM: Back in 1940. And they were there for about four years or more, or whatever it was. And they had been given these prisoner of war logs to sort of keep a record for themselves. At that time they were getting mail from home, too.

PS: They were supplied by the Red Cross or...

AM: Red Cross. They were getting mail from home, too, which included photographs and snapshots, which they pasted into their log, like this. Now, when we got there, as I said, things were very bad. The food was limited to just a little bit a day, and the packages would dwindle down to one-tenth per man. So that I, who always like to write, had nothing, didn't even have a piece of paper to write on or a pencil. I spoke with one of the British boys, and he had this log. And he was so tired of keeping it that [chuckles] he says, "Al," he said, "if you want this log, I'll take a half of your D-bar," which was a ration of chocolate that we had gotten in the package. "I'll take a half of your D-bar, and you can pay me out over a period of time." Because we were in sections, in six cubicles like. So I said, "Look, I'll give you my whole portion. You take it, and I'll do without it," because I wanted this more than I wanted the food. Because I kept as much of a log as I possibly could. I'm not a great artist. I'm not a great writer, but I do write poetry. I write songs and things like that. So this was the war time log that was given to the British prisoners of war, and which I got from this fellow Herbie Robison, and then which I started to keep. And little things like this, but, of course, it would take you a lot more time.

PS: Yeah.

AM: What I actually got it out for was to show you the Red Cross parcel and what all...

PS: Were these, dr--did you...

AM: They were tracings that were made by the POWs...

PS: Oh, oh.

AM: For me. They put them in these prisoner of war logs. All this stuff, and then it was...

PS: These tracings are of war planes.

AM: War planes, the British war planes. And this was a tribute to my crew, and these other little things. But I don't want to, we did not have paper. I used to use, from the cigarette packages they got, they u--this is toilet paper.

PS: Yeah.

AM: But, this was me walking along the corridor at night going to the outhouse.

PS: Night mission.

AM: And, but I wanted to get this one of the Red Cross parcel. They wrote poems and they did, that was a drawing by one of the men.

PS: Yeah, a British war plane.

AM: This, I think, is a B-17. *Queen of the Sky*, that's a B-17.

PS: Oh.

AM: And these little poems that I made up. This is a gunner's day, and I'll get to it in a second here. This--well, Harry made that little bit of artistry.

PS: The...

AM: One of the guys did it for me.

PS: Would you describe, Al, what we're looking at here?

AM: This is a prisoner of war log, which I managed to purchase from one of the POWs for a bar of chocolate.

PS: Yeah, but I meant the pictures right here.

AM: And I have it, and it, within these pages are memories that are priceless...

PS: Oh they sure are!

AM: Showing the barrack *Stube* which is a barrack room where we stayed. This is my poor attempt at artistry. But you can see that this is all we had. Our little, what they call a *paillasse* which was a bag of straw, was used for a bed--we rolled up at night, during the day and put it on the side. These...

PS: Now this barrack room is identified as Room 12, Barrack 13, West Compound. Is that Barth?

AM: Yeah, Barth.

PS: B-A-R-T-H, Germany, *Stalag Luft One*. Now *Luft One* would refer to Air Force...

AM: Yeah, *Stalag Luft*.

PS: A *Stalag* for the Air Force prisoners.

AM: This was a poem that I wrote. But I wanted to get to this oh, here. This are some of the contents of the Red Cross parcels. You can just go right on down every little thing.

PS: Yeah. We're looking at a page on which there are drawings of plum pudding, deviled ham, Wrigley's Spearmint, Doublemint, pipe tobacco, fruit bar, mixed candies. And this was a typical package, Red Cross.

AM: Red Cross food parcel, yeah.

PS: Al, during this period, were you or, during the first month or two months in your initial *Stalag*, were--did the Red Cross come in at all to interview for the purpose of identifying the prisoners? To notify, what I'm getting at, during this period, had your family been notified that you were a prisoner of war?

AM: Well, my family eventually got, was notified. As I say, my daughter was born in September of 1944 while I was on Operations. And my wife got the notice, the first notice came, it was a, sort of a, just a regular card, which indicated I am safe, I am uninjured, I'm being taken care of, and I'm in good hands.

PS: This was after you were shot down in Frankfurt.

AM: When I was shot down.

PS: Yeah.

AM: We were allowed to write, send that card away. Now as I say, we were captured November 21st. I had a, managed to get that card out a few days later. And Molly, my wife, didn't get that till sometime in January. So, that's the only correspondence we had between us.

PS: Now that came through the Red Cross?

AM: Through the Red Cross.

PS: And, until then, when you were initially, when you were shot down, did she then, did your family then receive word that you were missing, that you were shot down?

AM: From the War Department, Missing in Action.

PS: Yeah, yeah. So that was in November. And it was January until...

AM: It was in the...

PS: They knew that you were alive.

AM: Alive, yeah. Missing in Action [unclear].

PS: Yeah. Until then there was no communication at all of any kind between you and your family, and they had really no reason to believe that you were other than killed.

AM: Well, except the word of the War Department that I was just missing.

PS: Yeah, missing, yeah.

AM: But there was no official death notice.

PS: Yeah, yeah.

AM: You just asked something about the Red Cross visiting. I think that was one of the questions. At any rate, we did have representatives of the Swedish Red Cross come

in at one time to--I guess this was Barth, Number One, *Luftwaffe*. And among the group that was with them was Max Schmeling, the old fighter.

PS: Oh!

AM: He came with them, he was with that group. I don't know, I guess he had some sort of a job. At any rate, they walked around, they spoke to some of the POWs, and everybody hollered, "When are we goin' home? When are we gettin' the hell out of here?" But for the most part they did their business, whatever it was, and they gave us some encouragement that things were progressing to a point that, "You'll be getting more food." And that we possibly might be getting out of here into a processing center preparatory to going home. It was words of encouragement, but it didn't happen until the May we were liberated by the Russians on May the 1st.

PS: Yeah. And at that time you were north of, the *Luft Stalag* was north of Berlin?

AM: Barth was on the Baltic Sea, on the peninsula jutting out, it was south of our original *Stalag*.

PS: During that period, you had reached the point where you had no fear of your eventual release at the end of the war. Were you...

AM: Well, I'll tell you, things changed for us during the--by Stalin when they made that turnaround. They were bringing in hundreds of POWs, Allied POWs, from that battle.

PS: Yeah, the German...

AM: And the Jerry guards were walking around in, they were in their seventh heaven!

PS: Yeah.

AM: "Oh, we're gonna kick the hell out of you Yankees! We're gonna knock you all the way back to the Atlantic Ocean!"

PS: What Mr. Miller is speaking of, right now, the Battle of the Bulge, Bastogne, Belgium. Can you just give, this tape could be made many, many years from now, be studied and listened to, by people who would have no knowledge of the term *Battle of the Bulge*. Can you give us, for the benefit of those who listen to this in the future...

AM: Well, apparently it was a geographic area that bulged out into the, actually into Europe, at a point near Belgium, if I remember correctly. My geography [is] not too good.

PS: That's right.

AM: And the German forces, the *Wehrmacht*, came in there in strength, and surrounded some of our forces up in that area, to a point where they probably would have annihilated them if they didn't get, if we hadn't sent every possible reserve. I heard later they were taking clerks out of offices in London, and in any area where they could reach out and get people of physical capability to get in there and fight, and do whatever they can

to stave off the Germans till our reserves, till our forces got together and then drove them back. But that was a very serious setback in the war.

PS: Yeah, during that period as Germans suddenly were told that, "This is it, we have turned the whole thing around. And from here on in we will be on the offensive." And, but it proved to be, I guess it was about two weeks that the Germans continued their advance under General von Runstedt, was it?

AM: Well he was the commander of the...

PS: Yeah.

AM: [unclear]

PS: Now during that, were you pretty much aware of what was going on while a prisoner? During that period of a few weeks, suddenly it took a turn in reverse. Were you aware? Of course, you had these many, many prisoners coming in...

AM: With stories now.

PS: With stories, and you heard. Were you getting any information at all through clandestine radio?

AM: Yeah. We had hidden radios and they would get messages from the BBC and they would jot it down, and somehow or other, our men were absolutely marvelous with what they could get together. They had typewriters. They had the ability to convey information from one barrack to the other. And they would send messages around during the time we were free to walk around from barrack to barrack with information as to what was actually happening. Of course, they couldn't give us the truest picture as to how badly we were being beaten in the Bulge, but it was enough to keep us informed, and, well, we got our hopes together. When some of the guys came in and said, "We're gonna turn it around yet. We haven't got our forces together, but we will do it." And it turned to be the case that they reversed the whole thing and pushed them back, and then they knocked them out.

PS: Now after you were privileged to send the card home, your family was then notified that you were alive, a prisoner of war. Was there any mail, any exchange at all of any communications?

AM: No communication at all.

PS: You were not, your family, you could write no letters to your family and...

AM: No, no written communication whatsoever. I was, we could write, but they wouldn't mail it.

PS: Yeah.

AM: The only thing that, a little information leaked to my wife was when one of the crews with whom we were roomed in England flight, there were two crews. We were one crew, another crew was beside us. And we shared that one barrack. When we went up on our last flight, these fellows from the other crew were being shipped home. They had completed their tour of missions and they were being shipped home. The information came back that our crew got shot down in this last Merseburg mission. And one of the fellows,

a fellow named Millick [phonetic] from around Limerick where they had that tornado just recently...

PS: Yeah.

AM: He managed to get back over to the States O.K. And he got into the Philadelphia area, and he called my wife by phone. And he said that, "As far as people know, the men that were not in the formation saw the plane go down, and saw a lot of chutes in the air. As far as we know it could have been that he came through O.K. That's all I can tell you." And then when she finally got the card she knew that I was still alive.

PS: Then, we're approaching the surrender of Germany. After, you were getting information during the Battle of the Bulge. Then, when things turned, you were then aware of the fact that the Allies were definitely on the march through Germany into Poland on one side, into Austria on the other side.

AM: And the Russians from the east.

PS: Yeah. And you were aware then, now, that the day was coming in the very shortly of the surrender. Did you notice at that point any sharp change in the attitude and treatment from the German guards?

AM: Oh, absolutely. We were, I would say the latter part of April, we had information that things were being turned around. We couldn't pinpoint exactly what, where and what the troops were involved, but the German leaders came to our leaders and told them that things were not looking too good for them and they were going to evacuate that camp. They wanted us to march out with them towards the west, where the Allies were. They didn't want any parts of the Russians.

PS: Yeah, yeah.

AM: And our leader says, "Absolutely not. We will not let these men go out on the road to be targets for our own planes. They'll be completely unidentified. We have no identification whatsoever. We don't even have a flag. And, absolutely not. These men are gonna stay here. You can evacuate. You can leave, and, "bye-bye Charlie." But as far as we're concerned, we're staying here." Now that was Colonel Zenkie [phonetic]. You might have seen him on television just recently, in that, they had a, PBS had a whole big thing.

PS: Yeah. He was like the commanding officer...

AM: He was our commanding officer.

PS: Of the prisoners...

AM: Right, of the POWs.

PS: Of the American...

AM: At this Barth Number One.

PS: Yeah.

AM: And, Dobreski [phonetic] was there for a while too. He was a, 28 fighters he knocked down. At any rate, we stayed put. They, one night they disappeared. There was nobody...

PS: And this was...

AM: At Barth.

PS: At approximately what...

AM: The latter part of April.

PS: Latter...

AM: Yeah. They disappeared. The camp was unguarded. Then the Russians came up. And we were warned to stay away from them Russians, they're crazy people, they drink like mad and they'll kill, shoot anything in front of them that they don't like. So we minded our own business, stayed together, and kept our heads about us as much as we could. But the vanguard of the Russians came up, met our leaders, and told them the camp was liberated. "You can do whatever you want. You can march out. You can walk around. But don't interfere with our troops." At any rate, we were warned not to do anything for several days, until that group went out, and the administrative, the more of the occupation forces came up to take care of the camp and administer whatever had to be done. So that we were there until we had the word that May the 8th the war was over, that the Germans had surrendered. And we were promised there would be planes coming in that would take us back to Allied territory. Well, we sat there from May the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th. On the 13th of the month they flew in a bunch of B-17's, and they took us lock, stock, and barrel back to Reims, France. From then on we advanced to Lucky Strike on the...

PS: Yeah, I was...

AM: That was. You know.

PS: Oh, I was there, yeah.

AM: Old Gold and all those...

PS: Yeah.

AM: Some very interesting experiences there too. But that was about the sequence of the events.

PS: During the period that, between the time that the German guards left, until you were evacuated, was there any Soviet government, military government, looking after the welfare of the prisoners? Feeding? Who was...

AM: This is very interesting. They were concerned that we were not fed too well. And as a result the leaders, the Russian leaders, advised their men to round up a bunch of oxen that were in the area, cattle, whatever they could, and drive them right into the camp, which they did. There must have been about forty or fifty oxen that were driven into the camp, and brought down to the lower end down there. And we were informed, "They're yours. Do whatever you want with them. Eat 'em, skin 'em, do whatever you want." So we happened to have a couple--so resourceful--a few guys that knew how to butcher animals. And they went down there and they went to town. They took about fifteen, twenty of these oxen and butchered them, cut them up, and they portioned out the meat. Raw meat, it was as tough as could be. And they saw that everybody in the camp had a ration of this ox meat. When we finally got it, it was so goddamned tough that you couldn't even tear it. So we used to beat it. We had stones and whatever, hammers. We'd beat it until we made it as

tender as we possibly could. Then we'd put it on a little bucket a day fire that we had and cook 'em up to some extent and make of this a meal. We had other access. When we were free like that, had access to the entire area. So we left the camp, and we marched down to the roadways, to the little farmhouses. And I remember a big Jewish guy from Florida, Ralph Gross. He was the, who more or less lead because he was the biggest. He says, "Come on, follow me." We went right into a farm house there and rounded up a bunch of chickens. Got 'em into a corner and grabbed them. And he took them by the heads, like this, tore the head right off, and ran the blood out and jammed it into a bag, a sack. He said, "We're gonna take them back and we're gonna flick 'em, and we're gonna eat 'em! [laughing] These Germans will learn a lesson from us!"

PS: So you were finally evacuated.

AM: By B-17's, some British planes.

PS: What is the--can you recall Al, then, when you first were in contact with your family?

AM: First? My first contact with my family? Well, I wrote a long, a lonnnng letter when I got to the [unclear] when I was sitting quietly. And the mail that, which she eventually got, only a short time before I got home, I guess.

PS: There was no such thing, though, as telephoning?

AM: Not at that point.

PS: No.

AM: No, the first telephone communication was at Camp, Fort Patrick down in Virginia when I got into, we came into Hampton Roads by ship. And we were brought in in the camp there, and we were permitted a phone call. So I made my call from that point. But the interesting thing was, when the train came up from Fort Patrick, Virginia, it went right up past where we lived in West Philadelphia. Woodland Avenue has a railroad train going there...

PS: Yeah.

AM: Right on after Fort Mead, not Mead...

PS: Dix?

AM: Dix. Right after Fort Dix. That was two or three blocks from my house! [unclear] [laughing]

PS: So you, then, the next question, we're at the end, Al, but there's something, it might be a little out of concept, there's just something I've been curious about all through these years. After the years following World War II, there were many television programs that ridiculed, oh, like *Hogan's Heroes*, which, I don't know if you recall, it was a television series that made...

AM: Oh yeah, I remember.

PS: Remember...

AM: Richard Dawson, and the guy that was killed...

PS: Yeah...

AM: I think...

PS: It portrayed the German guards as blubbering idiots, and the American prisoners of war as being almost like in control of their own fate. I often wondered--now, you know, I was in combat in World War II; I was not a prisoner, but I often sat there watching, everything was, of course, in humor--and I often sat there watching and feeling very sensitive as to what former prisoners of war felt on looking at this, which certainly portrayed a completely different picture of the lives of our boys who were prisoners.

AM: Yeah. Our writers, of course, reporting for comedy. They wanted to...

PS: Yeah.

AM: Write a series that would attract the people to it, and give a laugh out. But frankly we kept looking at each other and saying, "It never happened. It never happened. It never happened." Why, half of the...

PS: Did you resent the fact that they made a big joke out of the whole, the, what were for some just horrible, horrible incidents, as prisoners of war?

AM: Well, we had different elements of people. Some were cranks, some were jolly people. Even a Jerry guard, when you meet a foreigner today, or at any time, there, the personality that you run up against is sometimes different than what you see on a screen or read in books. At any rate, as I was describing one of our railroad trips, the Jerry guards were jolly fellows. They laughed and they joked with us. And they said, "I used to live in Camden! I remember Cane [phonetic] Avenue in Camden. I used to--my father had a..." and we laughed, we had a little joke, and they would dance a little bit. So you had the jolly ones...

PS: Yeah.

AM: And on the other hand you had the mean, vicious guys that didn't know anything but hate, and when we were going to that first camp...

Tape two, side one:

PS: This is Philip Solomon interviewing Mr. Albert Miller for the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive. This is tape two, side one. Al, to continue, we're reaching the end of the questions I had planned on asking you. To continue, we had reached the point where you were describing your trip home from Hampton Roads was it--your--the point of that train...

AM: The Naval Base at Virginia, yeah.

PS: Yeah, yeah. You returned home on a naval...

AM: Yeah, it was the *General Butler, S.S. General Butler*. It was a cruiser.

PS: Oh, a cruiser.

AM: Yeah.

PS: Then, we were dis--you were describing the fact that you passed your former, within a few blocks of the former home in West Philadelphia. You then came into Fort Dix. Your family there was living in West Philadelphia? And you immediately were privileged to speak to them and...

AM: Which I did, yeah.

PS: This was probably June? The German surrender was May the 8th, and I guess with all the processing and all we're getting into mid-June of 1945?

AM: Well, an interesting story regarding that was, as I said before, we were flown into Reims, France, where for the first time in months we were permitted showers and a thorough cleaning up and given rations of clothing, that is to say, clean underwear, socks, shirts, pants, slacks and so forth. And we relaxed there for a couple of days before we were flown up to Fort Lucky, or Camp Lucky Strike, which was the point of debarkation, I guess...

PS: Yeah.

AM: Where, for people going home. And then if you recall, there were points issued to...

PS: Yeah.

AM: Members of the military as to how quickly you can go home.

PS: Yeah.

AM: And P.O.W.'s were number one on the hit parade, so to speak, because they were given priority. However, when we got to Fort, to Lucky Strike, there was no shipping available, and we were there from, I would say, the beginning of June, for four weeks we were at Lucky Strike.

PS: I was there at the same time.

AM: Is that a fact?

PS: Yeah.

AM: Why didn't you call me? [both laugh] An interesting thing about that was that this Moe Priven [phonetic] who, my buddy, his brother Bernie Priven played in the

Glenn Miller orchestra. He's a trumpet. And he was down in Paris, France, at the Olympia Theater there. Now we were at Lucky Strike for two weeks waiting for shipping and nothing was happening. So Moe got up off his fanny and he says, "The hell with this sitting around. I'm gonna go down and see my brother in Paris." Well, he was a single man. He didn't have to run home. But, he says, "I'm goin' down there." So he sort of left and we were casuals. We were not assigned to anything. So he wasn't AWOL. But he went down to Paris. He was gone for about six or seven days, then he came back, and he sees we're still sitting there waiting for ships. He said, "You dopes!" He says, "The biggest cit--the best city in the world..."

PS: And you're within...

AM: "Is down there and you're sitting up here? Get down there as fast as you can!" Well something was arranged and I managed to get there. And we went in, we saw Bernie Priven play, and we spent a little time there and we got back. But that was toward the latter part of June. I think we must have left Le Havre, we were, we came back to the camp and we were told shipping was available. "You better get down to Le Havre, and you'll be able to get back home," which we did. And we must have left there around the 19th or 20th of June. At any rate we got home, at Hampton Roads, about seven days later. And that's when...

PS: Yeah.

AM: The trip back to Camp Dix.

PS: To review just a few points, Al, how old were you when you were shot down, during this period of incarceration? How old were you?

AM: That was November, I was about 31.

PS: And can you, if you care to review, your physical--oh, during the period of your incarceration, were you forced to work? Did you work on any assignment?

AM: No. We were non-commissioned officers and we did not have to work.

PS: Oh. What grade of Sergeant? [unclear].

AM: Tech Sergeant. I was...

PS: Yeah. So, Privates and Corporals were forced to...

AM: To work. None of our crew and none of the fellows in our area were forced to work.

PS: Yeah.

AM: We just...

PS: None of them were below...

AM: Played ball.

PS: None of them were below the rank of Sergeant?

AM: Not in our camp. PFC and Corporal. They were work groups, were detailed into the factories and the farmyards around.

PS: But they were volunteers?

AM: No, they were forced.

PS: Oh, they were forced.

AM: Yeah. Some of them wanted to do something, but...

PS: Yeah.

AM: They were detailed. We of the non-commissioned boys were in the barracks and then in our camp area. And what we did was play ball. A lot of them were talented in artistry and a lot of them formed classes. We had different classes in English and Math and foreign languages, classes, and then they formed a theater group. And they put on *Petrified Forest* among other things. It was just a very talented bunch of people.

PS: In thinking back, Al, would you care to say anything at all, your physical and mental attitude and physical and mental condition during that period?

AM: I was as well as a man of my age could be at 31, and I was in good physical condition. I didn't want to, I couldn't compete with some of the 21-year-olders in the obstacle races and other things, but it was, I was in very good shape. And thank the good Lord for that. And mentally I was right on the ball. I wrote a few songs for some of the shows. And I did a lot of poetry, which is evident here in the log that I have. And I just kept myself busy as the other boys did, and thank. There was always talk about repatriation through the entire period of our incarceration, which only materialized for some of the very badly wounded. And...

PS: They were repatriated before the war ended?

AM: Before the war ended, yeah. Well, as a matter of fact, they called us all down, "Anybody who wants repatriation and feels that they're capable of getting through, come down to our, to the meeting area," which they did. Now some of the guys went to some extremes. They wanted to get back, and in order to, some of them punctured their eardrums.

PS: Oh!

AM: They did things; they chopped a piece of their finger off. They did whatever they could that they thought would get the attention of the repatriating officers and get them onto that list. But our group, we just stuck together. I got descriptive poetry that describes everything.

PS: Al, it's been I think a very informative interview. Is there anything at all that we didn't cover that you would care, any personal comments, any...

AM: Well, of course, did that piece get on the tape about the concentration camp that I saw?

PS: No, no, it didn't.

AM: Would you want that on there?

PS: Oh yeah, surely.

AM: I think that, relative to our Jewish subject, it might have been interesting, although I should have maybe explored it a little further. When we were liberated and given permission to walk around the area without Jerry guards on our back, I came across what appeared to be a concentration camp that was in the process of being liberated. Because

these people were coming out of what appeared to be underground areas where they might have lived, and coming up into the air where they saw the sunshine they were, the sun absolutely blinded them as they looked up into it. And they were disheveled and broken down and limping and crippled. And I, we were not permitted to get close to them because of the prospect of disease being transferred. So I didn't get that close that I could interrogate anybody or even get a better look. And I'm quite sure that it must have been a political concentration camp that was being liberated.

PS: Were they wearing uniforms?

AM: No uniforms.

PS: No uniforms, just...

AM: They were in rags.

PS: Yeah.

AM: Rags.

PS: And their appearance, physical appearance was...

AM: It was sickening.

PS: Bad, yeah.

AM: They were limping, and they were helping, one was helping another. It was really not a pleasant sight. But I couldn't identify it as...

PS: You...

AM: Being Jewish.

PS: Yeah. You don't know the name of the, the location or the camp or...

AM: Well, the location was in Barth.²

PS: Yeah.

AM: It was just right outside of our camp only maybe a couple miles away.

PS: O.K., Al. This has been certainly an interview that we appreciate very, very much. And on behalf of myself and the Holocaust Oral History Archive at Gratz College we want to thank you very, very much and thank you.

² He may be speaking of Ravensbrück or one of its sub-camps (*Das nationalsozialistische lagersystem - Herausgegeben von Martin Weinmann bei Zweifausendeins*)