HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

MURRAY GRANGER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Philip G. Solomon
Date: March 19, 1989

This page left intentionally blank.

MG - Murray Granger [interviewee]
PS - Philip G. Solomon [interviewer]
UP - Unidentified Person
Date: March 19, 1989

Tape one, side one:

PS: This is Phil Solomon interviewing Mr. Murray Granger, for the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College. Mr. Granger is a former Prisoner of War of Germany during World War II. [tape off then on] Can you tell us where in Europe, and in what unit you were serving prior to your capture?

MG: Prior to capture I was in France, southern France, 3rd Ranger Battalion.

PS: And from there?

MG: Pardon me?

PS: Were you captured in...

MG: I was captured in France.

PS: In that area.

MG: In that area. [tape off then on]

PS: Murray, prior to the time of your capture, had you witnessed any examples of Germany cruelty or atrocities against soldiers and civilians?

MG: No I hadn't.

PS: None at all.

MG: None at all.

PS: At the time of your capture, had you heard any rumors or reports of the mass murder of Jews, political prisoners, Gypsies, Poles, Russians?

MG: Nope. I had no knowledge of anybody being killed...

PS: No?

MG: Except GIs.

PS: Had you heard anything at all about the existence of Nazi concentration camps?

MG: Nope.

PS: What was the date of your capture, and where were you first taken?

MG: Oh my God. Heh.

PS: Well, roughly.

MG: Around, approximately early '44. I don't know what, whether it was around September, around there. Right after the invasion.

PS: Yeah.

MG: We made an invasion in southern France.

PS: That would have been in the early...

MG: August 15th we made the invasion. Right after August 15th, yeah.

UP: Was it before the Battle of the Bulge?

MG: No, right after the Southern France invasion. We made the invasion in southern France. We went in, we had, the Rangers went in ahead of time.

UP: That was during the Bulge.

MG: No, it was way before the Bulge.

PS: No, the Bulge was December of...

MG: That was way before the Bulge was.

PS: '44. yeah.

MG: This was August 15th we went into, August 15th we went into southern France. We made an invasion on August 15th, at 8:00 in the morning. It was the first raid, the daylight raid.

PS: Do you remember, can you recall the approximate date of your capture, and where you were first taken?

MG: Yeah, it was approximately maybe the first day of September, in--outside of Strau-, outside of, well, let's see, outside of Toulon, a submarine base.

PS: You say September. That would have been September, 1944.

MG: '44.

PS: While interned, oh, do you recall where you were taken, where you were first taken on your, immediately following your capture?

MG: Yes, I was taken to a command CP, you know, a command post, for...

PS: Of the German units you were facing.

MG: Of the German unit, command, for interrogation, for further shipment to a POW unit.

PS: You were interrogated. Can you describe, Murray, the intensity of the interrogation that you were subjected to?

MG: It was rough, because the PO-, because the Rangers, the POW, excuse me, I'm sorry, the Germans didn't like Rangers because Rangers took no prisoners. We never took a prisoner, never in my life. And, we went back to command post and we were verified by the German Army that we were Rangers. Because they knew who was fighting on that side. And we was interrogated from there on out. And the interrogation was, I remember now it was in a French--see this comes back to you after a while, a French farm house. And it was very intense. They asked you about different gun implacements and different military information. After all that information is being told, we'd tell them our name, rank and serial number, according to the Geneva Conference, and told the, all the infantrymen were told not to give any but name, rank, and serial number but they didn't believe in that. So they went ahead and they start to beat you up. They used rubber hoses and different language and it possibly lasted about two hours and ten minutes and you got thrown in a, for two hours you get thrown into a barn, by a stall, and your face was like a balloon. They used rubber hoses, because rubber hoses tell you no marks. They use rubber hoses on you it'll never show a mark. And I just passed out and went into a, with a bunch of other GIs

somewhere else. And from there on out we got on a Jeep and got taken back to another area. I don't know how many miles, and started processing to a POW camp.

PS: That was probably still within France.

MG: It was in France.

PS: Yeah. During the, your intensive interrogation, was there any, were there threats of death? Execution?

MG: Yes, one, heh, incident, the first incident was, my name was Murray Goldberg, and because all my dog tags was left with the Ranger Command on all the raids. And when he asked me what my name was I told him my name was Aloysius O'Brien, who I went to school with in high school. I went all the way through school with Aloysius O'Brien. In fact he was like a room mate with me in high school, all the way through. And that name was Aloysius O'Brien. The only thing that he said, if you was a Gillistein, a Friedman, or a Goldberg or something he says you'd be cremated automatically. And I told him my name was Aloysius O'Brien. And he just, only [unclear] says a lot of these Germans were in, as Bill will tell you, were in the United States in 1935. And they said, "Well," I says, "Well I'm as Irish as Patty's Pig." I says. And they said, "Well you must be in like an old Irish mick." An old slang for an Irishman. And I told him, "Yes." Only there's one trouble wrong, cause I was sweatin' out and even then, he didn't ask me how to spell Aloysius, because I was...

PS: [chuckles]

MG: I never spelled it!

UP: I can't spell it.

MG: I can't spell it.

PS: In other words, had you given your true name...

MG: True name I would have been burnt to a crisp, yeah.

PS: You would have been gone.

MG: And stayed that way. In fact, my father was not notified I was a POW until I was released.

PS: I was gonna ask you that, Murray.

MG: Because what happened was, excuse me.

PS: No, I was gonna ask you, are you, do you know how long a period of time elapsed between the time you were captured, the actual date, and when your family was notified that you were missing in action?

MG: Fourteen months.

PS: Bef-, well, missing in action?

MG: Yeah.

PS: Four-, from the U.S.? From the [unclear]?

MG: Fourteen months from when I was captured, fourteen months.

PS: All that period your family had no...

MG: No.

PS: Notification?

MG: No, because my father told me after the war was over, that when he went in to call the General in charge of the State Department, which takes care of all the POWs, the name is, the General in charge by the name of General Yuro [phonetic], General Yuro, who takes care of all the POWs--and when the Germans sent cards back, small cards that one of your Americans has been, such and such has been captured, through the War Department, they notified them. They used my Aloysius O'Brien with my regular serial number, 32877033. And the War Department had a lot of spies during the war. And when they checked, this is what they told my father, when they checked it out. Only one person is allowed to look at the records, and that was the high command, that was General Yuro himself. And when he checked it, that number, 328, they don't go by the name, they go, they check that number 32877033, on my morning report that I was captured, I mean missing. They found out that the name was Goldberg and they notified nobody. And my, they told my father that they would notify him when he would, they would get notification from the German Third Reich that I was a prisoner. But...

UP: But the name was...

MG: But the name was, they couldn't notify him because a letter would be sent back to German headquarters and they ain't seein' their son no more.

PS: Well, Murray, did you, did your family...

MG: Called 'em up every other...

PS: Prior to the end of the war...

MG: Called 'em up twice a month.

PS: You were really not on record there...

MG: No.

PS: …as being a prisoner, that is as Murray Goldberg. There was, there's...

MG: There was no POW.

PS: Now, your last days with your Ranger unit...

MG: Mmm hmm?

PS: …you were still Murray Goldberg at that time?

MG: That's right.

PS: Well, then wouldn't it have been the duty of the U.S. Army, through channels, to have notified, according to their records, that Murray Goldberg was missing in action?

MG: Right.

PS: And your family wasn't...

MG: …nope.

PS: Notified?

MG: They could not take a chance. They would not do it.

PS: Oh, oh.

MG: And when I came back, he said, "The first time I talked to you was on the telephone when I get, you're allowed a 20 minute telephone." I don't know about it was, 20 minute telephone per man.

PS: That's after the...

MG: After the war was over...

PS: Liberation.

MG: The United States would let you call up home only. And it was 20 minutes, because right after that they start--they scramble the phones. I guess that's after too many years calling home, so.

PS: At that...

MG: And he said, "The first time I spoke to you was just now that you were a POW." And after the war was over, the State Department notified my father and told him why they were sorry they could not, you know.

PS: From the combat unit that you said actually captured you, when they sent you back to a permanent POW camp, do you recall where, say, approximately where in Germany the prison camp was?

MG: Yes, it was in, it was, I know exactly. It was in Hammerstein, New Jersey and *Stalag* II-B. Right in the, in Hammerstein.

PS: Not New Jersey.

MG: No, I'm sorry.

PS: [chuckles] In Germany.

MG: Right, okay, sorry.

PS: It should only have been Hammerstein, New Jersey.

MG: Well, I wish it was! [both laughing]

PS: Yeah!

MG: Hammerstein, Germany. Hammerstein. II-B.

PS: While, were you there for the balance of your...

MG: No, I was not.

PS: Imprisonment?

MG: No, I was not.

PS: Well while you were in Hammerstein, was it prisoners of war only, or were there also, was it also used as a concentration camp?

MG: No.

PS: Prisoners...

MG: All military only. Military and civilians stayed separate. They would not mixed you. This was used as sees fit.

PS: Can you please describe your treatment, and the treatment of your fellow prisoners at the hands of the German prison guards?

MG: Well, while I was at camp, you get up approximately seven, all privates up to sergeants, get up at approximately 4:30, 5:00 in the morning, 5:00. And we were sent

out on details, different details. And working in labor groups they call it. And we come back approximately about 12:00 for lunch every day. And everybody, we got approximately six potatoes per day. At noon, there were more potatoes. Well, then we'd take the peels off on your own, and that's what you get per day. You don't eat no more. You will not go to no more mess halls until noon the next day.

PS: Just once a day...

MG: Once a day.

PS: Six potatoes.

MG: Water would turn on, at the camp, and...

UP: Raw potatoes?

MG: No, they were cooked.

UP: They were boiled.

PS: Boiled. Was...

MG: No more till noon the next day.

PS: No soup or no...

MG: No, no soup, no bread, no nothing.

PS: And this work you were doing was probably road work, heavy work--that required...

MG: Yes, a 17-hour day. We worked 17 hours guaranteed.

PS: And you would certainly say, I imagine, that the food, the nutrition you received was certainly not adequate...

MG: Yeah.

PS: What was your weight?

MG: I weighed 80 pounds when I came out.

PS: 80?

MG: 80.

PS: From, what was your weight prior to that point?

MG: 141 you had to be in order to get into the Rangers. Approximately 141. Over there they wouldn't take you.

PS: And yours was...

MG: 80.

PS: No, I mean prior to capture.

MG: Oh, prior to capture I was about 142.

PS: So that's 60, more than 60 pounds lost...

MG: Right.

PS: In a short...

MG: The water was turned on at 9:30 in the morning until 10:30 and then...

PS: Was there any...

MG: And then we came back...

PS: Was there...

MG: And then they turned it on at 4:00 in the afternoon to approximately 5:30. And the doctors that were captured with different units, other units, told us, "Do not go ahead and wash, because it doesn't make a difference. You all smell anyhow. But, you, at least you won't dehydrate." So we used that for drinking water. And you used, no, there was no utensils used. They don't...

PS: There was no daily...

MG: You do not use utensils at all, I guess because what they're trying to do is break you down into a two-legged animal. And in my opinion what a POW is is a two-legged animal locked up in a cage and ready to be sprung. In other words, you can, if they treat you long enough to become an animal, you will become an animal. And in fact, in Hammerstein, in II-B--now other camps I cannot talk for you, I was not there--we used no toilet paper. No toilet paper you used. And the clothes is--we never changed. We wore the same clothes and approximately I know everybody in camp they had no change of clothes. And of course, naturally, dysentery was inevitable, and lice. Everybody had lice. And later on as you go toward the end of the war, Joe will tell you, when you go on the farm, you keep warm with the goats. I used to love goats because they kept me warm all the time. And when I went to my friend's house, a POW in New York State, he told me, he says, "Well, Murray's got a goat; he's at home now." You had the regular lice. So, there was fellas that had been in camp for four years in Bataan Death March, in Japan. They never changed clothes for four years.

PS: And you were a prisoner during one entire winter.

MG: Yeah.

PS: The winter of 1944...

MG: Right.

PS: [to] '45.

MG: I didn't get out till the end of '45.

PS: A foolish question, but adequate heating facilities?

MG: No heating facilities at all, because they had what they called block coal. Block coal in a pot belly stove. A pot belly stove in the middle? So the guy next to the stove as he can tell you, any army guy, quonset huts...

PS: Yeah.

MG: It is warm, and if you live at the end of the barracks, you freeze to death because...

PS: I know. I froze.

MG: You froze at the end of the barracks. And I stole coal. That was the--three of my worst atrocities. And I have it, I don't have it with me, but I have it in intelligence when I went up for protocol examination for POWs now, in '81 or, examination for POWs? We had to have protocol, your torture and all that stuff? There was three of them. And one of them was, I went to steal coal to keep warm. And I told the guy to watch, watch the gate at night time. So I went over and jumped across and stole the coal and threw it over to him,

but he must have spotted the guard walking back with the dog, and he took off, you know? He chickened out on me. But, who knows why. And when I looked up there was, there was a German pair of boots. And there I am with the coal. And they don't care if you have fights together, because that was, that happened, but don't go against the regime. So, I was taken back and told that the next day I'll be notified what was going on for a punishment of stealing coal, for stealing, which is pretty bad in a POW camp. And I finally was taken out in the yard, approximately, I don't know what day it was, I can't remember, and stripped back and they told everybody to watch. They do that to everybody when they, if somebody get tortured so, to teach them a lesson. And I got 13 lashes across my back. And the only thing that kept me alive was--the doctor says that they were dumb but smart. They were dumb trying to hurt you, but they were smart, because they cauterized me. They put about a barrel of coarse, kosher salt on top of the wound to make you suffer, but it cauterized me. So I...

PS: What did the...

MG: [unclear]

PS: What kind of a, an instrument was used for the lashings?

MG: Lashings? A cat of nine tails, but no tails. They used barbs on the end.

PS: Barbs on the end. Metal barbs?

MG: Metal barbs. They cut them off.

UP: You still have scars from that.

MG: I still have, matter of fact I never told my youngest daughter, because when we were down there she said, "Dad looks like a bunch of pigeons walked on your back. Where'd you get that?" And I said, "I fell on a piece of glass."

PS: And that is still there 45...

MG: Still there.

PS: 45 years later.

MG: Right. In fact I had to prove it to the intelligence when I came back. I had to, they want, they don't take words for it. They want proof of what you went through.

PS: Murray, with this very tough schedule of working really hard, hard physical work, and the inadequate food you were served, was there any such thing as a day of rest, a holiday, where no work, or where you would...

MG: No.

PS: Even a little bit of a...

MG: In this...

PS: Bonus of food?

MG: No, no, and then I, no, there was no bonuses there, but on Sunday you was off. But they had a deal at II-B. And a lot of, and I'm not the only one that can testify of this, and that was on Sunday, the officers would go out, this was in II-B, would go out and they would go rabbit hunting. And the GIs would go out with, with beaters, and chase the rabbits out in front so the officers could shoot them. And I told him, commented one time,

I said, "How do you know the rabbits comin' out of the woods and me comin' out of the woods, chasin' em?" He said, "The break, you get in the way, yeah, tough." Yeah, when we chased the rabbits, and, for about two hours, and we got off that afternoon, we get off at about 3:00. That was the only day we had off on Sunday.

PS: But no bonus of a little extra food or soup.

MG: Oh, maybe, yeah, Sunday I mean they gave us every Sunday, Limburger cheese, about three slices, and bread, coffee, only on Sunday.

PS: Murray, you mentioned II-B. Now that was *Stalag* II-B...

MG: *Stalag* II-B.

PS: At Hammerstein.

MG: Yeah.

PS: Now, you were there for quite a while?

MG: I was there for approximately six months.

PS: Then you...

MG: At six months I got sent to a permanent detail in the--we were just put in boxcars and we got sent forty and eights, [unclear]. We got sent to forty and eights, to another place which we didn't know where it was at, and we was locked in there. And after we got locked in there, the P-47s love the highways and trains. That's their meat.

PS: Yeah.

MG: So what they did is, every time a train or a, the P-47 fighter pilots, we seen them through the window flyin' around and they'd just come down and go after the trains.

PS: Yeah.

MG: P-47s.

PS: That was the Thunderbolt, hmm?

MG: Yeah.

PS: Thunderbolt.

MG: Well, see their job was to make sure no supplies go on the highway or any trains. They have to, and, they come off the ground when we were on details. They come off the ground 50 feet. You can see an American flag, when you're coming in at 425 miles an hour, single pilot, he don't know if it's a GI or a German. And, they peel off, and well we got out by civilians for the details. Approximately 100 men got sent to a detail. We was on the train all day, all night, all day, all night. We counted by approximation. No time. [unclear] I had no value of time. We ended up at, outside of Strausbourg, which is three miles from Poland. And that's where I spent my rest of my...

PS: Balance.

MG: …career in prison.

UP: When you were squeezed into the Forty and Eight...[1]

MG: Yeah?

[1] Forty and Eight is a type of boxcar, used in World War I and World War II, which transported forty men or eight horses. *World War II Encyclopedia*.

UP: How many men were, was it just strictly standing room?

MG: No, we were sittin'. No, you can't lay down. You can lay down in a guy's crotch or something, but you can't lay down. You can sit. We leaned back like. Lined up...

UP: [unclear] American...

MG: And one camp, one camp a box car.

PS: What time of the, what time of the year was that, do you know?

MG: Winter time.

PS: Winter.

MG: Coooooold! [chuckles]

PS: There was no...

MG: Snow everywhere.

PS: No heat...

MG: No, we don't have no heat there.

PS: …in the cars.

MG: They don't worry about heat. They don't need heat.

PS: Were there stops where you could...

MG: No, one can't.

PS: Unfreeze or...

MG: One can't, that's it.

PS: Yeah.

MG: Yeah.

PS: Now you've, then eventually you...

MG: Eventually I went to Poland and the farmers were--this woman was told by the Germans to run the camp, no, I'm sorry, run the farm. It was a 10,000 acre farm, with 2500 head of cattle. They had prisoners run the whole job. Now, they had what they call details, *arbeits*. *Arbeit* means work. And, on the detail of this camp, you may be approximately 300 people at that camp, I mean at, I'm sorry, at the farm, but you didn't know anybody of the, anybody umpteen ages down. Because it was kept separate bunches. That way we couldn't group together. Separate bunches to work on detail. And then, the woman that ran the farm, the woman who ran the farm, was bombed by the Air Force. And her mother and father and all the kids were killed. Because, that's why the Germans did not send anybody from the Air Force in there, I got news for you. If they did they would have expired in about an hour. And, she was cau-, she was really a very, very strict guard. She had the cat o' nine tails all the time. Every five minutes she'd just lash it all day long. Just for nothing, 'cause I didn't do nothing. And she would still lash it. Because she said, "The best GI is a dead GI." She said it all the time. "And, if I had my way--which I don't, because this is controlled by the military, I would make window shades out of all of you guys." That's her...

PS: She was brought in...

MG: …words.

PS: …Murray, from Germany, by...

MG: Yeah. By the Germans.

PS: Were there any Ger-...

MG: She was strict too, I'll tell you that.

PS: Were there any permanent German guards or *S.S.* [unclear] who were...

MG: [unclear] she had, on that farm she had the *S.S.* with her.

PS: Oh.

MG: There was about five *S.S.* guys for a hundred people. That's all they had. Five. And the *S.S.* guys, and he can attest and so can you, they'll cut, they'll charge their own mother 30 dollars and they don't pay 'em back; you pay 'em back 29, they'll kill you. *S.S.* don't, they're the youngest, they don't care about nobody.

PS: Mur-...

MG: I worked there approximately six months.

PS: With all of your experiences which you have certainly related very well, in the wildest stretch of imagination, would you say that Germans adhered to any degree whatsoever to the rules and to, for the Geneva Convention?

MG: Negative. They did not agree with nothing. The only thing they ever did was too much tortures. The only thing they ever did was put, send your name to the State Department as the only one that was done. And that was by a law where you, they had to notify the United States that I was a prisoner.

PS: Other than that...

MG: Otherwise...

PS: All the, their actions were cruel, heartless?

MG: Oh cruel [unclear].

PS: Inhuman?

MG: They were approximately like the Crusaders back in the time of the year 700.

PS: And yet Germany in the years prior to World War II, probably the most advanced society on this earth, they, their educational system, their, in the arts and sciences and...

MG: Right.

PS: And in every other way. They, their manufactured products were super, superior to most.

MG: But not on human beings.

PS: But on human beings they had no...

MG: No.

PS: No feeling.

MG: In fact the worst one that they even registered and take pictures of, and, and when I notified Intelligence when the war was over, they had one that it was the most biggest atrocities in the world, in the world. And that was on GIs. And this one is the one

they have millions of different atrocities. But this was the worst one I have ever seen it. You can't even go to sleep when you watch it. They even called camps in from all over and this was verified not just by me, where they take you in a, into one field day they have, a field day. They don't feed seven GIs, seven of them, GIs, and they put them in this camp in the middle of a, like a, an auditorium, no seats, no nothing. And they don't feed you nothing at all for seven days. And then they put turkey and four beers for seven guys. And you become an animalistic human being. And you had to fight to get it. Now, what happens is, we watched it, and you can't go to sleep. If you do they'll wake you up. They'll watch you. And, at the end, they actually, the GIs will kill you. Six guys died, and the seventh one is just shot in the head so nobody will [unclear]. For they just, and, and they sit there and they drink and they have a big feast, [unclear]. And I notified Intelligence about four times. Yeah, I notified them.

UP: You saw that.

MG: I seen it, well I was sitting in the, about the fifth row up. I looked better you know at that, and we had to get up. It was like, like watching those VD shows, in basic, where you turn around you know and you gotta watch them. But I seen it. I [unclear].

PS: Did the Red Cross come in at all, Murray, during the period that you were a prisoner, in either of the two camps?

MG: Eh, Intelli-, excuse me, International Red Cross is allowed to go into any POW camp, and the Germans cannot touch them...

PS: Right.

MG: They cannot, they did let them in. But approximately 24 hours before we had it, in the auditorium a meeting saying the American POWs, the International Red Cross would be there. "You will be served food, fruit, and etc. and etc. per table." There were one per section before they want to set it up. "You'll eat no food. Don't worry about it. We have hidden cameras. We will know. They go home, and they ask about the treatments, everything is fine. They go home. Remember that, after the day is over, or the week is over." They served them the best, officers' quarters. "You will stay, you'll, right there. And when they go home, you will go home, in a pine box." And 90 percent of the GIs that got killed, officers or enlisted men, found out, well now the government found out is, they would send a card to the State Department saying that you died of pneumonia. Well then when the government figured out that so many of these guys died with pneumonia, they said, "Well, something's gotta be bad, and something you know. It's not kosher somewhere." So the idea was, the International Red Cross was there, they did question us about the treatments, but they knew themselves what, what the deal was, to, about the punishments afterwards. And we had to tell them what we told them. They were there. They asked the questions about the eating and everything. We told them, "Well, we just ate what they ate," and what can we say? We was buying...

UP: What, when you say punishment, is it because you grabbed for the food? It was...

MG: Grabbed for the food, or we would tell them, or eat the food, or you know, some guys, or well we would tell them, "The punishment here is rotten, boy, I mean, they do something and beat you every five minutes." And all this stuff. We didn't say nothing. We were scared.

PS: Didn't the International Red Cross, Murray, every, ever pop in unannounced and just see you in your work fields or...

MG: No. They never did. Because they said they couldn't, they couldn't guarantee they would see the prisoners. They'd make up an excuse that you...

PS: To your...

MG: Once in a while we did get parcels, once in a while. They had the what they call a Red Cross parcel. And of course the Germans would take some. Now this is just my case.

Tape one, side two:

PS: Interview with Mr. Murray Granger. Murray, you were speaking, we're, we've gone onto the other side, so, you know, continue.

MG: Well, they, I was on a detail, and approximately, I don't know, I was taken off the detail and taken out to another area, which was, and I told them, "Why we going there?" And they told us to, we had to [unclear] going for approximately two days TDY [Temporary duty y...] to another camp. And that camp, I was surprised, I had never seen it before. I don't know where it's located at. I can't even tell you the name. It was too secret. I didn't know there was a camp there until they opened up the bushes. Yeah. And it was a camp for Jewish POWs that they found out through leakage, through our own enemy, or ourselves. And there were some Jewish guys admitted they were Jewish and, "If they wanna kill me, go ahead." They did, not me. I figure I wanna live. Religion was religion, but I wanna live. And, there were only Jewish people in this camp, prisoners. Well they had a, and they started them off with 1200, and there was only 200 came out alive. They were--when they go to sleep they use chains on the legs, and they don't take them off. If they're there three years, for three years. And, they, they don't work. They just get beat every day.

PS: You say, Murray that there were 1200...

MG: 1200...

PS: Jewish prisoners originally.

MG: Right.

PS: And only 200 came out alive.

MG: That's right, in that one camp.

PS: And they were beaten and...

MG: They were beaten.

PS: Subjected to...

MG: Severely.

PS: You were subjected to, certainly, plenty of cruelty. Do you believe that this was even, even worse?

MG: This was even beyond sanity.

UP: These were American soldiers?

MG: American soldiers, yeah. But they, these guys that went in there like if my name was Goldberg and I don't give a God damn and that's the way I am, and do what you wanna do.

PS: Did--were you able...

MG: But not me.

PS: To speak...

MG: Pardon me?

PS: Were you able to speak to any of the...

MG: No, no.

PS: When you were in the, your first *Stalag*, at B-II, there and then the second, were there any Jewish prisoners within your camp, B-II or the one in Poland?

MG: What do you mean, that they didn't know about? No, no, no.

PS: No, no Jewish prisoners.

MG: No.

PS: POWs that you were aware of.

MG: They were all Irish. There were some Italians and I didn't mean to say Irish, you know what I'm talkin' about. I mean they were--there probably was Jewish people but they didn't know about it.

PS: So the death rate there was 1200 originally living and only 200 who survived.

MG: Right.

PS: And a thousand were gone.

MG: Right. And that was a special deal.

PS: While a prisoner, Murray, did you hear at that time any rumors of the other Nazi atrocities against humanity?

MG: Never heard anything from, and I know of fellows that had been in prison camp that, from, in my camp, were caught in Africa in 1942 in the first, when they were up there with Desert Rat Rommel. They was captured with Rommel in 1942, the beginning of World War II. And they had never, nobody has ever heard, I don't care what it is, I guess, no communications set into a, even you could talk to a guy from the plain infantry he never heard of any. He never heard of it.

UP: That's what I was telling Phil on the way up.

MG: Nobody, no, we didn't know.

PS: Well even those who were not captive...

MG: The only thing I heard was, the only thing I did hear at a camp was when we was on a march. At the end of the war we was on a march. And Joe will tell you all about it, and I will. And, that, Roosevelt died, and we didn't believe it because they lied to us so much. We said, "Yeah, I know, so did New York got bombed too."

PS: That was about three or four weeks before the end of the war.

MG: Yeah.

PS: Around in April.

MG: That's all I heard.

PS: Murray, do you remember the approximate date, and by whom you were liberated? Americans? British? French? Russians?

MG: Yeah, we got liberated possibly, the war was over May 3rd and we got liberated approximately around July 1st. Lack of communications.

PS: July 1st?

MG: Yeah. July 1st.

PS: Not until?

MG: No.

PS: That's a month-and-a-half that...

MG: There were no communications.

PS: From May...

MG: Lack, for a lack of communication.

PS: From May 3rd to, that's almost two months...

MG: I know. Lack of communications...

PS: That you were still...

MG: From the high jobs to the low jobs.

PS: Well the area of the, this last...

MG: The farm...

PS: *Stalag* you were in, was that not overrun by the Russians?

MG: The Russians overran it, yeah.

PS: Yeah.

MG: They were...

PS: But you were still, oh, then the Russians...

MG: The Americans [unclear] out of that camp, see.

PS: Yeah.

MG: We were overrun by the Russians, Russian tanks.

PS: Oh, oh, what...

MG: Well we got...

PS: Do you remember the date, approximately the date of...

MG: Liberation was July 1st.

PS: The Russians hadn't gotten in till that time?

MG: Well, it wasn't the idea. It was just the idea that they were hiding us and they, and so the communication from high headquarters to the farm I guess was cut off by the Americans and we had no communication. It was just one of those things.

PS: But there were then no Germans who were...

MG: No.

PS: There to oppress you?

MG: No.

PS: The woman who was...

MG: In fact worse than the POW camp was fellows that I know that was in the army and they got killed June 1st. Now the war was over May 12th, May 3rd in Germany. June 1st these guys were fighting the Germans and got killed! The Americans too, they were fighting them, because they were out there in the, suburbia, fighting, and that happened. There were a lot of guys died after the war was over. Infantry guys, regular infantry guys. Because they were up in the hills or in the mountains somewhere and no communication could get to them. It was one of those things.

PS: But Murray when the Russians did advance and overran the site of your concentration camp...

MG: Right.

PS: The POW camp...

MG: That place, yeah...

PS: Were the German guards and the German women that all, the camp personnel, overseers still there when the Russians...

MG: They were still there but they lasted about five minutes.

PS: Yeah.

MG: They killed them all. Our liberators killed them.

PS: Can you describe your general physical and mental condition at the time of liberation.

MG: [chuckles] Well, like an animal put in a cage. If you came over to me, if a woman came over to me, well, you don't see many women. I mean maybe you see them in towns, you know, so, if a woman come over to me I wouldn't even know what to do with them. Your mental state is--I think for every POW talking, it's rough because you're let out too soon. In other words, here you get beat up, doin' by a ruler, and all of a sudden the military says, "You're free! Go home!" What do you mean go home? Your mind just doesn't take it, your mind doesn't work that fast. I don't care what's...

UP: In other words you were brainwashed.

MG: You were...

PS: Yeah.

MG: Brainwashed so much that, and I know a lot of guys from, Air Force guys who tell me this, the same way, they just, you're, of course your nerves are gone. You had no nerves at all, because you're under pressure at all times. You know, you're thinkin' about survival. And you're an animal. And the main thing I think about is what a POW if somebody asked me, "What is a POW?" I think it's a two-legged animal, locked up in a cage ready to be sprung. They lock you up for four years, they throw you a bone, they give you no utensils, no toilet paper then they say, "You're free. You can go where you want. You can go eat." You're hungry, you're starving, you can't eat because your stomach is swelled up for 54 feet, and Joe will tell ya everything else. And, with his story he'll tell you that even on the march the atrocities was worse and that when guys fell down they shot them then and there.

PS: Yeah.

MG: So it was just a mad chaos when we came back to the American lines. I didn't salute nobody. I thought I was a gorilla. An officer came over to me. He told me to sit down. I'd say, "Shut up." And he'd say, "You're gonna get court martialed. Are you a new officer?" And I told him, "I could care less what you do, buddy. I went through a court martial." And you think I'm worried about a court martial? Until the medics took over, then they controlled.

PS: Would you say that the processing of the ex-POWs and communications and arrangements made for your return were reasonably efficient?

MG: Oh yes.

PS: The time period was rapid and...

MG: It was pretty good. I don't know if Joe would say, but I think it was pretty good. We went down to what they call Camp Lucky Strike in Chesterfield in Le Havre, France.

PS: Near Le Havre. I was there.

MG: Yeah. We was up there, and then they processed you out. But when I got there, approximately from, prisoners got there approximately 1:00 in the morning. They said, "Go to the mess hall, and I'll cut you up a chunk of meat." And you know because we couldn't eat anyhow. A chunk of meat and a cup of coffee, you know. And, they said, "You want to go home fast? You start processing now." 1:00 in the morning we processed all night, all day, 24 hours, even Sundays and no holidays to get you back home. When we did come back to the States, I went back on a, Le Havre, I went back on a prison ship. And, you couldn't sleep downstairs because we was above deck. We was upstairs, you know. Above deck, and that thing was clanging from the stacks to the troop prison into New York City. The only thing was we couldn't get off the ship, because the band had to be over there in the morning.

PS: Yeah.

MG: And that was the roughest part of the whole thing, even prison camp. They make you stay in--on the ship playing songs and all that stuff. And they say, "Well, the Mayor won't be out till 9:00 in the morning before we can pull in." I was about ready to jump a few heads.

PS: Murray, when you were liberated, did you run into very much trouble straightening your name, the name problem out so your family could be notified?

MG: Well, I did not, because we was allowed one phone call...

PS: Oh, oh.

MG: So I called up my...

PS: I see.

MG: For 20 minutes each POW there, and I called up home and then I told them I'd explain it to them afterwards. And then he realized what the story was.

PS: And up until that time of your phone call...

MG: Yeah.

PS: They, your family certainly must have assumed that having heard nothing at all...

MG: Nothing. Just, the only time they heard was when I was, the morning report they got from the morning report off the First Sergeant, that I was missing in action. I was MIA. They didn't know whether I was killed, whether...

PS: Yeah.

MG: …I was [unclear].

PS: Then hearing nothing for fourteen months?

MG: No, nothing for fourteen months.

PS: They must have certainly assumed that...

MG: They assumed I was...

PS: You were killed.

MG: Gone, but they were getting letters, during the fourteen months from the State Department saying that, "I'm sorry, we didn't notify, we can't, still can't find him. If we do, we'll notify you, any, regardless of what time." They just, they couldn't take a chance. Because they would not only jeopardize me, not just me. It would jeopardize more, more of the other POWs, they got to also...

PS: Yeah.

MG: …protect them. They'd say, "Well, we're gonna go a little closer scrutinization," which they couldn't. They had to, they couldn't take a chance.

PS: I've reached just about the end of my questions. There's just one more, I'm more or less curious. In years after the war, there were various TV programs, series, that pictured the life of American POWs in German camps as constantly harassing their German captors, leading a happy existence, pulling all kinds of tricks.

MG: Mmm hmm.

PS: Now I myself was back and a civilian by then. And even though I was fortunate never having been a prisoner, I served through the war and in combat. But I myself, every time I saw those programs, I deeply resented because I thought that there were many many people who actually believed that this was the life of the prisoners of war of the Germans. Now did you experience any feelings, resentment? You no doubt saw some of those programs, right?

MG: We seen 'em, and I would say, naturally, we all had bitter resentment. I mean, we were ready to tear the TV out or go after the guy. And we have a club, American ex-POWs, that in, that actually, when it first started, you know, when it first started, they sent a letter to Sommers. Is the name Sommers, in charge of National Command? We sent a letter to the program saying that, "Would you like to see the atrocity of all these thousands of people who came back, and talk to them?" But the United, but the TV program said that they can do what they want when they want. This is not Germany, and that's the way it is and up to today, you will still, if you put on your radio, or your TV, it will be Hogan's Heroes, which is a...

PS: Yeah.

MG: A false to the public. So that a POW can sit back and sit there while the other guys can get killed, right.

PS: And they pictured all the German guards as...

MG: Right.

PS: Blubbering idiots.

MG: We went ahead, and the organizations that we belong to today, which is American ex-POWs, Inc., fought that and why we fought with, with the President going to Germany and all that. And it's just one of those things. It's a freedom of press and the United States is free. And so on...

PS: Murray, this taped interview will immediately become a permanent part of the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College, and on behalf of the Archive Department I want to thank you very, very much for your very important testimony. Thank you, Murray, thanks very much.