Tape two, side one:

BH: And, where were we?

PS: This is Philip Solomon, interviewing Bernard S. Harman, for the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College. And this is tape two, side one. At the end of the side two, this is side one of tape two…

BH: Right.

PS: At the end of tape--side two of tape one, we were just starting to speak of the book that really I me-, I had just mentioned, I believe…

BH: I know.

PS: That I had just seen a page that really…

BH: Page 11, 11.

PS: Page 11. Well this is a poem.

BH: It's another poem.

PS: Dated September 3, 1944.

We know the death we face each day.
We volunteer and we fight that way.
Strafing, bombing, hurling death and destruction.
To the enemy we call.

And such. And it goes on. But the one I was looking at, at the end of side two of tape one, was a…

BH: 11, wasn't it?

PS: Oh.

BH: Page 11.

PS: Yeah, page 11, it was. Is a drawing, the title, "Legion of the Broken Wing." And this is such a beautiful, and the thought, legion of the broken wing. And it pictures a broken wing with the U.S. Air Force insignia, and then a propeller. Now Bernie, I'd like you to speak a little bit about the book. For me, it's almost beyond words. It's something you did to fill in your time to keep from going nutty. Can you go through possibly and give us a little idea? The book is really one of the finest relics, one of the finest examples of WWII. A man who was in a prison camp, who had seen his missions as a, as a gunner on a B-17 flying fortress. So Bernie, maybe you can give us a little description of how you developed this book, and the contents. It really is something that must be seen by, by more people. And I'd appreciate it if you could give us a little description, a few words, some words about it.

BH: Well, before we go any further, Phil, I just want to mention one other thing. You had asked me about the heat. We didn't have any heat. How we kept warm and all. Well I want to give you a little for instance right now, that I forgot to mention before. I happened to get a very, very bad case of frostbite in the camp, from no heat, from the cold weather. Now I wasn't the only one. There were many, many other prisoners also got

frostbite. And when I got out of the service, I got a 10% disability for frostbite at that time. And I went through all the years with the frostbite. And then finally after, well, I'd say, almost fifty years, all of a sudden I started to get sores on my feet, on my toes. And I went to a podiatrist to get my nails cut. He'd take care of my feet once every couple of months. And he saw this. He says, "Boy." He said, "What is that?" He says, "What's these sores on your toes?" They just appeared, just like out of the daylight, I said, "I don't know. What is it?" So he checked my circulation. He says, "I'm afraid you've got a, I'm gonna might have to bypass in your leg, because of the sores." But he didn't know what it was. So he sent me to a vascular man, on the same day. And he was worried, this doctor, and he sent me right over there and I came into the office. And the doctor's name was Dr. Herring. And I got on the table and he looked at my toes and he said, "Well, young man," he said, "Did you ever have frostbite?" I said, "Yeah, fifty years ago." "Well," he says, "Young man, that's what you've got." I says, "What do you mean?" He says, "You've got a recurrence, a very severe recurrence of frostbite on your toes now. All your blood vessels on the end of your toes are shot. No circulation goes in." And he says, "It showed up more so now, you're fifty years older." So I put my money on the table and so we started to treat it. We put medicine. My wife put medicine and bandages on there. And I've got them on eight toes, four on each foot. And I tried to get an increase from the V.A., but I'm still waiting to hear. I haven't heard a word from them. But you were asking about the cold weather. Now that was my own experience, because I got the frostbite. Now there was other cases naturally.

PS: When you had the frostbite, when it occurred, were you given any, any cr-- it was on your feet?

BH: Nothing, never nothing. Nothing at all. No medical treatment, no nothing.

PS: No additional protection?

BH: Nothing.

PS: Or nothing to help?

BH: Nothing at all. Nothing. Nothing. You just existed from day to day and hoped you lived into the next day. Like I say there was many days we thought we were gonners, but luckily we came through. Now, as far as this book goes, Phil, when I received this book from the Red Cross, which I appreciate it now…

PS: Which was a blank, blank book.

BH: Yeah, it was an empty, it was a…

PS: Yeah, a blank book, blank book.

BH: A never used book. It was a brand new book, blank. And I looked at it and I said, "What am I gonna do with this book?"

PS: They were just blank pages.

BH: And I didn't know what to do. Yeah, it was blank pages. So finally I said to myself, "I don't know, maybe I should do some kind of writing in that book." And I think the first couple of times I was thinking about it, I saw some of my fellow prisoners, and a few of them happened to be artists or writers or something. One of them, he asked me, "Let

me draw in your book." So I had one guy draw me a picture. Next thing I knew I had another fellow draw me a picture. I kept going around the camp. I had another one writing a poem. I did some writing myself in there.

PS: Did any of the others have books similar to this?

BH: I don't know anybody else that had a book, that I know of.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Even today I don't know of it.

PS: Yeah. Well the fact that you were…

BH: And…

PS: You did not request this book.

BH: I didn't request the book. They just sent it to me. I had requested a clothing book.

PS: And, but the, yeah, but you certainly, they sent it to the right person.

BH: So maybe God was with me and wanted me to get this book…

PS: Yeah, I don't think, I don't think anyone could have done more…

BH: See?

PS: …with a blank book than you have done with this book. It blows, I, I wish I had been the, the command of the language to tell you…

BH: Yeah, that's what I wish, too. I don't have that command of the language.

PS: Yeah, well, you've certainly expressed in this book so much.

BH: See? Now, what happened here, you see, each individual prisoner, quite a few of them, made little comments and write, and drawings in my book. Some of them made poems in the book that they made up themselves. There are some beautiful pictures in here that are just made it in their own way of doing things. And some of the poems are so, if you read some of these poems, they really hit you to the heart.

PS: Yeah, oh absolutely.

BH: If you read them, if you take the time to read them. And some of these pictures are authentic pictures, you know.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Some of them, and you see what a barracks looks like here, a camp scene. I've got one of the sketches in here.

PS: Yeah, some of the pictures and cartoons, or caricatures are, during the war the, Bill Malden was a very famous cartoonist.

BH: Bill Malden. I remember Bill Malden.

PS: And a lot of this looks like the work of a, of a Bill Malden, who drew every issue of *Stars and Stripes* and…

BH: Now here's a, I just happened to open this page here now. A "Moon-o-Gram [phonetic] to Mom".

PS: The "Moon-o-Gram to Mom".

BH: The "Moon-o-Gram to Mom". One of the prisoners wrote this as thoughts. He was thinking of his mother at the time. And actually he was sending the message to his mother, in this book, hoping that I come out with this book alive.

PS: Yeah.

BH: So he wrote this poem, which I, it hit me to the heart. I don't want to read the whole thing. It would take too much time. But it really is pathetic the way he wrote this book and what it meant to him. And I'm glad I can get it back and let other people read it.

PS: Did his mother ever see that?

BH: I don't know. I really don't know. I lost touch. I should have got their names here. [unclear]

PS: Yeah. Oh, oh, you don't have the names.

BH: Yeah, I should have made them sign their names.

PS: The poem that's written was in a little, like a full moon.

BH: Yeah, and just…

PS: Colored, the golden, yeah…

BH: Well he's looking at the moon and thinking of his mother.

PS: Yeah.

BH: He's dreaming in plain words of home.

PS: Let me, and there's quite a lengthy poem.

BH: See, he's dreaming of home.

PS: "The thoughts of moon now almost fall / Slants past the window blind. / Those silver beams are messages / from those left behind." You know, I can hardly even look at this book without…

BH: You see what I mean?

PS: Choking up and tearing up.

BH: Now this is actually what the guy felt.

PS: Yeah. That is only the first few lines, a beautiful, beautiful poem…

BH: "I take my answer back to him, / A mom-o-gram to her, / Deliveries are guaranteed. / The moonbeams all concur." Now that's really a poem.

PS: Yeah. Want to read that first, the first stanza again.

BH: This here?

PS: Yeah.

BH: "The frosted moon now almost full, / slants past the window blind. / Those silver beams are messages / from those I left behind."

PS: That's so beautiful.

BH: See, he feels from the heart.

PS: Yeah.

BH: These things are straight from the heart.

PS: Yeah, and remember, this was written by a boy maybe 19, 20 years old.

BH: 19 years old. That's right. Yeah.

PS: A prisoner of war in Austria, a captive of the Germans, and not knowing whether his family left behind think of him as dead.

BH: Yeah. I'm just going to read the last paragraph now. I think this really hits home. "The Mom-o-gram seems business like, / Though still serene and calm. / He checks one prisoner of war / One Moon-o-gram to Mom." Now this is, this is really something.

PS: And you don't even have the name. He did not, this was in…

BH: I should have put that in.

PS: The book that I described. One of the pages of the book, the whole thing is just beyond description.

BH: Now here's another one. "Last Flight." Another fellow wrote about his last flight before he got shot down. This is a baseball team. [unclear] reading here. Actually to appreciate everything you'd have to read the book.

PS: Yeah.

BH: There's so much in this book that I can't go over everything. But I will say this, I also had a, and this is 1943 to 1944, I wouldn't say much, but I have it in the book here, up until March of 1944, I guess it is. [unclear], no, this should be up, yeah, March of '44, right before we evacuated the camp. I would say at least 75 to 100 air raids that we were under at the camp that we sweated out, that we were under the bombs that the Americans were dropping.

PS: Yeah.

BH: So I have a list of those in here. And I know there's something else of interest I would like to comment on here. In the back, the book actually consists of quite a few poems, and drawings, from fellow prisoners, and also some German newspapers and some German writing, and also some cards from Europe. Prague, Czechoslovakia. Austria. And then I made some comments, myself, of incidents that happened during my stay there, which I really want people to read more than anything else, because actually that describes a lot of things that had happened while I was there. Now this, this here must be at least…

PS: Was this a swastika I saw in this…

BH: This is at least a couple of hundred incidents that occurred in the camp. What's this one? Oh.

PS: We're looking at a page…

BH: [unclear]

PS: With a German swastika at the top. Was that when you received the book or…

BH: What do you mean?

PS: Does that relate to the…

BH: No, that relates to the speech…

PS: Oh.

BH: That a German general made. It was a German speech delivered to the POW's, myself and other prisoners, the rest of the prisoners. "Although this took place

over 11 months ago, I can still recall some of the words in a speech that a German officer made when I was leaving the last *Dulog* in Frankfurt, Germany for Krems, Austria. This goes back to when I was first captured." Now the reason I remember this is because it was written down. I don't know if I would have remembered it now.

PS: Yeah.

BH: But since it's written down, it's bringing it back to me. "July, *Luft* III in Frankfurt, Germany," which I described before, for Krems, Austria, which is my permanent camp now, he said, "Remember, gentlemen. We are Germans. We are warriors. We were born to fight. We are not afraid to die. My men will shoot you down, without mercy, should you wish, should you fail to carry out my orders. These soldiers, gentlemen, are German soldiers, who have orders to kill you. You will not get away. You are all Americans. Your country, your people, and your flag will be judged by your conduct, so behave, gentlemen, behave. Do not try to escape, or we will shoot you. We don't want to wound you. We want to kill you." Now this was an actual speech that I, I [unclear] here. Because I don't remember it too well now. But after I read it then I remember it.

PS: Yeah, you're reading the words. Remember…

BH: [unclear]

PS: That this book, most of the writings were from a kid, what, you were 18, 19 years old, Bernie?

BH: 19.

PS: And the, this, the, although they weren't physically manhandled…

BH: [unclear].

PS: Just the torture…

BH: See here's another one, see. You asked me about a cemetery. You remember she asked me about a cemetery now?

PS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BH: This is right up in here with May 29, 1944. From the French…

PS: That's still almost a year before liberation.

BH: Yeah. This was from the commander of the French prisoners, who was stationed further up the road. And he was hospitalizing friends. He wrote a letter to our commanding officer because we commemorated, we, when they buried him, in the cemetery. There was a cemetery up the road that they buried anybody that died. French, Russian, American. No matter who you were, you got buried up there. That's the cemetery that Josey was talking about. Now he died there, this officer, and we paid our respects to him as they passed with the funeral. So their officer was acting our commander in charge, Sgt. Hertenbach. He was the one in charge of our camp, for commemorating the General. See those are the kind of things that are in this book. And then some of these incidents, I just want to bring a few of them out. I mean, "The Crash Landing Which Started My Life," "The Prisoner of War Life," "My First Night Spent in Germany Sleeping on the Floor." Here's another one. "The Time Spent in the Cell at Dulag III, Frankfurt, Germany,

crowded into a 6' x 12' room with seven other American airmen." Oh here, there is a meal. "The first meal at a transit camp, a potato soup and cigarettes, which were thrown to us by Russian prisoners in the next barracks. The bombed cities, through Frankfurt."

PS: Yeah, this book, it's a shame that more people can't look at this book and appreciate the, all the sentiment behind it.

BH: Here's another one I want to read to you, Phil.

PS: Yeah.

BH: "The train ride from Frankfurt to Austria, namely in Krems, on the Danube, in a boxcar with 48 other men in the car, three nights and three days' journey with our shoes taken from us." So we couldn't escape. It's called "The Shoes." [unclear] prison camps. "The last time we saw our officers in the *Lag Luft*, when we were separated. The dilapidated conditions of the barracks upon arriving in 17B, also the reception we received from the prisoners already there. The first night Chaney," that was one of my crew members, "and myself slept on the floor in barrack 34A. The first day I received my Red Cross parcel, also sweating out quite a long line to get a pair of decent shoes." Now most of these things in here are actually are the, are intimate. They actually should be read. If anybody gets a chance to read this book, this should be the one. Here's another one. "Fifty shots were fired in the night when a fellow prisoner was attempting to escape. The first baldie we received here, and how funny we looked."

PS: By baldie…

BH: Well here's a military, "military funeral procession for Robert Livingston who died of pneumonia," He was the only one I knew that died.

PS: From your…

BH: From our camp, yeah. "Taking a shower in the rain because water was turned off by the Gerries." Gerries were the Germans. "Daily funeral processions of dead Russians passing by us." Now right next to us was a Russian prison camp. Right next to us. In between the camp there was a, like a, a slit trench. And the Russians really were beat. When I say beat they didn't get nothing. We were in bad shape, but they got less and less than we did. So when we got, let's say, a Red Cross parcel, we had, sometimes we had sardines. And you know, when you open a can of sardines up, you've got oil in there.

PS: Yeah, yeah.

BH: So we would eat the sardines, and then we would take the can and throw it into that trench which was right here, see? Now when we could throw it into the trench, the Russians would jump in and get that sardine can…

PS: Yeah.

BH: And lick out the oil. That's how hungry they were. See, in the camp right next door. Yeah, listen to this one. "Shortie Fried, a fellow prisoner, was sleeping on a table during the winter, because the fleas were so thick in his bunk that he couldn't sleep." See?

PS: And you had no means of combating the infestations, or, nothing was done about it?

BH: Nothing. Now let's see. "Several number checks in the mud and rain and cold of winter, which lasted anywhere from three to seven hours. Shakedowns in the middle of the night by the Germans."

PS: Now that three to seven hours, that was totally unnecessary.

BH: Well, they kept you out there. That's the way they did it.

PS: I mean for no reason other than to torture you.

BH: That's to keep you out there and to give you a punishment some way.

PS: Bernie…

BH: Go ahead.

PS: Was the Red Cross very much, or of any comfort and assistance while you were a prisoner of war?

BH: Well, all I could say is this. I think the Red Cross intentions were well, were sincere. But I think a lot of it had to do with the Germans not letting the stuff come in. Now what I mean by that is one day, I got it written in here. I'm going to tell you what happened. We were actually starving. I mean we didn't have any parcels. And we hadn't gotten a parcel for about three months or so. And the Germans claimed that they were bombed out, and in the bombings, the trains, and all the Red Cross parcels got ruined. So we couldn't get no parcels. So anyway, we hadn't noticed, after about three months one day the trains were coming in with a load. And we all presumed it was going to be Red Cross parcels, right? Because we were all looking forward to it. Anyway, the train pulled in and we were all waiting there like ghouls, you know? The train opens up, what do you think comes out? Toilet paper! Rolls and rolls of toilet paper.

PS: Did the Red Cross or any representatives of the International Red Cross, ever visit the camp, visit there?

BH: Oh yes. Oh they came in, yeah.

PS: Yeah. They did nothing noted to, now, when you [unclear]…

BH: Well what the Germans did then…

PS: You cleaned up for it?

BH: After we [unclear] the prisoners. So they cleaned up the camp.

PS: Yeah.

BH: They gave you a little bit more, they [unclear], you know, [unclear] in there. And then when the Red Cross came in, they would say it was--they knew it was gone but they figured rather than jeopardize our position in there in the camp, you know, by complaining too much, they let it ride. Now what they've done after they got out of the camp, I don't know. I don't know if they complained to the States, you know, the Red Cross, or not.

PS: Right.

BH: But they couldn't do anything because we were the prisoners, and they figured they would jeopardize our position if they, you know, spoke too much. But I think they'd done as much as they could. I think so.

PS: Now we're coming toward liberation. Now what was keeping you and your fellow prisoners, probably physically and mentally able to accept this with hope, your hope that--what I'm, what I want to ask you, were you getting any kind of information, for instance on, when the Allied invasion, the turn of events on the eastern front with the Soviet Union, and the invasion of Normandy by the Allied armies, and their advance and their crossing of the Rhine, and the Americans and Russians and British getting closer and closer and closer, were you aware at all of the events of the war, the progress?

BH: Yeah, I would say, to answer your question, Phil, I'd say roughly after about, I'd say six months, some way, I don't know, a radio we got into the camp. How it got in, I don't know. It was under cover. And what they done, they had the radio and every night, say around 9:00 at night or 8:00 at night, they got the BBC on.

PS: Oh.

BH: British Broadcasting Company.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And we used to hear the report every night, even if it was during the night. They'd sneak in a report and paper that right to the barracks leader. And he would read out what's happening. So we knew that the Americans had invaded France and were going into Germany. We knew that the Russians were beating the Austrians. And we knew what was going on. We were just waiting for them to get into us. We were in the middle. And I think our camp was a little high because we had hoped they were going to come get us, you know? Then besides that we all talked and naturally talked about our homeland, America, and different stories. We spoke to each other and we kept each other's spirits up, you know?

PS: Were the German guards giving you any information at all about these events? Did they give you any information as to how the war was turning against them?

BH: No.

PS: And did you notice any difference in treatment from the Germans, when you knew through your radio information that things were definitely turned and the Germans were losing, losing, losing. Did you notice any difference in the attitude or treatment from the German guards?

BH: No, they were defiant to the end, as far as I was concerned. And very few of them would admit they were losing. Because the German propaganda was tremendous, even toward the end of the war. They were still winning the war.

PS: Do you think that they themselves didn't really know? That they were…

BH: No, I think they knew but they didn't want to admit it.

PS: Yeah. That they themselves were victims of the propaganda of the German government.

BH: I think they knew it but they wouldn't admit it.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Now, what made them change their minds was the bombings, when they started to bomb Germany badly, and the buildings started to go down, you know? You saw some in Berlin, I guess?

PS: Yeah, oh.

BH: And they couldn't help themselves anymore. See, they couldn't help themselves. What could they do? Now, towards the end there, when we evacuated the camp, I [unclear]. Do you want me to go into that now or do you want me to hold off?

PS: Oh yeah, I was going to ask you, getting to the point of liberation, Bernie. We're getting now toward VE Day, Victory in Europe Day. I think the official date of the German surrender was May the 8th, 1945. Now getting toward that date, can you…

BH: Yeah, May of '45, yeah.

PS: Can you tell us about the events of your liberation? Were you liberated by either the Americans, British, or the Russians?

BH: Mmm hmm. I just want to mention one other thing and then I want to go into that evacuation. One little thing. You asked me about cold and all. "Our first winter spent here in 1943 to 1945, when it became so cold that most of us had to stay in our sacks." That's our beds, so-called beds. "To keep warm. Many cases of frostbite." See that's in here. When I read these I didn't read that. Now, what had happened here, the Germans knew that they were getting beat at that time. That was in '45. And I think they, the way it sounded to us, they decided to get back the Americans, the American prisoners back to the American lines, because they were afraid of the Russians on the other side.

PS: When you said "they," you mean the German guards?

BH: The German guards. We were in the middle. See we were…

PS: Yeah.

BH: Austria was on one side, and the Americans were on the other side. The Russians were on one side, the east coast, or the east front.

PS: Yeah.

BH: The Americans were on the western front. And we were right in the middle. So when they started to bomb Vienna--really start bombing them and they were bombing them day and night--they must have decided to pull us out because they figured they were losing the war, and try to get us towards the American lines. So one morning, it was in April, I believe, it must have been about 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. It was early. A guard came in and said, "Everybody get up. Get your things. We're leaving camp." See? And we were looking, we were stunned, you know, from being awakened.

PS: When you say that they were concerned about getting you…

BH: To the American lines.

PS: Don't you think they were more concerned about getting themselves…

BH: Oh that could be too.

PS: …to the Americans rather than…

BH: But I think they wanted to save their face…

PS: Yeah.

BH: …by showing they were taking us back to the Americans, see? Besides being scared of the Russians.

PS: Yeah.

BH: They were scared of the Russians. Anyway, we all got out in the compound, and you took whatever you could with you. And I had a, I don't even know where I got a little bag from, but I had a duffel bag. I don't know what I got it from. But I threw an extra pair of pants in there, and I threw this book in there. And I threw some food in there, whatever I had left I threw in there. And I got in line with the rest of the prisoners. It was about [unclear] like blocks, a few blocks long, four thousand prisoners, just lined up. And then all the German guards were down the side. Hundreds of German guards with guns.

PS: Enough to control four thousand?

BH: Oh yeah, they were almost, they were this far apart, maybe three or four feet apart, all with guns. And they said, "*Raus!* Start marching." So we started marching out of the camp, all of us in unison, you know. And we started marching toward the American lines. Now, we marched in the fields. We marched all day. And then at night, wherever we were at night, if it was a, a, say something like Bear Mountain Park, you know, grass and all, you just laid down in the grass and fell asleep, until they woke us up the next morning. Again, no food or nothing. See? And then we'd start marching again. Then we'd march through glens and we'd march through quite a few big towns.

PS: Were the guards getting any food?

BH: Well they had a knapsack. They must have got rations.

PS: Oh, yeah.

BH: But their rations were so small, they didn't have anything.

PS: They probably weren't too well off either.

BH: Yeah, they were starving, themselves!

PS: Yeah.

BH: And we marched, like I say, all day. Then sometimes at night if we were near a, what they call a *Bürgermeister* camp, a farm, *Bürgermeister* farm. I don't know if you know what that is. One man, the *Bürgermeister* owns the, all this, all these little farms around and he's got the big farm in the center with a courtyard, with a big gate. So if we happened to come near one of those, they'd march as many of us as they could into that courtyard. See, and they had the chickens in there with haylofts, you know, and all that stuff. Then you just grabbed, laid where, you laid down wherever you could to get to sleep, you know. And what happened, when we saw chickens, we killed chickens, and ate. And we started to eat a little bit. So I got in this book, I can't, I'll mention it but it's in this book again. We were stealing chickens and eggs and all that on the way down. Finally, one day we're marching on the road and, I guess we were very haggard looking and everything. Because I even had dysentery on it. Luckily I had my extra pair of pants. And so [unclear]

God's gotta be with you. I had an extra pair of pants in my sack. And while we were marching I just got dysentery. And you know what happens with dysentery. It all went down me. I had my new pants, so I took them off and I threw them the hell away and took the new pants and put them on. And then I started marching again. I didn't wipe my, there was nothing to wipe yourself with. So, and we were marching along. All of a sudden, like from no where is, these big limousines came out. They had these convertibles, you know, with the window and…

PS: Yeah.

BH: You know? Open cars, the limousines. And it might have been about six or eight storm troopers in the car. Big guys. When I say big guys I mean like this, six foot five, 280, you know? With these tommy guns. And they roll in and surround us. There was about 20 or 30 of them. And they surround all of us. And they're all with the guns like this, see? Pointing right at us.

Tape two, side two:

BH: You didn't know Adolf, did ya?

PS: This is tape two, side two, again, Philip Solomon interviewing Bernard Harman for the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College. Bernie, you were just speaking about the storm troopers surrounding and brandishing the tommy guns, the submachine guns.

BH: Well anyway, they threatened to kill us if we keep stealing chickens and eggs or any kind of food along the way. They said if we keep doing this, it's the end. So naturally we stopped doing it. We were scared. We knew the war was coming near the end and we didn't want to ruin everything. Then we kept going. We went through a lot of towns, Linz. And I remember, and I think we were marching roughly 20 or 22 days.

PS: 20 or 22?

BH: 20 or 22 days we were marching. And finally we were winding up in the forest, somewheres near Braunau. Braunau, and that was in Austria I believe, too. Or no, it was Germany. Braunau, Germany. We wound up in this forest and we were all in bad shape. We were all, we were laying down. We just, we could hardly go any more.

PS: Did any of the boys actually fall out of the march, unable to continue?

BH: No, I, no, I don't think so. No, I think we all existed but all of us were pooped. I mean we were all…

PS: Oh, I would think.

BH: We were just pooped out. And naturally if one guy was a little weak we pulled him along. You know, we didn't let nobody drop. Now the one thing I ought to mention too on this here, on the way, I still remember, we were marching down the road and we saw a bunch of wandering Jews coming up. Now I don't know if people ever saw the wandering Jews, but that was the first time I saw them. And…

PS: From the concentration camps?

BH: They were labor camps. And all they did was march and march like we did. Then [unclear] they took them into labor and they worked. But as you walked along the road, you'd just see them lying on the road, dead, one after another.

PS: You could identify them as Jews?

BH: Oh yeah, I even talked to one of them, yeah. I gave him some cigarettes.

PS: Were they wearing prison…

BH: They had the Jewish star, you know, the Jewish star with the…

PS: And wearing prison uniforms?

BH: The prison uniform with the Jewish star.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And one guy stopped me and he said, "Please, please, give me something." And all I had was cigarettes. I gave him some cigarettes. Like I say, if they dropped, if one of them dropped on the ground, one of the Jews, they just shot them. They didn't, they shot

them. So as you walked along the road, you could see one Jew after another laying on the highway. They just walked away from them. And even the Gentile fellows, all of them, couldn't believe what they saw.

PS: Yeah.

BH: It really was pathetic. Anyway, after that, we were in this forest. And we were, I don't think we could have went any further. We were just laying there. We were pooped. And it was raining. It was very, very deplorable conditions. And even the guards I think were fed up already, you know?

PS: Well, they must have been.

BH: And we were just staying there, resting, doing nothing. We just couldn't go any further. And all of a sudden we see a motorcycle come up, three of them, Americans.

PS: Oh!

BH: Up the road, just three guys, three officers. And they came up, and we saw them start talking to the Gerries, to the commander. And the next thing we knew, the German commander got up, he says, "The American prisoners," whatever he called us, he says, "I am now releasing you to the American government. You are not prisoners. You are now Americans, in the hands of the Americans."

PS: And they were, became the prisoners?

BH: Yeah. Well anyway, a lot of them were bumped off. A lot of them were, we got, killed a lot of them too. A lot of them, you know, they just [unclear].

PS: At this point, Bernie, was this after the Germans surrendered, do you think?

BH: Oh no, this was before. Before. Before the surrender, right? Anyway, the three American officers looked at us, and they were all waiting in the field. They didn't have anything with them. So the American officer got up and he said, "Look, fellas," he says, "You are now in the, you are in the hands of the Americans now. You are not prisoners any more. And the only thing, I don't have no food or anything for you guys." So he said, "The only thing we can do, there's a town down the road about three miles. Now, I'm giving you the authority. Go down there, take whatever you want. But get back here, because we want to get you back home." So we started to walk. And then some guys got trucks. I don't know how we got them, but we had, the German trucks had like wooden stoves on the side. They were out of gas and all. They worked with wooden stoves, to run the car, the trucks. They just put wood in there to run the truck. But anyway, hundreds of guys were marching down toward this town, and trucks were going down toward the town, you know. And finally we got down here and the only thing we had was a bakery. So we smashed in the bakery, we took all the bread, threw it into the trucks, you know? We grabbed what we could and we all headed back to the camp. All we had was bread. Then we must have stayed there for about, I guess maybe three days or so, like that. And finally the rest of the American Army came up, and they, if I remember right now, they took us to a German factory that was in Braunau, and they told us to get in there. They wanted to give us shelter. And we went in there with beautiful floors, the enamel floors. Beautiful. It

looked like a very modern factory. But it was a factory. I think it was some kind of electric they were doing in there. And we just went into the factory and we just laid there, and the Americans gave us some food and all, you know. And about, I'd say maybe three or four days later, they flew us out of there into France. And then we came through Nancy, France. And that's where we found out that the war had ended, when we were coming through Nancy, France in trucks. They were taking us to Lucky Strike, Camp Lucky Strike.

PS: Yeah, yeah.

BH: And we came through Nancy and everybody was just cheering and cheering. And we thought it was for us. And then we found out the war had ended, see? So we all got out. They stopped the trucks. We all went into the bar. They had a French bar in there and we all had to drink the cognac or whatever you call it.

PS: When you say Camp Lucky Strike, to bring up to date, for people that might not know the meaning, Lucky Strike was a staging area for the port of Le Havre.

BH: Yeah.

PS: Going back just a moment, Bernie, you mentioned about coming across Jewish prisoners, who were in such deplorable condition and dying. At that point had you heard of the, what later became known as the Holocaust? Had you heard anything at all of the…

BH: Well, I think we heard about the gas chambers.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Holocaust. We didn't hear the word Holocaust anywhere.

PS: Well that didn't come till later.

BH: But we heard about the gas chambers. That's when we said to ourselves…

PS: And the cremat-…

BH: Boy are we lucky we weren't [unclear].

PS: Yeah, yeah.

BH: But that delousing…

PS: You did know then…

BH: Yeah, and water came out instead of gas.

PS: Right.

BH: See it was the same kind of incident. The only thing, they had gas come through and we had water come through.

PS: So you were aware to some extent.

BH: We were, we heard it somewheres. Now I'm not sure if we heard it on the radio, from radio broadcast or what it was, but we had an idea what was going on.

PS: Really, at that point there wasn't too much known, even…

BH: No, we had heard something about it, then.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And about the Jews being, you know, killed in the gas chambers. Now where at, I think it might have been from the BBC broadcast. I'm not sure. But we had some inkling of it.

PS: So then you finally arrived at Camp Lucky Strike.

BH: Right.

PS: At that point, was there any contact at all with your family?

BH: Oh yeah, I sent them a phon-a-gram, whatever you call it.

PS: Oh, oh, that's in the book.

BH: It's in the book here. That I had arrived, I was in Lucky Strike, and I'd get back to them, you know.

PS: When was your, then you, at that point I don't think they [unclear]. You went back to the United States by ship?

BH: No, no, now wait a minute. Now I was in Lucky Strike for about a month.

PS: Oh, that long?

BH: Well they kept us there to build us up.

PS: Oh, oh.

BH: No, I came back when I got…

PS: We were probably there at the same time, then.

BH: Yeah, I came up like this. They blew us up like balloons. Well, I don't know if you remember, we had egg nog and…

PS: Yeah, well we didn't get special…

BH: Well every few blocks they'd have an egg nog, in a full can.

PS: Yeah, oh yeah, yeah.

BH: And you dipped it. It had a, you'd just go over and take a drink.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Egg nog fatten you up. We were like little kids looking pregnant like a woman.

PS: So you were there that long.

BH: Yeah, about a month. And then they…

PS: And then…

BH: And then they sent us back by ship.

PS: Yeah.

BH: By ship. The crew had…

PS: I was there at the same time. Maybe [unclear]…

BH: Yeah, we were on the ship. We came back on a ship. Yeah, you might have been there at the same time, probably. And then when I came back here I went to Fort Dix.

PS: I went directly to Fort Dix.

BH: Yeah, well I went to Fort Dix and we got there one day, no I think we were there for a couple days. And that was, I think I sneaked into town, into Trenton. But anyway, one thing I wanted to tell you…

PS: Well at Fort Dix were you, yeah.

BH: Maybe I shouldn't say it but I want to say it anyway. When we came in to get the medical exam, we were all prisoners, ex-prisoners. When we got up to the line, we had a bunch of officers, you know, medical officers there. And we all got stripped down. We got to the first officer and he said, "Now, look, do you want to go home?"

PS: Yeah.

BH: "There's nothing wrong with you."

PS: Yeah. Otherwise…

BH: You understand?

PS: Yeah.

BH: [unclear] just walked around here. And, "No, I feel okay." And we all walked through. And when I got to the end, there happened to be a table there about disability. So I got a habit of picking up papers. When I walked in, right there I pick up a paper. So I walked by and picked up this disability paper. But I don't think three guys picked that paper up. And we just all walked through, nothing wrong. We went back to the barracks, got our uniforms on. They gave us our leave, our furlough, and we all went home, see?

PS: Yeah.

BH: So then I saw that disability, so I did get 20% later on.

PS: At what point were you able to actually telephone your family? Did, were provisions made for you?

BH: Oh as soon as I hit Fort Dix.

PS: Oh, you were able to call home.

BH: Oh yeah, as soon as I hit Fort Dix I called my mother, naturally. Because I wasn't married at the time. And then I told them I was coming home and they met me at 13th and Market, by the bus station.

PS: I came in…

BH: Do you remember [unclear]

PS: By bus from Dix to 13th & Market.

BH: [unclear] It was 12th or 13th & Market.

PS: Yeah, with my duffel bag and…

BH: Yeah, well that's where they met me at.

PS: So I was on, being re-deployed to, my outfit, to the Pacific.

BH: Yeah, well we went through the same thing. We went through the same thing.

PS: Bernie, we're getting pretty close to the end of the thoughts that I had and the questions that I had in mind. During these, can you at this, well, first, you probably experienced after the end of the war there were quite a few programs, radio programs like *Hogan's Heroes*, do you remember that, ridiculing really, making prison camps and the POWs seem like they had…

BH: Heaven.

PS: Full command. The, all the German guards were blubbering idiots.

BH: Yeah, I laughed at them.

PS: Yeah.

BH: I, I laugh at them.

PS: Yeah, well did you have any, see, I saw, watching those programs, while thank God I was all through combat but I was never a prisoner of war, I sat there thinking, "How many former POWs, who went through hell, and have much, were much the worse for it, must be watching programs like *Hogan's Heroes*, and resenting the fact that made, they made really such ridiculous, they made life look so different than what it was.

BH: I want to tell you something. First of all, *Hogan's Heroes*, I was, to me it was a farce. I never appreciated it.

PS: Yeah, right.

BH: From after what I went through. And the other show, *Stalag 17*, you remember that *Stalag 17?*

PS: Oh yeah, yeah.

BH: And when I saw that, a lot of people said to me after they seen it, "Did you have all that fun at that camp?"

PS: Yeah, yeah, that's what I meant, yeah.

BH: So I looked and I said, "Well, are you kidding me or what?" "Well, you saw that picture, *Stalag 17*." I said, "Get the hell out. Don't even ask me a silly question like that."

PS: So that was much like *Hogan's Heroes*.

BH: Yeah, well, now there were some moments when we were, I wouldn't say happy, but we had some jovial, you know, you crack a joke.

PS: Yeah.

BH: You talk to each other about the good old days back home and you laugh for a few minutes, you know. I'm not saying we were sad all the time, you know. There were some moments when you appreciated a little humor, in the camp itself, you know? But when I saw that, and then people say to me, "Oh Christ, is that the way it was in the camp? That wasn't bad!"

PS: Yeah, that's exactly what I had in mind, thinking that so many veterans of the prison camps must be watching this, thinking…

BH: Absolutely. I didn't appreciate it.

PS: No.

BH: For the way, they should have just said it was a comedy, not the real thing.

PS: Right.

BH: They should have made some kind of, you know. But actually a lot of people believe that's the way it was.

PS: Yeah, I believe so. That's why I re-, I myself, although I wasn't a prisoner, I deeply resented the fact that a whole joke was being made of it.

BH: Absolutely.

PS: They made it the, really the butt of all the jokes in…

BH: I know even when I see them today I, the…

PS: Yeah.

BH: I can't even watch them. Sure.

PS: Now, we've about reached, to this day, do you feel any, your thoughts, of course I know quite a few times, just as I do when I think and reminisce, I choke up. Now there are many times during this interview that you choked up quite badly.

BH: Yeah.

PS: I don't know if it will come through on the tape, but to this day, Bernie, do you feel any, any reaction, anything that you feel carried over from those days?

BH: Oh yeah.

PS: Physically, mentally?

BH: Physically I think a lot of it carried over, because I'll tell you what happened to me, to make it short and sweet. I attribute a lot of that to that experience I had. First of all, I had cancer when I came out, after, how long, '56 was it, Grace? About ten years after I got out I had it.

PS: And you were still, in your 30s?

BH: Oh yeah, I was about 35 or 36. I got it right downstairs here…

PS: Yeah.

BH: And I lost a testicle. They told me I was going to die. And I took 70 uranium cobalt treatments. And I tried to get it through the VA and they turned me down. And touch wood, I came out of it, and I was able to go back to work and all. And then in '82 I had a heart attack, and I had a bypass afterwards, you know.

PS: Yeah.

BH: That's in '82. And I came out of that, touch wood. And in '90 I had a reaction with fluids. And I had that taken care of. And then two years ago I had three bleeding ulcers. Touch wood, I've come out of that too, so I attribute a lot of it to that.

PS: Oh certainly.

BH: What I went through. But you can't claim anything.

PS: Bernie, I've about reached the end of my part of it. Is there anything you would like to add?

BH: All I want to say, Phil, is this, Phil and Josey, and I want to thank you for having this interview with me. And either way, I don't care, whatever happens, it's been a pleasure to talk to you. And if you feel you can help me with the book, I'd appreciate it.

PS: Oh, I [unclear]

BH: I think you may have learned something from the book. You may have learned something from what I had mentioned to you.

PS: Anyone who sees that book will learn very much.

BH: Well I think you appreciated what I have here. And that's worth money to me.

PS: Right. But Bernie, instead of you thanking us, on behalf of the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College, I want to thank you for contributing so much beautiful testimony…

BH: It's a pleasure.

PS: …to our, and I, this will become a permanent part of our Holocaust records. Future historians will be studying the experiences of concentration camp survivors, liberators, POWs, former prisoners of war such as yourself. So…

BH: I hope something comes out of it.

PS: Yeah. And again, on behalf of all of us, we thank you very, very much.

BH: I appreciate your time.