

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

INTERVIEW

of

HELMUT KOBLER

June 17, 19~~82~~ 93

by

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1 MS. COSTER: We are interviewing Helmut Kobler,  
2 for the Holocaust Oral History Project in San Francisco.

3 Today is June 17, 1993. I am Peggy Coster. The  
4 Producer is John Grant.

5 Why don't we start by just going over the Gestapo  
6 prison. You were sent to the first Gestapo prison, which  
7 was?

8 A. Which was in Saatz, which is in Germany.

9 Q. S-a-t-z?

10 A. S-a-a-t-z. Now it's part of the Czech Republic  
11 and it's called Rijadice (phonetic).

12 As I mentioned before in my previous tapes that I  
13 was pretty well desperate when I punched the fuel line I  
14 was digging a trench for and they handed me over to the  
15 Gestapo and accused me of sabotage.

16 I was kept for overnight in the camp prison and  
17 then I was handed over to the Gestapo. They came and  
18 picked me up and took me to the Saatz Gestapo. The Saatz  
19 Gestapo didn't do very much with me, except they were  
20 questioning me about why I did it and things like that.

21 Q. What did you tell them when they asked you  
22 why you did it?

23 A. I just told them the truth, that I was just  
24 fed up with it.

25 As a matter of fact, I told them the truth after

1 they beat the hell out of me. I first thought, you know,  
2 it was so cold, the pick slipped in my hand and just fell  
3 and I hit the pipe by accident. But they didn't go for  
4 that very well.

5 So they kept on beating me until I admitted that I  
6 just had enough and I just vented my frustration.

7 I remember that wasn't very satisfactory to them.  
8 They felt that I must have had somebody in the camp who  
9 was leading me on to do this kind of thing, because by  
10 that time I was 17 years old.

11 If I remember correctly, I was practically every  
12 second day I was taken in and beaten up and softened up  
13 and made to confess that I had helpers, that I had people  
14 who assisted me in committing this sabotage.

15 Also I was suppose to be sent to the Carlsbad  
16 Gestapo for more detailed interview.

17 In the meantime I was suppose to work outside the  
18 prison as a grave digger digging graves for the Saatz  
19 cemetery. I think I mentioned that to you before.

20 Q. You said they were trying to soften you up?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. How did they try to soften you up?

23 A. Beat me up.

24 Q. You don't mean they tried to like they took  
25 you to tea and tell you how much they would help you if

1 you cooperated?

2 A. No. That is not the Gestapo methods. The  
3 method was just beatings. I couldn't even say much  
4 torture. There was no torture. The beatings were enough.

5 Q. Was there torture?

6 A. No.

7 Q. What is the difference?

8 A. Well, to me torture is when you apply  
9 current to somebody's testicles or cut them continuously  
10 with a knife or sharp object or stick pins in them. But  
11 beatings to me was not torture. They hurt, of course.

12 I later experienced at the Carlsbad Gestapo torture  
13 and that to me was torture. This was just regular, you  
14 know, being kicked on the ground, being beaten with a  
15 stick over the head, having your ears boxed and tying you  
16 to a chair and kicking the chair over. Things like that.  
17 More to scare me than anything else. It certainly wasn't  
18 torture, what I thought would be torture.

19 Q. Basically it sounds like you started out  
20 trying to tell them it was an accident. They absolutely  
21 refused to believe that. Then they refused to believe it  
22 because you felt desperate?

23 A. That's right.

24 Q. What they wanted to know is you were in the  
25 resistance and they were unwilling to accept any other

1 answer?

2 A. That is correct. That I belonged to a  
3 group of partisan cell in the camp. Because apparently  
4 there were other little acts of sabotage which had nothing  
5 to do with me and I had nothing to do with them. But I  
6 got caught and the others didn't. Basically that's what  
7 they wanted from me.

8 Q. You said they beat you until they got  
9 names?

10 A. No. No names. They kept on beating me and  
11 telling me if you don't tell us the truth you will go to  
12 the Carlsbad Gestapo and they will know what to do with  
13 you.

14 Q. So you didn't break and make up anything?

15 A. No, there was nothing to break. I had no  
16 names.

17 Q. No.

18 A. To give them.

19 Q. I can't imagine being kicked and tortured.  
20 I can imagine how easy it would be to say something else  
21 even if it wasn't true while you were being beaten up  
22 because they wanted information.

23 A. No, I never felt like that. I felt hate  
24 toward them they were beating me up like that, but there  
25 was no names to give and I never thought to give just

1 phoney names. That would spare me. Basically they find  
2 out that was really the truth that was it.

3 Q. So now you were digging graves in Saatz.

4 A. Yeah, I was taken out every morning. You  
5 mustn't forget I was already in 45 and that was maybe  
6 January 45. So the war is getting pretty close to its  
7 end, which ended May 8th officially of 1945.

8 So things just were not running as well, trains  
9 were not running, continuous bombing around there.  
10 Everybody in the jail and in town were agitated, were  
11 nervous because they could hear the cannons firing. It  
12 was a very stressed situation.

13 Part of utilizing the Gestapo prisoners was they  
14 used them for digging graves and for disarming bombs,  
15 cleaning up the rubble after bombing attacks.

16 Q. Whose graves did you dig?

17 A. The job I got was digging graves at the  
18 German cemetery for Germans who died on the front or in  
19 the bombing raid or even died natural death. But usually  
20 it was German Nazi.

21 As I told you, I derived great pleasure from that  
22 job. It was a miserable, bad job but it gave me great  
23 pleasured to dig graves for those Nazi.

24 I recall they use to come and pick us up, an old  
25 S.S. guard picked us up about six-thirty. It was still

1 dark. And led us out of the city to the cemetery.

2 And then we had to start digging the graves,  
3 prepare for a funeral which usually was in the afternoon.  
4 When we had the graves dug and big funeral with the  
5 flowers and trumpets and fanfair and all that then the  
6 coffin was in the grave the people left, we came back and  
7 we filled the grave back up, arranged the flowers and  
8 left.

9 Usually we came back about five, six o'clock in the  
10 evening to jail. We got our meal and we went to bed. The  
11 next morning it was either to go to the Gestapo and what  
12 they called <sup>Vethör</sup> Fehrhehr (Phonetic). I don't know the  
13 translation. It's like an examination. They called it an  
14 examination.

15 So I must have been there about three to four weeks  
16 and then I was taken to Carlsbad, which really isn't that  
17 far. I have done that route now. It's not that far from  
18 Saatz. It's about a hour to drive but it was quite  
19 different at that time.

20 It looked like it took a day to get from there to  
21 Carlsbad. But I got to Carlsbad and it was the Gestapo  
22 was quite different there. There was no foolinig around  
23 with them. They were deadly serious and they were  
24 killers. You seen that the minute you got there.

25 Up to that point I remember that I still had some

1 civilian clothes on. That means I had a jacket, a sweater  
2 and shoes, normal leather shoes. Now there I was just  
3 stripped and all my possessions were taken.

4 I was examined, my rectum was looked into, whether  
5 I had anything stashed away there.

6 I was handed prison garb, which consisted of a  
7 shirt, no underwear, pair of pants, prison pants. They  
8 were not striped pants like we had in the concentration  
9 camp. They were just gray, kind of a grayish color and  
10 had a G on the back which meant Gestapo painted on the  
11 back of the jacket.

12 They were suppose to be clean, but even when they  
13 handed them to us nicely folded, washed, they were full of  
14 lice. I remember that.

15 The next morning I was taken out of the cell and  
16 taken upstairs and the examination started in serious.  
17 They had my file with them from the Saatze Gestapo. They  
18 started right out on the same thing and started out with  
19 just without asking me any question I got beaten up,  
20 punched in the nose and hit over the head with a club, a  
21 rubber hose, and slapped around.

22 I was bleeding. I was lying on the ground. I got  
23 kicked again. That's how it started without even asking  
24 me a question. Then the questioning started and then  
25 again.



1           What I remember more than anything was getting hit  
2 over the head with a rubber kind of club. Rubber about an  
3 inch thick. I was hit over the head and on my neck and on  
4 the back.

5           When I gave the same answer then they started in  
6 serious, what you might consider torture, what I consider  
7 torture. That was they handcuffed me, put my -- How  
8 should I say it? My arm, handcuffed arms under my knees,  
9 stuck a big heavy steel bar between it and hung my body  
10 between two chairs.

11           Q.       They put your arms under your knees like  
12 this?

13           A.       No. They put my knees like this. I can't  
14 do it now. I am too old. Between here and my knees they  
15 stuck this bar. My hands were handcuffed like this. They  
16 picked me up and put this bundle, because now I was just a  
17 bundle, with my knees practically at my chin, and hung me  
18 between two chairs and just beat me again like that with  
19 this rubber hose or whatever it was.

20           And that was terrible. That hurt a lot. I didn't  
21 tell them. After that I was sent back, dragged back to  
22 the cell. I was suppose to get it the next day again.  
23 The next day was pretty well the same way. I was tied  
24 handcuffed to a chair and so I couldn't protect my face.  
25 I was continuously slapped. Not boxed, or not punched.

1 Just slapped in the face. In other words, I was sitting  
2 something like that. My feet were cuffed to the chair.  
3 There was no way I could move my head. I was getting  
4 slapped like that.

5 The guy was sitting in front of me. I couldn't do  
6 nothing. Blood running out of my mouth. My ear drums  
7 were busted at that time. I only recently had them  
8 replaced about five years ago in Santa Rosa. They  
9 replaced one of my ear drums.

10 Q. So what did you do to hear all these years?

11 A. You can hear with a busted ear drum. You  
12 just don't hear so good, I guess.

13 But basically the consequences of that was I use to  
14 get infections in the ears for years and years, working in  
15 the tropics. Apparently anything can get in it. That's  
16 when I found out I have my ear drums busted.

17 So I remember these sessions. Of course, we didn't  
18 have mirrors or anything. When I got home I could feel my  
19 face. It was all swollen and all beaten up. That didn't  
20 work too well. Still I didn't tell them a different  
21 story. Again, not because I was brave. There was no  
22 different story to tell them. Even if I tell them a lie I  
23 didn't know what lie they wanted me to tell them.

24 So basically they just went at this systematically  
25 for a number of days. I seem to remember I was in

1 Carlsbad maybe three, four weeks, in the Carlsbad Gestapo.

2 In between these beatings and between these  
3 examinations, or special treatment as they call it, we  
4 were also taken out again outside the prison and did bomb  
5 disposal work. That was not too much. Usually it was  
6 maybe one or two bombs which didn't explode. They had  
7 their own experts. We had to dig the holes around it so  
8 they could get in it and things like that.

9 We did not actually dispose of the bombs. What we  
10 did is you see a bomb sticking out that didn't explode.  
11 It was our job to dig around it so the guys from their  
12 disposal unit could come and dispose of the bomb, explode  
13 it or whatever. And clean up the rubble. There were  
14 bombing attacks practically ever day on Carlsbad and the  
15 surrounding area. So there was a lot of clean up work to  
16 do which we did.

17 That's also the place where I told you, I don't  
18 know whether I told you, but to illustrate the hunger I  
19 had there was on one or two sites they built a latrine.  
20 You understand what a latrine is?

21 Q. Yes.

22 A. It's like Johnny-on-the-Spot here, except  
23 they dig a hole in the ground and set a little outhouse on  
24 it and that was for us prisoners and everybody else to go  
25 and do their business.

1 I went in one of them and I looked in and I seen on  
2 top of this pile of shit I see a piece of bread, part of a  
3 sandwich. I was so hungry I reached in and I cleaned it  
4 up as best I could and I ate it.

5 So that should give you an idea of the hunger we  
6 had at that time.

7 So between the hunger, the beatings and the fear  
8 some bombs we were digging out would explode, that was  
9 what I remember out of the Carlsbad Gestapo prison.

10 I remember incidents in there where a Gestapo man,  
11 I have seen it -- I was practically standing next to the  
12 guy that was shot. One of the prisons right in the yard  
13 and the daily apelplatz. I seen several prisoners being  
14 executed down in the yard.

15 Most of the executions were not even political  
16 executions. They were executions because the prisoner did  
17 something, tried to escape, stole something, or something  
18 like that. They were like summary executions.

19 I don't know whether I mentioned to you I couldn't  
20 understand the kind of animals Gestapo men were.

21 Particularly in this prison was that I remember  
22 that they needed somebody to help one of the Gestapo  
23 officers to move his family. So there were three  
24 prisoners. I was one of them. Another German speaking  
25 prisoner was with me. I don't remember who the third one

1 was.

2 We were taken in a car by this officer to his  
3 residence where he lived in the hills of Carlsbad. There  
4 he was with his wife and two beautiful children. One was  
5 about, I would say two years old. Another was four years  
6 old. Apparently his wife was moving out, moving to  
7 Germany. He was still staying.

8 It was very touching to see him, how gently he  
9 treat his children, how emotional he was about saying  
10 goodbye to them and so. This went on while we were moving  
11 the heavy boxes down into his car, the luggage and so on.

12 They were going to the railroad station. But them  
13 saying goodbye, it was so tender of a moment and I seen  
14 that same son-of-a-bitch kill a couple guys in the yard,  
15 in the appel yard. Well, just shot them. Executed them,  
16 you know. When I say killer, you kneel down and they shot  
17 you in the neck and you were dead.

18 Q. What was the expression on the face of the  
19 Nazi as they shoot a person, a typical expression?

20 A. I don't know. I never watched their face  
21 expressions so that I could study them whether he got any  
22 sadistic pleasure out of it or not. Usually there was a  
23 lot of yelling and crying and screaming going on.

24 I remember that he shot one and the guy kept on  
25 kneeling and same guy he shot him once more. The guy was

1 still kneeling. So he just kicked him in the side of the  
2 back so the guy falls over.

3 That was a tough Gestapo place, really tough. All  
4 they were concerned with was about the biggest crime you  
5 could commit was sabotage.

6 Q. Sabotage could be anything?

7 A. Anything, anybody accuses you that you  
8 committed sabotage; destroyed government property was  
9 sabotage.

10 Q. It could be anything from like stealing  
11 bread to --

12 A. No, stealing bread, no. Stealing bread is  
13 stealing. But stealing something, a camera, you know, it  
14 could be anything. The other thing was what made them so  
15 cruel was this was in Germany, you see. They were going  
16 against their own people. I was in a cell with German  
17 speaking officers, Army officers, even S.S. officers who  
18 got caught without a pass, you know, went to visit their  
19 families.

20 I remember one was a colonel in the German Army.  
21 He was very close to the front to his family so he went to  
22 see his family. He hadn't seen them for six, eight months  
23 they tell me. They caught him without the proper papers  
24 and so on, shoved him into that cell, and next day he was  
25 shot. He was executed.

1 I am just trying to recreate to you the tension,  
2 the things that were going on in there.

3 For instance, I remember being in the cell and  
4 there was a raid on Dresden. One of the big heavy raids  
5 on Dresden. The cell window was quite high. You couldn't  
6 look out the window. It was high. We could see in that  
7 cell we could see the flashes and feel the earth trembling  
8 from the bombing.

9 So we knew it's not going to take very long. But  
10 by the same token the more we knew and looked forward to  
11 the more cruel the Gestapo became. There was practically  
12 no more tolerance at all.

13 Finally I got -- I was told I am being shipped to  
14 Dachau. Dachau was quite a distance from Carlsbad.  
15 Again, if you drive it you can drive it about four hours  
16 now.

17 I and several others of that Gestapo prison, I  
18 would say about 20 of us, we were handcuffed and were  
19 taken to the station and put into a regular prison train,  
20 not the trains like cattle trains and so on. It was a  
21 regular box car, which was equipped with cages where there  
22 was suppose to be like cells, you know, maybe three, four  
23 feet wide and that's where we were put in.

24 Q. Facilities?

25 A. Oh, it had facilities, you know, where you

1 could go out. You had to ask the guards. There was a  
2 guard in each of the wagons. There was a toilet. There  
3 was no way you could jump out the window or anything like  
4 that because there were no windows and they were high. It  
5 was a typical train, which was used to transport prisoners  
6 on normal trains.

7 So every place the train stopped some more  
8 prisoners got in. Pretty soon we are full and we are  
9 about four, five cars. We are shuffled around one train  
10 station and the other one. Every so often hooked onto a  
11 passenger train until finally after about eight days like  
12 that we reached Dachau. We didn't get anything to eat.

13 I think first two or three days we got something  
14 but after that nothing. We got to Dachau and put in an  
15 outhouse slagge, which is kind of a barracks where  
16 prisoners are taken care of. Again, Dachau was not like  
17 Auschwitz, was not like Finectenslagge or anything like  
18 that but it was more like -- I would say you worked,  
19 younger people were in there. But it was a Finectenslagge  
20 in the sense that they did have ovens in there and they  
21 did have -- They worked you to death in there, if you are  
22 long enough there. What they didn't have was like  
23 Auschwitz where they separated the men from the women and  
24 old people went right straight to the delousing into the  
25 ovens, where this was not the case in Dachau.



1           What I seen was, as a matter of fact we came there  
2           at night. So we were locked up in this wooden barrack for  
3           about two days or so.

4           Then we were told to get ready, we are going back  
5           to Carlsbad. They didn't want us or they didn't accept  
6           anymore prisoners because the Americans were pretty close.  
7           That was what I was told.

8           So we went back into this, practically the same  
9           train with the cells in it. We went back to Carlsbad and  
10          arrived in Carlsbad about six days later.

11          This time I did not get even to see my Gestapo  
12          officer who handled my case or wasn't even taken for  
13          examination, but was just left in the cell and getting the  
14          same kind of cruel punishment you get in a normal Gestapo  
15          prison.

16          Again my job was at that time I remember I had to  
17          wash the corridors and the steps of the Gestapo offices,  
18          which were above. I was trying to find things out.

19          Sometimes I would kneel near the stairs and these  
20          were stone stairs and kept on washing, washing them and  
21          listening what is going on in the offices to find out.  
22          They were panicky. They were running up and down.

23          One officer came out and he noticed that I was not  
24          working, I was listening. So he took me in and he and  
25          some of his friends beat me up. I was out of commission

1 for about three or four days.

2 Then I found out they are building an air raid  
3 shelter at the Gestapo. The back drop of the Gestapo was  
4 a rocky cliff. Into this cliff they were driving a tunnel  
5 for an air raid shelter. Since I was working in the mines  
6 and being experienced in underground work in mines I asked  
7 this one guard about it and he told me, yeah, they were  
8 going in there, but it's not going very fast because they  
9 don't have experienced people in there. They can't use  
10 prisoners for that.

11 So I told him I worked in the mines and I know I am  
12 very experienced in this kind of work and I volunteered  
13 for it. It was outside the gate of the Gestapo. So I  
14 convinced this Obershotfurher that I am experienced and I  
15 heard about them building it and I would like to do it. I  
16 volunteered for it.

17 I got accepted. So I worked on that for about two  
18 or three days, I think. I got in -- When I got there the  
19 tunnel, they were blasting out of the rock maybe 50 meters  
20 in. That's about a hundred fifty feet in. They had a  
21 guard sitting outside.

22 It was somewhere around 18th or 20th -- No, 18th of  
23 March. It was still pretty cold in there. So the system  
24 was and I worked there with old German tunnel miners,  
25 which they were the bosses. There were four, five

1 prisoners on the crew with me.

2 The system there was if you to go to the toilet you  
3 go out and you get to the mouth of the tunnel and you  
4 holler out for the guard that you are coming out, that you  
5 want to go to the toilet and you go to the toilet and the  
6 toilet was again one of those latrines outside. I went to  
7 the toilet and I observed that already the guy watches you  
8 go into the toilet, close the door and he goes and closes  
9 his door of his watch shack and when you open the door to  
10 get out he comes out and you go back into the tunnel.

11 Q. What is this watch shack? What did he do  
12 in there?

13 A. A watch shack is usually a little wooden  
14 shed, a temporary shed where there was a stove and where  
15 the guards were sitting, keeping warm. All they had to  
16 watch was this opening in the hock, you know. A little  
17 further was the latrine. That's what I meant by watch  
18 shack. So they don't have to stand outside in the cold  
19 and freeze. They had this watch shack. It had a door, it  
20 had a stove and they kept warm.

21 So I it was about ten o'clock and I escaped. I  
22 really didn't even know where to run, where to go.

23 Q. Ten o'clock at night?

24 A. Yeah. So I ran up that cliff and on the  
25 side. I seen there was a big road, which I could see even

1 from out to the bomb disposal.

2 When I say run, I had wooden clogs on, wooden  
3 shoes. So I run as best I could in wooden shoes. I still  
4 had that same type of uniform on, a gray jacket, gray  
5 pants. I scraped the paint off of the G, so it looked  
6 like a regular walking jacket.

7 I just run up that hill and run up the road and I  
8 am out walking on the sidewalk, which was above. It was  
9 houses above the Gestapo. It was a road I thought was  
10 leading out of Carlsbad towards the border.

11 It was dark and I heard the sirens going off in the  
12 Gestapo. All of a sudden out of the dark I hear Stop,  
13 identify yourself. When my eyes got better, accustomed to  
14 it, I was outside a police station, a normal police  
15 station.

16 Again, you mustn't forget this was at night. There  
17 is no light, nothing. First of all, the sirens went off  
18 from the Gestapo but they could very well be air raid  
19 sirens too, because there were night air raids quite  
20 often. So there was no light whatsoever on the street.  
21 You got to accustom yourself to that.

22 When this guy said Halt, who are you, what are you  
23 doing, something like that. He told me to put my hands  
24 up. I put my hands in the air. He shone his flashlight  
25 on me.

1           He says What are you doing here? I says Well, I am  
2 going to work. I am working night shift.

3           Where? In that quarry down there. I have seen the  
4 quarry close by.

5           He said papers. No, I have no papers. I don't  
6 need papers to work. I tried to lie. I was talking  
7 German with him and I was talking the kind of dialect from  
8 that area, which I picked up, and just about when he  
9 finished the sirens stopped and another man walked out of  
10 the door and said What was that all about?

11           He said somebody escaped from the Gestapo. He said  
12 What have you got here?

13           Well, I got one of the laborers from that quarry  
14 here. Okay.

15           This man took his flashlight and shone it on me  
16 from the top down, stopped at my wooden shoes. So he knew  
17 I was the escaped guy. I am sure. I was trying to think  
18 whether I would be able to run away. Just at that moment  
19 I was going to beat it, you know, make a run for it and he  
20 says all right, go on. Next time carry your papers with  
21 you or something like that. That man knew who I was. He  
22 knew that I was the one who escaped. He let me go.

23           So then I made my way along that road and I walked  
24 all night long on the side of this highway. Come daylight  
25 I was heading for the woods, which usually were on the

1 side. Again, I just recently rode that distance and this  
2 was about, to the border from Carlsbad was about three  
3 hours max. I remember it took me at least three days.

4 So I crossed the border into Czechoslovakia, or  
5 what was at that time the Protectorate of --.

6 It was high noon. My intention was to get to a  
7 train station and try to catch a train to Brno and from  
8 Brno to Eventuates (phonetic) and Eventuates and go to  
9 Templestein (phonetic), where I knew there were partisans  
10 and hide out with the partisans in the woods.

11 Q. Was the rest of your three day trip was  
12 that pretty uneventful on that road?

13 A. It was uneventful in the sense that I  
14 walked at night along the road. Every time I seen a car  
15 approaching, the lights or so, I hit the ditch.

16 Just before I dawn I find myself a place to crawl  
17 in and sleep. That's about -- There was nobody chasing me  
18 or anything. Once I believed I crossed the border and I  
19 was kind of hiding out in a low undulating hill like and  
20 watching this little tiny village. It was like many of  
21 the villages. There were just a few houses along the  
22 street. There were no blocks or anything along the  
23 highway.

24 Most of them are farm houses, small farmers. One  
25 or two cows, things like that. At the bottom they have

1 living quarter, at the top they have haystack, the hay  
2 supply. So I seen somebody opening a door. They have big  
3 doors and little doors. Opened the little door. And let  
4 somebody out with a ladder. The man walks with the ladder  
5 away from this house and there is a young girl, maybe 16,  
6 17, kind of sticks her head out and looks up and down the  
7 road.

8 I thought well, I will try it. I went to her and I  
9 asked her where the nearest railroad station is and she  
10 indicated it's right up the hill there.

11 She says You are a prisoner? I said Yes.

12 You are an escaped prisoner?

13 I said Yes.

14 Are you hungry?

15 Yes, I am.

16 Come on in. She took me in. They fed me. I  
17 crawled upstairs into the straw above and they hid me  
18 there for about three days.

19 The father got more and more upset about it. I  
20 heard him tell the girl, tell two girls, they are going to  
21 have to get rid of me. I have to move. Because they were  
22 afraid if I get caught they are going to get killed for it  
23 too.

24 Q. Were they Czech or German?

25 A. Czech. So I thought -- I would have loved

1 to just stay there until the war was over. God, I got  
2 fed, I was warm, I got a place to sleep. I knew the war  
3 wasn't going to take too long.

4 Every night I heard them arguing about it  
5 downstairs. So they told me about it.

6 I said if you can help me get to a train station  
7 and get me a ticket I will be out of here.

8 So they decided -- I think the train left around  
9 about three p.m, four o'clock. They walked me to the  
10 station, in between the two girls, the two sisters and  
11 they were laughing and making jokes just like I belonged  
12 to them. There was a guard at the railroad station, as I  
13 suspected there would be. But seeing us so friendly and  
14 figured they belonged to the village and they bought a  
15 ticket for me and seen me on the train and that was it.

16 Q. Did they give you a change of clothes?

17 A. Yes, they gave me a change of clothes.  
18 They gave me a jacket which I put over the Gestapo jacket.  
19 Oh, they gave me some shoes.

20 Q. Were they identifiable?

21 A. They were gray working pants. The train in  
22 Prague I had to change trains. Again, I wasn't worried.  
23 Usually all the controls are outside where you get out of  
24 the train station, not out of the train. When you get up  
25 the stairs and that they usually had a control.



1           So I was able to switch trains very quickly. But  
2           the thing is I didn't have a ticket anymore. I only had a  
3           ticket to Prague. So the distance from Prague to Brno is  
4           about three hours by car, the train took all night.

5           Q.           Was this because of the disruptions from  
6           allied bombing and stuff?

7           A.           That not so much, but what it was was they  
8           stop at every station. There might have been some  
9           disruptions ahead that they were fixing. But it took,  
10          usually it took about 12 hours.

11          What do I remember on that train ride?

12          The train was stuffed full, which I liked a lot of  
13          people in them. The conductor was walking through the  
14          train and asking for tickets and he clipped the tickets  
15          with a little hole punch, little pliers like.

16          He came to me and there was no way I could escape.  
17          We were just so many people in the hallways inside of it.  
18          I was in a hallway outside, just kind of cabins. There  
19          was no way I could move.

20          So I just told him I am an escaped prisoner, I have  
21          no money, no papers, no ticket. He kind of nodded his  
22          head and next, next, and started clipping tickets all  
23          around me. So I got away.

24          Then I worked my way inside and I got a seat. I  
25          thought I am on my way, but I knew I have to change in

1 Brno. I knew Brno very well. I knew there are going to  
2 be Gestapo controls at every train station.

3 I said to myself I have got to get off one station  
4 before it hits the main rail station in Brno. I decided  
5 which little station I was going to get off. But I fell  
6 asleep and I woke up and the train was already in Brno.  
7 Everybody was getting out of it.

8 So there was no way for me to just go in the same  
9 stream of people. I tried to get out. Sure as hell you  
10 had to walk up a flight of stairs and there was three of  
11 them sitting there. Everybody had to pass by and show his  
12 i.d.. I had no i.d.. I got caught.

13 There was no telling them, you know, a different  
14 story. I just told them I escaped from the Carlsbad  
15 Gestapo and that was it. I was going make it easy on  
16 myself.

17 So I was taken to this infamous Gestapo prison in  
18 Brno called (name in German), which it was student  
19 dormitories. The Gestapo took it over and made a prison  
20 out of it. In there they believed me that I escaped the  
21 Gestapo from Carlsbad.

22 Why did I escape? I wanted to be with my family,  
23 my mother and so on.

24 They figured out somebody must have helped me,  
25 because when I escaped the Gestapo was the 25th of March,

1 as I remember it. When I got caught was the 7th of April.  
2 So where was I at that time and how did I get there?

3 So I gave them a story that I was just walking  
4 along the highway at night and hiding during the day.

5 Where did I get the train?

6 I told them I got the train in Prague.

7 How did I get to the strain station in Prague  
8 without being found?

9 Then where did I get the jacket?

10 Where did I get the shoes? They knew somebody must  
11 have helped me. So there is where I really got beaten up.  
12 They wanted to know who it was.

13 Q. Beaten up by your standards or tortured by  
14 your standards?

15 A. Beaten up. Beaten up.

16 Q. Did they get any information from you?

17 A. No. When you say torture, sometimes what  
18 they did is they hold your hand, your finger on the desk  
19 like that and with a rubber trunchion they hit you over  
20 the finger. That hurts a lot. But it didn't hurt any  
21 more than when you get hit over the head or slapped  
22 around, what I call slapped around.

23 No, it was just continuous beatings, kicking.  
24 That's about what it amounted to, but it was continuous.  
25 It was wounds and wounds. You get your face straightened

1 out a little bit. I had my nose broke. And things they  
2 did, they go and twist your arms into the back and hold  
3 you for that. I can't remember all the details of what  
4 they did. They did God awful things.

5 So in that prison there was again mostly  
6 partisans, freedom fighters and saboteurs. I remember, I  
7 think I told you about the executions every day. I had a  
8 cell up in the first block. This prison was built in a L.  
9 No, I should say it was built in an E. Like an E fashion.

10 At one of those between the two blocks there was a  
11 wall, wooden wall of boards with sand behind it. There  
12 were a couple stakes in the ground and that's where they  
13 shot -- No, there were three stakes in the ground. This  
14 is where they shot the prisoners.

15 Q. What were the stakes for?

16 A. They were for normal executions. Where the  
17 prisoner is taken and tied to the stake and shot from the  
18 front. That's normal official execution. That's what  
19 they were for.

20 But they did not use that anymore when I was there.  
21 What they did was they used the prisoners, took a whole  
22 queue of them, lined them up one by one behind the other.  
23 There were about four, five of the Gestapo or S.S. on each  
24 side of that queue and in the front was a guy who was  
25 killing them.

1           So the prisoners stepped one step forward, two of  
2           them made him kneel down and the guy shot him in the neck  
3           and he fell over. Then the next one shot in the neck. It  
4           was terrible to watch. I could watch it if I climbed up.  
5           My bunk was the third bunk up. I could see the  
6           executions. That's what I seen.

7           They were going every day at that time. They  
8           didn't bother tying them to the stake. There was this  
9           system where they were shot in the back of the neck or  
10          back of the head.

11          Q.           Who were these people they were shooting?

12          A.           Well, they were suspected -- I can tell you  
13          a good cross section what was in my cell. We were about  
14          20, 25 people in that one cell. There was five of them  
15          were caught with weapons in their hand. They were  
16          partisans, actual partisans.

17          I would say another six of them were suspected to  
18          have helped partisans.

19          There was one, two, three in for so-called  
20          sabotage.

21          There was myself, there was an escaped prisoner,  
22          escaped British prisoner. He was an Australian. He  
23          escaped and got caught.

24          There was this old man I told you about. So that's  
25          about the cross section of it.

1           These people, one was a teacher, one was a  
2 professor. Usually they were intellectuals. They were  
3 ones were suspected. The others were already, the six  
4 which were caught, were already sentenced but were still  
5 in the process being examined and so on because they  
6 wanted more names.

7           That's why they hadn't killed them yet. Three of  
8 them on the lower bunks were continuously in iron, leg  
9 iron tied to their bed. The hand was handcuffed to the  
10 bed. They couldn't get out. That was punishment to  
11 soften them up.

12           I think I told you one day the old man was pushed  
13 into my cell and -- He was an old farmer from out of the  
14 mountains. Must have been maybe 45. You could see he was  
15 hard looking, hard working farmer. He had a rosary in his  
16 hand. He was praying all the time. He was praying.

17           I asked him what he was here for? He was in there  
18 because his only daughter got married and they had a  
19 custom in the vicinity they kill a pig and the whole  
20 family take part in it and eat up the pig. People in the  
21 cities didn't do it anymore because they didn't have any  
22 pigs, but this custom was still very much in effect in the  
23 country.

24           A neighbor reported him. They arrested him and  
25 accused him of sabotage. Even though the pig was his, it

1 was not his to kill. They took it from the farmers when  
2 they could. The farmers usually had a good life. They  
3 had their own food. They weren't bothered too much.

4 Q. So did the neighbor get a reward for  
5 turning this guy in?

6 A. I don't know. I don't think at that time  
7 because it's too close to the end of the war.

8 Q. Why on earth did they do that?

9 A. I have a neighbor that didn't like me and  
10 this happens, except there a neighbor is a neighbor for  
11 life. I don't know why the neighbor did it. There was a  
12 lot of that going on. You couldn't trust anybody at that  
13 time. So he was sentenced right there to death.

14 Q. So in talking about sentencing to death,  
15 you are not talking about like a courtroom procedure?

16 A. No, no, no. He was -- One of the Gestapo  
17 officers says you are accused of sabotage, you did that  
18 you are going to die tomorrow. That's what I mean. There  
19 is no court.

20 I don't even remember being before a judge or  
21 anybody was. You go before the Gestapo. Maybe the guy  
22 who is doing the examinations and is satisfied you have  
23 committed that, well, let's kill the bastard. So the  
24 other guy above him authorizes it and that's it. That's  
25 the whole sentence. No, there was no court proceedings.

1           Anyway, this guy was walking all night long in the  
2 cell back and forth. Back and forth. Praying to God.  
3 God, you can't be a life for a pig. A life for a pig. A  
4 life for a pig. It's not possible. All night long. Some  
5 guys yelled at him Go lie down, go to sleep. Not much  
6 pity around there.

7           In the morning they came for him and took him down  
8 and shot him. So the atmosphere, they knew the Russians  
9 are pretty close.

10           Oh, yeah, I also remember one day in there at night  
11 we could hear the footsteps. There were tiles on the  
12 floor. You could hear their foot step outside in the  
13 hall. You could hear the foot step. You were on edge to  
14 see what cell they go into and what is going to happen  
15 again.

16           They pushed in two guys. Two guys brought a  
17 stretcher in with one guy on it and left. I tried to talk  
18 to them. They were Russian partisans. They were all in a  
19 fire fight. You could see some of the wounds, there was  
20 blood still. There was no doctor, no bandages. We tried  
21 as much as we could to tear off the shirt and bandage it.

22           This man on the stretcher apparently was their  
23 commanding officer. He was very badly hurt. I remember  
24 the blood dripping through one of the canvas stretchers on  
25 the floor. Didn't even move him any place after. They



1 were trying to keep him calm and keep him comfortable.

2 In the morning I heard the foot steps. About eight  
3 o'clock there is a lot of activity in the halls, cells  
4 opening and closing, and you know they are taking  
5 prisoners out, bringing them around and shoot them. So  
6 you listen.

7 By that time I was pretty scared. So you listen  
8 for the steps where they come to your cell.

9 To my cell they came and at that time I figured who  
10 would go. I figured it was between me and the British  
11 prisoner, because the other ones haven't had full  
12 examination yet. So I thought they are going to get me or  
13 get the Australian.

14 There was footsteps coming to my cell. The cell  
15 was opened. And they haul out the Russians. They make  
16 the two Russians pickup the stretcher and haul them out,  
17 took five of them, took them down and the guy on the  
18 stretcher, you know, they made them put down the stretcher  
19 and they told him to dump the guy on the ground.

20 The Russian either didn't understand it or didn't  
21 know it so they stood there and shot them standing up.  
22 Didn't even make them kneel down. One came and took the  
23 stretcher and dumped the guy on the ground and shot him a  
24 couple times. So that was it with the Russians that I  
25 remember.

1           So that was the kind of people we had in there.

2           Then all of a sudden the executions stopped. There  
3 were no more. There was a day, two days. You could hear  
4 activity going on, but not outside in the hallways.

5           Then all of a sudden we were suppose to move out.  
6 They took me, they took the British guy, they took a  
7 couple other people outside. Again, I thought that's it.  
8 We are going to get it.

9           We were led into a big hall like and made to stand  
10 with our faces to the wall, no talking. Just keep staring  
11 at the wall with your hands behind your back.

12           In that big hallway there were on one side windows  
13 and they looked out towards the execution ground. The  
14 hall was an old tullinary, you know, a place for physical  
15 exercises, physical education. It was fairly big. It was  
16 as big as a basketball court. There was four or five  
17 windows. They looked out to the execution place.

18           I could see boxes stacked, wooden boxes stacked  
19 about four, five high and the blood running out of them.  
20 There were just ordinary wooden boxes. They took them to  
21 the creamatorium and burned them. Apparently they didn't  
22 have time to do that. Must be at least 50 of them stacked  
23 along the wall like that. You see the puddles of blood.

24           So I was really scared. I thought they were going  
25 to kill us right there. I am waiting, waiting and waiting

1 and we were taken out, handcuffed. Still I was thinking I  
2 am going to get shot.

3 We were taken out into a truck, loaded onto a  
4 truck, and taken to the railroad station and there we were  
5 loaded into three cattle cars.

6 I think I mentioned to you again the Germans, where  
7 they had a little plaque inside the cattle car. It says  
8 four horses or 20 men, no more. We was stuffed in about  
9 200 prisoners.

10 (At this point a recess was taken)

11 A. Where did we stop at?

12 Q. The end of the Gestapo and you were on the  
13 train. Go ahead.

14 A. Well, as I stopped saying the first thing I  
15 notice getting into that cattle car, the box car, was the  
16 little plaque on the top saying four horses or 20 men and  
17 we were pushed in about 200 prisoners. We couldn't bend,  
18 nothing. Just stood there like pressed sardines. We  
19 couldn't move or anything.

20 My first impression was I hope this is not going to  
21 take a long journey; a few hours you could stand it.

22 This was already in April 45. The Russians were  
23 coming closer and closer. The west, the Americans were  
24 coming closer towards the German border.

25 We were in the box car I realized that there was

1 two more box cars like that and finally we were hooked  
2 onto a locomotive and at that time they was having steam  
3 locomotive, very few diesels.

4 We were put in front of a train, a normal train, a  
5 luxurious train. In that train were about eight, nine  
6 cars of the Gestapo officials, families, wives, children.  
7 The purpose of the whole thing was they wanted to get from  
8 the Russians to the Americans, surrender to the Americans,  
9 not to the Russians. They knew the Russians didn't make  
10 any bones about it. They just got somebody he was S.S.  
11 and they killed him, they shot him. They didn't take S.S.  
12 prisoners, especially if he was from the Gestapo or SD,  
13 Sicherheitsdienst.

14 I found out after the war they also advertised in  
15 radio and so on that this train is a Red Cross train and  
16 as a precaution the Americans don't attack the locomotive  
17 and dive bomb the locomotive because the custom was to  
18 just go and dive bomb the locomotive, drill it, in other  
19 words, disable it, and the whole train is standing there  
20 and takes days before they can clear the track, get a new  
21 locomotive and usually they didn't do much damage to the  
22 other installations.

23 So their intent was to advise the Allies that they  
24 have in the box cars next to the locomotives and between  
25 the train where they have the families that they have

1 political prisoners and most of them who had somebody in  
2 either England or America, who had some association with  
3 the Allies.

4 They knew my father was in England or he escaped  
5 the Gestapo and got to England and is fighting with the  
6 British.

7 I understood on that train also, I don't know  
8 whether this is true or not, but there was a nephew of  
9 Churchill in there as a prisoner. So there we were in  
10 that train.

11 The Gestapo then didn't have that much priority and  
12 we were shuttled from one station to another and then  
13 another and then another, and then hooked on other trains.  
14 So the whole trip took about eleven days. This eleven  
15 days we had no food, no water, nothing.

16 How should I describe it to you? It was the most  
17 horrible sight you can see. They were all men, no women  
18 in there. You couldn't bend to take your trousers off or  
19 to go to the toilet.

20 After the second day I remember it just didn't even  
21 matter. I just pee'd in my pants and shot in my pants and  
22 was hungry, thirsty. I remember my mouth being so dry it  
23 just felt like it was solid rock in my throat.

24 After the second day I remember people in there.  
25 There were various ages. I was the youngest one, I was

1 17. I think the oldest one was maybe 65 or something.  
2 There was various ages. But then after the second day  
3 they started moaning. This whole train was moaning. The  
4 Gestapo was beating on the doors, to tell us to shut up,  
5 to be quiet. The moaning and this moaning made somehow  
6 made us comfortable, made us not feel the pain so much.

7 I would say after the third day, fourth day, you  
8 know, kind of a half conscious, this low hum moan going  
9 around. And then that stopped. Then people started  
10 dying.

11 And that started shuffling. One guy is dead and he  
12 can't get to the ground. So they start shuffling until he  
13 finally falls down.

14 But then you get more shuffled because he is on the  
15 ground now and nobody wants to step on him and he takes up  
16 that additional space.

17 So I remember this continuous shuffling going on.  
18 Every time we start the shuffling there was somebody dead,  
19 somebody discovered his neighbor died, and trying to get  
20 him to get on the ground and not step on him.

21 So this shuffling has been going on. This is what  
22 sticks in my mind. I would say in our train in the six  
23 days there must have been about 20 people, 20 men died.

24 That created a big problem. Finally people stood  
25 on the dead ones. Tried not to, but there was no place

1 and defecated on the dead.

2 As it happens, it started getting warm, it's spring  
3 now. Some of the bodies started stinking, deteriorating.  
4 It was just terrible. I couldn't compare it to anything  
5 else when I think about it.

6 I think how I survived this?

7 After about the ninth day all I remember is this  
8 shuffling, no more moaning. It was quiet, but there was  
9 shuffling. People were dying. Most of us by seventh,  
10 eighth day were completely unconscious, not even knowing.  
11 It was like a bad dream or so. I remember personally  
12 every so often when the train jerked or we were hooked  
13 onto another locomotive or something like that I woke up  
14 to a jerk and I opened my eyes and I can still see in the  
15 same box car with the same people. I closed the eyes  
16 again or passed out again.

17 Until the eighth day. It was the eighth day. Mind  
18 you, we didn't know where we were going. We didn't know  
19 we are going towards Americans. We know the Gestapo is  
20 fleeing with their families and having us as a hostage.

21 On the eighth day I can't tell you whether it was  
22 morning, noon or afternoon, but it was still day light  
23 outside. All of a sudden I wake up or I regain  
24 consciousness and I hear heavy machine gun fire.

25 I opened up my eyes. I realized the train is being

1 attacked by dive bombers. I opened my eyes and all I see  
2 all these people couldn't find room to stand on the  
3 ground. Since my position in there was against the wall,  
4 one of the walls of the box car, so I could rest against  
5 it.

6 Before I realized where we were I wanted to throw  
7 myself on top of it to avoid that. I heard bullets  
8 flying past me and going into the pile of bodies lying on  
9 the ground. So it looked like the Americans did not take  
10 the bite, did attack the train, made it stop. So the  
11 train stopped.

12 After awhile the planes went away. Some of the  
13 Gestapo came and opened the doors and said to throw the  
14 bodies out because there were a number of wounded or dead  
15 ones. So we used that opportunity to just throw the  
16 bodies by the side of the train, to throw them out.

17 And clean up as much as we could because now in my  
18 box car, in that car, there was about 50 people less.  
19 There was a little bit more comfortable. But it must have  
20 taken us ages to clean it, to throw them out because we  
21 were weak. Nobody could move. Everything stunk. We  
22 stunk. Not even the Gestapo came close to the train.

23 Q. The Gestapo was still with the train?

24 A. Oh, yeah, they were with the train. They  
25 had their families and everything with it.



1 Q. So there wasn't really liberation yet then?

2 A. Oh, no. It was not liberation. They were  
3 running away from the Russians. They took the family,  
4 they put us as hostages in front of the locomotive, so the  
5 locomotive is not being attacked like all the rest of  
6 them. I think they were P-51. All they did was machine  
7 gun the locomotive and paralyzed it. It was a steam  
8 locomotive.

9 Just if the train tried to get out of the station,  
10 just getting it out of the station they attacked it. They  
11 drilled the locomotive. The train was stopped and the  
12 rails were blocked. We were standing somewhere, I don't  
13 know where. Along that, the locomotive was disabled.

14 They were trying to get a new locomotive. They  
15 were using the chance to get the dead bodies out of the  
16 box cars. Then they locked us up, locked us back in.

17 Q. Did they give you water?

18 A. No. No, nothing. I think we got water on  
19 the last day. We got some water. I remember that was the  
20 train station, a big train station. There was a train  
21 yard and I seen a train loaded full of box cars but open  
22 box cars. It was fully loaded with bodies, dead bodies,  
23 naked bodies. They were taking the dead out of the  
24 concentration camp so they didn't leave any evidence and  
25 they were hauling it wiith them into Germany, into the

1 Reich but never had opportunity to dump it because the  
2 trains were going to the train, trains with wounded coming  
3 from the front, refugees all over the place.

4 They didn't know what to do with them. They didn't  
5 even time to bury them. They had them in the open cattle  
6 trains. We were in a closed cattle train.

7 So that is where we got the first water. It was a  
8 big station. That one was Gielava. I remember where it  
9 was among other reasons. Then on the 12th day, 11th or  
10 12th day I can't remember. I don't know. I lost time on  
11 that. We came to a place near Pilsen into a camp, which  
12 was also -- It was not a concentration camp. It was a  
13 labor camp. It was an empty labor camp.

14 They herded us into the camp. What I remember  
15 about that time is when they opened the doors again and  
16 they were standing there with machine pistols and yelling  
17 Raus, Raus, Raus, everybody out and nobody would go. We  
18 thought that was the end. As you get out they would shoot  
19 us.

20 I remember one of the guards finally holding his  
21 nose, because it stunk so bad, grabbed a couple guys by  
22 the ankles and yanked them out. Then when the rest seen  
23 they are not getting shot they started getting out.

24 We were marched into that camp. I would say the  
25 camp was about a mile away from the railroad station.

1 When I say marched, it was not marching. We were dragged  
2 in there. There were quite a few hurt from that air  
3 attack. Quite a few died. Quite a few were hurt. The  
4 wounds were festering. We were dragged into this camp.  
5 It had barbed wires. It had the standard guard towers.

6 It was manned by part of the Gestapo who came were  
7 them and part were S.S., normal S.S. guards.

8 We were starving. We got water in the camp. I  
9 remember like today we got a piece of bread. About one  
10 inch thick, maybe a little bit inch and-a-half thick and a  
11 big piece of margarine, about that big on the bread. So  
12 life looked a little better for us.

13 We were told not to eat it all. This is suppose to  
14 last us another three days. That's the rations we are  
15 going to get. Natually, everybody ate it up, ate the  
16 margarine and bread. There was practically more margarine  
17 than bread. I did the same thing.

18 The camp was just standard camp, block houses,  
19 wooden block houses with three tier bunks and pot belly  
20 stove in the middle. Latrine to the side. I got the  
21 shits. I got diarrhea you wouldn't believe it. It was  
22 just something awful.

23 Not having eaten for so many days and all of a  
24 sudden getting that margarine, it was terrible. Not only  
25 me, but it was so bad we were all lying in our bunks for

1 at least another two days just having diarrhea. So it  
2 stunk, which was so awful in the train was getting into  
3 the barrack again. Nobody even bothered getting up and  
4 going to the latrine. They were too weak, too demoralized  
5 to get up and do anything.

6 I understand this was done on purpose. They didn't  
7 have sufficient guards to guard us so they did this trick  
8 with the margarine and we all got the diarrhea.

9 I remember I was one of the first ones getting up  
10 and getting out and looking around. I see the camp was  
11 S.S.. By that time it was pretty close to the 30th of  
12 April, 1st of May. I see the guards still in their S.S.  
13 uniform.

14 The next morning I got up and I see the same guards  
15 who wore the S.S. uniform now were wearing normal  
16 wehrmacht, normal German Army uniform.

17 The next morning I get up and I don't see anybody.  
18 The gate was open. I walked out. That was 5th of May,  
19 1945. Most of the prisoners were still too sick to even  
20 walk out.

21 The S.S. left, everybody left. At that time I  
22 joined the partisans in Milishoff and May 8th the war was  
23 over. That was it.

24 I then worked my way back home. Milishoff was on  
25 the German border, very close to the German border. In

1 Bohemia. I had to make my way home, which took me about  
2 15 days because again nothing was running, no trains, no  
3 buses, no nothing. We had to walk.

4 Q. Did they give you water when you got to the  
5 camp?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. As much as you wanted?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Who was kind of running the camp at this  
10 point?

11 A. Well, the S.S. were running the camp.

12 Q. Were they fully staffed or were they  
13 running away?

14 A. I think the S.S. was still there from when  
15 this was a labor camp. They had the barracks outside.  
16 They were there from before.

17 But then I also seen in there some of the Gestapo  
18 from the Brno Gestapo. From the 5th of May they were all  
19 gone.

20 Q. Did you have a chance to hear them or see  
21 them? They might have been panicking a lot?

22 A. I overheard some, but I couldn't figure it  
23 out. I didn't -- To me it was not much different. The  
24 Russians are coming from one side, the Americans coming  
25 from the other. The difference was to the Germans. They

1 had to get all across Moravia, Bohemia, to get into  
2 northern Bohemia to surrender to the Americans. I seen  
3 them in columns, fully armed with tanks and everything,  
4 just columns, division, divisions, just pressing on to  
5 surrender to the Americans.

6 Q. Did they give you food up until the day  
7 they disappeared?

8 A. Did they give us, until they appeared?

9 Q. Until they disappeared.

10 A. No. There was activity in the kitchen, but  
11 I don't think anybody was worrying about food.

12 Q. So you weren't eating at this point?

13 A. No. You were so sick after that margarine  
14 incident. I don't think so.

15 Q. How long was it between when you got to the  
16 camp and then May 5th?

17 A. About four days, four, five days.

18 Q. So it wasn't much time anyway?

19 A. No. We got our first meal was this piece  
20 of bread and margarine and all the water. I am saying all  
21 the water we can drink.

22 In the wash room, one of those long wash rooms  
23 there was water. So you could drink. In the barracks  
24 there was buckets of water too.

25 I remember the first two days I didn't bother

1 cleaning up. Then the second day it wasn't so bad  
2 anymore. Again, I was one of the first because I was the  
3 youngest one.

4 After that, after the Germans left, the American  
5 Army took the camp over. By the time I went out there was  
6 still people laying in the barracks couldn't get up.

7 Q. Were you there before the Red Cross came?

8 A. No, I was already out but I came back. As  
9 I said I walked out May 5th. The war was over May 8th.  
10 The Americans came about May 9th. So the Red Cross was  
11 shortly thereafter.

12 Q. Now you were with the partisans. What did  
13 you do for three days with the partisans?

14 A. Basically I was looking for the guards.

15 Q. The guards?

16 A. For the S.S. guards.

17 Q. Among the partisans?

18 A. No. I knew the partisans were looking for  
19 them too.

20 Q. Oh, I see.

21 A. The Parisans were in the area. I am not  
22 making much out of it. As I said, people knew where to go  
23 and how to find them in the partisans. By that time the  
24 war was at the end and there were partisans all over the  
25 place.

1 Q. Were there partisans still serious about  
2 this or were they wanting to go home knowing it really was  
3 the end?

4 A. The partisans I am talking about, partisans  
5 which lived all their life in that area and towards the  
6 end of the war maybe one or two was very serious partisan,  
7 who had been in the movement for years or months, while  
8 the other ones were just recruited and volunteered when  
9 they seen the Germans are on the run.

10 Q. So they are new volunteers that could see  
11 the Germans were on the run?

12 During the car had they maybe been working with the  
13 Germans or against the partisans?

14 A. Some of them I am sure worked with the  
15 Germans. They tried to get into the partisans.

16 Q. The partisans didn't seem to mind?

17 A. They didn't know them. What they wanted  
18 was numbers. Maybe there was one who really was a serious  
19 partisan, a serious freedom fighter who was living in the  
20 woods. But the other ones had their homes there and came  
21 out. They knew they were not going to be caught by the  
22 Germans anymore.

23 What I did when I joined them, it was no big  
24 formalities where you had to swear allegiance. You were  
25 told here, get yourself a gun and get yourself some



1 clothes.

2 What I did, the first German officer I caught I  
3 took his pants and I took his clothes and I took his gun.  
4 As a matter of fact, I didn't catch him. He surrendered.  
5 I took a Red Cross and made red star and put them on my  
6 shoulder, so it doesn't look like a German uniform.  
7 That's what I did. That's how I became partisan.

8 Q. What happened to this German officer who  
9 surrendered?

10 A. I don't know.

11 Q. Did the partisans do anything with him, do  
12 you know?

13 A. Well, let me think. There was a whole  
14 group of Germans running out towards the Americans, whole  
15 divisions, as I told you. We got some of the first ones  
16 who came in that day. I don't know. Maybe we got 25 or  
17 so. But these were regular Wehrmacht. All we were  
18 looking for is S.S.. By that time we also knew they put  
19 on German uniforms shortly before the war ended.

20 So we made them to take off the jacket and shirts  
21 and we looked for the tatoo, for the S.S.. If it was S.S.  
22 man we hand them over to little pool to do whatever they  
23 do.

24 Q. Partisan group?

25 A. Yeah. We caught a bunch of Germans who

1 were fully armed, were trying to get to the Americans.  
2 They seen us and they surrendered. There was no fire  
3 fight or anything. They seen us and wanted to surrender,  
4 to have somebody to protect them as long as it's not the  
5 Russians who were pushing behind them. This is the group  
6 of about 25.

7 We had them, we locked them up in the cellar. That  
8 was the occasion where I took the uniform of the German  
9 officer. And took his boots and gave him mine. It was a  
10 fair trade. So we had them in the cellar.

11 Then all of a sudden overnight in the morning we  
12 started waking up, there was a big noise, tanks rattling  
13 outside and there was a full German division, fully armed  
14 with tanks and everything, going by through that village.  
15 We had in the cellar we had 25 of the German prisoners.  
16 We through if they would have stopped.

17 Q. You would have given them the 25 prisoners?

18 A. Never mind we would have given them, we  
19 would have run away. I remember in the cellar each one of  
20 us was sitting on a German, making sure he couldn't yell  
21 out or scream.

22 Q. Sitting on their head?

23 A. Yeah, sitting on their head. It's a cold  
24 cellar. Windows are way up there. All they could see is  
25 when you lookout you could see the feet marching by.

1           If they yell out or attract attention I am sure  
2 they would have gotten out and we would have been shot. I  
3 don't know what. Anyway, that's how I got my uniform to  
4 go home with and my weapon.

5           Q.       Do you know what happened to all the bodies  
6 on the train?

7           When you kicked them out of the box car did  
8 somebody come along and bury them? Do you know anything  
9 about that?

10          A.       I am sure somebody came along and buried  
11 them because they couldn't let them lie along the tracks  
12 like that. But at that time this was already standard  
13 occurrence. It was not just my case. There were other  
14 trains under similar conditions with prisoners who died  
15 and they throw them along the tracks.

16          You could see them even before my train went by  
17 there were bodies thrown out. I think there were people  
18 that picked them up and buried them but no name, no fancy  
19 funeral.

20          That's the last people who died. After there were  
21 prisoners who were liberated. They were eating, they were  
22 given food and the bodies couldn't take it and they died.  
23 They died of typhoid. That was a big fear in my camp in  
24 Millishoff there is going to be typhoid because of the  
25 diarrhea.

1 Q. You said you went back into the camp after  
2 you left it. Was that before you started for home?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Was that when the Red Cross had already  
5 taken over?

6 A. The Red Cross had already taken over and  
7 they saw at that time that was typhoid in the camp.

8 Again when I say they have taken over, it was not a  
9 big swearing in ceremony. They brought in a kitchen and  
10 took over looking after the patients, the inmates and  
11 helped them get better and controlling their food intake.  
12 That was very hard to do. We hadn't eaten for days and so  
13 on. A lot of them plundered German trains. There were  
14 big tins. The Germans were gone and they were standing on  
15 the train station, a train full of food for the front.  
16 Most have it was in tins.

17 So they go and just take it as much as they can  
18 carry and eat it and boom they were sick. Some went and  
19 didn't know what to do. We were living by that time  
20 already outside and pretty free in the camp and made camp  
21 fires and warmed the tin up without opening it and it  
22 exploded in their faces.

23 Q. Whose faces?

24 A. The prisoners faces because they didn't  
25 know what to do with a tin of food.

1 Q. You mean the German prisoners?

2 A. No, I am talking about our prisoners,  
3 getting a hold of German food which was left on a train  
4 station in a train, in box cars, which was suppose to go  
5 to the front.

6 The Germans had everything in a tin, except bread.  
7 Most of the tins are big cans like that. And had military  
8 color on it and were suppose to be eaten, taken out,  
9 opened, cooked, warmed up and eaten. You could eat it  
10 cold too. But people didn't know what it is.

11 They thought this tin you just hold over the fire  
12 and warm it and open it. By doing that the cans heated up  
13 and exploded in their faces. Or some boiled it in water  
14 over the camp fire. I would say a lot of people got  
15 killed just from that.

16 Q. Boiled unopen tins?

17 A. Yeah. They didn't know. These were not  
18 sophisticated people. Some were there five, six years and  
19 didn't know you are suppose to open it and put it in a  
20 dish and warm it over the camp fire. Besides there was no  
21 dishes available or anything like that. There were no can  
22 openers available.

23 I have seen them crack open the can with rocks.  
24 That was our food supply for many, many days.

25 Q. Where?

1 A. While we were there.

2 Q. In the camp?

3 A. Outside the camp. I was with the  
4 partisans.

5 Q. When this was happening?

6 A. Yeah, that was after the war, after May  
7 8th. All of a sudden somebody discovered there were a  
8 couple box cars with food in there, which was German Army  
9 food. So they spoke around in the camp and people went  
10 there to help themselves.

11 Q. The Red Cross in the meantime was in the  
12 kitchen?

13 A. Well, the Red Cross was in the camp and the  
14 people who were in the camp were not people who really  
15 were mobile yet. They were people who were still pretty  
16 sick.

17 The people who could move, anybody who could move  
18 moved out of that camp. It took us a while to even  
19 believe this is really true. The first chance you get you  
20 move out of the camp. Just get out and live in the  
21 country, beg, steal or whatever you could and then make  
22 your way home, wherever you can.

23 Some had to go all the way to Poland. Some of them  
24 run back into Germany because they were afraid of the  
25 Russians. Some were Russian prisoners, taken prisoner by

1 the Germans. The Russians showed no mercy with them.  
2 Took them in and walked them to Siberia. Walked I am  
3 saying. There is no transportation.

4 I would say for three months that whole area was  
5 completely paralyzed. Slowly buses, the only  
6 transportation you could get was Allied vehicles. I had  
7 no problem with the Americans because I got a certificate  
8 from them which said I was liberated by them and I am  
9 carrying a weapon and it was registered.

10 But the Russians was a different story. I had to  
11 get into the Russian zone, which was liberated by the  
12 Russian.

13 Q. When did you get the certificate from the  
14 Americans?

15 A. During the first week after the war.

16 Q. Back at the camp?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. How did the camp change? How many people  
19 did the Red Cross have? How were they able to start  
20 cleaning and doing things?

21 A. People on the Red Cross were very few. The  
22 American Army what they did is they organized it in such a  
23 way they selected between the inmates, between the ex-  
24 prisoners a group of people who were given the  
25 administration of the camp. This was doctors, lawyers,

1 people who say okay, now you administer the camp for the  
2 Red Cross. I am sure an American officer was in charge of  
3 it overall.

4 The problem was nobody wanted to get back into the  
5 camp for a while. When word got out the Americans are in  
6 there, the Red Cross is in there, you can go in and out, a  
7 lot of us went back there just to get the certificate,  
8 this piece of paper that would carry us through the Allied  
9 and Russian zone to show we are ex-prisoner. I have the  
10 piece of paper still.

11 Q. You still have that?

12 A. Yes. That was very important to us because  
13 we had no i.d., we had nothing. Especially me, strutting  
14 around in a German uniform.

15 Q. Did you encounter any German citizens at  
16 this time?

17 A. No, not there. I caught a couple guards  
18 who were hiding in the little towns, and little mountain  
19 villages around the camp. But most of the guards were  
20 older guys. They were in their 50s and '60s, which  
21 had been dragged in.

22 No, German people in that area there were no German  
23 people. Mostly Czechs because it was in northern Bohemia.

24 Q. Do you want to stop for the day?

25 A. Yeah.



HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

INTERVIEW

of

HELMUT KOBLER

June 17, ~~1989~~ 1993

by

Interviewer  
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HELMUT KOBLER

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1 MS. COSTER: We are interviewing Helmut Kobler,  
2 for the Holocaust Oral History Project in San Francisco.  
3 Today is June 17, 1993. I am Peggy Coster. The  
4 Producer is John Grant.

5 Why don't we start by just going over the Gestapo  
6 prison. You were sent to the first Gestapo prison, which  
7 was?

8 A. Which was in Saatz, which is in Germany.

9 Q. S-a-t-z?

10 A. S-a-a-t-z. Now it's part of the Czech Republic  
11 and it's called Rijadice (phonetic).

12 As I mentioned before in my previous tapes that I  
13 was pretty well desperate when I punched the fuel line I  
14 was digging a trench for and they handed me over to the  
15 Gestapo and accused me of sabotage.

16 I was kept for overnight in the camp prison and  
17 then I was handed over to the Gestapo. They came and  
18 picked me up and took me to the Saatz Gestapo. The Saatz  
19 Gestapo didn't do very much with me, except they were  
20 questioning me about why I did it and things like that.

21 Q. What did you tell them when they asked you  
22 why you did it?

23 A. I just told them the truth, that I was just  
24 fed up with it.

25 As a matter of fact, I told them the truth after

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1 they beat the hell out of me. I first thought, you know,  
2 it was so cold, the pick slipped in my hand and just fell  
3 and I hit the pipe by accident. But they didn't go for  
4 that very well.

5 So they kept on beating me until I admitted that I  
6 just had enough and I just vented my frustration.

7 I remember that wasn't very satisfactory to them.  
8 They felt that I must have had somebody in the camp who  
9 was leading me on to do this kind of thing, because by  
10 that time I was 17 years old.

11 If I remember correctly, I was practically every  
12 second day I was taken in and beaten up and softened up  
13 and made to confess that I had helpers, that I had people  
14 who assisted me in committing this sabotage.

15 Also I was suppose to be sent to the Carlsbad  
16 Gestapo for more detailed interview.

17 In the meantime I was suppose to work outside the  
18 prison as a grave digger digging graves for the Saatz  
19 cemetery. I think I mentioned that to you before.

20 Q. You said they were trying to soften you up?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. How did they try to soften you up?

23 A. Beat me up.

24 Q. You don't mean they tried to like they took  
25 you to tea and tell you how much they would help you if

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1 you cooperated?

2 A. No. That is not the Gestapo methods. The  
3 method was just beatings. I couldn't even say much  
4 torture. There was no torture. The beatings were enough.

5 Q. Was there torture?

6 A. No.

7 Q. What is the difference?

8 A. Well, to me torture is when you apply  
9 current to somebody's testicles or cut them continuously  
10 with a knife or sharp object or stick pins in them. But  
11 beatings to me was not torture. They hurt, of course.

12 I later experienced at the Carlsbad Gestapo torture  
13 and that to me was torture. This was just regular, you  
14 know, being kicked on the ground, being beaten with a  
15 stick over the head, having your ears boxed and tying you  
16 to a chair and kicking the chair over. Things like that.  
17 More to scare me than anything else. It certainly wasn't  
18 torture, what I thought would be torture.

19 Q. Basically it sounds like you started out  
20 trying to tell them it was an accident. They absolutely  
21 refused to believe that. Then they refused to believe it  
22 because you felt desperate?

23 A. That's right.

24 Q. What they wanted to know is you were in the  
25 resistance and they were unwilling to accept any other

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1 answer?

2 A. That is correct. That I belonged to a  
3 group of partisan cell in the camp. Because apparently  
4 there were other little acts of sabotage which had nothing  
5 to do with me and I had nothing to do with them. But I  
6 got caught and the others didn't. Basically that's what  
7 they wanted from me.

8 Q. You said they beat you until they got  
9 names?

10 A. No. No names. They kept on beating me and  
11 telling me if you don't tell us the truth you will go to  
12 the Carlsbad Gestapo and they will know what to do with  
13 you.

14 Q. So you didn't break and make up anything?

15 A. No, there was nothing to break. I had no  
16 names.

17 Q. No.

18 A. To give them.

19 Q. I can't imagine being kicked and tortured.  
20 I can imagine how easy it would be to say something else  
21 even if it wasn't true while you were being beaten up  
22 because they wanted information.

23 A. No, I never felt like that. I felt hate  
24 toward them they were beating me up like that, but there  
25 was no names to give and I never thought to give just

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1 phoney names. That would spare me. Basically they find  
 2 out that was really the truth that was it.  
 3 Q. So now you were digging graves in Saatz.  
 4 A. Yeah, I was taken out every morning. You  
 5 mustn't forget I was already in 45 and that was maybe  
 6 January 45. So the war is getting pretty close to its  
 7 end, which ended May 8th officially of 1945.  
 8 So things just were not running as well, trains  
 9 were not running, continuous bombing around there.  
 10 Everybody in the jail and in town were agitated, were  
 11 nervous because they could hear the cannons firing. It  
 12 was a very stressed situation.  
 13 Part of utilizing the Gestapo prisoners was they  
 14 used them for digging graves and for disarming bombs,  
 15 cleaning up the rubble after bombing attacks.  
 16 Q. Whose graves did you dig?  
 17 A. The job I got was digging graves at the  
 18 German cemetery for Germans who died on the front or in  
 19 the bombing raid or even died natural death. But usually  
 20 it was German Nazi.  
 21 As I told you, I derived great pleasure from that  
 22 job. It was a miserable, bad job but it gave me great  
 23 pleasure to dig graves for those Nazi.  
 24 I recall they use to come and pick us up, an old  
 25 S.S. guard picked us up about six-thirty. It was still

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1 dark. And led us out of the city to the cemetery.  
 2 And then we had to start digging the graves,  
 3 prepare for a funeral which usually was in the afternoon.  
 4 When we had the graves dug and big funeral with the  
 5 flowers and trumpets and fanfair and all that then the  
 6 coffin was in the grave the people left, we came back and  
 7 we filled the grave back up, arranged the flowers and  
 8 left.  
 9 Usually we came back about five, six o'clock in the  
 10 evening to jail. We got our meal and we went to bed. The  
 11 next morning it was either to go to the Gestapo and what  
 12 they called Fehrhehr (Phonetic). I don't know the  
 13 translation. It's like an examination. They called it an  
 14 examination.  
 15 So I must have been there about three to four weeks  
 16 and then I was taken to Carlsbad, which really isn't that  
 17 far. I have done that route now. It's not that far from  
 18 Saatz. It's about a hour to drive but it was quite  
 19 different at that time.  
 20 It looked like it took a day to get from there to  
 21 Carlsbad. But I got to Carlsbad and it was the Gestapo  
 22 was quite different there. There was no fooling around  
 23 with them. They were deadly serious and they were  
 24 killers. You seen that the minute you got there.  
 25 Up to that point I remember that I still had some

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1 civilian clothes on. That means I had a jacket, a sweater  
 2 and shoes, normal leather shoes. Now there I was just  
 3 stripped and all my possessions were taken.  
 4 I was examined, my rectum was looked into, whether  
 5 I had anything stashed away there.  
 6 I was handed prison garb, which consisted of a  
 7 shirt, no underwear, pair of pants, prison pants. They  
 8 were not striped pants like we had in the concentration  
 9 camp. They were just gray, kind of a grayish color and  
 10 had a G on the back which meant Gestapo painted on the  
 11 back of the jacket.  
 12 They were suppose to be clean, but even when they  
 13 handed them to us nicely folded, washed, they were full of  
 14 lice. I remember that.  
 15 The next morning I was taken out of the cell and  
 16 taken upstairs and the examination started in serious.  
 17 They had my file with them from the Saatz Gestapo. They  
 18 started right out on the same thing and started out with  
 19 just without asking me any question I got beaten up,  
 20 punched in the nose and hit over the head with a club, a  
 21 rubber hose, and slapped around.  
 22 I was bleeding. I was lying on the ground. I got  
 23 kicked again. That's how it started without even asking  
 24 me a question. Then the questioning started and then  
 25 again.

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1 What I remember more than anything was getting hit  
 2 over the head with a rubber kind of club. Rubber about an  
 3 inch thick. I was hit over the head and on my neck and on  
 4 the back.  
 5 When I gave the same answer then they started in  
 6 serious, what you might consider torture, what I consider  
 7 torture. That was they handcuffed me, put my -- How  
 8 should I say it? My arm, handcuffed arms under my knees,  
 9 stuck a big heavy steel bar between it and hung my body  
 10 between two chairs.  
 11 Q. They put your arms under your knees like  
 12 this?  
 13 A. No. They put my knees like this. I can't  
 14 do it now. I am too old. Between here and my knees they  
 15 stuck this bar. My hands were handcuffed like this. They  
 16 picked me up and put this bundle, because now I was just a  
 17 bundle, with my knees practically at my chin, and hung me  
 18 between two chairs and just beat me again like that with  
 19 this rubber hose or whatever it was.  
 20 And that was terrible. That hurt a lot. I didn't  
 21 tell them. After that I was sent back, dragged back to  
 22 the cell. I was suppose to get it the next day again.  
 23 The next day was pretty well the same way. I was tied  
 24 handcuffed to a chair and so I couldn't protect my face.  
 25 I was continuously slapped. Not boxed, or not punched.

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- 1 Just slapped in the face. In other words, I was sitting  
 2 something like that. My feet were cuffed to the chair.  
 3 There was no way I could move my head. I was getting  
 4 slapped like that.  
 5 The guy was sitting in front of me. I couldn't do  
 6 nothing. Blood running out of my mouth. My ear drums  
 7 were busted at that time. I only recently had them  
 8 replaced about five years ago in Santa Rosa. They  
 9 replaced one of my ear drums.  
 10 Q. So what did you do to hear all these years?  
 11 A. You can hear with a busted ear drum. You  
 12 just don't hear so good, I guess.  
 13 But basically the consequences of that was I use to  
 14 get infections in the ears for years and years, working in  
 15 the tropics. Apparently anything can get in it. That's  
 16 when I found out I have my ear drums busted.  
 17 So I remember these sessions. Of course, we didn't  
 18 have mirrors or anything. When I got home I could feel my  
 19 face. It was all swollen and all beaten up. That didn't  
 20 work too well. Still I didn't tell them a different  
 21 story. Again, not because I was brave. There was no  
 22 different story to tell them. Even if I tell them a lie I  
 23 didn't know what lie they wanted me to tell them.  
 24 So basically they just went at this systematically  
 25 for a number of days. I seem to remember I was in

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- 1 Carlsbad maybe three, four weeks, in the Carlsbad Gestapo.  
 2 In between these beatings and between these  
 3 examinations, or special treatment as they call it, we  
 4 were also taken out again outside the prison and did bomb  
 5 disposal work. That was not too much. Usually it was  
 6 maybe one or two bombs which didn't explode. They had  
 7 their own experts. We had to dig the holes around it so  
 8 they could get in it and things like that.  
 9 We did not actually dispose of the bombs. What we  
 10 did is you see a bomb sticking out that didn't explode.  
 11 It was our job to dig around it so the guys from their  
 12 disposal unit could come and dispose of the bomb, explode  
 13 it or whatever. And clean up the rubble. There were  
 14 bombing attacks practically ever day on Carlsbad and the  
 15 surrounding area. So there was a lot of clean up work to  
 16 do which we did.  
 17 That's also the place where I told you, I don't  
 18 know whether I told you, but to illustrate the hunger I  
 19 had there was on one or two sites they built a latrine.  
 20 You understand what a latrine is?  
 21 Q. Yes.  
 22 A. It's like Johnny-on-the-Spot here, except  
 23 they dig a hole in the ground and set a little outhouse on  
 24 it and that was for us prisoners and everybody else to go  
 25 and do their business.

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HELMUT KOBLER

12

- 1 I went in one of them and I looked in and I seen on  
 2 top of this pile of shit I see a piece of bread, part of a  
 3 sandwich. I was so hungry I reached in and I cleaned it  
 4 up as best I could and I ate it.  
 5 So that should give you an idea of the hunger we  
 6 had at that time.  
 7 So between the hunger, the beatings and the fear  
 8 some bombs we were digging out would explode, that was  
 9 what I remember out of the Carlsbad Gestapo prison.  
 10 I remember incidents in there where a Gestapo man,  
 11 I have seen it -- I was practically standing next to the  
 12 guy that was shot. One of the prisons right in the yard  
 13 and the daily apelplatz. I seen several prisoners being  
 14 executed down in the yard.  
 15 Most of the executions were not even political  
 16 executions. They were executions because the prisoner did  
 17 something, tried to escape, stole something, or something  
 18 like that. They were like summary executions.  
 19 I don't know whether I mentioned to you I couldn't  
 20 understand the kind of animals Gestapo men were.  
 21 Particularly in this prison was that I remember  
 22 that they needed somebody to help one of the Gestapo  
 23 officers to move his family. So there were three  
 24 prisoners. I was one of them. Another German speaking  
 25 prisoner was with me. I don't remember who the third one

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HELMUT KOBLER

13

- 1 was.  
 2 We were taken in a car by this officer to his  
 3 residence where he lived in the hills of Carlsbad. There  
 4 he was with his wife and two beautiful children. One was  
 5 about, I would say two years old. Another was four years  
 6 old. Apparently his wife was moving out, moving to  
 7 Germany. He was still staying.  
 8 It was very touching to see him, how gently he  
 9 treat his children, how emotional he was about saying  
 10 goodbye to them and so. This went on while we were moving  
 11 the heavy boxes down into his car, the luggage and so on.  
 12 They were going to the railroad station. But them  
 13 saying goodbye, it was so tender of a moment and I seen  
 14 that same son-of-a-bitch kill a couple guys in the yard,  
 15 in the appel yard. Well, just shot them. Executed them,  
 16 you know. When I say killer, you kneel down and they shot  
 17 you in the neck and you were dead.  
 18 Q. What was the expression on the face of the  
 19 Nazi as they shoot a person, a typical expression?  
 20 A. I don't know. I never watched their face  
 21 expressions so that I could study them whether he got any  
 22 sadistic pleasure out of it or not. Usually there was a  
 23 lot of yelling and crying and screaming going on.  
 24 I remember that he shot one and the guy kept on  
 25 kneeling and same guy he shot him once more. The guy was

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14

1 still kneeling. So he just kicked him in the side of the  
2 back so the guy falls over.  
3 That was a tough Gestapo place, really tough. All  
4 they were concerned with was about the biggest crime you  
5 could commit was sabotage.

6 Q. Sabotage could be anything?

7 A. Anything, anybody accuses you that you  
8 committed sabotage; destroyed government property was  
9 sabotage.

10 Q. It could be anything from like stealing  
11 bread to --

12 A. No, stealing bread, no. Stealing bread is  
13 stealing. But stealing something, a camera, you know, it  
14 could be anything. The other thing was what made them so  
15 cruel was this was in Germany, you see. They were going  
16 against their own people. I was in a cell with German  
17 speaking officers, Army officers, even S.S. officers who  
18 got caught without a pass, you know, went to visit their  
19 families.

20 I remember one was a colonel in the German Army.  
21 He was very close to the front to his family so he went to  
22 see his family. He hadn't seen them for six, eight months  
23 they tell me. They caught him without the proper papers  
24 and so on, shoved him into that cell, and next day he was  
25 shot. He was executed.

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1 I am just trying to recreate to you the tension,  
2 the things that were going on in there.

3 For instance, I remember being in the cell and  
4 there was a raid on Dresden. One of the big heavy raids  
5 on Dresden. The cell window was quite high. You couldn't  
6 look out the window. It was high. We could see in that  
7 cell we could see the flashes and feel the earth trembling  
8 from the bombing.

9 So we knew it's not going to take very long. But  
10 by the same token the more we knew and looked forward to  
11 the more cruel the Gestapo became. There was practically  
12 no more tolerance at all.

13 Finally I got -- I was told I am being shipped to  
14 Dachau. Dachau was quite a distance from Carlsbad.  
15 Again, if you drive it you can drive it about four hours  
16 now.

17 I and several others of that Gestapo prison, I  
18 would say about 20 of us, we were handcuffed and were  
19 taken to the station and put into a regular prison train,  
20 not the trains like cattle trains and so on. It was a  
21 regular box car, which was equipped with cages where there  
22 was suppose to be like cells, you know, maybe three, four  
23 feet wide and that's where we were put in.

24 Q. Facilities?

25 A. Oh, it had facilities, you know, where you

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1 could go out. You had to ask the guards. There was a  
2 guard in each of the wagons. There was a toilet. There  
3 was no way you could jump out the window or anything like  
4 that because there were no windows and they were high. It  
5 was a typical train, which was used to transport prisoners  
6 on normal trains.

7 So every place the train stopped some more  
8 prisoners got in. Pretty soon we are full and we are  
9 about four, five cars. We are shuffled around one train  
10 station and the other one. Every so often hooked onto a  
11 passenger train until finally after about eight days like  
12 that we reached Dachau. We didn't get anything to eat.

13 I think first two or three days we got something  
14 but after that nothing. We got to Dachau and put in an  
15 outhouse slagge, which is kind of a barracks where  
16 prisoners are taken care of. Again, Dachau was not like  
17 Auschwitz, was not like Finectenslagge or anything like  
18 that but it was more like -- I would say you worked,  
19 younger people were in there. But it was a Finectenslagge  
20 in the sense that they did have ovens in there and they  
21 did have -- They worked you to death in there, if you are  
22 long enough there. What they didn't have was like  
23 Auschwitz where they separated the men from the women and  
24 old people went right straight to the delousing into the  
25 ovens, where this was not the case in Dachau.

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1 What I seen was, as a matter of fact we came there  
2 at night. So we were locked up in this wooden barrack for  
3 about two days or so.

4 Then we were told to get ready, we are going back  
5 to Carlsbad. They didn't want us or they didn't accept  
6 anymore prisoners because the Americans were pretty close.  
7 That was what I was told.

8 So we went back into this, practically the same  
9 train with the cells in it. We went back to Carlsbad and  
10 arrived in Carlsbad about six days later.

11 This time I did not get even to see my Gestapo  
12 officer who handled my case or wasn't even taken for  
13 examination, but was just left in the cell and getting the  
14 same kind of cruel punishment you get in a normal Gestapo  
15 prison.

16 Again my job was at that time I remember I had to  
17 wash the corridors and the steps of the Gestapo offices,  
18 which were above. I was trying to find things out.

19 Sometimes I would kneel near the stairs and these  
20 were stone stairs and kept on washing, washing them and  
21 listening what is going on in the offices to find out.  
22 They were panicky. They were running up and down.

23 One officer came out and he noticed that I was not  
24 working, I was listening. So he took me in and he and  
25 some of his friends beat me up. I was out of commission

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1 for about three or four days.

2 Then I found out they are building an air raid  
3 shelter at the Gestapo. The back drop of the Gestapo was  
4 a rocky cliff. Into this cliff they were driving a tunnel  
5 for an air raid shelter. Since I was working in the mines  
6 and being experienced in underground work in mines I asked  
7 this one guard about it and he told me, yeah, they were  
8 going in there, but it's not going very fast because they  
9 don't have experienced people in there. They can't use  
10 prisoners for that.

11 So I told him I worked in the mines and I know I am  
12 very experienced in this kind of work and I volunteered  
13 for it. It was outside the gate of the Gestapo. So I  
14 convinced this Obershotfurher that I am experienced and I  
15 heard about them building it and I would like to do it. I  
16 volunteered for it.

17 I got accepted. So I worked on that for about two  
18 or three days, I think. I got in -- When I got there the  
19 tunnel, they were blasting out of the rock maybe 50 meters  
20 in. That's about a hundred fifty feet in. They had a  
21 guard sitting outside.

22 It was somewhere around 18th or 20th -- No, 18th of  
23 March. It was still pretty cold in there. So the system  
24 was and I worked there with old German tunnel miners,  
25 which they were the bosses. There were four, five

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1 prisoners on the crew with me.

2 The system there was if you to go to the toilet you  
3 go out and you get to the mouth of the tunnel and you  
4 holler out for the guard that you are coming out, that you  
5 want to go to the toilet and you go to the toilet and the  
6 toilet was again one of those latrines outside. I went to  
7 the toilet and I observed that already the guy watches you  
8 go into the toilet, close the door and he goes and closes  
9 his door of his watch shack and when you open the door to  
10 get out he comes out and you go back into the tunnel.

11 Q. What is this watch shack? What did he do  
12 in there?

13 A. A watch shack is usually a little wooden  
14 shed, a temporary shed where there was a stove and where  
15 the guards were sitting, keeping warm. All they had to  
16 watch was this opening in the hock, you know. A little  
17 further was the latrine. That's what I meant by watch  
18 shack. So they don't have to stand outside in the cold  
19 and freeze. They had this watch shack. It had a door, it  
20 had a stove and they kept warm.

21 So I it was about ten o'clock and I escaped. I  
22 really didn't even know where to run, where to go.

23 Q. Ten o'clock at night?

24 A. Yeah. So I ran up that cliff and on the  
25 side. I seen there was a big road, which I could see even

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1 from out to the bomb disposal.

2 When I say run, I had wooden clogs on, wooden  
3 shoes. So I run as best I could in wooden shoes. I still  
4 had that same type of uniform on, a gray jacket, gray  
5 pants. I scraped the paint off of the G, so it looked  
6 like a regular walking jacket.

7 I just run up that hill and run up the road and I  
8 am out walking on the sidewalk, which was above. It was  
9 houses above the Gestapo. It was a road I thought was  
10 leading out of Carlsbad towards the border.

11 It was dark and I heard the sirens going off in the  
12 Gestapo. All of a sudden out of the dark I hear Stop,  
13 identify yourself. When my eyes got better, accustomed to  
14 it, I was outside a police station, a normal police  
15 station.

16 Again, you mustn't forget this was at night. There  
17 is no light, nothing. First of all, the sirens went off  
18 from the Gestapo but they could very well be air raid  
19 sirens too, because there were night air raids quite  
20 often. So there was no light whatsoever on the street.  
21 You got to accustom yourself to that.

22 When this guy said Halt, who are you, what are you  
23 doing, something like that. He told me to put my hands  
24 up. I put my hands in the air. He shone his flashlight  
25 on me.

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HELMUT KOBLER

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1 He says What are you doing here? I says Well, I am  
2 going to work. I am working night shift.

3 Where? In that quarry down there. I have seen the  
4 quarry close by.

5 He said papers. No, I have no papers. I don't  
6 need papers to work. I tried to lie. I was talking  
7 German with him and I was talking the kind of dialect from  
8 that area, which I picked up, and just about when he  
9 finished the sirens stopped and another man walked out of  
10 the door and said What was that all about?

11 He said somebody escaped from the Gestapo. He said  
12 What have you got here?

13 Well, I got one of the laborers from that quarry  
14 here. Okay.

15 This man took his flashlight and shone it on me  
16 from the top down, stopped at my wooden shoes. So he knew  
17 I was the escaped guy. I am sure. I was trying to think  
18 whether I would be able to run away. Just at that moment  
19 I was going to beat it, you know, make a run for it and he  
20 says all right, go on. Next time carry your papers with  
21 you or something like that. That man knew who I was. He  
22 knew that I was the one who escaped. He let me go.

23 So then I made my way along that road and I walked  
24 all night long on the side of this highway. Come daylight  
25 I was heading for the woods, which usually were on the

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22

- 1 side. Again, I just recently rode that distance and this  
 2 was about, to the border from Carlsbad was about three  
 3 hours max. I remember it took me at least three days.  
 4 So I crossed the border into Czechoslovakia, or  
 5 what was at that time the Protectorate of --  
 6 It was high noon. My intention was to get to a  
 7 train station and try to catch a train to Brno and from  
 8 Brno to Eventuates (phonetic) and Eventuates and go to  
 9 Templestein (phonetic), where I knew there were partisans  
 10 and hide out with the partisans in the woods.  
 11 Q. Was the rest of your three day trip was  
 12 that pretty uneventful on that road?  
 13 A. It was uneventful in the sense that I  
 14 walked at night along the road. Every time I seen a car  
 15 approaching, the lights or so, I hit the ditch.  
 16 Just before I dawn I find myself a place to crawl  
 17 in and sleep. That's about -- There was nobody chasing me  
 18 or anything. Once I believed I crossed the border and I  
 19 was kind of hiding out in a low undulating hill like and  
 20 watching this little tiny village. It was like many of  
 21 the villages. There were just a few houses along the  
 22 street. There were no blocks or anything along the  
 23 highway.  
 24 Most of them are farm houses, small farmers. One  
 25 or two cows, things like that. At the bottom they have

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- 1 living quarter, at the top they have haystack, the hay  
 2 supply. So I seen somebody opening a door. They have big  
 3 doors and little doors. Opened the little door. And let  
 4 somebody out with a ladder. The man walks with the ladder  
 5 away from this house and there is a young girl, maybe 16,  
 6 17, kind of sticks her head out and looks up and down the  
 7 road.  
 8 I thought well, I will try it. I went to her and I  
 9 asked her where the nearest railroad station is and she  
 10 indicated it's right up the hill there.  
 11 She says You are a prisoner? I said Yes.  
 12 You are an escaped prisoner?  
 13 I said Yes.  
 14 Are you hungry?  
 15 Yes, I am.  
 16 Come on in. She took me in. They fed me. I  
 17 crawled upstairs into the straw above and they hid me  
 18 there for about three days.  
 19 The father got more and more upset about it. I  
 20 heard him tell the girl, tell two girls, they are going to  
 21 have to get rid of me. I have to move. Because they were  
 22 afraid if I get caught they are going to get killed for it  
 23 too.  
 24 Q. Were they Czech or German?  
 25 A. Czech. So I thought -- I would have loved

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24

- 1 to just stay there until the war was over. God, I got  
 2 fed, I was warm, I got a place to sleep. I knew the war  
 3 wasn't going to take too long.  
 4 Every night I heard them arguing about it  
 5 downstairs. So they told me about it.  
 6 I said if you can help me get to a train station  
 7 and get me a ticket I will be out of here.  
 8 So they decided -- I think the train left around  
 9 about three p.m, four o'clock. They walked me to the  
 10 station, in between the two girls, the two sisters and  
 11 they were laughing and making jokes just like I belonged  
 12 to them. There was a guard at the railroad station, as I  
 13 suspected there would be. But seeing us so friendly and  
 14 figured they belonged to the village and they bought a  
 15 ticket for me and seen me on the train and that was it.  
 16 Q. Did they give you a change of clothes?  
 17 A. Yes, they gave me a change of clothes.  
 18 They gave me a jacket which I put over the Gestapo jacket.  
 19 Oh, they gave me some shoes.  
 20 Q. Were they identifiable?  
 21 A. They were gray working pants. The train in  
 22 Prague I had to change trains. Again, I wasn't worried.  
 23 Usually all the controls are outside where you get out of  
 24 the train station, not out of the train. When you get up  
 25 the stairs and that they usually had a control.

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25

- 1 So I was able to switch trains very quickly. But  
 2 the thing is I didn't have a ticket anymore. I only had a  
 3 ticket to Prague. So the distance from Prague to Brno is  
 4 about three hours by car, the train took all night.  
 5 Q. Was this because of the disruptions from  
 6 allied bombing and stuff?  
 7 A. That not so much, but what it was was they  
 8 stop at every station. There might have been some  
 9 disruptions ahead that they were fixing. But it took,  
 10 usually it took about 12 hours.  
 11 What do I remember on that train ride?  
 12 The train was stuffed full, which I liked a lot of  
 13 people in them. The conductor was walking through the  
 14 train and asking for tickets and he clipped the tickets  
 15 with a little hole punch, little pliers like.  
 16 He came to me and there was no way I could escape.  
 17 We were just so many people in the hallways inside of it.  
 18 I was in a hallway outside, just kind of cabins. There  
 19 was no way I could move.  
 20 So I just told him I am an escaped prisoner, I have  
 21 no money, no papers, no ticket. He kind of nodded his  
 22 head and next, next, and started clipping tickets all  
 23 around me. So I got away.  
 24 Then I worked my way inside and I got a seat. I  
 25 thought I am on my way, but I knew I have to change in

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HELMUT KOBLER

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- 1 Brno. I knew Brno very well. I knew there are going to  
 2 be Gestapo controls at every train station.  
 3 I said to myself I have got to get off one station  
 4 before it hits the main rail station in Brno. I decided  
 5 which little station I was going to get off. But I fell  
 6 asleep and I woke up and the train was already in Brno.  
 7 Everybody was getting out of it.  
 8 So there was no way for me to just go in the same  
 9 stream of people. I tried to get out. Sure as hell you  
 10 had to walk up a flight of stairs and there was three of  
 11 them sitting there. Everybody had to pass by and show his  
 12 i.d.. I had no i.d.. I got caught.  
 13 There was no telling them, you know, a different  
 14 story. I just told them I escaped from the Carlsbad  
 15 Gestapo and that was it. I was going make it easy on  
 16 myself.  
 17 So I was taken to this infamous Gestapo prison in  
 18 Brno called (name in German), which it was student  
 19 dormitories. The Gestapo took it over and made a prison  
 20 out of it. In there they believed me that I escaped the  
 21 Gestapo from Carlsbad.  
 22 Why did I escape? I wanted to be with my family,  
 23 my mother and so on.  
 24 They figured out somebody must have helped me,  
 25 because when I escaped the Gestapo was the 25th of March,

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HELMUT KOBLER

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- 1 as I remember it. When I got caught was the 7th of April.  
 2 So where was I at that time and how did I get there?  
 3 So I gave them a story that I was just walking  
 4 along the highway at night and hiding during the day.  
 5 Where did I get the train?  
 6 I told them I got the train in Prague.  
 7 How did I get to the strain station in Prague  
 8 without being found?  
 9 Then where did I get the jacket?  
 10 Where did I get the shoes? They knew somebody must  
 11 have helped me. So there is where I really got beaten up.  
 12 They wanted to know who it was.  
 13 Q. Beaten up by your standards or tortured by  
 14 your standards?  
 15 A. Beaten up. Beaten up.  
 16 Q. Did they get any information from you?  
 17 A. No. When you say torture, sometimes what  
 18 they did is they hold your hand, your finger on the desk  
 19 like that and with a rubber trunchion they hit you over  
 20 the finger. That hurts a lot. But it didn't hurt any  
 21 more than when you get hit over the head or slapped  
 22 around, what I call slapped around.  
 23 No, it was just continuous beatings, kicking.  
 24 That's about what it amounted to, but it was continuous.  
 25 It was wounds and wounds. You get your face straightened

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- 1 out a little bit. I had my nose broke. And things they  
 2 did, they go and twist your arms into the back and hold  
 3 you for that. I can't remember all the details of what  
 4 they did. They did God awful things.  
 5 So in that prison there was again mostly  
 6 partisans, freedom fighters and saboteurs. I remember, I  
 7 think I told you about the executions every day. I had a  
 8 cell up in the first block. This prison was built in a L.  
 9 No, I should say it was built in an E. Like an E fashion.  
 10 At one of those between the two blocks there was a  
 11 wall, wooden wall of boards with sand behind it. There  
 12 were a couple stakes in the ground and that's where they  
 13 shot -- No, there were three stakes in the ground. This  
 14 is where they shot the prisoners.  
 15 Q. What were the stakes for?  
 16 A. They were for normal executions. Where the  
 17 prisoner is taken and tied to the stake and shot from the  
 18 front. That's normal official execution. That's what  
 19 they were for.  
 20 But they did not use that anymore when I was there.  
 21 What they did was they used the prisoners, took a whole  
 22 queue of them, lined them up one by one behind the other.  
 23 There were about four, five of the Gestapo or S.S. on each  
 24 side of that queue and in the front was a guy who was  
 25 killing them.

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- 1 So the prisoners stepped one step forward, two of  
 2 them made him kneel down and the guy shot him in the neck  
 3 and he fell over. Then the next one shot in the neck. It  
 4 was terrible to watch. I could watch it if I climbed up.  
 5 My bunk was the third bunk up. I could see the  
 6 executions. That's what I seen.  
 7 They were going every day at that time. They  
 8 didn't bother tying them to the stake. There was this  
 9 system where they were shot in the back of the neck or  
 10 back of the head.  
 11 Q. Who were these people they were shooting?  
 12 A. Well, they were suspected -- I can tell you  
 13 a good cross section what was in my cell. We were about  
 14 20, 25 people in that one cell. There was five of them  
 15 were caught with weapons in their hand. They were  
 16 partisans, actual partisans.  
 17 I would say another six of them were suspected to  
 18 have helped partisans.  
 19 There was one, two, three in for so-called  
 20 sabotage.  
 21 There was myself, there was an escaped prisoner,  
 22 escaped British prisoner. He was an Australian. He  
 23 escaped and got caught.  
 24 There was this old man I told you about. So that's  
 25 about the cross section of it.

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1 These people, one was a teacher, one was a  
2 professor. Usually they were intellectuals. They were  
3 ones were suspected. The others were already, the six  
4 which were caught, were already sentenced but were still  
5 in the process being examined and so on because they  
6 wanted more names.

7 That's why they hadn't killed them yet. Three of  
8 them on the lower bunks were continuously in iron, leg  
9 iron tied to their bed. The hand was handcuffed to the  
10 bed. They couldn't get out. That was punishment to  
11 soften them up.

12 I think I told you one day the old man was pushed  
13 into my cell and -- He was an old farmer from out of the  
14 mountains. Must have been maybe 45. You could see he was  
15 hard looking, hard working farmer. He had a rosary in his  
16 hand. He was praying all the time. He was praying.

17 I asked him what he was here for? He was in there  
18 because his only daughter got married and they had a  
19 custom in the vicinity they kill a pig and the whole  
20 family take part in it and eat up the pig. People in the  
21 cities didn't do it anymore because they didn't have any  
22 pigs, but this custom was still very much in effect in the  
23 country.

24 A neighbor reported him. They arrested him and  
25 accused him of sabotage. Even though the pig was his, it

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1 was not his to kill. They took it from the farmers when  
2 they could. The farmers usually had a good life. They  
3 had their own food. They weren't bothered too much.

4 Q. So did the neighbor get a reward for  
5 turning this guy in?

6 A. I don't know. I don't think at that time  
7 because it's too close to the end of the war.

8 Q. Why on earth did they do that?

9 A. I have a neighbor that didn't like me and  
10 this happens, except there a neighbor is a neighbor for  
11 life. I don't know why the neighbor did it. There was a  
12 lot of that going on. You couldn't trust anybody at that  
13 time. So he was sentenced right there to death.

14 Q. So in talking about sentencing to death,  
15 you are not talking about like a courtroom procedure?

16 A. No, no, no. He was -- One of the Gestapo  
17 officers says you are accused of sabotage, you did that  
18 you are going to die tomorrow. That's what I mean. There  
19 is no court.

20 I don't even remember being before a judge or  
21 anybody was. You go before the Gestapo. Maybe the guy  
22 who is doing the examinations and is satisfied you have  
23 committed that, well, let's kill the bastard. So the  
24 other guy above him authorizes it and that's it. That's  
25 the whole sentence. No, there was no court proceedings.

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1 Anyway, this guy was walking all night long in the  
2 cell back and forth. Back and forth. Praying to God.  
3 God, you can't be a life for a pig. A life for a pig. A  
4 life for a pig. It's not possible. All night long. Some  
5 guys yelled at him Go lie down, go to sleep. Not much  
6 pity around there.

7 In the morning they came for him and took him down  
8 and shot him. So the atmosphere, they knew the Russians  
9 are pretty close.

10 Oh, yeah, I also remember one day in there at night  
11 we could hear the footsteps. There were tiles on the  
12 floor. You could hear their foot step outside in the  
13 hall. You could hear the foot step. You were on edge to  
14 see what cell they go into and what is going to happen  
15 again.

16 They pushed in two guys. Two guys brought a  
17 stretcher in with one guy on it and left. I tried to talk  
18 to them. They were Russian partisans. They were all in a  
19 fire fight. You could see some of the wounds, there was  
20 blood still. There was no doctor, no bandages. We tried  
21 as much as we could to tear off the shirt and bandage it.

22 This man on the stretcher apparently was their  
23 commanding officer. He was very badly hurt. I remember  
24 the blood dripping through one of the canvas stretchers on  
25 the floor. Didn't even move him any place after. They

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1 were trying to keep him calm and keep him comfortable.

2 In the morning I heard the foot steps. About eight  
3 o'clock there is a lot of activity in the halls, cells  
4 opening and closing, and you know they are taking  
5 prisoners out, bringing them around and shoot them. So  
6 you listen.

7 By that time I was pretty scared. So you listen  
8 for the steps where they come to your cell.

9 To my cell they came and at that time I figured who  
10 would go. I figured it was between me and the British  
11 prisoner, because the other ones haven't had full  
12 examination yet. So I thought they are going to get me or  
13 get the Australian.

14 There was footsteps coming to my cell. The cell  
15 was opened. And they haul out the Russians. They make  
16 the two Russians pickup the stretcher and haul them out,  
17 took five of them, took them down and the guy on the  
18 stretcher, you know, they made them put down the stretcher  
19 and they told him to dump the guy on the ground.

20 The Russian either didn't understand it or didn't  
21 know it so they stood there and shot them standing up.  
22 Didn't even make them kneel down. One came and took the  
23 stretcher and dumped the guy on the ground and shot him a  
24 couple times. So that was it with the Russians that I  
25 remember.

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1 So that was the kind of people we had in there.  
 2 Then all of a sudden the executions stopped. There  
 3 were no more. There was a day, two days. You could hear  
 4 activity going on, but not outside in the hallways.  
 5 Then all of a sudden we were suppose to move out.  
 6 They took me, they took the British guy, they took a  
 7 couple other people outside. Again, I thought that's it.  
 8 We are going to get it.  
 9 We were led into a big hall like and made to stand  
 10 with our faces to the wall, no talking. Just keep staring  
 11 at the wall with your hands behind your back.  
 12 In that big hallway there were on one side windows  
 13 and they looked out towards the execution ground. The  
 14 hall was an old tullinary, you know, a place for physical  
 15 exercises, physical education. It was fairly big. It was  
 16 as big as a basketball court. There was four or five  
 17 windows. They looked out to the execution place.  
 18 I could see boxes stacked, wooden boxes stacked  
 19 about four, five high and the blood running out of them.  
 20 There were just ordinary wooden boxes. They took them to  
 21 the crematorium and burned them. Apparently they didn't  
 22 have time to do that. Must be at least 50 of them stacked  
 23 along the wall like that. You see the puddles of blood.  
 24 So I was really scared. I thought they were going  
 25 to kill us right there. I am waiting, waiting and waiting

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1 and we were taken out, handcuffed. Still I was thinking I  
 2 am going to get shot.  
 3 We were taken out into a truck, loaded onto a  
 4 truck, and taken to the railroad station and there we were  
 5 loaded into three cattle cars.  
 6 I think I mentioned to you again the Germans, where  
 7 they had a little plaque inside the cattle car. It says  
 8 four horses or 20 men, no more. We was stuffed in about  
 9 200 prisoners.  
 10 (At this point a recess was taken)  
 11 A. Where did we stop at?  
 12 Q. The end of the Gestapo and you were on the  
 13 train. Go ahead.  
 14 A. Well, as I stopped saying the first thing I  
 15 notice getting into that cattle car, the box car, was the  
 16 little plaque on the top saying four horses or 20 men and  
 17 we were pushed in about 200 prisoners. We couldn't bend,  
 18 nothing. Just stood there like pressed sardines. We  
 19 couldn't move or anything.  
 20 My first impression was I hope this is not going to  
 21 take a long journey; a few hours you could stand it.  
 22 This was already in April 45. The Russians were  
 23 coming closer and closer. The west, the Americans were  
 24 coming closer towards the German border.  
 25 We were in the box car I realized that there was

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1 two more box cars like that and finally we were hooked  
 2 onto a locomotive and at that time they was having steam  
 3 locomotive, very few diesels.  
 4 We were put in front of a train, a normal train, a  
 5 luxurious train. In that train were about eight, nine  
 6 cars of the Gestapo officials, families, wives, children.  
 7 The purpose of the whole thing was they wanted to get from  
 8 the Russians to the Americans, surrender to the Americans,  
 9 not to the Russians. They knew the Russians didn't make  
 10 any bones about it. They just got somebody he was S.S.  
 11 and they killed him, they shot him. They didn't take S.S.  
 12 prisoners, especially if he was from the Gestapo or SD,  
 13 Sicherheitsdienst.  
 14 I found out after the war they also advertised in  
 15 radio and so on that this train is a Red Cross train and  
 16 as a precaution the Americans don't attack the locomotive  
 17 and dive bomb the locomotive because the custom was to  
 18 just go and dive bomb the locomotive, drill it, in other  
 19 words, disable it, and the whole train is standing there  
 20 and takes days before they can clear the track, get a new  
 21 locomotive and usually they didn't do much damage to the  
 22 other installations.  
 23 So their intent was to advise the Allies that they  
 24 have in the box cars next to the locomotives and between  
 25 the train where they have the families that they have

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1 political prisoners and most of them who had somebody in  
 2 either England or America, who had some association with  
 3 the Allies.  
 4 They knew my father was in England or he escaped  
 5 the Gestapo and got to England and is fighting with the  
 6 British.  
 7 I understood on that train also, I don't know  
 8 whether this is true or not, but there was a nephew of  
 9 Churchill in there as a prisoner. So there we were in  
 10 that train.  
 11 The Gestapo then didn't have that much priority and  
 12 we were shuttled from one station to another and then  
 13 another and then another, and then hooked on other trains.  
 14 So the whole trip took about eleven days. This eleven  
 15 days we had no food, no water, nothing.  
 16 How should I describe it to you? It was the most  
 17 horrible sight you can see. They were all men, no women  
 18 in there. You couldn't bend to take your trousers off or  
 19 to go to the toilet.  
 20 After the second day I remember it just didn't even  
 21 matter. I just pee'd in my pants and shot in my pants and  
 22 was hungry, thirsty. I remember my mouth being so dry it  
 23 just felt like it was solid rock in my throat.  
 24 After the second day I remember people in there.  
 25 There were various ages. I was the youngest one, I was

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1 17. I think the oldest one was maybe 65 or something.  
 2 There was various ages. But then after the second day  
 3 they started moaning. This whole train was moaning. The  
 4 Gestapo was beating on the doors, to tell us to shut up,  
 5 to be quiet. The moaning and this moaning made somehow  
 6 made us comfortable, made us not feel the pain so much.  
 7 I would say after the third day, fourth day, you  
 8 know, kind of a half conscious, this low hum moan going  
 9 around. And then that stopped. Then people started  
 10 dying.  
 11 And that started shuffling. One guy is dead and he  
 12 can't get to the ground. So they start shuffling until he  
 13 finally falls down.  
 14 But then you get more shuffled because he is on the  
 15 ground now and nobody wants to step on him and he takes up  
 16 that additional space.  
 17 So I remember this continuous shuffling going on.  
 18 Every time we start the shuffling there was somebody dead,  
 19 somebody discovered his neighbor died, and trying to get  
 20 him to get on the ground and not step on him.  
 21 So this shuffling has been going on. This is what  
 22 sticks in my mind. I would say in our train in the six  
 23 days there must have been about 20 people, 20 men died.  
 24 That created a big problem. Finally people stood  
 25 on the dead ones. Tried not to, but there was no place

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1 and defecated on the dead.  
 2 As it happens, it started getting warm, it's spring  
 3 now. Some of the bodies started stinking, deteriorating.  
 4 It was just terrible. I couldn't compare it to anything  
 5 else when I think about it.  
 6 I think how I survived this?  
 7 After about the ninth day all I remember is this  
 8 shuffling, no more moaning. It was quiet, but there was  
 9 shuffling. People were dying. Most of us by seventh,  
 10 eighth day were completely unconscious, not even knowing.  
 11 It was like a bad dream or so. I remember personally  
 12 every so often when the train jerked or we were hooked  
 13 onto another locomotive or something like that I woke up  
 14 to a jerk and I opened my eyes and I can still see in the  
 15 same box car with the same people. I closed the eyes  
 16 again or passed out again.  
 17 Until the eighth day. It was the eighth day. Mind  
 18 you, we didn't know where we were going. We didn't know  
 19 we are going towards Americans. We know the Gestapo is  
 20 fleeing with their families and having us as a hostage.  
 21 On the eighth day I can't tell you whether it was  
 22 morning, noon or afternoon, but it was still day light  
 23 outside. All of a sudden I wake up or I regain  
 24 consciousness and I hear heavy machine gun fire.  
 25 I opened up my eyes. I realized the train is being

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1 attacked by dive bombers. I opened my eyes and all I see  
 2 all these people couldn't find room to stand on the  
 3 ground. Since my position in there was against the wall,  
 4 one of the walls of the box car, so I could rest against  
 5 it.  
 6 Before I realized where we were I wanted to throw  
 7 myself on top of it to avoid that. I heard bullets  
 8 flying past me and going into the pile of bodies lying on  
 9 the ground. So it looked like the Americans did not take  
 10 the bite, did attack the train, made it stop. So the  
 11 train stopped.  
 12 After awhile the planes went away. Some of the  
 13 Gestapo came and opened the doors and said to throw the  
 14 bodies out because there were a number of wounded or dead  
 15 ones. So we used that opportunity to just throw the  
 16 bodies by the side of the train, to throw them out.  
 17 And clean up as much as we could because now in my  
 18 box car, in that car, there was about 50 people less.  
 19 There was a little bit more comfortable. But it must have  
 20 taken us ages to clean it, to throw them out because we  
 21 were weak. Nobody could move. Everything stunk. We  
 22 stunk. Not even the Gestapo came close to the train.  
 23 Q. The Gestapo was still with the train?  
 24 A. Oh, yeah, they were with the train. They  
 25 had their families and everything with it.

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HELMUT KOBLER

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1 Q. So there wasn't really liberation yet then?  
 2 A. Oh, no. It was not liberation. They were  
 3 running away from the Russians. They took the family,  
 4 they put us as hostages in front of the locomotive, so the  
 5 locomotive is not being attacked like all the rest of  
 6 them. I think they were P-51. All they did was machine  
 7 gun the locomotive and paralyzed it. It was a steam  
 8 locomotive.  
 9 Just if the train tried to get out of the station,  
 10 just getting it out of the station they attacked it. They  
 11 drilled the locomotive. The train was stopped and the  
 12 rails were blocked. We were standing somewhere, I don't  
 13 know where. Along that, the locomotive was disabled.  
 14 They were trying to get a new locomotive. They  
 15 were using the chance to get the dead bodies out of the  
 16 box cars. Then they locked us up, locked us back in.  
 17 Q. Did they give you water?  
 18 A. No. No, nothing. I think we got water on  
 19 the last day. We got some water. I remember that was the  
 20 train station, a big train station. There was a train  
 21 yard and I seen a train loaded full of box cars but open  
 22 box cars. It was fully loaded with bodies, dead bodies,  
 23 naked bodies. They were taking the dead out of the  
 24 concentration camp so they didn't leave any evidence and  
 25 they were hauling it with them into Germany, into the

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1 Reich but never had opportunity to dump it because the  
2 trains were going to the train, trains with wounded coming  
3 from the front, refugees all over the place.

4 They didn't know what to do with them. They didn't  
5 even time to bury them. They had them in the open cattle  
6 trains. We were in a closed cattle train.

7 So that is where we got the first water. It was a  
8 big station. That one was Gielava. I remember where it  
9 was among other reasons. Then on the 12th day, 11th or  
10 12th day I can't remember. I don't know. I lost time on  
11 that. We came to a place near Pilsen into a camp, which  
12 was also -- It was not a concentration camp. It was a  
13 labor camp. It was an empty labor camp.

14 They herded us into the camp. What I remember  
15 about that time is when they opened the doors again and  
16 they were standing there with machine pistols and yelling  
17 Raus, Raus, Raus, everybody out and nobody would go. We  
18 thought that was the end. As you get out they would shoot  
19 us.

20 I remember one of the guards finally holding his  
21 nose, because it stunk so bad, grabbed a couple guys by  
22 the ankles and yanked them out. Then when the rest seen  
23 they are not getting shot they started getting out.

24 We were marched into that camp. I would say the  
25 camp was about a mile away from the railroad station.

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1 When I say marched, it was not marching. We were dragged  
2 in there. There were quite a few hurt from that air  
3 attack. Quite a few died. Quite a few were hurt. The  
4 wounds were festering. We were dragged into this camp.  
5 It had barbed wires. It had the standard guard towers.

6 It was manned by part of the Gestapo who came were  
7 them and part were S.S., normal S.S. guards.

8 We were starving. We got water in the camp. I  
9 remember like today we got a piece of bread. About one  
10 inch thick, maybe a little bit inch and-a-half thick and a  
11 big piece of margarine, about that big on the bread. So  
12 life looked a little better for us.

13 We were told not to eat it all. This is suppose to  
14 last us another three days. That's the rations we are  
15 going to get. Natually, everybody ate it up, ate the  
16 margarine and bread. There was practically more margarine  
17 than bread. I did the same thing.

18 The camp was just standard camp, block houses,  
19 wooden block houses with three tier bunks and pot belly  
20 stove in the middle. Latrine to the side. I got the  
21 shits. I got diarrhea you wouldn't believe it. It was  
22 just something awful.

23 Not having eaten for so many days and all of a  
24 sudden getting that margarine, it was terrible. Not only  
25 me, but it was so bad we were all lying in our bunks for

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1 at least another two days just having diarrhea. So it  
2 stunk, which was so awful in the train was getting into  
3 the barrack again. Nobody even bothered getting up and  
4 going to the latrine. They were too weak, too demoralized  
5 to get up and do anything.

6 I understand this was done on purpose. They didn't  
7 have sufficient guards to guard us so they did this trick  
8 with the margarine and we all got the diarrhea.

9 I remember I was one of the first ones getting up  
10 and getting out and looking around. I see the camp was  
11 S.S.. By that time it was pretty close to the 30th of  
12 April, 1st of May. I see the guards still in their S.S.  
13 uniform.

14 The next morning I got up and I see the same guards  
15 who wore the S.S. uniform now were wearing normal  
16 wehrmacht, normal German Army uniform.

17 The next morning I get up and I don't see anybody.  
18 The gate was open. I walked out. That was 5th of May,  
19 1945. Most of the prisoners were still too sick to even  
20 walk out.

21 The S.S. left, everybody left. At that time I  
22 joined the partisans in Milishoff and May 8th the war was  
23 over. That was it.

24 I then worked my way back home. Milishoff was on  
25 the German border, very close to the German border. In

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1 Bohemia. I had to make my way home, which took me about  
2 15 days because again nothing was running, no trains, no  
3 buses, no nothing. We had to walk.

4 Q. Did they give you water when you got to the  
5 camp?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. As much as you wanted?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Who was kind of running the camp at this  
10 point?

11 A. Well, the S.S. were running the camp.

12 Q. Were they fully staffed or were they  
13 running away?

14 A. I think the S.S. was still there from when  
15 this was a labor camp. They had the barracks outside.  
16 They were there from before.

17 But then I also seen in there some of the Gestapo  
18 from the Brno Gestapo. From the 5th of May they were all  
19 gone.

20 Q. Did you have a chance to hear them or see  
21 them? They might have been panicking a lot?

22 A. I overheard some, but I couldn't figure it  
23 out. I didn't -- To me it was not much different. The  
24 Russians are coming from one side, the Americans coming  
25 from the other. The difference was to the Germans. They

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1 had to get all across Moravia, Bohemia, to get into  
2 northern Bohemia to surrender to the Americans. I seen  
3 them in columns, fully armed with tanks and everything,  
4 just columns, division, divisions, just pressing on to  
5 surrender to the Americans.

6 Q. Did they give you food up until the day  
7 they disappeared?

8 A. Did they give us, until they appeared?

9 Q. Until they disappeared.

10 A. No. There was activity in the kitchen, but  
11 I don't think anybody was worrying about food.

12 Q. So you weren't eating at this point?

13 A. No. You were so sick after that margarine  
14 incident. I don't think so.

15 Q. How long was it between when you got to the  
16 camp and then May 5th?

17 A. About four days, four, five days.

18 Q. So it wasn't much time anyway?

19 A. No. We got our first meal was this piece  
20 of bread and margarine and all the water. I am saying all  
21 the water we can drink.

22 In the wash room, one of those long wash rooms  
23 there was water. So you could drink. In the barracks  
24 there was buckets of water too.

25 I remember the first two days I didn't bother

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1 cleaning up. Then the second day it wasn't so bad  
2 anymore. Again, I was one of the first because I was the  
3 youngest one.

4 After that, after the Germans left, the American  
5 Army took the camp over. By the time I went out there was  
6 still people laying in the barracks couldn't get up.

7 Q. Were you there before the Red Cross came?

8 A. No, I was already out but I came back. As  
9 I said I walked out May 5th. The war was over May 8th.

10 The Americans came about May 9th. So the Red Cross was  
11 shortly thereafter.

12 Q. Now you were with the partisans. What did  
13 you do for three days with the partisans?

14 A. Basically I was looking for the guards.

15 Q. The guards?

16 A. For the S.S. guards.

17 Q. Among the partisans?

18 A. No. I knew the partisans were looking for  
19 them too.

20 Q. Oh, I see.

21 A. The Partisans were in the area. I am not  
22 making much out of it. As I said, people knew where to go  
23 and how to find them in the partisans. By that time the  
24 war was at the end and there were partisans all over the  
25 place.

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1 Q. Were there partisans still serious about  
2 this or were they wanting to go home knowing it really was  
3 the end?

4 A. The partisans I am talking about, partisans  
5 which lived all their life in that area and towards the  
6 end of the war maybe one or two was very serious partisan,  
7 who had been in the movement for years or months, while  
8 the other ones were just recruited and volunteered when  
9 they seen the Germans are on the run.

10 Q. So they are new volunteers that could see  
11 the Germans were on the run?

12 During the car had they maybe been working with the  
13 Germans or against the partisans?

14 A. Some of them I am sure worked with the  
15 Germans. They tried to get into the partisans.

16 Q. The partisans didn't seem to mind?

17 A. They didn't know them. What they wanted  
18 was numbers. Maybe there was one who really was a serious  
19 partisan, a serious freedom fighter who was living in the  
20 woods. But the other ones had their homes there and came  
21 out. They knew they were not going to be caught by the  
22 Germans anymore.

23 What I did when I joined them, it was no big  
24 formalities where you had to swear allegiance. You were  
25 told here, get yourself a gun and get yourself some

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1 clothes.

2 What I did, the first German officer I caught I  
3 took his pants and I took his clothes and I took his gun.  
4 As a matter of fact, I didn't catch him. He surrendered.  
5 I took a Red Cross and made red star and put them on my  
6 shoulder, so it doesn't look like a German uniform.  
7 That's what I did. That's how I became partisan.

8 Q. What happened to this German officer who  
9 surrendered?

10 A. I don't know.

11 Q. Did the partisans do anything with him, do  
12 you know?

13 A. Well, let me think. There was a whole  
14 group of Germans running out towards the Americans, whole  
15 divisions, as I told you. We got some of the first ones  
16 who came in that day. I don't know. Maybe we got 25 or  
17 so. But these were regular Wehrmacht. All we were  
18 looking for is S.S.. By that time we also knew they put  
19 on German uniforms shortly before the war ended.

20 So we made them to take off the jacket and shirts  
21 and we looked for the tatoo, for the S.S.. If it was S.S.  
22 man we hand them over to little pool to do whatever they  
23 do.

24 Q. Partisan group?

25 A. Yeah. We caught a bunch of Germans who

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1 were fully armed, were trying to get to the Americans.  
 2 They seen us and they surrendered. There was no fire  
 3 fight or anything. They seen us and wanted to surrender,  
 4 to have somebody to protect them as long as it's not the  
 5 Russians who were pushing behind them. This is the group  
 6 of about 25.

7 We had them, we locked them up in the cellar. That  
 8 was the occasion where I took the uniform of the German  
 9 officer. And took his boots and gave him mine. It was a  
 10 fair trade. So we had them in the cellar.

11 Then all of a sudden overnight in the morning we  
 12 started waking up, there was a big noise, tanks rattling  
 13 outside and there was a full German division, fully armed  
 14 with tanks and everything, going by through that village.  
 15 We had in the cellar we had 25 of the German prisoners.  
 16 We through if they would have stopped.

17 Q. You would have given them the 25 prisoners?

18 A. Never mind we would have given them, we  
 19 would have run away. I remember in the cellar each one of  
 20 us was sitting on a German, making sure he couldn't yell  
 21 out or scream.

22 Q. Sitting on their head?

23 A. Yeah, sitting on their head. It's a cold  
 24 cellar. Windows are way up there. All they could see is  
 25 when you lookout you could see the feet marching by.

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HELMUT KOBLER

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1 If they yell out or attract attention I am sure  
 2 they would have gotten out and we would have been shot. I  
 3 don't know what. Anyway, that's how I got my uniform to  
 4 go home with and my weapon.

5 Q. Do you know what happened to all the bodies  
 6 on the train?

7 When you kicked them out of the box car did  
 8 somebody come along and bury them? Do you know anything  
 9 about that?

10 A. I am sure somebody came along and buried  
 11 them because they couldn't let them lie along the tracks  
 12 like that. But at that time this was already standard  
 13 occurrence. It was not just my case. There were other  
 14 trains under similar conditions with prisoners who died  
 15 and they throw them along the tracks.

16 You could see them even before my train went by  
 17 there were bodies thrown out. I think there were people  
 18 that picked them up and buried them but no name, no fancy  
 19 funeral.

20 That's the last people who died. After there were  
 21 prisoners who were liberated. They were eating, they were  
 22 given food and the bodies couldn't take it and they died.  
 23 They died of typhoid. That was a big fear in my camp in  
 24 Millishoff there is going to be typhoid because of the  
 25 diarrhea.

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1 Q. You said you went back into the camp after  
 2 you left it. Was that before you started for home?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Was that when the Red Cross had already  
 5 taken over?

6 A. The Red Cross had already taken over and  
 7 they saw at that time that was typhoid in the camp.

8 Again when I say they have taken over, it was not a  
 9 big swearing in ceremony. They brought in a kitchen and  
 10 took over looking after the patients, the inmates and  
 11 helped them get better and controlling their food intake.  
 12 That was very hard to do. We hadn't eaten for days and so  
 13 on. A lot of them plundered German trains. There were  
 14 big tins. The Germans were gone and they were standing on  
 15 the train station, a train full of food for the front.  
 16 Most have it was in tins.

17 So they go and just take it as much as they can  
 18 carry and eat it and boom they were sick. Some went and  
 19 didn't know what to do. We were living by that time  
 20 already outside and pretty free in the camp and made camp  
 21 fires and warmed the tin up without opening it and it  
 22 exploded in their faces.

23 Q. Whose faces?

24 A. The prisoners faces because they didn't  
 25 know what to do with a tin of food.

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1 Q. You mean the German prisoners?

2 A. No, I am talking about our prisoners,  
 3 getting a hold of German food which was left on a train  
 4 station in a train, in box cars, which was suppose to go  
 5 to the front.

6 The Germans had everything in a tin, except bread.  
 7 Most of the tins are big cans like that. And had military  
 8 color on it and were suppose to be eaten, taken out,  
 9 opened, cooked, warmed up and eaten. You could eat it  
 10 cold too. But people didn't know what it is.

11 They thought this tin you just hold over the fire  
 12 and warm it and open it. By doing that the cans heated up  
 13 and exploded in their faces. Or some boiled it in water  
 14 over the camp fire. I would say a lot of people got  
 15 killed just from that.

16 Q. Boiled unopen tins?

17 A. Yeah. They didn't know. These were not  
 18 sophisticated people. Some were there five, six years and  
 19 didn't know you are suppose to open it and put it in a  
 20 dish and warm it over the camp fire. Besides there was no  
 21 dishes available or anything like that. There were no can  
 22 openers available.

23 I have seen them crack open the can with rocks.  
 24 That was our food supply for many, many days.

25 Q. Where?

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- 1 A. While we were there.  
 2 Q. In the camp?  
 3 A. Outside the camp. I was with the  
 4 partisans.  
 5 Q. When this was happening?  
 6 A. Yeah, that was after the war, after May  
 7 8th. All of a sudden somebody discovered there were a  
 8 couple box cars with food in there, which was German Army  
 9 food. So they spoke around in the camp and people went  
 10 there to help themselves.  
 11 Q. The Red Cross in the meantime was in the  
 12 kitchen?  
 13 A. Well, the Red Cross was in the camp and the  
 14 people who were in the camp were not people who really  
 15 were mobile yet. They were people who were still pretty  
 16 sick.  
 17 The people who could move, anybody who could move  
 18 moved out of that camp. It took us a while to even  
 19 believe this is really true. The first chance you get you  
 20 move out of the camp. Just get out and live in the  
 21 country, beg, steal or whatever you could and then make  
 22 your way home, wherever you can.  
 23 Some had to go all the way to Poland. Some of them  
 24 run back into Germany because they were afraid of the  
 25 Russians. Some were Russian prisoners, taken prisoner by

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- 1 the Germans. The Russians showed no mercy with them.  
 2 Took them in and walked them to Siberia. Walked I am  
 3 saying. There is no transportation.  
 4 I would say for three months that whole area was  
 5 completely paralyzed. Slowly buses, the only  
 6 transportation you could get was Allied vehicles. I had  
 7 no problem with the Americans because I got a certificate  
 8 from them which said I was liberated by them and I am  
 9 carrying a weapon and it was registered.  
 10 But the Russians was a different story. I had to  
 11 get into the Russian zone, which was liberated by the  
 12 Russian.  
 13 Q. When did you get the certificate from the  
 14 Americans?  
 15 A. During the first week after the war.  
 16 Q. Back at the camp?  
 17 A. Yeah.  
 18 Q. How did the camp change? How many people  
 19 did the Red Cross have? How were they able to start  
 20 cleaning and doing things?  
 21 A. People on the Red Cross were very few. The  
 22 American Army what they did is they organized it in such a  
 23 way they selected between the inmates, between the ex-  
 24 prisoners a group of people who were given the  
 25 administration of the camp. This was doctors, lawyers,

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- 1 people who say okay, now you administer the camp for the  
 2 Red Cross. I am sure an American officer was in charge of  
 3 it overall.  
 4 The problem was nobody wanted to get back into the  
 5 camp for a while. When word got out the Americans are in  
 6 there, the Red Cross is in there, you can go in and out, a  
 7 lot of us went back there just to get the certificate,  
 8 this piece of paper that would carry us through the Allied  
 9 and Russian zone to show we are ex-prisoner. I have the  
 10 piece of paper still.  
 11 Q. You still have that?  
 12 A. Yes. That was very important to us because  
 13 we had no i.d., we had nothing. Especially me, strutting  
 14 around in a German uniform.  
 15 Q. Did you encounter any German citizens at  
 16 this time?  
 17 A. No, not there. I caught a couple guards  
 18 who were hiding in the little towns, and little mountain  
 19 villages around the camp. But most of the guards were  
 20 older guys. They were in their 50s and '60s, which  
 21 had been dragged in.  
 22 No, German people in that area there were no German  
 23 people. Mostly Czechs because it was in northern Bohemia.  
 24 Q. Do you want to stop for the day?  
 25 A. Yeah.

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# WASENIUS REPORTING SERVICE

3309 SANTA MARIA DRIVE  
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September 19, 1993

Dear Karen:

I am enclosing the transcript and video taped interview of Helmut Kobler. I wish I had heard the first two interviews.

The following pages are names that need to be corrected.

P 2 - L 11 Rijadice?  
P 7 - L 12 Fehrhehr?  
P 22 - L 8 Eventuates  
P 22 - L 9 Templestein .

Also on P 16 L 17 is the name of a prison camp which I am not familiar with. It sounds like Finectenslagge, but I am sure that's not it.

Also on P 26 L 18 reference was made to the name of a Gestapo prison in Brno. I did not understand the German phrase.

On P 22 - L 5 I understood Mr. Kobler to say Protectorate of Women and Men. If this is correct let me know and I can insert that language. My maps are inadequate for these small towns, which probably don't exist anyway.

*It is challenging & always  
interesting. If you wish to send  
another one while Mr Kobler is  
looking this over, please  
do so.*



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