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Interview with: MAX GARCIA
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Interviewer: Sandra Bendayan & Carolyn Rosenthal
Transcriber: Carol Cruthis

Q: I REMEMBER THAT WE LEFT OFF THE LAST PART OF YOUR INTERVIEW AT THAT MAGNIFICENT MOMENT OF LIBERATION.

A: Yes.

Q: WOULD YOU TALK NOW ABOUT THAT WHOLE DAY, THAT WHOLE WEEKEND?

A: The liberation took place on Sunday, the 6th of May, 1945. I always had thought that it was around the noon hour, but I was given later data by people who kept a very close hidden diary, a Czechoslovakian by the name of Drahomir Barta, who is still alive and is a doctor, I believe, in literature at Prague University. He recorded the actual tanks arriving within the camp approximately a quarter to three in the afternoon. Upon reflection over much time, I have come to the conclusion that he was right, and I was wrong because the time frames when they arrived in the camp. I got to talking with the guys who were leading the tanks, the two sergeants, and by the time that I came down in Ebensee, when they moved me immediately out and moved me into the doctor's house across the street from the command post, it probably was late afternoon, and so the sequence seems to be kind of proper there. At any

rate, somehow on Friday before the liberation, there was something awry within the camp. There was some sense. A meeting was called by the camp commander with all the SS standing behind him--armed, with weapons at the ready. He informed us that the Allies were moving closer and that he and his troops had decided that they would fight to the last man, and that he did not want us to be part of this. So he was going to have us moved into the tunnels so that we could be protected from any battle that would ensue between his troops and the Allies. This was translated by one of the prisoners into more than one language. He spoke in German, translated in Russian, French, and things like that. Immediately, a big roar, "No! We won't go!" went up. Now this was about sixteen to eighteen thousand prisoners. About two thousand or more are in the hospital, but the ones who were standing on the square, "No! We won't go!", which took them totally by surprise. There was some discussion among the SS. Nothing further was said and they disappeared. When we woke up Saturday morning, they were gone.

Q: THE WHOLE SS?

A: The whole SS had disappeared overnight, the ones who were going to fight until the last man. And so the camp, Saturday, was ours.

There was very little food in the camp and immediately, what happened was, there had been a lot -- I wouldn't say a lot, but there had been quite a number of Communists from different countries who had established, this I learned later. This I didn't know at the time. They had established an underground type of quasi-government that when this push came to shove, they would be ready to immediately take over and do what needed to be done to protect the fellow prisoners there. The S.S. had left and that Saturday morning, they took over, and immediately began to ration all the food because there was so little. They didn't know when the Americans were going to come. So that was all taken care of at once.

What also took place that Saturday was that the prisoners went after the Capos and the Block Altesten and other sons of bitches who had given them such terrible times, and they were pulled apart limb by limb. Now this I've seen with my own eyes. We had no weapons, and these people were actually attacked by the starving ex-prisoners and were murdered. Their arms were torn off. Their legs were torn off. Their heads were twisted off, and you find body parts lying in the camp street. That took place on Saturday as well.

On Saturday, what also took place was, suddenly on the fence overlooking the valley of the camp. The camp was located on a ledge and we overlooked the valley where the Traun River was--on that fence, which was no longer electrified now because that was one of the first things which the new government did. They cut off all the electricity. They knew where all these things were so that nobody could run into an electrical wire and execute himself. So on these fences appeared flags of all the nations of the prisoners who were there. I have always wondered, where did they hide them and how quickly did they do these things? Where did they find the sheets to make these? Where did they find the paint and all these things? But all of a sudden, this became a very festive-type thing around the edge of the camp. Of course, myself and others, we stood there at the fence overlooking that valley and wondering, where are these Americans?

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY INKLING UP TO THEN THAT ALLIES ADVANCING TOWARD THE CAMP?

A. We knew from people in the tunnels who had been other civilian workers, slave labor as well, but civilians, who had more access to radios and other situation than we did. Although there was a radio in the camp. There was an ex-German there, or a German

who had been in camp since 1933 or something. He was just one of a real senior prisoner who had all kinds of privileges. He'd never had to work. Ate well, and he was the only one allowed to have a radio. Towards the end, he allowed the underground government to listen to the radio and to English broadcasts and others, so that they could get a feeling and an idea as to when things might happen and who was going to be in this particular area. Was the British coming or the French or the Americans? So they knew that the Americans were in that area and they, more than likely, would be the ones liberating us. I didn't know that, but they knew that. But we surmised the Allies were coming. We also knew that the Russians had been close to Melk because they forced us to get from Melk to Ebensee, so these kinds of things we surmised.

Saturday, we went to bed that night. As I said, we were all very hungry by now because there was hardly any food. The next morning, Sunday, we woke up, and again, we all went to the fence, looked around, and talked to one another. In the early afternoon, we heard this rumbling, and we didn't quite know what this was. Then the rumbling became louder and louder, so we all raced towards the gate of the camp, which was still locked, and outside the gate there now stood two, like, national guardsmen, except, old national guardsmen. We

don't have such units here, but over there, they were called the Volkssturm. Basically, it was the people's guard, and most of these people were in their late fifties. They were no longer qualified for military service. They stood there with a rifle and that was the guard of the camp. They had let it be known to the government, the underground government, that they didn't have any bullets in these rifles, so they were just like a couple of guys in an operetta.

Then these tanks rolled up. There were two tanks and a jeep. The first tank came to that gate and the gate was closed. We stood there next to the gate, looking thru the fence and at this whole thing. The sergeant leaned [leaned forward] out of his turret and grabbed that rifle of that guy on the right side, and then he broke it over his gun turret. Above the gate there was a hook with a lamp on it, that was on at night, and when you came to the gate, people could really see you. He hung that broken rifle over the lamp. This was almost like a movie script, you know. I mean it was so fantastic, because it was like it was a rehearsal. This is what we are going to do.

These guys didn't know there was a camp up there. They had been told -- I all this found out later, because I became very good friends with these two sergeants who actually liberated us, as well as the

company commander of that unit. We have become very good buddies in the last few years. They had been told that there were photographs existing, and that there might be a concentration camp in that area someplace, but they didn't know exactly where, but keep looking for them. They came into Ebensee, and they came across to the bridge, and the captain called one of his lieutenants, George Garbowit, who by the way died last year. He was the only Jewish combat officer in that particular tank unit. He called George on the radio, and he said, "George, send a couple of your tanks up there, up on the hill, and we'll stay back here, and we'll cover you. We want to find out what is in back there because also that is what is known as redoubt," and where they thought many of the Nazis had fled to, the S.S., for the last resistance in the war. So they wanted to be very careful because they were afraid that these were the fanatics that they may have to deal with. So, George called these two guys and said, go up there and stay on the radio with me, and keep me appraised of what you see. Keep me informed. When they came to the gate, he got on the radio and he said, "I think we found the concentration camp." He said, "Crazy, thousands of starving people here."

By now the gate had opened up, and they rolled thru with these two tanks and the jeep. They went to the main appell square, the appell platz, where they halted. They kept their engines running, and both sergeants were now sitting in the turret. The guy who was the driver and the other guy, they had opened up their hatches, and they were all looking at this whole crazy mess. People tried to climb on those tanks, and the soldiers said, "Down! Down! Down!" They didn't want anybody up there. They didn't know what the hell was going on. They couldn't cope with this, what they just saw. One of the sergeants took out a pack of Lucky Strikes. My father had always insisted, which I think I've talked about before, that I learn English because I had already learned French in Antwerp in school. I was allowed to smoke cigarettes when I was fifteen years old. My father had allowed me to start smoking, and we had seen Lucky Strikes in Holland before the war. In those days -- this probably goes back before your time, but in those days, they were a green package with a red ball, but when Lucky Strike, quote, "went to war", unquote, they became white packages with the red ball. So he got out a pack of cigarettes, and I see the red ball, and I said to him over the din, I shout up to him, "It's been a long time since I've had a Lucky Strike." He says, "Who said

that? Who said that? Who speaks English?" And I said, "I am," and he said, "Come up here," and he gave me a cigarette. And that's where it all began. He lit it for me, and, I mean I went bonkers [index finger in circular motion].

Q: NO FOOD?

A: No food. I was dizzy. I just swerved there, and I said to myself, Max, stop this. Don't inhale because you can't do this anymore.

He and I began to talk, and my English, in those days, was very poor. I mean my vocabulary was that much [appeared to show off camera]. With body language and with whatever I could, we could make ourselves understood. He got on the radio and says, " I found somebody who speaks English." And he got right away, Tim called him back and said, " Don't let him out of your sight. We need this guy. Keep him in sight. Keep him with you wherever you are, and don't let him go. We're going to send a jeep for him, and we'll bring him right back." In the meanwhile, I say to him, "Look, let me take you down and show you the camp. Let me walk you thru so that you have some idea." And he said, "No-no-no-no-no." Then he got on the phone with this other sergeant in the next tank. He said, "This guy wants me to walk down." He said, "You want to come along?" The two guys and I now walk. We have applause

everywhere. People patting me on the back. People patting them on the back. These two sergeants are the same age I am, now. When I was liberated, I was not yet twenty-one. I would be twenty-one in June, so these guys are my age. They're in their late teens, early twenties, just bordering. They're filthy because they're tank people. They haven't showered or washed. So we walked on. The first thing I do is take them to the kitchen. I said, "You've got to see the kitchen." When we came to the kitchen, they got to honor their liberators, and they got to offer them something to eat. They're making this soup for everybody, so each of the GI's is offered a plate of soup, of this gruel. They look at this, and they've been eating K rations all this long, and they look at this and [gutteral sound from throat]. Who needs this? I said, "Honor them. Take one taste. You don't have to eat it. Just take a taste of it, then give me the plate. And they did. [Tips cupped hands to mouth and slurps.] And I, all of a sudden, had two plates of food. This was a great act of organization. I mean, this was really thinking. Then we went out, and I walked them thru the camp, up the the crematorium, the hospital, and thru the street back to their tanks. They saw these bodies, or what was leftover bodies, on the street, and I explained to them what had happened. They nearly threw

up. I mean, they had seen guys of theirs killed in combat in tanks, raw blood and arms. They couldn't cope with this. We came back to the tanks, and one of the guys said to the lead sergeant, he said, "There was a radio call here. There's going to be a jeep here right away, and you should put this guy on there and take him. He's going to go back to Tim," which I didn't know who Tim was then, but that was the Company Commander, and they wanted me right away. Pretty soon, the jeep showed up, and I was loaded on, and everybody was applauding me. I drove out of the camp, and I never saw the camp again, except for a few weeks later when I had to go back up there and get a pass from UNRRA (United Nations Reconstruction and Relocation Association). You know what UNRRA is, because that would be my only pass that I had been a prisoner in a concentration camp, and that would give me a certificate that, in case I traveled thru, now, military Europe, I had some identification. So that's the only time I ever went back. And that was the liberation.

Q: WHAT KIND OF SHAPE WERE YOU IN?

A: I was what I have referred to with I was a walking lesson in anatomy. You could see every bone in my body. By now I was down to around 80 pounds. I was really skinny. I had used up all the fats that I had

from my good Auschwitz days. Had that war lasted maybe another week or ten days, I would have been gone because there was hardly anything left of me to speak of.

That afternoon I went to the downtown which is a village, large size village, and it had a hotel in there. Post Hotel was more like a beer garden. It had an outside tables where people would sit and have beer and pretzels and whatever they eat. I was brought there, and I asked to sit there and stay out there and wait. While sitting there, I see GI's going into the house across the street, and I hear a lot of screaming. I see people coming out, a man and his wife, about a small suitcase each, and screaming and shouting. They were being tossed out of their house by the Americans. It happened to be the doctor of that particular village I was told later on. I also found out later, years later when I went back to Ebensee, that he wasn't very much loved. He had been a Nazi and an avowed one, so some of the people really didn't feel too upset. I guess somebody must have fingered him and said get rid of him first before anybody else. Anyway, I was sitting there, and other prisoners arrived at the beer stube, and I found out one was something like a Prime Minister of Hungary and some other very high political prisoners. There was one very -- two small kids came

who may have been no more than eight, nine years old. I think there was five of us all together -- yeah, I think so, two politicians, one a prime minister, as I recall, another guy, and these two kids, and myself. We put into this flat, this apartment. I was the only one who could speak English. Now you imagine there, I couldn't speak English, but I could speak English. I was the English-speaking one. So they told me that this was our place. Find any clothes that you can find in the closets are yours. You sleep. Find the beds. This is your place to live. Then, oh, half an hour to maybe less than an hour, GI's came up, and they brought us each a carton of ten-in-ones. Now a ten-in-one is ten rations of food. In other words, for ten different people, and that's what they used to call a ten-in-one. Each of us got a ten-in-one box. We looked at that stupid thing, and we didn't know how to open it because they had metal straps around them. These were heavy cardboard boxes. Did you ever see one of those?

Q: NO.

A: They're about this long, about this wide, and about that deep [indicates with hands off camera], and they weigh a good bit. We went thru the house and found screwdrivers or hammers, and we finally were able to open these things with our weak strength, and of course, these little kids couldn't do anything. Then

we found these foods with cigarettes and candies and Spam. You mention it, and it was all in there, and soap.

Then we looked at each other, and of course, we stank. We hadn't had any washing. I probably had my last shower I had was at Mauthausen in January of 1945, and here, now, we were in May, and I cannot recall having gone to any other shower. So the first thing we do is we take baths. We set up a list, and that water turns black. I mean it's black. I wash myself and the other guys, the same thing. Some of it has come off, but you know that this is going to have to go on, and indeed, every time we took a bath more blackness came off.

I think on Tuesday -- I had gotten some clothes from the GI's, American uniforms, because the Captain and the officers wanted me to sit in the beer garden so that I could be immediately at hand for interpreting duties. I had said I can't find any clothes, so the word had gone out, we need some small uniforms for the guy that we have; so I got in one of the first ones into American uniform. On Tuesday, I felt confident enough so I -- now, remember also I have no hair. All that was shaved off, and we had that stripe. There was a barber shop in the basement there, like a couple steps down into a half cellar. I went in there and

said, give me a haircut [big smile]. Of course, I had no money to pay for it, and he could immediately tell that I was a prisoner. So he gave me a haircut, and I walked out, and I felt better. And that was my life. From now on I was just sitting there, people would come and would speak in German or in French, and I would do the interpreting duty in my English. And I must say that I sponged words. I just began to drink English words, and my language began to improve very quick-like. I've always found since then that you can put me in a country for half a year, and more than likely when I walk out, I have a reasonably good knowledge and speaking knowledge of that language.

Q: IT'S AN EXCELLENT SURVIVAL SKILL.

A: Well, it was not a survival skill as much as this is something that seemed to be something innate within me, that I could pick up languages rather quickly because, later on when I was away free and my wife and I would travel thru Europe -- I had never been in Italy before. The only Italian I had known was North Beach Italian, okay? Walked in Italy, ten days later I walked out, and people couldn't believe that I had learned that in ten days. So the same thing went there. I absorbed English rather quickly. So when these young troopers found out that I couldn't drive a car, I had never driven a car, only been on a bicycle,

they said, "Well, Max, if you stay with us, every one of us knows to drive every vehicle in the unit, from a tank to a truck to a jeep, anything. We have to know. So we better take you out and teach you how to drive a car." So they took me out into the mountains with a jeep, showed me where the accelerator was, the brake, the steering wheel, how all these function, the clutch, and they taught me how to drive in two days. My wife, to this day, says I learned my driving in the Army.

Q: HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH THAT FIRST BOX OF TEN-IN-ONE FOOD?

A: It was crazy because first of all you have this Christmas in front of you. You begin to open these packages, and you begin -- everything you have to taste [eating motion with hands]. Right away -- somehow, you no longer are that dependent on food anymore. Now it becomes an obsession in the sense that, hey, I'm not in the camp anymore. I got this whole thing in front of me. There's ten days of food right there. I'm in control of it, so you begin to say, I don't like this. Anybody wants to trade? And the trading begins, and the protectionism begins like, "Get out of my box!" [yells loudly], and this real -- real close protectionism of, this is mine! So this trading begins. You've tasted everything. You've opened everything. Things begin to spoil after a few

days because you've opened it. But then there was the kitchen across the street where the GI's ate, and we were allowed to eat there three meals a day, so from our point of view we were incredibly good off because the guys in the camps had hardly any food. They were scrounging up there. They didn't get really any food until about a week after they were liberated because nobody had foreseen to allow food for sixteen thousand people suddenly, and all of them undernourished. And how do you go about it? Nobody really knew in those days. How do you treat people who have been undernourished to that degree? What kind of food do you give them? And people -- soldiers, both American, French, and English, I learned later on, when they came up, they would give these people sardines. They would give them chocolate, all because they felt sorry for them, and they were killing them, out of love. I had diarrhea. For a good three weeks, I would eat, and I'd be in the can at the same time. Nothing could hold it. My intestines were completely slick. There was nothing left there. It took about three weeks before it finally began to grab, and I began to slowly build up my body in flesh and fat.

Q: DID YOU HAVE OTHER ILLNESSES OR MEDICAL PROBLEMS?

A: I had one medical problem, and that happened later, but that goes on into the story a little bit further on when I was sent to an Army field hospital.

So I stayed in that command post. Then about two weeks later, they were ordered to move to Trieste, to Yugoslavia, Italy, because Tito was making loud noises that he was going to take Trieste and annex it to Yugoslavia, and Eisenhower didn't want to hear of that, so he told this unit that had liberated us to get going and roll to Yugoslavia and occupy Trieste, so that Tito would not go in there.

I'd been with these guys, and we'd become buddies. They had taught me how to drive a car. I had wore their clothes. They had taught me how to shoot a machine gun by now. I pulled duty with these guys. They suddenly had become my family. So when the word came, the captain calls me in and said, "Max, we're going to leave. You can't come with us because we're going to go to Trieste, and from Trieste we're going to go back to the United States." I didn't accept this, so a couple of the guys I knew, I said, "I want to go along with you guys," and they said, "Sure. Hell, yes. Come along, Max." So I snuck into one of the tanks, and I rode out in the bottom of the tanks with the guys. In the afternoon they came to a halt south of Radstadt in Austria. The company commander called for

a complete line up of all the men there. That was the first. He wanted to see whether everybody was there, all the tanks. So here comes Max out of the tank, and he says, " I told you, you couldn't come with us. Max, there ain't no kidding about this. You can't come along. You got to go back." He called one of his officers, "Take Max to the nearest military government place. Tell them what had happened, that he is legit, and all that. He has a pass, but that we can't take him with me. If we were staying in Europe, we would keep him, but can't do it." So he drove me back to Radstadt. By now it had gotten kind of dark. We're still in the mountains now. Remember the sun goes down, it's dark. So we went to the military government. So they put me up for the night. The next day I start hitchhiking back to Ebensee. A couple of GI's in a jeep picked me up. They ask for my dog tag. I don't have any dog tag, but I'm in American uniform, I wear a kepi, got the blouse, the whole thing. I look like an American. Hair's beginning to grow. They ask me questions. My language, of course, it's poor. I mean, highly accented, you know. Can't make a cohesive sentence, and I don't know anything about football or baseball or what have you.

So we're coming across a bridge where they have a guard, where even the GI's have to show who they are, travel orders, dog tags, and they're being asked questions. These two guys say, "Well, we picked up this guy, but we don't think he's kosher," so I was ordered to come off the jeep. I was put next to the bridge in a house on a bench and said, sit there. I was sitting there, and one of the officers came out and began to talk to me. I answered him, and we got to talking. Another officer came out and asked me questions. I was sitting there, oh, maybe an hour had gone by, and I didn't know what the hell was happening. Some Austrians came up, and they wanted to talk to somebody. They had their own GI's. Their German was awful. They were from German parentage, but they had really never really spoken German at home, few words. I began to interpret between these Austrians and the officers. The officers were able to give them instructions thru me, which I did, and the Austrians walked away. Later on, the officers had allowed they had been impressed with my handling of the situation and my help. The first officer came back to me and started talking to me more, and said, blah, blah, blah, the whole thing, and said, "Well, I'll be back in a minute." He went back in. All this I find out later, okay? They talk about me, and they decide that, hey,

we could use a kid like that. They come out again, and they ask me to come in, and they said, "Look, we're willing to take you on, that you can stay with us and do what you been doing, act as an interpreter. You can stay with us." I said, "Okay." Now, I've already learned my first lesson, all right? The guys that had liberated me, I had gone with them, and they sent me back. Now I say, "Okay, but under one condition." He said, "What's the condition?" I says, "When you move, you take me with you." He said, "Well, we can't take you back to the States." I said, "I know that, but when you move inside Europe, you take me with you." They had another conference, and they come back to me and said, "Okay. It's a deal." The sergeant was called up and said, "Max is going to be part of your I and R, which is intelligence and recon. Now I was in an infantry unit. Their's was an infantry organization, so I was put in with the squad, the I and R platoon.

Q: IS THIS A SPECIAL DESIGNATION YOU HAD?

A: I and R is intelligence and recognizance.

Q: NO. I MEAN NOT HAVING BEEN A DRAFTED AMERICAN SOLDIER, OR WHATEVER, WHAT KIND OF OFFICIAL SLOT DID YOU --?

A: Oh, I had no official slot at all. I mean I was just put into that particular platoon. The sergeant was in charge, and I was assigned duty hours like anybody else. From this and this time, Max sits on the bench. From this and this time, this guy sits on the bench. Max is always available because if you really need some heavy German interpreting, get Max.

So I began to pull duty, slept with them, got uniforms. I even got a pocket allowance to go to the PX to buy a few things, and life was pleasant. Then I started getting headaches. I couldn't understand why I was getting headaches, and I went to see the doctor. I also was getting migraines again. Doctor couldn't understand what was going on, so he sent me to the field hospital. I may have had a cold by then, too. I'm not positive. Anyway, he felt it important enough to send me off to the field hospital. So I was sent off to the field hospital. I don't know how many days, but it was less than a week that I was there, and I was discharged. But in those days, when you were a displaced person -- because now the word "displaced person" was now in vogue -- when you were a DP, they had to send you to a DP camp. Now here I was. I got all my uniform back again, no dog tag, but I look like a GI, and they said, "Well, you got to go to the DP camp." I said, "Oh, no. I'm not going to the DP camp.

My unit is there, and I'm going to go back on the ambulance. I go to Gmunden, and then from Gmunden, I'll get a ride to my unit." "Can't do this Garcia." "Sorry, sir. That's with him," and I did. I walked back. I arrived back at the unit, and they said, "We never thought we'd see you again." I said, "Why not?" They said, "Well, we figured from the hospital they're going to send you some place else." I said, "Look, this is my unit, right? We made a deal. You take me wherever you go. I stay with you wherever you go." "Okay!" Nothing further was said, and I continued to be part.

In the summer, the word, the rumor, spreads that the unit is going to be moved to Bavaria. Like any army, all rumors have truth. I mean how this happens, but they all have truth. Now I'm getting worried because nobody's telling me anything. But the day comes when they say to everyone, "Okay, start packing up. We're moving out day after tomorrow. Begin packing and cleaning up and vacating." So I'm sitting there with my duffel bag. By now I have accumulated some things. I have some more shoes. I have some more clothes, underwear, the whole thing. I go to the CP, the command post, where I been sitting on this bench whenever my duty was. I said to the captain, I said, "Captain, what's happening with me?" He said, "Max, I

got other things on my mind right now. You're the last of my worries." This was the guy in charge of the whole movement. All the guys were loaded on the trucks and sent to the railway station. They were going to be trained on the train to Bavaria. Then there was the other trucks and jeeps that were loaded up with their gear. They would go in a convoy to Bavaria. At the last minute, the captain calls me over. He said, "Put your gear in my jeep. You're coming with me." I said, "Okay." He said, "Sit in the back." He had his driver. He sat in the front seat, and I was sitting in the back. We went to the railway station. We saw the train ready to go out. The convoy pulled out, and I said, "Captain, why couldn't you tell me?" He said, "Well, Max, I had an awful lot of things on my mind, but the colonel wanted me to have you, as an interpreter, with me because I am the lead vehicle on the convoy. I needed an interpreter right away, so Clark says, 'Have Max go with you all the way.' We are keeping our bargain. We agreed with it," because he had been in on the conversation. " You're staying with us."

We drove all the way to Bad Worishofen, which is -- I don't know if you know where that is -- but that is around Memmingen in Bavaria. It's north of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, beautiful country, very spa

oriented. We arrived there, and we had been assigned a portion of that city. The convoy pulled in, stopped in the street, and Captain Miles says, "Max, all these people on the left side, in their houses, tell them they got one hour to clear out. Go in there and tell them cause we're going to take over this whole street and our people moving in." This was the first real job I enjoyed since I was liberated. And I really mean this. I really enjoyed that job. There were a couple of guys with me, and I went from house to house, and in my German I told them they had one hour to clear out, to leave all their pots and pans. They could only take toothbrushes, some personal clothing, and what they immediately needed. Everything else was to stay, no blankets. " Where do we go?" I said, "We don't care where you go." "We want to see the Burgermeister." I said, "Go see the Burgermeister, but before you do, clear out your house." There was a lot of commotion by these Germans because they were so pissed off. They were just yanked out. "You can't do that to us!" I said, "Look," you know, I would say, "What do you mean we can't do that to you?" He said, "That's not fair." I said, "Hell you did that all over Europe." I said, "I'm from Holland. You did the same thing to us when you moved in. You stole everything, so the Americans can certainly do it to you." I said, "I'm all in favor

of it. Now clear out." Within a few hours the street was clear, and each platoon was assigned a number of houses in which they lived. The guys had these wonderful down blankets, you know, these big things. We each had our own kitchen, and we began to cook, and we began to organize and things like that.

There was no duty to pull anymore, except guard duty, a little bit of guard duty. They kept the cars and the jeeps polished, and the trucks were polished. I mean it was just make-work type thing. Most of the time was spent in smoking and tossing baseballs back and forth and that sort of thing. Because it was summertime now, nobody was tossing a football, and baseball was a brand new thing. I'd never seen this before. So we were staying on that street, which side journeys into town. USO had opened up a place, and we would go down there and dance and listen. Now we began to fraternize with the German girls. This was very great living. This was really enjoyable.

It was now getting to be August, and these officers called me in and said, "Look, Max, don't you think you ought to go back to Holland and see if your parents are there? Maybe they have survived all this." I said, "No. If I barely survived it, I know my mother couldn't and my sister couldn't, and I doubt if my

father would have been so lucky." Anyway, they talk me up, and so I decided, okay. I hitchhiked all the way back to Amsterdam.

Q: HAD YOU WANTED TO GO BACK TO HOLLAND AT ALL?

A: You know, I did not. I had made up my mind after I came out, from the camps, that I would never live in Holland again, that I could not cope with those memories. I didn't know where I was going to go, but I had made up my mind I would never return to Holland as a permanent place to live. So I wanted to go back to Holland to satisfy -- that I had made the effort to see if they had returned, although deep down in my heart, I knew it was out of the question. They wouldn't be there.

Q: HAD YOU HEARD ANY RUMORS OVER THE YEARS OR ANY OF THE RED CROSS LISTS OR ANYTHING?

A: Well, later on, many years later after we had started the Holocaust library here, my wife and I, we went to Amsterdam to the war center, the documentation center. At that particular place, the Dutch had just then, about the year before had come out with the books of all the people who had been killed or died or murdered. They knew exactly all their names, where they had gone, what day they were killed, et cetera. That's when I found for the first time where my sister

had been gassed and where my mother and father had been gassed, and that's the first time I ever knew where they had gone to.

So I hitchhiked to Amsterdam. I arrived in Amsterdam. Let me put it this way, I was in Amsterdam when V-J Day was declared, so I was in Amsterdam when the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That was around the first week in August if my memory is right, because, I believe V-J Day was around the thirteenth or fifteenth of August. I'm not precise on that, but I was in uniform, okay? I had gone to our address. I had gone to see the people whom I knew. They hadn't heard about my parents. They were surprised to see me in uniform, hair was now back to normal, from May to August, full head of hair. I looked well again. Body was filled out, and I was in American uniform. My English by now was good. I mean vocabulary were there, and I could curse and talk as fast and quip as fast as any guy in English. Holland was occupied by Canadians. They had liberated Holland. The Canadians would see me, "Hey, Yank, have a beer!" So taken in to rest and get a beer. "Where you from?" The only one I could say I was from was -- the Colonel and I had become, not friends, but always with the officers, and he was from Buffalo. I would say I was from Buffalo, New York. I wouldn't say I was from Amsterdam because I had heard

rumors when I was in Amsterdam that those born in 1924 were called to active duty because the Queen had a lot of trouble with Indonesia. They had this freedom fight going there, and I wasn't going to stay in Holland to begin with, and I wasn't going to be in any army. Later on, I found out that, yes, 1924 class was called up, but all those who had been in concentration camps had been excused, so big deal. So I'd gone around. I spent about, oh, a long week in Amsterdam or in Holland. No satisfaction. Didn't meet any of my relatives. Some had returned, not from camps, but from hiding. I was the only one who had returned. Again, later on, found out who had even been in a camp and actually survived it. All the ones who had come back, otherwise, had been in hiding or had been part of a mixed marriage and had never been arrested, but had to wear their yellow stars.

Q: YOU'RE THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF YOUR FAMILY?

A: Of the entire Mespogah.

I tailed it out of Holland, and again, I had troubles because again I had no travel papers. Maastricht in southern Holland was the recreation for the 7th Army, and so the railway station was controlled both by the Dutch police and by the American MP's. By now I had to wear a red, white, and blue Dutch flag on my uniform because there was some commotion in Bad

Worishofen. Who is this guy who speaks English and German so well, and doesn't have dog tags? So finally, word came out from military government, we have no problem with him wearing a uniform, but he should at least have his national flag on his shirt. I went up to one of the MP's and I said, "Look, I gotta get back to my unit in Bad Worishofen, 319th," and I go thru the whole routine. I said, "But I'm originally from Holland," and these Dutch cops, they're looking at me, and they're not going to let me onto the platform. The MP said, "You come with me," put me in the train, and off I went. I had learned a lot of things by now, how to finagle things and how to use my English and my knowledge of Americans by now.

I hitchhiked all the way back to my unit, and when I arrived on the street, [chuckles] I remember this scene so well. They were tossing softballs back and forth. They said, "Oh, shit, look who's here." So the word came out, and everybody came out of their houses and saying, "Goddamn you, Max. Where you come from?" I said, "Well, you're my unit, right? My parents didn't survive. I didn't see anybody there. Here I am." I went back into my house where I had been and stayed with them until we got orders to move to Czechoslovakia. I went thru that same anxiety. Are they going to take me with them? This time it was no

such thing. Max, you're riding with me. Let's go. We're moving. Get your stuff with me, and again with Captain Miles in his jeep, and off we went to Czechoslovakia to what was then a portion of Sudetenland. We went to Eger. We remained in Czechoslovakia until the day, I think it was February, 1946, when the American troops and the Russian troops -- because we jointly occupied Czechoslovakia, they left the very same day, and Czechoslovakia became a free country. From there we went to Aschaffenburg. I don't know if that name's familiar. That's in western Germany, and that was a big "repple depple", as it was called. Do you know what that means?

Q: REPPLE DEPPLE?

A: Right.

Q: REPLACE --

A: Right, replacement depot. All these names come back to me now, "repple depple". All these typical GI vernacular words.

The 80th Infantry Division, which was the division I was with, and I was with the 319th Regiment, 1st Battalion Headquarters Company. They went to Aschaffenburg because from there they were going to go home. The war in Europe was over. The war in the Pacific was over. Now it was time to get these troops home. While we were in Bad Worishofen and I had come

back from Amsterdam, and now the town, everything was relaxed. One day one of the officers called me in and said, "Max, in the United States we have what we call officers' clubs where the officers come on Friday night or after work. They go in there and have drink and socialize with each other. It's a very big custom in American bars, in the cities; wherever you go, there usually are hard-boiled eggs on the bar, and you can buy one and eat one while you're drinking your beer. We're going to open up our officers' club for the unit, and I'd like you to get us some eggs, okay?" I said, "All right. I'll see what I can do," because it would be nice, that little touch of home if we had some hard boiled eggs. I said to the mess sergeant, "Let's go look for eggs. That's what they want. Let's go look for some eggs. So we go out in the jeep and drive thru Bad Worishofen, and I said, "Sergeant, stop this jeep. Stop. Stop." He said, "Why?" I said, "Stop. Let's sit here for a while." I had been noticing, that we were driving not fast, very slowly. We were just casing the joint. I'd seen women go by with shopping bags. Remember in those days there were no plastic. There were no paper. They were always cloth, remember, that used to have. They were also linked. I said, "Look, they're all going into that same place over there, and look how they come out." So he watches and

said, "I can't tell any difference." I said, "Look how they're holding their bags." He said, "What do you see, Max? What's so different? What do you notice that I don't see?" I said, "Look how carefully, tenderly, they hold those bags and how protective they are of those bags." He said, "What does that mean?" I said, "There are eggs in that bag." He said, "You can tell all this?" I said, "Yeah, there are eggs in those bags. Let's go in and see what they got there." We drive over there, park, and we go into that door. There are all these women, and they're all buying eggs. We walk in, and I said, "Let's go into the back." The guy says, "You can't go in the back." I said, "Who are you?" He said, "I own this place." I said, "Well, go f---," in the vernacular was that I said, "Go screw yourself. We're going in there." Eggs from floor to ceiling. I mean this place was loaded with eggs. I said, "Sergeant, I stay here, and you go back to the unit, and you get a couple of trucks, and we're going to load up on some eggs." He goes back to the company street, and he says, to one of the officers, "Max wants two trucks with a number of guys. He's found some eggs." The officer said, "Okay, but, shit, let's not get into trouble about this, huh?" Anyway, we came, and we loaded trucks with eggs. I mean, it was one of these typical sights that is hilarious. We come to the

company street, and there's two trucks loaded to the gills with eggs. Now these guys have all been eating powdered eggs since they came from the United States when they came over, and occasionally, they would have found an egg or a chicken in France that they killed and cooked. All these eggs! Then the Colonel comes to me, "Shit, Max, I asked you for a couple eggs. What are you trying to do?" I said, "Sir, they have those eggs." He said, "Well, you can't do that, Max. They belong to the Germans." I said, "Sir, they don't belong to the Germans." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "They've stolen those from all over Europe. They're not their eggs. They're more likely my eggs from Holland." He said, "Well, you know how to rationalize things, but --." I said, "Well, are you going to have people at your club from military government?" He said, "Oh, more than likely." "And they're not going to eat eggs?" He said, "Okay, I got your point." So now we unload those eggs, and from there on out, the next morning, every GI in the unit, eggs for breakfast, eggs for lunch. The sergeants and the cooks, they were just so happy to fry eggs. You want poached eggs? You want hard-boiled, soft-boiled, fried, sunny-side up? Eggs till it came out of the ears.

Q: MUST HAVE BEEN THOUSANDS OF EGGS.

A: Two trucks load, and remember in those days, they were not in cartons, like we have paper cartons here, these little trays. They had them in cases. They were that long [measures with hands off camera]. If you go to some of these stores, they have these flats, like fifty eggs or a hundred eggs on a flat. They were in wooden crates. That's how eggs were packed in those days, so that's what we had. It was great. This is one of the anecdotes that I always amuse myself of. The two in Bad Worishofen, one, to throw the Germans out of their houses, and two, finding those eggs because he wanted some eggs for his bar.

Then when we went to Czechoslovakia, and I went along, as I said -- they had flour now, but they had no baking facilities, so I was instructed to find some bakeries downtown, take the flour over there, and tell them to bake bread for us. Then for every so many loaves that they baked for us, they would get so much flour for themselves to bake and to sell, because we had no money to pay for it, but they would get flour instead. They could use that bread, that they had extra, to sell and make a living off. So that became my job.

We stayed in Czechoslovakia. We were there, I think, from, well, we were there for Thanksgiving, for Christmas, for New Year's, so we must have gotten there

in October, or late September. We stayed there, I believe, as I said, until February of 1946. By the time I left Czechoslovakia, I was beginning to speak Czech. Again, my absorption, and I was actually in a German section of town of that area. Of course, now there was a lot of fraternization. Every guy had his own girlfriend. It was like a roaming whorehouse, you might say. It was really insane.

Q: YOU, TOO?

A: Yeah, me, too. Why not?

So then I had helped to organize -- this also was my first Thanksgiving. I had never experienced a Thanksgiving, and it was unbelievable the way these cooks began to cook a couple of weeks before Thanksgiving; began to make the apple pies and to do this and the stuff to start coming in, and the way the tables were set up. They all had paper tablecloths and things like that. It was almost insane to believe an army, right after a war -- because the war had been over now since May, and that's not quite half a year yet, yeah, I guess about a half a year, and all this is flowing. Everything they got: the turkey, the yams, the cranberries. Oh, it was all there, and it was such a festive thing, and they just enjoyed teaching me what this meant in the United States and what it meant to them.

I went thru that, and then I had to help them organize the Christmas festivities and the New Year's festivities. We took over a big beer hall, and we hired a band, and all the booze had been saved up. The officers had said, look, the liquor portions are coming in, but we don't want to give it out the guys. We don't want them to start drinking, except the beer; no hard liquor, and then Christmas they can have the hard liquor under controlled circumstances, and that's the way it went. Christmas Eve I passed out before the party began [chuckles], and my girlfriend had to take me up to my room. She was furious because there she was sitting, and she couldn't be at the party, and I already had zonked out. I have never been much of a drinker, not even today.

When the time came to start going to Aschaffenburg, all these girls disappeared into the trucks, and they all fled Czechoslovakia because they were afraid. See because they were all Germans by nationality, and the Sudetenlanders were the ones who had really started the problem with Czechoslovakia, and the Czechs hated their guts. Secondly, they also had fraternized with the Americans, so they had double potential punishment coming, and you know what they did to girls in Europe after the war who had been collaborators. Do you know what they did?

Q: WELL, I REMEMBER REMOVING ALL THE HAIR.

A: Shaved all the hair off, and there were no wigs in those days, remember? The only thing these girls had was bandannas then, and it was quite a shameful thing because they didn't mind the liberators, but they felt these girls would go to bed with anybody as long as they could get something out of it.

When the Colonel, whom I had gotten the eggs for in Bad Worishofen -- he had talked to Captain Miles, who was a West Pointer, and so he was going to stay in Europe no matter how long because he was regular army, and he was not a draftee, and he had told Jesse, "Look, I'm going to bring Max to the United States. You keep an eye on him. Take him wherever you go. Take him with you, and I'll get the affidavits to him, and I'll bring him to the States.

Q: WAS THAT YOUR DESIRE, TO GO TO THE STATES?

A: I didn't know anything about this. I had no desires at that time. All I knew was the I wasn't going to go back to Holland to live, and I hadn't made up my -- my life was too good to worry where I was going to live next. The only thing that ever happened to me after Ebensee, about a week or so after I was liberated, someone came to me and said, "Max, we want you to go to Palestine with us." I said, "What for?" "Well," they said, "we're going to build a Jewish

nation," and I said, "Uh-uh, not for me." I said, "Are you guys out of your goddamn minds? What we just been thru, now you want to build a nation so that we can be wiped out in one fell swoop?" I said, "That's not for me. I'm not going." They said, "But we want you there. You're by yourself." I said, "I'm Jewish, but I'm not meshuga," okay? I said, "I'm not going." I said, "After all, we came from Holland, we were pretty much assimilated. We never felt we were Jewish. We knew that we were Jews, but nobody made us aware of it, except ourselves. It's not for me." So I never, as long as I was with the infantry, I had never given any thoughts where I was going to go after this. I mean I was living a very relaxed, loose life. I got three meals a day. I had a roof over my head. I got money from the Army, and I had now begun black marketing because I had cigarettes, cartons of cigarettes I could buy in the PX, and I could sell them on the black market, and I could get German scrip. Jesse Miles by now had his own girlfriend that he was very serious about, and he didn't have enough money to keep her, so we made a deal. I would sell my stuff in the black market. Whatever I got in the black market, I would give to him so that his girlfriend could live on the scrip money, and he would transfer money into a bank account in the United States in Buffalo in my name.

Q: WAS THE BLACK MARKET DANGEROUS?

A: It wasn't too dangerous. There was no German police. Basically, it was all military police that handled all that and the C.I.D., the Criminal Investigation Division. So that's how we handled it. That's how I was able to come to the United States because I had piled up something like $1000 in the United States in these kind of transactions.

We went to Aschaffenburg and then Jesse said, "Okay, you're coming with me," and then he began to explain to me, that's the first time I had heard about it, that Clark was going to bring me to the United States, and that he had told Jesse to keep an eye on me.

We went to another infantry unit, that was the 1st Division, now, the 26th Infantry. He introduced me to the Colonel after he had reported in for duty. He was the shortest Colonel I had ever seen in my life, and he had two ferocious German shepherds that were his pet dogs that he had picked up someplace. I was given to understand that he was a real mean son of a bitch, this guy. I mean a bastard from the word go. It was winter now, and it was cold up there. I have pictures that I stand in my overcoat with snow all around me, like freezing. We're on the top of a mountain. The town I'm in now is Scheinfeld. Scheinfeld is west of

Nuremberg, beyond Furth, F-U-R-T-H. Furth is the town that Kissinger was born in, just trying to link it up for you. I'm pulling duty, not much, because there's not much to do there. It's cold, as I said, and once in a while, Jesse and I get into a jeep, and we drive to Nuremberg, some things like this. It has become now that duty is almost becoming a little bit like sightseeing-type thing. There's not much to do. Keep things clean, inspections, keep the guys occupied, just don't let them drift. I mean the other GI's now. Also, I have no rapport with the GI's of the 26th because I'm coming in there with an officer, and I'm kind of his protége'. Although I sleep and live with the GI's, we don't get really to know one another.

At one time, I get a visit from a C.I.C. agent. C.I.C. is Counterintelligence Corps, and Counterintelligence Corps means counterspying, okay? Now you're getting into the forerunners of what the CIA later became, which was the OSS and the C.I.C. and the C.I.D. They all became, later on, the CIA. I get a visit, and the guy talks to me, and he says that they would like me to come to their offices, at their home. They would like to have dinner with me, would like me to come over for dinner. I go to Jesse and I said, "What's C.I.C.? What is all this about?" He said, "Well,if I were you," he said, "I'd go to that dinner." I said, "What

do you know about these guys?" He said, "Well, this could be your ticket out." He had already told me about Colonel Clark going to bring me to the United States. Now again, mind you, we are now in the late winter-spring of 1946. Sure he has told Jesse that he's going to bring me to the United States, but I find it so big a figment of the imagination. In fact, the night in Bad Worishofen when we drove Colonel Clark to the next town over where he had to pick the train, because he was leaving for the United States ahead of everybody else, they had to give him so much more time, and he was drunk. Oh, he was drunk, and he wanted me to come with him. We drove in the staff wagon, a big staff car. In his drunkenness, he began to tell me, "I'm going to bring you to the United States. I'm going to bring you to the United States. You're going to be my son, going to bring you to the United States." On the way back the next day, I told Jesse what he had said. I said, "This guy was drunk. I don't think he's going to remember the next day what he said." At that time, Jesse told me, he said, "You're wrong." I said, "What do you mean, I'm wrong?" He said, "He's already talked to me about it when he was stone sober, and he told me that he wanted me to look after you, that you are to come with me wherever we go because he's going to bring you to the United States. When he gets back,

he's going to put an affidavit together and send it to me so that whenever the time comes, you can go to the States.

Q: DO YOU KNOW WHY HE HAD SUCH A GREAT DESIRE--?

A: Yeah. I found that out later. He had three daughters, or actually two daughters. No sooner had he gotten back, he and his wife got together, and they created a third daughter. He had been in business with his father, and there were no other males. He was looking for another male to come into the family who could come into the business and continue this thing. That, I think, was in the back of his mind.

Jesse now begins to tell me these things, so as I say, now I'm beginning to see things a little differently. My God, there is a guy interested in bringing me to the United States. Maybe this will come about, but I'm not driving any hopes up. Now the C.I.C. wants to see me, and Jesse says, "You go and have dinner with them, and Max, don't fuck things up because this could be your lucky break." "Are they that important, Jesse?" He said, "They are <u>THE</u> important unit in the whole goddamn army."

I have dinner with them. There were three or four other agents there, very nice even, and they questions the hell out of me. They said they'd get in touch with me. A few weeks later, they call me, "Come and see me

again. We want you to come. We have accepted you. If you want to, you can join the C.I.C., and then you have to go to Bamburg. Bamburg is north of Nuremberg, east of Wurzburg, and west of Bayreuth. I'm trying to place it for you. That's where C.I.C. headquarters is. I said, "Jesse, they've asked me to join. What do I do?" He said, "Start packing." I said, "You want to get rid of me or something?" He said, "No, Max, I don't want to get rid of you. I want you to be in the position that when the break comes, you can take advantage of it, because it's going to come. Arthur is not going to let you down. He's going to send this affidavit, and when push comes to shove, you should be ready for it. Got to start packing, and you'll be on your own." I said, "Well, I won't see you." He said, "You'll see me. Really, we'll get together. This is a small country. We're not that far away. We'll keep in touch." Off to Bamburg I go. Remember, I'm still in uniform. I haven't gotten any civilian clothes. I'm still in American uniform. I go to Bamburg, and I go thru this schooling. You have to go thru a lot of procedures, legal things, what you can and cannot do, all that sort of rot. I get gun training now, how to shoot revolvers, how to shoot this and investigative procedures, all these things. We go thru a crash course. The orders are posted, and I been assigned to

Nuremberg. They drive me to Nuremberg, and I report in.

The C.I.C. does not carry any rank. Everybody is called mister. You don't know whether you're a private, a PFC, a corporal, a sergeant, or a full colonel. There's only two people in the unit who know everybody's rank because they have the documents in sealed files. All you wear is a U.S. symbol. You wear officer's clothes, and you carry a '38 revolver on your hip. No rank on sleeves. No rank on shoulders. It's the ideal life. You live in private homes, and you have cooks who cook for you, and you have the best food in the world and the best sleeping accommodations. You're king! Being C.I.C. meant nobody could question YOU. You could question everybody else. The only one who could question you was your commanding officer. It was the worst place for me to ever been in because I got so spoiled there. I was rotten spoiled. By the time I came to the States, I had lived the king's live. I was a prince. I had my own car. I could do what I wanted to.

Q: BUT WHAT WERE YOU REQUIRED TO DO FOR THEM?

A: Investigations, finding Nazi's, bringing them in, sending them into the prison camps, interrogations, looking after thefts that would happen in the displaced person's camps, the murders that would happen in

displaced person's camps. These were the kinds of things. I had become a detective, in other words, but a counterintelligence detective. I don't know if you know what that means or if I make myself clear. We would get a tip, and we would follow up on the tip to see if intelligence was involved against the United States Army. After all, it was an occupied country. There were a lot of Nazi's on the loose. There were a lot of SS on the loose. The United States had become alert now to Communists, too, that they felt them to be a threat. All of these tips would come in, and then we would be assigned the task and follow-up, shadowing people, bring them in for questioning, see who they are with. All the kind of investigative techniques were used. Later on, after I had been there for a few months, I was assigned a county, like Marin County here type thing or San Francisco County, and I became the sole king of that county. My word became law there. I was the C.I.C. man in charge of that county. I could tell the police who to arrest. I could do anything I wanted. I mean it was absurd, but true. This was an unbelievable thing for a young guy like me, not even twenty-two, with all this prison experience, given that much power. That's why I said I became totally spoiled by this.

I know once I got an assignment that there was a Nazi, a known SS. I got the address. Go pick him up, Max. So I went out there in a jeep, and I get there. It's a butcher store. Now here I'm five foot six inches tall, and all I see is butcher store. All I can think is, I go in there, and there's some son of a bitch waiting with a butcher's knife, and he's going to hack me to pieces. I walk in and holler, anybody here, anybody here. Finally, somebody, yeah, here. It's a guy his size [points to someone off camera]. I mean he stands there towering over me. I said, "Are you so and so?" He said, "Yes, I am." I said, "Okay, you're under arrest." I mean, here I am [holds hand out indicating his height]. Imagine me telling him [points to someone off camera] he's under arrest? In a butcher store? I said, "Take off your shirt. Lift up your arm." He took off his shirt, and there's the tattoo. I said, " Put your shirt on and come with me." [Closes eyes and shakes head] When I came back to the office, to the unit, I had to go in and change my underwear. I was a bit scared, and everybody laughed about this, but when they realized what I had brought in --. This guy was six foot four inches tall, stood something like a Forty-niner and yea big. These are the things that I was involved in. Shoot-outs on the railway station on the platform in Nuremberg. When we caught a guy whom

we had been looking for and who made a run for it, we all started shooting at him. It's like an operetta, when you think about it, what took place in those days, and now we laugh about it.

Q: WERE YOU EVER HURT?

A: No. No. Once I turned over in a jeep in rainy, storming day coming back from my county. I had my jeep, and it had the canvas top. You know in a jeep in those days there was no electric windshield wiper. I don't know if you know that. You always had to use your [wiping motion with hand], drive and [wiping motion with hand]. You had to do it with your hand because they didn't have any electric windshield wipers. The road was potholed from tanks and heavy --, during the war. I come along going back to Nuremberg, and I hit one. I get off the road, and I pull myself back up. I hit another one, and I turned over. Luckily, the motion threw me over, and I fell under the side seat which pulled it over me. I only had scratches on my forehead. I have photographs of this. And this jeep, I smashed the jeep partially. All of a sudden, people are all around me. I'm in my raincoat, and I wake up from being partially knocked out, and the first I grab, is my gun still there? That was there. They all talk German to me, and I start talking back, the German. They all helped me to get back on the

jeep, soaking wet by now in this rain, and I drove back to home. I pulled in, and I explained what had happened, and they all just burst out laughing. I said, the first thing I looked for was my gun. These are the kind of things that happened.

We had parties. We would go up to the officer's club and drink away. We were the only one's sitting there with our guns on our hip because we were the only ones who did not have to turn in their guns. The MP's had to turn in their guns. The C.I.C. kept their guns.

I pulled duty there, and then I got a pass. My commanding officer, he knew my background. There was another guy like me in the C.I.C. Both of us had been in concentration camps, so he got us both passes to the War Crimes International Tribunal. I went once or twice -- twice I went -- to watch all those guys sitting in the dock there. It meant nothing to me. I mean -- [shrugs shoulders].

Q: WERE YOU GETTING ANY SATISFACTION OUT OF YOUR C.I.C. JOB, HUNTING --?

A: Yeah. I got a lot of kick against Germans. I never beat them up, but I got a lot of kick of being their boss. Now the tables had turned. I was in charge. My word went, but the softening influences, I think, of the American attitude worked very quickly on me. They were not revengeful. They were forgiving.

They just wanted to go home. We'd come over to do a job. We've done the job. Now let's clear out and go home and be done with. If you're Europe born as I was, or as I am, and you remember back the days of the '30's, in Europe, where everybody hated each other's guts. You went twenty-five miles, and you had to speak another language. You went from Holland in four directions, and in each direction you went, there was another language: Danish, to the north; German, to the east; French, to the south; English, to the west. In the United States, that doesn't exist. Everybody who spoke a different language immediately mistrusted the other person with this other language. Of course, this is still going on over there. That was the nice thing that happened to me, that I was thrown in with these GI's, and I absorbed that as I absorbed their language. I began to think like them, to act like them, to rationalize things like them. I was given the opportunity more than once where somebody had said, "Max go into the back room, beat the shit out of this guy. We'll watch it, and if you need help, we'll come in and help you." I don't need it.

Q: IN YOUR C.I.C. WORK OR ON THE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL, DID YOU EVER RUN INTO SOMEONE WHO HAD ACTUALLY BEEN YOUR CAPTOR OR WHO HAD HURT YOU?

A: No. I have never, in my entire experience afterwards, ever met anyone who had been a guard over me. Never. And I don't know how I would have handled that situation at that time. I really don't know, but I am very fortunate that I was thrown in with the American troops and absorbed their life-style, which, to this day, I been very thankful for.

All kinds of rumors floated around the C.I.C. But before that, my commanding officer called me in one day, and he said, --. By now I had received the affidavit from Clark, and Truman had come out with his Presidential order that he would allow the first, I believe, thirty-five thousand displaced persons to come to the United States without any papers. I think it was a Presidential decree or something. Before that, my C.O. had called me in, and he said, "Max, don't you think you ought to go to Amsterdam and see if you can get a visa to go the the States? I will give you one of the agents to come along, and then you guys take a jeep and see what you can work out. Maybe there's a way that you can get papers to go to the States from our embassy in Holland." So he called the other guy in, and he gives each a box of extra bullets, and he told the other guy, he said, "Now, if you have to shoot your way out of Holland, you do so. You don't leave Max behind, but if you can do it without shooting, so

much the better, but here are the extra bullets just in case you have to. After we got out, we looked at each other. The next day, we went off in the jeep, and I said, "Are we crazy? What is this? Here we're sitting with guns. We're going to Holland. We have boxes of extra bullets. We have money. I know where I have to go. We have these papers." So he says, " I know we might have to use them, but let's not worry about it. When push come to shove, then we'll talk about it."

Went to Holland. Saw some friends of mine. Went to the embassy. They said they couldn't do anything for me. I said, "Why can't you do anything for me?" "Well, you never came back to Holland after the war was over, and you never registered here as a Dutch citizen. You are now what we call a stateless person. Even though you were born in Holland, you have never registered. We cannot handle you because you're not a Dutch citizen. If you had been a Dutch citizen, perhaps we could have done something for you, but you got to go to Munich. They handle all the stateless people.

Q: SO YOU WEREN'T A DUTCH CITIZEN BY BIRTH?

A: Yes, but in as much as after the war, I had never come back to Holland to re-register myself as a survivor, they did not consider me at that time to be, quote, "Dutch," by American standards, mind you.

We had done our work, so I said to the guy, "What do we do? Going to go home?" He said, "Well, [shrugs shoulders] what do we do now?" I said, "Let's go to Antwerp. It's only a few miles up the road." He said, "Okay, I've never been to Antwerp." Say, "Have you ever been to Brussels?" No, I've never been to Brussels either, so maybe we can do both of these things, and then from Brussels, we'll scoot east and go head straight home. All right, fine. So off to Antwerp we went, and we went to the B.O.Q. You know what a B.O.Q. is?

Q: NO.

A: Bachelor Officer's Quarters. They have one in every major place, and when you are traveling, it's the equivalent of a Y.M.C.A.-type thing, but except for officers.

We report in and request lodgings. Now you remember, we are in officer's uniform, no rank, just the U.S. We walk in, and they said, sit down; and we sit, and we sit. Finally, the other guy goes up to the desk, and he said, "What the hell is going on? Why do we have to sit there? All we asking for is a room." "Well, they want you to wait a bit." Finally, we wait, and we are taken into dinner. We're allowed to have dinner, but we still have not been assigned a room. Finally, after dinner, we pulled out, and we are taken

to the officer of the day. He said, "What are you guys doing here?" I said, "We came from Amsterdam. We're going to Brussels on the way back." He said, "Now, what are you really doing here?" I said, "Nothing." We explained what we were doing in Amsterdam. We're stationed in Nuremberg, and we're just passing thru because we have time on our hands. Wouldn't believe the story. I said, "Why don't you call our duty officer in Nuremberg and ask him who we are?" He gets on the line and calls. He verifies that we are who we say who we are, but we're not supposed to be in Antwerp. We only were supposed to go to Amsterdam, and why they are in Antwerp, don't ask me that, but if they say who they are, they are; and you described what they look like, and that's the guys. They belong to us. He comes out and said, "Well, you're cleared. You're legit." Then we get a room assigned. We sleep. The next morning, we have breakfast, and we go see the guy. I said, "What is all this? Why did you make such a big deal about it?" Then he told us that there had been a lot of pilferage in the Antwerp harbor, and they knew that the C.I.C. was going to come by and start looking into things, and they thought that we were the C.I.C. advance. They were going to put us right in our places because I guess everybody was in it, like every good longshoreman, and we had a big laugh about it.

We got passes to go walk around Antwerp. Then we came back and went to see the same guy again and said, "Now we want some passes to go to Brussels." He said, "You know you are some son of a bitch, aren't you? When you get a finger, you want the whole hand." I said, "Look, you know who we are. There's no harm done. Brussels is twenty miles up the road. We want to spend a night there, so that he can see it, and I can see it again, and then we'll be out of there." So he gave us the pass, and we went to Brussels. When we get back to Nuremberg, they laughed their heads off. They said, "Garcia, you are typical."

Then sometime later, they have the big raid, Saturday and Sunday. In all of Germany, all western Germany, French zone, English zone, the American zone, on the same day, all known Communists, Communist sympathizers, all Russians, all Yugoslavs, everybody who was with a Communist country had to be picked up during that night, brought in, interrogated, and see who were the live wires among them. So that we did. Being a agent, I was put in charge, given addresses. I would have a couple of MP's and some soldiers with me in the jeep. We would go from location to location picking people up, putting them in the truck, and they would be taken away. A couple of weeks after that, my commanding officer called me in, and he knew by now

that Holland couldn't do anything for me. He had seen the affidavit. Nuremberg, the war crimes trial, so the Russian counterintelligence was there, too. They had as much right to be there as we were because it was an international enclave because of the war crimes trial. He called me and Sasha in. Sasha was the other guy who was in the camps. He was Polish. He said, "We don't like you guys being here with us now because it's too dangerous. We have picked up all these Communists, and we know that the Russians have your names and where you come from. If they pick you up, there's nothing we can do about you guys. What we're going to do is we're going to send you to Frankfurt. We've talked to Frankfurt, which is the top headquarters of C.I.C., and we're going to see if we can get your papers to go to the United States. They flew us to Frankfurt. We went to the State Department. We had the top attorney for the C.I.C. with us. They explained things to the State Department. He told us to go to the local army hospital and get X-Rays made to make sure that our lungs and everything was clear. Then come back the next day. They should have a visa number for us." That's unbelievable.

Q: PRETTY SPEEDY.

A: I go to the hospital with Sasha. Next day I get a phone call at the C.I.C. headquarters. I have to back in the hospital. What now? They start taking a whole series of X-Rays on me. Now, of course, in the camps, I had pneumonia in both lungs at one time or another. I had my water being pulled out. I think I told you about that. They found something in my initial series of X-Rays, and it looked like I had TB. You cannot come to the United States if you have a communicable disease, in those days. So they called me back, and they're going to take a much closer look at my lungs now. I'm sweating now, because if this thing doesn't work out, I'm stuck in Europe. They take this whole series. Now they let me sit and wait because they want to see them in case they need to take another shot at me. After quite a wait, they come out and said, "You're clean. You had TB. It's all dormant, all gone. The scar is still there, but nothing to be concerned." They called the State Department and said, he's clean.

By now, they had received the number overnight from Washington, D.C. They put us back on a plane. Off to Nuremberg we flew. The next thing we knew we had to find, in the black market, some fabrics to make a suit out of. We had to find a tailor. Sasha and I got the same suits [chuckles], ersatz material. Had

suits made. We still had our Army shirts, army socks, army underwear, but we had now gray suits. They threw some parties for us. I think, ten days later, back on an airplane to Frankfurt. In Frankfurt, they picked us up at the airport, the C.I.C. They took us to their headquarters, put us back in a room. We're not allowed out of there. Next day, they take us back to the airport, put us on another plane. They flew us to Bremen. The C.I.C. was waiting for us there. In the cars, to their headquarters. Not allowed out of the house.

Q: IS THIS BECAUSE OF THE RUSSIAN THREAT AGAIN?

A: [Nods head] Not allowed out of the house. We stayed there, I think it was, two or three days. From there, we were taken to Bremerhaven. Placed on the S.S. Ernie Pyle, the ship. Turned over to the captain with instructions. We were not to get off the ship in Le Havre when it makes its stop. The only place we were allowed to get off was New York.

Q: HAD YOU BEEN AFRAID OF THE RUSSIANS AT THAT POINT?

A: No. By that time, I was afraid of nobody. [chuckle] I was so self-confident. It was awful. This came to haunt me when I came to the States because I was so damn self-confident in the wrong directions because I had never lived here, and yet I came over

here like I conquered the world because I had been a C.I.C. man. I had totally become spoiled. Over here it meant nothing, being C.I.C. So what? Big deal. Over there it meant everything, so this was the bad part for me.

So we got on the ship. We came to the States, and it's because of the C.I.C. that it was accelerated. From the day that we first set foot in Frankfurt and applied for the visa until the day we arrived in New York City, less than four weeks had gone by.

Q: AMAZING.

A: Less than four weeks. That's how fast they got us out of the country. All because we had been in that raid, and they didn't want us in Nuremberg.

Subsequently, last year in fact, I found out from my commanding officer, who I finally met after all these many years, that he had gone to see one of his commanding officers and said, "Look, we got these two guys there. They can pick them up any day." His commanding officer had said to him, "Get rid of them. Don't let them stay." He said, "We can't do that. These guys have served us. They have been just like us. You just can't discard them like that. That's inhuman." He said, "What are you supposed to do with them?" He said, "Let's get them to the States. They both have affidavits. Let's get them to the States."

He said, "Well, if you believe that strongly, you work it. Leave me out of it." And that's how I found out how we got here, because this guy took an interest and said, I want these guys out of here. I don't want --.

Q: WHAT WAS HIS NAME? DO YOU REMEMBER?

A: Yes. It's -- oh, why'd you ask me now [hand to forehead]? Kiel. Kiel. Kiel. I just wrote him a letter last week.

Q: WELL, MAYBE IT WILL COME UP AGAIN.

A: He lives in North Carolina, Goldsboro. (Morry. Morry Kiel.) He's seventy-seven or so. We talked about it. Last year we saw each other for the first time since 1946, and we talked about it and all these details. My wife was very interested to hear all this because all that I had said to her, and here was, finally, a guy who could verify it. Nobody had ever been able to verify my C.I.C. days until she met him. The same thing when the thing I told you earlier today about me and the tank and being hidden. We had met the Captain in 1988 at the reunion, and Pat began to ask him questions about this. He began to corroborate what I had told her, when we wrote the book. This was the first time that somebody actually had corroborated what I had said about what took place at that time. These were all very good things because it proved to her that my memory had been correct all along, and that what she

had written down, although could not have been corroborated from second or third sources, was indeed true.

We came into New York. It was a horrendous ride across. It was storming, and I was seasick so much. I thought we were going to go down the drain in the Atlantic, and we came to New York City. That Statue of Liberty in the fog is an incredible sight. When Manhattan -- you know in those days there were not that many big buildings in Manhattan. They had the Empire State and the Chrysler, and that was it, and to see that rising out of the fog, and that Statue of Liberty in front of you in the early morning hours [shakes head slightly]. We still had some brandy left over, and we pass it around, and we all had a swig, and I guess we wished ourselves well. That was quite a sight.

Most of that day after I got off the ship and was allowed into the United States after my papers had been checked and cleared, we went to Grand Central that evening, and I was placed on the train to Buffalo where the Colonel and his wife were waiting for me in the middle of the night. It's quite a thing.

Later on, when I came to San Francisco, I arrived here in 1953 at Fort Ord when I had re-enlisted in the Army.

Q: YOU WERE ALL THOSE YEARS IN BUFFALO?

A: No, I had been in Buffalo, spent the winter in Buffalo there, the '46-47 winter in Buffalo which was brutally cold. They told me it was one of the worst they had ever lived thru.

Q: YOU WERE WITH THE CLARKS?

A: Yeah.

Q: HOW DID THAT GO?

A: Not too well.

Q: OH.

A: Not too well. And again, my fault, not theirs because I had been so totally spoiled, and I was a wise guy. I mean really, what people would refer to as an army brat. I was really spoiled.

Drifted down the eastern seaboard. Came close to going back to Europe and said that I wasn't suited for this country. Then decided I would enlist in the Army. That would give me time to think things thru, and I would get three meals a day, and I've always liked the Army. So I go back in, and at least for the next eighteen months, I am taken care of. I can think things thru, and more than likely, they'll ship me someplace, and I get to see something else of the country, and maybe I would re-think myself. It turned out that way.

By that time, the migraines became very bad because -- after my basic training, I had made a request to be going back into the C.I.C. Now, because I was not a citizen, had not become a citizen because I'd just come there the year before, 1946. You can only be in the C.I.C. if you have been a citizen. The only thing they could send me to was C.I.D., Criminal Investigation Division, which is part of the military police. I went to military police school in Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania. I think it was something like a six-weeks course, and all the guys, besides me, were veterans. They had all fought in the Second World War, and I was the only new recruit. Everybody who graduated, except me, went to Germany. They were all shipped to Germany. I was the only one left behind, and I couldn't understand why, and nobody else could understand why. I wound up at Fort Lee in Virginia, and I was put into military police on guard duty -- on a stockade -- in guard towers, and I would have nightmares, cause you asked about nightmares. I would have nightmares. I would scream in the barrack, wake up soaking wet, so I have to go on sick call into the mental health clinic. They listen to the story, and they send me out to the psychiatrist. The psychiatrist calls up my commanding officer and says, "Do you know you got a time bomb with you." He said, "What do you

mean, time bomb?" He said, "You keep this guy on the goddamn towers with a live machine gun, he's liable to kill a lot of these guys down below, because one of these nights he's going to break, and he's going to look at all of the guys as SS men down there." He said, "I'm writing you a letter what I'm recommending, and I don't want to have any responsibility for this guy." The next day, as soon as that telephone call came in in fact, I was pulled off the towers and told I was going to be transferred.

Q: THEY DIDN'T DEAL WITH THE NIGHT TERRORS OR THE -- ?

A: With who?

Q: YOU KNOW, YOUR NIGHTMARES OR YOUR -- ?

A: The nightmares were the whole thing being on the tower. I was back in the prison camp.

Q: RIGHT.

A: That was what all these things came back out of, and the psychiatrist recognized what this was all about, and he said, hey, this guy is going to turn, so I was sent to another station around Washington, D.C.

That was a very secret post. Everybody walked around with tags, and this is 1947, mind you, now. You had all different kind of code of tags. If you were caught in one section of the camp with your color tags as opposed, you immediately got arrested. So I walk

in, show my papers. I been assigned here. The security officer sits me down and starts asking me questions, and then hands me some other papers and said, "Here, fill this out." I said, "What's that?" He said, "That's a request for transfer." I said, "Hell, I just got here." He said, "Well, you cannot be on this post." I said, "Why not?" He said, "You're not a citizen, and you're not supposed to be here. I don't know who fouled this thing up, but you cannot be here, and you have to get off this post as quickly as we can." Well, what was supposed to be very quick-like took almost three months to get me off. And me got me off.

I would go in to see them at the post or headquarters, and I said, " I was supposed to be off here. Why don't I get transferred?" "Well, the Army is very slow." "But when I came in here, they said I had to clear out, like the next day." "As long as you stay in the area where your tag says you can be, you will be okay."

Finally, they put me on the trucks, and I run back and forth to Virginia, Fort Belvoir to pick up the food for the camp, that sort of duty. Finally, I'm wrangling some weekend passes, and I go to the U.S.O. and get to know some people. During one of these sessions, I meet a guy, and we talk. He says, "You

speak languages then?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Boy, we need people like you in my outfit." I said, "What's your outfit?" He said, "The Army Medical Library." I said, "What do they do?" So he started telling me, and I said, "Do you think you could get me in there?" He said, "All you have to do is meet my commanding officer, the captain, and he'll get you in in no time." So I go back to my camp, and I go see the sergeant, and I said, "I need a three-day pass in the middle of the week." He said, "No way. What for?" I said, "I need it. I want to get off this post." "Garcia, you just got to relax and wait." I said, "No, I'm tired of waiting." I said, "I need a three-day pass." "Can't give you one." I said, "Can I talk to the Lieutenant?" "You want to go over my head?" I said, "You don't want to give it to me. I know where there's a job waiting for me in Washington, D.C. I need a three-day pass in order to finalize it. Let me see the Lieutenant." Finally, I see the Lieutenant. I explain to him what I had told the sergeant. He said, "Boy, that's a long shot, isn't it?" I said, "Well, better than sitting around here, ain't it?" He said, "Well, that's true." So he said, "Sergeant, give him a pass. Maybe he can do something that we don't know how to do." I went to see him, went to the captain, talked to him. He called

up the Pentagon, gave them my serial number. He said, "You go back to the post. Your transfer should be there by the end of next week."

Q: JUST LIKE THAT.

A: I went back, told the Sergeant and Lieutenant. "A-a-a-gh [wave of hand], don't believe them." Phone next week, my transfer came in, Army Medical Library. He called me in and said, "How did you do this? We been old army people. How do you do these things?" So I explained to him. He said, "This is unheard of."

Well, this was great duty. This was on Constitution Avenue and right next to the Smithsonian. The unit was no more than like eight people and a captain. All civilian clothes, all day long. You lived in private homes. You had extra allowance in food. You had to stand no inspections. It was just great. Promotions when they were due. It was a marvelous unit. When my time was up, they wanted me to stay. I was going to be promoted to the next rank, and I said, no. I got to liking Washington, D.C., and now, I've made up my mind I want to be an architect, and I want to go to school, and I'm going to stay in the States. And that's the whole thing.

Q: WHY DON'T WE STOP RIGHT THERE FOR TODAY BECAUSE WE'VE TAKEN MOST OF THE TIME? I DID JUST WANT TO ASK, THIS UNIT THAT YOU HAD TO TRANSFER OUT OF SO QUICKLY, WITH THE VERY STRICT AREAS, WHAT WAS IT ALL ABOUT?

A: That's where all the intelligence codes came in from all over the Eastern seaboard.

Q: ALL THE INTELLIGENCE CODES?

A: All the radios in cryptology from the embassies from all over Europe. There was a similar one here on the West Coast. All the radio codes came in there. They were received there, translated, and sent on to the State Department, the Department of Defense. That's what this thing was at. This was the top intelligence decoding unit of the United States for the East Coast.

Q: I SEE, BUT THEY COULDN'T SEE A CONNECTION OF SENDING YOU THERE FROM -- ?

A: Barbed wires everywhere. They were all sectioned up. When you went thru the gate, you had to pass thru several gates to be cleared. High security. Even the people, they lived together. It was almost like you were a prisoner there. Very intelligent people. Very intelligent people. All languages. All had become coders and decoders, and those were the days when the sophistication wasn't in there yet. In those

days, it was strictly was mathematics, as coding is today still, but now with computers, it's so much more sophisticated today, and so much faster than it used to be in those days; cause now, in fact, the messages can come right into the computer, and at the other end, the message comes out all totally decoded and everything else. It's really fascinating. So, it's been quite an interesting life in that sense.

Q: SOUNDS LIKE IT. WELL, LET'S GO ON WITH IT. DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS YOU'D LIKE TO ASK?

Q2: JUST FROM READING YOUR BOOK, BUT THEY'RE PERTAINING TO LATER ON, SO I THINK, YOU'LL PROBABLY TALK ABOUT THEM, LIKE ABOUT NOT WANTING TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN DUTCH --

A: Yeah.

Q2: -- AND WHAT PROMPTED YOUR RETURN. THINGS LIKE THAT, BUT YOU'LL PROBABLY COVER IT --

A: Prompting my return to Holland?

Q2: TO EUROPE AND ABOUT HANS DE LARA)?

A: Who?

Q2: Hans De Lara.

A: Oh, Hans De Lara), my cousin.

Q2: BUT YOU'LL PROBABLY TALK OF THOSE THINGS.

A: Yeah. If you guys want to continue, I'll be glad to come back.

Q: GOOD, LET'S DO THAT.

A: He [points and smiles] wants to know the end of the story.