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Interview with

Clyde Funk

February 22, 1975

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: *Clyde Funk*
(Signature)

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Dr. Clyde Funk for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on February 22, 1975, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Dr. Funk in order to get his reminiscences, experiences, and impressions while he was a prisoner-of-war of the Germans during World War II. Dr. Funk served aboard a B-26 medium bomber during that conflict, and he was subsequently shot down in France and was captured there.

Dr. Funk, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, just tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Dr. Funk: Well, my full name is Presley Clyde Funk, and I was born in Snyder, Texas, on April 4, 1918. I went to school in various and sundry elementary schools in Texas. My father moved around quite a bit. He was in the insurance business.

We finally settled in Dallas in about 1930, and I finished high school at Highland Park High School. Then I went to Southern Methodist to get my pre-medical work, and during the process of doing that the Depression came along, and I had to drop out of school. I went to work for the Times Herald as a circulation manager.

I had about recouped my finances to get back into school when December 7, 1941, popped, and I got fire in my blood and heard that old Air Force song and went down and enlisted in the cadet program. I enlisted in 1942 right after Pearl Harbor and had to wait an interminable period of time. It seemed like I'd never be called up for training. Finally, I was called up and sent out to the West Coast to the Flight Training Command, where I finished my cadet training in 1943. The reason I say finished was because I washed out in pilot school. I went back to navigation school and then finished that in early '44. I was sent overseas after staging at Lake Charles, Louisiana, as a navigator-bombardier on a B-26 outfit.

Marcello: In other words, you had been training for a B-26 from the very beginning.

Funk: Well, after I finished bombardier school, yes. I went through bombardier school at Victorville, California. Then I was sent to Lake Charles for staging. And until we got

there, we really didn't know what we would be assigned to. Some of the fellows went to "heavies," and some went to twin-engine bombers. Of course, the Martin B-26 Marauder was a twin-engine plane. We staged at Lake Charles and departed from Hunter Field in Savannah, Georgia.

We went overseas and had an exciting trip overseas. We got grounded in Bermuda because of the weather and got to enjoy three days of Bermuda. In those days there were no motorized vehicles on the island. All the horseless carriages . . . and it was really an exciting visit for me to Bermuda.

Marcello: You mean horse-drawn carriages?

Funk: Yes, yes. Just carriages. No, no motorized vehicles. On the American base there was some trucks, but they were restricted to base. They weren't allowed to go into town because the cobblestones wouldn't take them. They were meant just for the horse-drawn carriages. I said horseless carriages awhile ago. Horse-drawn carriages was what I was trying to say.

We got to Ireland by way of the Azores. I guess it was in the spring of '44. I enjoyed seeing Ireland in the spring because it is truly an emerald isle. I really enjoy the memory of flying in there on that spring day. It really was beautiful. We had further staging there because the

English navigation system was completely different, and we learned all the English double-talk that had to do with radio and so forth. We also learned a few navigation hints in regards to navigating out of England.

Then we were sent to a little place called Chipping Ongers, which was north of London, close to the balloon barrage at Chelmsford. We stayed there. Our group was the 386th Bomb Group, 558th Squadron. They had lost so many bombardiers that it wasn't long before I was flying lead bombardier out of Chipping Ongers. We flew several missions out of there.

Marcello: Now were you still on your B-26?

Funk: Yes, the same one. We brought our ship overseas with us. But we didn't get to keep it after we got to the squadron. They put it in the pool, and we went with a seasoned crew. I was assigned to a crew with a Captain Snyder. I don't remember his first name because I very seldom flew with him because neither of the bombardiers flew relief. Sometimes we'd fly two and three missions a day and sometimes none. It was just according to how tired the old bombardiers were.

Marcello: There are two things that you've mentioned, and I would like to clear them up for the record. You mentioned that your original B-26 was put in a pool. Now what exactly does that mean?

Funk: Some ships were so shot up that they reserved a new ship in a reserve pool. Incidentally, my crew flew their ship over--straight across from LaGuardia. I was shipped across by the Air Transport Command. It's been a long time since I said the word. ATC was what we called it. That's the reason we had the interesting trip over, because we flew a different route. We flew the southern route, and our crew flew the ship over by the northern route which is shorter.

And after the ship was put in the pool, of course, we flew with other seasoned crews. Well, it wasn't long before my crew had gained enough experience to be trusted, so to speak, and then I rejoined them.

Marcello: I see. In other words, at this point you were back with your original crew.

Funk: That's right. Then I came back with my original crew.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that you were a relief bombardier. Just for the record, what exactly does that mean?

Funk: Well, that meant that they weren't sure whether I'd stay on the bombsight on the first few missions, and so the lead bombardier would fly a squadron of six ships, and the relief bombardiers would fly either fourth or fifth or sixth position on the lead bombardier and watch for him to drop his bombs and then simply toggle them out.

Marcello: I knew this was the case with the heavy bombers, where you had a lead bombardier and everybody toggled off him.

Funk: Each squadron toggled off him. Now there were so many of the "heavies" that the whole group would sometimes toggle off the lead bombardier. But in our case it was each sixth ship. Our first mission to Paris was quite interesting.

Marcello: Well, let's just talk about that first mission from the time you got up in the morning until you returned to the base.

Funk: Well, briefly it was always real early in the morning . . . of course, I don't remember all of the details. We always thought breakfast was horrible around four o'clock. You know, after you've been up worrying about your first mission the night before, four o'clock comes awful early. You really hadn't had much sleep. It was great justice that they decided not to fly those people as lead bombardiers that first mission (chuckle). At any rate, we'd had a briefing early in the morning.

Marcello: Was there a great deal of apprehension before that first mission?

Funk: Well, it's mixed. You know, there is bound to be apprehension and fear because, you know, you see the ships all shot up on the line and hear about the ones that didn't come back. You're bound to be filled with fear. Any man that wasn't

afraid wasn't very smart. But anyway, we were so excited that I think that fear was overcome by the excitement of going and wondering if you were going to do your job right. You know, pride overcomes the fear a lot of the times. We'd gone through a lot of training--expensive training--to drop bombs out of ships (chuckle).

Anyway, there was the excitement of going into the briefing room and everybody chattering and talking, and then the commanding officer comes in, and everything hushes and is quiet in there. He majestically sweeps the shade from over the map, and here is this long line of pins clear into France, and, of course, we'd never even seen the Channel yet (chuckle). And we were told that there will be an assembly over London with the "heavies" assembling ahead of us at a certain altitude, and we're to assemble at a certain altitude, and the fighters will assemble at a certain altitude. The "heavies" had escorts all the way in and out from their targets.

Marcello: By this time the Mustang has been developed.

Funk: Oh, yes. There was the P-51, P-38, and P-47.

Marcello: The "Little Friends" is what they called them, wasn't it?

Funk: Yes. And we, of course, immediately heard that the Polish boys that were revenge fliers that were flying P-51's--that's an English outfit--were the best escorts. Of course, the

"heavies" would always get them. But anyhow, our escort would leave us as soon as we crossed the Channel. We were well-armed and flew at a low enough altitude and were fast enough that it wasn't warranted sending fighters all the way in and out with us. The fighters very seldom attacked the B-26 because of its speed and because of its armament. Flak, antiaircraft batteries, were our main worry. This was what got 90 per cent of our ships after I joined the unit.

Marcello: Were you briefed at this time or even before as to what sort of flak and other resistance you could expect going into the target?

Funk: Yes, sir. You know, railroad flak was the problem. We depended on intelligence to tell us where the Germans had moved their railroad cars with those 88's. That 88 was a terrible weapon.

Marcello: Did it still have its reputation this late in the war?

Funk: Oh, yes! It was what finally got me. But anyway, that German 88 was a tremendous weapon. It fired on radar before, I guess, anyone in the United States had ever heard of radar.

That first mission wasn't easy, though. We came in over Paris. Our target was the marshalling yards. I don't know whether that's a word that you know or not.

Marcello: Railroads, sure.

Funk: It's where they marshal cars. Anyway, we called them the marshalling yards, and this was our target for that morning. There was flak all the way in.

Marcello: In other words, even at this stage of the war, the Germans were still full of a great deal of fight yet.

Funk: Oh, yes, sir. This is March, '44, and they're very much full of it (chuckle). They were full of fight. The first thing that happened was that . . . I hadn't been briefed for some strange reason on the fact that we had what was called "window." Have you heard this word before, "window?"

Marcello: Yes.

Funk: This was metal fragments that were thrown out of the ships to disrupt the radar.

Marcello: To foul up the radar.

Funk: Yes, to foul up the radar. Well, for some reason, I hadn't been briefed on this, and when we got over Paris, why, the very first thing that happened was that they started throwing out the "window." Obviously, it's called "window" because it goes out the window (chuckle). But anyway, I thought these were bombs going out, and I dropped my bombs there. Well, of course, that filled me with fear and trembling because the minute I hit my toggle switch I knew they weren't bombs. I didn't know what it was, but I knew they weren't bombs.

Well, they took pictures where my bombs hit, and I just waited to be court-martialed because we were right over the heart of Paris. We went on to our targets, of course, but I didn't have any bombs to drop. But anyway, we got our target. We hit the marshalling yards, but in the process our lead ship was bombed absolutely to pieces. Nothing was heard of the ship or the crew.

Marcello: You witnessed this?

Funk: Oh, yes. This was my lead ship. I was flying number four, which is stacked down just under number one. One, two, three, four. I was flying number four position.

Marcello: What sort of feeling did you experience when you saw this? I'm sure it happened very fast.

Funk: Well, it was so rapid that it was mostly surprise. Your first thought was that there weren't any parachutes. And having had no experience, I immediately started doing what I wasn't supposed to be doing, and that was looking for survivors. I was supposed to be tending to my business, and due to the excitement I was tending to my emotions. I guess a lot of other people were, too. It's hard to control them. Well, anyway, it is over in a flash, and you're so busy dodging flak and going into evasive actions. This made my crew the lead ship then because the deputy commander is in the four position, so we immediately pulled up into the number one position. And having already dropped our

bombs, we scurried and underwent all sorts of maneuvers trying to avoid flak--zigzagging up and down. We did get back. We had a few holes in our ship, but no serious damage.

Marcello: When did you start picking up the flak?

Funk: Oh, the minute we crossed the coastline. Just the minute we crossed the Channel coastline, the French coast, that is. That's when our fighters left us because they can't afford to lose P-51's, you know.

Marcello: I guess after awhile the Germans could almost tell where these planes were going, what targets they were going toward.

Funk: I think they knew ahead of time. I think their intelligence was so good that they knew where we were going. They just didn't have the fighters to put up to knock us down, and that's the only reason we didn't have to worry about fighters.

Marcello: On that B-26 did you as a bombardier have other functions besides being a bombardier? Did you man a machine gun when you weren't functioning as a bombardier?

Funk: Oh, yes, I had twin .50's in my nose cone, and this was my responsibility to man those. Of course, as lead bombardier--not this first mission--but as lead bombardier the Norden sight takes over the flight of the ship. For the bomb run the Norden sight puts you on course and corrects for wind drift and everything.

That first mission for awhile was a hellacious mission. It almost ruined me because of this ship going down. I found it difficult to stay in my sight. But anyway, I conquered this, or at least hid, this fear (chuckle). I don't think I ever conquered this fear.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were up there in the nose, so obviously you did have a very good view of that ship exploding.

Funk: Oh, yes! And the flak is so heavy that it looks like you can walk on it.

Marcello: Well, what is it like going through that flak?

Funk: It's a strange experience, especially that first time, because you hear all sorts of tales about it ahead of time. The guys talk about the flak being so heavy that you could walk on the smoke, you know. But it really looks that way because there are so many shells bursting around you, and the bark of those shells is just like the bark of a dog. Your ship is insulated, and actually there is an impact of air more than a sensation of sound. But the sound you do hear when it's close enough for you to hear it is not good. It really sounds like the bark of a dog. It's a gusty, quick, sharp, snap of a bark. And you can tell the 155's and the 105's from the 88's just by the character of the smoke and the character of the bark. The

88's have a low bark, and the 155's and the 105's, which they didn't use on us much, by the way, because they were mainly for high altitude, had a sharper crack that was really more of a sensation of pressure from them than the sound.

Marcello: Well, I guess they used that 88 for everything.

Funk: It was mainly for 8,000 to 10,000 or 20,000 feet. For anything above 20,000 feet it was no good. In fact, above 10,000 feet it wasn't good, and this is why we tried to bomb at over 10,000 feet. Their accuracy was so diminished after 10,000 feet of altitude.

Anyway, we got back from that first mission, and, of course, they were busy with everything that was being prepared for D-Day, which we did not know. There was no whisper of D-Day until it happened. This was really a closely guarded secret.

Marcello: You know nothing at all about it?

Funk: No! We knew that something was going to happen, and the whispers were that it would occur at Dieppe and Dunkirk and this and that and the other, but never where the invasion was made.

This was really a well-guarded secret. And all the time intelligence headquarters would release maps of the Normandy coast and the preparations for what we were going to do subsequently.

Anyway, we flew numerous missions between March and June. Of course, the culmination, the climax of all of our flying, was really D-Day, and anything after that was really sort of anti-climatic.

Marcello: You might talk about what the role of your particular plane outfit played in the Normandy invasion.

Funk: Well, that was interesting, too. I guess that was our next highlight. In between the first few flights that I made, though, we moved. When we moved around May from north of London down to Bournemouth, which is close to Stoney Cross, Southampton area, we knew then that things were going to happen, but we still didn't have a hint as to where we were going to go because the shortest line is right across to Le Havre, you know. And so everybody speculating the invasion would be from Le Havre on north, and nobody really suspected that we were going to hit the Normandy coast.

As we moved, we got to meet new people and saw a new area. And about this time I had, oh, sixteen or seventeen missions. I had had a trip into London to see some interesting sights. It would take a whole tape to talk about it because London is a most historic city.

And then I got a little fatigued before D-Day happened, and in late May I was sent down to a rest and rehabilitation area at the very end of England called Land's End. And I

remember the name of the hotel--the Imperial Hotel--but I don't remember . . . oh, yes, I do remember the name of the town--Torquay. This was quite exciting because we got to go down there where there was no war. This was the vacation-land for Britains. The war had never touched the south of England.

Marcello: When you get off the base, are you generally warned or instructed not to mention anything about your missions or anything of this nature to anybody?

Funk: Well, we had had a year, literally years, of briefing about security. Oh, I remember some of the expressions of World War II--"Loose talk sinks ships" and "Button up your lips" and all sorts of placards and everything. This was for civilians as well as soldiers. The main thing was that loose talk could sink your ship. You just didn't talk about your unit number and your squadron or anything because the Germans, of course, were busy trying to get the information about where everybody was, especially at this time where they were going to concentrate. So we didn't really have much contact with civilians after we were moved to Stoney Cross because there were so many military personnel in there and such excellent security that there weren't any towns-people around, and those that were, I found out later, were busy getting their boats ready for that armada of small ships that made their way across the Channel with supplies.

And, of course, the highlight of all the flying history . . . and I guess in "The Longest Day," the movie, pictured it best. It still can't picture it like it was. The weather was horrible. We were supposed to fly in at 10,000 feet, and we went in at 500 feet. We flew three missions that day--first mission before dawn, the next mission at mid-morning, and the next mission that afternoon--all of them hitting the Normandy coast.

Marcello: What sort of targets were you normally hitting?

Funk: Well, we were hitting gun emplacements and barbed wire emplacements along the Normandy coast, around Omaha and Utah Beach.

But the most dramatic that I remember--and it will stand in my mind the rest of my life--is seeing the battleship Texas and the battleship Arkansas sitting off to our left as we flew in, and the trajectory of their tracers was higher than the flight of our ships. They were literally going higher than we were flying because we were really hugging the deck going in. I can remember seeing the cliffs of Dover disappear behind us and seeing the flash of guns and then realizing that these were huge battleships that were right on level with us and seeing the shells burst inland as we went across the Channel. This was something that can't be pictured on the screen. And literally

it looked like you could walk on the armada of small boats that were carrying supplies across and carrying wounded back. In addition to that, there was a continuous line of C-47's carrying in supplies and paratroopers and bringing back wounded. Now where they landed to pick them up, I'll never know. But there must have been special areas of beach where they knew they could land to pick up the wounded because the C-47's were just as thick as the boats on the water. That's something I'll never forget.

And when we hit the beachhead, it seemed like every bush was firing at us. At 500 feet you're fair game for anybody. Of course, at 500 feet it's a difficult target when you're going 300 miles an hour, so they didn't get many hits. But we came back looking like a sieve. Our ship was full of small holes, but no one was wounded, not on any of these three missions.

That was the climax. Anything after that was anticlimatic, even the mission on which I was shot down which was much later. D-Day, of course, was in June, and the three missions I flew that day sort of blanked out all the rest of the missions until I was shot down. We had what we called a bunch of "milk runs." We were dropping pamphlets and leaflets into France and especially along the south coast of France.

Then the war sort of got serious again in the winter of '44, and, of course, a lot of big battles were fought. We had moved on into France by then. In fact, we had moved three times. We moved into Normandy and moved again, and when I was shot down we were stationed at Cherbourg, which is close to Orleans and south of Paris.

Marcello: We mentioned this before the interview started, but I think we should probably get it in the record anyway. What was a tour of duty for a crew member of a B-26?

Funk: Well, actually sixty-five missions was supposed to be the maximum. But we were short of crew--we lost so many planes being shot down and wounded--it was really unusual for a man to go back after his sixty-fifth mission. Most of the time it was seventy if he made it. The bad part about it was that when you got past sixty-five missions, you had used up your odds pretty much. And everytime you went out was . . . your number was up pretty literally. And there was quite a superstition about flying these missions, and you just didn't volunteer--you were asked--because the volunteers seemed to get it. This may not have been statistically true, but this was the superstition amongst the fliers--you didn't volunteer.

Marcello: I also heard that if you aborted a mission, you had to have a pretty damn good reason for doing so.

Funk: Well, the crew that I was flying with never really aborted a mission, but those that we did see aborted was for a real good reason. We only had one crew that had a reputation for not going in. Unfortunately, they were shot down on an aborted mission. They turned around because they had an engine out, and . . . we think it was just bad luck. We don't think that they aborted on purpose, but these particular crew members--and I don't remember the names enough to be specific--were shot down avoiding a mission. We saw that engine out. We saw their prop feathered. We knew that they had a legitimate reason. You didn't even go back because of the radio being out because you had teammates that you flew with. You could fly on somebody's wing and get back on that. You just didn't avoid a mission unless you had to. An engine out was a legitimate reason.

Marcello: I assume that once you did get up in the air you might as well go through with the mission.

Funk: Oh, yes. Your pride, your ego, had a lot to do with that because after a man has gone that far, has flown that many hours, you don't abort because of fear because you know everybody else is scared, you know, and so you just accept fear as part of the deal.

Marcello: Do you ever talk very much about the possibility of being shot down? Or is this a subject that is in the back of your mind but you never mention it?

Funk: No, you never talked about it. There was a favorite expression, and I'm sure it was in the back of everybody's mind just like it was in mine: "It couldn't happen to me." This is the old ego, you know. "It can't happen to me. I'm something special." (chuckle)

Marcello: Were there ever any formal preparations or orientation that you had to prepare for the possibility of capture?

Funk: Oh, yes. We had briefings frequently. We had many briefings ahead of combat and during combat about what to do if we were shot down. Certain survival techniques, of course--first aid, survival in the woods, how to eat, and how to contact the Free French units--were impressed on everyone. And that brings up an interesting thought.

Marcello: But these were more or less evasive-type maneuvers. In other words, what happens if you do get captured?

Funk: Yes, if you did get captured, they had some suggestions to make. In the first place, don't be a hero. Heroes get shot. When I was shot down, for instance, I didn't even have a gun on me. I purposely left it behind because I didn't want anybody to have an excuse to shoot me. So we did think about being shot down. I didn't . . . you know, a pistol or a rifle is no good to a man floating in a parachute, if you're lucky enough to float down.

The main thing they taught us, though, was the interrogation techniques. And this was how to avoid giving

information because the Germans were thirsty for information about the strength of units, location of units, who the current commanding officer was, and so forth. We were taught not to give anything but name, rank, and serial number. And, of course, this gets come bruises, as I'll tell you later (chuckle).

But anyway, they taught us some little techniques. Like when the interrogator is really bearing down on us, you just watch his fly, you know, on his britches, his zipper, even though there were no zippers in those days, but look at his buttons on his fly of his trousers. It embarrasses him; it gets to anybody. As you can notice if I look at you, you wonder what the heck I'm looking at. And it really just confounded them, and it stopped many, many conferences when I was in solitary confinement-- just by me staring at the guy's fly.

Marcello: That's interesting. I've never heard that before.

Funk: Yes, well, that's just one technique. But many techniques were taught. They also taught us that there'd be an apple on the desk and that he'd speak perfect English and that he'd be from Brooklyn, that he had property, and that he'd ask if his property was still there and would he get it back when the war ended.

Sure enough, all these things happened. The interrogation technique was just a pattern that was sewed up

before we got there, and it made it easier to stand because we knew what was going to happen next. This was exciting. Of course, we're getting ahead of the game a little now.

In October, another climax happened, really sort of an anticlimax because nothing could equal D-Day. Even getting shot down didn't equal D-Day. But the war, as I told you, did increase in intensity in the winter of '44, and the Germans were mustering all of the last bits of strength they could get together to try to stop the march on the Rhine.

On October 12, Columbus Day, 1944, we had an early morning briefing and again one of those four o'clock breakfasts. I'll never forget that breakfast because I cursed it. It was French toast, cold French toast. It wasn't many hours before I was treasuring the memory of that good breakfast (chuckle), the farther away I got from food. The more I realized that that French toast wasn't so bad after all.

But anyway, we made our mission. We were flying out of Cherbourg, as I told you. We went in southeast of Nancy and across on into Alsace-Lorraine. We were bombing troop and munitions emplacements in the Saar Basin, close to a little town which on the map was Zaberg, but which I found out later is the same as Saarbrücken.

We went in and we got railroad flak on the way in, and we marked it on the map and made sure we didn't fly back over it. We had a pretty heavy crew. We were experimenting with some new radar equipment, and I was not flying bombardier that day. I was using . . . I was flying as accessory bombardier because we were breaking in a new crew.

And by the way, this is another superstition in the Air Force. That second mission with a new crew is for some reason bad. I had already flown that early morning mission, and I had come back and found out that they didn't have a training bombardier for this new crew. "Angel Puss" was the name of that ship, by the way. I don't even remember what my first mission that morning was, but this second mission was in "Angel Puss" with a brand new crew that had never had a mission before.

And by this time we were flying on what is called a pathfinder mission. This is a word that you may be familiar with by now if you've interviewed before. A pathfinder was a radar ship that flew in over in an overcast . . . and this was an overcast day. We flew in over a cloud cover.

Marcello: This was a technique that the British developed.

Funk: Yes, and the American Air Force refined it. Actually, our pathfinder ships were equipped with the most up-to-date

radar equipment that could be found. In fact, they had some infra-red equipment, too, that gave them an outline of the terrain below, even through a cloud cover.

Anyway, we made our bombing run with this new crew, and, of course, we had another superstition that there are certain people called "flak magnets." And Pete Peterson was our "G-box" operator. This box by the way was called a "G," the initial G. I don't know why it was called a "G-box." But this radar box was called a "G-box," and he was the "G" operator. This made a crew of nine, which was two or three more than the average B-26 crew. Ordinarily, we just carried six--three aft crewmen, a pilot, co-pilot, and the bombardier who acted as a navigator, also. But on this ship we had an extra navigator--that was the "G-box" operator--and then a trained bombardier and navigator, which was my duty.

We got into our target--it was Saarbrucken--and dropped our bombs and got a good hit apparently because after the war I found out that . . . every bomb was in the target area that day, so we knew that we didn't miss. I didn't find this out until, of course, a year or so later in talking to some of my buddies that had been on that mission.

Anyway, on the way back out, as I said, we had marked down where this railroad flak was. Well, they were pretty smart. They had moved the flak, and we flew right back over it just as straight as you could imagine. Of course, it was still an overcast. We had no way of seeing the ground below. Their very first burst of four shells, which were supposed to bracket a squadron . . . one was in front of us, another was behind us, and two center shells were close enough that we had a direct hit in our upper turret and then a head-on hit in our wing. Without a good pilot--and I remind you this was his first combat mission--without a good, straight-thinking pilot . . . I owe my life to Simpson. I don't know Red, and I never saw him again except for a short time I saw him in Strasbourg after we were shot down. But I owe my life to him because he kept that ship straight and level just with the throttle. He had no tail section. The tail section was blown off. In fact our tail gunner was blown free to parachute down. Our upper turret gunner was killed instantly when we got the midships burst. And we only had, well, less than forty-five seconds to get out of that ship, and certain events stood out like they lasted minutes. The alarm horn was going off, and we knew we had to get out. We feel the jolt; we know we've been hit.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what it felt like when you got hit.

Funk: It was a jolt. It's a jolt and that same thought comes through your mind: "It can't happen to me." Of course, immediately when the hit occurred, everybody was up and the alarm horn's going. You know you've got trouble. You're going to have to bail out, so the pilots triggered their horn. I looked at Pete, the "flak magnet," and sure enough, he's bleeding. He's got a piece of flak across his face. He's cut from chin to ear, not a bad wound but bad enough that he's got another purple heart, which is his sixth one (chuckle). Everytime he gets hit with flak--everytime he goes up. He can't get his chest chute on. He's got a suit of armor on. We wore flak suits. He can't get his flak suit off, and I remembered jerking his flak suit off and helping him get his chest chute on. We didn't wear chutes because we couldn't wear our armor and chutes, too. And I, of course, by this time had mine on, and we'd gotten Buzz Sewell out of the nose of the ship. He's the bombardier.

Marcello: What's his name again?

Funk: Buzz Sewell. I don't know what his first name is. He was from up in the Boston area--fat boy, a happy-go-lucky guy. He froze! We had the bomb bay doors open getting ready to go out, and he froze. He was right in our way. We couldn't get out. Now all of this happened in forty-five seconds,

mind you. So we had to boot him out. We literally had to kick him out of the bomb bay doors (chuckle).

Marcello: Incidentally, had you had any experience in bailing out or parachute training?

Funk: Oh, no, you don't need any training for that. You've got one time to try it (chuckle). You don't need any training for that.

Anyway, we boot Buzz out, and then I helped Pete out. He was the second man out of the bomb bay because he was wounded. As I say, we had to put his chest chute on him because when he got that flak suit off, he was ready to go out, and without that chute you fall pretty hard. So we got his chute on him and got him out.

I don't know about the rest of the crew because they were going out the back end of the ship. The tail section was blown off, and the tail gunner and the waist gunners were going out. We knew our turret was gone, so we knew our turret gunner was gone. And that's another part of the story. Don't let me forget to tell you the sequel to that. Maldonado was the turret gunner. As I say, I had only met these people this one time. These were all new people-- just joined our squadron.

And going out of that ship was something else. I've never felt such a feeling of relief to get out of a burning

airplane in all my life! You know, you didn't have to be urged to go, except we had to urge Buzz. But anyway, that's the three of us that I know about. Of course, we go down as a group of parachutes.

Marcello: Okay. So what's it like? Pick up the story in as much detail as you can remember from the time you bailed out.

Funk: This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I wouldn't sell it, and I wouldn't buy it. You couldn't make me buy it, and you couldn't make me sell it (chuckle). But I went out of that ship face first, chest down. And I pulled my ripcord, and nothing happened. And I go frantic! You know, I go "ape!" I start clawing at the thing, and, sure the chest chute is alright. I'm just falling straight down. The wind's blowing it back into me. In my frantic grasping at it, I turn on my side, and it blossoms like a white rose. It's literally like a white rose above me.

And then everything stops. You're not aware of sound; you're not aware of motion. We jumped from 10,000 feet. Everything is a blur on the ground because you have enough motion, and you're high enough that you can't see details. And the only way that you know you're descending is the gentle motion of the earth below you. You're not moving; it's the earth moving. And then you're gradually aware that you're beginning to hear gun shots. And then you're gradually

aware that there's a louder sound occasionally of artillery. And then you're gradually aware things are being magnified. Each tree becomes, instead of a green blur, an indistinct tree and then a distinct tree, and then it gradually magnifies into view. Just turn the magnifying glass on it. It ever increases as a zoom lens might.

And then you realize you're in danger because you realize that those shots down there mean that there's a battle going on. And pretty soon you can hear the wind of the bullets because these rascals are shooting at us as we're descending in parachutes! And on top of that, about the time I get within guiding distance of landing my chute--and we'd been instructed on how to use the ripcords, I mean, the shroud lines to change directions--why, we get buzzed by something. I guess it was . . . I don't know the type of German fighter it was. He didn't fire; he didn't shoot at us. But the ground troops were shooting at us. I hit in, I guess, no man's land.

Marcello: As you are descending, do you think about what you're going to do when you're going to hit the ground?

Funk: Yes, sir. The main thing is not to break your legs because you don't feel like you're moving and yet you've been told that it's like jumping off the second story of a building. This is what the jolt is like. So you're thinking about all

you've been told--flexing your knees and cushioning your fall and acting like . . . we had been taking tumbling lessons, of course. This was some preparation.

Well, all of this was for naught because when I got about 500 feet off the ground and realized how rapidly I was descending--because by then everything is really coming up at you--why, I realized the wind had changed, and I am going backwards, not forwards. So I frantically grabbed my shroud lines and tried to turn around, but it's too late. I hit backwards, and I hit in a foxhole, and my knees went under me, and I wrecked my knees and ankles in the process. But, you know, you don't pay much attention to pain because there are no troops around me, and I think, "I've got a chance to get out of here." I know the Free French are in this area. We're in Alsace-Lorraine. Nancy is just a few miles northwest of here, and there is 3rd Army headquarters-- "Lucky Rear." We're near Nancy, and if I can just make it across that Moselle River, I've got it made.

Marcello: What do you call it, "Lucky Rear?"

Funk: Yes, "Lucky Rear" was Patton's headquarters at Nancy, and we're southeast of there. Well, I think I've got it made. I don't see anybody anywhere. I can't hear any shooting now. I've landed in a clearing in a foxhole. I get my chute buried in this foxhole and pull a tree over it and . . .

Marcello: Ultimately, what sort of injuries did you suffer when you hit?

Funk: Just these sprained knees and ankles as I landed. I didn't pay attention to them, though. They were, of course, puffed up like a balloon from the sprain.

And so I head for the woods. I head west. I know the Moselle River is there, and I know the Free French are there, and if I can just get to the Moselle, why, I feel I have got it made.

Man, I hadn't gone a hundred yards before I hear that old German expression, "Hände hoch!" You know, "hands up!" (chuckle) Man, that barrel of that gun looked as big as a stovepipe, and I didn't have any trouble getting my hands up. The two things that stand out in my mind about that are the first English words from the Germans I heard. "For you the war is over." They said this to everybody.

Marcello: Now this is a German soldier.

Funk: Yes, this is the soldier--young, wet behind the ears, looked like he wasn't over seventeen years old. The gun was bigger than he was, it looked to me like. He said, "For you the war's over."

And the second thing that stands out was that he was interested in my equipment. First, the throat mike that I had forgotten to disengage and had jumped with it intact and

it had just pulled out of the set. The throat mike is just a microphone that attaches to the area of your vocal cords. You don't have to hold a hand mike that way. He was interested in that. He didn't know what that was. He'd never seen a throat mike before. He thought it was some sort of secret weapon of some kind. But anyway, he took that for a souvenir. The other thing in line with equipment that he was interested in, of course, was my .45. He wanted my .45 automatic which I had left in my tent. He couldn't understand why it wasn't on me. He couldn't believe that a warrior from the sky came down unarmed, and he searched me at least three times trying to get this valuable souvenir because apparently an Army .45 was one of the most treasured . . . just like we treasured their P-38 or their Luger. He just never could quite fathom that I hadn't thrown it or hidden it.

Marcello: Did he rough you up in any way?

Funk: No, he didn't. He didn't rough me up. He just said, "For you the war is over." And I can get him in trouble, of course, with that gun in my back.

So I was escorted then to a command post. That was still in the front lines because you could hear the guns going. I, of course, had lost track of the other parachutes. I had seen Buzz Sewell's chute go down in a clump of trees, and I had lost track of the other chutes.

Marcello: At this time do you have a feeling of loneliness or anxiety or anything of that nature?

Funk: No. You've lost hope 100 per cent, because you figure that you're dead. You just figure you're dead, and so you start figuring out how to reverse that position. You're numb. You're really numb. There's an anesthetic-like feeling. You're injured. You're hurting by now. You realize after you've stopped running that your knees are killing you, that your ankles are killing you. You realize how hopeless the situation is. And literally the war is over. Of course, we had heard the tales about solitary confinement, and we've heard tales about how bad the food is, how lonely it is, and, you know, all that mess. But then the next three days were full of experiences.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned that you were captured by this very young German soldier. It is quite obvious that they're apparently reaching the bottom of the manpower barrel by this time.

Funk: That's strange that you would mention that because all we saw was the very young and the very old. The prime soldier was gone, at least from that area. We just didn't see him. Of course, and I guess the reason . . .

Marcello: Did he rough you up any at all from the time he had captured you and until he took you to this headquarters area?

Funk: It was mostly curiosity. But then when he turned us over to this command post, they hustled us into a Mercedes Benz or similar-type vehicle and carried us to a little town of Cirey.

Marcello: Now by this time . . .

Funk: This is quickly.

Marcello: . . . are the rest of the crew members being gathered together?

Funk: I don't know yet, you see. I'm the only one that I have seen so far. They hustled me in this command car with a brute on each side of me. I found out in a little while that we're going to Gestapo headquarters. And when we get there in this little town of Cirey, which is close to Roan L'etate, which, by the way, was the home base for the gunners that shot us down . . . and this was a standout, by the way. The minute we got to Cirey, the base of these gunners . . . Cirey and Roan L'etate are real close together, only about a mile and a half apart.

Marcello: What were the two towns?

Funk: Cirey and Raon L'etate.

Marcello: I see.

Funk: These two towns are real close together, and this 88 group had their railroad flak in between these two towns.

But anyway, they heard they had captured criminals. The airplane had, of course, gone down in flames. I didn't

know who all had got out of it at that time. But anyway, they greeted us when we got to this little town of Cirey with the top off of our airplane. You know, they had sawed it off, and they had the date it was shot down--10:40 a.m., October 12, 1944. And they were excited. They wanted souvenirs, of course, and they started looking our uniforms over, and, of course, we really didn't have anything.

Marcello: You keep saying "our" and "we." Were you with other pilots or other crew members at this time?

Funk: Well, they told a similar story. I hadn't seen any of them yet. But they told similar stories. They had similar experiences.

Marcello: I see.

Funk: They had similar experiences. It wasn't until we got to Raon L'etate that we were joined together. At that time, Buzz Sewell joined me and Peterson joined me. Some of this garbled in my memory because two of these boys almost got back over the Moselle River and got with the Free French, actually, and ran into a pocket of Germans and were later captured. I'm not real sure which ones of us were together at this collaborator's house in Raon L'etate. But that's a little ahead of the story because first we were taken to the Gestapo command post, and there we were roughed up a little bit. I say "we" because Buzz Sewell was there, but I didn't know it. And we got our stories together later.

Marcello: Did you know this was where they were taking you? When you got there did you know this was a Gestapo headquarters?

Funk: No. I was just thankful that this was the Wehrmacht that had me because they were obviously old and not interested in the war anymore. But I tell you, the Gestapo was interested!

Marcello: Describe in detail what happened when you got to the Gestapo headquarters.

Funk: Well, this is sort of amnesia for me. When I got there . . . I remember going into the command post, and this brute of a guy who spoke good English and had a Brooklyn accent, by the way (chuckle), started quizzing me. I gave him the old name, rank, and serial number routine, and the next thing I remember is picking myself up off the floor. He had hit me with brass knuckles on the left side of the head. He was right-handed. He had broken two or three of my teeth out, and I don't know whether he broke my jaw or not. I couldn't open it for three days to eat, even if they had given us any food. But anyway, that stopped my interrogation for the moment. They had butchered me up. They had hit me with the brass "knucks" so that I couldn't talk, so I wasn't any good to them anymore. But they got the old name, rank, and serial number routine out of me.

Marcello: Did this happen within a matter of minutes, that is, from the time you had been captured?

Funk: Oh, yes. This went on thirty minutes to an hour--as long as it takes to get me in the car and take me into this little town. Say an hour or hour and a half. Who knows?

Marcello: In other words, when you went before the Gestapo officer there was no small talk, or he wasn't trying to set you up?

Funk: No, he was just interested in how many were in my squadron, why there were so many people on board my ship, what all that special equipment was. Of course, we'd punched the red button when we'd gone out. This blew up all the navigation equipment. All they could tell was that it was special equipment on board. They kept wondering why were there two crews shot down because they had nine people accounted for apparently. And they just couldn't understand why one ship had nine people because it's usually six. This bothered them, and this is what he kept . . . I remember him insisting on this before he clobbered me, and then I don't remember anything. It's sort of a daze--the next two or three days.

Marcello: When he brought you in there, were you sitting down or were you . . .

Funk: No, they never let you sit down. We were standing at attention, in fact. If you relaxed, they hollered whatever . . . "Achtung!"

After I was knocked unconscious and got up spitting out teeth, why, they hustled me into another car and took me to a collaborator's house. It was there that I met Buzz Sewell and Peterson. As I say, this is kind of a blur. These next few days are sort of a blur because apparently he dazed me, and I probably had a little concussion. Actually, I think I was dazed from the blow.

Marcello: Did you have a chance to talk over with Buzz exactly what . . . were you swapping battle stories at this point?

Funk: No, I got a chance to listen because I couldn't open my mouth (chuckle). I couldn't even eat. They had hit me in the left jaw, and I really couldn't even eat.

Marcello: Did you really have much of an appetite anyhow?

Funk: Well, by that third day I did. The first day I didn't care about food. The second day I was aware that I was going to have to have some nourishment. By the third day of no food I was really hurting. We're still in the collaborator's house--the French collaborator's house--and up in a white, three-story . . . I remember being up where there was a bathroom at the end of a hall, and it was all wooden. It clattered when you walked.

We were looking around trying to see how we could get out of the place because we knew this was France still. I heard talk from the other people there that the third

invasion had come on, and this was why they were so anxious . . . that the 5th Army was coming up from the south and going through France like a swarm of locusts, you know. That was the reason they were so excited, because we were apparently at the apex of a triangle which was surrounded on either side by American troops. Some of them were on the Moselle, and some of them were going toward Strasbourg.

That's the next exciting part of the trip because . . . well, let me tell you something else about the food that . . . they finally on the third day came in with a tin of blood sausage. Have you ever seen any blood sausage? Now I'm not talking about goose liver. I'm talking about red, bloody blood sausage. You know, you open the tin, and red blood pours out of it. Well, I think that even if my jaws had been able to open I couldn't have forced myself to eat that. It smelled bad, and it looked bad. So I gave my tin to Buzz. He's with us by now. I'm not sure, but I don't think Peterson's with us yet. I think he joined us here later. Like I say, this part of it is a little bit of a blur.

Marcello: It's just the two of you.

Funk: I think it's just the two of us. Of course, there are other Americans.

Marcello: Oh, I see. There were other Americans there.

Funk: Yes, there were other people who were apparently captured.

Marcello: But they were more or less leaving you alone. They're not doing anything to you.

Funk: No, we were just in this collaborator's home. In fact, there was a German guard outside. But mostly it's just French collaborators that are guarding us. These people were spat upon, of course, by the other Frenchmen. That's another story later.

Anyway, in order to move us out of this little village southeast of Nancy, they had to take us back up to this place we bombed. They had to take us back to Saarbrucken. We didn't see what effect our bombs had because we were bombing woods nearby that had emplacements and troops.

Marcello: Is Saarbrucken in France?

Funk: That's in Alsace-Lorraine in the Saar Basin. They had . . . in order to get us to Strasbourg where they were going to put us in prison--Strasbourg is on the Rhine, you know--they had to move us north to the Saar Basin in Saarbrucken, and I remember spending the night in a church there--some sort of an assembly hall next to a church. I remember hearing guns in the night and planes in the night.

Then they put us on a train in boxcars and carried us back down the Rhine, then, on the other side of this triangle--point of this triangle where there were still

some German troops--into Strasbourg. There was a most interesting experience because along with Buzz Sewell . . . and by this time Pete Peterson and Simpson came in-- the pilot came in. The four of us were there together now along with other American prisoners.

Marcello: About how many are there altogether?

Funk: Oh, fifteen or twenty of us, but there was about a hundred Russians in there. Some of these Russians spoke English. The thing that stands out in my memory about that experience is that they didn't feed them at all. The Germans didn't feed the Russians at all. They were literally chewing their shoe leather, what was left. They were eating the bark off the trees in the courtyard of this old castle that we were in.

Marcello: I assume they segregated you from the Russians.

Funk: No, we were just all thrown in there. Of course, the place was bedbug-ridden. We were sleeping on the floor on what the French call a pailleasse. It's a straw mattress.

Marcello: The Americans bastardized it though, I think, and called it a "palley-ass."

Funk: It's just a straw-filled piece of muslin is all it is, and not real thick straw at that. Of course, you end up burning the straw when you get cold enough. But anyway, bedbugs were a plague, and the Russians were a plague because they

didn't want to talk about food. They weren't apparently aware of the fact that they were hungry and lean. They only wanted to talk politics. By golly, they talked about world domination. They indoctrinated us into communist tenets and tried to make communists out of us. This is the only thing they had on their mind. They didn't have women on their mind; they didn't have food on their mind; they didn't have clothing on their mind. All they had was communism on their mind. These are guys that were our contemporaries.

Marcello: What sort of a reaction did you have to this sort of thing?

Funk: Oh, we just ignored them. We didn't feel like talking politics. But that's all they were interested in. This stood out in my mind because here these guys were obviously starving and wounded and untreated.

Marcello: Were these guys Russian soldiers or political commissars or . . .

Funk: We don't know. We really didn't know. We were only there a few days. I remember the weekend came up, and all the Germans left on pass. We couldn't see a guard anywhere. We knew that there must have been some outside the gates of this old castle. Looking out an east window, we could see a cathedral that we had been told had been torn up by our bombs--but wasn't. It was still standing, not a window broken in it.

That Sunday we were particularly hungry. I had gotten my mouth open by then and could chew. We decided to scrounge around and see if we could find some food. That word "scrounge" became a favorite word because that's the way we lived for the next few months. Anyway, we got out in the garden, and left over from the previous summer and fall garden was one huge wood beet. I called it a "wood beet" because you almost had to saw it. We broke a glass--window pane--and got a sliver of glass to cut up this old wood beet. We ate that like it was a turkey dinner. That old wood beet, I think, really kept me going that day (chuckle). Then the Germans the next day, on Monday, decided they really had to feed somebody, so they brought in the usual watery soup that we got for the next few months.

Marcello: In the meantime, you're back in the hands of the Wehrmacht again.

Funk: Oh, yes. The Gestapo had turned us back over to the Wehrmacht. Then the problem from Strasbourg was how to get us to Dulag Luft, which is the interrogation center at Wetzlar. The P-47's are hitting everything that moved; the 5th Army is coming up from the south. How do they get us to Frankfurt? Wetzlar is just north of Frankfurt, you know. Wetzlar, of course, I knew about because that's where the

Leitz lens factory is. I love cameras, and I knew that the Leitz factory was at Wetzlar. So that was a familiar name to me. That's one of the famous lenses that goes into the Leitz camera.

Anyway, we finally got to Frankfurt by devious means-- traveling at night, a boxcar that was shunted here and shunted there. I have no idea how long it took us to go. I lost all track of time.

Marcello: In the meantime, how were you equipped so far as clothing is concerned to fight the cold and the elements and this sort of thing?

Funk: Well, I had my flight boots on. I did not have any shoes. I just had flight boots on. Part of the time we marched, and these things are hard to march in. Of course, I was half-thankful for them because my ankles were so swollen that I couldn't have gotten regular shoes on anyway. So that was a blessing in disguise. My knees by that time had gotten pretty good. They weren't hurt as bad, apparently. My ankles were the only thing bothering me by then.

But anyway, the interesting part of the transportation was the fact that we were . . . the final trip to Frankfurt was in some Italian coaches where you had to enter from side doors. I vaguely remember that there were more of us than could get into each compartment. I remember that the soot and cinders was so terrible that you could hardly breathe.

There were so many of us in there that there just wasn't any breathing air. At night the air's still and the smoke from the engine would come back and just lay into these things, most of them which had no windows. I remember crawling up into the luggage rack above the seat to get . . . you know, where the air was a little thinner, I thought, and I remember being able to breathe a little better up in this luggage rack up high above the seats. Of course, there were "Kriegies" as we learned to be called. Kriegsgefangen, you know, is the word for prisoner-of-war, so we soon learned that we were "Kriegies."

Anyway, I remember when we woke up in Frankfurt. We were amazed at the devastation of this railroad station. This is one of the most beautiful railroad stations in the world. There was nothing left of it. The minute we piled out of these cars we were aware that we were full of soot and covered. We were literally black with soot. We didn't recognize each other. We started dusting off, trying to get this coal soot off of us.

About that time the air raid goes off, and they shuttle us into a group down into the underground. We stayed down there . . . I have no idea how long. And the German citizens paid no attention to us. This is Frankfurt now. They're being bombed. You'd think they'd spit on us

and stone us and stab us. They paid no attention to us! They were so absolutely stark with fear that they were huddled in groups just like we were! Then the all-clear sounds, and we go back up.

Then we get in another Italian coach--crowded--for the trip to Wetzlar. There we get our first taste of the Luftwaffe because there we were turned over to the air force. Thank God for that because the Gestapo did no more questioning. I was never really physically mistreated anymore, by the way, after that first brush with the Gestapo.

Marcello: Is this where Dulag Luft was located? Was it at Wetzlar?

Funk: I don't know. I don't know. I never could quite decide. Our destination was Wetzlar, and yet Dulag Luft seemed to me to be out of the town. It wasn't in the town. It was a separate place.

Marcello: I was under the impression that they were two separate places.

Funk: Yes, but it was near Wetzlar.

Marcello: But you went to Wetzlar first.

Funk: To get there, yes.

Marcello: Okay.

Funk: And I got the impression that it was somewhere north and east. I'm not sure now. I have never spotted it on the map. I've tried to spot where Dulag Luft was.

Marcello: Well, it's at a town called Oberursel.

Funk: Oberursel, yes! Now that comes back to me, Oberursel, but I never could find Oberursel on my map. I remember that now. That comes back to me.

Marcello: So anyway, you go to Wetzlar first. So what sort of a reception . . .

Funk: Nothing.

Marcello: Describe what happened at Wetzlar.

Funk: We just go through it. We just go through it.

Marcello: Were you processed in any way or anything?

Funk: Not that I remember. As I say, this is sort of a blur to me. I really don't remember even much of solitary confinement.

Marcello: Up until this time had they attempted to start compiling any sorts of records since your capture?

Funk: No interrogation since the . . .

Marcello: No paperwork has been done.

Funk: No. As far as I know, no paperwork has been done at all. We're just loose-herded like a bunch of loose cattle. There are South Africans; there are Italians. Why Italians, I'll never know. But there were some Italians. All of us were in this group, but only the Air Force officers were put together. The Air Force officers were segregated once we got to Oberursel. We never saw each other again there. We

were kept as solitary confinement prisoners while we were at Oberursel at Dulag Luft.

Marcello: Okay, I guess, then, since you weren't at Wetzlar very long, I guess from here you then moved on to Oberursel.

Funk: Well, like I say, we went on through. Wetzlar was just a landmark.

Marcello: Describe what happens when you get to Dulag Luft.

Funk: Well, this is so vague. I really only remember the barbed wire and somebody in a tower and the gates opening and us going in, and I'm plopped into solitary confinement. I remember the long, wooden hall. I could hear the echo of the guards calling each other by number. I can even remember their numbers. This one guard called the other, "Einundzwanzig!" The next one would say, "Einundvierzig!" or "Einunddreissig!" I just remember that twenty-one, forty-one, thirty-one call.

Marcello: Do you recall what your little cell was like here?

Funk: Oh, yes! You couldn't stand up; you couldn't lie down. It wasn't tall enough to stand up in, and it wasn't long enough to lie down in. So you had to squat.

Marcello: Was there anything else in that cell--a stool or what have you?

Funk: There was nothing. I had nothing in mine except nails in the boards. After awhile you'd do anything to pass the time. The window I couldn't see out of. It showed nothing.

Marcello: It did have a window?

Funk: It did have a little square, but it was just for air. It didn't go anywhere. The only thing I remember about those three or four days . . . and I don't even remember how long I was in solitary. It couldn't have been more than three or four days because I couldn't see daylight. I lost track of day and night. I had no watch, of course. They had confiscated my watch, and they had confiscated my Air Force glasses. Those were just souvenirs, you know. I only remember being cold. I didn't have enough clothing. I had no cover. I remember counting the nails in those boards just to pass the time of day.

Marcello: Did you have a chance to communicate with anybody next door to you?

Funk: No way. Apparently there was no one close to me because I tried tapping on the walls trying to see if somebody would answer. Each time I tapped the guard came to the door and either kicked the door or hit it with his gun butt and hollered some German word which I assume meant to be still or be quiet.

Marcello: Did they harass you in any way at all during this period that you were in solitary confinement?

Funk: No, they were very, very congenial and very, very kind. In fact, each day, or each period of time--I assume it was day because it was always daylight when I went out to be

interrogated--I would go to the same English-speaking gentleman who was in polished German uniform.

Marcello: Describe this whole incident because I think this is one of the most interesting parts of the whole story.

Funk: Well, we'd be marched down this long hall . . .

Marcello: Well, first of all, how long were you in solitary before they brought you out?

Funk: Each day, each day, I assume, because each day I was interrogated about three times.

Marcello: Well, let's take the first day that you were interrogated.

Funk: Of course, I was full of fear because when they pulled you out of that room, why, we had heard that Goering and Hitler had decided to kill prisoners-of-war.

Marcello: This was a Luftwaffe camp.

Funk: Yes, this is a Luftwaffe Camp. We had heard that Hitler had told Goering, who was the commander of the Luftwaffe, to kill all prisoners-of-war, that they were murderers, that they were gangsters, American gangsters. So it was with great fear that I was taken out this first time and marched down this wooden hall and across this courtyard to a nice office. Here was this spit-and-polish German officer in boots and, you know, just obviously the finest of the fine. And here's the apple on the desk like I've

been told, and the cigarettes on the desk. Of course, at this time I really hadn't started smoking yet. I only smoked later to kill my appetite. He offered me the apple, which I refused. Even as hungry as I was, I wouldn't have the apple. I gave him nothing but the old name, rank, and serial number routine.

Marcello: What sort of questions was he asking you?

Funk: He told me . . . this very first day he said, "Well, since you won't give me the information, I'll give you the information." And so he opened up a file that said 558th Bomb Squadron, and he read me my commanding officer who was dead. He was out of date on that because . . . I can't think of the colonel's name, but he smeared himself all over the airfield trying to make a landing. I didn't even know who our new commanding officer was because I had gotten shot down in the interim on this twenty-seventh mission. He told me how many planes we had. He told me how many pilots and first pilots we had. He told me what ships had been shot down recently, how many were prisoners-of-war, how many were dead. He gave me all of the information that I didn't even know myself.

Marcello: Did he even go so far as to tell you where you were born?

Funk: Oh, yes! He had every detail about my history. He knew what town I was born in. He pronounced Snyder a little wrong, but he knew Snyder, Texas. Then he went into this routine about, "Do you think I'll get my property back that I have?"

They all had property in the United States. Of course, we were told that this was a lie, that this was just a way they'd get sympathy. This was the way that they built empathy, in fact.

Marcello: Incidentally, what sort of a reaction did you have when he read off this list of statistics to you?

Funk: Oh, we'd been told that they had all the current information. We were also told that the main thing that they were interested in was the radar equipment. I didn't know any more about it than he did because it was put in in a sealed box, and we were taught how to use it. We didn't know what it was.

Marcello: Did he ever threaten you during this period?

Funk: No, never a threat. Now he did say . . . he did imply that if I didn't cooperate that I'd never see the light of day, but he didn't say he was going to kill me. He never really gave me a threat.

Marcello: Did he ever threaten to turn you over to the Gestapo or anything of this nature?

Funk: No, sir. He never did threaten me. Now I was in a daze these few days, and hungry and really frightened to death, so I may have missed the threat, the innuendo, but no overt threat. He tried to reason with me. He tried to get information out of me by reason.

I was interrogated a very short time the second time and a very short time the third time and then no more. Now

some of my companions that I met later in Sagan were kept in solitary two and three and four weeks. These were simple people like I that really had no information either. But whether it was that they thought they had information or something, I don't know. We never could figure out how they determined who they kept in solitary so long.

Marcello: Incidentally, were you looking at his fly?

Funk: Yes, I pulled that trick, and that may have shortened the interview because he was sitting back at his desk like this (gesture), and I was sitting to the side. I would just stare at his fly.

Marcello: In other words, he was leaning back on his chair behind his desk.

Funk: Yes, yes. You know, I'd stare at his fly, and it would stop the conversation momentarily. It may have tended to shorten my whole interrogation period.

Marcello: Did you talk at all with him?

Funk: No, I listened. I really only had three things to say-- name, rank, and serial number. This had been so impressed on me that . . . and I was so sparked with fear. Just to be blunt about it, I was afraid for my life, so I didn't really have anything to say. My "no's" and "yes's" were about all that I uttered. I did acquiesce, I'm sure, when he would say some familiar term about one of my crew members and one of my officers.

Marcello: Did you ever take any of the goodies that he offered you?

Funk: No, I never did accept anything. I didn't smoke and I didn't want his apple (chuckle). Did other people have this experience?

Marcello: I don't recall anybody ever talking about the apple, at least not remembering the apple.

Funk: This was something that was impressed on me. I may be over-emphasizing it. I may be remembering it more than it is, but at least during one interrogation the apple was on the desk.

Marcello: As you look back on it . . .

Funk: But he got more and more unfriendly. I do remember that. "If you're not going to cooperate with me, we won't cooperate with you," type of thing. But never an overt threat. "Okay, if you want it this way, why, you can just go on to prison camp. We might be able to get you out of here if you give us the information we want." Those were the . . . he was trying to reason with me. For some reason he cut it short. Maybe he got the information he needed from other people.

Marcello: And again, I'm sure there were all sorts of pilots . . . fliers coming in then, and he couldn't spend too much time with you.

Funk: Oh, hundreds! Literally hundreds, I found out later, came through there! Thousands . . . even thousands, I guess!

Marcello: I'm sure this guy had interrogated enough prisoners to know who would talk and who wouldn't talk.

Funk: Yes, who had information. I really didn't have any information. I'm sure that he determined that I just didn't have any pertinent information or more than he already had.

Marcello: What was it like being in solitary? What do you think about when you're alone in this little cell?

Funk: Golly! There's no way to describe what being deprived of company is like. I had always known that human beings were gregarious and had to have company, but, man, that's the worst torture there is! That is absolutely the worst torture there is to me--being deprived of somebody to talk to because just communicating with your fellow man is so urgent to you. This carries home today. I can't stand to see anyone punished by being put away. This is an emotional thing with me.

Marcello: By this time, after being in solitary, do you lose all of your idealism so far as why the war is being fought and this sort of thing?

Funk: Never for a moment. Never for a moment. Pearl Harbor was such an event, such a striking home event, that I don't know any of us that have ever had an expressed moment of doubt. We were imbued with a spirit of patriotism that never left

any of the people that I was with--never! This was something that was impressive to me. Later on, I was thrown in with lawyers and . . . actually, lawyers who had quit practicing law to fly an airplane. McDonald, from Galveston, for instance, who was in prison in my combine, had quit practicing law to fly. He was a crewman on a B-17, one of the "heavies." I remember that. I've never seen him since we got out of prison. He'd been shot down over Germany. None of these people ever expressed a moment of doubt.

Marcello: The worst thing then is this loneliness.

Funk: Oh, yes. This solitary is just terrible, and the fear of death. You know, you'd never know when they'd open the door and say, "This is it," you know, "Up to the wall." You know, we've seen a lot of movies. You've seen them; I've seen them. We still see them--stand them up to the wall and pull the trigger, the last cigarette, the blindfold, and all of that. This is what goes through your mind.

Marcello: What sort of food are you receiving at Oberursel?

Funk: None. None. Water and that's all--not even bread. We were starved during the . . . I was at least. I was glad to get water. Now what they handed me may have supposed to have been soup, and I just didn't recognize it. Later on,

I recognized these liquids as soup (chuckle). But during this period of confinement I got no food. In fact, on the entire trip to Sagan we were carried by train, by boxcar, by walking--by whatever means they could get us to Sagan after we left Oberursel. As I say, I was only there three or four days because they had such a tremendous influx of fliers that . . . and I assume that this was just for fliers--that Oberursel was just for fliers. From what I learned later, there were no enlisted men that went through here. These were flying officers that went through Oberursel. I wasn't aware of this at the time, of course. All I was aware of was that solitary room.

Marcello: I have another question concerning your experiences here that I forgot to mention. I think that in most cases when you went through Oberursel they also tried to get you to fill out the fake Red Cross forms, did they not? Do you remember this?

Funk: This is vague to me. Somewhere along the way they tried to get me to fill out some sort of a form that had more information on it than I needed to give. I tore it up.

Marcello: I think they used the ruse that this information was needed so that it could be sent back to the Swiss Red Cross so that your family and so on would know that you were still alive.

Funk: It wasn't until I hit Sagan--Luft 3-A--that the real Red Cross form was filled out. It was just a short form with just my name, rank, and serial number, no information about when I was shot down. They supplied all of that, apparently, to the Swiss Red Cross. But the trip to Sagan is a blank.

Marcello: In other words, you went directly from Oberursel to Sagan with no stops in between other than . . . I mean, no processing or anything in between.

Funk: Just P-47 stops (chuckle). Everytime something moved in Germany in the daytime it was hit, so we traveled only at night and stayed on sidings during the day. We were not allowed out of our train cars. Of course, taking care of your natural functions was a real problem. They would let us outside the car to take care of these functions. But I remember the P-47 flights that bombed the trains. They had them unmarked, of course, and they weren't marked as Red Cross or POW trains.

Marcello: What sort of an experience was this to come under attack by P-47's?

Funk: Oh, we were scared! We were scared! Yes, you know, this was death of a different type. We were afraid of the Germans killing us, but we never had a thought that one of these friendly bombs was going to hit us (laughter). You know, this is the way human nature is.

Marcello: For a little airplane those P-47's packed quite a bit of firepower.

Funk: Yes, and I say P-47 because that's all I ever saw. I didn't see any P-51's. I didn't see any P-38's. I only saw P-47's bombing.

But I do remember one most interesting happening, and I don't know when it happened or where it happened. It's bound to have happened before Frankfurt, though, because it was only there that we were in mixed company. After I left Oberursel there were only Air Force officers. But before Frankfurt we had a South African pilot who had been shot down six or seven times. He flew for the British. I remember that as we neared Frankfurt we crossed, I guess, the Rhine. This crazy idiot dove out the window into the river--in the night, in the dark! The minute he saw we were over the river, out the window he went. I often wondered what happened . . . Pinaar! I remember his name even--Jack Pinaar. I will always wonder what happened to this crazy man because he thrilled us with stories of his previous escapes. We didn't think . . . we just thought he was romancing. We didn't think he meant it. But, by golly, when we went across that river bridge, before we got to Frankfurt, out the window he went! Whether he lived . . .

Marcello: Nobody followed him?

Funk: On, no, no! No, sir, I don't swim well (chuckle), and I'm sure nobody else wanted that cold water in the wintertime.

Marcello: At this time I gather that you really weren't thinking seriously about escape yet.

Funk: Well, in the back of your mind are the stories of the Free French and possibility of the British having some sort of escape system because we know that back in the lines the British have put their storm troopers . . . OSS . . . what was the OSS? Is that a word?

Marcello: Yes, the OSS was the American intelligence organization.

Funk: Right, but what was the British commando unit called? I can't remember. They had something, too. But the American commandos were the OSS. I remember that. And always there was this whisper amongst the troops that we had the possibility of escape if we would just keep our eyes open.

At Strasbourg, for instance, to back up a little bit, we had a French doctor in there with us who went out through the sewer. Two men came up suddenly into the prison, took him through the sewer, and away they went. They didn't ask us to go, and we didn't want to go because we didn't know but what this was a setup. So we didn't go with him. I've got his name written down somewhere. I haven't looked it up in years because I was . . . if I ever got back in Paris--

he lived in Paris--I was going to look his family up and see if he ever got back. But I never followed up on him even when I got back to Paris.

But, anyway, the trip to Sagan . . . I don't even remember what towns we went through. It's all just a blur.

Marcello: Now you did not go through the processing center at Weissen.

Funk: No, I went directly to Sagan. I was processed at Sagan. Some of the fellows did. I didn't know the name of this processing center. Some of them were processed before they got there, but I hadn't even had my picture taken until I got to Sagan.

Marcello: And this was at Stalag Luft 3-A.

Funk: Three-A. I remember this 3-A. I may be wrong, but I remember this as 3-A. It was Air Force officers only. We were the center compound. That's all I remember, is that we were the center compound. Apparently, Sagan was divided into a British compound, a French compound which was opposite to our . . . I don't even know what direction.

Marcello: As a matter of fact, I think there were like north, south, east, west, and center compounds.

Funk: Yes, and we were center compound. The English were adjacent to us and across the fence. By the time I hit Sagan I had like two-weeks of beard, I'm dirty, my uniform is soot-filled, and you don't recognize me as anything but a gangster. The

picture that I have . . . I got hold of my I.D. card later, and it looks like a thug.

Marcello: But they did not confiscate any of your clothing or anything of that nature.

Funk: They had already taken everything away from me when I was between the Gestapo and Strasbourg--everything that could be removed.

Marcello: I was going to say, in a lot of cases they actually had the prisoners turn in their uniforms, and they gave them old ill-fitting British Army uniforms. I guess anything to humiliate you.

Funk: At this time there were so many people coming in that they had trouble processing us. I'm sure this is why they skipped this other processing center. They just didn't have room for us.

Marcello: Describe what Sagan looked like--the camp itself, your compound as you remember it.

Funk: Well, all I remember is barbed wire and wooden barracks. The barbed wire was striking in that on each corner was a guardhouse, you know, on stilts with the police dogs and the guards marching the perimeter. And there were two areas of barbed wire, of course, with a no-man's land in between. Even if you had a reason for being past this one wire you got shot at if you went across to this area.

Marcello: Was the inside barbed wire like one strand or something?

Funk: Just a warning wire, and then, of course, the entanglement was part of the outer perimeter. We were allowed to walk the wire. We couldn't walk the fence. We could walk the wire for exercise.

I remember coming into this place and standing and standing and standing. Somewhere in this blur I went through a process of a shower and DDT and taking off my clothes. I really don't remember what was given back to me because I was in flight uniform, and I got some sort of a flight uniform back--a shirt and trousers. But my jumpsuit was taken away from me, and my boots were taken away from me at this time so that I was barefooted. They were flight equipment. They were classed as flight equipment, not my personal belongings, and were taken away. This is when I ended up in a British battle jacket and British battle pants.

Marcello: Did they fit fairly well?

Funk: Fair--I was lucky. I got a pretty fair fit.

Marcello: What did the barracks look like here?

Funk: Well, that's most striking. I can close my eyes and see that picture now because when I went in from the barbed wire to a cold barracks . . . I thought it would be warm, but it wasn't. Well, we went into an end room. This end room served as a storeplace for coal. There was no coal, but there was a place for it. There was a potbellied stove

like was in the old farmhouse where I grew up as a kid with a flat top--no fire in it. This room was basically empty, but it was supposed to be our kitchen-supply room.

Marcello: Was there anybody in this barracks when you got there? Were you the first group that was moving into this barracks?

Funk: No, I was marched in to join a combine of twelve other people. I was the thirteenth man. I don't even remember all of these people's names. They are blurred out with . . . I've got them written down. Of course, some of them stand out so much in my mind. But Buzz Sewell and I were together. We were put in this one combine.

Marcello: That's right. You mentioned the combine because the camps were divided into compounds and then into a barracks and then into a block and then into a combine.

Funk: Right.

Marcello: The combines, I think, had about twelve men in them. Is that correct?

Funk: Twelve, yes. Ten, eleven, twelve--however much room there was in a corner. And the way these were segregated was that they put bunks to the ceiling, five or six high, and then in the center area was a table and a chair and a sink over by the window. I remember the sink well because it has a story all its own. In our combine of three people there were some standouts. I was a sort of a nonentity.

Buzz Sewell was a nonentity. Fink . . . Frederick . . . no, I don't know his first name because Frederick is a friend in Dallas now. I don't remember Fink's first name. But he was from Pennsylvania, and the reason he stands out in my mind as an historical character is that he had been shot down at Dunkirk. Everyone knows the romance of Dunkirk. When was that, '39?

Marcello: 1940.

Funk: I guess '40 was Dunkirk. Anyway, here it is '44. He's been up here in the war going on four years.

Marcello: Now was he already there when you got there?

Funk: He is the combine chief. He is the senior officer. Even though he's a second lieutenant, he's been there longest, and rank has something to do with what you do, but seniority also counted. So he was the clothing officer and the food officer and just the hanzo in general. He was the combine chief.

Marcello: Now I mentioned this organization awhile ago. Was this something that was established by the prisoners-of-war basically, or did the Germans have something to do with this?

Funk: The Germans really had nothing to do with this. I thought at the time they did, but I learned later that there was a chain of command. There was even an American general parachuted into our compound to command us. I thought I'd

remember his name. I don't remember his name, but he had been parachuted into German hands to command the American prisoners-of-war. This chain of command went right on down. We had a security officer. We had adjutants. We had the whole works--the whole chain of military command. We had a military organization. We had KP duty. We had a roster whereby we served time cooking and we cleaned up. We had everything . . . really a military organization. It was our own design. It was not a German design.

Marcello: Before you get into this organization, let's just talk a little bit more about the physical layout.

Funk: I had forgotten all of this. You see, you're bringing these things that I had forgotten.

Marcello: What sort . . . you mentioned the bunks awhile ago. What sort of bunks were these in terms of comfort, cleanliness, and this sort of thing?

Funk: Of course, we were scrupulously clean. We managed to stay clean in spite of all of this.

Marcello: Was this more an American characteristic than, let's say, a British characteristic or that of any other nationality?

Funk: I had an impression that the British were clean. There was very little contact I had with the British, but they were clean. The French were notoriously filthy. We had

noticed that for the French soldier. I maybe shouldn't put this in a history . . . I assume it's confidential. But they were filthy people. We noticed this when we went through France. When we got to Strasbourg--and we were marched through Strasbourg when we left to go on up to Frankfurt, as I told you--it was obvious where the German sector was and where the French sector was because you could eat off the cobblestones in the German sector. Not only that but the people of Strasbourg who stoned us, threw rocks at us, who spat on us, were the Hitler youth. Six, seven, and eight-year-old kids carrying pitchforks and sticks, not guns. They were too young.

Marcello: This would occur later on, I guess.

Funk: No, this was in Strasbourg, to back up now. This was when we were in Strasbourg.

Marcello: I think this is an interesting story. Maybe we need to talk about it.

Funk: This is just a short incident. We were marched from this old castle to this train station to go to Frankfurt. On the march the Hitler youth were marching also. They lined the streets as we were marching by and stoned us and spat on us. The people didn't. The French people didn't; the German people didn't. In fact, the French people, when nobody was looking, would give us the old "V" for victory

sign--hold up those two fingers, you know. This we got all the way through France, by the way, and some places even in Germany. It was strange that we'd get that "V" for victory sign flashed at us. We knew that they were friends, you know, that if you could get away there was somebody that would help you. This gave you a thread of hope, too.

Marcello: I'm sure it was a little bit humiliating to be stoned and spat upon by these little kids, was it not?

Funk: Well, you know, that was something. I had no feeling of revulsion. I had a feeling of anger like I'd like to kick them, you know. Then I remembered their conditioning. I remembered that these were robots who were conditioned by the Hitler philosophy. I don't know how it affected the other people, but I really don't hold any rancor in my heart even about that now. I'm sure that these six-year-olds after thirty years are now ruling Germany. I'm sure that they have this conditioning still built into them. I have a great respect for Germany in that they have built back, without help, of course. At the time I really didn't think that they ought to do anything like that. I thought it ought to be decimated. I realize now you can't decimate a country.

Marcello: Anyway, we were talking about your particular combine. Let's try to describe it in a little more physical detail. We were talking about the bunks, for example.

Funk: This area that we had . . . now as I remember it, we had five, four . . . I can't remember exactly. There were two five's and a three, I guess. The three was next to the door.

Marcello: You mean three tiers and five tiers.

Funk: Yes, three tiers of bunks were next to the door, and then the two five's were in the corner. Then our combine was separated from the other combine not by a wall but by the backs of other bunks. You see, there was no room. There was no room, but they were segregated by these tiers of bunks. This gave you a little privacy, but it also crowded you because here's two or three combines in this end of the barracks. In the middle of the barracks was the trough where we defecated and urinated.

Then the other end of the barracks . . . they didn't have a kitchen. They had another trough in this particular barracks. Now some of them were different. Some of them had only the one latrine in the center and a kitchen on each end. But in our particular barracks we had just the one kitchen, and we took turns using it. One end of the barracks had a certain number of hours to use it, and the other end of the barracks had a certain number of hours to use it. I don't really remember how many people were in a barracks. There must have been . . .

Marcello: I think 100 to 200.

Funk: . . . must have been 100 at least. There must have been fifty or more at each end.

Marcello: My statistics say anywhere from 100 to 200 were in a barracks.

Funk: Yes. Again, it depends on the size because some of them were bigger than others. I have some pictures I'll show you, by the way, of some of these barracks from the outside. But I can't tell . . . I can't even remember from looking at the outside of these exactly the topography on the inside. I just can't remember exactly how they were.

Marcello: What else was in the combine besides the bunks?

Funk: You asked about the bunks though. The bunks consisted of a wooden frame with slats laid across a ledge. On top of the slats was supposed to go the "palley-ass." Well, now when you're cold and hungry and you need to cook, you use all of your bed slats that you can get by with and still have something to lie down on. So we had scrounged and salvaged every bit of wire and string that was possible, and we had strung this from slat racks to keep the "palley-ass" from falling through. So literally when you slept, you slept draped over about four slats, which is about the minimum you can get by with. You're supposed to have, say, thirty slats. But you end up with four. You know, it's supposed to be a platform of slats but you're

gradually burning them in that stove trying to toast that German bread that they gave us once a week.

We had to . . . of course, we had to ration it and use so much per day. I think I got a slice a day of that German bread, is what it amounted to. So far as Red Cross parcels, we only got about one every week or one every ten days. These were supposed to be for one day. A Red Cross parcel is designed to support one man one day. It has a breakfast, lunch, and supper in it, you know. We got . . . we were lucky to get one every ten days on the total.

Marcello: We'll talk a little bit more about that a little bit later on. What sort of furniture did you have?

Funk: Well, just the table and chairs I mentioned and the sink. The sink is something else now because the sink has a drain that simply goes . . . I don't know where it went. It went down and into the snow. We had no idea where it drained to, but it must have been into an underground channel of some kind because it didn't run out on the ground.

Marcello: We're just talking about a sink, not running water.

Funk: No, no, it's not running water now because they brought us water. Oh, now that's an interesting story, too. They brought us water in what were called "kines." Have you heard this word before?

Marcello: No, I sure haven't.

Funk: Well, we thought it was k-i-n-e, and we called them "kines." It wasn't till after the war that I saw a picture of one of these things, and on it was written--and I never had noticed it when they hauled them to us--"Kein Trinkwasser." That means not for drinking purposes (laughter). We called them "kines" because all we saw on that was "Kein Trinkwasser." And in German that means "not for drinking purposes," not potable. And that's what they brought our hot water in. Now presumably these were lead containers, is the reason they weren't for drinking purposes. I assume that if we had been there long enough we would have absorbed enough lead to have been poisoned by them. But I wasn't there that long. I don't know whether anyone was or not because the water really wasn't all that hot to us to absorb any ionic lead. But, anyway, that's interesting, too.

They brought this water once a day. We had hot water, and we could do with it as we pleased. We could bathe in it, and we could shave in it. Of course, we ended up drinking it because it was a source of heat. The heat of the water gave us energy. It gave us a calorie of solar heat. Then we'd save what was left for what little hygiene purposes . . .

Marcello: How large a container are we talking about?

Funk: We're talking about a ten-gallon container roughly. What's a milk pail? About ten gallons?

Marcello: I suppose, yes.

Funk: It's around ten gallons. I wouldn't really be sure. It's more than five gallons. It's about double a . . . it's about like a milk . . . old milk pail that you've seen on farms.

But anyway, back to the sink. In our combine we had a fellow name Werrlein who was a good old Pennsylvania Dutch boy who was good with his hands. He was a cabinet maker before he came to the Air Force. He was a crewman. He was a bombardier who had been shot down from one of the "heavies." He had been in there two years at least. He didn't bother about being a prisoner-of-war. He was solid and had good hands. Everything he got hold of, he made into something. We got hold of a Red Cross baseball bat to play with. Of course, it immediately went into being a hammer. He cut the end off of it, bored a hole in it with a knife he'd scrounged from somewhere. He had a silver knife with a saw edge stoned into it. He'd saw the end of this baseball bat off, use the handle of the bat as the handle of the hammer, and there he had a mallet to make dishes. We made our own "kriegie" dishes. We saved every bit of tin, every bit of solder. He had just beautiful utensils that didn't leak because he had a technique of bending the edges so that they interlocked. He made us tinware that was serviceable and that we could clean because he soldered these seams with

the solder he got off of the little bit of solder that's used to keep the key on a can. You know what I'm talking about?

Marcello: I know exactly what you're talking about.

Funk: He'd save every little bit of this solder. When he got enough he'd tin a dish. So we had all of the utensils we needed. The Germans let us do this.

Marcello: What you're saying here simply confirms something that I've more or less surmised all along. This is that the prisoners were scavengers. Anything . . . any object . . .

Funk: We were scroungers. We weren't scavengers. We were scroungers. That's a little different because scavengers take food, you know. A scavenger is a perishable . . . we didn't have any perishables to scavenge. But we scrounged the material. I think there's a little difference in meaning there. We scrounged every bit of wire, every bit of string, every bit of cardboard. Cardboard was our fire. We could toast a toast on our "kriegie" burners that we made. He taught us how to build these things. We built tunnels with this tin, and we built blowers and cranks and used the string to turn the little squirrel cage fan. We could use just a few bits of cardboard under a burner _____ to toast a piece of toast. We conserved every bit of heat from these bits of cardboard by using these "Kriegie" burners. I don't

have any pictures of those, but I'm sure they're in a museum somewhere because there's bound to have been some of those salvaged.

Marcello: I think I'm going to talk about those a little bit later on because I think that is an interesting story.

Funk: Let me finish talking about Werrlein.

Marcello: Right.

Funk: The knife that "Hand"--this is "Hand" Werrlein now, our draftsman--the knife he has is verboten. It's forbidden.

Marcello: Hand?

Funk: Yes, because of his hands. He has thumbs as big as hammers. We called him "Hand" Werrlein because he used his hands like a hammer, and a knife. He could mold things with his hands. He was six foot two or three and just a brute of a man, kind and gentle as he could be. But he could make anything with his hands. This knife that was verboten . . . when we'd hear the call "Goon in the barracks," we'd simply drop the knife in the drain of the sink. No clean German is going to put his hands in dishwater to look for a knife, and they never did find our knife, which was both knife and saw. The baseball bat mallet he'd just simply disassemble and throw one piece in one bunk and one piece in the other. They just thought we'd cut up our baseball bat and thought we were crazy (chuckle). They never did recognize it as a mallet. But, anyway, that's the story of the sink. It

saved us losing our knife many, many times because the Germans would hit in the middle of the night or the middle of the day to inspect and see if there was any escape mechanism going on, you know, if we were tunneling or digging.

The old sound, "Goon in the barracks" would alert everybody. Then at night, of course, when they came, why, "Heraus!" and "Achtung!" were the sounds that got us out of bed for an "appell." Is that word familiar to you?

Marcello: Yes.

Funk: That simply means name-calling, roll call. We'd be rousted out in our . . . whatever clothes we could put on to stand in the snow while they counted us to see if anybody had gone under the wire.

Marcello: "Tallyho" was also one of the words used, was it not?

Funk: Yes, "tallyho" was the word we used. We used "Goon in the barracks" mostly because they hated this word "goon." They learned to know what we meant by "goon." We used the word "Goon in the barracks" more than we hollered "Tallyho." The British used this word "tallyho." That came from them mainly. Some of our barracks chiefs . . . what are they called? I can't remember what our barracks chiefs were called. We had a name for them, too. It probably wasn't very nice. But, anyway, that was the word they used. But the troops would pass the word on as "Goon in the barracks."

Marcello: Okay, we were mentioning the stove awhile ago. Now did you say there was a central stove in this barracks only there was no coal or anything for it?

Funk: Just the cardboard we could scrounge is all we had to burn. Now rarely we'd salvage some coal. We had a detail that had to do kitchen detail. They would go after the hot water and after our soup and after our bread and come back and dispense it to us. These guys . . . these troops would steal whatever coal they could and put it under their supplies. When they came back, why, we'd hide it and burn it in our stove. But that's the only way we got any coal. There was no ration of coal ever issued to us. Of course, we were there from October until shortly after Christmas, which was the height of the cold season in Germany.

This stove was used rarely. Mostly we used our "kriegie" burner because it burnt less cardboard and got more heat per piece of toast. The toast, by the way, was a paper thin slice of this ersatz bread that looked like sawdust. It really looked like sawdust. But it tasted good. It had a nutty flavor that I'm sure sustained . . . we lost a lot of weight, of course, because we estimated that our daily calorie intake was less than 400 calories a day. All of us got down. By the time I had finished my seventh month I was down to about 125 pounds, which is some forty pounds under what I fought at. The burners though

. . . the "kriegie" burners and blowers were something else. I wish that I had been able to haul one out with me when we evacuated Sagan.

Marcello: I can't seem to contain you from talking about those. I've given up and I'll just let you again describe exactly what those "kriegie" burners were like. Obviously, this is a substitute for the warmth that wasn't coming from that central stove.

Funk: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: Okay, so describe how they were made and how they were used.

Funk: Well, we scrounged and saved every bit of tin that was used . . . you know, to come in. Some of our Red Cross parcels, of course, came in tins. Over a period of months we accumulated enough tin to make these utensils I spoke of and to make cups and to make these burners. By fashioning these bits of tin into a funnel and blower, with the blower turned by a string and crank, we were able to have a forge, really a forge, that blew a stream of air onto a small fire that concentrated this fire underneath a plate-- again, a piece of tin--on which was placed one piece of toast. We could cook one piece of toast at a time on that. Just the warmth of this toast . . . it took us an hour and a half to fix breakfast.

Just the warmth of this hot toast with this ersatz margarine . . . tafelmarge. Tafelmarge? Yes, that's the word. Tafelmarge is what they called . . . is what the Germans called it. It was just margarine, and it tasted like axle grease. But it must have had some nourishment because it didn't act as a laxative. It wasn't mineral oil, obviously. It stayed with us. It acted like food, in other words. We'd, of course, put as much of that as we could on each piece of toast. This was our one meal a day. We managed to have one meal a day with the soup and the bread. Our chocolates that came in the Red Cross parcels were hoarded until we got enough to make what we called a "bash."

Now once every, oh, six or eight weeks we'd get enough food saved back that we could have a "bash." We'd save all the meats that came in the Red Cross parcels. See, there were thirteen of us getting parcels now about every ten days. In this was some sort of a meat, some sort of a chocolate, what was called a D-Bar from the vitamin D that's in it, and K-9 biscuits. This is literally what they were. They had a K-9 mark on them. We called them dog biscuits. We'd save all of these things and the margarine that the Germans gave us, and about every six or eight weeks we'd have a "bash." This "bash" consisted of some sort of a meat pie if meat was what we had been

saving or a chocolate pie which we made simply by melting the chocolate along with the powdered milk. The powdered milk was Klim, by the way.

Marcello: Milk spelled backwards.

Funk: Milk spelled backwards. That was an interesting name because it took us awhile to realize that this Nestle Company had produced a powdered milk, and they got the trade name by simply spelling milk backwards--Klim. Anyway, this was our standby. We was talking about making this pie for this "bash." As I said, it was either a meat pie with these K-9 biscuits mashed into a crust, or it was a chocolate pie made by mixing the powdered milk and water and the chocolate melted into a filler that was put on these K-9 biscuits, which were mashed . . . the dog biscuits, which were mashed up and mixed with the "marge" to make a crust. It was an excellent pie. Golly, I've always wanted to make one since I came back because I have fond memories of food, you know, because, really, our conversation in prison camp centered finally on one thing. We had one man there, McDonald from Galveston, who had designed an automobile that he was going to have when he got back to the States that had the back of the front seat that folded down into a portable food bar where he would never be without food. All of us had similar things on our minds.

Marcello: Now this is a thought that I think was on the minds of 100 per cent of the prisoners. It wasn't women. It wasn't sex.

Funk: Occasionally.

Marcello: Maybe on occasion, but his primary interest was food. In fact, I've heard some prisoners say that they thought about food so much that they could actually imagine that they smelled a particular type of food cooking somewhere in that camp.

Funk: Yes, sir! I have waked up many a time in the night smelling food cooking because that was what I was dreaming. It just wasn't there. It became an obsession. Food became an obsession.

Marcello: I'm sure everybody was very calorie conscious.

Funk: Oh, yes, and quite hungry. No one can understand what chronic hunger is. Yet, that one sustaining thought, "Thank God we're not on fish heads and rice." This sustained us because we knew that on the opposite side of the world was a group of people from the home town who were existing maybe on nothing. This sustained us. We were everyday thankful that we were not in the Japanese theater. We were ever thankful that we were in Germany. Even when the order came out to shoot all prisoners-of-war, we were still thankful we were in Germany and not in Japan.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little at this stage about the organization of the compound that you were in. For example, I assume that you had a senior Allied officer in each barracks would it be?

Funk: Yes, sir. I can't remember the name. I remember we had a colonel who was a very, very interesting man.

Marcello: Exactly how was the senior officer selected, and what functions did he have?

Funk: Well, there were two methods. Of course, by rank first. I can't think of that guy's name who was parachuted in to manage the affairs of prisoners-of-war. He was the commanding general, and he was in connection with the commandant . . . the German commandant. Then each compound, like the center compound, had a . . . in our case it was a colonel. The highest ranking officer was a colonel. Then under him were several majors, and under him were several first lieutenants. Most of us were second lieutenants. Now in my case, I had been promoted and didn't know it, so I went all through prison camp as a second lieutenant--low man on the totem pole. So I really had very few duties.

Marcello: Now exactly what was this man's function? Did he exercise all of the command responsibilities of that organization?

Funk: Just as in any military organization--uniforms, maintenance, cleanliness, inspections. We even had inspections in our barracks to make sure we kept them swept out so that we didn't have any disease. We had surprisingly little illness when we were in Sagan.

Marcello: I'm sure, again, that hygiene was one of the keys to survival in that situation.

Funk: Oh, yes, you had to be clean. And, of course, that's hard to do when you don't have water to wash in--you've got snow around--and so we did keep clean. Now we couldn't take a bath as such. There was no bath. But we could clean and stay hygienic.

We had a pair of clippers, for instance, hair clippers that made the rounds of the entire compound. Needless to say, they were worn. But we did manage to keep our hair out of our eyes. It wasn't any good hair-cut. It wasn't anything neat, but it was passable.

We had a razor that we passed around. Where blades came from, I don't know. But there were a few razor blades. The Germans, of course, guarded these. When the razor was used they were there. The razor was accounted for because this is a weapon, of course.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago, for example, that you were not allowed to have knives. You obviously were very, very closely supervised when you had the razor. What other items were forbidden?

Funk: Anything that could be used as a weapon. Even just a sharp piece of metal was verboten, and yet the guards overlooked our making of utensils. They knew we had to have something to eat out of, and they had to overlook this.

Marcello: How about writing materials?

Funk: Well, we had pencils and paper supplies to us, and we were given these luftpost air mail type things that we could

write every so often. Everytime we got one we wrote a note home and put it in the mail. I never did get any mail from outside. I wasn't there long enough. It took a year in prison camp before they processed anything to give to you, so I never did get any parcels or any mail. But I found out later that my mail was getting through, finally. A lot of it reached my folks after the war was over. But the mail did finally come through . . . processed through. These pencils we were allowed to keep. Some fellows kept journals and diaries. I kept some sort of a log, but in the process of marching as we left Sagan later on, I lost all of that material.

Marcello: What sort of an intelligence organization was maintained within the barracks?

Funk: Of course, this was all well-organized. Those of us not inside the security organization only knew that certain people were "X" officers. We called them "X," which was the initial that stood for security. I remember that these officers had entr e to the kitchen, to the commandant's office. It was an official military unit that had access to the German office. There was communication between the German officer in command and the American officer in command.

Marcello: These men acted as the liaison.

Funk: But then secretly these security officers also were planning escape. For instance, this man in Dallas that I told you

about, that I think you must meet some day, was the security officer for the entire compound.

Marcello: What was his name again?

Funk: Red Johnson. He was an engraver by trade. He was a jeweler by trade. He worked for Linz Jewelers there in Dallas. He made money. I don't know where he got the paper, but he made German money that you couldn't tell from the real thing. He made passports and I.D. cards that were identical to the German requisite for a civilian. We even got, through trading with the "goons," material for clothing. We had complete German uniforms that we had made.

Marcello: Now did you actually see all of this going on, or, again, was this part of the intelligence apparatus that you really were privy to?

Funk: I was aware of it, but I was not privy to it. People for escape were selected very, very carefully.

Marcello: All escape plans had to be approved.

Funk: Oh, yes. They were approved by central. Now this is by rumor. I wasn't privy to any of this information. All I knew was what I heard. In fact, I don't guess any of our combine, any of the thirteen men in our combine, were privy to it. Even Fink, who had been there four years, was not privy to any of this secret information. Of course, everything was pretty much quiet as far as escape was concerned

because just before I had been put in Sagan the British had staged a big escape.

Marcello: This is when they started to clamp down. Up until this time escapes were kind of almost like a game, were they not?

Funk: Yes, that's right. I gathered that. But the British had a sizeable escape. I assume some of them got away because they stood fifty British, I understand, before I got there in November . . . in October they had just put up fifty British before the firing squad. I heard the rumor that there were fifty British killed and where all the other compounds could see as an example of what would happen if anyone escaped. It would be fifty to one--one escapee and fifty dead.

Marcello: Where was all of this sort of thing stored? You mentioned the making of the uniforms and . . .

Funk: Well, you see, this is what I don't know. There were tunnels. I never saw a tunnel. I carried dirt but I never saw a tunnel. Dirt was passed to me in a coffee tin. As I walked I sifted dirt. The Germans never got onto the fact that why, where you walked the perimeter, it would rise instead of digging in. They never were conscious of the fact our walk-way around this inner-wire circle raised instead of being eaten in, like if you walk a path it digs in. This one raised, and it was because of the dirt from the tunnel. But I never saw a tunnel.

Marcello: Well, where did you get the dirt?

Funk: It was passed to me by somebody else who hadn't seen the tunnel. As we walked, and this was the only exercise we had, the coffee tins of dirt were passed to us, and we sifted them out as we walked.

Marcello: Well, now all of this really does say something about the efficiency and clandestine nature of that intelligence organization.

Funk: Yes, because it was absolute total security because if we didn't know we couldn't tell.

Marcello: What was the procedure that was used for new people coming into the compound? These people had to be checked out, did they not?

Funk: Well, they were just incommunicado for awhile. We had to wait and . . . of course, I was there for such a short time. Seven months is a relatively short time. But it didn't take fellows like Fink and Werrlein and McDonald, who had been there a long time, to size up a man and decide whether he was German or American.

Marcello: The Germans would plant stooges in the compound, would they not?

Funk: Oh, yes, sir! We never had one that I know in our combine. Presumably they were planted elsewhere in the compound. But the security was so good that these people didn't have a chance to find out about anything. They'd hear rumors.

For instance, our radio was never discovered. We had a British radio. Each British uniform had a piece of radio sewn into it. When I say a radio I mean a crystal set. Each British uniform had a piece of a radio sewn into it, into a button, into a seam--wire in seams, wire in place of thread. So the British made radios. They did it more as a hobby than anything else. They threw over the fence to us each night our baseball. It was a radio. So we got British BBC news every night at midnight. We got in more up-to-date combat maps than the Germans had. Old "Popeye," our guard, used to come to us . . . he had one eye. He had been at Stalingrad, you know, an old man who was a survivor of Stalingrad. "Popeye" would come to us secretly, "Where is the front tonight?" (whispering) He'd ask us. He spoke English and he'd ask us where the front is tonight. He kept up with the war through us, not through history. This security was so good that even I didn't know.

Marcello: Well, here again, did you ever actually see the radio, or were you just getting this secondhand?

Funk: No, I never saw it. I only heard about it because the news was passed by word of mouth. We did keep a map. We kept a map that we passed around that showed where the front lines were, how close we were to freedom, you know, how close were they coming to us.

Marcello: How much was the news ever discussed?

Funk: It was not discussed. Oh, while we were walking, while we were getting our exercise, we'd, you know, be thrilled by the fact that there was an advance from the south or an advance from the west, you know. Patton's episodes around the Rhine were, of course, thrilling to us because we were waiting for Patton to rescue us because we knew he was coming towards our direction.

Marcello: Did you have a code name for news? Do you recall this?

Funk: Yes, but I can't . . .

Marcello: "Dave?"

Funk: No.

Marcello: In a lot of camps I know it was called "Dave."

Funk: We had a code name, but it wasn't that. I just can't recall what it was. We had a code name.

Marcello: Some of my research indicates that each combine did perhaps have about ten minutes to discuss the news, and maybe that was about it.

Funk: Oh, yes, yes! And it was presented to us. A courier would come around to each combine as if he was visiting, and quickly, very quickly with good security--a "kriegie" posted at each end of the barracks to holler "Goon in the barracks" if anything came up--he would post the news each night. This was in the dark, of course, you know. You weren't supposed to be out on the ground at all. He would have to sneak in and bring the news to us because it came from a central point. Like I say, I

never saw this radio, but it was there because the news was progressive and accurate each night. Occasionally, we wouldn't get our nightly news.

Marcello: And it would come at a particular time?

Funk: The midnight BBC. The midnight BBC news was what we listened to.

Marcello: I'm sure this was a real morale booster.

Funk: When I say we listened, I mean vicariously I listened because I never heard it. I only got it through the bulletin.

Marcello: I understand there were some rather stiff penalties, or could be some stiff penalties, if prisoners caught fellow prisoners talking about the news in a rather haphazard manner.

Funk: That's right. We had our own security. This was amongst the Americans themselves. You just didn't expose it. And we had good security because they never caught on to it . . .

Marcello: Awhile ago . . .

Funk: . . . except they knew we had the news. Some of the guards on the inside . . . old "Popeye" knew. He was on our side anyway (chuckle).

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that from time to time the Germans did pull inspections in the barracks to look for any contraband.

Funk: Missing people mainly.

Marcello: Describe what these inspections were like.

Funk: Well, we never knew what they did. We never knew what they were doing inside the barracks because they got us all out. But they'd come in and "Heraus!" and "Appell!" and all then to get us all out in the snow for a count. We'd be out there for an hour or so. During this time we'd see them going back and forth through the barracks. So we knew we had to put contraband away--like dropping the knife in the sink and hiding it under the dishwasher. We always kept a level of dirty dishwasher in that pipe so we could drop the knife into it. They never found that.

Marcello: I've also seen it written on occasions that from time to time some minor bits of contraband would be left out in the open so that it could be found and so they'd be satisfied.

Funk: I understood this. I never experienced this. We really didn't have much in our particular combine (chuckle), but I understand that some of the higher echelon of security would leave some things that they knew the Germans knew we had, and they'd leave it. But this I only heard by rumor. I don't know that to be a fact.

One of the most pleasant memories that I have . . . when I said November and remembered about the push of the Germans in November and the break of the weather on December 23, we had cause to celebrate because Christmas was at hand and the New Year was at hand. This was Christmas of '44. We had cause to celebrate because the Air Force got airborne on

December 23, 1944, and broke the pocket from Cologne and Düren and absolutely drove the Germans back into the ground. We got bunches of new prisoners-of-war in because there was "beaucoups" of planes shot down, and a bunch of paratroopers were killed at Cologne, and a bunch of them were captured, and so we got all sorts of new news. The war was over. You know, this is the news that was brought to us. We'd broken the backs of the Germans. But then, of course, it took from Christmas to May 9th, I believe it was, for the war to really be over.

But we really celebrated that Christmas. We put on shows. We had saved up our food, and we had bashes. We really had a Christmas and New Year's party. A play was put on. We had a play lampooning the German Army. We had German officers, and they had given uniforms through the . . . we had even a stage and a show house where we could have these plays. That's where we had our school, too, which is an entirely different story because we had classes going all the time--calculus and other forms of math, English and so forth--just to keep up with our education.

Marcello: We'll talk about this later on. Yes, now getting back to new arrivals that came into the compound, were these people interrogated or interviewed or things of this nature?

Funk: They went through practically the same thing we went through, except after December 23, the German organization was

chaotic. They really just sometimes crowded them in there because they had no place to put them. We were so crowded when we finally moved after New Year's . . . sometime in January we were started marching, you know, out of Sagan. I guess it was January--shortly after New Year's.

Marcello: Yes, this was a rather wretched march. We'll talk about this later on.

Funk: Oh, yes. We marched, of course, from then until April and ended up down in Moosburg, as you know, at Stalag 17. Anyway, most of these fellows had just been jammed in there. They were still in their uniforms. Some of them still had their watches. The German confiscation techniques had gone to pot. A lot of them had all of their equipment. They were just jammed into prison camp. We learned later that the GI's, the enlisted men, were . . . there was no place for them. They were put in German homes and put in encampments outside of the combine and everything.

The Russians were coming from the East, the Americans were coming from the West, and Sagan was in jeopardy of being liberated. That's what prompted, of course, the January march.

Marcello: Getting back to the organization within the compound, there was also a mess officer for each compound, was there not?

Funk: Right.

Marcello: What functions did the mess officer have?

Funk: Well, of course, everybody thought the mess officer was crooked (chuckle).

Marcello: I'm sure everybody watched the dividing of the food like a hawk.

Funk: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, we would all gather around when the bread was sectioned.

Marcello: This is what I understand.

Funk: With the water--even when the water was passed out--it had to be exactly measured so that each man got his cup of water.

Marcello: And isn't it true that the man who sliced the bread got the last slice? Isn't that the way it usually went?

Funk: Well, yes. This mess officer had the inside track. If he sliced it thin enough he got a thicker slice at the end. We accepted this as sort of, you know, the privilege of being mess officer. But in our combine we were all friends. We really didn't have any problems.

Marcello: But now what I'm saying is, was there one man in the barracks who was assigned as the mess officer?

Funk: Yes, but each combine had its mess officer.

Marcello: Right, and each combine did its own cooking, too.

Funk: Right. Each combine would go pick up its ration of food and our . . . Fink, of course, being our senior man, he knew the ropes, and he knew how to deal with the major mess

officer, the combine mess officer, and he'd get . . . well, of course, that was a detail. This was too many wheelbarrows of bread and water to be handled by one man, so there was a crew of them that were assigned to this . . . they had one main officer, of course. But the combine officer was the key to all of this being fair bit. We never thought of Funk as being unfair.

Marcello: And was the cooking schedule usually rotated in the combine? Everybody took their turn at being mess cook.

Funk: Oh, yes. At cleaning up, at being mess officer, at being the cook and so forth--we all had turns. As I say, it was really organized in a military manner. We had duty days and a duty roster. This was written down. We had a duty roster, and we all had duty days.

Marcello: What sort of food were you receiving while you were here at Stalag Luft 3-A, and how often were you being fed, and how much were you being fed? This is kind of like a three-part question.

Funk: Well, once a day the food detail would come. Sometimes it would be mornings, sometimes it would be afternoons--usually in the morning with hot water in the "kines" that I spoke of. Great ten-gallon vats, maybe fifteen gallons even. It took two men to heft them. It was hot steaming water. Rarely it would be soup. Once a week it'd be soup instead of hot

water. Or maybe once a week it would be part of a "kine" of soup and part of a "kine" of hot water.

Marcello: What was the soup like?

Funk: Oh, it was mostly straw and something. Occasionally, we'd find small bones in it and delight in whatever meat there was. We didn't care what the source was. It was small enough to be rabbit or a rat or mouse. We didn't really care what meat got into it as long as it was meat (chuckle). We didn't ask any questions. We didn't try to identify those little bones. Most of the time it was just sour potato soup, though. The flavor was that of sour potatoes usually. Occasionally, there would be cabbage soup. Most of the time it was so thin, though, and so much straw in it that we called it straw soup. This was such a problem that occasionally we'd have to dig lengths of straw out of the lower intestinal tract that'd get caught in some of our companions. This straw would be . . . we'd be drinking the soup, and it'd go down as a two or three-inch length of straw that they'd used to stew into the soup. I don't know what kind of stems they were. But, anyway, it's what you put in there to give body to the soup, I guess.

Marcello: You mentioned you would dig this out?

Funk: Yes, it would get caught in the rectum. It'd get caught sideways, and we'd have to help these guys defecate by getting this straw out of the way because they couldn't

pass a bowel movement. This was rare. This was not an everyday occurrence. But it's just to illustrate that the straw was in the soup. It was not a common incident, but neither was it uncommon. But that soup was hot. That was the main attribute--it was hot.

And, of course, the "kriegie" bread--the ersatz bread--was nut brown and covered with a white powdery substance. We never did identify it. It must have been some sort of coarse rye flour that was only lighter in color than the substance of the bread. We just knew that it was sawdust in the bread. We just knew that it had filler of some sort of cellulose. Now I'm not talking about coarse sawdust, but I'm talking about processed sawdust that gave cellulose filler to give body to it because it tasted and had the texture of sawdust. But the flavor was good. I'll have to say this, that the flavor of the bread was excellent.

Marcello: How many slices of the bread would you get per day? Do you recall?

Funk: Well, if we were lucky we got three. Most of the time it was one or two because when you divide a loaf or a loaf and a third between thirteen men, that's not many slices of bread.

Marcello: When we talk about a slice of bread, what thickness were these?

Funk: These were kilo loafs--2.2 pounds. I remember that distinctly, and it keeps me to this day remembering that conversion

factor because these loaves weighed 2.2 pounds. When you divide 2.2 pounds by thirteen with a little thicker slice for the knife, you know, why, you don't have much bread (chuckle). Anyway, we would get two or three slices.

Marcello: Like you say, I'm sure this was quite a ceremony to watch the man cut the bread.

Funk: Oh, yes. Everybody stood around with absolute attention to the thickness of a slice. If it was too thin, why, we'd scream out. You know, if you could read through it it was too thin (chuckle). And, of course, we drank our soup as quickly as we could because the heat was as much a source of calories as the substance of the soup.

Marcello: Was this about the extent of the variety of the food?

Funk: Well, the Red Cross parcel was the other variety.

Marcello: I'm sure that was a pretty big occasion when that ten-day period came around.

Funk: Oh, yes. Man, you're talking about dividing things up now. That's when the division was really taking place because when you divided up the tin of Red Cross, you know . . . when you got one parcel for every three men or one parcel for every five men, as it turned out to be later, why, this is not much of a Red Cross parcel when you remember that this parcel is designed as a one-day supply for one man. When you divide one of these five ways or three ways, why, it took some dividing. We kept a record of who got the

milk the last time or who got the K-9 biscuits the last time, who got the sugar, who got the cigarettes. Cigarettes, incidentally, were trading units. Mostly we'd smoke some to kill our appetite. That's when I first started smoking, was in prison camp. I never smoked before, and this was mainly just to kill my appetite because it did help keep me from having that gnawing feeling in my middle.

I remember lying on that upper bunk . . . I was lucky to get an upper bunk. The reason we didn't like lower bunks is because we had such a fluid content in our diet that a lot of the fellows had trouble holding their water at night. The man on the lower bunk caught it (chuckle). But, anyway, this was the reason. I got enough seniority finally that I got an upper bunk.

Marcello: That's right. The position of the bunks, or the position of your bunk, varied according to the amount of seniority that you had.

Funk: That's right. But, also, there was some decision-making by the combine chief because if we knew somebody had any legitimate reason we put him on a bottom bunk. If we knew he wet every night, why, we put him on a bottom bunk. He didn't have any choice. I remember one great big old guy who just couldn't hold his water at night. He'd dream and dream he was going to the latrine and cut loose. So he got a bottom bunk. What were we talking about?

Marcello: We were talking about food in general and the way it was divided.

Funk: The Red Cross parcel division was carried on this way. Certain items were hoarded, stored. The D-Bars, for instance, were stored for a community "bash." They went into a combine storehouse. We had some lockers, by the way, that I had forgotten about. There weren't many lockers. Two or three men would share one locker. Fink would store the food. He was absolutely fair about it. We never caught him getting fat. He was lean (chuckle).

Marcello: I'm sure if you would check it out to see who was gaining weight (chuckle).

Funk: He saw that we had clothing when clothing was available. He got the choice. If there was a choice between a good shirt and a bad shirt, he took the good one. But he was fair.

Anyway, we saved certain things like the milk, the powdered milk. The Klim we saved. The K-9 biscuits we saved, and the chocolate we saved, and the sugar we saved for the simple reason that, as I told you, every so many weeks we would have a "bash." This would either be a chocolate "bash" or a meat "bash."

This brings up an interesting incident. Fink was a cook when the time for our "bash" came. He started out early in the morning fixing this meat pie which was in one

one of our tins. We had hoarded cardboard so that he could use the potbellied stove for that because you had to have a bigger stove to cook the meat. He had the K-9 biscuits ground up with the tafelmarge on the bottom and the meat seasoned and put in the top. He came out of the kitchen into our combine area. We were adjacent to the kitchen. He stumbled and turned this meat pie face down on the floor. There wasn't a sound from anybody except his sobbing. He cried. A grown man cried over spilling the meat. What we did was get another piece of tin that we'd used for our toaster and slipped it under and turned it right side up, divided it and ate it, and never said a word (chuckle). No question about the sand that was in it. And we never criticized him. He criticized himself, but we never criticized him. We knew that it was an accident. But I never will forget the sorrow on his face when he stumbled in front of all of us and dumped that meat pie on the floor (chuckle).

Marcello: You were mentioning awhile ago that certain items were stored for the "bash" and that you never had any reason to doubt Fink's integrity. How great a problem was theft in the barracks?

Funk: Practically none! Absolutely practically none!

Marcello: What would happen if a person were to be caught stealing?

Funk: Well, the only time I know of was in another barracks, and the fellow simply disappeared. We don't know what happened.

We had a kangaroo court that met secretly. This was an official organization now. Of course, it was without sanction of the Germans. But our commanding officer and the ones under him served as a court. Now this is by rumor. I never had any experience with this because I witnessed no dishonesty--
absolutely no dishonesty.

Marcello: What delicacies so far as food would the Germans provide on rare occasions? You mentioned that once in awhile you would find bits and pieces, maybe, of meat. How about the coffee? Did you get any form of coffee?

Funk: Yes, they had an ersatz coffee that they furnished us that we thought was just burnt bark. It tasted like burnt bark. I couldn't drink it. I'd rather just have the hot water. On occasion we'd have some sugar left over from our "bashes," and we'd use a little bit of it in our coffee.

The coffee that came in the Red Cross parcels would often disappear. Very often our parcels wouldn't have the coffee or the cigarettes in it. They'd be gone. And the soap would be gone.

Incidentally, after Sagan was evacuated we heard that there were warehouses full of Red Cross parcels discovered. When we were liberated from Moosburg 17, my companions reported when they . . .

Marcello: Moosburg 17? Was that the compound?

Funk: I think it was 17. Stalag 17 is what they called it.

Marcello: I see.

Funk: I'm not real sure. We had never really had our name attached to it. Now 17 itself was supposed to be at Nuremberg, but this may have been 17-A because it was a satellite of the Nuremberg-Regensburg-Augsburg triangle, you know. This was an emergency camp. We heard after we got back to the distribution point in Rheims that there were warehouses of Red Cross parcels discovered there, also, that had never been passed out to us. So the Swiss were sending them to us. The Germans were just warehousing them. Strangely enough, they hadn't eaten them. They were hungry, too. But they had just warehoused them. They just had not turned them over to us.

Marcello: Did you ever have any ways of supplementing your diet other than the Red Cross packages? In other words, the Americans that were captured by the Japanese had resorted to such things as dogs, cats, and anything of that nature. Anything that walked, talked, or crawled was eaten.

Funk: By the time I got there, there were none left. They had all been used up. By the time I got to prison camp, there was nothing left walking. This, we suspected, was the source of some of the meat in our food. Nothing ever walked or crawled. We never did even see a frog or a lizard.

Marcello: Now, of course, you were there basically in the wintertime, so you wouldn't have had a chance to have a garden or anything of that nature.

Funk: No. I understood they had some gardens in the spring and summer and fall. There were some gardens that were allowed, and the plots were still there.

One of the strange things that happened was that we got a whole shipment of ice skates from the YMCA (laughter). Some of the "kriegies" flooded an area under the ruse of making a skating rink, but they . . . we had a water source, apparently, for this skating rink. There had been negotiations, and we were allowed to build the rink. We just left the water running and flooded our compound as a . . . just sort of a . . . I don't know.

Marcello: A token of defiance?

Funk: Yes, defiance. We just flooded the area. Anyway, we never got to use our ice skates because about that time January came along and we went out.

Marcello: Did you ever have an opportunity to bribe the German guards in return for certain favors, perhaps certain food items or things that they . . .

Funk: I never did have an opportunity to do that. There were a certain select few in security that had access to the guards, and this contact was guarded very carefully because the Germans were just as severe on their turncoats as we would have been on ours.

Marcello: And also, I would assume that once you had a guard, once you had bribed him, he was yours.

Funk: Oh, yes, because all we had to do was slip the word that he was taking bribes and he was dead. Now this is by rumors. This was top security. This contact was where we got our movie camera. I understand there were movies made even. We got cameras for sure because I've seen pictures since we got out of meetings and everything that were held.

Marcello: I know in some of the camps there was also a journal that was maintained of the activities. Was this done in your camp?

Funk: I never saw one of these, but I understood there was. We had one man that was writing a book while he was in prison camp.

Marcello: I assume that records of atrocities and everything else were recorded, put down, if any such things should occur.

Funk: Supposedly, supposedly. I just really don't know. I was there such a short time, and I was never in the inner circle. This was so top secret that it was not privy to me.

Marcello: What did you do with your day?

Funk: Walked mostly. We talked a tremendous amount. When we could lie down to talk we talked food mostly and politics occasionally. But we had no recreation except at a special time. Like at Christmas we were allowed to have the play, and a select group of men that the Germans trusted were allowed as trustees to put on this play lampooning the German Army. Our guards looked at it and laughed right along with it (chuckle). They had old "Popeye" lampooned and the commandant lampooned. It really made fun of them in a severe manner.

Marcello: Now these are still Luftwaffe personnel?

Funk: Oh, yes, these are still Luftwaffe.

Marcello: I'm sure you had nicknames for all of these German guards and so on.

Funk: I don't remember them. I remember "Popeye" only because he went with us all the way to Moosburg. We carried his gun. We carried his pack at night when the other guards couldn't see because, you see, our immediate guards were our prison guards who were with us at Sagan. They went with us to Moosburg. In the column that marched, these guards in turn were guarded by we don't know who--Gestapo we assume--who had guard dogs. Our German guards were just as afraid of those guard dogs as we were. When we could get by with it, we'd tote old "Popeye's" pack and gun for him because he just was old and couldn't do it. He would have fallen by the wayside.

Marcello: Did you have those dogs, incidentally, here at Stalag Luft 3-A?

Funk: No, not that we could see. We knew the dogs were there. We heard them barking. We knew that they were on the perimeter of the entire camp, but they were not in between the compounds that I know of. I really never got to a point where I could see. But I saw the guards with dogs only after we got on our march. These were mainly airdales. You'd think they'd be German police dogs. But they were mainly airdales.

Marcello: How great a problem was boredom?

Funk: Oh, there was too much talk and walking to really be bored. We were concerned with survival and with the rumor that we were going to be shot. I don't really think boredom had entered into it--hunger and fear but not boredom. I don't think I was ever bored.

Marcello: Who did the work in the camps? I know that in a lot of camps they used Russian POW's to do all the work.

Funk: I didn't see any Russians. We had some GI's--American GI's--that came in on work details occasionally, but we never did see any Russians. They didn't even allow the French or British to come into our compound. The American GI's who were in a separate compound . . . they kept the GI's, the enlisted men, separate from the officers. They were kept under guard by a German guard when they came in to do work details.

Marcello: You mentioned the Christmas play awhile ago as an example of the recreational activities in which you were engaged. What other outlets did you have to occupy your time? For example, you also mentioned those classes, which I think is an important part of the record.

Funk: Yes.

Marcello: You can talk about those.

Funk: I wasn't able to participate in any of those classes because, again, seniority came into this. You had to be there awhile to be able to participate. They had to learn to trust you. I realize now that I was in a period of observation--of being

observed. It wasn't until the march really began that I was accepted as an insider, and, of course, we were all trying to survive then because nothing else counted. Our security broke down, and our organization broke down, and we were just columns of marching "kriegies" then. Our discipline held through. We kept our discipline. We never lost our discipline.

But as far as attending class, I never did get to. There were classes in calculus. We had a black man, a fine man, who was a P-51 pilot, a volunteer who had stopped teaching at one of the eastern universities just to fly in the Negro squadron. You know, they had an all-Negro squadron that flew out of Italy. It was a fine squadron. He was a teacher, a math teacher, and he taught a class in calculus. This was beyond me. I hadn't had enough background in calculus to attend that, and the other thing, the history, the government, the philosophy, I wasn't really interested in. I didn't have seniority enough to attend anyway.

This broke down about Christmas. After Christmas things were so tight with the Germans that there was a nightly rumor that we were going to move.

Marcello: Was there ever much card playing or things of this nature?

Funk: We didn't have any cards that I know of. I heard there was cards, but we didn't keep our pasteboard for that (laughter). Our pasteboard was used for burning. We did salvage enough

pasteboard for "Hand" to make Christmas cards. I'll show you my Christmas card that he made for us. It's got the list of our combine members, too.

Marcello: In terms of your daily camp routine, when did you get up in the morning and when were lights out in the evening? Do you recall?

Funk: Well, this is hard for me to recall because there were so many different times for "appell." We had a morning routine where we got up at sunrise. Almost every morning we had a count. They didn't trust any night. Almost every morning we would have a roll call. This would usually be real early. My memory of a daily routine is really poor. It's amazing how poor it is.

Marcello: How about lights out?

Funk: Well, of course, that was early. I mean, they didn't waste any electricity. The energy was at a premium in Germany, and lights out was, as I remember it, shortly after sundown, maybe 8:30 or nine o'clock. I don't remember ever being up till ten o'clock.

Marcello: How much did the guards harass you here at Stalag Luft 3?

Funk: None. We had "appell," we had our "heraus," we had to get out for the count and we had to get out for them to search for contraband, but this was not really bad. It broke the routine. We didn't like getting out in the snow. We didn't like standing there stomping in the snow. But it actually

broke the routine. As far as the guards themselves, they were not vocally abusive or physically abusive. Outside of the first incident when I was slapped around by the Gestapo, I had no physical abuse. We were not pushed or shoved. We were not physically touched by the Germans. We were not gun-butted as the Japanese prisoners were. We were not beaten with sticks. I saw none of my fellow "Kriegies" punished. If punishment happened it happened away from camp. Our combine was intact except for Buzz Sewell being sick and leaving us.

Marcello: Did you ever have opportunity to get out of the camp at all?

Funk: No, not until we marched. We were under real tight security. Apparently, they didn't let officers do anything. Our senior officers told us that the Germans assumed that one officer, according to their philosophy, constituted an army, and that he would mobilize any and all forces convenient. Therefore, officers were segregated so they could not organize and insurrection or an escape. This is why enlisted men and officers were kept apart, because of this German philosophy of one officer-one army. Really, we didn't have this type of philosophy. I think that any American given another American would have constituted an army. You wouldn't have had to have been an officer. But in the German army the hierarchy of command is so strict that an officer is obligated to organize. Whereas, in the American Army it would have been a voluntary thing. It was just a little difference in military philosophy.

Marcello: From what you could observe, what kind of a background did these guards come from? In other words, were they old soldiers, old people, or just exactly what?

Funk: The guards that I knew in Sagan were all veterans of the Stalingrad siege. They were one-eyed, one-legged, one-armed--all of them used up. The young men that I saw were like the ones that captured me in the battleground. I never saw any young German soldiers except at this . . .

Marcello: Well, obviously, then, from what you've said about the lack of physical punishment, these guards really didn't have any grudges to bear or anything like that against the prisoners.

Funk: No, they were just anxious for the war to be over. Later on, as I told you, these guards tried to surrender to us. Of course, they were shot down by the SS troops that were defending that area around Moosburg. Our Christmas parties and our New Year's parties, of course, were not completely celebrated because the Russians were coming in from the east, and the Germans, rather than turn us over to the Russians, evacuated us and started us on the march towards . . . they were trying to get us to Czechoslovakia, is what they were trying to do. But they never attained that.

Marcello: How important does religion become in a situation like this?

Funk: Well, we had so many mixed philosophies of religion that mostly it was a matter of discussion. Religion was one topic of discussion, but it was so crowded out by the politics of

the moment that in my memory and our group particularly it wasn't a particularly frequent item of conversation.

Even in combat we had a chaplain. Captain Smith was our chaplain. He met each crew as they came in from combat and did the appropriate thing for whatever religion a wounded man or a dead man happened to be. We didn't know whether he was Methodist or Baptist or Catholic because he was versed in all of the procedures of the various churches because we could have only one chaplain. We couldn't have one for each religion. He was a good man. He was there day or night, whenever we came in. He was always with us.

As far as religion per se, though, I don't think we really had any religious observations in my compound that I remember. Discussions, yes, but no resort to prayer, for instance, that you'd think would be so prevalent. I think it was because we felt that we had already reached the final point, that the cards were already dealt, that the die was cast, and that however it worked out it would work out. I think this was everybody's feeling, that fate had dealt us that final number (chuckle), because we knew, you see, that Hitler had issued this order. We had had word from our commanding officer, the colonel of our combine, that the prisoners-of-war were ordered to be killed and that Goering had stated the order. Thus, we were living on borrowed time. So this saddened us and made us hope for a release, but it

didn't particularly depress us. There's a difference between sadness and depression. I don't think we had one depressed man that I ever saw.

Marcello: How about recreation in terms of athletic activities? Did you ever have the opportunity to participate in something of that nature?

Funk: Of course, I was there at a time when it was winter. I'm sure that there were football and soccer and volleyball games in the summertime, but because of the winter snow, and the several inches of snow that was prevalent, we didn't really have time to do anything but walk.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us up, I think, to the time when you leave Stalag Luft 3, and this, of course, is in the later stages of the war. The ring is being closed. The Russians are advancing from the east and the Americans and the British from the west. Prior to the actual evacuation of the camp did you notice any changes in the disposition and the attitudes of the guards? Were they beginning to become edgy, nervous, things of that nature?

Funk: They were obviously on edge but not with us--mainly with each other. We received orders from our commandant that we were to be prepared on a moment's notice to evacuate, that we were to get rid of all surplus equipment, that we were to carry nothing except what was absolutely necessary because we would be marching in the snow, that we were to salvage every usable

piece of clothing that we couldn't use and put it in pools so that it could be passed on to those that did need shoes, trousers, and so on. In this fashion I got a pair of GI boots that I wore . . . hightop shoes that I wore for many years after the war ended. I managed to keep those. They took all of my clothing away from me later as we were decontaminated. But I was able to keep my shoes.

Marcello: Did you have adequate clothing to take care of you in the wintertime?

Funk: Yes, I did. I had two pairs of woolen socks and this good pair of shoes. I had my woolens from the GI coats and a woolen shirt and underclothing that was adequate. This was from the pool. I had really not enough adequate . . . I didn't have enough clothing while I was in compound, but as we pooled everything and passed it out again . . . of course, a lot of clothing showed up because some of the men had been there long enough to get parcels from home. There was enough clothing to keep them from being hurt by the elements.

Marcello: Do you remember what items you carefully packed for your particular march?

Funk: Well, I've still got one that I shouldn't have carried, and that was a book about Benjamin Franklin, Van Duren's Ben Franklin. I carried it because I enjoyed reading it. I've still got it. It came out of our library. We had a library--

YMCA library. I salvaged that one book, and it was heavy. I didn't have any food to carry, though, so it didn't make much difference (chuckle).

Marcello: Besides that, you might have to burn those pages to keep warm (chuckle).

Funk: But anyway I did salvage that. A lot of us who were more fortunate in the degree of our strength did carry things for other prisoners-of-war and also for the guards, too. As I say, we'd even tote old "Popeye's" gun occasionally when he couldn't march another step.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had carried some equipment and gear of the guards. Why was this?

Funk: Well, we liked them (chuckle). They'd been with us, and, you know, they'd never abused us. There was never any vocal or physical abuse. Obviously, they were under coercion. These old veterans of Stalingrad were under coercion of the guards on the perimeter--the ones with the dogs. We just felt sorry for them. At night when we'd be marching or when the guards were away from us, why, we'd quietly carry their knapsack or their gun and help the old fellows along because they just couldn't make it. They just couldn't keep up.

Of course, some of our fellows couldn't keep up with up either. When we'd resume march . . . we'd take a break every hour or so. When we'd resume march some of them couldn't get on their feet, and they were left sitting in the snow. We

never really knew what happened to them. Of course, this was sort of a black mark in your memory about those things.

Marcello: Well, let's go back and start then from the beginning of the march, and we can more or less work around some of the things we've talked about.

Funk: Always confusion, always confusion, thousands and thousands of "kriegies." I have no idea how long a line of prisoners were mobilized to get out of that camp.

Marcello: Incidentally, is it kind of upsetting to have your routine suddenly changed? In other words, you'd been there for several months now. Were you kind of getting used to the routine here at Stalag Luft 3?

Funk: Well, of course, we were used to the routine there. We did not want to leave for one main reason--we wanted to be liberated. And the purpose of this march was to keep us from being liberated. This is what we were mostly upset about.

Marcello: You were their trump card, in other words.

Funk: Yes. This was anger. We never were able . . . I still can't figure why those Germans spent manpower and food . . . they fed us daily. They sheltered us daily. It may have been a haystack or somebody's barn, but they sheltered us at each rest period. Why they spent all of this manpower and energy just to keep us from being liberated . . . I guess they clung to the thought that the war was not over yet.

Marcello: Well, again, you were their trump card. They might have been able to get better terms by having you.

Funk: We couldn't figure it out because it became so confused that some of the fellows were marching off in a separate column and dickering with the townspeople for food. You know, it really was fascinating, absolutely fascinating, the degree of discipline they had had and yet the looseness of the march. They had the guards, they had the dogs, they had the guns, and yet we were so numerous that they couldn't keep track of us. I don't think everybody reached Moosburg. I'm sure that a bunch of them housed up with sympathetic German people to wait the war out because they were trump cards to those German families. We figured that a lot of them stayed and ate pork and dumplings. Then they were able to say, "These people took care of us. Don't do anything to them." We never knew for sure, but this is sort of the romance that went on about people who would disappear. We hoped that they'd done that instead of being killed, you know.

Marcello: How long did this march take place . . . how long did it take altogether.

Funk: Oh, man! We left Sagan in the middle of winter, early January, maybe late in December. No, we saw the new year end, and we left very shortly after New Year's Day. It must have taken a month or six weeks to get to Moosburg because we marched part of the time and went crowded in boxcars the other part of the time. I'd have to look back

at a calendar to try to determine when. But we were there most . . . we were at Moosburg all of April, I know, so it must have been latter March when we hit Moosburg finally.

Marcello: How long would you say this march took place altogether, then? How many . . . what are we talking about, six weeks?

Funk: Two months at least. Early January, February, March--that's two months right there. So it must have been two months at least.

Marcello: How were the provisions of food that the Germans made available to you during this march?

Funk: The Germans actually tried to feed us something hot every day. They didn't always achieve it, but they tried to serve either hot soup or hot water to be eaten with bread once a day, and hot potatoes occasionally. Most of the time it was enough to keep us going. But those that were poorly nourished, those that had been prisoners-of-war longer, some of them just didn't survive because of the decrease in food.

Marcello: I think you were doing a lot of marching in snowstorms during this period, too, were you not?

Funk: Oh, yes. I can remember when we hit Nuremberg. We went into Nuremberg by boxcars. All of us had diarrhea. We evacuated the boxcars mainly because the tracks were shot up. We jumped out of the boxcars and were lined up in a station in Nuremberg with our flaps down, you know. Quite a movie. I would have given the world to have a picture of that. But, anyway, as

we marched out of Nuremberg . . . we spent the night at a station there and in boxcars. Of course, we had been shot up quite a bit. The P-47's had shot up the train and killed some of the "kriegies" and some of the guards, too. Then as we marched out of Nuremberg I remember I had salvaged somewhere a scarf, a GI scarf, that I had sewn down the back . . . hand sewn down the back, and left just eye holes so I could pull this woolen scarf down. I remember by the time we got on the outskirts of Nuremberg by the airfield--the Messerschmitt factory was there, you know--we could see these destroyed planes like dim ghosts out to our right as we marched through going south. I remember the feeling of this hood, and it was cased in ice. Our breath and our . . . the condensation of our breathing would absolutely encase you in ice, and you didn't get cold. It acted just like an igloo. I don't think I ever had a chill burn on my feet. I don't think I ever really had frostbite of any kind in spite of this below zero weather we went through.

Marcello: And a lot of people did get frostbite and pneumonia.

Funk: Yes, but none of the people in my column. I was sort of self-appointed . . . I was interested in medicine. Of course, I had dropped out of . . . I had stopped my medical career to fly. I had made sure that the fellows that were close to me in our column had their extra pair of

socks next to their body to dry and that every time we stopped they changed socks so that they had a dry pair on. I don't think I had a man with even a blister on his feet in our immediate combine. It just took that little bit of extra urging to make them do this because they were bone-tired, you know, and hungry. You had to urge them to take their shoes off and take their socks off and put a dry pair on. But every break we took, which would be about every hour or hour and a half . . . I think this helped keep our health, too. It was just a matter of hygiene, of course. But, anyway, by the time we hit . . . let's see. That was Nuremberg in the dead of a snowstorm. I can see the snow falling across us now--not falling down but blowing across. It's sort of a vague memory of how we got to Moosburg. We marched all the rest of the way to Moosburg, which is in the center of a triangle between Nuremberg and Regensburg, and Augsburg.

Marcello: Wasn't this a train trip? Didn't you go by boxcars or something?

Funk: To Nuremberg.

Marcello: Oh, to Nuremberg?

Funk: Yes, and that's where we lost our train because it's been shot up.

Marcello: I see.

Funk: And from then on we marched the rest of the way.

Marcello: Where did you pick up that train?

Funk: Oh, in Spremberg.

Marcello: Spremberg. Okay, were you at a Luftwaffe base here for awhile?

Funk: No, not that we know of now. Not that we know of. We spent the night in churches and barns and haystacks. I remember one night we were in a barn, and some of the fellows hid in the hay and didn't come out when we went marching. They stayed behind to trade with the German people. They thought they had a better chance of surviving if they got with a German family. I know some of those fellows stayed behind to be with the Germans.

Marcello: In other words, the Germans were not even bothering about roll calls or things of that nature.

Funk: Oh, no, no. There was no way to keep track of us by then. When we hit Moosburg finally . . . when we marched into Moosburg, I know there was a Franch camp on one side, and we had no place to bed down. They bedded us in the straw on the bare ground until they could get tents put up for us. I somehow or other got lucky and drew the barracks. I got into a wooden barracks where there were numerous people. There was no room for beds or combines or anything.

Marcello: I understand it was very crowded here at Moosburg.

Funk: We just slept, really, anywhere we could get a place to sit. We couldn't lie down. It was so crowded in the

barracks that we slept sitting. Everybody had their fires going because it was cold and they wanted hot food. The smoke was blinding. I can remember that so distinctly. Then later on they got us into barracks. The enlisted men were living just in the community, and the officers again were segregated. They still had this thing about the officer having to be confined because he was the organizer.

Marcello: According to my records, you arrived in Moosburg somewhere around February 10.

Funk: I just can't remember that.

Marcello: And this so-called march of death was somewhere around 480 miles altogether. It took about thirteen days, almost two weeks.

Funk: You see, that extends to two months in my mind. And yet I know I was in Moosburg in winter and spring because we were liberated on April 29, and I had been there a month or six weeks, which would fit with your date there. But the length of the march was interminable to me. And yet documented here, it's thirteen days.

Marcello: Now as a camp--and I'm speaking now from a physical standpoint--how did Moosburg compare or contrast with Stalag Luft 3?

Funk: Oh, it was total confusion. People were scattered everywhere--groups here, groups there--and yet towards the end

they seemed to have separated us out. I remember after we had been there a short while the French were living in wet straw, and they carted them out by the cartloads from death of pneumonia. We really didn't have any epidemic, and yet they were just across the fence from us. They were just dying like flies apparently.

Marcello: Had your prison organization broken down, or were you still organized into combines or anything of this nature?

Funk: We were all confused. You just picked a place and picked a partner. In fact, we were trying to find old companions. I heard about Billy Voorhees from Dallas being there and I found him. I found Bill Bush who was there. He was a neighbor of mine in Dallas. I found him and visited with him. Then I desperately was looking for an old friend of mine who I had gone through cadets with, Gilbert Falke. I had heard word from friends he was here. We went overseas together.

Therein lies another story because our paths crossed repeatedly all through the war. We were on the train to California together, we finished cadets together, we washed out of flight training command together, went back to bombardier school, ended up at Victorville, went through the war together. He was shot down within hours of when I was shot down, only he was flying out of Italy. We ended up in the same prison area. Of course, he was wounded so badly that he was in a hospital the whole time. Lo and behold,

here we got down to Moosburg, and I found Gilbert so we were able to visit and compare notes then.

The strange sequel to that is that when I came back after the war is over, enter into medical school and sit down, here's Falke and Funk together in this class in medical school (laughter) just like we were in cadets. And our paths crossed repeatedly until we finished med school, and he's in Dallas practicing still.

Marcello: What sort of food did you get here at Moosburg?

Funk: Oh, I just don't remember. I know it was never enough. We had no parcels there.

Marcello: I think there was no rail service to Switzerland, so parcels couldn't get through.

Funk: Yes, nothing was moving that wasn't hit by Allied aircraft. I remember lying out on the . . . in early April I remember lying out in the sun on those beautiful spring days watching from dawn until dusk the B-24's from the 5th Air Force flying over to Regensburg, Nuremberg, and Augsburg and hitting them. We could see the smoke rising. Then the lines of them would be going back meeting each other--a continuous line of thousands of bombers from morning until night leaving southern France and going back. We didn't know whether it was Italy or southern France. But we know now that it was southern France that they were flying from.

Then, of course, we knew the end of the war was approaching because we began to hear sounds of battle and hear the sounds of artillery.

Marcello: Did you ever get any sort of an organization established here at Moosburg at all?

Funk: At least none that I was aware of. Certainly, there was a way that details were picked to bring food, what little hot food we got, and what bits of wood to burn and so forth. We did get a few chunks of coal occasionally down there, strangely enough. Again, we started making our "kriegie" burners (chuckle), started improvising ways of cooking.

Marcello: Now were you still under the control of the Luftwaffe here, or does the Wehrmacht come back in the picture or the Gestapo?

Funk: Apparently, we were still under the Luftwaffe. We had no way of really knowing because there were rumors about who was in command. We had rumors that the Gestapo had us and was marching us to death. Then we had rumors that the SS troops had taken over. Then we knew . . . we saw the guards. We knew they were still there. Yet, they acted like prisoners. There's such a confused memory of those last few months. I was so undernourished and really so fatigued--emotionally fatigued--that I really have but a blur of a memory. The only thing that stands out is that final moment when Patton drove in through the front gate and literally drove over the front gate of our prison compound.

Marcello: At this particular stage do you still think that there's a good possibility that you're all going to be lined up and shot?

Funk: Well, you know, the order still stands, and literally we ran onto the written order in the commandant's office. Why it was never carried out, no one knows. Goering, I presume, stopped it. He's the only one we can give credit to for stopping this order because the order to kill all prisoners-of-war was in the hands of the German commandant, even at Moosburg. And yet it was never carried out. These people evidently knew the war was over. Hitler didn't. He, you know . . . the fanatic that he was. Apparently, he hung onto victory as a last hope until he killed himself.

Marcello: Okay, so now we're getting into the closing stages of the war, and you're on the verge of liberation.

Funk: Do you know what stands out in my memory?

Marcello: Okay, what?

Funk: The pool. We had a pool of money. We didn't have any money, of course, but we put up a pool of money betting the day the war would end. I had May 7. You know, you drew a number. You picked what you thought was the most likely number. I picked May 7. Well, of course, that's when the shots stopped, but they didn't sign until the 9th, so I lost the pool (laughter). I don't know who finally got it (chuckle).

Marcello: In other words, you would simply . . . each one was more or less obligated to bet so much money.

Funk: Yes, right, yes. We put so much money in escrow. I don't know how it was ever collected (chuckle), but I assume it was.

Marcello: Well, you're getting into the sweat-out stage of the war now. Did you ever think about escaping at this point?

Funk: No, sir! No, sir! No escape thoughts at this time. We had one man go berserk and start over the wire, and they saw him and shot him down. We didn't entertain any thoughts because there was no way to dig, no way to go over the wire. The one man who went a little bit stir crazy at that time, and knowing the war was going to be over in a few days, in a panic started climbing the fence. Really, all he wanted was to visit somebody in another compound. Of course, the Germans shot him down. This is a . . . you know, this reminds you you're still a prisoner-of-war.

Marcello: Are you secretly collecting weapons of any sort just in case, you know, there might be some sort of a showdown?

Funk: I don't know of anyone that did anything until after the compound was broken down by Patton. Then they rushed into town. In fact, some of the Russians . . . by the way, we had Russian prisoners there by then. Some of them had to be militarily disciplined by Patton's troops. They were

hung, in fact, for rape and pillage. I'm sure that some of the GI's probably were disciplined, too. But I didn't know anything about that because when I found out there wasn't any food I went through the back fence waving at the military guards, by the way. They just waved good-bye (chuckle). They didn't try to stop us (chuckle).

Marcello: Also, during this period President Roosevelt died.

Funk: Yes.

Marcello: What sort of an effect did this have upon the morale of the camp or what sort of excitement or rumors did this cause?

Funk: Well, I don't know how to express this. I may not be expressing the feeling of all of the prisoners-of-war, but there was no depression. In fact, some of the people were glad he was dead because they thought he was sick and had sold us down the river at Yalta. We had news of Yalta. The majority of the people that I was in conversation with felt that he was a sick, old, used-up President who was not making wise decisions. And the Germans, of course, were amazed at this reaction. He died on April 2?

Marcello: April 12.

Funk: I couldn't remember for sure . . . early part of April. But, really, I sensed a feeling of relief. This just dismayed the Germans because they thought that with our leader

gone that, like Hitler being gone, all would be disorganization. They couldn't conceive of why we were not in absolute dismay at the death of our leader. Their philosophy's so different that they just couldn't understand that--the few that we heard express themselves. The mixed feelings of people at Roosevelt's death were so obvious--that so many people thought he was used up, that he had made poor decisions. This was sort of a . . . you know, very much a bone of contention among the political discussants because there were a lot of anti-Roosevelt people in prison camp that really didn't think too much of him. I don't know whether you picked up this kind of feeling or not.

Marcello: Not too much, no.

Funk: It wasn't an over thing. It wasn't a rebellion. It was just not a feeling of dismay at his death. It was a negative thing rather than a positive thing. Really I don't know how I felt. I was sorry that he was dead. But I really felt like he'd sold us down the river.

Marcello: Okay, I think this brings us up to the days immediately prior to the liberation. What I want you to do at this point is to recall as best you can in as much detail as you can remember just exactly how the liberation came about and what your experiences were in it.

Funk: Oh, well, that was . . . I will never forget those last few days because we were counting the minutes for Patton to get there. We knew that his armored divisions were close at hand. We could hear the sound of battle for a day ahead of liberation. We didn't know which direction they had come from. We knew it would be from south of Moosburg. Of course, he had overshot as usual and was coming back, and we knew that the SS troops were coming through there and were defending the area. Our guards had told us that. We were told to lie low.

In fact, I remember seeing my first German jet. One spring day we were out looking at the bombers go over that were going to Nuremberg and Augsburg and Regensburg and bombing. Suddenly we saw this aircraft come from a high altitude down through the flight and take two or three bombers with it in smoke--shot them down. As this plane came down, it made a steep descent, and we recognized that it had no prop. It was the first jet we'd ever seen. They, of course, had so little fuel for their jet planes that they could make one pass. They went to a certain altitude, came through a flight, and then landed. Shortly after that, I guess the next day or two, one of the German jets slow-rolled right down between two of our lines of barracks. The scream of those jet engines sounds like a falling shell. I

can see "kriegies" to this day scattering like rabbits, jumping under the barracks to keep from getting hit by the shrapnel, you know (chuckle).

And that was our first experience with a jet plane. We didn't even know what they were. We had had no rumor of propellerless aircraft, you know. Of course, we learned later that the Americans were also flying some jets in the later stages of the war, but we'd had no rumor of it even from the guys that were shot down.

But, anyway, those three days were crowded with every rooftop being filled with "kriegies" looking at Moosburg and trying to see when the flag went up.

Sure enough, on the morning . . . I guess it was about ten o'clock as I remember it. It was mid-morning, April 29, when the flag did indeed go up. The German flag was pulled down over the burghermeister's house and over the cheese factory, and up went the American flag. You know, this was an overwhelming time because we knew the war was over for us.

About that time, of course, Patton crashed in through the front gates of our compound. At this time, why . . . just shortly before this we had heard shots, and we had heard by rumor that our guards had been shot down by the SS troops because they were trying to surrender to our commandant. Sure enough, "Popeye" was

dead. I found that out for sure. He'd been one of the ones killed by the SS troops.

Marcello: Exactly what sort of emotions did you experience when you knew that it was over and you were about to be liberated?

Funk: "I'm hungry!" (laughter). Do you know what I did? I scrounged a full tin of GI peanut butter and ate so much peanut butter that night that I almost died. I had a blockage, and I swelled up like a poisoned pup. I lay in my bunk hoping I would die. It gradually subsided, and it was the next day then, April 30, that I went out through the fence when I found out there wasn't any food really for us. I went to Regensburg. They were still liberating that airfield. They were still evacuating German prisoners and were still under fire, and I hooked a ride on a C-47 to Rouen. That's about the end of the story.

Marcello: Now were you there when Patton crashed through?

Funk: Oh, yes. I have the . . .

Marcello: You might describe this incident.

Funk: Oh, that was thrilling because we were looking for food. When Patton's tank passed through our line . . . because we were literally lined up beside the roadway to cheer him and his troops. When his tank passed us we hoped they'd throw K-rations to us. They were out of food! Patton had outstretched his supply lines, and they had no food themselves. Instead they were throwing us .30-caliber automatic weapon

shells. I still have four of those as souvenirs so to speak. I never will forget how disappointed I was that he didn't have food for us.

Marcello: Incidentally, according to my records, I notice that at one point there on the verge of the liberation that the guards perhaps got nervous and did some firing into the prisoners, and some American planes came down and strafed the towers. Do you remember this incident?

Funk: Only by rumor. I did not see this. This was such a massive accumulation of troops that we only heard about this. We heard that there had been "kriegies" shot. We heard that guards had been shot. I really didn't witness any of this shooting. I didn't see the planes, but I do remember a photographic P-51 coming through. Then we knew things were really on the up-and-up. Three or four days before we were liberated a photographic ship, a P-51 equipped with photographic equipment instead of machine guns, came and slow-rolled over the camp and went on, you know, with impunity. He wasn't even fired on, so we knew then that the war was nearly over. That was the harbinger of the finale.

Marcello: Well, now exactly how did the liberation take place? Is this when Patton's men came in, or when did you have your first contact with the liberators?

Funk: Well, shortly after the flag went up over Moosburg, and of course, immediately after I tried to scrounge some food.

When I made myself sick and had to sleep it off that night then after the next day when I found there was no food, I left. So I didn't witness any of the confusion.

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Funk: I went through the wire to Regensburg very quickly. I didn't wait around to see where . . .

Marcello: Then from there you got back to Rouen.

Funk: I hitchhiked back to Rouen and then to Paris then to Rheims. Then at Rheims I was processed and . . .

Marcello: Now at Rheims, is this where Camp Lucky Strike was located?

Funk: No, Lucky Strike was . . . Lucky Rear now was Patton's deal in Rouen. Now wait a minute. No, in Paris. They were in Paris by then. That's when I tried to visit my brother-in-law. After May 9--8th and 9th I was in Paris --I made my way on to Rouen and then finally to Rheims.

Marcello: And that's where you were processed.

Funk: Yes. Then Rheims is where Camp Lucky Strike is. That's the processing center. There we were decontaminated.

Marcello: You might describe the processing that took place there.

Funk: I only remember being deprived of all my clothing--mounds of clothing outside the going-in line and throwing it on there--and saying, "Gee, I wish I could keep those woolens." But they were full of vermin and filth. The only thing I

got to keep was my shoes. So I got a full new issue. You saw the list of things that they issued to us. They said, "Take what you need, but don't take more." I came out with the first bath in several months and clean and decontaminated, DDT'd and all. They sprayed us in those days with DDT to get rid of the lice.

I don't know that I had any vermin personally. I don't remember ever having but bedbugs bite me. Of course, they didn't stay on you. But I think that the fellows in our combine had such good personal hygiene that we never did have any vermin living on us. But the rule was that there was body lice, so everybody had to be DDT'd and decontaminated.

When I got out of the processing center at Rheims, I have no idea how I got to LeHavre. I don't remember whether I hitchhiked, went by truck, train. I really don't remember how . . . I was so excited, so consumed with the idea now of getting home. I had a full belly now, and I wasn't hungry anymore. I was so consumed with the idea of getting back to the United States that I didn't pick up any souvenirs except those few bits and scraps that you saw--an armband here and a medallion there. I think I did salvage a GI watch, a German GI watch, that I brought back.

Marcello: When did you get your first, what I would call, solid food? Now at first I think they were giving you mainly soft foods, weren't they?

Funk: I didn't go through that.

Marcello: You went through the process . . .

Funk: I went through the camp. I won't say AWOL. I was a prisoner-of-war. There's no way I could be AWOL. I went to Regensburg and hit a regular GI chow line. Of course, they recognized me for what I was. I ate so much oatmeal--I heaped up both sides of a mess kit that someone loaned me--that I couldn't contain it! I was like an old Roman. I simply vomited it up (chuckle). And from then on I was careful about how much I ate. I only ate small portions and tried to eat several times a day because I just couldn't hold food down if I ate much. It was several days before I was really able to hold down a full meal.

From Rheims . . . there was an interesting thing at Rheims. You know, before I told you about the cathedral in Strasbourg that they told us was demolished and wasn't. When I got to Rheims I had the pleasure of seeing one of the bridges that was bombed lying in the river where we had hit it and the cathedral at the base of the road right where the bridge . . . the cathedral was still intact, which the Germans had propogandized that we had destroyed.

So I know those two were not destroyed. This filled me with pleasure because the one disappointment in bombing was remembering the historic, romantic, old landmarks of Germany and France that were going to go before the board from the bombings. I'm sure a lot of them did. But these two I saw still standing. I know that that was propaganda because I saw them standing.

Marcello: This brings up an interesting question, I think. When you were moving around from place to place near the end of the war, that is, on your way from Sagan to Moosburg, were you able to observe the damage that had been done by the air raids on the German cities?

Funk: Oh, yes.

Marcello: What sort of feeling did you have when you saw what had been done?

Funk: Well, of course, I was angry at Germany. When I went through Dresden, which is the home of Dresden china, I had mixed feelings. I was angry at Germany; I was glad it was destroyed. I had a crude animal pleasure that Dresden was destroyed. Then I had second thoughts. I thought of Dresden china and the precious, priceless china that came out of this place. Then I was filled with remorse for the loss of the art, the loss of the culture. But the feeling for the Germans--I had none. I was then at an animal stage of being, you know, just looking for revenge.

I was still looking for the guy that hit me in the jaw (chuckle).

Marcello: You hadn't forgotten about him, then.

Funk: I hadn't forgotten him (laughter).

Marcello: I know that a lot of the prisoners seemed to have vivid memories of Nuremberg in particular. I gather that this was the place that the British normally panted. They apparently had bombed the rubble and then rebombed what they had . . . they seemed to be trying to break things up into smaller pieces.

Funk: Well, the trouble was that the Germans . . . every night they had a night bombing. You know, the British bombed at night.

Marcello: Yes.

Funk: Every night the British bombed the Germans started rebuilding the next day. They were building Messerschmitts while they were being bombed. How they kept it up, I don't know. But the devastation of Nuremberg was complete just like Dresden. Dresden was totaled. Those are the only two that I really saw that were totaled.

Now Frankfurt, as I entered into my prison life, was devastated, but I only saw the station there. It was bombed out. They just had tracks laid on top of the rubble to pick us up. I understand now from visitors to Germany that the station at Frankfurt is a beautiful new building.

Marcello: As you look back on your experience as a prisoner-of-war, what do you see as perhaps being the key to your own survival in getting through this?

Funk: I really don't know how to answer that. It used to be that when you'd fly you'd laugh about, "Well, you'll only go when your number comes up." Then some wag would say, "Well, what about if the pilot's number comes up?" (laughter). I don't know. I don't know what carried us through. I think Yankee ingenuity carried us through more than anything else--being able to make do with minimal amounts, being able to cook with nothing and to make food out of nothing and basically excellent help to begin with that carried us through those months. I don't think if we hadn't been absolutely, perfectly conditioned by months of training ahead of us that we would have been able to stand it. I think our physique, our body health, was what carried us best, along with Yankee ingenuity.

Marcello: Well, that's all the questions I have. Do you have anything else that you think needs to be a part of the record, or have we more or less covered everything?

Funk: Oh, there's lots missing (chuckle). It takes some key questions to jar my memory. A lot of little incidents like at Spremberg, you know, when we were in the first hot chow line in several days.

Marcello: Now Spremberg was one of the stops along the march.

Funk: Yes, after we left Sagan and were on the way to Moosburg. I remember we were all weak with hunger. We had a wash basin we scrounged along the way that we were going to get our porridge in. They had some hot porridge for us instead of the bread and water that we had been getting. I was chosen to stand in line. As I stood at the line and . . . just as I got up and the porridge was poured in my pan, I passed out, just passed out cold. I woke up back in my group of three or four fellows that were sticking together. They had saved my portion of porridge. They had eaten theirs, and they were waiting for me to wake up to eat my share (chuckle). You know, all that stuff stands out and a lot of little stories like that. The church at Muskau . . . Muskau? The first stop after Sagan.

Marcello: I have it here.

Funk: What was the first stop after Sagan?

Marcello: Just a second.

Funk: I can't remember the name of that church.

Marcello: It was Muskau.

Funk: That's where it was! It was snowing and bitter cold and no food that night. It was our first night. I remember being in the pews of the church, and it was one of these ancient churches that had all sorts of areas where you

could climb up and sleep, and there were "kriegies" everywhere! I never saw so many people asleep inside one building! Of course, it was a shelter from the weather. There was no heat in this place, but just the shelter from the weather that made it warmer.

Marcello: In fact, I think a lot of the "kriegies" had a two-day rest here, did they not?

Funk: Yes. We weren't used to marching, and we were all pretty weak from hunger. I think we stayed there . . . I think the Germans were trying to decide which way to go, is what I really think. I don't think they were resting us. I think they just didn't know which way to take out of there. That's the reason that I think I remember some off-of-the route places like Plauen. I seem to remember Plauen. Now it may be that I remember that as a bombing target because some of these things are confused in my memory.

But after Muskau and Spremberg there's a gap. I couldn't tell you which route we took because we doubled back and we made right turns and we made left turns on these country roads. I really don't know how we got to Spremberg.

But from Spremberg we hit the boxcars, of course. That was torture. Too many of us . . . I don't know how many--sixty in a boxcar that maybe should not have

had more than forty. That was torture. I'd have rather been marching. The boxcars were torture. That's a story in itself.

All of this is vague in my memory. As I told you awhile ago, it extended two months when historically it was thirteen days. It seemed like months to me that we were in those boxcars. I think that's enough for now.