

August Wickert Oral History Interview

AUGUST WICKERT: -- would be an opportunity when we got together here for me to relate some of this to you to give you an idea about what we've been through, what we went through, and what we had to put up with while we were in the service. I went to the service -- I started in February, and we left in February, and we went on the train. That's the first time I ever went on a train, up to Chicago, the CNE Railroad.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get drafted?

AW: Oh, yeah, I was drafted. Yeah. I got my greetings from the government, or from the president. They sent a letter that said, "Greetings, you have been selected to serve your country," or something like that, so...

I: Where were you then?

AW: So we went up on that train. It was the first time I had written on a train as far as that goes. We went out to O'Hare. Then they took us out all around to Chicago. We went into (inaudible) station around Chicago. And then that's where they took us in, and we went then down to Fort Butner, North Carolina. I was in the 78th Division, which was the Lightning Division. The general of that division

got an award after the service. I read where he got an award for feeding the division on the least amount of food of any general in the service. (laughter) And I can always remember being hungry down there. And I always swore at that son of a gun for starving us to death, because we'd go out -- and I was used to -- we'd go on problems, and they wouldn't give you any water. I was used to drinking water when I got hot, and working in the field in North Carolina, working -- walking on the sand -- it was sand. Our freight field was hard sand that was baked. And you'd go out there in the 100-degree, 100-and-some-odd degree weather in sand, inspections, and so forth, and you hear the guns clanging all around you, (laughs) and guys fell down, you know? Every time we had an inspection, we'd hear at least 12 of them. You can count 12 of them that had passed out while we were in the sand, at attention.

I: You guys passed out every time?

AW: Huh?

I: Did you guys pass out (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

(laughter)

AW: No, I don't know about that. I never -- I knew a couple of them that passed out, but they'd only passed out once in our outfit that would be close to it, but... We walked down there. We did a lot of walking. Of course, they put me in

the infantry. I went in the infantry. There was an experience at O'Hare, when we were going to get our inspection at -- our physical at Fort Sheridan. We were going through this line, and they said they needed some Seabees. These are construction people of the Navy. And they needed some of those. And they said, "Anybody want to volunteer to go through this door here?" So I thought -- well, I was the fourth or fifth one back, so I thought, well, what the heck, I might as well try that. So I went in through that door and the first station there. Why, the first thing they had in there, they had this colorblind thing, and they said, "What numbers do you see in there?" And I said, "There are supposed to be numbers there?"

(laughter)

F1: You can tell him the Coast Guard, dear.

AW: Huh?

F1: You could tell him it is the Coast Guard.

AW: No. Well, the Seabees are the same thing. But anyway, he said, "You go back through that door there." (laughter) So I was in the same line as the Army. That was my stint at the Navy. (laughter) They said (inaudible). But anyway, they put us in the service. We went to Camp Butner in North Carolina and then the 78th, which was the Lightning Division. Then after we went through basic training, and

we've been on training -- I've been -- we were in around about 11 months or so when I -- well about 10 months. They ordered for some cadre, or for some people to come out. You had to have a certain idea, a certain IQ, and they wanted certain officers. Well, I was a corporal at this time, and you had to be a noncom officer, and you had to have an IQ of at least 190. Well, I was the only one in our platoon... I mean of 95 not 190, of 95 not 190, 95. And I had one of the 100. That's where the 190 came from. (laughter) Mine was 100. But anyway, they took us in, and I was the only one in our outfit that met this -- or in our platoon that met this category. I mean our company. And every company had so many deferments. This is the way I went out, and they sent us out then, and then we're always sitting around waiting. You know, you go from one... We ended up in Picket, Virginia and then -- they shipped us out there from Picket, Virginia. And when we went out, they told us in a couple of days -- we were out about a day on the ocean, and they told us that we were headed for... Or they wouldn't tell us where we were headed for, but it was kind of... And that was before D-Day, and everybody was training in England, and everybody's friends was in England, you know, your relatives and everybody was in England preparing for the march. If you were going off the East Coast, well,

you'd be going to Europe. And so that was what we kind of thought. But after we were out about four days, it came in on the noncom one day and said, well, our destination had been changed. We are now going down to Algiers, which is in Africa. So this was different then. I mean, you know, but that's what they told us. That was the first time we knew anything about -- but they changed our destination. So we went down to Algiers. Now the one day out, out off the shore, I was seasick. And of course, if you hadn't been seasick, you don't know how sick you can be. You throw up, you sit on the stool and throw up, and you sit down and try to puke in the next one. (laughter) You never go eat, or you quit eating. You just can't eat anything, and your stomach is always in a turmoil. But in the First World War, Dad was seasick, and he told us about all he could eat were apples and crackers when he went overseas. And, of course, we didn't. I just quit eating, and everybody else there was seasick. The ones that were really seasick, why, they didn't eat. But we got to Algiers, and they just took us off of this one boat, ran us up on the pier, on the gangplank, and down into an English ship. I called it a limey ship, but this was a -- that's what they called the English in the war was limeys. And, of course, this was an English ship, and it was... Now, we went across on -- and

I don't remember the name of it, but it was a clean ship, and it was a good ship, and it was all troops. You were in three decks in the hole where you slept, and then you slept in these brigade. Now, I don't know, for some reason, our records or my records always kept getting lost. I thought they probably picked up the stack and never got the last one or something. (laughs) But three or four times, my records were lost. Even in prison camp, they were lost, and when I got back from overseas they were lost once, when I was changed from or moving from one place to another. But we got on this ship on the Mediterranean, why, they slept in hassocks [sic] over the dining room table, the long tables here in the dining room, and then they would tie hassocks to the ceiling and -- hammocks, yeah, OK -- and sleep in them. And I put mine up that first night. We went in about four o'clock. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. And the English ship left after dark, left the harbor, then we could feel the motor start, you know. And, I mean, the motor's going in, going out. But it was just after dark, and so you didn't know anything about it. Well, I put this hammock up, and I crawled on that thing, and I said, "Boy, this isn't going to work." (laughs) So I rolled out of it right quick, and took it down, and laid it on the table. And I go, "Well, this is pretty good." So I went to sleep,

and I slept all night, and I woke up, and I go, "Boy, I didn't even get sick yet." And I hadn't much more than I got that thought through my mind and as my stomach (inaudible), and I took off up the stairs and up, out on the deck. And I reached for the deck, just to throw up, you know, and a big wave came up and just (laughter; inaudible). I got some saltwater, you know spit, saltwater, wet, soft, wet. So I go back down and I finally get -- I ease out and I go back downstairs. Well, I find out that the sea is -- we were in the Mediterranean now, and it got so rough that that deck was off limits. You weren't supposed to be on that deck because there were so much water washing on it. But I threw -- they had lost a couple of guys overnight, so the story was. I didn't know them or didn't know who it was, but just was the story that they'd lost a couple of guys in the sea overnight who were on the patrol or on duty. They were walking the deck and got washed overboard. I don't know how true that is, but that was the story. But anyway, we weren't supposed to be on that deck. But I threw up there and... Now, they bake their own bread, kept their own flour and everything. And the first night we got it, why, we had these little black specks in them, in the bread. And you got to looking at 'em and they were mice turds (laughter) that that they had cooked in the flour.

You had those to eat on this ship. Now, they hadn't been to port for a long time apparently, I don't know, but anyway, they had beans that had bug holes in -- you know, weevils in them and stuff. Their food -- I mean, this was the quality of food that they were eating on there, they were fed on that English ship. But I didn't eat very much anyhow after that (laughter) until -- it took us three to five days to get to Naples, and that's where we were headed and we went. But I finally got on right behind the engine room upstairs, or the captain's deck -- what do they call it anyway where the captain drives, you know, (inaudible) ship from. And I finally got right behind that in the sunshine, and it was from the south, and I could stand in that day, I could set there most of the day without having to go to the rail, or... And I don't know, for some reason I didn't get the runs on the lower end, or didn't get diarrhea on that ship, but I did throw up all the time. I could keep nothing down. But we got into Naples then, and that's where we first saw there's been -- there's some people starving. We got off of the ship, and little kids just flocked toward us as we come up, asking for candy, or food, or something, you know? Little Italian kids that they were hungry, and they had learned that they could get stuff from the troops, of course. Well, then they took us out that night and they put

us -- they didn't get us out until late, dark. And it was after dark and they put us in this -- they told us to put up our pop tents there while it was dark. And nobody dug a trench around theirs or anything, and it rained that night. It rained that night, so you got up and everything was wet. Your blankets were all wet because the water had run under them. And we didn't get up until about nine o'clock and then they took us to eat something... Well, no, they had breakfast over with. They didn't wake us for breakfast to eat because the company that we were going to didn't even know we were there. See, we went to this 45th Division, and they didn't take us to the companies that we were assigned to. They just took us to division headquarter. Well division headquarters, they had all their men, and they didn't even bother to tell us, so we went without breakfast that morning. But we got something to eat then in early noon, because we went to the outfits. We hadn't eaten. Well, they just went to the companies.

I: How many were in your group? How big a group are you talking about?

AW: A whole shipload. Hey, I don't know. There would be companies of us, but it was all temporary, you see.

I: How many in a company?

AW: Well, a company has four platoons, and the three rival platoons have 12 members to a squad, and a squad leader sits as squad leader so -- I mean platoon leader. So they got 36. Thirty-eight times three is 100. And then the fourth platoon or the fourth squad, which is the machine gun and mortars, and they want to have the same 14, the same numbers, so there would be 14 times four would be... And then there were four of those. See, there's four platoons to a company.

I: Two hundred?

AW: Yeah, around 240, 250, something like that. That would be the whole one. But now, we weren't full, because they didn't have enough of them to fill the whole squad up. In other words, they broke us up into platoons and so forth. And I don't know how many there was in -- because you just were in groups. They read your name off, and you went with that group, you know? And then when they started sending us out to the outfits, well, they got us to the outfits, and we started up to the frontlines that day, and it was a very clear day. Now, this was in Anzio, and that's where the Germans had re-attacked, you know, in Italy. They came in at Anzio, after they had been at the --

I: How long had the Allies been (inaudible) then? What's the dates?

AW: A couple -- well...

I: A couple of months?

AW: Yeah. This was in --

I: A year...

AW: -- February in... See, I went to the service in February, and I was -- I went overseas in February. I was over there in February. I was captured in February. I had gone in the service, and then the next year I was captured, in February. So February isn't a good month for me, (laughter) from that standpoint. But --

I: What year?

AW: Forty... Let me see. I've got to go back now. I graduated in '41, '42, '43. I guess I went into the service -- '44 is when I went overseas. I was captured in... Yeah, I was captured in February of '44.

I: When was D-Day?

AW: Forty-five.

I: Oh, D-Day was '45.

AW: D-Day as in -- oh, in France?

I: When they invaded.

AW: June of --

I: Forty-three?

AW: Let's see. No, forty... I was captured in -- what'd I say, '43?

M1: You were captured in '44.

F1: Forty-four.

I: You were probably captured in '43.

AW: It was in -- D-Day was in '44. It was after I was captured.

M1: Forty-three. D-Day was six months before you were captured, then six months after...

I: Oh, OK. They were in Italy before they were in France --

AW: Oh, yes, they were in Italy. See they came out of Africa.

And then they came up to -- and I want to say Fara Sabina, but that's not the right town. Anyway, on the boot of

Italy. And then they were having trouble there so they went up and entered at Anzio, which is up north further, about at the knee of the boot.

I: And they had done this just shortly before you got there.

AW: Right, and the Germans were driving just as we're -- the Germans had brought in SS troops and Polish soldiers down there to fight -- I mean, to reinforce those people. And when they brought those in, then they started getting replacements for the Americans, and then that's when they changed our ship to go to Italy, instead of going to Africa, and then on to England, like they intended to. See, we went in on replacement to this unit that was getting whipped in Anzio.

I: The Allies were in Italy about six months before they captured (inaudible).

AW: No, about a year.

I: About a year. I didn't realize.

AW: Yeah. And I don't know the exact dates. You can look up the history, that part of it, but it's something like -- they were in there quite a while before we ever went. Now, see, from a year, the time I was in, I was in prison camp. From the time I left the States, I'm talking about. I mean I was drafted, and a year later I went overseas, and within a year of the time I was drafted, I was a prisoner of war. And these guys who were in prison camp had been in prison camp since Africa. They wanted to know all about. You know, how's things -- here's a guy that just left and was captured right away, you know? But they put me in -- we got overseas, and we got on the frontlines. Now, we were going up to the frontlines this day, and it was a real clear day. You know, one of these days you could see forever. And we counted 23 airplanes shot down that day. They had as many -

I: Whose planes?

AW: Usually Germans, but they would -- the tracers... Now, the tracers is every fifth shell in a belt that they're firing, and antiaircraft. And the tracers were so heavy, were so

thick, it looked like you could walk on them, you know, shooting up at these planes. They were that thick up there, because all of these different antiaircraft guns that were in there protecting against the German Luftwaffe that had come in to -- they held this counterattack against what was at Anzio. But we walked that day and that night it started raining, and we were on our way to the frontlines. Now, we started up to the frontlines. You were asking about squads. I told you there's supposed to be 12 to a squad. We had three: there was a sergeant, and then we had one -- we had two... No, we had a BAR man, a guy with a BAR gun. That was the most automatic of the weapons that we had. And then usually in a squad you had the BAR man, you had his assistant, and his second in command, or three BAR people in a squad. The rest were all riflemen. Well, I was the assistant squad leader, because the rest of them had been killed, captured or something. And so we were supposed to have 12 and we had -- well, we started out with four, and on the way up there this fellow had received the word that his twin brother had been killed somewhere else. And this was the second one in the family that has been killed. Well, we started to the frontlines, and we got up to where these -- talking about these airplanes and everything going, and he turned around and went back, and, you know, just couldn't

take it anymore. But we went on going up there. But we walked all day. We'd see these -- and you'd see a big plane flip. You know, sometimes you'd see a parachute come out and he'd float down. Sometimes you wouldn't see anything. You know, if you just -- wasn't a plane that come tumbling down, then you'd see nothing, and you'd see the dust. But there were twenty-- we counted -- I counted 23 that day. And you started putting the cost of these planes, you know, you'd think about what's this costing the country, you know? And you'd put this cost of those planes to these, and 23 in one day, you're all -- plus all the people and everything else. I'm talking about just the airplane cost, you know, about the cost of it. But you could see very well. That night and it had started raining, and it rained, and hard rain. And we were going to the frontlines then, because we'd gone, joined our outfit. They had come back, and they were in -- supposed to be rested for a week. And we were relieving the English. They were -- the English were on the frontline, and we were relieving them. But going -- that night, it was so dark, you couldn't see -- you just couldn't see anything. You'd have to hold on to the guy in front of you. Well, you'd get off of the road and you'd go in the water up to your waist, you got in the ditch. If you stayed off to your left a little bit, you would be up to your knees

or halfway to your knees or something like this. That's how deep the water was, and we were wading through, going to the front lines. And so you would hold on to the guy. If he went down, you'd kind of let it down, (laughs) come back up, you know? But that's the way we went to the frontline that night, and we walked all night that night, and then they got us into a house, you know. That's because we were leaving these Englishmen. Now, they were in the back. They still had people up -- I mean, the people in the front. This was back at the second -- this was a front, and then this was a main front, then there was a second front, and we were back here somewhere, and then we were coming up from that. And that's how far back we were. The next morning, then, we started -- when we started going with our outfit up to take over the English, where the English were, and we were walking along, and all the shells had come in. This is when you'd start hearing the shells whistle, and, you know... And they'd tell you, "Well, if you hear them, don't worry about them. It's the ones that had 'To whom it may concern.' They're the ones you've got to worry about." (laughs) But we were going up there along the ditch. You know, the English were coming back this way, and we were going this way. And there was a shell hit right over hairline. I fell on the -- everybody fell down, and I fell over like this. Well, I

felt a stinging in my back, and then I saw there was smoke coming out of it. And I had a bandolier. You hooked the bandolier, which was a packet of cartridges, you know, a clip of cartridges, a dozen of them in a bandolier. You got two of those to go into battle with, plus the one that you had that you were using. And I had this bandolier hung over my back. Well, what had happened, a piece of shrapnel had hit one of these clips, and had cut through my jacket. I had a jacket on. I had a shirt on, wool shirt. I had an undershirt on, and had cut through those and not cut my skin, but it had burned the cloth. And this thing was burning, and I couldn't get it off my back, you know. And I was trying to get it off, and I told the guy behind me, I said, "Get this -- you know what's going on here?" And he looked and saw what it was and he took off. Well, then the sergeant from the other squad saw -- came up and he saw what it was. And he came up, took it off, and just put it over to the side, you know. (laughter) But here -- I mean I kept asking him, you know if there was blood there or anything. I kept feeling for blood. He said, "No, it red. It was burned." And that was all that it had. It cut through, and came that close to going into my back here, and went through a jacket, a petite jacket, a belt, the belt on your pack, and through the pants, and -- I mean, through the

shirt, and two shirts, and I had a heavy undershirt on, a wool -- a heavy undershirt, and a regular undershirt. And it went through all of that and didn't hit me. But then we went on up to the front that day, going up to -- moving on up to the front, and we were up there, and we went into -- we were following a ditch system along. Well, we were coming this direction, and then there was a big drainage and irrigation ditch is what it was, drainage ditch, and they had dug out holes in there for you to sit in, so you could watch the Germans over there. Well, we sat here about three days, and we could see the Germans moving around. Now, they were out of range. They would be, oh, 1,200 to 1,000 feet away. Our guns, rifles were exact at about 750. And if the activity got too much, well, you set your sights up as high as you could, and then you'd see that guy, and you'd elevate, you know, and see -- and every once in a while you'd get close enough you could see, well, it didn't fall down or move or something. (laughs) Don't know if you ever hit anybody or not. But they would shoot back at us the same way. I mean, they knew where we were setting. They knew we were dug in. But they were walking from building to building all the time, and we could set there and see them. Now, we didn't know this at the time, but the second day they had taken the left side -- no, the right side -- and

the third day they had taken the second side, the left side of us. We were the only ones that had held up.

I: The Germans had taken --

AW: Yeah.

I: -- the side (inaudible).

AW: And then that next morning, about daylight, the farmhouse... Now, this was Mussolini's development project, where he put these houses up and irrigated the ground, and it was good houses, I mean, and good ground, or good crops. But this is a project that he had developed there for the country, and was a good one. But we were in these houses, these farmhouses then. But they'd taken the machine gun -- we knew we had a machine gun at the next house over, because that was the left of us. And they were shooting on that. Well, the next morning, when it got daylight, them son-of-a-guns was shooting right down the ditch at us, or behind it. They couldn't shoot down our ditch; they were shooting behind us. But they were shooting -- so the Germans had taken that over and were shooting at us with our own machine guns. Well, then we found out that our other side was out. Now, the captain then, or the lieutenant, was going to pull us back. And so he ordered us to withdraw, and we started back. Well, then he got an order from headquarters somewhere that says, "Hold at all costs." So we were left

out there. Now, he pulls us back then just over the crest of the hill, like about from here to the [Fairway?] House, the old Fairway House. Would've been about that far back. That was where the crest of the hill was, all right. Our artillery fell in on us. Our mortars fell in on us. They were trying to hit those guys coming, but they fell in on us. And so here you are, ducking your head, or trying to save your eyes from that, and then when it let up you look up, and here all the Germans had been able to move up. Just every six feet there was a German helmet sticking up along that hill there. And this is when we we realized -- I mean, then they started saying, "Come on..." We were still firing, and the lieutenant was back here waiting for (laughter; inaudible). We were still shooting.

I: They were saying, "Come, come."

AW: Yeah, to give up.

I: Oh.

AW: See? And then, of course, this is the way we were captured.

I: The lieutenant was still telling you -- or he was wanting to screen --

AW: He was the one that had the flag waving, see? Because they'd told him, you know, to hold at all costs. He knew what was going to... Well, he knew also that they had the left flank, and they were two miles behind us there, and

five miles behind us on the right. So we had no way to get out. The only guy that got out was the second -- the master sergeant -- or the staff sergeant, the lieutenant -- or the platoon sergeant in the second platoon. He saw what was happening, and he took off.

I: By himself.

AW: Yeah. He just took off. And --

I: Was that during the night, or first thing in the morning?

AW: That was in, oh, yeah, the first day, first light of morning. We started -- that machine thing started firing at first light of the morning. They had taken that at dawn, you know, or before dawn. They'd taken that out that day. And they got our mortars, and, of course, they were using our mortars, and firing them over at us, because they were on both sides. That was (inaudible).

I: I mean, this was your company that you were --

AW: Yeah.

I: -- your company here --

AW: Right.

I: -- 250 people --

AW: No. Well, we were supposed to be 250. When we were supposed to have 12, we had three in our squad.

I: That's the way it was.

AW: And most of them had five. That was the most anybody had.

I: You were down below a hundred, around a hundred men, then.

AW: Oh, yeah.

M1: Fifty.

AW: I'll tell you what, we were --

I: How many were you there that surrendered, then?

AW: Maybe about a hundred, I would guess, something like that.

I: Most of them made it through, then?

AW: Well, yeah, that didn't get killed, yeah. There was a lot of them injured and stuff like that, but we didn't lose, like, half of them where everybody was killed, or anything like this. We didn't have a chance -- I mean, they had no chance to fight me at that point, because they came up on us at dark, and then our artillery was in on us, and you couldn't stay up through that because you'd definitely be mowed off, because they would hit, and then, you know, they just threw that artillery --

M1: You'd be down in the ground.

AW: Well, we'd stay down in the hole, you know. Because they had these holes dug. But anyway, then after we were captured they took us up, and they sent us back to a med aid station. Now, this is when we found out it was SS troops and the Polish people. So these Polacks didn't want to do anything. I mean, they didn't want to fight at all, you know. (laughs) The SS troops kept them going. And the ones

in our outfit that could speak Polish, you know, and they talked to them, and that's how we found out about it was from the Polish soldiers that the Germans were fighting (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

I: They were wearing German uniforms?

AW: Yeah, oh, yeah. And they had -- I mean, they had --

I: And they were drafted by the Germans to fight for --

AW: Well, they were young. Well, they were captured by the Germans when they took over Poland. They took all those guys and put them in the Army, see.

I: I see.

AW: And that's what they brought down here were the people they trained from Poland with some SS troops, just off this invasion that they started. But when they brought us back, we had to carry -- then going back to their aid station -- now, see, there was a soap factory there they were trying to capture.

I: The Germans were trying to capture American --

AW: Well, no, the Germans had... The Americans had it first and the Germans captured it back, and that was the main objective: to get that control of that soap factory. Because, you see, when we woke up that morning, after we got there, we went into one of these houses that Mussolini had built. And when the daylight came we saw there was

mountains here and mountains here, and we were down this valley. Soft Valley, I think, [Salt?] Valley, or [Sore?] Valley, something like that. But anyway, we were down in this valley is where we were, and we were down in the middle of it. They had 88s set up on these banks over here, on each hillside.

I: Howitzers?

AW: Yeah. And so the first day they took our squad, and this is when we were up on the frontline. They took our squad, and we went in this barn. And the barn was attached to the house, the cow barn, and then the house was here, two-story house. Well, our squad went in here the first day, and the second day then they pulled up -- my platoon sergeant pulled me and another guy from the company, and there were three of us that they took up for lookouts up in the upstairs... See, and that's when we could see what these Germans were doing, and what they (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

I: You were in houses, then, too.

AW: We were in a house, yeah. That's where we thought we would go, see, at this time. Well, they started moving this door here, on the front door. And the first day, well, by ten o'clock, they'd laid an 88 right in there, in that door. (laughs) It had a little cupula on it, you know? They blowed that thing right up, blowed the door out. So any

movement, why, they would shoot at. Now, we were upstairs, and the English had left a five-gallon square tin of dried tea. And this was where I drank tea, mostly because we would cook tea up there and drink tea out of it, and we learned to drink -- you know, that's where I learned to drink tea. But I was on lookout at day, and at night, then, I would pull a two-hour shift, and we'd go out on -- this is a wheat field out to the east, and we'd go out there, and lay out there at night, so if they were coming we would know about it, see. And in the morning, then, when we were back, and got back up here, and it was frosty, just like -- well, it's February, I mean, and there would be frost, we come back in the morning, go upstairs, we could see out there where we'd been laying (laughter) ourselves out there, where we'd been laying. Well, they could see that, too, so they knew right where our outpost was. That may be why they didn't come that way, but we were the last ones that, you know, they came around. But we were in this house, and that was where we were. And then, of course, when we were fighting, we were fighting away from that house when we got out there. We'd pulled out of that house and gone up to the line, or withdrawn. I don't know which was which we had done. But you had no movement in the daytime at all; you'd only move at night. But when we went to the frontline, or

after we were captured, we went back, going back, they told us we had to carry the wounded back, and they told us to carry wounded. Well, there were four of us, and I don't know who the other three were. But we had this big, tall guy, and I don't know where he was from, but he was out of his head. He was always talking about I believe it was Rosemarie, always talking about Rosemarie, you know, all the way. And we carried him about a half mile back to this aid station. We got him to the aid station, and we got him to the door, and there were Germans came and took him. They didn't let us carry him in; they just come in the door and took him. But going along there, coming back here, why, there was guys that Germans -- a guy had been hit directly - - his leg was laying out on the side. His intestines were hanging on a bush and stuff like that. As you come along, you know, you saw that kind of stuff all the way back from the frontline. So we were taking our poll of them, but this is the kind of stuff you saw when you were coming back, and here we were carrying this six-foot -- he was 6'5" or something, like, 200-and-some-odd pounds, real heavy man, but he'd been, you know, seriously hurt. But we got to the aid station then, and they lined us up, and this is where I got a hundred, because they lined us up four abreast. We always marched three abreast. They lined us up four abreast

all the time. Well, they were bombing this soap factory, you know, the planes were. They were coming over and bombing it. Well, they had got us up there and collecting. They started deciding to send us back. And we had this one SS troop sergeant. He was an older man, and he was hollering all the time, you know, and pushing people around, real rough, you know, always hollering something at us. But we were lined up, and he was one of them get -- you know, that was supposed to be -- was going to take us. When he brought us back, he was overseeing us coming back and carrying the dead back. And so it was one of them. He was the one that stood out in my -- I remember, because the way he treated us. But anyway, they got us lined up here, and I saw those planes coming, and I thought, uh-oh, they'll recognize us. They'll recognize we're, you know, Americans. Well, they dropped their bombs on the soap factory, and peeled off, and come over, and they saw this formation. (laughter) Well, right over us. Of course, we fell down, and now Smith, who lives in (inaudible) Missouri was a fella that we trained with in the 78th, that he was shipped out the same time I was. He was in the same squad I was. And we were in that same -- we were captured -- he was captured before I was, but he was -- and he was a different company at that time, but we were captured... So we were standing

right side by side. And these planes come over, we all fell down. I fell down this way, and Smith fell down right behind me, because we were standing right side by side, see? I got up and looked at Smitty. I looked around after they were gone to see who was hurt, and I looked at Smitty, and (inaudible) blood, or, you know, had blood flowing. I said, "Are you hurt? Are you hit?" He said, "No, I don't think so." Well, what had happened is a bullet had hit close enough to his face to make the ground come up and break the skin all over it. Now, he had a dark beard. He's a real dark man -- I mean, dark-haired man, real thick, dark hair, and he had a beard on it. And he had this blood and this dirt and this blood, you know. And he really looked like the whole part of his face was blown off. But a bullet also had gone in his shirt, or in his jacket, through his shirt, in his cigarette carrier. He smoked. He had a cigarette, metal, you know... Hit that, and came back out, and went in the ground. Now, that was right between he and me, and that's how close (laughs) we came at that point. And, of course, then we got started walking. Well, then when the next bunch of planes came over, because they came over about every 15, 20 minutes going to that soap factory, and bombing something up there around that, and we would, you know, line up cars or convoys or something.

I: Germans didn't have planes up there to challenge them then?

AW: The Americans didn't then. Now, the Americans did --

I: So these were American planes?

AW: That came up, yeah, shooting the -- well, yeah, but the shrapnel that I was telling you about shooting all the ones down, they didn't have many left anymore, and if they were out, they controlled air at this stage --

I: Americans.

AW: -- see. And they came in, and they'd peel off, and, you know... Now, the first two planes hit or shrugged us, but now the one of them hit us, and then the other one went to the side of the house. This one came right over us. We were right against the aid station. Went right through the aid station. I don't know if they hit anybody else. But this German I was talking about, you know, that was hollering all the time, we looked around, we were looking around then, and here he was sitting there, fell back against the building, just slumped down on his knees, and a little blood spot right on the left side of his jacket that showed through. And he was just laying there, you know, had gotten his rifle -- well, his rifle was caught. He had one arm. It wasn't on the ground yet, laying across his knees, and he had his head back, and he had been hit right there. And we had some other fellas that were hit. We had one guy

that had the tip of his ear hit with, you know -- and stuff. But Smith wouldn't let him work on him, no. Now, we had guys that were captured with us, or that was injured when they were captured, before they were captured, that went through the --

I: Aid station.

AW: -- aid station, the German hospitals, and they treated them just like they did their own soldiers. They had plenty to eat all the time and everything. But we were going back. Well, then they had us in this row of fours. And they started marching us then, and going back. We walked all that day. I don't know where -- how far back we did get -- we did walk. But anyway -- I don't remember right now, but anyway, we were walking all that day. Well, I got so thirsty, because we had no water. See, we stocked our water at night, and we didn't get it stocked that night, and here I was without water in my canteen. Well, I had to have water, I thought. And we were going by this ditch that was water -- clear water running down it. So I go over and take my canteen cup, and I get me a drink of water, and I drink it, and just, you know, get out of the ranks. And the guy, the German didn't say anything to me. The guard let me get the water, and I drank it, and he got some more, and I drank one cupful, and got some more and I drank it, and got back

in line, started walking, and about 100 yards up the road there was a Jeep in the ditch, sitting across the ditch, with four dead Germans in it. And two of them were laying in this ditch with (laughter; inaudible).

I: This is, I'm assuming --

AW: (inaudible) I can't go. But here they had shot the gun, airplanes, and... Yeah. And, I mean, they weren't loaded very much yet, so -- of course, it was cold weather, but I don't know how many days they were there. They were killed. The driver was laying out, and the guy behind him was laying out. But the driver was laying down -- or, no, the guy behind him was laying right down in the water. I mean, his whole -- the upper part of his body. And the other one just had his hands or legs, arms in or something.

I: The Germans were kind of slow picking up their dead, then?

AW: Well, yeah, they didn't have time, because we were on the push, and they didn't have time to worry about the dead. They had to keep worrying about the live ones, and that was what they were doing. But this had probably happened the night before or something like that. They hadn't been there, you know, long enough to get bloated and everything. But my first experience -- that's the other thing -- my first experience with seeing the dead was when we were in Naples, that first night, when they moved us out and put us

in this tent, they took us by this aid station where they were collecting the dead from the Americans. And here they had these on this truck, like cordwood piled up, you know, dead people, piled up. And they were taking them off, and laying them down in the line of the aid station here to be identified tomorrow. They'd gone up that night to get 'em, see. The first day when we went up, (inaudible) shooting the door off, a mortar had fell right in the foxhole with the sergeant and blowed his leg off. I mean, his left leg was -- or, yeah, his left leg was blowed off below the knee. But the mortar had fell right in the foxhole with him. But we went on, now, see, but he got back to the American aid station. They took him back that night, see, nearly two days later before we were captured. But we marched back, then. See, we started back, then, but anyway, we ended up at Fara Sabina, which is a camp in Italy, an old army camp in Italy. And this was the hard part as far -- we had to convert to not getting anything, to even being hungry all the time. This is where we were hungry. And all we would get would be a ladle of soup, or hot water, green water, grass water, and they made it with grass. They put grass in it. And the water came out of the river. So you'd have about a spoonful of sand at the bottom of your soup each day. You would eat that. You'd get a slice of bread, and

that's all you got to eat. Well, these guys, of course, your stomach isn't used to being without food, and here you have to get your stomach adjusted to being hungry. You have to get your system adjusted to being hungry. And these people that smoked had such a hard time. There was just one kid from, I don't know, New York, New Jersey, somewhere out in there, anyway, and he said, "Well, I..." People started selling -- they'd sell everything, you know, sell them to the Germans for anything, for cigarettes. And this guy said, "I'll never do that." He said, "I smoke, but I'll never do that." Well, about two days later we saw him, and he was running around in his shoes. He had shoes, no socks anymore, and his long johns yet, and a topcoat. He had traded --

I: No pants?

AW: He had traded everything else off for a cigarette. I mean, this is just how bad that they got, you know, and they would do anything for a cigarette, a lot of these guys. Now, there is where I saw they would peel potatoes, apparently for the Germans, you know, because they eat a lot of potatoes. We never got any potatoes, but they'd peel potatoes. Then they would throw the peelings out in our compound. And some of these guys would go up there and fight just tooth and nail to get these, you know. And I saw

what they were doing, I said, "You sons of bitches will never get me to do that." (laughter) And I wasn't going to let them get me down to where I would fight in front of them. You know, they'd stand there and laugh at -- they had them fighting, you know, and (inaudible)...

I: How long were you in Sabina?

AW: About a month. Then they put us on cattle cars to take us to... Now, that was north of Florence. That was up in Italy. They were taking us up there in cars, or trucks, and I don't remember how we got onto trucks to go to Fara Sabina, but they took us up there in trucks. We got in there at night. It must've been the day we started marching, because they would bring supplies up in trucks, and then they would send us back on those supply trucks probably. And I would say that we would get -- we got back there. But anyway, we got in there after dark, or near dark, in the evening. And they had guards all along the road, watching, you know, that nobody escaped and stuff. But we went into that camp. Now, there you had -- at the toilets you had a hole here, about a six-inch hole, and you had two foot blocks here that was built up about two inches, inch and a half to two inches, and that was your toilet. See, that's when you put your foot on and sat over that. And, of course, your stomach, you got diarrhea because you

had nothing to eat, and you drank water and everything, so you had diarrhea all the time. But this was really the worst, I suppose, that we got for under, because after that, why, we got in the better. Now, you see, when I went up to the frontline, they didn't tell us to wear two pairs of pants. It was wintertime. They didn't tell us to do anything, or anything to take. All of our stuff was in our duffel bag, except what we had on. Well, here they threw us on the frontline, and we didn't have these clothes on. I was upstairs in this house, and there was some pants, wool pants, knickerbockers. And they had fit me. So I put them on under my GI pants. And so I had two pair of pants that way. Now, we wore a heavy undershirt anyhow, but we didn't have our heavy overcoats or anything. They didn't tell us what we would need in clothes anywhere, or what to get out of our duffel bags. At no time did they do that. Of course, we got off of the ship, our duffel bag -- we never saw our duffel bag. We got off the ship, they moved us out so quick, put us in a uniform and up here, and we wouldn't see our duffel bag till we came back off the frontline, if we come back. Anyhow, but they didn't bother telling us what we would need.

I: Somebody was asleep.

AW: Well, that's what I figured. I assumed this was a bad job of somebody not taking care of this.

M1: How long would you be in the frontline if you were to tour up there?

AW: Probably a couple weeks.

M1: Couple weeks?

I: Yeah. See, we were there five days. The line who was in there had relieved the 78th before. The 78th had been fighting, and had pushed up past the soap factory, and then the SS troops and those guys came in and reclaimed it. Well, the 78th lost so many people, they went back, the ones that went back, and they'd been back about a week, and we were going back up. They put us with us, and sent 'em back up. Then the limeys came back, or the English came back, and they said, "It's rough up there, mate," or "Sure, sure tough up there, mate," or, you know, this kind of thing, warning us that it's going to be -- that we were in for trouble. But anyway, this is how I got this [Pendleton?] pair of pants, and I wore this all the time now. That'll come in later. But we went. Then they put us -- took us to Fara Sabina, and we were there and sitting there, staying there, and not getting anything to eat. Then they put us on cattle cars, or boxcars, where they took some of these Red Cross parcels and made a heater. And then in a can you'd

make a fan to turn it to blow the air through it, and you'd make a channel, and you'd go in here, and this would be the fire pot. You'd have wood, a little wood, and so you'd start the fire, and you'd cook that on that. And we would have the refried potatoes, or cooked potatoes, and we'd fry the spam, and then use that and make gravy. Now, how would we get flour? We would have flour from somewhere.

F1: [Gavin?] brought that picture of these (inaudible) --

AW: Yeah, of that cooker stuff, yeah, that -- yeah.

I: Where did he get the pictures?

F1: What?

I: Where did he get the pictures?

F1: He drew -- I think this was drawn. He drew it.

AW: Yeah, I don't remember now, but...

F1: Yeah, (inaudible) I think he (inaudible).

AW: Yeah. But it would be -- they would be a board, and that they would... See, they would give us wood to cook with, but we had to go out and cut our own wood to cook with. But they had a place where they were clearing ground, and we went out -- I went out for a week or ten days and just cut it for the whole camp, and then they would haul it in and dump it, and you could go get your wood so you'd have wood to cook with. And now, we never had any heat in the barracks there, just like hogs, or animals, you heated --

your, you know, body heat was enough. We never had any heat in the barracks. But then we would cook that until we -- as long as we had the Red Cross parcels we could survive. I mean, there wasn't any problem with surviving when we had that. But we would cook it -- oh, we'd get a box of prunes or a box of raisins, and we would take this brown bread -- and this is what we made gravy with is the brown bread. We'd break it up in the grease, you know, and use that and water to make gravy for our potatoes. And then we would use -- we cooked in one of those milk cans or something like that, see. And then we would use prunes, we would cook and make pudding with. We'd put the brown bread in it and make the pudding and so forth. And we had a box of sugar for coffee, you know, these little blocks. There'd be a box about like that size, something like that.

I: (inaudible) the pudding?

AW: And we would -- yeah, we would use that sugar. Now, she said that [Pappendorf?] said I made the -- we had a birthday, and I made the -- we baked him a cake with this bread and raisins, and he said I made the icing. He said I made the icing for it. (laughs) Well, how I did it I don't remember now, but we used this sugar to make the icing, you see.

F1: You'd have cocoa, or you'd have cocoa (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

AW: Oh yeah, we would have cocoa or coffee. We had instant coffee or cocoa in the boxes. So we would have the -- yeah, that's right. We had the cocoa. We had the sugar, and we used the dry milk, or the milk, and I made his icing for his cake, for his birthday cake. Which one was it? His 25th?

F1: Twenty-first, I thought.

AW: Twenty-first. See --

I: Twenty-first?

F1: I'm not sure.

AW: -- I was 18 years old when I was captured. And then I would have been a prisoner of war at this time and come back through the --

F1: Could've been the 25th. I don't know, but he (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

AW: -- rehabilitation time. And I spent my 21st birthday in London, England on the way when I was coming back. And I'll get to that later, but this was comparison to age. Now, I was a kid. I was always the kid in the group, you know. Now, there we played baseball, see, or softball. Of course, they had a softball team. Now, this was a sandy -- well, it'd be like playing up here on our sandhill. That's what that whole camp was on was that kind of sand. We'd walk in

it. Why, you know, you'd make ruts every time you stepped down that beat. And we played baseball and softball and that kind of stuff. And we had a guy that played with the Cleveland Indians in our camp, and we had about four professional people. We had a guy from Denver who played on the commercial, or the industrial league, and he was a catcher. And every one of his fingers here, every one was broken, had been broken, and they're crooked, you know. This one here was broken, and they were just like claws: they'd go around the ball, (laughter) they had bene broken so much. It'd just encompass the ball, you know, when he would throw it. And he was probably -- I don't think he was as tall as you. He wasn't as tall as you are. But he would stand up behind the batter, rather than squat, you know. And he could throw that ball, and he had an arm on him, and whip it down the second. But anyway, this is the kind of people. We had a guy from Detroit that played in the industrial league up there, a pitcher. And he was in the one end of the barracks, or 21, and, let's see, 21A, and we were in 21B. And each barracks had a team, see. And Pappendorf had the box scores. (laughter) I've added 275 and I've fielded the fouls. (laughter) He's got the proof up here. You know, I can see it. So I wasn't too bad of a ball player. But that was our pastime.

F1: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

I: What did you do during the days (inaudible)?

AW: Well, in the morning, well, you got up and you ate, and then in the morning we usually walked and made six or seven passes around the outside, walking in this sand, you know.

I: Marching? I mean, was it organized, or...?

AW: No, just walk.

I: Just to get your exercise.

AW: Yeah, just (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

I: Was there any organization in the group there?

AW: Oh, yeah.

I: Hierarchy.

AW: Yeah. Each one had a... Now, we had a first sergeant that was captured in Africa, from Texas, a big, tall Texan. I don't remember his name right off. But anyway, he was our -

-

I: Squad leader.

AW: No, barracks command, in charge of the barracks. See, each one had a... The ranking officer really is what it was that was in charge of the barracks.

I: You didn't have officers in with you, then?

AW: No, no, we only had --

I: Enlisted men?

AW: -- noncommissioned. Enlisted men had to work. See, I had my pay book with me. If you had your pay book with you when you got up to Munich, you didn't have to go out and work.

I: What's a pay book?

AW: That's where they keep the record of and enter every pay you get, when they pay you. And you had that on the frontline.

I: Well, why did that make a difference whether you'd have to work or not?

AW: That was proof of my rank.

I: You were a corporal?

AW: Yeah.

I: How'd you get up to be a corporal when you hadn't even... You were just in the States for (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

AW: Well, I got to be a corporal in the States, and when we were doing a problem here, and I was picked as one of the flank guys to go along the levy. We're on a march here. And I was picked, me and two other guys were picked to run ahead of them out here in the brush, and keep ahead of the column. And we were on a ten-mile walk here, all right. I did this, and I ran that, and we were getting behind. We were falling behind. And so I took off to go tell the captain that we couldn't keep up. He'd need to get somebody else in front. And I went up and I saluted -- now, this captain, the guy at

Pearl Harbor, the captain at Pearl Harbor that they took out of Pearl Harbor, his son -- Short was his name -- his son was captain at this time, was our company commander. And I ran up to him, and I was out of breath, and I said, "Sir, your flasher squad." (laughs) And I was just out of breath. And I reported back to him. We got back to camp. I had (laughing; inaudible). Because the squad leader says who is this guy here, he said, that come up to him. He was asking the company, or our platoon leader. And he said, "We've got to have him rank." (laughs) And so that's how I got captain. When I went overseas I automatically became --

F1: Corporal.

AW: Huh?

F1: Corporal.

AW: Corporal. When I went overseas I automatically became sergeant, because you moved up one rank when you went overseas if you were a noncommissioned officer.

I: So you were a sergeant, then, when you went (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

AW: I was a sergeant when I went over there. That's when I went to the frontlines, because I was -- I didn't have sergeant stripes, but I had sergeant on the --

I: Paper.

AW: -- list, you know, that I went out. All right, I was a sergeant then, and that's why they put me in as assistant squad leader.

I: Some of these other --

F1: It was only ranked men that had that.

AW: Hmm?

F1: Or the higher ranked men were those three that were in charge of the platoons, or ranks --

AW: Well, the captain --

F1: -- squads?

AW: Well, see, the commissioned officers were -- well, we had a colonel, lieutenant colonel, majors, down divisions, starting at divisions, coming down to regiments, and then coming down to -- what else? There's something besides regiment and companies. But anyway, a company now, you only knew the ones in your company.

I: Battalions.

AW: Battalions, yes. Then you only knew the ones in your company. And your company was the captain, and then you had a first lieutenant under him. And then you had a second lieutenant, or a first lieutenant, as company commanders. And then you had -- I mean, as platoon leaders, see. And you had a captain, and then a first lieutenant. So that was the rank that you had. That was the commissioned officers.

Then everything else you had a first sergeant who had the -- was a business person. He kept the day call and everything. That's what [Uncle Paul?] worked for all the time when he was running around, is he worked in the day office, and he kept records for the staff sergeant, or his first sergeant, who was responsible to the company commander. See, he kept records for all the company command-- I mean, for the captain, see. But anyway, then you had a staff sergeant under him who would be the leader of the platoon. He would drill the platoon, and do all -- assign the duties and everything. Then each squad leader had a sergeant under them, and a corporal was the assistant squad leader. Well, we had a guy when I went to Italy, then, they had a guy that was a sergeant already, had been over there for a long time, and so he had that. And that's why I was a sergeant, and just made -- and I was made assistant squad leader at that time. But I had no experience.

I: But some of these infantrymen, they were just privates yet?

AW: They were all privates, yeah.

I: They were all privates.

AW: Privates or BFCs.

M1: And those are the ones that got put to work?

AW: And they had to go out on the farm and work.

I: But you said they got a rank when they went overseas. What were they...?

AW: Well, if you were a commissioned officer you did.

I: Oh, if you... OK.

AW: Yeah, you're private, you didn't increase from a private, or PFC.

I: OK, but since you were a corporal --

AW: But if you were any -- right, I went to sergeant. Then, when I got back, when I went, after being captured and come back, they made me a staff sergeant. So I came out as a staff sergeant. I never had to sew my staff -- I don't think I ever sewed my staff sergeant stripes on. I think I got 'em in that box of stuff that I've got, but I never sewed 'em on or anything.

I: What kind of rank did the... Or what kind of work did the privates do in the prison camp?

AW: They went out and worked on farms, mostly. Some of them worked in factories and everything. But they ate pretty good all the time.

I: Well, they had to go out every day to work --

AW: Yes.

I: -- and then they'd come back inside.

AW: Yeah, they would assign them to farms, or to a farmer, and they would work at a farm, and --

I: But you guys that were back here playing ball were all corporals, sergeants, and lieutenants.

AW: We were noncommissioned officers, yeah.

I: Were there lieutenants there, too, then?

AW: Huh?

I: Lieutenants were there?

AW: No, no, they weren't with us. Commissioned officers wouldn't be in our camp. They had a separate camp to go to.

I: They didn't have to work.

AW: No. But if you had proof of purchase, proof of -- not proof, but proof of rank -- and that's what the pay book was. That's what they used. If you had your pay book, they gave you the proof of rank, see. Now, of course, where we were? We were in Munich now. And this is when we would go out at night, and the planes would go over, you know, and then you'd see the big bomb dropping on Frankfurt, and the fires in the north, you know, and we'd go out and cheer. (laughter) And every night for, I don't know, 40, how many days, they went over -- the planes would go over at night, and you'd see the bomb drop, and then you'd hear them go back, and so we'd go out and watch the fireworks every...

I: Did you get much news from the other side?

AW: Yeah, we would -- they had a -- they made a crystal set. You know what a crystal set is, a radio.

I: Yeah.

AW: All right, they made one of those, and they dug under the floor, and hid it under the cement, under the beds or something all the time. And then we would get the news from the BBC News. So we knew what the BBC News was putting out. And they would send a letter around and we would read it. Well, we'd have somebody watching each window and each door to see if there's any Germans coming while they were reading this to us. Well, then every so often they would come --

I: When'd you get the...? You said there was a letter.

AW: Well, they would write --

I: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

AW: -- they would write a letter out of the news.

I: Whoever listened to the radio.

AW: Right.

I: I see.

AW: I never knew who had the radio.

I: You never heard the radio.

AW: I never heard the radio. I never knew anything about it. I don't know who had it. They would get a word every once in a while that we had one, and they'd pull an inspection on us. They'd call everybody out maybe some morning, early, with a bunch of soldiers. Then they'd come in and they'd go through all the barracks, and check everything, you know,

try to find it. And then, well, we'd be shut down for a week or so. Well, one time they found -- I think we had three different sets, they said, at one time in the camp, and they found one. Well, the other two shut down, then, for a week or so, and we didn't get any news at all. But we knew what was -- I mean, we had the news from the British viewpoint on it, I mean, as far as what the war was going on. We knew more probably factual about the war than what the German people did.

I: You knew when D-Day was, then, and...

AW: Yes. When D-Day came, we thought, well, within a few weeks we'll be getting out. Well, then it wasn't long before we started getting these prisoners in from D-Day who had frozen feet and everything, you know, because -- you know, and that was captured there.

F1: So how much did you have, like, experience with the Nazis, then? Or was that a whole different question, or...?

I: That's the SS.

M1: That's the SS.

F1: That's the SS? OK.

AW: Well, yeah, ISS, that's the --

F1: They were running these camps?

AW: Huh?

F1: They were running these camps?

AW: No, no, they weren't running the camp. They were Hitler's henchmen, and they were the ones that the crack soldiers, the best soldiers, you know...

F1: Then you had more just German people that were running those camps, then?

AW: Well, yeah, the German soldiers, sure.

F1: OK.

AW: Yeah. After we got through in Italy, we hardly saw any -- I don't know that we saw any SS troops after that.

I: You remember the Republican Guard in Iraq that Saddam had? It was his crack troops?

AW: Yeah, that's what the SS was, the same kind of troops.

I: They'd probably be Marines here, or one of the elite.

F1: So once you got to this camp, (inaudible).

AW: Huh?

F1: Once you got to this camp, then (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

AW: No, in the camps they didn't bother us. They just let us run these camps ourselves. Now, they set up a church. We had church services after a while and stuff. Now, people talk about thinking about God or being converted all the sudden and everything, and I say, well, this didn't happen to me, as such. I didn't just think right now, because we'd gone through, you know, confirmation and everything, and

this, that, but when you're up there on that frontline, and these bullets and stuff, or there mortars are flying in on you, the artillery shots are going in, you know you've got some other powers to help you. And that's the correlation where you go through and you know what it is. And then you go on and you go through. Then you go, like, you go through this aid station, and then you move on up, and you go through Fara Sabina, and all of these other things. The thing that amazed me is I thought we would have more people that would lose their mind in this operation than what they did.

M1: In what operation?

AW: I mean in the prison camp.

M1: Prison camp.

AW: Yeah.

M1: Just give up and go berserk.

AW: Huh?

M1: Just give up and go berserk, and...

AW: Yeah, there was some, but there wasn't as many as I thought there would be at all, because of the time when you're... Now, see, we had books. The Red Cross, when we got there -- we had books. I read a lot -- I read more books in prison camp than I've read in all my life, even while I was in college. Now, there again, you see, I was reading books all

the time. The light wasn't too good, and I got a sty on my eye. And here the eye's hurting, and going bad, and you get to thinking, my God, am I going to go -- am I going blind? And, you know, will I be able to -- if I get back home, will I be able to see anything? Or will I see anything at all when I get...? And you have all of these things. And then I quit reading, and then it started clearing up. But there was about a month there that this was just -- you know, that was the main thing on you. Of course, when you're hungry all the time, your stomach is always hurting. It's always hurting. You never know. See, when I was at Fara Sabina... Now, when I came back -- I got to Munich. I was telling you about having this Italian knicker pants. All right, when I was at Fara Sabina, we gassed up, and I had this pair of Army pants. Well, when I got to Munich, they said if you don't have an Army uniform, the Red Cross, they will give you pants. So I took my other pants off and just went up there in my knickers, and so they gave me another pant. It had a 46 waist. Now, I wore a 30, 32 at this time, or 31 or something like this, but it had a 46 waist. When I put it on -- and you know how the flap is on Army -- you got this button over here that you button up. All right, at a 46 waist, this button hold here would just reach here. That's how bloated I was. So I don't know how big I was, (laughs)

like that, but I do know that there was months that that was the way I wore my pants, because that was all the tighter I could get 'em. And that's what we did. That's where the -- you know, what happens when you get hungry: you gas up. Well, this is still the cause of me gassing up today. You see these kids with big bellies, and, you know, you know their stomach is hurting every minute of the day, and that's all you think about is food. Now, we would dream about what meal we're going to have when we get back home, or what meal we would like to have. Well, all these other people would talk about going out to some restaurant and getting a big feed at some restaurant and everything. I always thought about going to the locker plant, getting a round steak, and taking it home, and Mom fixing round steak and mashed potatoes (laughter) and sweetcorn, and then having pineapple cream pie. Now, we concocted up some wonderful dishes here about what we would like to have to eat, or what we'd like to eat. But that was one. The other one was always fried chicken and gravy and mashed potatoes. I mean, that was the other one that I always dreamed about eating was those two things there. These other people would want to go have shrimp, or have lobster, or something like this, you know, prime rib or something like that. Well, I'd never eaten out enough to even know what it was to eat out at a lunch stand

when I was at school, you know, where you got a sandwich maybe, and I didn't even know what it was to get a good meal in a restaurant. But this was what I thought of, you know, what I always thought about, as far as getting something to eat. But you had to eat something, you know, fix up eight- or ten-course meals, you know, to eat different things, because you'd think you'd never get enough to eat.

M1: (inaudible) bloated up?

AW: Huh?

M1: (inaudible) were you gassed up?

AW: Well, I gassed up at Fara Sabina where we didn't have enough to eat. At Munich is when I found out how big I was, when I got this other pair of pants and had to hook it over there. The other one, I just wore without button up.

I: Did you come down -- I mean, your belly come down then when you started getting better food, or...?

AW: Not in Germany. Not until we got --

I: You guys were playing ball then kind of bloated up?

AW: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

M1: How long were you in Munich?

AW: There was this guy in Texas that -- he was a schoolteacher in Texas, had played third base, and his hands were always - - I was there watching one day, and he caught the -- the guy was stealing third, you know. And the guy held his glove up

and caught the ball. The guy was coming in the base. He reached out and tagged him. The ball wasn't there yet. It hadn't hit... The umpire says... (laughter) But his head - - he was just that quick, you know. He just reached down and tagged the guy, caught the ball. The guy saw him tagging, so he called it out before he got -- he didn't even have the ball (inaudible). But anyway, he was gone through college, and he was a pretty good player. And we were playing one morning, we were playing a pickup game like, and he was coming back to third base -- or I happened to be playing third, and he was on the other team, and he was coming back to third base. Well, the base is back here, and I straddled the base like this, you see, and he came to the outside to slide in. Well, he hit my leg and didn't reach the plates. But I tell you, the umpire (inaudible). He just looked up at me sheepishly and got (laughing; inaudible). Because nobody had done that kind of thing to him before. But see, I was a shortstop on the team in our barracks. But we would get pickup games in the morning and play in the morning, you know, just whoever wanted to play. And now, everybody didn't do this. I did this. A lot of guys played bridge, you know. They played bridge for hours on hours, and argued each other, you know, and getting mad, because of the way they played. And I said, "Well, I don't

need that. (laughs) I can get mad without having to have a card game to get..." But oh, they'd get just wild.

I: What'd you do with your days, other than playing ball?

You'd walk in the morning, you said, but --

AW: Well, read.

M1: What kind of books did you read?

AW: And you sat around and talked. You'd play solitaire, a lot.

I played a lot of solitaire.

M1: What kind of books did you read? Do you remember any of them?

AW: I don't remember the names of any of them, no. I did at one time, but I can't recall any now.

M1: They were novels?

AW: [Elaine?] and I were talking about... They were novels, nearly all novels. Historical novels, but I would say everything I read was novels. They had a library there. You could go and get these books and take them out, and then take them back, and -- where the Red Cross had sent these books over. They were all old books. They weren't new books. They were books that people were going to throw away, you know, that they sent over there. They gave them to the Red Cross, and the Red Cross sent them over to us.

I: How long were you in Munich?

AW: Well, we were in Munich until... No, wait a minute. We weren't in Munich but about a month. And then they sent us up to Buchenwald on the Oder. And that is up south and west... Now, Munich isn't where we saw the planes. 2B is where we saw the planes. That was up at Buchenwald, and that would be south and east of Berlin, over in east Prussia, see.

M1: Where were the planes going?

AW: Huh?

M1: Where were the planes going? (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

AW: They were going to Frankfurt.

M1: Frankfurt.

AW: Yeah, to bomb. Or Berlin. They might've been going -- no, they would be going north, because I don't know whether... Oh, Frankfurt on the Oder, not Frankfurt on the Main. There's a Frankfurt on the Oder and a Frankfurt on the Main. See, Frankfurt on the Oder is up north and east of Berlin, and Frankfurt on the Main is down in the southwestern part. Frankfurt on the Main is the one they talk about now where you fly to Germany now, you fly to Frankfurt.

M1: On the Rhine.

AW: Yeah, that's the one that's on the Rhine. That's the one on the Main, they call it. And that's the one that they talk -

- but Frankfurt on the Oder is what I'm talking about, where they went north to bomb all the time.

M1: Probably (inaudible) city.

AW: Yeah. And then, of course, this was also where their probably jump-off point to the Russian front was.

M1: Did they go (inaudible) Munich?

AW: The Germans, see.

M1: (inaudible).

AW: See, and this was probably what they were after was shutting that down more at that time. But then at 3B -- see, we were at Munich about a month, and 3B -- we were up at 3B then that while.

I: How long were you up there?

AW: It took us about a day and a night, two nights and a day on a train to get up there.

I: How long were you there, though? How long did you stay there?

AW: Well, till the Russians came through.

I: You stayed there the rest of the time, then.

AW: Yeah. Well, not the rest of the time, but till the Russians came through. And we were there talking about February. Well, we were there a year later, after I was captured, and we got a windstorm in February. I think this was the 22nd

of February. But... No, this was in the tenth city. We had moved out of 3B, 2B.

M1: Because the Russians were coming in.

AW: Right. And they had taken us, then, marched us seven days. We marched seven days. Nothing to eat the first four days. Now, there was snow on the ground when we started, and everybody made sleds and started to carry the stuff that they had, the extra stuff, you know, like the extra food you got and everything, and made your packs up. Well, then they started throwing this away. You know, they used the boards out of their beds, you know, to make sleds. And they started throwing this stuff away as they'd go out, because the stove ran out, the sleds couldn't work anymore, they had to carry the stuff. Well, they'd throw -- and on that trip, then, about the second day out, there was another guy here, an older fella, who was hollering all the time at everybody, you know, hollering at -- all the time yelling.

I: This is a German you're talking about?

AW: A German, yeah, one of the guys guarding us on this tour. See, we could hear the Russians shooting. Now, the Russians liberated us. They came through and liberated us, or went through. Their point was about ten days ahead of their regular front. And they lived off of the land entirely. Well, then the regular front came through, and we asked them

for something to eat. And they say, "There's a cow. Kill it." That was the way they approached it. And they would come through this town, and if someone had a bicycle, they wanted to take it. I mean, you know, and --

M1: Now, was that the whole? Just the front part?

AW: The Russian -- no, the whole -- the Russian --

M1: Army.

AW: -- army, yeah.

I: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

M1: The whole army (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

AW: Right, when they came through, why, the first guys didn't take time to worry about bicycles or anything. They were always in a hurry to keep going. They would kill a hog, take what horses they could have to keep going, and stuff like that, or kill -- not a hog, a cow -- you know, to get meat, and take whatever potatoes they would need. And they would just keep going. But the front would come there then, and they would take over this area. And they came in, and around this camp -- now they didn't put anybody in charge of the camp that we knew of. The German people up and left one day, and that was all there was to it. The guards just up and left. Well, the German people now, or the German -- the soldiers could go down -- some of them went down to town. Now, I never did, because I thought, well, what if I lost --

I mean, I couldn't talk to them or anything else. But they said that these Russians were just shooting up the town clock, you know, churches or whatever, they'd just shoot 'em up like that. And anybody had a bicycle or something they want, they'd take it. And the guys then that stayed over -- some of them stayed overnight in homes down there. And the Russians would come and hammer on the door, and the guys would say, "[Americanski?], here." He'd shine the light in. If he'd see the American uniform, he'd say, "Comrade," and take off. But he was looking for women, and this was a way that some of these girls would protect themselves from the Russians. But this is the way they come in. They just come in and took over everything.

M1: You were at that 3B camp several months?

AW: We were at 3B for -- let's see, I was captured in February, March... We were probably in there in April. And then I was there till the next probably January.

M1: That's when the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

AW: Or February. That's when the Russians came up.

M1: It was at that camp you saw the bombings. You also had an opportunity to play ball and things like that.

AW: Oh, well, we didn't do that anymore, no. We just did that at 3B while we were there, during that summer. I think we were there, yeah, just one summer, because I was in there 13

months on that. But then we went -- from there, then, we walked, and they put us in this tent city. This was the 22nd of February. I was captured -- yeah, I was captured the 18th, and this was the 22nd.

M1: Yeah.

AW: Yeah. And we got this -- we were in tent cities. There were 450 people in tents, one big tent, and there were seven of 'em. And I was in number four. We laid down. When we laid down, the guy next to you's knees would come up -- his feet would come up as far as your knees. Your head would be right here next to the guy laying the other way. Then you'd be here, and your legs -- everybody's legs would overlap, you know, down that. Well, this storm came through, this wind, and blew so hard, and we had to take a sledgehammer... It blew these tents down. And we had to do our duty and go around and keep these pegs drove in the tent, keep them from blowing out, because this was -- and this was pretty heavy ground. It wasn't sandy ground, like we were at -- like we were on before. But we would have to keep those tied down. Well, our tent is the only one that didn't fall down. Most of them fell down, the whole thing fell down to where they had nothing at all to keep the... They would lay there on top of the people. They'd prop it up with stuff. You know, you'd have to crawl in it and stuff like that. The water

would come, and rain and everything. They had no way to change it. But we were there, then. And that was -- I think we were there about a week to ten days. Yeah, about two weeks. We had about ten days, or seven days of walking, and then we were there in that tent about seven days. We had one spigot of water for all those people, about 450 times seven, whatever it is, one spigot to get water. There was a line a quarter of a mile long waiting to get water on a warm day. Of course, the warm days you took to pick the lice off of you, you know, that was in the straws and stuff, and you always had lice to pick off. But, you know, I mean, nobody [big?]. Now, on this march that we were on -- and I was going to tell you about this guy that was yelling all the time. Had the guy by the name of Johnson that was in the 34th Division, or in the Armored Division, that was captured in Africa, and he's gone through all this mess of prison camps all the time, and he stepped out of the file to fix his bag, or fix his pack, and this crazy guy, bang, shoots him right between the eyes, kills him, after being in there 32 months and putting up with all that, then he gets shot like that, you know, when they're that near to getting off. Well, they took him off. He wasn't around us anymore after that. But that was the second day out that he shot him. We didn't get anything to eat till the fourth day.

They fed us that night. They gave us some soup and a piece of bread. The next day then -- let's see, the fourth, fifth -- the sixth day we got something to eat again, and then we got into camp, and then they fed us there. And then there we'd get a bowl of soup in the morning and a slice of bread. But this wasn't -- now, see, we had Red Cross stuff that we hadn't eaten yet. So we had this to fall back on. Now, they had Red Cross parcels that came in there when we were leaving, and they were distributing them to the civilians.

I: Civilians?

AW: The German civilians.

I: They weren't giving them to you guys, then?

AW: No, they didn't give them to us, because we were leaving, see. But we saw them giving them to the civilians. And, of course, we were eating better than a lot of the civilians were, probably, with the Red Cross parcels, because we had more meat than they had. But in this camp now here, where we were, I mean, this was just an organized herd of people. I mean, that's all. I mean, it wasn't organized to the extent that you were there. There weren't squad leaders or anything else, you know. But then we went from there, that's where the Russians overrode this. And we asked them for something to eat, and they said, "Well, there's a cow. Kill one." And they hadn't killed them all yet. They

killed three or four of them. The point guard guys that went through killed, taken one, and they taken a couple of horses, good horses that was there. They'd taken them. Well, the rest of them came in. They killed two or three more of these cows, and there was still one left there. I mean, the farmers would have four or five cows. That'd be all they'd have, you see. But they went on --

I: Did you kill the cow?

AW: Huh?

I: Did you guys kill the cow to eat?

AW: I don't know. I don't think so. We were, you know, given stuff to eat, but that's all I know. But the Russians -- the guards took off. And then, you see, the Russians were going to charge for us. They said, "Everyone go to the office and sign up, and so they can turn it in to the Americans that they're here and that they're repatriated." But they were going to charge, I think, 100, 125 a head for all that they repatriated. Well, I refused to do it. I said, "I'm not going to do that." Well, then they came in to -- they said they could come in to get us, but they were going to discern, determine who left. Well, the trucks came in the back of the camp in the evening, one evening. And I don't know why, but for some reason I was able to get on the first truck out, first batch out. But there were I don't

know how many trucks, eight or 12 or something like that, came in and loaded up and took us out the back way. The Germans didn't even know -- I mean, we didn't go out the front way. The Germans didn't even know we were gone.

I: Russians.

M1: Russians.

AW: Or the Russians didn't.

F1: Russians.

AW: See? And we went on and went back, and then, of course, that was the start back. But when you talk about people being treated bad, now, the Russian prisoners were treated worse than we were. And at 2B we had Russian prisoners, and then American prisoners, Norwegians, Serbians, and so forth. Now, but the Russian people were treated worse. Now, after the Germans left, I had a friend that -- the guy that was in camp there, he could speak Polish, and some of these Russians could speak Polish. And he went over to this camp and gave 'em stuff, because they were hurting so bad. And so I went over there with him one time, and -- but these guys were -- they were laying in these... Now, we had three decks, you know, in those barracks, like I was talking about, and they were laying in there, all hollow-eyed, you know, and just emancipated something terrible in me, that some of them couldn't even get out of the bunks. And when

they got way, usually they killed them. I mean, they didn't leave them, you know. But here, they left, or were getting ready to leave, and these guys were still there, and they had nothing to eat. And so, but these guys were really -- you know, the Russians... Now, also there they had a fence line. Now, they had a compound here, and our compound was this way. And the one I went into was down here from us. Now, this compound here was -- they had the two fences, and this was no man's land. Well, we would throw cigarettes over to those Russians. I say "we." I never did, but some of the guys would. They could talk Polish, you know. They'd throw cigarettes. Well, if they didn't get -- there's a single wire out here. Here's the big fence. Then this (inaudible) -- there's a big fence here and a single wire here. All right? We would throw it from here, trying to get it all the way over there. Well, one time it didn't go all the way and it fell in here, and the Russians stepped over the fence to get it, and the guard in attire, pow, shot him. I mean, just dropped him right there, because he'd stepped over that fence too close to that, and, I mean, no question asked about it. Now, one time, well, when I was out cutting wood -- I said I went out for a week to cut wood. We would go, I would suppose, close to three miles. There was a canal that went by the back of the camp that

barges went on, you know, like -- well, Elaine remembers the one that goes back of [Heinz and Helga's?] house. This is the kind of barge. It wasn't that big a canal, but it was one that barges like that moved on that. But we walked down that barge down here, where they'd cleaned up some woods, and we went in there, cut roots up, cut up roots and cut stuff, and piled the wood, and then they would take a truck and a team of horses and haul it to camp, and put it off, so we would have that to cook with and stuff. And I did that. Now, one time when we were out on that deal, they came by... Now, Jews had striped uniforms all the time. Russians had their own uniforms, and they were all ragged. Americans and English had their own uniforms, but they were pretty well kept. See, the Russians didn't recognize the Red Cross, and, of course, the Germans didn't recognize the Red Cross. But this Jewish group was moving away.

I: Were these soldiers or were these civilians?

AW: Political prisoners. They were --

I: German citizens.

AW: Yeah, right. They had this wagon. They were picking up something in a wagon. I don't know. They had two on the tongue, two on the single tree, one on each corner pushing. That would be eight. And I think they might've had a couple across the back. There might've been ten of the. But they

had a guard in front of them and a guard behind, and both of them had a pistol and a whip. And they were moving this wagon with these people. And they were all so thin and so weak that they could hardly walk, let alone push a wagon. But this is the way they were working them. And I saw this with my -- I mean, this I saw with my own eyes, and I saw the Russians, how their prisoners were treated. But, of course, I give the Russians no quarter because they treated their prisoners no better. So, I mean, the Russians were treated this way... Now, after the Russians came in and liberated us, why, these guys who were in the camp there... You see, the Russians came and -- this first camp we were at, before we started on the march, and then when they got up to this other one, the Russians came through there. Well, the Russian soldiers had them to shoot the guards that they wanted shot, you know. They handed them out and shot 'em, and the commandants of the camp and everything. When the people came up there, they'd take care of that. They'd just go after the people that ran the camps, and...

I: How did they find them, though? I thought they all left, the German --

AW: Well, some of them were still around. I don't know how they found them.

I: The ones that stayed around, then --

AW: Yeah, yeah.

I: -- they found them and killed them.

AW: Yeah. But --

I: War trials.

AW: Huh?

I: War trials.

AW: Yeah, that wasn't a war trial --

I: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

AW: -- yeah, but they just killed everybody where they were at Germany. Now, when we were liberated, then, we went from this camp here -- they took us out in trucks that night, and put us on a train, I think it was. And then we rode overnight on a train. The next morning they put us in an airplane, a B25, which is a big transport plane, boxcar. They just walked us in there, herded us in there like in a boxcar, you know. And then they flew us from there to Camp Lucky Strike in France. And that's where we started the rehabilitation then. And then brought us in there, and they had these tents that held 10 or 20 people, I don't know which now. But anyway, they were small tents like that, and you had one, two, three, four, five... Well, you'd have one, two, three, four... One, two, three four... Maybe ten people is all they'd have then, something like that, because they had to be double deck, and they would be just on one

side, and around the end, and back down this side I think is all there was. There might've been two across the end. But anyway, that's the kind of camp we moved into. And they were canvas-top, but they had a bunk to sleep in, and a mattress on 'em. But we went there, and they fed us. We could have -- they gave us scrambled eggs and coffee or milk. You could have as much as you want, but that's all you could have. And so we would eat scrambled eggs. We'd go in and get something to eat, and then you'd just go back by the latrine, because you'd never (laughs) be able to get to your bunk and back to the latrine or anything. You'd have to be passing it, you know. It would just go through you that fast. Well, after about five days of this, then, they gave us a steak dinner. But here they let us have this milk and scrambled eggs and toast, all you could want. You could eat as much of it, get as much of it as you want. Well, sometimes you'd get to where you wouldn't be able to eat anything, and they'd feed you -- I think they fed us four times a day. I think they fed us at daylight or, like, seven o'clock in the morning, and then around 10:30, eleven o'clock, and then again at 2:00 or 3:00, and again about dark. About four times a day you could go -- you know, they'd have the mess house open. That's the way we ate there. And then after -- well, while we were there, then,

and after been there, actually, ten days or so -- because, see, they were starting -- by that time the armistice had been signed.

I: The what?

AW: The armistice.

F1: Armistice.

AW: Armistice had been signed to where the German war was over, see. Germany had surrendered, all right? (break in audio) Well, then they came through, and they wanted -- they offered -- wanted to know -- or they had -- anybody could volunteer to go serve a KP on a hospital ship.

I: Going back to the States.

AW: No. Going back to the States -- no, that isn't right. They offered us, if we wanted to go to England we could go to England. This is how I got in England on my birthday. We could go to England. I had this friend from Aledo, Illinois, who had been in Ireland, and had gotten engaged to a Belfast girl, a girl from Belfast. And they hadn't been that far. He didn't know whether he still was interested in him or anything. He wanted to go to England and wanted somebody to go with him up there. And I said, "Well, I haven't been to England. I'll go with you." He was from Illinois; he had to be a good guy. (laughter) So we went to England, and got to London, and we got our pass to Belfast,

and he went up there to Belfast to see this girl. And she worked in a kind of an ice cream parlor thing. It wasn't really a restaurant, but they served coffee and stuff. She was a waitress in there. She didn't know we were coming or anything, but he walked in, or he wanted somebody to go with him, and so I went with him, and he -- we walked into this restaurant, and he didn't know if she worked there or not anymore, you know. Walked in there, and one of the girls saw him. And she turned around, (laughs) headed back to the other, to the other end, or the back part of the restaurant, and told this other girl, and she looked up and come up there, (laughs) and it was her. Well, he stayed up there then. I mean, they hit it off real good, and I didn't stay around any longer. I went back down to... Well, we had a three-day pass to go up there. He got an extension on it, and got married. They were planning on to get married. I guess they got married. I never did go back to see him. But he is back to Aledo. I talked to a guy in Aledo, and he is back there, and he had an Irish wife, so I would presume that they got married and came back. But anyway, I went back to London then, because my three-day pass was up, and I went back to London. And that was when I celebrated my 21st birthday. I'd been through that, and that was when I first celebrated my 21st birthday. Well, then, that's when they

asked for people to volunteer for KP on a hospital ship going home. So I said, well, if that'll get me home, all right. And, I mean, they didn't have my records anywhere. I'd gone through (inaudible), you know, and they didn't have a record that I was even there anymore, outside I'd gone on passes, you know. But when I went down there to go to the ship, they found them again. So they were ready, and so I could get on this ship. And we started home on this hospital ship, and we were going to do KP. Of course, everybody's stomach had been tore up, you know. And we had to do KP to come back. And about a day out everybody's sicker than a dog, just sick as could be. And the lieutenant that was in charge of us -- on the second day, I just -- you know, I was on the top bunk. I happened to get the top bunk. The lieutenant that was in charge of us came around and checked on us, you know. He crawled up and looked, and I was laying up there, and I just knew he crawled up and looked. I didn't know who he was, but he just crawled down and walked away and never said anything, (laughter) so I must've looked the part. But I was pretty sick. We were sick. But we went in. They told us that you've got to eat, you know, on this. You've just got to eat. So here we walk in this hospital, all of us guys that hadn't been eating. Now, we'd passed the dry heaves to this

point, to where we didn't have anything, you know, at all to throw up. And so we walked into this line that we were supposed to feed on. I fed there a couple days, couple times the first days we were there before we were sick. Got our food, and we stood up. This was on a -- we stood up to eat in this hospital ship, in the mess hall. And there were six -- you stood at six on a side of the table. And we got there, and got in there, and sat down, and the ship was rocking. You had to hold your tray down, you know. And we got there, and of course none of us had eaten enough, really, to know. And the guy just across from me one way up, he just looked -- or, no, he came in, he was one way this way from me. I was the fourth one from the wall, and he come in, and he was over here. And I thought, boy, you don't look very good. And I hadn't much more than thought about that, and the ship went down the other way, you know, and came back up, and he went (imitates vomit sound), right onto the plate. (laughter) Everybody turned to their tray, you know, (imitates vomit sound) all these trays go banging against the wall here. We all take off and walk out, you know. But hearing all that miss, we didn't eat anything. But he sure cured us, as far as eating. And a day out of New York, again, it settled down. But that's how we got back, on the hospital ship.

M1: Did you ever do any KP?

AW: Huh?

M1: Did you ever do any KP?

AW: Oh, sure, you'd pull KP all the time.

M1: Oh, I mean on the ship, while you were sick.

AW: Oh, yeah, the first day or so I did, and then the last day I did. (laughter) But --

M1: How long was (inaudible)?

AW: Seven. It took us seven days going over and seven days coming back.

I: What'd you do over in the States, then, when you got back?

AW: Well, we came back, and they gave us a month R&R, and -- you know, rest and relaxation. We went home. And that's when, of course, Mom and Dad first saw us, or first saw me, and when I talked to [Marilou?]. But then I went to -- they sent me to Little Rock, Arkansas.

M1: How'd you get home from New York (inaudible)?

AW: You want to hear that story? (laughs) I never told them when I come home from the service anytime. I'd always just come in on 'em. And I would come from North Carolina -- in North Carolina, I'd come up through Cincinnati, Ohio. Now, Cincinnati was the best town for soldiers that there was. You went through that, and it was always a hit. We'd go through Cincinnati. We had a layover there, and we'd catch

a train there that would go through Salem, Illinois, and that'd be 60 -- you know where Salem is, 60 miles north of Marion. Well, I'd hitchhike from there home all the time. And I had done this -- I went -- well, just before I went overseas to meet [Marilyn?], I went home from there, and I went from North Carolina. So I came that way home all the time. I never went to Chicago ride back down on a bus, never went to St. Louis to have to come back. I'd always go through Salem, get off there, and could hitchhike home. Because I'd get out on -- the station was right on 37. I'd get out off of the train, go out to the station, and wouldn't be three cars that passed till they picked you up. But the last time -- see, well, I'll take you through at home a little bit, about what happened there. See, Mom and Dad got the word, I guess, six months after I was captured that I was missing in action. They didn't get it right away. It was about six months later they got it. I don't know what their calendar is, something like that, but they didn't know for sure that I was only missing in action and hadn't heard and hadn't heard. They didn't get -- I had written a letter from 3B. I'd been all through Fara Sabina, all through Munich, [7A?] at Munich, and all the way up there, and there you could write letters through the Red Cross. They give you a card, and you could write one or two

sentences on it, and that was all. And Mom was over at, well, a neighbor of Aunt Martha and Uncle Bill's, [Marthy?]. So this would've been in July. I was captured in February. This was in July when they first heard. And they said that... She said, "Well, I'm going to go home, and I'm going to get a letter from both the boys." And [Mabel Going?] says, "Do you still think you're going to hear from August [Lewis?]?" (laughter) That's what they called me. She says, "Yeah." Then she went home and got a letter that day. But this is a story I (inaudible) get that letter. Well, then I'd written another time back, I guess. I'd gotten two -- they'd gotten two more letters from me. I'd written one to them. I'd write one to them. We could write two letters. I'd write one to them all the time, and then I'd write one to, oh, Uncle -- one of the uncles or something like that, uncles or aunt.

I: Someone that you knew, they'd make the news off of that, too.

F2: Which (inaudible) the reporters that you were in the camp?

AW: Huh?

F2: I mean, they knew you were a prisoner. They found out that you were missing through (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

AW: They didn't find out that I was a prisoner of war until after I got this letter.

F2: So after they got this letter? So they got that first, and
--

AW: Right.

F2: -- knew you were alive, but they didn't know (overlapping
dialogue; inaudible).

AW: They only knew I was missing in action.

F1: Didn't your cousin Bill write back and say --

AW: Well, yeah. They had this report. Bill, Shorty and Ed's
brother, Bill, he was killed over there in the service in
Italy. And they knew where I was, and they knew where Bill
was. He was at Salerno. That was the name of the town I
was trying to think of before. That was where they'd first
come in. And he was over there. And so Uncle Henry wrote
and told him... Now, see, they didn't censor letters going
in, but they censored Bill's out. And so Uncle Henry wrote
and told him, he said, "You check out on..." They had word
that I was missing in action, and he knew that where I was
and where Bill was was fairly close. He says, "Will you go
over and check and see what you can find out about August
Lewis? And they said he's missing in action, and they
didn't know what. But they said if he is captured, or still
alive, say he is a bad boy." And so they got a letter back
from him then two months later, and he said that I had gone
over (laughs; inaudible) -- had gone over and checked with

my outfit, and found out that that outfit was all captured.

So he'd wrote back and (inaudible) I went at that point.

And --

F2: So that's all they knew. They didn't know where you were, or... He didn't even know. He just knew that...

M1: That you'd been captured.

F2: But he didn't know for sure whether you were alive or not.

AW: No. And, you see, he got killed later.

F2: Right.

AW: See, he was sent back in a bag, or in a casket, rather.

F2: So that's why she still thought you were alive and --

AW: Yeah.

F2: -- sending a letter.

AW: Well, she had this, you see, and they didn't have word that I was dead, and they didn't have word that I was a prisoner of war until after they got this letter from me. See, so... And then, of course, I think I wrote to Uncle Bill -- I wrote to them, Uncle Bill and Aunt [Marthy?], I think I wrote to them and I don't know who else. I wrote to some of the cousins there, or --

F1: Betty Ann.

AW: Huh?

F1: Betty Ann.

AW: Yeah, that'd be Uncle Jake's daughter. So that one of them would get through all the time. And usually only one would get through, because when Betty Ann got hurt, Mom and Dad didn't get any. When Mom and Dad got theirs, why, that other person I wrote didn't get one. But usually one would get through. I would write two and they'd get -- one would get through.

I: So you'd always write one to Mom and Dad and one to somebody else?

AW: Yeah. But they... See, now, Dad -- we lived out on the east of town there, east of Marion. That's all grown up now. I don't know whether I took some of you down there or not. I've had Elaine down there, where we'd turn... When we were going together, we lived there, east of Marion, about three miles. That was on Grandpa Wickert's old farm that Dad -- they bought this before I went to the service. I helped them move before I went in the service. And they... Yeah, I lived there for a little while before I went in the service. And, well, we moved there in March, I guess. They moved there in March, and then I went in the service the next February, so I lived there about a year. But that was when I was selling. I sold candy out of a truck, wholesale candy. I drove a candy truck. And I did that, until the tires got bad and everything from the war,

to where you couldn't get tired. I was having a flat tire about every day, and so I said, "I don't have to fight this." And so I went and started working at the Kroger store, in the butcher's, and then I worked at the Kroger store until I went in the service and was drafted. But then we lived out there, out east of town. And when I came home after the service now, after I got back in from overseas, I had written that I was back in the States, or... Yeah, I had told them that I was back in the States, but they didn't know when I was coming home, and I didn't know, either, as far as that goes. But I got on the train. They give us this pass, and I got on the train. Went and got off at Salem, and these two guys came, coming from New York, or from Detroit, going down south somewhere, stopped and picked me up. Well, I had these cartons of cigarettes, you know, and cigarettes were rationed, you know, and so I'd just give them a carton of cigarettes, (laughter) and they picked me up. And they got about to Mount Vernon, they asked whether I could drive. I said yeah, I probably could. So they said, "Fine, you drive. We're tired." (laughter) So I drove their car down, then, from Mt. Vernon to Marion, and I got out. Now, Uncle Bill [Wool?], and that would be Mom's oldest brother, on the corner of 37 and Main Street in Marion ran a Mobil station there, a filling station. And

Bobby [Cooksy?], who knew me -- or knew us, you know, was a taxi driver in town. He hadn't gone to the service. He was in 4F and hadn't gone to the service, but he was a taxi driver. And he's the guy that had to take the notice out to Mom and Dad that I was a prisoner. No, that I was missing in action. And he went by and picked up Uncle Bill. And then he went right back to town, and... I better -- let me go to the bathroom.

(break in interview)

I: You were just telling us about the guy...

AW: Oh, taking me down home.

I: Yeah, the guy who picked you up.

AW: Picking us up and taking us down home, yeah. And I got off at Uncle Bill's station. Well, first, Bobby Cook, see, he took Uncle Bill out, and then Uncle Bill went to (inaudible), and they all came out to the his house. But that was the rough part. But anyway, when I came back there, I got out there at the station. (coughing) And Uncle Bill's man -- I got in about five o'clock, and Uncle Bill's man was about ready to go home. And then he sees me, and he said, "Well, hello there," (laughs) you know. And (inaudible). But he took me -- looked -- saw me and said

hello, and turned around. The guy that was working for him there said, "Wait till I get back." (inaudible). (pause) (blows nose)

AW: (inaudible), and then Carolyn (inaudible) 12, and (inaudible). [Esta Mae?] would've been five years younger, and (inaudible) five years younger than that. See, she wasn't... No, she wasn't that old. Because, see, Caroline was born in '25. [Paul?] was born in '30. Esta Mae was born in '35, so Marilou was born in '40. And this would've been '45. She would've been five years old. And Marilou (inaudible). But anyway, she can talk when I came home, and when I left she couldn't even talk. See, I was gone by (inaudible). Paul (inaudible) -- somebody else (inaudible) in the house. Of course, I didn't (laughter) (inaudible) where she could talk. This was the first time I heard her talk. So I can imagine how these guys that had kids and never heard 'em talk feel. But suffice it to say, they had it there. But she came -- I mean, they came home, and we had a month, and a get-together. I don't think [Dad?] was home yet. He (inaudible) work, and Caroline wasn't there, so it had been Mom, Esta Mae, and Paul, and I think Paul was probably -- I don't remember. He wasn't home then.

F1: He wasn't out of the service.

AW: No, he got out of the service before I did, but he wasn't home then. See, after that, then, I went -- I had 30 days there. And then I went to Hot Springs, Arkansas for a month. And then they sent me to Camp Adair, Oregon. And I went out there, Adair, Oregon, and that's where we were getting cavalry ready to go the Japanese, proper base. And we were there a while. And then they sent me back to Virginia. Now, this was a train ride, both ways, you know, (laughs) on a troop train. And then we went back to Virginia, and we had to send the people to Germany for occupation zone. We worked in a... Well, out in Oregon I was cavalry. We trained -- these guys had come in on their way to the Pacific, and we would train them, see. Now, see, this happened while I was home on the leave is when the Japanese basically, because that celebration was while I was home. And then we were out there, and these guys were going to the Southeast, or the South Pacific, and would train 'em. They would come in. We'd run -- they'd take 'em out on problems, you know, shooting at the range and stuff like that. I was a staff sergeant, I guess, at that time (inaudible) go in there. We trained them. That's what we did. Then they said they cooled that down. They got that many troops going out that way. They sent us to Pickett, Virginia, and there I worked in a warehouse, getting

everything out to go to Germany, filling whatever their ordinances (inaudible), filling up whatever they need there, going to Germany. Then when I could get out, I could get out three different ways. You got so many points for (inaudible), so many points for how long you were overseas, so many points that you were in the service for. Well, I had three different ways that I could get points, enough to get out (laughing; inaudible). But Harold was home about a week or so before -- I mean a month or so before I got home.

M1: (inaudible).

AW: Huh?

F1: [Denmark?].

M1: He was (inaudible) when you got (inaudible).

AW: Oh, yeah. See, he signed up. He didn't wait to be drafted. He signed up and was in probably better than a year longer than I was. I don't remember exactly how long. He didn't graduate at the same time I did. Well, I was out from all the way till the next February, so I was out from May through the -- so I was out about a year and a half, (inaudible) going by my... Yeah, he was in the combat engineers. He built the river across the Rhine.

F1: Bridge?

AW: Or bridge, I mean bridge. (inaudible). But when we came home, when I came home, after I came home, he came down to

see me. He was running a Kroger store in [Bridgeport?], down in Bridgeport, a Kroger store. And so I was going to take it in, and take it to the shop, and he was going to pick me up there. We took it to the -- I don't remember the guy's name now. (inaudible) know where the shop was. We were going down 13 there, and it was raining a little bit, kind of a light rain. And this (inaudible) River Bridge, it's a big abutment, you know, like this here. And it was all flooded. The old floodplain, everything was water, just the road sticking up. About that far from the road was water, you know. All the ditches were filled up, and all the land outside of it was full (inaudible). And we were taking this car in, and the brakes (inaudible) right before that. We see this dam abutment coming up to you, and boy, what's going to happen? I'm sliding sideways, sliding this way. And I go, boy... So we slid right through that abutment sideways, you know. (laughter) And I got on the other side. I hit the brakes then, and then the thing went completely around, or completely around this way, twice, and I headed back this way. Now, I wasn't going very fast, but this was just -- and (inaudible), and, of course, you couldn't buy tires then. Everybody's tires were (inaudible). The tires were (inaudible). And then headed back. Harold was following me into town. He pulled up

beside me. He says, "What in the hell are you trying to do?" (laughter) I was trying to keep this thing (inaudible), I said. So I turned around, and we went back into town. But boy, I could see this thing -- first it started to the side a little bit, you know. The left front wheel caught. Brought it around like this, and I thought, oh boy, we're going to the -- like, this is it. I thought, oh boy, we're going into the water. I wonder if I can get the door open. That's (laughing; inaudible). Well, then, I caught it. It went right through, that's the end of it. (inaudible) on the road, spin right through it, you know. I got through to the other side, and I hit the brakes, and then it just spin all the way around twice, and then hit it. (laughter) And he pulled up beside me, (inaudible), "What are you doing?" So I turned around and went back, took it on into town there. That's about -- I figured the good Lord was looking at me (inaudible). (inaudible) he surely had a purpose for me to be around (inaudible) looking around this house. (laughter) You see a lot of purposes. But this was a time when people talk about the Lord had a hand in what happened to you and things like that. Well, there certainly were things in my life that I'm sure that (inaudible). Came home, got out of the service, and then I started working -- well, I worked at Kroger before I went in. I went back and

started working at (inaudible), but we ran around together in church all the time, and we had two confirmation classes. He went to the first one, and I went to the second one. While he was in confirmation class, I know that (laughing; inaudible). And then we lived three miles out west of town at that time, and, see, our car burned out. We had a Model T, and then bought a Model A, a used Model A. And we drove that, and now we had the Model T ten years. This was in '35. And we bought this Model A. Well, the Model A, they got a short in 'em, so the first time he brought that home, he was going to put it in (inaudible). (laughs) He went about halfway out. Well, he finally got it stopped, backed it up, and pulled it back, and the wall came back in. He nearly drove it all the way through. (laughter) But anyway, these had a -- in the switch they would get a short. And this happened to this one morning when we were going to take (inaudible) and go to school. We didn't have the car while they were in (inaudible) Caroline got out of high school (inaudible). But (inaudible) short in it. I mean, I got a soft spot in my heart (inaudible). He'd go to town (inaudible) go to school (inaudible). We hardly ever had to walk very long, because everybody out the other way knew us, and somebody would stop to pick us up. Sometimes we'd go in at night, go into a ballgame. You'd get out there, and

you'd be within (inaudible). A lot of times we'd get a ride in these things, they'd ask me if I'm related to [Wilbur?] - - some of them thought I was Wilbur [Saltner?]. These people still got (inaudible). You know, they didn't know whether I was (inaudible). They didn't see us every year, and they thought that we were Wilbur or [Edwin?] Saltner out there, and they'd stop and pick us up because they thought (inaudible). We'd go out to the basketball field. That's where we'd get a ride in, and coming home (inaudible). And he told me he was going to go up and Doris, his sister, was at the university. He said, "I'm going to go up and see Doris and see if I can get enrolled in the school." And I thought, well... Of course, I'd heard -- in the meantime, when I was down in Arkansas, they had this information series all the time. They told us about the GI Bill. We didn't know all this stuff here. We got war news, but we didn't get (inaudible) see about going to university. I said, well, I'd always said if I was going to go to school they'd have to pay me. I said, if they pay me... This is what I thought when I heard about the GI Bill. And you'd have to transfer there sometime. I could go (inaudible), and got up there. Now, Dave -- George was going (inaudible) and lived (inaudible). And he knew about this house this lady had, and if we got a room we could get to university.

It would be cheaper. That (inaudible) when I was there, was in the office. And I (inaudible), well, [Jeanette Fisher?], who was (inaudible) her, and... But, you know, this -- he never had me in class. He never knew what kind of grades I had. But anyway, Dave and I went in there both at the same time to get our transcript sent up, and this is what -- you know, (inaudible), but this guy didn't have any classes. He didn't do that every year. He knew who I was from, like, four years prior. He knew what my grades were. But that's when I decided to go to university, (inaudible) university. Elaine was (inaudible), they were in the same (inaudible) coming to school. And we were all --

F1: These old men. (laughter)

AW: Yeah, these girls were all excited about us, you know, and wondered who we were. (inaudible) --

F1: Oh, OK, (inaudible).

AW: Yeah, she was up there, too. Then we knew some of the other girls from Marion that was up there. But then we got (inaudible) school. I went through (inaudible) English 0, English 1, or English 2. And so they told me that -- they said, "You simpleton, (inaudible)." (laughter) About four or five words is as much as I (inaudible). Well, I got in English 1, rep 1. And maybe F and something like that. But [Debra first?], she started correcting my papers, (laughter)

so my grade automatically jumped up to B. Then when I started English 2, I mean, when I got the speech I got an A. (laughter) She would always correct my grammar in it. Well, I couldn't help her in chemistry. (inaudible), and then they were able to come out (inaudible). Yeah, yeah, I came back through Fort Sheridan. See, (inaudible) there now. Some of these guys that had to get shirts that were used, (inaudible) new stuff when you went overseas. Those would be cleaned, (inaudible). So at that time, that wasn't good. But anyway, (inaudible). So we were going through the chow line that night, (inaudible) POWs serving, [was the?] POWs down here serving (inaudible). (inaudible). I mean, they had to take him out. They had to take him out, (inaudible) take him out, take him out, anybody else (inaudible) doing (inaudible). This guy (inaudible) threw up his hand together, they were serving (inaudible) raindrops Friday morning. Well, (inaudible). He said, "SS is not what I'm worried about." Called up the (inaudible) and says, "(inaudible) from Germany, just left here. (inaudible) what time we leave here." So the time, they said, "Back here Monday morning, bright and early." (laughter) So Monday morning, bright and early, he was delivered to (inaudible). But they always talk about (inaudible) his name was, but he said he just was the wisest guy, you know, working with

people like that. By the time they brought him in,
(inaudible) they take him out on the lakeshore, vacation.
Colonel (inaudible) went out there. He had a cat, and he
let the cat die (inaudible) what was going on. Then he
turned that cat, (inaudible) the lakeshore, you know, dozens
of yards down the way. (inaudible), bam, turns out he's an
expert firer. And he never (laughter; inaudible). Grandpa
(inaudible). This one guy would walk right down in the
middle of the road, and the soldiers (inaudible) run down.
They'd get in trouble. (inaudible) if you knew Grandpa's
running down. But he had a watch that he said his German
friends had gave me. He still had that watch when we were
up there in the '70s.

M1: And he said a lot of those guys wanted to stay (inaudible).

AW: When we were in Germany, then, in '71, we visited this farm,
a dairy farm up in [Wolfstein?]. And this guy had been in
America as a prisoner of war.

F2: Wasn't he in Canada?

AW: Yeah. Thought he was in Kansas, out in the west, out in...
Yeah, on a farm. He worked on a farm. Anyway, he worked on
a farm out in the wheat country, but he'd talk about this
being so good. Now, also, there was a guy from Germany,
with the German group last year, who was a prisoner of war,
and was over here. And he talked to the group at Highland.

And his comment was, "Those were the best years of my life."
And I went up and talked to him afterwards, and told him
that I was a prisoner of war. But he got off onto somebody
else, and I thought I...

(break in tape)

AW: -- those arrangements, and I didn't want to wait for him.
But he wanted to talk to me about some stuff that I didn't
(inaudible). I thought I'd see him the next day up there,
but then he wasn't with the group. See, he was out visiting
these other people. So I don't know what ever happened to
that, but he said those were the best years of his life.
But they liked being over here, and a lot of people came
back over here (inaudible). But Irene's father, see, was
captured, was a German prisoner of war, and then after the
war he came to America instead of going back to... No, he
wasn't in Germany. He was in --

F1: He was in Serbia.

AW: Huh?

F1: He was in Serbia.

AW: I think the Serbia was something down there.

F1: Because they were trying to find someone who could be in Serbia, but he was in the hospital. This is (inaudible) her stepfather, yeah.

AW: Yeah, that's (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

F1: Her father, I think, was (inaudible).

AW: Yeah.

F1: He was (inaudible).

AW: Well, that's why he...

M1: (inaudible).

AW: Yeah.

M1: (inaudible).

AW: Oh, the Germans? They were... Well, they had a bunch of 'em over there, they used over there. After I got home from -- Camp [Arrow?] was still in when I was on the home (inaudible). That's (inaudible) liberate. Before I got home I did. Anyway, he wrote me a letter and said he was guarding these prisoners over here. Do you want any (inaudible)? (laughter) I said no. I said, just let 'em go back home. I said, "That's not going to accomplish anything." But, you know, if he was in a position to where they could do, he would do that.

M1: [Harold?] (inaudible)?

AW: Yeah. Well, he was a sergeant, you know, and he was in charge of these I don't know how many in this engineering

outfit, you know, combat engineering outfit. And that was (inaudible).

I: (inaudible)

AW: I think I got that when I was in... Might've been while I was home, before I (inaudible). I don't know, when I was home on R&R, and he wasn't (inaudible).

I: When you were in Germany, did you ever run into any Wickerts, or...?

AW: No. There's a funny story there, now. Never dawned on me - - oh, I knew we had Wickerts over there, you know, but, I mean, that's all I had ever thought about it. And it never dawned on me until I was captured in Italy and going -- starting up through Germany -- you know, starting up through Germany, and I had to think -- when they were taking -- when I realized they were taking us to Germany, and I happened to think, well, I remember some of the -- some of those bastards could be Wickerts. (laughter) You know, this is a thought that went through my mind, you know. Now, all I knew is that Grandpa had a brother. He had one son who was a captain in the Army. And that son, as far as I knew, only had one daughter, I thought, or no children at all. So I thought if there is any, it has to be from some of the girls, or else it has to be some other relation. So that was all I knew. But then, of course, his cousin had had

three boys. See, we found out when we were over there, but we didn't know that at that time. But he was in the service, and he died in '44. So he died during the service. But he wasn't a captain in the Army. He might've been a captain in the Reserves. I don't know. I never did find that out from [Hilda or Annalise?]. It was Annalise's father is who it was. But I got to Munich, and this is the first place where they checked us through with names, you know, who we were and everything. And they were going through these names, and... No, that wasn't the first place, because the first place they didn't even have a name for me. I wasn't even supposed to be there. They had a man here, and you could go with him, (laughs) but they just threw me right onto the trip. Well, that was when we were going out to Fara Sabina. They just threw me on to the train and sent me on. Well, in Munich, then, the card caught up. They had a card on me. And we were going through and getting, I think, shots or something, taking everybody's name, you know, and they had an interpreter there, and talking about it. Here's this guy that was standing back behind me, you know. He had gotten my card, and he said, "Same name, same name." And he was talking to these guys. He was all excited about the same name. And I thought, something's up. (laughs) I run (inaudible). So

they were talking about me, says -- he was talking about the same name. He says -- and then he comes, he says, "You August?" I said, "Yeah, yeah, I'm August." He says, "Same name, I'm August. (laughter) My name August." But here I thought I might run into a Wickert, you know. "Same name. Mein name August." (laughs) Yeah. But that's as close... See, there was only one cousin that was in the war over there, and he was killed in Yugoslavia, down in the Baltics. He was killed down there, and...

F1: Is that Annalisa's dad?

AW: No, no. Annalisa's dad I don't think was even in the (inaudible). I don't know. Nothing was said about that, and I never did get a chance to talk to them about that to find out about it.

F1: (inaudible).

AW: It would be interesting to get these, I mean, these letters that I have, if I get those interpreted, you know, from his...

F1: That his father wrote (inaudible).

AW: Yes.

F1: His grandfather.

AW: His grandfather wrote to [Chrisian?], yeah. They might tell about -- you know, have something about what he was in the service. But that was the first time that I realized that

this could happen. And then when it became August, well, then I kind of forgot about it. I never paid any more attention to it at all.

F1: (inaudible)

AW: See, when we were over there, what's his name... What's his name?

F1: (inaudible)

AW: Well, it's like, you know, the poll taker here, the famous one.

I: Gallup poll?

AW: Gallup, yeah, like the Gallup poll. The Wickert Institute in Germany. Reinhardt. Reinhardt was telling us that the Wickert name is quite common. He said the head commentator in France, his name is Wickert, in Paris.

F2: You mean like Dan Rather?

AW: Huh?

F2: Dan Rather (inaudible)?

AW: Yeah. Yeah.

I: You mean in France.

AW: In Paris. The German commentator that is reporting in Paris, back in Germany, his name is Wickert.

F1: Like Pierre Salinger.

F2: Pierre Salinger is our representative in France.

AW: The Wickerts came from East Prussia, and I think the one that we are from --

M1: We came from East Prussia?

AW: Well, yeah, the Wickerts were -- that's where their main... But the one that we're from was an army officer, and they only had one child, and then, of course, he had six or eight or -- had a big family, and six or eight of them survived, and that's where the (inaudible). But the original was only one, and that's all we know about him: his name was Wickert and he was an army officer. So I would guess he was shipped in there from over in East Prussia, and what is Poland now. You know, see, they came out of East Prussia where most of the fighters were. (laughter) See, I mean, the German...

F1: (inaudible)

AW: In German history, East Prussia, of course, is the one where most of the -- you know, all of the fighters, you know, all the army people from. But, you see, that's north and east. Now, where we are from, we are east of -- I mean, west of East Germany a little bit.

M1: Where the Wickerts are now.

AW: Yeah, well, where [Grandpa's?] from.

I: Where the soldier had been to.

AW: Huh?

I: Where the officer went to --

AW: Yeah.

I: -- he was shipped to.

AW: Yeah. But East Prussia, see, is over in Poland now, what was East Prussia.

M1: Those are German people in there. They're not Polish people.

AW: And a lot of German people in Poland, yeah. See... The guy that runs the tour, what's his name? Orville. Yeah, Orville, the guy that runs the tour over there, they and a couple other guys went to Poland. And the guy always, who is his cousin, that runs a church in Germany over here, they have relatives over in Poland. They only came over to this territory about just a few years before the war broke out. Well, they came over to get away from the Russians.

M1: The Russians had taken over Poland at that time?

AW: Well, the Russian influence was -- yeah. And then they went over to Poland, into Poland, on a tour, at the time we were over there. They stayed over a week longer and went over into Poland. There was a car loaded up, a van loaded up. They rented a van, drove over there, and said, "Let's see these people" that was related to 'em.

M1: (inaudible) had (inaudible).

AW: Probably the Prussians, yeah. Some of the Prussians that they sent over to fight, paid fighters, yeah.

M1: (inaudible)

AW: Yeah, they were Germans, but they weren't from East Prussia. They might've been from East Prussia. I don't know where they were from. Prussia was usually the one that (inaudible) ammunition specific to fighting, (inaudible) the other fighters.

M1: (inaudible) rather do that.

AW: You see, up near Munich, now, Germany is divided up near Munich. This is kind of like the southwest here, or else the northeast. It isn't heavy populated, and they are a lot of forest work and farm ground and all.

M1: This is where the Wickerts were from.

AW: Yeah, that kind of stuff, small town. You go down around Munich and it's all recreation area, recreation stuff, gambling stuff, and stuff like that. And then you go to Berlin, of course, and around there. But that is where most of the farm ground is, is up in that area.

M1: They don't have that much farm ground around the Rhine, then? Is that hill country, or...?

AW: Mountains. Well, now, along the Rhine, in the valley they will have some, but you get away from that and you'll get in the mountains. See, along the Rhine, a lot of places, they've got this terrace where they grow grapes. They work one year, and you will see the catwalks all the way up, and

a little patch here of grapes, a little patch here of grapes, a little patch there, little garden spot here, he's got his shack here, he lives down here on the Rhine, and down on the town. We've got pictures from when we were over there. We went down the Rhine, we got pictures showing this stuff up the hill, up the mountains like that. But there is good farm ground along the rivers, of course, some places. But through there, why, wherever that is... There's not much good farming in the southern part of Germany at all, and what is there is usually for... Now, see, when we were in there in '71, there was...

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