HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

BERNARD S. HARMAN

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Philip G. Solomon
Date: September 12, 1995

Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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BH - Bernard S. Harman [interviewee]
PS - Philip G. Solomon [interviewer]
JF - Josey G. Fisher
Date: September 12, 1995

Tape one, side one:

PS: Philip Solomon, interviewing Mr. Bernard S. Harman, for the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College. The date is September 12, 1995. Mr. Harman, can you tell me when you entered the armed service of the United States, the approximate date?

BH: November of 1941.

PS: Did you enter the Army or Air Force or…

BH: I enlisted in the Army Air Force.

PS: Right. And you were sent then for training, flight school, or?

BH: I was sent to Atlantic City for my basic training. And in Atlantic City I took my test, and they sent me from Atlantic City to radio school in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. That was the category they put me in.

PS: And you then became a radio operator for flight service?

BH: I attended radio school in Sioux Falls for about six months, and then I graduated as a radio operator and then volunteered to go into gunnery school so I could participate in B-17 flying in bombers. And I went, I got sent to Las Vegas, Nevada, for gunnery school, which lasted for eight weeks. After gunnery school, then I was sent to Ephrata, Washington. No, I was sent to Salt Lake City, where I was sent to Ephrata, Washington and put on my B-17 crew. Do you want me to keep going?

PS: Well, was that a usual combination, radio and gunnery? Or navigator/gunner? Was it usually a combination like that?

BH: Well…

PS: With, say with gunnery, would it be either…

BH: The radio operator who actually operated the radio is on the ship, and they wanted the flying experience. So you had to become a gunner to get flying experience in an airplane. Because that was the first time I ever went up in an airplane. I was never up in an airplane before, until I got to Las Vegas, Nevada, which at that time was a small little town of nothing.

PS: You volunteered to go into the Air Force?

BH: Into the Air Force, and also into gunnery, yeah.

PS: And had never been in a plane, and it was war time.

BH: That's right.

PS: That took a lot of guts. Then your training continued until what date, before you, what, became actively involved in combat?

BH: No, well, after I graduated, I told you, after I graduated from gunnery school, I was sent up to Salt Lake City, and then from Salt Lake City I was sent to Ephrata, Washington, where I met my permanent crew members for the first time, and also my pilot, my navigator, my bombardier, and my co-pilot.

PS: And what kind of plane…

BH: And we became a crew. That was in the, in the B-17.

PS: The B-17. Also known as the Flying Fortress.

BH: Right, right. And we flew into Ephrata. Well, I guess we got together in Ephrata, Washington for about six or seven weeks, that we flew together to get used to each other, and also to get used to flying. And after six or seven weeks we were told we were to go overseas, and we got a furlough to go home.

PS: It was still the same crew?

BH: That was my permanent crew.

PS: Yeah, permanent crew.

BH: The ten of us.

PS: Was that crew and plane part of a squadron?

BH: Not at that time.

PS: Not at that time.

BH: Not at that time.

PS: It was to later be assigned to a group.

BH: That's right.

PS: Now, when you finished your flight training, did the crew in its entirety volunteer to go overseas? Is that the way…

BH: None of us volunteered.

PS: Oh.

BH: We were just told we were going overseas.

PS: Oh you were, I thought you said you had asked to go.

BH: No, I volunteered at the beginning.

PS: Yeah, right. And this…

BH: [unclear] the crew…

PS: At what, what date was this in, Bernie?

BH: Well that must have been in '42, I imagine. I don't know the exact date. But it was after we got our...

PS: It was well after Pearl Harbor. We were actively…

BH: Oh yeah.

PS: …in the war at that time.

BH: Yeah.

PS: Prior to the invasion of…

BH: Of Germany.

PS: Oh, oh.

BH: Way before.

PS: Way before.

BH: Yeah, way before that.

PS: The invasion was June, 1944.

BH: Yeah, we went in '42. And when we got our shipping orders that we were going overseas, I got a furlough for ten days. We were in Washington state at the time. And I think I came home by train because I couldn't get any airplanes at that time. And it took me three days to get home and three days to get back. So actually, I…

PS: And that was all part of your ten days?

BH: Ten-day furlough. And I actually had four days at home with my friends and my relatives, my family. And I didn't tell them I was going overseas. But I knew when I went back that we were starting to. So anyway when I went back to Ephrata, and from there we started to hedge-hop. What they call by hedge-hop, we'd go into town, a different town, we'd fly from Ephrata to Pendleton, Oregon stay at the base maybe three or four days, then fly to Grand Rapids, Nebraska, to another Air Force base. We called that hedge-hopping, from state to state or from airport to airport, airfield to airfield, until we got all the way across to Bangor, Maine, which may have been maybe a month later. And then from Bangor we went up to Newfoundland, up to Gander Bay. And then we flew B-17s out from Gander Bay straight over to Prestwick, Scotland.

PS: During this period your crew was a permanent, probably a…

BH: A permanent crew.

PS: Yeah. And all this was with the permanent crew.

BH: With the 10, eh, 9 fellow members.

PS: And all in a B-17.

BH: All in a B-17. Yes, sir.

PS: Was it necessarily the plane that you were going to go into combat with?

BH: No, no. We just, we'd fly a different plane when we got into an airfield.

PS: You were ferrying?

BH: It was like ferrying a plane around.

PS: Yeah, yeah. I see. Then you became part of flight training in England, out of…

BH: Well after we, after we flew over from Gander Bay, we flew right over to Prestwick, Scotland. And they had that big air base over there. And we landed on our ship there, with hundreds and hundreds of ships. That was like a boarding place for the B-17s so that when they needed them in England, they'd get a call to fly them in. But we got off and left our ship there. Also there must have been maybe 200 or 300 other ships flying in with us at that time. And we all landed. We got on a train into England, from Prestwick, Scotland. And from there we went into our permanent base in England, with the 388 Bomb group. And we got stationed in our bunk. We had a bunk. And from there we started getting training in England.

PS: Yeah. And this was to be your permanent base?

BH: At that time, yeah.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Yeah.

PS: Bernie, your…

BH: My [unclear] you want me to go?

PS: Yeah, sure.

BH: On the last statement I made about a bunk…

PS: Right.

BH: Well that was actually our little, we had a hut. And actually our bunks were in the hut. They had six huts, eh, six beds in the hut. And the six enlisted men were in that hut. That was our permanent home while we were in England, flying together.

PS: Yeah. Now during that period, Bernie, were there--you were not making any combat, there were no combat missions?

BH: Not for us. There were no…

PS: No?

BH: Not for us. From the same…

PS: From the same base?

BH: The squadron was making bombing trips, but we were in training.

PS: Yeah.

BH: When I say training, we went up around the base. We flew, we'd practice our guns, shooting the guns, and we also took some refresher courses about Germany. You know, different places in Germany we may be bombing, and different instructions they gave us at the time. And I would say we were there about four or five weeks before we actually went on our first bombing trip.

PS: So you did within four or five weeks get into actual combat bombing missions?

BH: No, no, not before five weeks.

PS: Oh, oh. Why?

BH: We were training in the camp.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Just around the camp we flew. And we took individual lessons on, about Germany. We had big maps. They showed us different pictures of Germany, different places we'd want to hid [hide] for…

JF: Excuse me, how about parachuting? [unclear]

BH: And actually we didn't go into our first bombing session until like four or five weeks later when we made our first bomb run.

PS: Yeah. During, getting away from the actual flying experience and training for just a moment, Bernie. During this period, of course the war was going on and what later became known as the Holocaust--which we didn't know too much of at that time--but

at that time, Bernie, were you, did you hear anything at all of German atrocities against the Jewish people, against political enemies and Gypsies and so forth?

BH: Not at that time, no.

PS: You didn't hear anything at all about…

BH: Not at that time.

PS: …concentration camps?

BH: Not at that time.

PS: You knew nothing of gas chambers, crematoria?

BH: Not at that time.

PS: Okay. Now getting into your flying experiences. You were on a number--eventually you were shot, we're interviewing you, Bernie, for one thing, as a prisoner of war. Now, before you were captured you had many, many missions, I believe, correct?

BH: We only had, we, well we had missions, yeah. We had about seven missions.

PS: How many?

BH: Seven.

PS: Seven? Up until you were shot.

BH: We were shot down.

PS: And those missions were over?

BH: Over France, then into Germany.

PS: Yeah. France at that time of course was…

BH: Was Germany, yeah.

PS: …German-occupied.

BH: We were mostly within France and Germany, the outskirts of Germany.

PS: Now during that period also, you were, when you started to go on flight combat missions, you were flying from the same air base.

BH: Oh yeah, yes sir.

PS: During the period that you were there, Bernie, did you experience any German bombings? The Germans certainly were, at that time the Germans were still pretty much in command of the air, were they not?

BH: They were in command, we heard, we had some raid there and I remember, and I remember that because I used to go into town.

PS: Yeah.

BH: See, we were allowed to go into town every fourth day. We had what they called three days on and one day off. So the fourth day I'd go into town. And while we were in town we went through quite a few bombings, in Cambridge and so-called Hemel Hempstead. That had to do with towns near us.

PS: This was in southern England? When I say southern England…

BH: I don't really know if it was southern. I guess it was. I guess it was southern England.

PS: I think they, were you very far from London?

BH: Yeah, we were pretty far away, close to Cambridge.

PS: At that time the Germans were doing a tremendous amount of bombing, weren't they?

BH: Oh they were bombing. Oh we were, everything was blacked out [unclear].

PS: Yeah, yeah.

BH: Everything was blacked out. We went out at night when we were in town, and you didn't know who you were talking to.

PS: So that one point they started to hit very, very heavily the British and American air bases.

BH: Well, that might have been after I got shot down.

PS: Yeah, it probably was.

BH: See that might have occurred after I got shot down.

PS: Oh, okay. Your targets mostly were, do you remember? The seven [unclear].

BH: I remember, I remember Emden.[1] Schweinberg I remember, because that's where I got shot down.

PS: Okay. Now you were flying, were there any other--you are Jewish, right?

BH: Yeah. I'm Irish by blood.

PS: You carried a, your dog tag.

BH: Well, yeah, my [unclear].

PS: It had the letter "H."

BH: "H," yes.

PS: Of course for Hebrew.

BH: Right.

PS: Were there any other Jewish pilots, fliers, in your crew? Any other Jews in your crew?

BH: No. Very, very, very few. I don't think I met, maybe two. Because all [unclear].

PS: Was there anything said to you about disposing of your dog tag if shot down and captured alive?

BH: I don't think it was mentioned. You just thought about it.

PS: Yeah.

BH: I would thought, after I was in a couple raids, and I realized what was going on, I said to myself, "Why, if anything happens, I'm getting rid of them tags." Because then I started to hear about the Germans, what they were doing to prisoners and the Jewish prisoners.

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[1]Mr. Harman identifies Emden, later in the interview, as being near Frankfurt, Germany.

PS: Although you didn't hear about concentration camps, you did know of their treatment of Jewish…

BH: Yeah, I didn't hear too much about concentration camps.

PS: Okay, getting up to then the point of your being shot down and captured, Bernie. Do you want to go into that a bit, to relate the experience?

BH: Well, first of all I'll tell you this. Let's say all of my training was a joy ride. What do I mean by that? We were flying in the States, and we flew from city to city in America, and naturally it was a joy ride. There were no bullets or anything being shot at you at all. We didn't realize what we were going into. And after we got down to England and we went up on our first mission and the bullets started coming at us and the flack, then we realized that, what was happening. And then we started seeing airplanes going down and parachutes coming out and the ships going down. And then we said to ourself, "Boy, what do you call this?" And we were glad to get back to the base. And then our feelings were that some of the guys didn't come back; we could be next. You know? So what we'd do, we'd run into town and try to enjoy ourselves the best we could, and then we'd come back and we'd fly again. And every mission was the same way. You just got, I wouldn't say, I mean you know I think we were scared. All of us were scared and we didn't want to get shot down. And it's a funny feeling.

PS: I guess you did see every day flights that left the air, the field, and on the return there were not as many…

BH: Yeah, what happened there, naturally we'd take off, and I'd say after about our second or third flight, when we'd come back, after we flew, I'd, let's say that we flew around 17 hours by the way. We used to take one about 3:00 in the morning and then we'd come back like 7:00 at night, you know? And if the crew was shot down, let's say in the next hut over, and they didn't come back, by that same night there was another new crew in there to replace him for the next day bombing. So it got to be a, not a habit but a, just a ritual that some guys ain't coming back, see?

PS: How many B-17s were in a, what would you call it, a flight group?

BH: A squadron.

PS: A squadron.

BH: Well, I'd say, five, four, about twenty. But then you formed a group.

PS: Yeah.

BH: See there was 20 in a squadron. Then when you got up, upstairs, you'd form a group, a bomb group. And that might be like five or six squadrons. And you'd go in to bomb all at the same time. The navigator and the pilot got you through while you take the ship up.

PS: Now we're talking about a period of time prior to the Allied invasion of the continent.

BH: Oh yeah.

PS: So you were flying, from the time you left England, across the Channel, you were flying over enemy-held territory.

BH: Absolutely.

PS: You were over the enemy…

BH: Enemy territory all the time.

PS: Practically the entire, regardless of how short or long your flights were, they were all really, after the first few minutes over England before you hit the coast.

BH: Yeah, now, now, what occurred there, we had at the time the P-38 fighters. And at that time their range was just to go with the Channel into France. So they would accompany us all the way over to France. They crossed the Channel, till we hit France, and then they would turn back.

PS: Then you were on your own.

BH: And after that we were on our own.

PS: No fighter protection at all?

BH: None even. Nothing. We just went in and that was it.

PS: And at that time the Germans were still very, very strong. And in fact at that time I believe they still had pretty much control of the air.

BH: At that time the Germans were winning the war.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And England, Mr. Winston Churchill was ready to evacuate England at that time. And when the worst, I think it was the worst time of the war at that time, at that period.

PS: This was prior to the evacuation of Dunkirk, do you recall?

BH: No, this was before that.

PS: Before?

BH: Yeah, this was before Dunkirk.

PS: Before Dunkirk, yeah.

BH: This was before that.

PS: Were you captured, shot down, prior to the German offensive that caused the British evacuation at Dunkirk? I can't recall the date.

BH: No, I don't think. Now I know what happened on that day. I still remember that day. We got called into the briefing room. We had what they called a big briefing, and all the squadrons that were going up would be in the big room. And there was a big map up on the wall, maybe, well, I would say roughly, maybe 12 yards long. A big map of the continent. And at that briefing the commanding officer would tell you what the target was for the day. He'd say, "Fellows, we're going to hit Schweinberg today." That was the target for that day, October the 14th, 1943. And at that time that was the most protective part of Germany. It was in the Ruhr Valley, where all the ball bearing plants were.

PS: The industrial heart.

BH: Everything was in that valley. And they told us when we took off, he said, "Ninety percent of you aren't going to come back from this raid. But it's going to shorten the war." And at that time you could feel, you could feel the tremor and emotion in us at that time. We were all scared. You know, these kids. And anyway, we took off, at 3:00 in the morning, and we headed out. And we got all the way across the Channel. We got into France. Nothing, we didn't feel anything, till we hit the, right before the bombing. We hit twi-, we went all the way into Germany with nothing. No flack. No guns. No fighters, nothing. And as soon as we got into our bomb run, as soon as we started to go into the bomb runs, to drop our bombs, all hell broke loose. Fighters came out like ants from the sky. They just, in and out, in and out. Flack came out. Ships started to go down. And we went into our bomb run, I still remember. And during the bomb run, the pilot pulled back. He said one, one engine had been knocked out. And he still went in, and we dropped our bombs and we turned around and we started to head back to our base. On the way back, we started to get hit again. And one time [unclear] we got two engines out. Then all of a sudden you'd feel flack coming all over, you see fighters all over. And in the turmoil, the pilot finally hollered, "Everybody get into ditching procedure; we're going to crash land." Now ditching procedure is you get in the radio room and one fellow puts his feet against, up the wall. The second fellow puts his feet around him, and the third fellow props himself against the other wall so when you hit you've got a little stability. The other three, the waist gunners, the two in the back, they just stayed in their position. And the tail gunner was in his position. He couldn't move. And the ball gunner was in his position. Anyway, you could feel the ship going down and while you're going down you're just thinking, everything comes to you.

PS: There's no, sort of…

BH: No, everything starts coming back to you.

PS: No sort of jumping?

BH: Well we couldn't jump there. We couldn't jump. It was going into a spin.

PS: Oh, oh.

BH: We were going down, like you see it in the movies pictures. And, while you're going down, well all you do is, everything, your life passes in front of you. Actually you don't know, you just see everything pass in front of you. Your mother, your father. Your relatives. [weeping]

PS: But…

BH: Then finally, we could feel that it jolt; we hit the ground.

PS: It hit the ground level, fairly level?

BH: Yeah, well we hit a field, we were on a farm.

PS: You couldn't see, could you?

BH: The only one who could see was the pilot, the co-pilot. And then finally we felt the ship hit the ground. And it felt like it slid. And then we stopped, and Craig was in front of me**.** All of a sudden [unclear] my arm was on him. And we stopped.

PS: Who was hit?

BH: Craig was the engineer.

PS: Oh.

BH: He was sitting in front of me, and I had my legs wrapped around him. And then I remember that the pilot, [unclear], "Get out of the ship! Get out of the ship!" So we started to run, and we pulled Craig down from the ship, because he had legs, both of his legs here. And I think he had them amputated. And I had my ankle broken. But we ran away from the ship and the next thing we knew the Germans were on us, with a gun, you know.

PS: Ground troops.

BH: Ground troops, whatever they were. By the time we ran away…

PS: Do you recall, Bernie, about, whereabouts this was? It was in Germany, [unclear]

BH: It was right outside of Schweinberg.

PS: Oh.

BH: It was Schweinberg, Germany. We had, well we must have been near, I would say that we were near Frankfurt. When we were coming back, we were coming back from Frank-, we came off the bomb run. And I would say we were somewhere near Frankfurt. Now the reason I say that is because we went from Frankfurt. But anyway, after they captured us, they put the guns on us and they captured us. And they took us to a camp, maybe a couple miles from there, like with a, I guess a military base. But we were actually all in a fog for [unclear]. Like in a dream. And I do remember a German officer questioned me, took me in a room and he wanted to give me a cigarette. He talked very good English. And they started in, "Where are you from, and what were you bombing? What's your name," and all that, you know. And different questions. I only gave him my name and my serial number, and my dog tag. That's all I gave him. But they did that to all of us, individually. And the ones they kept in solitary confinement for about five or six days.

PS: At what point did you throw your dog tags?

BH: Oh, I guess while we were coming down from the ship.

PS: Oh, oh.

BH: I even don't know how we did it, just, it seemed like when we were going down in the ship I just [unclear] took them and threw them away.

PS: Did, were you questioned about the fact that you were missing your dog tags?

BH: No, no.

PS: They didn't…

BH: No, they didn't ask me. All they asked me is what I was and I said, "I'm American." And after that it was it. And luckily I don't look Jewish. Luckily.

PS: Right.

BH: But if you look Jewish, they took you for Jewish. See that's why I say I have a couple of friends of mine [unclear] they look Jewish and…

PS: At that point your initial interrogation, was there anything at all said about religion or did you see…

BH: With the Germans?

PS: With the Germans.

BH: No.

PS: About, this was of course the…

BH: No, no point made about religion.

PS: Initial [unclear].

BH: No.

PS: Initial processing.

BH: All they said, "What are you?" And I said, "American," and that was it.

PS: Then from there, Bernie, you were…

BH: Well, from there…

PS: They kept you in a group? The…

BH: Well, there was ten of us there, and they had rooms.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And they interrogated all of us. And I would say we were there about six or seven days. Don't forget this is a long time ago; it's a dilemma to a point. And the next thing I knew [unclear]. We had very little to eat, by the way, also. Very little. We existed like we're in a, in a utopia. I don't know, we were [unclear], you know?

PS: Yeah.

BH: Food didn't even worry, we didn't even think about eating.

PS: Were you house-billeted in a, was it something of a prison that…

BH: Well, I wouldn't say, no, it was a base, a military base.

PS: Oh.

BH: And the SS put us in a, a room like this, I'd say, and put us in there, dark, no lights, nothing like that. And after about six or seven days they got the ten of us together and they put us on a box car. And they told us we're going to go to our prison camps.

PS: Now what time of year was this?

BH: This must have been in, the middle of October the 14th. It must have been October. Real, yeah, October or November when the…

PS: Yeah.

BH: Well I got shot down October the 14th. So I would say five or six weeks later. So it would be November of '43. They told us, they put us in the boxcar and said, "We're going to get you to the prison camp." But they didn't tell you what prison camp. So we just sat in the boxcar, hundreds and hundreds of prisoners, besides our crew. They put you in like cattle.

PS: All Air Force, do you know?

BH: All Air Force. No window, nothing, just three in the box car, and locked you in there, and then you started riding. So the next thing we knew we wound up in Frankfurt, Germany, which we didn't know at the time till we got out. And the train stopped. On the way the only thing they gave us was water. Nothing else, just water. And…

PS: Now how long were you in that boxcar in transit before they…

BH: Well I would say two or three days [unclear].

PS: Do you remember any stop for…

BH: I know we stopped, we stopped for water. They had a stop and they had that big, big wooden buckets full of water and you'd go and to get a drink of water.

PS: But no food.

BH: No food, nothing. No food at all. And then finally we wound up, we found out we were heading for Frankfurt, Germany. Why, we didn't know. But then we got off at Frankfurt, the ten, we were still together, the ten of us, plus our rear man. But our ten naturally, we knew each other and we stayed together. And we had [unclear] German guards around us. And we still had to march through Frankfurt, to go to the Frankfurt Railroad station. It was a very big station, whether you know it or not. And we finally would get into the station. There was multitudes of people there. Thousands and thousands of people were there, hollering Jew-haters and murderers and, "We want to kill you," you know? And they start throwing the stones, and other things at us. And we thought it was the end. And we had these guards around us, luckily. Finally they got us up to the train, and the train was so full they had them on top of the train, on the sides of the train. Everything was full in, even the car. So there was no room to put us. So finally the German guards, a couple of them jumped on the train, and they had like compartments in there. It was something like this in the train. Well, it would seat six or seven people. They managed to, first the compartment. And they ordered all the Germans off. And they got them off. And finally we got into the train with all the guards around us. And they shoved us into this compartment so we wouldn't get killed, see? So we stayed in there with the guards. The guards they went from, they wouldn't, some of them didn't get near us. And we were afraid we were going to get killed. And finally the train drove off.

PS: Now the people, Bernie, in the station were just transient?

BH: Yeah, they were civilians.

PS: Civilians, ordinary people.

BH: Right.

PS: Business people?

BH: Yeah, business people, plain working people.

PS: And they showed tremendous hatred?

BH: Oh, awful hatred. My God, we thought it was the end. Curses, swearing, hollering, "Rosenfeld." They called Roosevelt, "Rosenfeld." Yeah, you know, that he was Jewish.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And like I said, we were just thinking this was the end, you know, with all this jeering and all going on.

PS: So the German guards…

BH: Oh actually helped us out.

PS: Really were your protectors at this time.

BH: Absolutely, yeah. So then from there the, after we got the train moving and they told us we were going to go to Krems, Austria, in a camp.

PS: It's a long trip.

BH: It was. Well anyway we drove it over there. I don't know how long, actually, but I would say another few days.

PS: It must have, yeah. It had to be quite a few days.

BH: Yeah, because time didn't mean nothing to us, you know. I mean it was, time just went. We didn't know anything about time.

PS: Did the train make many stops?

BH: No, we went straight through pretty good. Pretty good. But anyway, we pulled in, I remember we was pulled into this town. We didn't know it was Krems then. We pulled in to this dark area and it was raining cats and dogs, pouring. And finally the train stopped and they ordered all of us down out of the train. We had about, I don't know, I'd say maybe a few hundred guys. I don't know how many were in there.

PS: Did it make many stops from the time you left Frankfurt?

BH: Well, it made stops, just to let people off. A lot of people got off.

PS: Oh, it was a pa-, you were…

BH: It was one of the…

PS: Boxcars within a passenger…

BH: No, that wasn't a boxcar then.

PS: Oh, you were…

BH: We were on the train.

PS: Oh, oh. And there were…

BH: [unclear] in there.

PS: All, also passengers?

BH: Yeah. They were on the train.

PS: Civilian passengers.

BH: Yeah. So, when they left their [unclear], by the time we got to where we were going, we were practically the only ones on the train, see? So I don't know how many prisoners it was. It must have been quite a few hundred prisoners on that train. It was in Krems, Austria. Well anyway when we stopped it was pouring. It was raining so hard you couldn't believe it. Oh, awful, awful. And they stopped the train, and they made all of us get out in the rain, you know, and…

PS: During the trip, Bernie, from Frankfurt to Austria, were there, was there food at that time?

BH: I don't remember any food at all.

PS: Now there was at least what, two or three days?

BH: Easy, easy. Like, see, a lot of it is a dream now to me, you know? But there was no, I don't have any recollection of food. The only thing they might have given us was bread maybe, maybe. But I don't even remember that. But after we got off they landed some-

Tape one, side two:

PS: This is tape one, side two, Philip Solomon, continuing the interview with Bernard Harman. To continue, we were speaking about your arrival in Austria, and the train being transported.

BH: My last statement, we got off the train, in the rain. It was pouring cats and dogs. It was a real heavy, heavy rain. And it was muddy, it was like in the farmland. There was mud and everything on the ground. And we still had the same clothes that we were shot down in. We never changed clothes or anything.

PS: Yeah, I was just going to ask you about whether you had been given…

BH: No, we never changed clothes. We had the same clothes that we were shot down in, all the time that they had us there.

PS: Well, let me ask you this, Bernie. Up until this point, had you been processed as a prisoner? By "processed," I mean, was there any interrogation?

BH: Well at the beginning I mentioned that, yeah, with the…

PS: Yeah, well would you call that any kind of…

BH: Briefing.

PS: Intense interrogation?

BH: No, that was the only one.

PS: Make, they made no demands on you for information or…

BH: Well, they asked us questions but we refused to answer.

PS: And they did not press…

BH: They did not press it, no.

PS: For the answers?

BH: They offered us cigarettes. They were very hospitable and very friendly. The one officer, yeah an officer was on, there was only one officer. And he was well-groomed in English. He talked English better than I did. And they were pretty diplomatic. "Hey, do you want a cigarette? Do you want something to eat?" Or something, you know.

PS: So you would say that up to this point, which was then, what, about two weeks into your capture?

BH: Well it was roughly four weeks or so, I guess three or four weeks.

PS: So those four weeks, Bernie. Would you say that the Germans were adhering reasonably well to the agreement of the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war?

BH: Yeah, except for the food and the…

PS: Yeah.

BH: Eating thing, yeah.

PS: Oh. So you arrived and you were on your way to the…

BH: Now, at the time, I didn't mention to you, I, when I crashed, when we crashed I broke my ankle, I, on my left leg. And we had what they called the Air Force

boot. Now, the boot was on my foot, and the, it got in there so tight it just spread. My foot swelled up and I couldn't get my boot off. That's how tight it was. So I started to walk up the road with the rest of these prisoners. You know, we just--when we got off the train, a German officer made a speech. He said, "Look, we've got about two or three miles to go up the road. You're going to have to walk there before you get to your prison camp." So, I started to walk and then one of my fellow, one of the fellow fliers saw I was limping and tried to help me. But luckily it was a truck, a German truck, following us. And the German guard came over to me and put me in the truck, because I couldn't walk.

PS: You were wearing flight boots rather than in…

BH: Flight boots. In my regular flight, my army, Air Force [unclear].

PS: Which were not made for walking.

BH: No, no, it was not that. It swelled. My foot swelled up so much I couldn't get the boot off.

PS: Well weren't they more for warmth than for walking?

BH: Well we were flying over, yeah. Yeah, yeah, it was the flying boots.

PS: Yeah, that's what I mean.

BH: Yeah, they were wool inside.

PS: But did you also carry your regular walking, your regular shoes or combat boots?

BH: No, no. That's all we had for flying.

PS: You always had your flight boots.

BH: Just the flight stuff. Until we got off the ship, you know, when we got home.

PS: Yeah, right.

BH: When we got into our home base. But anyway, we, yeah, only there was hundreds and hundreds of guys walking up to the camp in the mud. And I was in the truck, German truck. And finally, I don't know how many hours they were walking. Finally, I would say maybe an hour-and-a-half, we saw lights in the distance, because it was late at night. It must have been, maybe I would say roughly two or three in the morning. You know? And suddenly we saw lights, you know, coming up. And one of the German guards hollered, "That's it. There it is. There's your camp." And we looked, you know, and then they came up to the camp. And they had a big, big doors that swung open like a regular, you know, they had fence around the camp. And they opened the gates up. And some American prisoners were in there already, and they were waiting for us. You know, an American prison; they were inside already. And as we came up to the gate they started hollering, "Anybody know where Joe Schmoe?" or, "Does anybody know Ralph Green?" You know.

PS: This was all Air Force?

BH: All Air Force.

PS: American only or was it…

BH: Only Americans. Only Americans.

PS: No British.

BH: Only Americans. And we looked and it was so gloomy and we almost died when we saw it, when we saw what it was there, you know, in that ten barracks. And they had the guards, just like you see in the movies. Guard towers all around with machine guns. And they had the gates open up with the German guards with the guns. And we started to march through. And we were very, very haggard, very haggard looking. And, you know, I mean, most of us were in a fog. I should say all of us were in shock. I still say we were in shock.

PS: All in shock. I'd say so.

BH: And finally, after we got into the camp, they start, "You go here into this barracks." And they shove you in this barracks, then they shoved, they had about ten or twelve barracks, until they had all the men in there. And naturally when you got in the barracks, the other American prisoners were in there. So they helped you out to a bit, you know, and they were old veterans. Let's put it that way. And I remember the first night we slept on the floor. We were just so tired we just laid on the floor, just to sleep.

PS: I'm just curious, Bernie, at what point were you separated from your officer crew?

BH: When we were on the train from Frankfurt. When we left Frankfurt, all of us were on that train.

PS: Including your, the officers.

BH: The officers, yeah, the officers. Now when we got off, that was for the, the camp for the enlisted men.

PS: I see.

BH: That was the *Stalag* XVII-B. And the officers stayed on. They were going to *Dulog* [*Luft*, interrogation camp], to *Luft* III [German prisoner of war camp for pilots], somewhere I think it was in Poland, I think, for the officers' camp. So that's when we actually, we got separated, at that time. And we didn't see each other after that until the end of the war. See, but anyway, we got into the barracks and I said before, and we just laid on the floor and fell asleep. We were just pooped.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Fatigued. And the next morning, you know, we start talking with some of the fellows. And somebody brought like, hot water or something. There was no food. Just like hot water and something like that. Maybe, there might have been a cup of coffee. They might have had coffee there. I'm not sure. And then the, they took us out, lined us up outside the next day, and they gave us the dog tag, took a picture check, took a picture of you, gave you a dog tag number, and then they told you which barracks you were going to be in. They, so, luckily the six of us were in the same barracks, the six enlisted men.

PS: But up till this point there had still been nothing more in processing or interrogation?

BH: No.

PS: By processing I mean getting all your identification…

BH: Well, when we came into the camp, maybe it's not coming, after we came, no, up until then, no. After we got into the camp, and we got into our barracks, which happened to be mine with 34-B, so they had an A barracks in front and a B barracks in the back, and they had a little latrine and--not a latrine; they had a washroom in the middle--and the latrine was all the way in the other end. Each barracks had a latrine. I mean every few barracks had a latrine to go to in the back. And there they took us in for interrogation and they took our names and serial number. And they were supposed to contact the Red Cross…

PS: Oh.

BH: …with your name and serial number. And that's how I imagine the Red Cross got my name. And my folks then found out where I was about a year later.

PS: A year later, you say?

BH: It took them a year to find out where I was. I was missing in action for a year before they found out.

PS: But the Red Cross was notified at what point, Bernie?

BH: Well, it was, I would say, what was it, five or six weeks after we went down.

PS: But I always thought it was the responsibility of the Red Cross to transmit the information of the, regarding the identification of prisoners so that those who had been listed as missing in action could be listed as still living.

BH: Well, the only thing I could say is this, I must have been in a, by the time we were shot down, and by the time I got to my camp, permanent camp, must have been roughly six weeks or several weeks of turmoil, I mean just running around and we didn't know where, didn't know what was happening. Just actually it was an episode, you know, that, unforgettable. And I would say about six or seven weeks later, right after we got into the prison camp, then when we gave the German, the Germans who were in charge, our name and serial number, I would imagine a few months already did pass by. Now I don't know how long it took the Germans to contact the Red Cross with our names and serial numbers. That I don't know.

PS: Well during that period were you permitted to write?

BH: Well not right away. Not right away. We didn't know anything about writing at that time. And I would say--I'm trying to figure when the Red Cross came in there--I think the Red Cross came in about a month or two months later, a representative from the Red Cross. And then they were given, we read orders, rules that we had to follow about writing home and all that.

PS: Oh.

BH: And then we received, we could receive a Red Cross parcel, it was supposed to be one every month. And we could send letters home. Well I think it was one or two a month; I'm not sure now. And then we had a form, a sort of form in there. We had the

regular form from the Germans to write on, and then they would censor it, I guess, or read it. And then my folks would send me a letter back and they could also send me…

PS: But this was about a year after your capture?

BH: Well this happened, no, now, my folks didn't know it till a year later.

PS: Yeah. So you received no mail…

BH: What I didn't, the Red Cross didn't come until about two months, I would say, after I was there. Now, that's when they told me I could write home. Now I believe at that time I wrote a letter home. I believe sometime during then I wrote a letter home. Not knowing I figure they knew.

PS: Yeah.

BH: See now, I don't know if they got my letters. I don't think they got my letters. Now what happened to the letters, I don't know, because the first letter I got from my parents was over a year. And my sisters, my brothers and my parents, it was over a year. And I was there and they told me that they didn't know anything from one year.

PS: So they were not receiving your letters or they would…

BH: That's the way it sounded. Now what happened to the letters I sent, I couldn't tell you. Because I'll tell you when I opened the Red Cross parcels--we would always get one a month--and you were lucky if you got one every six months. What would happen, when it came time for the parcel to come in, the Germans would holler, "They bombed last night."

PS: Yeah?

BH: "And they bombed out the trains, and your parcel was in there."

PS: They tell you in the meantime…

BH: That was their boot, so, like I said we got a parcel once every, I would say, every four to six months if we were lucky. And then it got to a point towards the end we got one parcel for two guys to split. You know, when it started to tighten up and Germany was losing the war. But they were very lax on getting stuff in to us.

PS: But the rations you were receiving, was it adequate, would you say, for subsistence?

BH: Now all we got was one hot meal. And the hot meal was soup at night. And the soup had cockroaches and worms, and anything they could throw in there.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And you had one, you had about a quarter of a loaf of bread maybe, like that, for two guys. They'd give you one slice. You know, that was the meal.

PS: That was…

BH: Now in the morning all you got was hot water, if you had something to make the hot water with, see? And so you had to…

PS: So all you got was water, cold water.

BH: If you had the Red Cross parcel, if you were lucky, you got coffee in there, you know, instant coffee. And you would have to stretch it, see? But otherwise all you got

was hot water. In the morning the water was on for one hour. It was, mostly I would say, let's say 60, maybe 120 guys in the barracks, maybe more, 150 guys in a barracks. And they had this little box in the middle, maybe as big as this, for a hundred, all we had to, to wash for here and to wash, you know, to get washed. And for one hour you had to get washed. Everybody had to run in and get washed, bathe, or fill a can up with water or something like that. Then there was no water again until at night, 7:00 or 6:00 at night. And everybody would rush in there and to either get a can of water, you know, or something like that, see? No windows. There was no windows, only, there was no window panes.

PS: In the building.

BH: Everything was open. And when it got cold, that wind came right in. No heat.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And when it rained, we'd go out and we'd take a shower. We'd jump out the window and take a shower.

PS: That was your only method?

BH: Well, after we were there a while, every six months they gave us what they called us a delousing. It's just like they sort of took the Jewish people into the…

PS: Yeah, the rooms.

BH: And then the water came down but over there it was gas. Over here we were lucky that it was water. Because they'd get about 100 of us into the room, strip us all down naked, and then they'd pour the water down. And then you'd walk out of there one at a time in the line, and they'd give you a baldie. So every six months you got a shower and a baldie, while we were there.

PS: Now during this period, Bernie, were you, there were what, about 200 men in your barracks, is that right?

BH: In the barracks.

PS: There were other barracks buildings. So you were able to observe the treatment of many other fellow prisoners.

BH: Yes.

PS: Was there any cruelty?

BH: Well, the only cruelty actually I could see was when the bombings came, naturally they bombed homes and they bombed people.

PS: Yeah.

BH: A lot of the guards were from this town, in Krems, you know, surrounding towns. And when they would come after a bomb raid, let's say, they would come in because their houses were bombed out or their parents were bombed out or killed, and they'd come in with the guns and they'd start hollering, "We're going to kill you! We're going to kill you!" You know--"My house got knocked down! I lost my house! I lost my parents!" You know? And it was bedlam. You know, a lot of times we actually thought they were going

to shoot us, you know? Luckily, they just walked through. They had like, they had two police dogs.

PS: Were you witness to any acts of cruelty besides the…

BH: Well, the only one, I didn't witness any of them actually, to a point. But I did see, after we got out, after we were freed, in Camp Lucky Strike, a couple of my friends…

PS: I was there.

BH: Were you there?

PS: Yeah.

BH: Yeah, well a couple of my friends, they were these skeleton cases.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And one of them I was very close to, Larry Press, I don't know if he's still around today or not, I really don't. But he was…

PS: Friends, when you say friends, from your *Stalag Luft*?

BH: No, he lived two or three blocks from me.

PS: Oh, oh, you knew him from home.

BH: I didn't know him that well, but I met him in the army. And we were around two or three blocks away and we got friendly because we were in the same neighborhood, you know? And we talked about different things and where we think we live, and we became real friendly after that. But then we got separated. He got, it so happened he got shot down over there too and I didn't know it. And then when I got back, or when I got to Lucky Strike I met him there, and he, they brought him in on a stretcher, and then they sent him right back. You've probably seen some of the pictures, when they brought prisoners in that were skeletons. He was actually a skeleton.

PS: Yeah. Now were you aware of any other Jewish prisoners during this period?

BH: No, I don't think so.

PS: So you were not…

BH: I seen a couple in Lucky Strike. I didn't know all of them, but I seen quite a few of them that were skeletons, you know, Jewish boys.

PS: Yeah.

BH: But I didn't actually know, you know, personally. But I spoke to them after I seen them in Lucky Strike.

PS: But here in the *Stalag* XVII-B that you were in, either you were not aware of any other Jewish prisoner, American-Jewish prisoners, or if there were, you were not aware of any--separation, you were not separated from the other prisoners?

BH: No, not at that time.

PS: You would say that, were you treated any differently, do you think?

BH: No, but they didn't think I was Jewish.

PS: Yeah.

BH: They…

PS: You had never been identified?

BH: Not that I, now I'm not ashamed of being Jewish. Now don't get me wrong.

PS: But you were [unclear]…

BH: But I didn't want to get killed.

PS: Yeah.

BH: When the gun's on you, you can't be brave.

PS: You never ever…

BH: They never asked me, they never asked me if I was Jewish, and I never told them I was Jewish. And I never denied I was Jewish. All I said, I was American. And they let it go at that.

PS: Bernie, we've gone into quite a, quite length. Your personal treatment at the hands of the German guards, were there any, you said in general they were reasonably, well, you were reasonably well-treated. Were there any individual guards who were cruel or themselves antisemitic?

BH: All right, I know what I'll, I'll mention something here. See, the people back here don't understand. The German guards that we had on the camp were what we called the--they were the older, the older gentlemen, the ones that couldn't serve in the army.

PS: Right, non-combatant.

BH: Let's say, it was anywheres from 65 to 75, see? And they were the ones that were guarding us, see? They, I don't think they ever went into combat, and like I say, I think you could have talked to them more than you could have, you could talk to them better than the soldiers that would have been in combat. Because there it was dog eat dog. You know that. And when I got my Red Cross parcel, whenever I did, luckily I didn't smoke. And I think I got five packs of cigarettes in that carton. You got five packs of cigarettes, you got a coffee, instant coffee, you got margarine or oleo margarine, in the can.

PS: Yeah, yeah.

BH: And I think I had Spam, a can of Spam. And maybe some crackers. And you had milk, the, what do you call that milk? Powdered milk.

PS: Powdered, yeah.

BH: See? Now, I'd take my five packs of cigarettes, and the Germans couldn't get any cigarettes. And they loved the American cigarettes. And so I'd go out and I'd walk around the compound and I'd pick up an old German Herr, as I called them then. And, "*Kommen sie hier*," you know. We learned a few German words at home. I told him I have a few cigarette. "Food, food." So then once in a while I'd get an egg, or I'd get sausage, you know, bread. And I'd trade my cigarettes for food with the German guards. Now like I said, the German guards were older men, and they were more casual. You know, they walked around with a gun but I think they were just there as a stationary measure, you know. So, actually, most of the German guards were pretty, pretty gentle with us to a point.

But you found a few that weren't, that were hollering. They'd pull their, like in the morning they'd come in and stick a bayonet up your rear to get you up. They'd walk in with police dogs in the morning, "*Raus*!" And if you didn't get up, they shoved that bayonet right up your behind, you know, because it was hay. We didn't have, we just had hay there. We didn't have a mattress or nothing like that, you know.

PS: Can you give us an idea, Bernie, of your physical and mental condition up to that point? You must have lost an incredible amount of weight.

BH: Oh, I lost about 30 pounds at that time. But when you're all together in the same situation you never notice it. You get used to each other.

PS: But, was there much in the way of sickness, disease?

BH: Well, we had colds, a few colds around. I only knew one case of pneumonia that I knew of in there. And see, we were all, all in pretty good shape when we went there. Touch wood.

PS: What was your, to bring out, well, we're speaking here as 50, more than 50 years after the fact.

BH: Much after the fact, yeah.

PS: 55 years, really. And we sort of lose perspective of the fact that we were more or less kids at this time.

BH: We were kids.

PS: 18, 19, 20, 22, 23.

BH: I was 19.

PS: You were 19 at this point.

BH: I was 19 at that time, yes sir.

PS: A lot of times…

BH: Like I say, you don't realize what it was…

PS: Yes.

BH: …until we got over there and…

PS: Right.

BH: …and we started to get into action.

PS: A lot of times people listening to this don't think of the transitional period of aging, that we weren't then what we are now, that we were kids.

BH: Absolutely.

PS: A bunch of kids.

BH: There's no doubt about it.

PS: We weren't men. We always talk of men in our outfit. But we weren't men.

BH: No, you were kids. If you wouldn't have been a kid you couldn't have went through with that.

PS: You're right, right. We were physically able…

BH: You couldn't have went through that.

PS: So your physical condition, you were all more or less the same.

BH: We were all [unclear].

PS: Up until this point you were able to meet the hardships, physical…

BH: Absolutely.

PS: Now how about your mental state?

BH: Well…

PS: Well, you were not…

BH: I, see and that didn't happen to me, touch wood. I was able to, I was always a pretty optimistic person. That was always my attitude, and, positive, you know. I was always positive.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And I always thought sooner or later I'd get the hell out of there, you know.

PS: Right.

BH: My own feelings. Then, most of the fellows I talked to, we all had the same feeling, and we helped each other out. Now there were quite a few cases where fellows went, met me, off. They just went nervous breakdowns. I've seen a guy jump through a windows, you know, he jumped through the window thing and landed up on the ground and went actually crazy. I've seen quite a few of them. But I would say 90% of us were strong enough, strong-willed, to overcome, you know, that waiting period. We were just waiting to get out.

PS: Yeah.

BH: You know…

PS: Now were there any in a physical condition that required medical attention? If so, was there medical attention given?

BH: No. No, the only thing we had, we had a, maybe a, a guy with a, what do you call that, one of those that was trained for medicine.

PS: Eh, oh…

BH: You know, they weren't doctors.

PS: The medical aids.

BH: The medical aids or something, you know, and [unclear] you know.

PS: Aids.

BH: But we had a couple of those guys.

PS: The corpsman, medical corpsman.

BH: Well some way we had a couple of those fellows.

PS: Yeah.

BH: And they called it the little infirmary.

PS: They were American POW's?

BH: They were the doctors. Yeah, POW's.

PS: No German doctors.

BH: There were no German doctors, none. No medicine. No aspirins, nothing. In fact, if you got hurt, I mean, you just had to lay there and just recover yourself, if you got sick. You know?

PS: Yeah.

BH: Luckily most of them were in very, very, well all of us were in very, very good shape, and most of us came out pretty well.

PS: Now, at this point, had you yet heard from home? Did you have at this point reason to believe that your parents knew where you were, that you were alive and…

BH: Well, I thought they knew after I was in there three months.

PS: Yeah. But you still had not heard from them.

BH: I didn't know. I hadn't heard from them from after a year. I didn't get any letters or anything from them, for a year. I guess it was more, more than that. It was at least twelve or thirteen months before I got a letter. Then I realized that they hadn't heard from me till then.

PS: And then suddenly the shock that, knowing that all this period they thought you probably…

BH: All they knew was I was missing in action. My mother got a bad heart from it, you know.

PS: And missing in action, probably they thought, you know, [unclear]…

BH: You might have been dead.

PS: You were dead. You had just been killed.

BH: Yeah. Well I didn't know at that time. I thought they knew. Like you thought. I thought the Red Cross had contacted them after a few months. They were, the way it turned out, they didn't.

PS: You know, before we started this interview, Mr. Harman, Bernie, showed me a war time log that he kept that is, as far as I'm concerned, is just beyond description. It's incredible. It's, well maybe, Bernie, if you want to describe it. It's a log that he kept with, oh, numerous photogra-, poems. One is entitled, "Last Flight."

Big birds filled with eggs of death.
Dark in the sky one day.
And enemy guns all blew their breath
To take their light away.

It is just an incredible book that's beyond, to me is beyond any words of description that I could give. It's a book that during this period, Bernie, to introduce the book, you were not forced to work.

BH: That's right.

PS: And saw no reason to bo-, did they offer any kind of work for those who might volunteer to work?

BH: Well, they couldn't, they didn't offer it, but the camp, we had a camp leader. We elected a camp leader of the camp. And he communicated with the German commander

of our camp, anything between the prisoners and the Germans. He was the in between man.

PS: Yeah, like liaison.

BH: He represented us. And also you could volunteer for the shows, to put on shows. Anybody who was musically inclined or an actor, or who wanted to be an actor or was an actor, could volunteer for those kind of shows and participate in them. Also, if you're a medic, you could have volunteered to go into the little hospital room we had. And actually, even for a chow detail.

PS: Were you able to socialize and meet with the PWs in the other barracks?

BH: Oh yeah. During the, during the day, now what would happen, we'd get up. I'd say they'd wake us up about 6:00 in the morning. And then we would have to be, that's when the water was on, from 6:00 to 7:00. And then we would have to be outside, lined up, every morning at 7:00, where they'd take a picture check, and check your serial number to make sure nobody escaped. So that would go on for maybe an hour, hour-and-a-half, maybe two hours. Rain, shine, snow. It didn't matter what it was. You had to be out there. Now they did that three times a day--morning, noon, and night. So that means actually you were standing out there maybe anywheres from five to seven hours, just taking picture checks and number checks, to make sure that nobody escaped. Now, in between that time, you were on your own. You could walk around the compound. You could just walk and talk or you could do whatever you wanted to do. Or you could get your book and hide under on and start working on your book, or you could read, you know? As long as the picture check was over. Now, like I say, they had, we had some baseball games there. You know, we had a big compound. And if you wanted to play baseball you could, you know, on the off hours. Then I imagine supper was sometime between 6:00 and 7:00 at night.

PS: Your plate of soup with all the worms and…

BH: And they brought in the bucket of soup. They brought in the bucket of soup with the germs and the cockroaches, whatever you want to call it. And that was our supper.

PS: It's just miraculous that there wasn't serious illness.

BH: Well…

PS: Now you went through an Austrian winter, right?

BH: Yeah.

PS: That was, to my experience…

BH: We went through two Austrian winters if I remember, two Christmases.

PS: And they were not exactly down, being down south.

BH: No, they're something like here.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Right near, near the Alps. Near the mountains.

PS: And you had no heat in the barracks?

BH: No heat. And we'd just stay in the bed sometimes. We'd stay in the bed.

PS: And no covers?

BH: Well we had a cover. We had a GI blanket…

PS: Yeah.

BH: That the Red Cross supplied.

PS: Your clothing, was there anything issued to you as PWs?

BH: Shoes, and then the Red Cross would send in GI pants once in a while. But they always sent it and we wouldn't get it.

PS: By and large you still were wearing some of your flight clothing?

BH: No, I would say I wore them for a good eight or nine months, and then finally I got a new pair of pants and a new pair of shoes.

PS: But as far as your upper jacket, anything like a jacket for warmth, or a coat for warmth?

BH: No, we didn't have any coats.

PS: No coats?

BH: We had the, I think I had my old Air Force jacket, if I remember right. We had that small Air Force jacket with a wooly collar.

PS: And there was no possibility…

BH: Oh I kept that.

PS: Of getting anything at all?

BH: Unless the Red Cross sent it in.

PS: Oh. Did they send in clothing?

BH: But they sent it in very rarely.

PS: Yeah.

BH: Now luckily, this book that I wrote here, or I carried, I was looking for something to do. So I was in clothing. My civilian occupation at that time. And I sent in through them I wanted a book on clothing, you know? And they sent me this back. They sent me this log. That's what they sent me that, through the Red Cross, when I had asked for a book on clothing. So when I saw that I figured, "What the hell am I going to do with that?"

PS: But what you did with that…

BH: So then, after I started looking at it, I said, "What the heck can I do?" Maybe I can do something with this here and start writing or something. Next thing I knew it, I'm talking with somebody else and the guy said, "Well let me put a picture in there for you." And they start drawing pictures, and poems. So what I did is start going around the camp and I let each of the fellow prisoners do something, participate in the book. And that's why it's so original. Everything in there is done with the prisoners of war, see?

PS: There are things in here, Bernie, you did at the time to sort of wile away your time.

BH: Yeah.

PS: There was nothing to read, to write, no recreation.

BH: Well, I had other things I had done. I didn't do this all the time.

PS: Yeah.

BH: But at night like when, before the lights would go out, let's say. You know, I'd sit there for an hour or so and just jot down, you know. But during the day I'd walk around the camp and I'd get, meet some other fellow prisoner and he said, "I'm an artist. I'll write you, I'll draw this in for you." Now this isn't all from one barracks. This is from all the prisoners in the camp.

PS: Now this, page 11, re-

Tape two, side one:

BH: And, where were we?

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

BH: Right.

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

BH: I know.

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

BH: Page 11, 11.

PS: Page 11. Well this is a poem.

BH: It's another poem.

PS: Dated September 3, 1944.

We know the death we face each day.

We volunteer and we fight that way.

Strafing, bombing, hurling death and destruction.

To the enemy we call.

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

BH: 11, wasn't it?

PS: Oh.

BH: Page 11.

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

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

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

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

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

PS: No additional protection?

BH: Nothing.

PS: Or nothing to help?

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

PS: Which was a blank, blank book.

BH: Yeah, it was an empty, it was a…

PS: Yeah, a blank book, blank book.

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

PS: They were just blank pages.

BH: And I didn't know what to do. Yeah, it was blank pages. So finally I said to myself, "I don't know, maybe I should do some kind of writing in that book." And I think the first couple of times I was thinking about it, I saw some of my fellow prisoners, and a

few of them happened to be artists or writers or something. One of them, he asked me, "Let me draw in your book." So I had one guy draw me a picture. Next thing I knew I had another fellow draw me a picture. I kept going around the camp. I had another one writing a poem. I did some writing myself in there.

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Yeah. Well the fact that you were…

BH: And…

PS: You did not request this book.

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

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

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

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

BH: See?

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

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

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

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

PS: Yeah, oh absolutely.

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

PS: Yeah.

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

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

BH: Bill Malden. I remember Bill Malden.

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

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

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Did his mother ever see that?

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

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

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

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

BH: Yeah, and just…

PS: Colored, the golden, yeah…

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

PS: Yeah.

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

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

BH: See, he's dreaming of home.

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

BH: You see what I mean?

PS: Choking up and tearing up.

BH: Now this is actually what the guy felt.

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

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

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

BH: This here?

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: That's so beautiful.

BH: See, he feels from the heart.

PS: Yeah.

BH: These things are straight from the heart.

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

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

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

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

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

BH: I should have put that in.

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Was this a swastika I saw in this…

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

PS: We're looking at a page…

BH: [unclear]

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

BH: What do you mean?

PS: Does that relate to the…

BH: No, that relates to the speech…

PS: Oh.

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

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

BH: [unclear]

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

BH: 19.

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

BH: [unclear].

PS: Just the torture…

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

PS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: By baldie…

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

PS: From your…

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

PS: Yeah, yeah.

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

PS: Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PS: Bernie…

BH: Go ahead.

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

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

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

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

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

BH: Well what the Germans did then…

PS: You cleaned up for it?

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Right.

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

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

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

PS: Oh.

BH: British Broadcasting Company.

PS: Yeah.

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

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

BH: No.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Yeah, oh.

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

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

BH: Yeah, May of '45, yeah.

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

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

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Yeah.

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

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

BH: To the American lines.

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

BH: Oh that could be too.

PS: …to the Americans rather than…

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Enough to control four thousand?

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

PS: Were the guards getting any food?

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

PS: Oh, yeah.

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

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

BH: Yeah, they were starving, themselves!

PS: Yeah.

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

Tape two, side two:

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

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

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

PS: 20 or 22?

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

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

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

PS: Oh, I would think.

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

PS: From the concentration camps?

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

PS: You could identify them as Jews?

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

PS: Were they wearing prison…

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

PS: And wearing prison uniforms?

BH: The prison uniform with the Jewish star.

PS: Yeah.

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Well, they must have been.

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

PS: Oh!

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

PS: And they were, became the prisoners?

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

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

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

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

PS: Yeah, yeah.

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

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

BH: Yeah.

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Well that didn't come till later.

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

PS: And the cremat-…

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

PS: Yeah, yeah.

BH: But that delousing…

PS: You did know then…

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

PS: Right.

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

PS: So you were aware to some extent.

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

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

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

BH: Right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PS: Oh, that long?

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

PS: Oh, oh.

BH: No, I came back when I got…

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

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

PS: Yeah, well we didn't get special…

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

PS: Yeah, oh yeah, yeah.

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: So you were there that long.

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

PS: And then…

BH: And then they sent us back by ship.

PS: Yeah.

BH: By ship. The crew had…

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

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

PS: I went directly to Fort Dix.

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

PS: Well at Fort Dix were you, yeah.

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Yeah. Otherwise…

BH: You understand?

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Yeah.

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

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

BH: Oh as soon as I hit Fort Dix.

PS: Oh, you were able to call home.

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

PS: I came in…

BH: Do you remember [unclear]

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

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

PS: Yeah, with my duffel bag and…

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

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

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

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

BH: Heaven.

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

BH: Yeah, I laughed at them.

PS: Yeah.

BH: I, I laugh at them.

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

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

PS: Yeah, right.

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

PS: Oh yeah, yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

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

BH: Absolutely. I didn't appreciate it.

PS: No.

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

PS: Right.

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

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

BH: Absolutely.

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

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

BH: Yeah.

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

BH: Oh yeah.

PS: Physically, mentally?

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

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

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Yeah.

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

PS: Oh certainly.

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

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

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

PS: Oh, I [unclear]

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

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

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

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

BH: It's a pleasure.

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

BH: I hope something comes out of it.

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

BH: I appreciate your time.