

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Veterans Project

World War II, POW Camps

O.H. 1333

LESLIE JONES

Interviewed

by

William Davis

on

January 15, 1990

LESLIE E. JONES

Born on May 5, 1920, in Warren, Ohio, Leslie Jones' family moved to Howland, Ohio, when he was one years old. He attended the Howland Schools where he graduated form Howland High School in June of 1939.

After High school he attended Tennessee Military Institute from 1939 to 1940, returning home to work for in his uncle's grocery store He worked there until he enlisted in the Army Air Corps on January 5, 1942.

He received basic training at Kessler Field in Biloxi, MI., after which he was sent to armament school at Lowery Field in Denver, Co. While at Lowery he received training on the fifty caliber machine gun and the various types of bombs that the B-17 and B-24's carried.

From Lowery he received primary flight training at Cimmeron FL., on single engine PT-19's After Cimmeron, he was reassigned to Enid, Oklahoma, for basic training, instrument training and night flying in BT-9's. Leaving Enid, he went on to receive advanced flight training at Pampa, Texas.

Upon completion of advanced training he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps and transferred to Boise, Idaho, for second and third phase training.

While at Boise he trained on B-17's. Training consisted primarily of cross country and formation flying. There he was also introduced the men he would soon fly into combat with.

In may of 1943, he and his crew were sent to Salina, Kansas, to pick up a new B-17. Their mission was to ferry the aircraft to Prestwick, Scotland where it would be turned over to another bomber group. He and his crew left for Scotland in June of 1943.

Upon leaving their aircraft in Scotland they were taken to Kimbolton, England. There he was assigned to the 379th Bomb Group, Eighth Air Force. (He could not remember his squadron number.)

On August 12th, 1943, he and his crew were shot down on their seventh mission shortly after bombing a ball bearing plant at Gelsinkirshen, Germany. Upon being captured by German soldiers he was interrogated and taken to Stalag Luft-III near Sagan, Germany. He was eventually moved from Stalag Luft-III and transferred to Mooseberg P.O.W. Camp. His final camp of internment was in Mooseberg, Germany where he remained until he was liberated by General Patton's Third Army in April of 1945.

After the war he returned home and opened his own business in plumbing where he presently works today. Among his many awards is the army Air Medal. Mr. Jones attends the Howland Community Church and he belongs to the Carroll F. Clapp Masonic Lodge. His interests include music and reading

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INTERVIEWEE: LESLIE JONES
INTERVIEWER: Joseph Nuzzi
SUBJECT: World War II, POW Camps
DATE: January 15, 1990

N: This is an interview with Leslie E. Jones for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project by Joseph A Nuzzi Jr We are at Mr. Jones's home at 1776 Hollywood NE, Warren, Ohio Today's date is January 15, 1990. The time is 3:10 p.m.

You were born and raised in Warren, is that correct?

J: Right.

N: And you moved to Howland when you were one year old?

J: Correct

N: Is that where you received your education, in the Howland City Schools?

J: Howland, yes. I went all twelve grades.

N: You graduated in what year?

J: 1939.

N: Are you from a large family?

J: Three sisters.

N: Are you the youngest, the oldest?

J: I am the second down.

N: What made you go into the military after school? Did you go immediately into the military after high school or did you wait a little bit?

J: I went to Tennessee Military Institute for one year, junior college, business administration and then I worked for a short time for my uncle. Then war was declared and that is when I enlisted.

N: You were in Tennessee Military Institute. In what year are we talking about?

J: It was 1943 and 1944. I am sorry, 1939, I am getting my Air Force career mixed up here. 1939 and 1940.

N: You graduated Howland?

J: 1939.

N: 1939 Howland City Schools in 1939. Military Institute from 1939 to 1940. You went to work for your uncle, what did he do?

J: He had a grocery store in Howland.

N: What was the name of it?

J: Ben H. White Grocery Store

N: Where was that at?

J: On the corner of 46 and 82 in Howland on the north west corner.

N: Is that where the hardware store is at today?

J: No, it is where the dentist is.

N: I am trying to think where the dentist is at. They had the Sohio gas station, right.

J: It was right across from the Sohio to the north.

N: You worked for your uncle in what year? Until you went in the military?

J: Yes.

N: You went in the military. What year did you say it was?

J: 1942, I enlisted.

N: Did you ask to go into the Air Force specifically at that point?

J: Yes.

N: What made you want to go into the Air Force?

J: I always wanted to fly.

N: Was that your boyhood dream, to be a pilot one day?

J: Yes

N: When you were at the Tennessee Military Institute, did you study aviation?

J: No. It was business administration.

N: There was no aviation connected to it whatsoever?

J: No.

N: How did you get into the pilot training?

J: First I went to armament school. That was in Denver, Colorado.

N: At Lowry Field?

J: Right. Then after I graduated from armament school. . .

N: That would be Lowry II right, not Lowry I?

J: I did not know there were two.

N: Neither did I, but I sent the announcement over today and there was two. Lowry was supposed to be for officers and Lowry II was for guys that went for fifty caliber machine guns, arm unit, and so forth. I never heard the terminology being used differently.

J: I never did either. All I knew was Lowry field.

N: That's what I thought it was. I spent two years at Lowry going back into the 1960's of course, but looking back in the history of that time it was always known as Lowry field. It was subdivided because they did have pilot training there.

J: They did?

N: Yes, they did have pilot training at the field. In fact Lowry used to be the Air Force Academy. That was the Air Force Academy at one time. Then they transferred and they made the school specifically in Colorado, Springs. But at one time it was the Air Force academy period. It has a colorful history because Glen Miller's band originated, by the way, at Lowry field. That's where I was stationed. In fact, I was stationed in the band, same designation, and we would look at the history of the band. Glen Miller used to run the show there. But the field was an Air Force training school for pilots, it was an academy. In fact, the barracks I stayed in at one time were the old barracks for the academy. So this guy

told me it was Lowry I and Lowry II. You threw me on that one because I thought I had a history of Lowry down pretty good.

J: It was on Colfax Avenue?

N: Yes, right, right off of Colfax Avenue. You go straight on Colfax and boom, you are right into the base.

So you went to armament school there and this is in 1942, what month are we talking about? Was that about January or so? You enlisted in January right?

J: Yes. First I went to Biloxi, Mississippi.

N: Oh, you went to Biloxi. At Kessler Air Force base?

J: Yes.

N: That was for your basic training?

J: Right, and then from there to Denver.

N: You took basic at Biloxi. It seems like a lot of guys went to Biloxi.

J: I don't know why.

N: Yes I don't know what the attraction was.

J: Not the weather that was for sure.

N: Was it hot down there or what?

J: No. When I was there, you know, it was in January. It was cold, wet, and miserable.

N: So, from Biloxi, Mississippi, then you went to Denver.

J: Yes.

N: What did you learn at the armament school? What type of training was that?

J: Well it was on the different bombs. Then we took a synchronization training, firing the guns through the propeller.

N: You had to fire through propellers?

J: Yes, that is the way the old fighters were. Thirty caliber and fifty caliber machine guns were synchronized with a propeller

N: I know the old WWI air crafts were synchronized through the propeller but I didn't think the.. .

J: It must have been some of the early ones in the Second World War because that is what we were doing.

N: What caliber are we talking about? Thirty caliber?

J: We were working on fifty caliber guns.

N: I always thought that with the old World War I air craft they were synchronized through the propeller.

J: Like I say, I really can't answer that, you know, whether any of the WWII aircraft had it or not, but we were sure doing it

N: I'll be a son of a gun. That fascinates me. I wonder what aircraft that they were using.

J: I don't know. We just had mock ups.

N: Because the 47's to P40's, 51's, naturally were all from the size of the wing. You didn't even have to worry about that.

You had bombs there and fifty caliber's there. What else did you do at the armament school?

J: We went to school to learn the different armaments for the Air Force

N: You learned about thirty and fifty caliber guns and

bombs, how to fuse them and the whole bit?

J: No, just the armament.

N: How long did this school last?

J: I really do not know, probably three or four months.

N: At Lowry, did you put in for pilot training at Lowry? Is this where you told them, "Hey guys, I think I would like to fly instead of doing this stuff."

J: They were giving exams. I took the exam and passed it. I waited there until I was called for pilot training.

N: How soon after you took the exam do you remember that you were called for pilot training? Was it immediately, or some time later?

J: Probably six weeks later

N: What were some of the qualifications that they were looking for in pilots at that time? Do you remember some of the basics that you had to meet? Obviously, physical requirements and height and eyes.

J: Actually I had taken the Air Force, tried to get into the Air Force even before I enlisted. I passed the physical and flunked the mental because at that time you had to have a college degree really to pass. So, they lowered the requirements at that time. So I passed the written test

N: I know some of our pilots during World War II that flew the fighters, in fact, and they were Aces, sergeants. Today you associate pilot training as nothing but officers and college educated people. At that point I know a lot of them were flying forties and fifty-ones and so forth that were sergeants. In fact they ordered a whole squadron of nothing but sergeants at one point.

J: Well, the British and Canadians had a lot of sergeant pilots too.

N: That is what I understand, the English as well.

J: Yes.

N: Where did you go for pilot training school? You said there were three phases to pilot training, right? Where did you have your basic training at for pilot training school and what did you fly? What was a typical day in basic training?

J: Before basic there's primary first. That was at Cimmaron Field in Oklahoma City.

N: Could you spell Cimmaron for me real quick?

J: C-i-m-m-e-r-o-n I believe.

N: Where was that at?

J: Oklahoma City, outside of Oklahoma City.

N: What did you do at primary training?

J: I went to school and I also had flight training.

N: Was the flight training simulated or was it actually flying time?

J: The PT 19's.

N: The PT 19's, that was that a low wing.

J: Yes. The Fairchild.

N: That was tandem wasn't it, one in the front and guy in the back

J: Right.

N: So you learned to fly single engine?

J: Correct

N: How long did that training last?

J: Probably about two and a half months.

N: I would imagine you had classroom time?

J: Yes.

N: Calculating speed, wind drift, ground speed, navigation, and all of that good stuff? Where you learn your instruments and so forth.

J: Right

N: So it's basically some of the same stuff you get if you wanted to become a private pilot today. You were military oriented at that time?

J: You got it every day, too.

N: How many hours did you fly a day?

J: Usually an hour, maybe an hour and a half.

N: Then back to the classroom?

J: Right

N: Did you go Monday through Friday or did you have to go Saturday and Sundays as well?

J: No, we got Saturdays and Sundays off.

N: What was a typical day? What time did you get up, what did you do?

J: Probably 6:00. These things escape me. We probably got up around 6:00. Then we'd have breakfast and go to the classroom to the flight line

N: Did you hit the flight line in the morning or the afternoon?

J: It varied, they would stagger your times.

N: Did they have you guys flying in instruments at that time or was that later on?

J: It was later on.

N: Did they specifically wait for good flying weather or did they take you up in bad weather as well, just to get you acclimated to bad weather?

J: The weather didn't really enter into it. If it was too bad they would cancel...

N: Naturally for safety reasons.

J: Yes.

N: How about night flying?

J: Not in primary, no

N: So primary was strictly all daytime?

J: Yes.

N: And VFI rules, visual flight rules?

J: Right.

N: After Cimmaron Field, where did you go to after primary?

J: Enid, Oklahoma. That was basic training.

N: This is called basic now. Now what did you do at basic?

J: The same thing except we got some instrument time and night flying there.

N: So you did get some instrument here?

J: Yes

N: What type of aircraft did you fly here?

J: BT-9's. I can't think of the manufacturers name on those.

N: Was that a tandem as well? Single engine low wing?

J: Right. Of course, we got aerobatics there, too. My last two hours, I got a new plane and I really had a ball. I might have added something too, in primary we had a civilian instructor In basic we had military instructors.

N: Were military instructors former combat troops? Had they seen combat already? Is that why they transferred to military instructor?

J: I kind of doubt that No, because they enlisted as soon as war was declared. I wouldn't think that they had time for combat and to come back

N: That's right, because you enlisted in 1942 of January and war was declared in December of 1941. Yes, you're right, the guys would be green, too.

J: Right

N: [In regards to] military instructors, what was the reasoning, do you think, for civilian in primary and military instructors in basic? Was there a basic philosophy that they were using at that time?

J: Probably the reason that they had civilians for primary is they were training so many pilots at that time...

N: Just lack of a number of good qualified men that were given military rank.

J: That's the only thing I could figure out.

N: Basic training saw you going instrument flying, night flying and aerobatics. Was that also training Monday through Friday as well?

J: Yes.

N: You had to figure out your own navigation, I would take it?

J: Right.

N: Did you fly in any formations at this point?

J: No.

N: Were you simply on your own?

J: Yes.

N: So you did a lot of solo flight at this point?

J: Quite a lot of solo [flying].

N: How long was this training, a couple months too?

J: Yes, they were all about the same. I can't remember exactly how long

N: When you were at these schools did they load you up on homework at night or were you allowed to go in the cities? Or would you wait to go in the cities? Was there anything to do at night? What did you guys do for fun and excitement?

J: We would go into Oklahoma City or Enid on the weekends. At night we studied.

N: Were there very many washouts at this time?

J: Quite a few.

N: What seemed to be the basic problem? Why were guys

washing out? Any particular reason you can point to?

J: I don't know, maybe coordination for pilot training. I think some of them possibly were afraid after they got up in the air

N: Now these programs here, were they getting you guys prepared for fighter school? Were they getting you ready to fly in bombers or transports?

J: In primary and basic there was no differentiation.

N: It was pilot training period.

J: Right. But the ones that did wash out would have a chance to go to bomedeer or navigator school then.

N: So, they still asked them if they wanted flight status, you have engineer or bomedeer school. You still could be on their crews

J: Right.

N: After basic training, where did you go from there then?

J: Advanced.

N: What was advanced school like, and where was that at?

J: It was at Pampa, Texas. That was twin engine there because we had designated that we wanted bombers. So once you did that you usually got the twin engine school.

N: What type of twin engine are we talking about?

J: We were flying AT 9's, 10's, and 17's there.

N: AT stands for air trainer?

J: Advanced trainer. The AT nine was an all medal plane. It was pretty hot for an advanced trainer. You were bringing it in at about a hundred and ten. When you pull the stick back, you better be ready to land because that

thing is going to sit down.

N: Really?

J: Yes.

N: What was the stall speed on it?

J: Probably close to a hundred I think.

N: So it was a heavy aircraft?

J: Yes, it was heavy and like I say, I don't know whether it had the Davis wings or not. Like I say, when you pull down on that stick you better be ready to sit down.

N: What were the 10's and the 17's like?

J: They were a lighter planes. In fact a 17 on a windy day, you would drift for half way down the runway.

N: You had a heck of a time landing it.

J: Yes. Actually there was so much difference between the two, the 9 and the 17 But I don't the make.

N: These were all twin engines though, right?

J: Right.

N: What did the training consist of here at this field.

J: About the same as basic. We had day cross country, night cross country. Then we had link trainer too. I mean instrument training.

N: That is all simulated you are talking about?

J: Right.

N: What was a link trainer like? Are you familiar with the simulators we have today? They are all computer operated and so forth.

J: No.

N: What were the link trainers at that time like?

J: They would give you exercises to do. In other words they were just like if you would take off in a plane, hit the altitude. .

N: Did you actually see that altitude register on your altimeter?

J: Right.

N: You had a bank indicator and the whole bit.

J: Right.

N: Did you guys have a gyro at that time?

J: Yes.

N: How about a horizon bank indicator?

J: Yes.

N: This school lasted approximately two or three months? And again Monday through Friday, Saturdays and Sundays were off.

J: Yes.

N: What was Pampa, Texas, like at this time? Were the towns people friendly to you guys when you did make into town?

J: It was a very small town, usually we went into Amarillo.

N: How were you guys treated by the American public at that time? How were you treated by the American public when you got off base at this time? Did people open up to you people?

J: Yes, actually the best place was Denver. We would go

down and sit on a park bench, downtown, you know, on the park on Sunday. A man and his wife would come along, open the car window, "What are you doing today." "Nothing." "Hop in!" They would take you to the mountains over in Golden, Colorado, and buy your meals. I never saw a town like Denver.

N: I know when I was there, it got to be a typical military town. They didn't hate you per say, but they weren't crazy about you being there. Obviously the war was on and it made a little bit of difference there. You talk about the main park in town with the water fountains. That was a beautiful park.

J: Yes, it sure was.

N: I took my wife fifteen years ago and I took her to Denver when I got married. She couldn't believe the park. How nice it was. Is that the one with the big pillars?

J: I do not know, it had the rides, roller coasters and things like that.

N: Yeah, I know where you are talking about. That was on the other side of town.

J: Yes, I remember, it was across town from where we were.

N: Yes, in fact, the last time I remember I was there about two or three years ago. I went down for an Air Force maneuver and it is still there. It's not as nice and pretty as it was back in the 1960's, but it was still there. After Pampa, Texas, where did you go? You went from advanced training, to what then after that?

J: I got my commission there.

N: What were you at that time? You weren't commissioned at this time?

J: Not until I graduated from advanced training.

N: What rank were you at this time?

J: I was Second Lieutenant.

N: Prior to commission, Cadets? Is that the status? So you were commission and Second Lieutenant then?

J: Right

N: After you got your commission, where did you go to then?

J: Then we went to Boise, Idaho. That was second and third phase training.

N: What did that consist of?

J: We took flights out over the ocean. Fly to California and back. Things like that. Formation flying and air to ground gunnery for the crew.

N: Did you have a crew at this time?

J: No.

N: What type of aircraft were you flying?

J: A B-17.

N: They gave you a B-17 at this time?

J: Yes, actually when we graduated from flying school there was around fifteen of us that wanted B-17's. They said there was no transition school that was open at that time on the B-17's but they had 24's at Boise. We said, "Okay we want four engines, so we'll go over there." When we got to Boise there were B-17's.

N: There were B-17's waiting for you. Talking to some of these guys, I think you made the wisest decision to go with the 17 because the guys who flew B-24's. They said, "Boy, get hit in a 24, it goes down like a rock. Plus there are so many things to hit." He said he used to be amazed at the number of B-17's to come back with all kinds of holes in them and the sucker is still flying.

He said, "If you do that to a B-24, you don't fly."

J: Well you see, the B-24 had a Davis wing. In other words, it was a straighter wing. In other words, higher stalling speed. That is why we didn't want that. We wanted the B-17 because we heard so much about it. It was such a good plane That is one reason that B-24's couldn't take it.

N: I know the guys that flew them, they said they were nice planes but don't get hit in one.

J: That is what they used on the west?

N: Yes, I talked to a guy that flew a B-24. In fact he got shot down. You are in Boise, Idaho, now and you are flying B-17's, is that where you got your crew?

J: Yes, we had our own crew now

N: So this is where you assembled your crew. This is where you guys got used to each other

J: Yes.

N: What was the camaraderie like between you and the other fellow pilot and the rest of the crew members? Did you guys ..

J: Just like a family

N: Did you stand on military rituals at all.

J: No.

N: So far I only ran into one crew that did that did stand on military rituals Everyone else tells me, "No way man." We called everybody by their first name. In fact, we had nicknames for guys. We went out and partied together. Everybody says the same thing that they were one big family. There was only one crew member that I know that said we were segregated. Well any how, that is the way it should be because one guy turned to me, he

said, "You know let's be honest when a bomb hits, it doesn't know from one rank or another. You are all going down together. You are all in the same aircraft."

J: Right.

N: So you were assembled here. How long did you guys spend together? You're flying up and down the coast and you're flying night formations and all this good stuff as well

J: Yes, that was probably about the same. Like I say these dates escape me It wasn't too long. We took a flight to Salina, Kansas, and picked up our plane, the one we were going to fly overseas.

N: Did you indeed stick with that plane when you flew overseas or did you ferry it over for somebody else?

J: It turned out that way

N: It turned out to be ferry.

J: Yes.

N: Everybody tells me the same thing. We went to pick up our plane only to find out we were ferrying it over for somebody else From Boise you eventually went to Salina, Kansas, and that's where you picked up your aircraft. That was a brand new B-17 I take it.

J: Yes

N: What happened there?

J: We went from there overseas.

N: What route did you take to get overseas?

J: We went to Gander

N: Let me ask one question real quick. You better bring me up to date When did you pick up your aircraft from Kansas? What month? Do you remember date and year?

J: It must have been in probably December because I went over in. . Wait a minute, I went over in June. It was probably in April or May. Probably May.

N: May, 1943

J: Right

N: You went over in June of 1943

J: Right

N: What route did you take.

J: We went from Gander straight to...

N: Gander?

J: Yeah, that is Newfoundland. To Prestwick, Scotland.

N: So many of the crew members that you talked to all took different routes.

J: Is that right.

N: Well, I did talk to two guys that took basically the same route, but normally it was to Goosebay, to Iceland or to Greenland, then down to London, England from there. Some went on to Prestwick others went to Prestwick then to England You never had the same guys flying basically the same routes, I don't know why.

J: Probably depended on the fields over there.

N: Yes, it probably could have been the fields or the weather at the time

J: Because in Scotland we landed on a grass field.

N: Is this Prestwick or Prescott, how do you pronounce it?

J: Prestwick.

N: It was an all grass field? Who owned it, we did or...
Was it an Air Force base?

J: Yes. We didn't know. It wasn't ours.

N: But it was a U.S. Air Base at the time?

J: Yes.

N: What was the name of the air base?

J: Gosh, I don't know, that was it, Prestwick.

N: So you landed there, where did you go to from Prestwick?

J: Then we went to our own base at Kimbolton, England.

N: Could you spell that?

J: K-I-M-B-O-L-T-O-N.

N: What was it called, Kimbolton Air Base?

J: Yes.

N: What outfit were you attached to? Let's start off with
the squadron first of all.

J: The squadron I do not know. 379th heavy bomb group.

N: That was the Eighth Air Force?

J: Yes

N: What general headed that?

J: Oh boy, name some generals.

N: I can't. I wish I could Arnold, by chance?

J: Doesn't sound right

N: I asked the same question to other guys and they can't remember either. I'll look it up. I have a World War II book on the bomb squads. Typically was it four squadrons per field? Do you know how many?

J: I really don't know. On a typical bombing day we would take off in formation. I don't ever remember another squadron or anything being mentioned.

N: Was Kimbolton a large English town?

J: No.

N: Was it small?

J: Yes, in fact I was never able to find it on a map. I recently got some information from this fellow in Colorado. They had been over there and they've got a plaque for 379th at Kimbolton.

N: What was the closest big town? Do you remember?

J: I can't remember, no.

N: You were only on seven missions?

J: Yes.

N: You say you went into London at that time?

J: Yes, I went into London a couple of times. I went over in June and was shot down in August so I didn't have much time

N: What date were you shot down on?

J: August 12

N: When were you liberated?

J: I was overseas exactly two years. So it was in...

N: Sometime in August?

J: Well, it would be before that. Probably in April or May. I've got a book on it downstairs. I wasn't there then. I was liberated from Mooseberg.

N: April 29th.

J: Okay, that sounds good.

N: Yes, April 29th, 1945.

J: Right.

N: If you were in Mooseberg, it was April 29th, because I talked to so many guys that were in Mooseberg ..

J: Well, that is where most guys.

N: A lot of you guys eventually wound up at Mooseberg. You say you went to Kimbolton, England and you say you went into London a few times?

J: A couple times.

N: Twice What was that like at the time? How did the English people treat Air Force personnel?

J: Real nice. They were treating us good at that time.

N: How old were you at this time? About twenty or twenty-two?

J: I was twenty-three when I got shot down.

N: What was it like, a kid from Ohio to be in London at that time?

J: Well, of course, you had the blackouts at night. That was different. Probably about the only thing to do is you had these clubs and you would buy a bottle to go in, have a few high balls. That seemed to be about the...

N: What type of entertainment? Did you go to movies? Did

you go dancing? Or basically just to the clubs?

J: That was the basic thing.

N: I was stationed in Germany for two years and we used to go to London once in a while. One of the biggest clubs around was a chain, the Swan I don't know if they were at that time or not. They called it the Swan. [There were] pubs all over England at that particular time. The English, when I was there, made it easy for us. England had fond memories of WWII pilots and crew members. This one girl's mother, who I used to date, always talked about you guys She really liked you guys. She told me, "To be honest, if it wasn't for the Americans our ARF gave it a hell of a fight, but if it wasn't for the Americans going there I'd be speaking German by now." So she had nothing but praise for you.

J: What part of Germany were you in?

N: I was stationed Gusbotten. That is just down twenty clicks south of Frankfurt. It was a nice base. In fact it was a German Air Force academy. It was Hitler's Air Force Academy

J: Was it?

N: We used to train his pilots. The interesting thing about it is that our bombers--after they'd bomb one in Frankfurt--used to circle around the academy. It used to get Hitler pissed off Here comes the bombers, knowing that they could bomb them any time that they wanted. They never touched the base The only time they touched the base was with a couple of P51's. We decided to have some fun one day and they went in and shot up the base a little bit. Some of his aircraft on the field were out. I thought that was kind of interesting People and [mines] though, got the heck blown out of it a couple times How many missions did you have? You were on your seventh mission?

J: Right.

N: Where were you flying to when you got shot down?

J: Gelsinkirshen.

N: What was in Gelsinkirshen?

J: A ball bearing factory.

N: Had you guys bombed it, or did you guys get shot down prior to bombing it?

J: We had bombed it and then we got taken out shortly after that.

N: Flak?

J: Flak hit our number three engine and I saw oil running over the wing. I asked the first pilot if I should feather the prop. He said no. Then we got a runaway prop. I didn't ask him then, I just hit number three button and we lost our oil pressure.

N: Why didn't you want to feather it?

J: If you feathered an engine, the fighters would come in and pick on that particular plane

N: How much did it knock down your speed when you had to feather an aircraft?

J: Not hardly any on a feather but a runaway would slow you down. That is what we got then, a runaway prop. That slowed us down. We fell out of formation then. The fighters finished us off.

N: The fighters knew if they saw one being feathered?

J: Yes. Sure

N: They would come after you like a sitting duck at that time. What did you get jumped by? What type of fighters?

J: I don't know, it was probably several different kinds. Of course, a lot of times you don't even see the fighters that are hitting you. Depending on where they are coming from.

N: When you went on a bomb raid, pinned up in the pilot seat, you obviously saw the flak in front of you. What was going through your mind at the time prior to hitting the target?

J: You are chewing the seat. (Laughter)

N: Like knuckle time?

J: Yes, actually all you could do is... We were flying in formation. Whoever was flying at the time would have to watch the lead plane and so .

N: Did you ever watch one of your fellow planes get hit and go down?

J: No.

N: Nothing like that happened until obviously the day you guys got shot down

J: There was probably some shot down but...

N: You never saw it?

J: No.

N: Prior to being shot down, did you guys experience heavy flak and any fighters?

J: Not as much. We went into France once and Sweden once. Yeltsinkurshin was the deepest penetration at that time. So that was the worst flak. Actually they told us that the flak wouldn't be a deterrent because we were flying at twenty-nine thousand that day, the flak won't bother you a bit It looked like you could get out and walk on it.

N: Really. They hadn't counted on the flak going up that high?

J: Right. They didn't know how good those German's were.

N: I guess not, maybe a little underestimated. I wonder where they got their intelligence from.

J: It wasn't accurate.

N: What was a typical briefing like before you guys went up? Did the pilots meet in a separate room, or did all the crews meet together? Did they brief you before you went up?

J: The officers would meet in the briefing room. Usually the [crew] was in there. In other words the pilot, co-pilot, bomadeer, and the navigator.

N: So, that would be base operations then?

J: Right.

N: So they were obviously giving you your destination?

J: The altitude. What you could expect in fighters and flak.

N: That was coming from what, G2?

J: Yes.

N: What kind of typical information did you get from G2 and how accurate was it?

J: It usually was pretty accurate.

N: Is this something that you guys can say, "If G2 says..."

J: Except that day. (Laughter) It sure wasn't accurate that day.

N: But most of the time when they gave you information it

was fairly accurate.

J: Yeah. In fact we were supposed to pick up a fighter escort on the way back that day. That was the first time that we were going to have a fighter escort.

N: You never had a fighter escort going into a bomb run before?

J: No. Of course that day we were supposed to pick him up on the way back but we didn't get that far.

N: When you went into briefing, again they gave you your coordinates and the fuel, how many bombs were you carrying for the day. What was going through your heads at that point? Any comments or thoughts about that?

J: No, not really.

N: One guy told me, he said the thing that he was always concerned about was when they sat down. He said eventually we would meet up with our crew in the general briefing area. They would tell us who we were going to bomb and so forth. He said the thing that everybody was concerned about was how long the string was. If the string was real long you had a hell of a flight. The string represented the destination. Is that what they did for you? Did they have a string marked off?

J: They might have, you know I really don't remember. They would have the maps up there and show us. I remember that. They showed us where we were going and everything.

N: What was some of the first things that you did when you climbed up into the cock pit?

J: You mean on a bombing run?

N: Yes. You had your briefing and so forth. When you climbed into the cock pit, what were some of your duties and responsibilities at that time? Did you check oil pressure and all of that?

J: Oh yes.

N: Basic countdown and run-up list and so forth...

J: Yes, we would have to pre-flight the plane just like before any flight.

N: Did both pilots pre-flight the plane or just one pilot?

J: No, both.

N: So you could double check and everything.

J: Right. Of course, you had your checklist prior to takeoff

N: How complicated was the checklist? If you guys really had to get into the air quick, how fast would you get through it? Not excluding anything either

J: Actually, the checklist wasn't that bad. It wasn't near what it is today, in other words. We did have a checklist. .

N: So basically we are talking minutes.

J: Sure, probably ten or fifteen.

N: Did your flight engineer call off speed for you?

J: Either he or I did, one of the two.

N: What was the significance of somebody falling off the air speed? Pilots didn't have time to look at the airspeed itself, they would be concentrating on the runway.

J: That's right, they would be concentration on the runway. If they divert their eyes to the airspeed indicator it would just take your concentration.

N: What was takeoff speed on that aircraft.

J: I believe around one-hundred and thirty if I remember

correctly. Of course depending on the bomb load too.

N: On your seventh raid that you guys got hit, you say your number three engine took a hit, then you got jumped by fighters. Did everybody make it out of the aircraft?

J: No, I was the last one out

N: Everybody jumped out or what?

J: Not to my knowledge I did a delayed jump. Our navigator said that he saw the plane blow up. Our communications were out, so I don't know whether the other boys got out, or they were killed in the plane or what. Our pilot and our engineer were fine when I left. They were both alive. The engineer had his chute on and the pilot didn't have his on yet. They were killed and you know, they didn't show up.

N: The guys in the back, you had no idea if they jumped out or not?

J: No. Ralph gave the bail out signal. He sent it on the intercom too but I think the intercom was out because we hadn't heard any reports from the back. The plane was on fire.

N: The whole plane was on fire? Was there a lot of smoke inside the aircraft at that point?

J: It was flaming down in the navigator compartment when I left. In fact I got burned on the left wrist. My face was . [shows pictures] See my chin. See the scabs. That helps you make the practice jump, too.

N: Yes, it sure does. When you see a fire you don't want to stick around for that

J: You don't argue

N: When you bailed out you had just bombed the Ball Bearing Plant and you were heading back towards your base when you got hit, right?

J: Yes.

N: What altitude were you at?

J: When the fighters hit us?

N: Yes.

J: At first we had dropped back and down so I would say..

N: You were away from the rest of the formation at that point.

J: Yeah, probably 23,000 at that point.

N: When you landed, did you land in an open field or a city or what?

J: I landed in a wheat field. A farmer was cutting wheat

N: That must have been a surprise for him.

J: When I bailed out my left shoe boot and sock flew off. So, I landed on my right foot so I wouldn't get the wheat stubble on my barefoot

N: Did you find your other shoe?

J: No, it was gone.

N: The farmer--was he the one that came running up to you at that point?

J: No, he kept working. There were constables, I guess, they came up in a motorcycle, too. It was a side car. They put me in the side car and my parachute on top of me. Then they took off to what I guess was a police station

N: Did they speak to you at all in English at this point?

J: No, not English. There was a English speaking one when

we got to the police station.

N: There was two of them?

J: Yes.

N: Did they draw their weapons on you and so forth?

J: No. One did yes. I don't know what I did and I don't know whether he thought I was reaching for a gun or what, but he pulled his. But nothing happened.

N: Did you guys have guns on you at the time?

J: No.

N: Very few guys did, in fact the one guy told me that, "When I saw him coming, he could run away. One of the things that I learned is more often than not they would shoot you with your own gun."

J: We had guns issued but they were left back at the base and we weren't wearing them

N: When they took you back to the police station, did anybody back there at all talk to you in English?

J: There was one there with broken English, if I remember correctly, because I wanted a mirror I wanted to look at my face

N: How did they treat you when they got you got back to the police station? Fairly well?

J: We were treated okay

N: Did they give you any water of anything of that nature, food and medical treatment?

J: Water. Medical treatment--I don't remember any. Our navigator and bomedeer showed up there too. That was the three of us that got out of the plane

N: Did they put you in behind bars at that point? Did they just take you into a room and close the door behind you?

J: We were just in a room there if I remember correctly. We were moved that same day I think and went to a regular air base. There we were in solitaire.

N: How long was solitaire?

J: About three days I think

N: Everyone I talked to says three days. You didn't have any food or water, right?

J: Yes, they would give us [rolls] like Ersat soup, we called it. Just real watery soup. Of course, the German black bread which I got to love.

N: What was the name of the German base and where was it at?

J: That I don't know

N: Do you remember where it was at?

J: I think it was at Bonn.

N: How far was Bonn from. . . What was it?

J: You mean Gelsenkirshen?

N: How far was Bonn from Gelsenkirshen?

J: I really don't know.

N: Did they transport you there by train or truck? You say you went from the police station to the air base.

J: Probably by truck. I really don't remember but I assume that would be the mode of transportation.

N: Once you got to the base, you said the base was in Bonn.

J: If I remember correctly, yes.

N: What did they do to you at that time? Were you interrogated at all?

J: They would take you out of your cell and interrogate you.

N: Who interrogated you and what was his English like?

J: His English was perfect. He was a German officer, probably a first lieutenant, maybe a captain. I don't remember. He kept asking questions and I kept giving him my name, rank, and serial number and finally he got kind of hot under the collar. I said, "You are an officer in your Air Force and I am an officer in mine. You know the Geneva rules. You are only supposed to give your name, rank, and serial number." He gave me a cigarette and that was all I was questioned. Then, he quit asking me questions.

N: Did he show you any books at all that they had in their intelligence on you guys?

J: He didn't show me anything, he was reading it all to me.

N: Was it accurate?

J: It sure was accurate, yes, very accurate. They had a good intelligence

N: Where do you guys think they were getting all of that information? Everybody tells me basically the same thing that there was a well spoken German officer that interrogated them and spoke excellent English. He got to the point where he would say, "You don't have to tell me about you, I will tell you about you." They had volumes of books. He would pick out the volume that corresponded with him and say, "Here's when you came over from England," and the squadron you're with and the whole nine yards. How do you think they got that information?

J: I don't know. I have no idea.

N: I would like to figure that one out. Everybody tells me the same thing. Nobody knew how they did it but they had one hell of a spy network going on. The one guy told me, he says, "You're not going to believe this. That guy knew when I enlisted in the military. What bases I had served in the United States and when I came to England. The whole nine yards."

J: He didn't tell me that. He told me what group I was with and where I was stationed in England.

N: Did he tell you who was on the aircraft with you?

J: No.

N: After he and you discussed the fact that you weren't going to give him any information, what happened then?

J: That was it. He didn't question me anymore.

N: What happened then to you?

J: I was taken back to solitary. Of course, a short time afterwards we were put on trains and taken to Sagan. That was Stalag Luft 3.

N: What was Stalag Luft 3 like? What were your first impressions when you got there and what was it eventually like?

J: It wasn't too bad when we got there because the fellows were glad to see some new people come in. Actually it was all Americans there.

N: How many Americans were at Stalag Luft 3?

J: There was about five camps there and I didn't know that for a long time after I came back. There was a lot of us there.

N: Two to three thousand?

J: Probably at least, maybe more. In our camp there was

probably four-hundred. Like I say there was about five camps there.

N: How were you treated by the German guards at that point? Were the German guards old, young?

J: Old.

N: When we say old, you were twenty-three at the time, what was an old man to you at that time?

J: Probably in there fifties.

N: So, these were the home front guys that were left behind?

J: Right.

N: Did the guards talk any English to you at all.

J: No. Some of us would speak German, I mean not myself, but some of the fellows would speak German too. But they wouldn't speak English. Of course they understood English

N: Did they understand English?

J: I think so, yeah. A lot of the goons as we called them.

N: Did they treat you guys fairly well then?

J: Yes

N: They didn't bother you?

J: No

N: What was a typical day like at the Stalag? What time did you get up? What things did you do and so forth?

J: We lived as a family. We called it a combine. It started off with six but it eventually ended up with ten. This other fellow and myself were cooks, permanent cooks. We cooked for our combine We told them we would cook

until somebody griped about it, then they could take over. Nobody griped

N: Nobody griped about it. How was the food? Did you guys have enough to eat? What did you have to cook?

J: The Germans would give us a soup, or potatoes, or meat, bread, once or twice a week. Then we had Red Cross food parcels.

N: Did you guys luck out and get the whole parcel, or did they take stuff out?

J: No, they didn't take anything.

N: You had a good combine back then, because talking to some of the other guys that said, "Boy, you got the parcels after the Germans got what they wanted from it."

J: We heard that if they caught any of their own people taking stuff they would be reprimanded. So we must have had a good commandant if that happened at other places.

N: Everyone I have talked to so far except one other told me the same thing. Your commandant must have been a "humane" type of an individual.

J: Actually, Stalag Luft 3 was a POW Camp in the First World War

N: So, I guess they were all ready. What were the barracks like that you stayed in? Did they have running water?

J: No

N: Everything was outside? All the toilets and everything were outside.

J: At one end of each barracks they would have an indoor john for night use

N: You weren't allowed to use that during the day?

J: No, during the day they had a regular latrine. This was just for night use.

N: What were the barracks like that you stayed in? They were all wooden.

J: Yes, pretty decrepit.

N: Were they off the ground?

J: Yes.

N: If they were off the ground at night, you could go out at night.

J: No. We didn't go out at night. They closed the shutters on the windows and, of course, the doors were closed. As far as them turning dogs loose, I doubt if they did. They had dogs with them patrolling outside but they didn't turn them loose inside as far as I know. I never knew of it.

N: Some of the Stalags told me that once you closed the windows, the shutters, they let the Dobermans out. They said first of all you didn't have anything to do at night anyway. Some other guys were telling me that the dogs would run wild loose at night. They would just turn them loose, and the Germans would do whatever they wanted to do

J: Not as far as I know. In fact they didn't have any Dobermans at our camp, they were German Shepherds.

N: What was a typical day like at Luft 3? What time did you get up? What did you guys do, play cards?

J: We got up at 8:00. We would have to get up for roll call. Then we would go back in and have some breakfast and either read, walk around the compound, and they had classes going. If you wanted to go to a school class.

N: All the guys had class?

J: Yes.

N: What type of classes did you have and who put them on?

J: Our P O.W.'s put them on.

N: The P.O.W.'s put the classes on. What type of classes were they?

J: French classes. They had books.

N: Where did you get the books at?

J: I don't know if they had them from home or if the German's would give some to them.

N: The books obviously were in English.

J: Some were, yes.

N: The French book were obviously in French. Then you guys have teachers that would translate.

J: Actually, we had musical instruments. Fellows would dress up and put on plays. This was after it was established for a while.

N: You had musical instruments and plays?

J: Yes, the fellows would dress up like women, some like men, and put on plays. A guy from Cleveland was a weather man. He was in our camp. He played the trumpet and he'd have, like, three mannequins on his fingers. So when he played the trumpet the mannequins would move.

N: So you met Wally Canan the weather man?

J: Yes

N: Is he still in Cleveland?

J: I don't believe. I think he is retired now.

N: I remember him, son of a gun. So you guys put on your own shows and everything?

J: Yes.

N: Does the name George Mulnar ring a bell to you?

J: It seems like it does, but I can't remember here.

N: Mulnar was in Stalag Luft 3, too. Mulnars got drawings, diagrams and everything of the whole Stalag. He kept a daily diary of everything. You should see his diary. Every day that he was there he wrote down what he did. He, too, told me about the plays and the musical instruments. So, it seems that the whole camp at one time or another was involved in doing their own plays. Mulnar even was the one that told me, if memory serves me correct too, they used to go to "radio" school and the Germans didn't know it. He said that guys would teach us how to make our own radios. The underground was giving them supplies. So we would have our own radios.

J: We made crystal sets.

N: Did they work well?

J: Yes, we could pick up the BBC.

N: You could pick up a BBC off your crystal set?

J: Yes. Then they would bring around the news and be sure that security was tight and there were no goons around.

N: What do you mean by goons? German guards?

J: Yes. The goons wore blue coveralls normally. They would just go around and snoop and find out...

N: Why would they wear blue coveralls?

J: That was just what they were supposed to wear.

N: Did they have weapons too with them?

J: No, the goons did not wear weapons.

N: So they did the work of the German guards per se, by going around and snooping around.

J: Yes.

N: Did they try to befriend anybody?

J: Yes, some of them. This one fellow in our combine would speak a little German. He would get him aside and once in a while he would give him a treat or something. He would try to get something out of them.

N: When you guys were in this camp, did you have a camaraderie amongst yourselves? You know, "Let's keep our morale up. If we've seen anybody that is starting to get very depressed and things of that nature we'll have a talk with him." Were there things that you did to keep one's spirit up?

J: Not intentionally, no. I think it was probably was just something that was done unconsciously. If we would see somebody that was kind of down we would cheer him up. Like I say, it wasn't anything planned.

N: In the course of the day, could you guys play baseball if you wanted to?

J: Yes

N: Cards obviously

J: Yes.

N: Basically officers and enlisted people or NCO's, I understand, were not allowed to work. They didn't put you guys to work, other than you guys, who had to cook. But that was something that you volunteered for or what?

J: Yes. No, but that was in our. .

N: Own little hutch area?

J: Yes, they would let the non-commissioned go out and work details outside the camp. We didn't have any non-coms in our camp.

N: The one guy I talked to was a non-com. He told me that they didn't have to work. He said that was something you could volunteer to do. More often than not, even if you volunteered they wouldn't let you do it. Especially if you were an air crew member they didn't want to hear it. The fact that you had the non-com status basically that is all they wanted to hear. Anybody below the non-coms didn't have to go to work.

J: Of course, some of the ones that did go out on work details had it better than us because they could trade cigarettes for food.

N: He said, "That was the reason why I went out." He went to go bake bread. The German's used to inspect them as they came out. He said they'd come in and inspect the jacket. That's where the bread was at. He said I would hold the jacket up and tell them to go ahead. They didn't know it, but the jacket hid the bread. He had cut holes into the side of the lining, stuck the bread down. How long were you at Luft 3? You weren't there until the end of the war, they moved you on from there, right?

J: Right. When the Russians started coming in, I remember it was cold, because they marched us about ninety miles. They put us in box cars to take us the rest of the way down to Munic That was where Mooseberg was.

N: Mooseberg was in Munich?

J: Yes, outside of Munich

N: Mooseburg, was that the name of the camp?

J: Right.

N: And that was outside of Munich?

J: Right.

N: No wonder why I couldn't find it. I'm looking for Mooseburg Germany on the map.

J: Oh!

N: It was outside of Munich then.

J: A while back when our planes would come over and bomb Munich we could actually see the bombs falling.

N: Oh really?

J: Out of the planes, yes.

J: Right. When one of the planes bombed Munich we could actually see the bombs.

N: So you were in Luft 3 for approximately how long, three months?

J: Oh yes. The biggest part of my being a POW was at Luft Three. When we got to Mooseberg it was cold when we started out. Then we weren't there too long until we were liberated.

N: You were shot down in 1944 of August?

J: No, 1943

N: You were liberated in April 29, 1945 Most of your time then was at Luft 3 Going back then, how long were you at Mooseberg?

J: I was a POW twenty and a half months all together.

N: So working back then, you weren't too long at Mooseburg. What time frame do you think you were there? It was cold when you got there, right? So January or February maybe you got there? Does that sound about correct?

J: Yes, it was probably in February.

N: I think February sound about right because he told me too it was colder than hell.

J: Yes, it was.

N: You say you were on a ninety day hike out in the woods.

J: No, it was ninety miles. We walked ninety miles, then they put us in box cars.

N: How long did it take you to walk ninety miles?

J: It was probably a week or more before we got on the box cars.

N: Once you were on the box cars they took you straight into Mooseberg?

J: No, we stopped. In fact one night we stopped in a town and we heard the air raid sirens go. We were really sweating it out because we thought the irony of it if our boys come over and bomb us. We thought they knew where the POW camps were but, of course, if you were going through a town they wouldn't have any information on that.

N: When they stopped you were you in a train yard at the time? Where were you at? Were you in the town or were you in the train yard?

J: We were in a train depot.

N: Mulnar was there with you.

J: Was he?

N: He told me the same thing. He said how ironic it was. He said, "I thought for sure that we were going to get bombed because one thing that he used to bomb was the train depots."

J: Right, the marshalling yards.

N: He said, "I figured that's it. They won't even know that we're here. He said he could hear bombs dropping around us." So you were there with him at the same time?

J: Yes. One of the nights, too, they took us off the train and put us in a factory We spent the night there. The same thing happened but the factory was warm at least. We were really happy to get that.

N: When they took out and they put you in this factory, how many guards were around you at the time? Could you guys have escaped any time you wanted to or it wouldn't have been the wisest thing to do?

J: It probably wouldn't have been the wisest thing because. .

N: Obviously where are you going to go.

J: They all had rifles and, of course, had orders probably shoot to kill if anybody did start anything.

N: What kind of physically condition were you guys in at the time? Were you guys run down?

J: No, we were in pretty good condition because we would walk every day We would walk around the compound or played baseball like you asked. We did that for reason to keep our physical condition and good shape. We played a lot of cards but we did a lot of walking too.

N: Not only did that keep you in shape, but it probably kept you in good spirits as well Not just sitting around with idle time.

J: Right. We were always doing something. We didn't just sit there and stare into space.

N: Running and jogging is one of the greatest things for depression that there is Not only does it give you good

physical situation but if you feel depressed and you feel tired go on jogging. It picks you up. When you got to Mooseberg, what was that camp like? Did you have the same enclosed luxuries that you did at Luke-3 or was it a step down?

J: It was a couple steps down. There were prisoners of war from India and all of the countries. That was a melting pot.

N: How many guys were there?

J: I have no idea because most of us were in tents there. There were some barracks I guess.

N: Were you in a tent?

J: I think I was in a barracks I don't remember too much about Mooseberg, really.

N: Nice place to forget.

J: Yes That is probably why I can't remember because a person has a tendency to forget the bad things.

N: Since there were so many people there, did you guys have problems with food and water and sanitary conditions? Did you get a chance to shower or anything?

J: I can't remember ever taking a shower at Mooseberg. At Sagan, of course, we got one once or twice a week. Most of the time it was cold water but it was at least a shower. But at Mooseberg I can't even remember taking a shower there

N: What was the camaraderie like at Mooseberg? It sounds like Mooseberg was a little bit depressing.

J: Yes, it was, although we figured that maybe the war was about over otherwise they wouldn't have...

N: Transferred you guys there.

J: Right.

N: So that lifted up, your spirits I would imagine, at that point?

J: Yes.

N: At Mooseberg, did you guys see any of our bombers or fighter pilots going over at the time?

J: Yes.

N: You saw them constantly?

J: Yes, constantly. In fact like I say, we could see the bombs actually dropping in Munich. They were there everyday.

N: That must have got the Germans a little upset. The guards must have knew that something was happening.

J: I think they knew at that time which side was winning. Of course, there were no German aircraft, they weren't anymore left at that time.

N: Did they still have the older guards at Mooseberg?

J: Yes.

N: They basically still left you alone?

J: Yes

N: You say you were liberated in April. That was Patton's third Army that liberated you guys.

J: Right.

N: Did you get a chance to see Patton when he came in?

J: No.

N: What did you guys do when you were liberated? Did they

tell you just to stay put where you were at, and we will try to get you out of here as soon as possible?

J: Yes.

N: Were there any fences up that you guys tore down at this point? Did you tear down the guard houses or anything as a sort of gesture? Did you guys do anything different?

J: No, not as far as I know. Some of the fellows went to Bukenwall, I think was the concentration camp.

N: Why would they want to go to a concentration camp?

J: They just wanted to see everything they heard and they wanted to see what it was like.

N: It was that close to you guys?

J: Yes, I think that was the one was fairly close. In fact, the fellow that got these, this fellow, he and I were cooks. His sisters boyfriend was in Patton's Army that liberated us. The two of them went and got these records of the German officers. They just told us to stay there and they would get us out as quick as possible. The thing I remember, they brought in the field kitchens and baked white bread.

N: That must have been a treat

J: It was like cake. It was the first white bread we had seen.

N: You died and went to heaven.

J: That's for sure.

N: When you finally made it out of Mooseberg, where did they take you to from there?

J: Camp Lucky Strike in France.

N: Where was that Camp Lucky Strike at in France?

J: LeHaure.

N: What did you do at Camp Lucky Strike?

J: Just waited impatiently for the ticket home.

N: Where you guys allowed to go into down town LeHaure?

J: Yes, we went to LeHaure. In fact, some of them went to Paris but they told us if we did go to Paris and the ship that we were assigned come in we would have to wait until the next ship. So, this fellow didn't go to Paris, I stayed right there. I thought I might see Paris later.

N: How did they French treat you when you went in to LeHaure.

J: Fine.

N: Did our government at that time give you guys any extra money and say, "We know you guys are going into LeHaure. Here is a few bucks to go spend as you will?"

J: We might have got a supplemental pay because I do remember we had some money but I don't remember where it came from so there must have been a partial payment at that time.

N: You were obviously collecting your paycheck while you were in the POW camps. So, they owed you that money. Were there any restrictions at all that our military put on you guys when you left camp to go into LeHaure? Did you have to be back by a specific time or did you come and go as you want?

J: Come and go as you wanted.

N: What was it like the first time you ate good food? Did you have stomach problems? Did you throw up at all?

J: No, I never saw problems like that, even when I came back and started eating steaks and lobster tails. It still

didn't bother me. Milk is what I missed mostly. I was always a big milk drinker. I drank it by the gallons.

N: Your generation must have grew up on milk. Everybody tells me the same thing, that they missed milk. I could never stand milk as a kid or as an adult.

J: I still drink it.

N: My mom and dad would always tell us about milk. They would always force it down our throats. I always hated it with a passion.

J: Maybe that is why, they tried to force it down your throat.

N: What did you do when you came back? Did you muster out of the military immediately or did you stay for a while?

J: No, I stayed for a while. In fact, I wanted to stay in but they had a surplus of rated officers. They said you could stay in and go back to a Master Sergeant rating.

N: From a Second Lieutenant to Master Sergeant.

J: Well, I was a First Lieutenant then. I got my First Lieutenant when I came back. I thought well, if they don't want me as I am, well I won't stay in. Some of the fellows did, they took a reduction in rank. It wasn't too long that they got their commission back again. I am just as happy I got out. Now, I mean the way things turned out. I would have been happy to stay in. I loved the military. I love flying.

N: What did you do when you came back here? Did you go to work? Where did you work at?

J: I went to work for my dad as a plumbing apprentice. I went to apprenticeship school for five years. That is what I have been doing since.

N: Then you have your own business.

J: When dad died I took over the business.

N: When did you say you got married.

J: 1977. I better check that. My wife would probably hear it and if it is wrong, she'll complain about it.

N: I know how that goes.

J: I do remember the 29th. 1977, I was right.

N: You remain a bachelor all the way up until 1977?

J: No, I was married, disillusioned, and then I married Dorothy.

N: Is there anything that we haven't covered that perhaps you would like to talk about? Is there anything at all that you can think of?

J: Not really.

N: Looking back, what type of pilot training do you think you got at the time? Do you think it was adequate enough to get you into B-17's right off the bat?

J: I think it was good training, of course, like I told you, I missed the first phase training. The first phase might have been landing and taking off the B-17, but I don't know since I didn't go through it. I would have probably had to have a little time before I got my crew, before I would go up. But as far as landing and taking off a B-17, I don't think I had any problem with it. It was such a heck of a good plane. In fact, one of the days we were coming back from a mission we were in the number two position, and me being the co-pilot I was next to the lead plane. We were flying formation and I just got it in as close as I could, in fact, one of the radio operators came up, "Who the hell is flying this thing," because I was so close. I loved it. Like I say, I wouldn't have any trouble after a couple days. I wouldn't have had any trouble with it.

N: That was a heck of an aircraft. I went up to the air base and saw the B-17 at the air base.

J: I did, too.

N: I was amazed at the cat walk went back from the front to the tail section. It was only that big and you had to put one foot in front of the other foot. My son is eleven, he said, "Dad, is this the way it was?" I said, "Joe, this is it. This is the real stuff." I couldn't believe it, how small that cat walk was. A long way to fall.

J: Dorothy got hydrophobia in there. She climbed up and she took off. She said, "The next time either you go in alone or I will control myself."

N: My son had a ball in there. We went goofy. He had a beautiful time. He went down by the waist gunners and tail gunner. Went up into the cockpit.

J: I would love to take another trip. In fact when I was over there that day I asked them if they ever took anybody up. He said, "No because of that insurance sake."

END OF INTERVIEW