Glen Naze was born 2 August 1919 on a farm at Montpelier, North Dakota some twenty miles south of Jamestown. He graduated from high school in 1937. He moved with his family to Winona, Minnesota, and it was here that Glen enlisted in the US Army Air Corps in June 1941. After joining the Army, but prior to departing for England, Glen was married (September 1943, wife Lorraine).

Glen was trained as a flight engineer and top turret gunner on B-24 Liberator four-engine heavy bombers. In early 1944, he was posted to England, to the 389th Bomb Group, part of the 8th Air Force, based at Hethel, England. By mid-June 1944, Glen had completed twenty-two combat missions over Europe.

On 21 June 1944, though, while on a mission to Berlin, Glen’s B-24 was hit by ground fire and shot down over Germany. Glen bailed out and was captured. He was initially taken to the Dulag Luft interrogation facility, where he spent several days, then to Stalag Luft IV Grosstychow.

When the Germans evacuated this camp in early February 1945, as Soviet troops closed in, all prisoners, some eight thousand were marched westward. Glen was in a group of POWs that spent the remainder of the war, some three months, on a meandering march to keep away from Soviet troops. This group finally was liberated by British troops in early May, near the German city of Stettin.

Glen was among the US troops evacuated, and returned to the United States. He spent some time recovering from his time as a POW, then was discharged in September 1945. Again a civilian, Glen worked twenty-five years as a mechanic for Suburban Chevrolet in the Twin Cities.

From official Army Air Corps records:

**WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE 1944**

**STRATEGIC OPERATIONS** (Eighth Air Force): Mission 428: 1,234 bombers and 1,170 fighters are dispatched to hit targets in Germany; 45 bombers and 4 fighters are lost.

Of 368 B-24s dispatched, 69 hit Genshagen, 52 hit Marienfelde, 47 hit Berlin, 40 hit Potsdam, 28 hit Niederschoneweide, 23 hit Genshagen, 16 hit Rangsdorf, 10 hit Trebbin, 8 hit Selvig, 8 hit Stendal, 7 hit targets of opportunity in the Berlin area and 1 hits Bederekesa; 19 B-24s are lost.

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is Friday, 11 March 2005. This is an interview for the Prisoner of War Oral History Project; my name is Thomas Saylor. Today I’m interviewing Mr. Glen Naze at his home here in Hopkins, Minnesota. First, Mr. Naze, on the record, thanks very much for taking time to participate in this project today.

G: (nods)

T: For the record, you were born on 2 August 1919 on a farm at Montpelier, North Dakota. I think you said that was about twenty miles south of Jamestown? So a lot of space around you out there, right?

G: (nods)

T: You enlisted in the service June 1941, and you did that from Winona, Minnesota, where you and your family had moved in the meantime. On the other end of that, you were discharged from service September of 1945. By 1944, to move to our story here, you were a flight engineer, top turret gunner on B-24 Liberator aircraft, flying with the 8th Air Force, 389th Bomb Group, and that from England. I want to move to 20 June 1944. That was, by your account, your twenty-third mission, is that right?

G: Yes.

T: By that time, after flying twenty-two missions, does one get kind of used to flying combat missions or is that something that you never really get used to?

G: You never get used to it. Ever.

T: So the more you did it, it didn’t make it any easier to prepare for.

G: I always asked God’s help before taking off, before we started. Sometimes the chaplains came out to the plane before we took off. Of course, we were all different religions, but it didn’t matter. The chaplains gave us a blessing. There was always one at the briefings. (pauses three seconds) We always were prepared for death.

T: The crew that you flew with that day, was that the crew you had flown your other missions with as well?
G: That was the crew I trained with in the States.

T: So you knew all these guys. You weren’t a replacement on some other crew that day.

G: No. No. Not that day.

T: What about the mission that day? That was a mission to the outskirts of Berlin, I think you said before we began.

G: Ball bearing factory.

T: Did anything make that mission different or something out of the ordinary?

G: No. Not out of the ordinary. They were all the same. You flew into flak, or ack-ack [anti-aircraft ground fire]. You could see it for twenty miles. Flew right into it.

T: With flak, what’s it like being in a plane, if you can describe from your perspective? What’s it like being in a plane when flak is going on around you?

G: As long as you see the smoke, it doesn’t affect you. Anything above you doesn’t affect you. But if you see a big flame of fire below you, those are the ones you have to worry about, because the shrapnel blows up.

(1, A, 35)

T: So if it’s above you, you learn not to worry about it too much. And if you saw the smoke, it was also okay.

G: Yes. Then it’s too far off. You could see—they send up a pattern really. You could see it when you’re flying twenty miles away. This black cloud. Because there might be more planes ahead of you and they were shooting at them too. There isn’t only one group going over at one time.

T: Right. So the groups would come in one after the other and by that time...I see. From your perspective, were fighter planes or flak more of a threat?

G: We were only attacked one time by fighter planes.

T: In all the missions you flew?

G: Yes. And that time, he took the wingman off each side of us. I and my nose gunner out of the whole group were the only one that fired some shells at him. I could see the pilot that came along. They took the wingman off just like I’m sitting and see you.
T: The German pilot, you could see him?

G: Just like that. And I could see my bullets going into the plane. Tracer bullets.

T: So you could trace where they were going. But you didn't use your guns all that often as a top turret gunner.

G: That's the only time I used them.

T: No kidding! In all those missions, you really only used your guns that one time.

G: That's the only time we were attacked by fighters.

T: So flak was the danger, really, to you guys.

G: Yes.

T: What happened on that day, on 20 June? The mission is going to Berlin. Was your plane hit before or after you dropped the bombs?

G: After. Yes. We had dropped our bombs. Then they knocked out the number four engine, and I just transferred the gas out of that into another tank on the other side and they knocked that engine out. And about that time the waist gunner, my assistant, called and says Lieutenant Rosas was hit. So I ran back there to see whether I could help him. I couldn't help him at all. He was killed.

T: I see. Now, a big bomber like that can fly with one engine out?

G: Yes.

T: So once you lost an engine—

G: B-24s cannot fly with two engines. You have to have at least three engines. Well, three of them, you can get by. But two of them, you can't. It has what they call a Davis wing, and there isn’t enough gliding power for that.

T: So you couldn't keep enough airspeed, in other words?

(1, A, 61)

G: No.

T: So once the second engine went out, you guys were in trouble.

G: We were in trouble.
T: What went through your mind at that time? You’ve been through a lot of missions by now, but this seems to be a different situation.

G: I don’t think anything different went through my mind. I heard the pilot say bail out. You opened the bomb bay doors and I sat down just like I’m doing here. I looked down there twenty thousand feet. All I could see was clouds. I thought, boy, I don’t know. But we had a Mickey—Pathfinder stuff [radar]. The guy that was doing the Pathfinder...

T: The Mickey Man.

G: Was standing behind me. He said, “Get out!” So I just rolled out.

T: Is this your first parachute jump?

G: Yes. First and last.

T: Okay. Talk about your first and last parachute jump.

G: They gave us instructions. I had a chest chute. And they said to lay on your back when you pull the ripcord. So you’re laying down like this.

T: Falling.

G: You grab the strap here. So you pulled it and the chute came out. But really that was the wrong thing to say. They told us to do that because the shroud lines would hit you in the face when it came out. So you lay down. But when you laid down like that this parachute came open, your head and feet kept going.

T: Did it jerk you?

G: It jerked and snapped your back. It was, I would say, three months before I could raise both hands above my head.

T: No kidding! So it really did snap your neck.

G: Oh! Whiplash.

T: They didn’t tell you that?

G: No. They didn't tell us. They just said lay on your back so the shroud lines won’t hit you in the face. But I fell through the clouds. I fell freefall through the clouds before I pulled my ripcord. The funniest thing. I still had my oxygen mask on. I thought well, I don’t need this thing anymore, so I threw it away. I looked and it stayed with me. It fell right with me.
T: Because you were freefalling.

G: Freefalling. Yes.

T: And it was going the same speed.

G: Same speed I was.

T: That's bizarre. Here's this thing falling in midair, right?

G: But I tried. I put my hand out and I turned over. I put my feet out and I turned this way. When I pulled my ripcord that mask disappeared.

T: Yes. It kept going, right? You know, you're bailing out of this plane over Germany. Did it consciously occur to you that you were going to become a POW?

G: No, it didn't. I never even thought about it. I guess I was praying too hard. Because you're a coward. I was afraid.

(1, A, 92)

T: And how would you describe what you were afraid of?

G: I don't know. I don't know if I was really afraid. If that's the word. But worried, I suppose. I had made up my mind that this was it for me. And I was ready.

T: So your thoughts in your mind were you weren't going to make it out of this.

G: Yes. Right. I was always ready. Maybe it's my religion I was brought up with (chuckles).

T: Were you a particularly religious person at that time?

G: No. No, not really. I went to church. My aunt played the organ at the church in Winona. She'd practice at night and I'd always go with her. She didn't want to go alone. We went to church on Sunday, but as to being religious, it wasn't that bad.

T: To stay on that track, do you feel that your POW experience changed your sense of faith?

G: No.

T: So you were a religious person when you became a POW, and you were when you came out. It wasn't any more or any less, you don't think.
G: No.

T: Mr. Naze, you must have made it through the jump because you’re sitting here talking to me.

G: Yes. When I landed, I landed in a potato field. Where they were all hoeing potatoes.

T: This is June, so the ground’s not frozen here.

G: Oh, no.

T: So you could see these civilians out there hoeing the field as you’re coming down?

G: Well, I didn’t realize how close to the ground I was until I saw the ground. Then I thought to myself, I’ve got to get ready to land. Because you’re supposed to bend your knees and stuff. And I hit.

T: So the ground seemed to come up quicker than you thought.

G: Yes. And they were all standing there, all hoeing potatoes. Old people and real young kids. They all had a gun.

T: What happened when you hit the ground? Did they come to you or run away from you?

G: I was right there. I was from here to that yellow line (looks out the window and points) from them.

T: So thirty, forty meters maybe.

G: Yes. One of the old men came up to me. They all had guns. All the kids and all. I could see them. They looked about this big (holds hands far apart), but they weren’t. I took my parachute off, and the wind caught it and blew it away. By that time I had the harness off and I threw that down too. The old man rolled that parachute up and gave me it. Wanted me to carry it. I said, “Nichts!” A know a little German. And threw it down again. They had a young girl there. I said give it to the girl. She can have it. I thought for dresses or whatever. But of course, the Germans took it from them.

T: Any members of your crew in the same area, or was it just you?

(1, A, 127)

G: No. I didn’t see another crewmember for eleven days.
T: At that moment with these people around you, what's going through your mind? Are you finally relieved that you're on the ground, or scared because they have guns?

G: I just thought the...I was worried more about the kids shooting me. But I should have been worried about the old people. They were more fanatic. I thought they could shoot me, so that's it.

T: It sounds like you were resigned to the fact that they were going to do you in.

G: Oh, yes (emphatically). I resigned myself to that up in the air. When I came down, this was it.

T: How did they treat you there?

G: They kept me there. One German came in and took me away. He took me on this car or this truck, and we went around to all over picking up the dead bodies or another guy and so forth. Then they threw me into jail in the city. The city jail. For three days.

T: How long did you stand in the field there before they came to get you?

G: Oh, I'd say a half hour.

T: That half hour. That could have been an awful long thirty minutes, I bet.

G: Oh, yes. Yes, it was. But really, it went faster because, as I say, I took the parachute time and the time you rolled it up and brought it to me and I threw it down again and wanted to give...I took my harness off.

T: Did they try to communicate with you or you with them?

G: Oh, yes. We were talking with hand signals. I let them know right away that I was an American. Because they were shooting the British more or less, because the British bombed the cities. I had a .45 [caliber pistol]. I threw that away on the way down. I thought, what am I going to do with this?

T: So you thought, even up in the air, you don't want that gun when you land.

G: I don't want that gun. What can I do with it? (chuckles) So I hit them on the head someplace in Germany.

T: Did these people maltreat you at all? Did anybody come up rough you up or knock you around?
G: No. They put me in jail for three days there before they took me away to interrogation. But they didn’t give me anything to eat.

T: So during the three days you were in this, kind of a small town jail, is that right?

G: Yes. It was a just a cell, a jail cell.

T: Any by yourself in the cell?

G: Oh, yes. Wood bed. There was a hole in the door where they’d look in at you once in a while. I was three days in it. The third day they threw a loaf of bread on the floor. A piece of bread. I couldn’t eat it. I wasn’t hungry anymore.

T: Now before this, before you were shot down that day, what had the Air Corps done, if anything, to sort of prepare you for: if you’re ever a POW here’s what you can expect?

(1, A, 163)

G: No. I don’t think…the only thing they told us is be sure to tell them you’re an American. But I don’t they even think knew what to expect.

T: So you don’t remember any kind of a briefing where you were given instructions on how to behave, or what you might encounter, or anything like that? So you really were on your own when you hit the ground. Whatever happens.

G: Yes.

T: Now in this little jail there were no other people in the cell with you?

G: No.

T: And were you questioned at all there?

G: No. Just put in there for three days. Then they came and got me, with two guards. Two German...young kids I guess they were. They were younger than I was. We went on a train to Frankfurt on the Main. Interrogation.

T: Did you travel with other Americans there or just by yourself?

G: No.

T: A long train ride.

G: Yes. And we sat in the Berlin marshalling yard while the British were bombing it one night.
T: Talk about that. Here you are on the other end of these bombs for a change.

G: *(chuckles)* Now I'm on the other end. That old train would go like this *(shakes arms back and forth)*. But the two guards were more scared more than I was. As I told you, I had already given up. Now or later.

T: It sounds like that might have been not an unhealthy strategy, because it sounds like it reduced your worrying, in a sense. You were kind of resigned to—

G: Yes. Wasn't worried. I said, well, this is it. This is going to be it.

T: So when the bombs were coming down there at the marshalling yard, they were more scared than you.

G: Yes, they seemed to be. They didn’t know what to do. They couldn't leave me. Where were we going? They didn't know. They were more scared than I was, I think.

T: How close did the bombs come to the train?

G: I don’t know. I know the train was just banging back and forth. The car was shaking back and forth. It was loud.

T: Is that the first time you had been on that end of the bombs?

G: Yes *(chuckles)*. Anyway, we got to Frankfurt on the Main, and then I was held in solitary. Seven more days.

T: Was this at the Dulag Luft, the interrogation center?

G: Yes. Frankfurt on the Main it was.

*(1, A, 192)*

T: And were you questioned there at all?

G: I was questioned. Yes. Every day.

T: What about the questioning? What did they want to know from Glen Naze?

G: They wanted to know what group I was flying in and the bomb group, what weight bombs, and the type of airplane, and what I did on it. That sort of thing. I was questioned by a professor of history from New York University.

T: No kidding?
G: He went back there for a visit and couldn’t get back. They wouldn’t let him come home.

T: He spoke English as well as you and me?

G: Oh, yes. He spoke beautiful English. Probably better than mine.

T: Was it always the same guy who did the questioning?

G: Always the same guy. Every day for seven days.

T: Do you recall being threatened at all or roughed up at all?

G: No. Never was roughed up. Just questioning. The last day he says, “Do you think this is pleasant? To have to interrogate you guys?” He says, “In the First War I was in the lines fighting.” So he was real old. I said to him, “I think it’s better than being in the front line.” And he rang a bell and two guards came in with big guns with bayonets on. I thought to myself, boy, I’ve had it now. But then they took me back in that cell and then they took me to the camp where I got shoes.

T: At Luft IV, you mean?

G: Not IV. This is in June, in a transit camp [at Wetzlar].

T: Oh, where they give you supplies, you mean.

G: Yes. I didn’t have any shoes or anything. Heated shoes [for flying high altitude missions] was all I had. They gave us shoes, and the Red Cross was there. I was there a couple days, three days.

T: So you’ve been kept in solitary confinement now, at the jail and also at the Dulag Luft facility, so you haven’t been with other Americans really for—

G: Oh, heavens. I haven’t seen any of my crewmembers at all until we got to this other camp.

T: At that point did you see somebody else?

G: No. It just happened. The cells are close together, and you weren’t supposed to talk. But we talked and hollered back and forth and sent Morse Code back and forth. I was an assistant radio operator. I knew Morse Code. It so happened that this kid from Granite Falls, Minnesota—he’s no longer living either, by the way—I didn’t know it. I never saw him until we got to the camp.

T: So you knew him only by the messages being tapped through—
G: By tapping. Code. They'd come and holler at us. Quit that! Quit that! They didn't know what we were doing.

[1, A, 236]

T: So it was possible to communicate a little bit, but it was still a lot of not knowing what to expect.

G: No.

T: Now, were they feeding you by this time at the Dulag Luft facility?

G: Oh, yes. They were feeding us. Soup. They fed us in that camp. Yes.

T: A number of times now you’ve come into contact with civilians. Once in the potato field. You’ve been through a couple of railway stations. Did you see civilians again in the train stations or as you were moving around?

G: No. Not until we were on the forced march.

T: So that’s sometime in the future yet. So all these going through on the trains or in train stations, you don’t really come into contact with civilians.

G: (shakes head no)

T: Do you know when it was you arrived at Stalag Luft IV?

G: It was 20 June [1944] that I was shot down. It was eleven days I was in solitary. Probably a week...I suppose it was the first of July, I would guess. Sometime around there.

T: Sometime in the first of July.

G: First part of July.

T: When you got to the camp there, Stalag Luft IV, you went from a train station to the camp.

G: Yes.

T: How did they get you? How did they transfer you? Did you walk?

G: We ran up a hill. With dogs on us and bayonets. If you couldn’t keep up, the dogs got you. But you know, at that time if you were healthy, a half-mile run was nothing.
T: Were you with a group of people when you were running up there?

G: Yes. Yes. About thirty of us I guess it was. I guess it was thirty. That's when they asked for your rank. I think I was the highest ranking NCO of that bunch.

T: What rank were you by that time?

G: Tech sergeant. I don't know what class that is now. Anyway, it doesn't matter. I think the rest of them were all sergeants or tech staff sergeants. I really couldn't say, but that's when they said, you're it.

T: Because you were the highest ranking of the group.

G: Yes. The Germans were rank conscious.

T: Yes, they are. When you got in the camp there, this is the first permanent, and your only permanent camp, as it turns out. Describe, if you can, as you come through the camp gates. What do you see? How does that camp look to you?

G: It looked like a little town really. It had barracks on each side and people around there. Guards all around. Fences. I don't know. It just...we knew we were there and we thought well, we're safe now.

T: So that was a thought you remember. That getting in the camp, you felt safe.

(1, A, 280)

G: Safer. Yes.

T: Before you got there and you thought about prison camp, did what you actually encountered sort of match what you thought it would be like?

G: No. Really, we had no idea what it would be like. Nobody ever explained it to us. I was about twenty-three. Other guys probably younger than I was. I had no idea what it was going to be like.

T: But you do recall feeling safer in the camp than out of the camp.

G: Yes.

T: In the camps, were you assigned to a barracks building then?

G: Yes.

T: From your perspective, how big was the barracks or the room in the barracks you had?
G: The room was about sixteen by sixteen, I think, and it had sixteen people in it. Double bunks.

T: So one bottom and one top.

G: There was ten rooms. Five up and five on the other side. And they were built up about this far off of the ground *(holds hand three feet high from ground)*.

T: So three feet off the ground maybe, it appears. So there was a space underneath the building then, and you had to go up steps to get in.

G: Yes.

T: So five rooms on one side, five rooms on the other side. Like a central hallway was there or—

G: There was a central hallway. Then also we had a washroom. And a toilet on the end.

T: So the actual building held a number of guys.

G: Oh, yes.

T: So ten rooms of sixteen, or later twenty-one you said.

G: When we first went in it was sixteen in there, but then more prisoners came in. They didn’t have a place to put them, so they gave us one here. Put one in this room. Until we had about twenty-one in each room.

T: The building is holding 150 to 200 guys.

G: Oh, yes. A lot of them. I never did count them, but all those...in that book or in that one barracks...I was in Barracks Five, and that is only Barracks Five. We had ten barracks in that camp.

T: So a lot of guys in this camp then, at Luft IV. Now, in your room, did you know any of the guys in the room there or were these new people for you?

G: Oh, yes. I knew most of them.

T: These are guys that you’ve met.

G: Eleven months. You get to know them.

T: When you first got there did you know anybody?
G: No. There were some of my crewmembers, but they weren’t in with me. Some of them came in later and went across to different barracks.

(1, A, 326)

T: In your particular barracks, did you pick a bunk or was one selected for you?

G: No. You picked one.

T: So one was open and you just sort of grabbed it. Bottom or top?

G: I was on the bottom. Because they’d call me out sometimes. I would get out.

T: Being in charge of the guys?

G: Yes. In each room, I don’t know if they all did, but our room we each elected one guy to go get the food. We had a pail, a sixteen quart pail. That was our meal. He would go up there to get it. He slept by the bucket. He was from Ohio. I just talked to him a couple weeks ago. He was from West Unity, Ohio. It’s just across the border [from Indiana]. If you ever drove the freeway out that way.

T: Now, you talked about the food, so let me pick up on that. The food was prepared at a central location?

G: We had two American cooks and big vats that they threw everything in. You’d go up there and get the pail of whatever it was.

T: And that pail was then brought back to your room?

G: Yes.

T: And how was the food divvied up then?

G: The Red Cross had given us a package, and in each one of those packages was a tin can of milk, powdered milk.

T: The Klim stuff.

G: Yes. Everybody would put theirs out there on the table, and this one fellow would give that out.

T: So it sounds like he was careful to—

G: He was it. Everybody agreed before. I didn’t appoint him. It was a unanimous deal. That he’d go.
T: Were people watching to see that things were divided fairly? I mean, evenly.

G: Our room was. We’d all wait there. We were all the same bunch. Get acquainted. Pretty good bunch of guys.

T: So you don’t recall disagreements about how the food was divided up?

G: No.

**End of Tape 1, Side A. Side B begins at counter 388.**

G: —and then they had to have one guy elected to get the food.

T: So one guy got the food. Food was brought back and divvied into your own particular thing that you were eating out of.

G: Each room.

T: And in the rooms it was divvied up among all the guys who were in that room.

G: Yes.

T: Did bread come with this too, so you had to slice bread up too?

G: No. No. You might get bread separate, a separate ration of bread. It wasn’t very much. I can’t explain it. Sometimes we’d get a half a Red Cross box. That would be split up between two guys. A lot of times there was corned beef in it. I think the whole camp did this: we took the Red Cross parcel, the corned beef, and gave it to the cook. He’d make a stew out of that. All these pound corned beefs. You might get three or four meals out of it. Maybe more. I don’t know how he did it. We had three hundred, three thousand, guys there and we got fifteen hundred cans of corned beef. It went further if you gave it to him. So everybody would give it to him. The corned beef was all volunteered.

T: How often do you recall getting Red Cross packages there at Luft IV?

G: Not very often. Maybe once a week we’d get half of one.

T: So you were splitting with somebody else anyway.

G: Yes. We never did get a full one.

T: Not for yourself.

G: No. Until the day we marched out.
T: Then what happened?

G: They marched us out by a warehouse. First, let me go back. They used to tell us, “We can’t give you these anymore because your planes are bombing our trains and transportation is so bad we can’t give them to you.” Which is true. But it wasn’t true. When we marched out they had a warehouse that probably was, I would say, half as big as that parking ramp across the street here [from the Naze condo unit in Hopkins].

T: That’s a pretty big parking ramp [several stories tall].

G: Yes. Filled with Red Cross packages.

T: And then they just handed them out?

G: They handed each one out. Of course, by that time we were so weak we couldn’t carry them.

T: Those are seven pounds, I think I read somewhere. They’re heavy.

G: Yes. We couldn’t carry it. So along the way a lot of that stuff you’d just throw away. Because they told us when we left that camp, you’ll only be walking three days.

T: So for three days you only need so much.

G: Yes. Instead it was three months.

T: A little bit of difference there, isn’t there? (both laugh) Do you recall the food being pretty much the same from day to day that the Germans supplied for you?

G: Oh, yes. If we got any meat in it we knew the bombers killed a cow or a horse or something. We got a lot of split pea soup that was wormy. The guy would dip it out and there would be a worm on the cup. Maybe you couldn’t eat yours. So take that can away and give it to the rest.

T: Do you just sort of learn to eat what’s in front of you after a while?

(1, B, 422)

G: Yes. You just…almost eat anything. You were always hungry.

T: Do you recall being hungry all the time?

G: Oh, yes. You’re always hungry.
T: How did that impact you? I mean, being hungry all the time.

G: I lost sixty-five pounds.

T: How much did you weigh when you got captured?

G: One hundred eighty-five.

T: And you were 120 at the end?

G: One [hundred] twenty-five, I think it was.

T: So lack of food was a real thing.

G: That was the biggest thing. How do I know how much I weighed? The day before I had to bail out they gave me a bigger chute. I was using a sixteen foot chute and they gave me an eighteen foot.

T: Because of your increased weight.

G: Yes.

T: You lost about all you could lose, didn’t you?

G: Yes. I gained weight, though, on the march.

T: You gained weight?

G: Yes.

T: How did that happen?

G: I stole enough food (laughing).

T: We’ll come to that. In camp there, while you were in camp, were roll calls part of the daily routine?

G: Oh, yes. Two, three times a day maybe.

T: How did that work? The whole roll call thing.

G: We had to get out. Everybody would get out of the barracks. We’d line them up five in a row and I would be in front. And the Germans would count us. One German in the back and one in the front. They never got the same amount. They’d count
again. Never had the same amount. Finally they'd say, how many have you got? They'd ask me how many were there.

T: So the counting was something that would happen regularly.

G: Oh, yes. Every day. Maybe twice a day, sometimes three times a day. Sometimes in the middle of the night.

T: So they came in unannounced and—

G: Oh, yes. They did. They'd tell you.

T: Did the guards often come through the barracks?

G: Yes.

T: Doing what? Were they looking for things? Looking for people?

G: If you were trying to escape. What was going on or...there were always dogs in the compound. Let loose. I don’t know how you’d escape. Where would you go?

(1, B, 444)

T: Escape is one of the things I always ask in interviews. Of course, you hear stories of POWs escaping and all this. The fact is that most POWs didn’t escape.

G: We never tried.

T: Is that something that crossed your mind as something you thought about or no?

G: You thought about it, but where would you go? You were out there about eighty miles from the Russian border and forty miles from the Baltic Sea. Your barracks is built up like that [off the ground] and the dogs are running outside.

T: So while it might have been something to think about, it wasn’t feasible, it sounds like.

G: It wasn’t, no. There were no woods or anything. They had everything chopped off. Bare field. There’s no way. We always talked about it, I suppose.

T: But the reality was, that unless you spoke German and knew where you were going—

G: No. I had an interpreter. We had one guy that was an interpreter. German. In the barracks. He spoke German. So they had to come to me to get anything they
wanted. I would tell them to get the interpreter. By the time they found him they couldn’t find me.

T: What kind of things would they typically want?

G: They wanted me to police up the area. I don’t know what we had to do. There wasn’t anything to do.

T: How did you pass the time during the day? There’s no work details.

G: Walk. That was about a ten acre fence. And we’d just walk around that. I don’t know how to explain it. This camp was like that and there was a little built-up thing about this high—

T: Foot and a half maybe.

G: This was about ten feet.

T: Ten feet between the two inner and outer fence like?

G: This wasn’t a fence. It was just a wood guard.

T: Like a rail or something.

G: Yes. And then we would just walk around it. Around in there. If you went over that fence they’d shoot you.

T: And everybody knew that?

G: Oh, yes. But other than that, I and this guy that was above me, we played a lot of bridge.

T: The Germans supply the cards?

G: No. We made our own [cards].

T: So the Germans didn’t supply the cards for you.

G: No! That was a bad thing. I wish the Red Cross had put some cards in the boxes instead of cigarettes.

T: So you had to really find your own—

(1, B, 473)
G: We had real thin cardboard, and we made our own cards. The deck was about that high *(holds hand six inches from tabletop)*. We drew the cards. Drew the numbers on the cards. The black ones we painted with instant coffee, so when you played a while they would stick together.

T: It sounds like you were desperate for something to do.

G: Oh, yes. He and I played at lot of bridge together. In fact, people would want to come play us because we were pretty good at it. They’d say, come on and play a game. Come play a game.

T: Had you been a card player before your POW time?

G: Oh, yes. I played bridge *[before my POW time]*.

T: So you knew how to play.

G: Oh, yes.

T: Anything else? Did the Germans supply anything? Sporting equipment, musical instruments, books?

G: They had musical instruments. There was a bass violin in the barracks. I don’t know where it came from.

T: A bass violin?

G: Yes. I don’t know where it ever came from. But somehow it was there. So somebody says, can you play that? I said, I can play it. I never saw one before *(laughs)*. They had a guy from Chicago. We used to kid him. His girlfriend is going to marry a shoe salesman. So he would sing, and I would play the bass violin.

T: So just something to do.

G: Yes. At night. Of course, he could sing. Better than I could play.

T: But you had no competition, did you?

G: No. But, believe it or not, they’d stick their heads out the doors and say, when are you coming to play for us? *(laughing)* It was just fun.

T: Something to do.

G: And then we also had school. We could teach. I taught basic algebra while I was in there.
T: So it was okay to get together in small groups and do things like that.

G: Oh, yes. In the barracks. If you wanted to go, if you wanted to have French...there were some people talked French and some spoke German. They'd have their own classes. If somebody wanted to do that, I said, why don’t they teach it, the basic part of it? Without any books or anything.

T: So the challenge was to pass time, but guys found ways to do that.

G: To keep your mind busy. That was the whole thing. I still think a lot of this horsing around we did with this violin and singing kept a lot of guys from going crazy.

T: Just keeping busy. Is that what it was?

G: Just keep their mind off of where they were.

T: Does that mean that you think some guys handled being a POW better than some other guys?

G: Oh, yes. The Easterners or New Yorkers, city guys had it rough.

T: Really? Why do you think that is?

G: I think because they didn’t have any experience with anything. Of course, we were farmers. You’re always busy. You’re doing something. I think that helped me a lot.

(1, B, 509)

T: Just knowing how to keep yourself occupied?

G: I came from a small school. Knew everybody. Some of these people with big schools, they went to school. Maybe that’s the only person they knew. The one next to them. I really don’t know, but I think the Easterners were having a harder time in that thing than the Midwest people.

T: Did you, Easterners, Midwesterners, what have you, did you make good friends in camp? People you considered close friends.

G: Not really. I knew them, but I never...one reason you didn’t, because if something happened to them you feel bad. If you don’t know the guy, it's kind of, well, he’s gone.

T: I hear you saying you kind of kept yourself from making too good a friends?
G: Yes. I did. I did.

T: And from your own record book [that you kept], guys came and went in the barracks in your building.

G: Not always. They were pretty much all the same until we started marching or before is when they took these guys out.

T: So the barracks population really didn’t change all that much.

G: Not that much, no. They brought some in. But the ones that were there first were always there. I knew them all, but as to what you call a real close friend, the only one I had is the one that I stayed with that lived in Ohio. And I still see him.

T: So that was a friendship that you did make. You didn’t know him beforehand.

G: Well, no. But the reason...he was blown out of his B-17. He was the only one out in the whole plane. He had shrapnel in his back. It would fester up. And this little knife I had, little penknife—I’ve still got it—we’d heat it up and I would cut those blisters out and squeeze out that piece of shrapnel. Then another one. I must have taken out thirty of those pieces.

T: Little pieces would keep coming out?

G: Yes. We didn’t have anything to kill the infection except I heated the knife and got it out and then kind of heated it hot enough so that wherever I cut would just sear it. It hurt.

T: It must have.

G: That’s the only thing we could do. I bet I took out thirty pieces out of his back.

T: You’re lucky you had that knife there to take care of him.

G: The Germans gave it back to me.

T: That’s right—you’ve got that. And your watch, right?

G: Did you ever see the German silverware?

T: Yes. I’ve seen some of it, yes. Do you have some too?

G: I have my knife and my spoon and my fork.

T: I’m wondering, here you are in a camp kind of in the middle of nowhere, but still the Eastern Front is getting closer. The Russians are getting closer.
G: Well, not really. For a long time we didn’t know what they were doing. We didn’t have any news.

T: This was my question really, of how much you knew about what was going on outside your camp.

G: The only news they told us is when President Roosevelt died [on 12 April 1945]. That was put on the loudspeaker. And if the Germans were making a big drive that was put on the speaker. If we didn’t hear anything, we knew we were winning.

T: So you kind of filtered the news that way.

G: Yes.

T: If they didn’t tell you something it was probably good?

G: It was good.

T: But as far as any kind of news or rumors, stuff like that, you don’t remember that stuff being passed around.

G: No.

T: Now, if new guys came into camp you could ask them for what’s going on outside?

G: Yes. Yes. That would be the only way you’d have any news.

T: So you could get some updates of how the war was going. But there was no radio that you recall anywhere or—

G: There might have been, but there wasn’t any in my barracks.

T: From your observation, in your barracks, in your room, how well did prisoners get along with each other?

G: We all got along real well. I don’t think in the eleven months I was there, or nine months, whatever it was, in the barracks, I don’t think I broke up maybe one fight or two.

T: So really serious disagreements were few and far between.

G: There might have been an argument but nothing too—how do I say it—manufactured to a big deal. They were congenial. All of them.
T: Do you think...again, you were a kind of a supervisor in a way. Do you think that the prisoners could trust each other? I mean, not to have their stuff stolen for example?

G: Oh, yes. You could leave your...nobody would take anything.

T: And does the same goes for stuff from Red Cross packages, foodstuffs? If you lay it out, it wasn’t going to get taken.

G: No.

T: That’s a good thing. In a small family like that, you don’t want to have your stuff taken.

G: No. I never had any complaints that somebody stole anything from anybody. If something happened, they’d always run to me. I don’t know. I was a leader instead of a follower.

T: What did they run to you for? What kind of stuff would guys come to you for?

G: If there was a dispute or anything, they would come. I don’t remember too much ever happened. I can remember more of them guys sticking their head out, when are you coming to play for us?

T: It sounds like the life at Luft IV, while you were a POW, it could have been a lot worse.

G: Oh, yes, it could. On Sundays we’d have a little group. Catholics would get together, and the Protestants. We could have a little group, a church service. Somebody would remember a prayer or something. I had my little prayer book. I’ve still got it. We’d have that. But that’s the only time you could have a group of more than three people.

(1, B, 589)

T: On Sunday morning.

G: Yes. And there would always be a guard there when we were having a little service.

T: How well attended were those services?

G: I never did really count, but there was always twenty or thirty, I would say.

T: So a fair number of guys took time to do that. How important was that for you to be able to have some kind of service on Sunday?
G: It would break the monotony for one thing. It would give you something else to think about.

T: That’s a couple times you’ve mentioned that kind of concept of just keeping your mind focused on something else. Having something to occupy you.

G: My radio operator was Jewish. He was in another barracks. One night they came and got me. The Germans come and got me and I thought, where am I going to now? Middle of the night. They took me over there. He didn’t even know me. He lost his mind. Worried that the Germans would find out he was a Jew, and would kill him.

T: What kind of shape was he in when you saw him there?

G: He didn’t know me. And we had trained together for six months.

T: You’d flown missions together, right?

G: Yes. All the missions. Didn’t know me at all.

T: So what did you do?

G: I talked to him and he was just out. Just like he was, I don't know, unconscious or something. But he didn’t know a thing.

T: What happened to him?

G: They took him to the hospital and that’s the last I saw. But I did hear later that after he got back to New York to the psychiatric...and he’s all right.

T: They were able to help him when he got back to the States here, but that worrying about what might happen to him...

G: That’s what I say. You had to keep your mind busy doing something or keeping your mind off of something. That’s it. My violin playing wasn’t good, but it... *laughs*. It kept the mind for an hour or so. Something to get away from thinking about that.

T: You’re a person who coming down in the parachute was convinced you’re not going to make it. That’s kind of a pessimistic assessment of your future, and here you’re talking rather optimistically. Like you kind of kept your mind busy and—

G: Once you got into camp it was a little different story. You felt safer.

T: Did that whole sense of, I’m not going to make it, change for you? That you were going to make it.
G: Oh, after I got in camp, yes. I knew I was going to do it.

(1, B, 627)

T: So you really became more optimistic about your own chances.

G: Even on the march. I knew a lot of the guys that were with us, although a lot of them went...they had buddies in another barracks and went to them. Some of them came back. But the group I was with kind of stayed together and they kind of looked at me to help. Get the food and stuff.

T: Before we go on the march, I want to ask about the Germans in camp here. What kind of guys were these guards from your perspective?

G: They were fine. They were good. A lot of them could talk English.

T: So you could have at least a little communication.

G: They would not talk English if there was another guard there with them. If you get this guy alone and give him a couple cigarettes, he’d tell you what you wanted to know.

T: So you could bribe these guys in a way?

G: Oh, sure. Sure.

T: But never in pairs, I hear you saying. Only alone.

G: Never in pairs, no. They didn't know you if they were in pairs, but one was all right. This one, he had one eye. We used to kid him when we were alone. Yes. A Russian woman shot you out of the sky. Because they were all Air Force. The guards were all Air Force.

T: Because the Air Force ran the camp.

G: Yes.

T: So the guards were people that you didn’t have to...you weren’t scared of them. They didn’t mistreat the prisoners or...

G: Oh, no. No. No. No. They were people that were guarding us. I suppose it would be the same if they were in a camp and we’d be in the tower with a gun.

T: So you didn’t have to worry. You didn’t fear these guys.
G: No. I didn’t fear them.

T: Were they, from your perspective as a twenty-three year old, twenty-four year old, were they younger than you, older than you?

G: They were all older.

T: Older guys. You mentioned one of them was wounded.

G: He had one eye. He was older too. They were all older than we were. But I never feared them. They never beat us or anything.

T: So if they came into the barracks, you didn’t have to worry that they were coming in to accost somebody or—

G: No.

T: The war got closer, and eventually on 6 February 1945 by the record, the camp was evacuated. How much advance warning do you remember having about the evacuation?

G: I’d say about a week. Because they told us to take our extra shirt and tie it up so you could use it as a backpack. They gave the barracks leaders, interpreters, cooks, and other main people tetanus shots.

T: The Germans gave you the word that something was going to happen.

G: We had a shirt and tied it up, sewed it up. I don’t remember how we did it. They told us that.

(1, B, 675)

T: When guys heard the news about that, what kind of discussions do you remember? I mean, were people worried about this? Was this a good thing?

G: No. Because they told us it would be only three days. We were going to walk to another camp. Three days. No one was worried about it. We were just going to walk to another camp.

T: And did you find yourself believing them when they said that?

G: Not really but... (laughing). You had to believe them, really. As soon as it got close to the three days, we knew that that was a farce.
T: So they tell you to get ready. But you had some advance warning, so you could kind of organize your stuff and all that. As a person in charge, what were your responsibilities going to be on the march?

G: I didn’t have any. No responsibility.

T: You were just going to be one of the guys out there walking.

G: One of the guys. But I did walk along and talk to them.

T: I keep thinking...you are a couple years older than a number of these guys, aren’t you?

G: Oh, yes.

T: You’re twenty-five by this time.

G: Twenty-four.

T: What happens on the 6 February? Let’s go back to that day. What do you remember about the time when the camp is actually evacuated?

G: They brought everybody out in the formations and said we were leaving the camp now. Go get your backpack or whatever you had. Your one blanket. We’re going to march out for three days.

T: So you heard the, three days marching again.

G: Yes. Everybody went out in a group.

T: Was it the whole camp or just your barracks building?

G: No. The whole compound A.

T: That’s a lot of guys.

G: There was compound A, B, C. We were A.

T: So the whole compound was being moved.

G: The whole compound went.

T: That’s a lot of guys on the march here.

G: A good many. With the exception of the ones they took out before. We really knew something was happening when they came and got some of the cripples. The
ones that had wounds. They were all these ones I crossed off [in my journal that I kept].

T: This is a cold winter.

G: Oh! It was cold. Coldest winter they ever had.

T: And you're not in good physical shape anyway, right? I mean, you've lost a bunch of weight.

G: (nods)

T: Let's talk about the march here. For you, on a daily basis, what is the kind of routine of this march?

G: They had broken us up in smaller groups, with fewer guards. We'd get hollered at in the morning. “Get up.” We'd just keep walking. The guards would be there. “Keep going this way.”

(1, B, 725)

T: Were these the same guards you'd had in camp?

G: Yes.

T: So these guys were walking along with you.

G: Yes.

T: What about the sleeping overnight? You’ve got a whole bunch of guys to try to accommodate.

G: You had one guy you slept with. You put one GI blanket down and slept and you covered up with one. That’s it.

T: And who were you with?

G: I was with a guy that slept above me. From Ohio.

T: What was his name?

G: Oberlin.

T: So he’s a guy...when it came to needing a buddy, he was the one for you.

G: Yes.
T: Now, it’s not somebody from your crew.

G: I don’t know where my crew was, really.

T: So the sleeping, do you remember that being outside mostly, inside mostly?

G: Outside. I’d say ninety percent was outside. If they could come to a big barn, they’d put us in the barn. But it was such a big group in there that...I was always afraid they’d set the barn on fire.

T: So you felt safer outside.

G: Outside. In the straw or hay, and somebody would light a cigarette or something. You never knew. I always managed to stay close to the door.

T: Just to be careful.

G: Yes.

T: Now, food in camp is one thing. Regular deliveries of food. What about the food while you’re marching here?

G: Sometimes we went to a farmer. He’d give us potatoes. They had big piles out in the field covered with dirt. And we’d eat them. Just like they would give it to them in a bushel or whatever. Of potatoes. And he’d give us a steamer to steam them. I remember one time the farmer said, we’ll give you the steamer after I steam the potatoes for the pigs.

End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.

G: We could steal more potatoes than what they gave us. The guys would go out there and put them in their pockets.

T: So you got what you were supposed to get and then you got some extras too.

G: Yes. The kohlrabis, and we’d share them. They were big. Sugar beets really. Cut them up and pass them around to eat on the march. That’s all we ever got.

T: So they didn’t really supply...there were no regular meals provided, as it were.


T: So scrounging for food became something to do.

G: We could do it. You’ve got to have it. You’re a pretty good thief.
T: Necessity is the mother of invention, is that right?

G: I guess so.

T: Talk about that. Where do you get the food? Where do you steal it from?

G: Most of us had potatoes and there’s a lot of starch in that. And the kohlrabi is a lot of sugar in that. That’s what we’d steal, enough so we’d have it for maybe two, three days. We’d have enough.

T: Because you’re walking through pretty rural areas, aren’t you?

G: Yes. And always around the town. We hardly ever went through a city.

T: So you went around the towns and cities.

G: Yes. They didn’t have enough guards to guard us really. To keep the civilians from coming in and killing us or something.

T: Did you have any bad experiences with civilians while you were marching?

G: No.

T: So finding food was a little bit of this and a little bit of that.

G: Yes.

T: But you didn’t have any...you didn’t go through cities and towns that you remember really.

G: No. I don’t remember going through any. A little village maybe or something. With the cobblestones. Hard to walk on.

T: The area you were walking in is pretty rural.

G: Yes. It was like northern Wisconsin. Trees, and all farms.

T: You had guards with you. Did you observe some guys actually trying to escape from this marching column?

G: No. Where you going to go?

(2, A, 34)

T: Same deal as in the camp. Safer with the column?
G: Yes. Safer with a bunch. We knew the war was getting over anyway. They were marching us toward the British or the Americans.

T: With all the winding around you were doing, could you kind of tell which direction you were moving?

G: You could. The sun and the moon. You knew where you were going. Always going one direction.

T: You meandered. We looked at the map before we started. You meandered around a lot on the way.

G: Yes. I suppose we walked six to eight hundred miles.

T: Back and forth a lot.

G: Yes.

T: You said you crossed the Oder River three times.

G: Three times. There was no bridge. The girders were there. Walked across the river and back.

T: How did your health hold up on this march?

G: Mine [health] was good. I was healthy all the time, but I had one tooth pulled. That’s all.

T: As far as problems with dysentery or other things—

G: I had dysentery, but otherwise I was... (trails off) Part of the farm life, I guess.

T: Do you think that growing up on a farm helped you during the walk too?

G: Yes I do. Kind of hard to say, but I think that growing up on the farm helped me all through the war.

T: What did that give you that a city boy didn’t have?

G: I don’t know. Maybe because you’re on your own a lot of times. I graduated from high school at sixteen. I was on my own all that time. A lot of stuff on the farm you had to do on your own, where they never had that opportunity in the cities.

T: You had to find a way to take care of things, I guess, on the farm.
G: Take care of yourself. Of course, I was, as I say, I was on my own from about seventeen. So I was taking care of myself a long time before I went in there.

T: So you had years of taking care of yourself by this time.

G: Right.

T: Now did some guys not stand up to having to march every day?

G: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. A lot of them got sick and they were put on a wagon. Feet blistered. Frozen.

T: It was cold for a while when you were walking, wasn’t it?

G: I can feel it too.

T: What effects did the cold weather leave you with?

G: Frozen feet. No circulation in the feet at all. Rheumatism.

(2, A, 65)

T: So that’s something that stayed with you long after.

G: Yes. My knees are bad now. Of course, I played a lot of basketball before I went in too, so that didn’t help the knees either. I played semi-pro ball. So that was years ago.

T: That’s interesting. For you, marching along there, how often was your column attacked or strafed by aircraft?

G: One time. Just that one time.

T: What do you remember about that particular event?

G: I remember hiding behind a tree (chuckles). I thought, boy, I went through the whole war and now, here I’m getting strafed by my own people.

T: Was it the case that...could you hear or see them coming?

G: Just one plane. One P-51 [Mustang single-engine fighter]. He just opened up [started shooting] too fast. He didn’t know we were there. He didn’t know. He opened up his 30 millimeters or 50s or whatever was coming down. The plane was probably less than a quarter of a mile from where we were. It was just an accident. Nobody got hurt.
T: He didn’t hit anybody?

G: No.

T: Do you think he recognized who you were then?

G: No. He didn’t even see us. We were in the woods. He didn’t see us.

T: What was he shooting at?

G: He was shooting at a train.

T: I see. So he didn’t see you. He was shooting at the train, not at a group of men.

G: Oh, no. He was shooting at the train. The train was moving real slow. He was shooting at the train. That’s all. We were in the woods. He didn’t see us. He didn’t know we were there, if anybody was there.

T: Did you fear that? Marching out in the open being attacked by aircraft?

G: No. At that time, [they] pretty much they knew that the POWs were marching.

T: So it wasn’t something that you were kind of on the lookout for or anything like that.

G: No.

T: With the problems with food and with weather and your health, what for you was the most difficult aspect of being on the road marching?

G: Mostly, when is this going to get over.

T: Really? Because they told you three days, right? And here it’s—

(2, A, 92)

G: Three months. We didn’t know where we were going or what was going to happen. They [the Germans] just left us.

T: Were there rumors among the guys about where you were going or what was going to happen?

G: Nobody knew what was going on. I don’t even think our guards knew.

T: Oh, really? So you couldn’t even pump them for information, really.
G: They were just going the same as we were. They were worried that the Russians were going to capture them.

T: Did they ever say that to you directly?

G: Not directly, but you could see it the way they wanted to keep going, keep going.

T: Towards the west.

G: Yes.

T: Now you made a brief stop at Stalag Luft I. Your column moved into Luft I, but you didn’t stay there very long.

G: That was a big tent city. Oh! No, we just marched in there and I think they fed us there. I had an ulcerated tooth. I went to the dentist. He was a French dentist. I couldn’t speak French. He couldn’t talk English. Had a tube of Novocain. He put the forceps on. It broke. I could stand it so long. I said, that’s it.

T: Did he get the tooth out or not?

G: No. My dentist, when I came home, kept getting pieces out for six months after I got home. A piece would come out the jaw.

T: Was that the most serious health issue or health problem you had while you were walking? That tooth?

G: That’s the only thing. I was healthy.

T: Now did you have any problem with lice or bugs or anything like that?

G: Oh, sure. Lice. Full of lice.

T: That’s interesting the way you talk about it. Like oh, yes, lice. Never having had lice, what’s it like to have lice?

G: (chuckles) If it was a sunny day like we had the other day, they quit marching. Maybe say, we won’t march today. Off would come your pants to pick out the lice.

T: So you learn how to pick them out.

G: They’re all right in here (puts hands to groin area).

T: In your crotch area.

G: Yes.
T: Could you feel them moving around?

G: Sure! *(laughs)*

T: So when you’re walking or sleeping, you can feel them.

G: Yes. They would crawl around. The next day, of course, the eggs would all hatch out again. So there would be that many more. When I came home somebody asked me, how did you smell? I said, I don’t know. We all smelled the same.

T: Soap hadn’t been part of your daily routine for how long?

G: No. Three months.

T: So the clothes you had on you wore those clothes for—

G: All the way.

*(2, A, 122)*

T: When everybody smells the same it doesn’t really matter, does it?

G: No, it doesn’t matter *(both laugh).*

T: But you didn’t stay at Luft I. They marched you back out of there.

G: Yes. They marched us. Our guards came and said, we’re going to go, and we left again. The same bunch.

T: So the group you left Luft IV with, you’re still with that group.

G: Yes. We weren’t really *in* the camp, I don’t believe. We were on the outside of the camp, so that we couldn’t mingle with the ones in there. We were there, but we weren’t with the rest of the group. They kind of kept us separate. I suppose maybe because we were so lousy. I don’t know.

T: You probably looked in pretty rough shape by that time.

G: Oh, yes. I suppose. Hadn’t shaved for three months, or had a haircut.

T: You must have looked like a bunch of guys from the Amazon or something.

G: *(laughing)* I don’t really know.
T: What were you carrying with you? Because you were liberated not long after that, by the British it was you said, right?

G: Yes.

T: What were you carrying with you by the very end there. What did you have?

G: One blanket.

T: Those were your possessions?

G: That’s it, and my knife and my watch. Nothing else.

T: Did you have your silverware too?

G: Of, yes. I had my silverware. Tin can.

T: Just the bare essentials it sounds like. Now the British, when they found you, do you remember that?

G: Yes. We were in a little area. I can’t remember if there were buildings there or not. A half-track came in and took the guards away.

T: So the guards were there until the very end with you.

G: And then they said—I said to the one I could talk to—where are we going now? He said, just keep marching. It was three days more before we found anybody.

T: So the British took your guards away but sort of just said, keep going?

G: Yes.

T: So they didn’t stop and they didn’t provide you with any kind of supplies or anything?

G: No. No.

T: What a letdown. A liberation per se was like they took your guards away and sent you on your way?

(2, A, 150)

G: On your way. Walk west. I remember here one time we were marching or walking. It wasn’t a march. It was a walk. Some guy went into a cheese factory and got one of these big rolls of cheese. About fifty pounds. Anyway he had a little kid from the farm or the house. Had one of these red wagons. Put it on the wagon. And
the little kid, I’d say about three maybe, four, ran after that wagon and crying like mad. They made him give the wagon back. I said, “We’ll cut this cheese up and pass it around.” I said, “You give him his wagon back. He hasn’t done anything to you.” I made him give the wagon back. We kept the cheese and the mother was standing there too. She was crying. She was so happy that somebody gave him the wagon back. I couldn’t see it; I’m too kind hearted.

T: Now did you run into British or Americans then when you finally found Allies?

G: British.

T: What were they able to do for you?

G: They flew us into Brussels. They deloused us and gave us new clothes. Gave us a dietician for every six men. Give you a little dish and two hours later they would give you another little something. She was with us all the time. I was going to say, on this march where they left us, there were six of us in this bunch. This guy I was with was wild. One night we slept in a barn because it was cold. There was a cow in there just bellowing, bellowing. I said, “I can milk the cow.” One guy said, “I have a bottle of wine.” I don’t know where he got it.

T: A bottle of wine. What a strange thing to have.

G: Probably found it someplace. And somebody says, one of the other guys said, “I’ve got some cheese.” So that’s what we had. Warm milk, cheese and wine. Funny it didn’t kill us (chuckles).

T: No kidding. And it’s bizarre you had that cheese to begin with.

G: Yes. It probably was from this farm where the barn was. I don’t know where they got it. I said, “I can milk a cow.” I milked a lot of them. I milked the cow. Because I knew that cow was in misery.

T: Needed to be milked, you mean.

G: Yes. So I milked the cow and we drank that warm milk. Ate that green cheese and drank that wine. Never forget it.

T: You still talk about it like you can remember it even sitting here.

G: Yes. Never forget that. I just think it’s funny we didn’t die. I think the next day is when we ran into the British and they put us on trucks and took us to the airport. Flew us in.

T: One thing I forgot to ask you. While you were in the camp were you able to send or get any kind of messages from your folks?
G: No.

T: Did you get mail while you were at Luft IV?

G: No.

T: Did you send anything to your folks? Postcard or letters or anything?

G: Not while I was in camp.

T: So you didn't get anything then. And your folks. When you got back, what did they know? Had they got any kind of message that you were...

G: You’d have to ask my wife. I don’t know.

T: At this point, you’re now in Allied control again. I want to move back to the United States. Did you take a ship or a plane back to the States?

G: We took a ship. Liberty Ship. Eleven days. Eleven and a half hours to go over, and eleven days to come back. On that ship they gave us one meal a day.

T: One meal a day? That’s it?

G: That was it. But I volunteered my buddies that I was with to help feed the guys. Some of them went to the cook, some of them were in the mess hall. I was in the mess hall. I cleaned the tables. And we could eat almost anything we wanted. We got all kinds of food. And boy, were they mad when I said, “I volunteered you to go to work.” Then when they found out they could get something to eat they were all happy.

T: You managed, it sounds like, along the way, whether it was in camp or on the march or on the ship, to sort of get what you needed.

G: Yes. I said I was a kind of a leader rather than a follower. A lot of guys were afraid to do anything, I guess. I don’t know. I was...

T: Are you the oldest, by the way?

G: Yes. I’m the only boy. I’ve got one sister.

T: Let me ask then: when you got back to the States—and you were married before you went overseas, right? And your folks, your mom and dad, were still alive?

G: Oh, yes.
T: How soon was it before you got back to—and they were still in Winona?

G: No. They were in Waterloo, Iowa, at that time.

T: And your wife was where?

G: She was teaching school here in the Twin Cities.

T: So when you came back to Minnesota, you came back to the Twin Cities then first?

G: Yes. Fort Snelling. I think I got thirty days leave. Then I went to Miami Beach to get discharged.

T: There was a rehab center there for POWs, I think too. When you first saw—and how soon before you saw your mom and dad?

G: Probably a week. I don't really know.

T: Did you go down to see them or did they come up to see you?

G: No. We went down to see them.

T: Let me ask about when you first saw Lorraine. How much did she ask you about your POW experience?

G: She didn't ask me anything.

T: So you don’t remember it being a real topic of conversation.

G: No.

T: Glen, did that change over the years? I mean, is that something—

G: Oh, yes. Yes, it changed. I’ve talked to school groups. Two or three times already. The last time was a Lutheran school out here in Burnsville. Can’t remember the name of the school. I know it’s a Lutheran school. And twice I was at the high school up here when they started studying World War II.

(2, A, 277)

T: When they asked you, that was it easy to say yes, you’ll do it?

G: Yes. The kids were interested. I couldn’t believe it. The first time I went up there I thought they weren't going to be interested. They’re going to be jumping around. You could hear a pin drop.
T: They were listening to you. Did that surprise you?

G: It did. I didn’t think they would be that much interested. And when I got done I said, anybody want to ask some questions? I thought, what kind of questions, but they did ask real good questions. I couldn’t believe that they were that interested.

T: Your folks. You hadn’t seen them for a while either. When you saw them, how much did they ask you about your POW experience?

G: I don’t believe they asked me at all.

T: You flew a number of missions too. Did they ask you about your combat experiences?

G: I suppose they did. I don’t remember if they asked anything special. It was about January until I got shot down. I did my twenty-three missions. One time my pilot and copilot were both wounded. We didn’t fly missions. I flew weather ship. Engineer on a weather ship.

T: You had to wait to complete your combat missions, in other words.

G: We could have gone with other crews. But we said we would rather wait and go with our regular pilot. Because you get to know him and you know he’s a good flier. When we went over, our engineering officer flew over with us. The group engineering officer. So he knew what it was. They needed somebody for flights, I’d hear my name called. I flew a lot of weather ships.

T: And those didn’t count as combat missions, did they?

G: No.

T: They were just...weather ship.

G: But we didn’t have any guns. B-24 stripped down. Nothing.

T: And so you were a flight engineer as well, so they could get you for that. Not just being a gunner; you had another job.

G: (nods)

T: To conclude here, as you got back, you don’t remember, it sounds like, that your POW experience was really something that you talked about either with your wife or with your folks to any great extent.

G: I don’t remember. Maybe she would remember. I don’t remember.
T: Maybe we can ask her later. You worked at Suburban Chevrolet for—

(2, A, 280)

G: Twenty-five years.

T: Did the people you worked with know you had been a POW?

G: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

T: So that’s not something that you felt difficult talking about with them.

G: My wife knew the son of the owner—she went to North High with him. So he knew I was a prisoner, probably. Yes. They sponsored me to go to Dunwoody.

T: Did they really?

G: I had to have a sponsor, you know, under the GI Bill. I went two and a half years. Went nights.

T: So you worked during the day and went to school at night? Boy, you were a busy guy.

G: Two and a half years, and I completed a four year course. In two and a half years.

T: Was Dunwoody a good place for you to be after the war?

G: Oh, it was. It still is. I recommend anybody to go there.

T: The last couple questions. One is about after you were released from being a POW. How often did you have dreams about your POW experience? Not your combat experience.

G: Not much on the POW, but the combat experience, I still dream of it.

T: So for your dreams, it was more of that stuff.

G: I can still see the guy that was killed, my co-pilot. Just before he was killed—he was flying waist gun that day, because we had a command pilot. He was throwing out this tin foil. I called him just before. I said, “Lieutenant, do you want me to come down there and take your place for a while?” And it wasn’t thirty seconds later the other side gunner called and said, “He’s hit!” Now why wasn’t I there?

T: Why not? Is that the kind of stuff that you think about over and over again?

G: Yes.
T: So stuff that you really can’t explain, but you know it was a close call.

G: If he had said yes, come down, maybe both of us would have been alive. Maybe both of us been dead. I don’t know.

T: So any dreams that you have had or have, is more about the combat stuff than about being a POW.

G: That’s all. Yes. I don’t dream any of it anymore.

T: For our purposes, it’s really just about the POW stuff, so that’s why I ask. Now how many children do you have?


T: As your girls were growing up, how much did they ask you about your POW experience?

G: I don’t think they ever asked me anything. I don’t know. They might have asked my wife.

T: So it wasn’t something that they seemed to be interested in.

G: I suppose they were interested in it too, but kind of afraid to ask.

(2, A, 325)

T: I see. Sometimes kids in school, I mean, when they’re growing up they’ll just ask you stuff.

(pause in tape)

T: Again, to sort of pick up the conversation. The one member of your crew who was killed was a resident of St. Paul, and you said that the agreement was among you guys that the person closest would go talk to the folks. So that responsibility fell to you.

G: And I went over there. That was the hardest thing. Harder than flying any mission. To tell... (trails off)

T: They knew he had been killed, right?

G: Oh, yes. They knew he was killed.

T: Did his folks already know?
G: Oh, yes. They, they knew. But the wife would not believe me even.

T: This guy was married too? The guy who was killed.

G: No.

T: It was his folks you had to talk to.

G: His folks.

T: And his mom didn’t want to believe it?

G: She didn’t believe yet that he was killed, even though I told that he died in the plane. She just still wouldn’t believe it. I talked with the husband on the side and he said, she can’t get the idea that he is dead. I never did tell them how. But he got hit here and his whole head… (trails off)

T: So you kind of censored how much you told them.

G: Yes. I couldn’t bring it to tell them that he was hit in the head. His whole head was gone.

T: How did you tell them? I mean, they must have wanted to know—

G: He died in the plane. He was hit and he died in the plane.

T: His parents, did they want to know more from you than that, or was that enough for them?

G: He would. I think I told him later on. Anyway, the way my daughter found out about it, this boy took them over to see his grand folks. She had a picture of the plane.

T: So she recognized the crew.

G: (nods)

T: You were in it. You were in the picture, right?

G: Yes. Sure.

T: That guy’s parents, did you have any more contact with them after that one time?
G: Oh, yes, sure. We saw them. I saw them a lot of times. And I see his brother once in a while. His brother was in the Navy. I’ve seen him oh, half a dozen times. They were at our wedding.

T: Did the folks get any better with sort of coming to terms to it do you think over the years?

G: I suppose they did. We never really did talk too much about it. We went over to France to see his grave. He wasn’t buried where we were. It was about an eight hour drive. His brother and father...

End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B begins at counter 383.

T: So the dad and the brother went over to Belgium to see his grave. Did you go over too? Have you been over or not?


T: When did you first go back to Europe to visit?

G: Over there? We belonged to a Belgian group...club. The headquarters is in Wisconsin. At that time—they still do—one year they go over to Belgium; the next year the Belgians come over here. So when we went they said, do you want to stay in a motel or do you want to stay with some people that speak English? So I said, I want to go with some people. I want to see them. I can always stay in a motel. And since then, we’ve been back twice, and these people we stayed with have been back here twice. So they stayed with us now. A couple times. Since we lived here [in this apartment in Hopkins], they were here.

T: This crewmember, is he buried in Belgium or in Germany?

G: No. In France.

T: So you traveled from Belgium up to France to see the grave?

G: I didn’t know where he was buried. But these people that we stayed with took us to a friend’s. To the beach. Normandy and all that. When we were there I went to the cemetery and asked them. The caretaker. Where I can see him. He looked in the book and said he was buried in, I don’t remember, another place, in France. I never did see it. Because he said it was about eight hours. No way of getting over there.

T: Did you ever have any desire to go back to any of the places in Germany that you were

G: No. I only saw it from the air. I wouldn’t know anything about it.
T: So the places you were on the march or the camps, no desire to go back and see those—

G: We never went through any towns.

T: Right, you never did. So it would be walking through the countryside, really...

G: They have a group that goes back there once in a while to the camp, but there’s nothing there anymore.

T: The camp was destroyed, that’s right. So that’s not something that would really interest you anyway. Going back there.

G: No. There’s nothing there.

(2, B, 410)

T: The last question I have for you is this: when you think about your POW experience now, as opposed to your combat experience, what do you think is an important way that that POW experience may have changed you as a person?

G: I was pretty hard to get along with when I came back.

T: In what way?

G: I think my nerves were shot or something. Somebody would say something cross to me, I would fly off the handle.

T: You seem like a real easy-going guy now, but you say that wasn’t the way when you got back?

G: No. That’s according to my wife.

T: So she noticed you...different.

G: I don’t know if she did or not.

T: You noticed it about yourself.

G: Yes. My nerves were on edge.

T: How long did it take for you to get, sort of get past that?

G: I don’t know. I don’t know. A couple years, I suppose. You were so run down too. It took a long time to get my weight back.
T: Yes. You lost sixty or sixty-five pounds, you said.

G: Yes. And the doctor I went to in Mound, he wanted to give me vitamin shots, but the government wouldn’t pay for them. The government wouldn’t pay for vitamin shots. So he gave them to me and I just owed. I suppose he charged the government for something else, which is fine with me. But every two weeks I go there for a vitamin shot.

T: Which you feel helped you.

G: Yes.

T: Are you a guy who had any experience with drinking after the war when you came back?

G: No. No. Didn’t drink before and never tried it when I came back. I used to smoke, but I quit smoking too.

T: I think everybody smoked in those days, didn’t they?

G: I tell you. Your nerves were so tight that...when you’re flying you don’t realize it, but you’re tense all the time. You have to be.

T: So that tensing up for a mission then is something that stuck with you. Really, it sounds like there was the combat flying experience and then this POW thing, and they were quite different, it sounds like.

G: They were. Really were.

T: The way you’re talking about it, it sounds like it took longer to get over the combat stuff than it did the POW experience.

G: There’s really two different parts, three different parts to your life. The flying, the POW, and the coming home.

T: Which was most difficult of those three?

G: Oh, I don’t know. I suppose...I really don’t know. They were all...at the time, it was difficult. When you’re flying you say well, I might not make it back. And the period of the camp, well, I’m safer now. I went home and I was so run down that I couldn’t do anything.

(2, B, 447)

T: How long was it before you started to feel like your old self again?
G: I suppose it was two, three years.

T: That’s a long time before you really felt like you were back up to normal again. You were working and going to school too, so you were keeping yourself very—

G: And building a house.

T: Did you build a house in Hopkins here?

G: No. Mound. My father-in-law had a summer cottage there that he had bought. I bought it back from him and it was just a living room and a kitchen, no running water. We slept on a Hide-a-Bed. We lived in it for a year and then built on a new kitchen, two bedrooms, and a bathroom.

T: That’s the last question I had, and I’ll ask you at this point if there’s anything that you want to add that you feel I didn’t get to or we didn’t talk about.

G: No. I think we off and on it filled in. If you want to ask my wife a few questions maybe it would help you.

T: On the record then, let me thank you very much for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW
Interviewee: Lorraine Naze
Interviewer: Thomas Saylor
Date of interview: 15 June 2004
Location: kitchen table, Naze residence, Hopkins, MN
Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, April 2005
Edited by: Thomas Saylor, May 2005

Interview key:
T = Thomas Saylor
L = Lorraine Naze
[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation
(***) = words or phrase unclear
NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: These are a few questions with Lorraine Naze. Specifically I wanted to ask, and I asked Glen and he said it was okay to ask you this, when he got back from overseas, you guys were married before. You knew him before. How do you think he had changed as a result of being overseas? How was he a different person?

L: At first it was just like he hadn’t been gone. But then, oh, I don’t know how long it would be, but I never could do anything right. Anything that I did was wrong.

T: So you feel like you couldn't do anything right for a while.

L: Yes.

T: What do you mean by that?

L: Well, cooking. I don’t know. Just everything. Quite a long time ago I was thinking back on that time, and it just seemed to me that for about two weeks I cried.

T: One would be tempted to think you’d be really happy.

L: I was happy, yes, but there was always this...I wasn’t right up to his expectations.

T: Did that pass with time, Lorraine?

L: Yes. It passed somewhat. He still is quite critical sometimes. But as soon as our last daughter left home, then he was just like he always was. He had regressed to where his responsibility was gone.

T: Do you remember asking anything about his POW experience when he got back?
L: I don’t know if I particularly asked, but he talked about it.

T: So if you asked questions, you got answers.

L: Right. But of course, I didn’t know what questions to ask. I didn’t know what he had gone through.

T: And really there was no kind of hook to hang those experiences on. Really, when you think in your own mind.

L: Yes.

T: That’s really what I wanted to ask you. Sort of that right when he first got back question. So thanks very much.

L: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW