

Interviewee: Harry D. Magnuson

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date of interview: 24 October 2004

Location: Mr. Magnuson's residence in Robbinsdale, MN

Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, December 2004

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, January 2005

Harry Magnuson was born 17 October 1923 in Minneapolis, one of five children. He grew up there, and graduated in January 1943 from West High School. Immediately after graduation, Harry enlisted in the US Army Air Corps.

In the Air Corps, Harry was trained as a waist gunner on B-29 Superfortress four-engine heavy bombers. Upon completion of training, he was assigned to the 39th Bomb Squadron, 6th Bomb Group, 313th Bomb Wing, 20th Air Force, and sent to the island of Tinian, in the Pacific. Missions were flown from here to Japan.

On the night of 25-26 May 1945, during an incendiary bombing raid over Tokyo, Harry's plane, the B-29 *Tokyo Trolley*, was shot down. Harry parachuted out; he was the only crew member to survive. Harry was captured soon after he landed, blindfolded and beaten, then taken to a nearby detention facility of the Japanese police, the Kempeitai.

Over the next three months, until the end of the war in August 1945, Harry and scores of other captured B-29 crew members were imprisoned at this facility in small cells, where they endured interrogations, physical and mental torture, sickness, and starvation diets. They were kept separate from other POWs, for the Japanese did not consider them normal military prisoners but rather, because of the nature of their missions against civilian targets, war criminals and thus not deserving of human treatment. Only in mid-August 1945 were Harry and the other surviving internees from this prison taken to a regular POW camp, Camp Omori, which soon thereafter was liberated by American forces. Harry spent many months in hospitals recovering from his ordeal, finally being discharged in January 1946.

Again a civilian, Harry was reunited with his wife Elizabeth (married June 1944) and helped to raise three children. He spent his working career in retail clothing sales, in Minneapolis, and also real estate, retiring in 1985.



The crew of the B-29 *Tokyo Trolley*. Picture might have been taken on the day of their last mission.

Photo courtesy of David Gaines, at <http://philcrowther.com/6bgmain.html>

Source: 6th Bomb Group Association website. Last accessed 16 May 2016

Standing - Left to Right: Sgt Charles W. Snell, **Sgt. Harry D. Magnuson**, Sgt Robert E. Warren, Sgt Donald R. Arntsen, Sgt Charles E. Barron, T/Sgt Joe A. Atchley.

Kneeling - Left to Right: 2nd Lt Walter L. Wentz, Jr., 2nd Lt John W. France, 1st Lt Donald M. Fox (Aircraft Commander), 2nd Lt Leland L. Sanderson, 1st Lt Herman W. Thomas

Interview Key:

T = Thomas Saylor

H = Harry Magnuson

[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: Today is Sunday, 24 October 2004. This is an interview for the Prisoner of War Oral History Project. My name is Thomas Saylor. Today I'm speaking with Mr. Harry Magnuson at his home here in Robbinsdale, Minnesota. First, Mr. Magnuson, on the record, thanks very much for taking time to speak with me today.

H: You're welcome.

T: Let me start with the background information that I talked about. First, you were born on 17 October 1923 in Minneapolis, and you were one of five children. You had two brothers and two sisters. You attended local schools, finally graduated from West High School here in Minneapolis, a January graduate. January 1943. You were then a voluntary inductee into the US Army, and after a brief career, shall we say, in the armored infantry, you volunteered to move to the Army Air Corps. They were looking for aircrew members, you remember. You were trained as a waist gunner, a blister gunner, on B-29 Superfortress aircraft and by early 1945 were flying with the 39th Bomb Squadron, 6th Bomb Group, of the 20th Air Force, based on the Pacific island of Tinian, in the Marianas. Let me ask, to begin, if you remember the first mission that you flew.

H: I think the first mission would be—when the planes go over for their bomb raid there's always, maybe, a problem coming back. So I think our first couple of missions were kind of a follow up. We got about halfway there and we kind of, we were responsible for any aircraft that were coming back, to make sure that they were coming back. Anybody that had a problem. Of course, we'd be in the air and we'd see it. Then we would radio on to whoever was responsible for them.

T: Almost as part of a rescue operation.

H: Rescue operator. It's like that. I forgot about that but, now that you mention it, I think there was one or two where we were on that kind of a raid. We weren't in the raid itself. It was just a backup, emergency backup I guess you'd call it.

T: So it was some time then before you actually made a mission to Japan?

H: Yes. I think it might have been the third mission. It might have been the fourth mission. That I can't remember. But I think the first couple of them, I don't know if we knew that or not. But I recall now that that's what it was for, just to go over

there and just kind of see that everybody comes back or report how many were down or whatever. If anybody went in the sea you would be able to report where they're at.

T: Do you remember the first mission you flew over Japan?

H: No. It had to be one of those eight [total missions that I flew]. So it couldn't have been eight and it couldn't be seven. [Number] eight would be one of them. Seven would be one of them. Six would be one of them. Five would be one of them. So probably the fourth. I probably had four. Four or five. But I'm not sure.

T: Right. As a waist gunner or a blister gunner, what was your responsibility, specifically on a combat mission?

H: Well, when you're flying in your position, if you're in formation I'm on the inside of that formation. And the inside, you can't really use your guns because you've got airplanes over on your left and you're sitting with your guns and it's possible that you might hit some of the planes on your left. So the blister gunner is...in fact, all the training that I did, I only used my guns once.

T: One time?

H: One time, and that was when a Zero was coming through our formation and I let a burst go. But I didn't hit anything.

T: You mean in all the training you had, you used your guns one time?

H: I just used them once. That I can remember. I don't think I ever used it because I can't, I have to be careful with these airplanes over here. Because I'm sitting on the right side of that airplane and I can't use my guns. But for some reason, we were probably all by ourselves or something and I was able to shoot at him, that one. But that was it.

(1, A, 53)

T: Did you see Japanese airplanes more often than that, or was that the only time you ever saw one?

H: That was the only time.

T: So it sounds like you had a lot of not much to do.

H: Not much to do, right.

T: Now it's a long way from Tinian to Japan and back. How do you pass time in an airplane when you've got ten, twelve, fourteen hours in the air? What do you do?

H: I don't know. We just sat. Listen to music. We didn't have any gear on or anything. Just like you're sitting in your living room.

T: It was pressurized, right?

H: It was pressurized, so it was real nice. We got the music. It was soft. It was warm. It was nice. Not B-17s. B-17s are something else.

T: It was colder than a witch's elbow.

H: Oh! Oh, yes. They're terrible. But for us guys, we just ate sandwiches and visited and that sort of thing. We did notice when we were coming back there were Japanese ships out in the ocean there. But we were so high. But you could see the puffs of smoke at us. The puffs from their guns.

T: But it was way below you.

H: Oh, yes. But you'd look at them. Kind of squint your eyes. They would come at you, but we were so far up, we were so high up that it didn't do any good.

T: Did the war seem in any way far away for you? I mean, the war's going on, but it sounds like your experience was the war is over here somewhere, far away.

H: Yes. Yes. Yes, it's different. It isn't like when you're in the infantry; you're in it all the time. We had no war until we get there. And the minute we leave the target, it's nothing. You're just there. Now, if you're a combat pilot or something like that, now, you're in it all the time. All the time. But when you're in a bomber like that, you leave the base and you get over there and you do your job and you come back and that's it. Kind of boring.

T: So the time over the target was maybe the time of stress or tension.

H: Yes. Yes. But that didn't last long. Five minutes, ten minutes at the most.

T: The raids that you remember over Japan, were they daytime or nighttime raids?

H: We did both. Our fire raids were at night. Or early in the morning. But it was dark. But otherwise we did some daytime bombing. On some of the different islands and different locations. Not Tokyo itself. Other places that we did that. The only time we hit Tokyo, that was with the incendiary bombs.

T: And was that just the night you were shot down, or were there more than one of those raids?

H: There were two of those. I got through the first one. What did I say, 23 and 24 of May [1945]. Yes. We left on the twenty-third, the evening of the twenty-third. We bombed on the twenty-fourth. We came back, and then we left again on the twenty-fifth and we bombed on the twenty-sixth. About one o'clock in the morning. We saw [Mount] Fuji as we flew by it.

(1, A, 88)

T: Those low level incendiary missions, what kind of memories do you have of those? What were those like?

H: The only thing I remember is, it's night. One o'clock in the morning and the—what do you call those—searchlights were going at you and they would hit you. Then you would think, that's it, but it didn't, we didn't get hit when that spotlight got on us. Then I remember on the way back you could look back. I could look back out of my blister and I could see fire, just fire, the whole ground, everything, was just covered with fire. Because that's what we did. We burned miles and miles and miles of it, I'm sure. Killed lots of people.

T: Was that something that got on your conscience at all, as a member of those raids? Of knowing what was going on?

H: No. No, not really. Not really. Because I didn't see anything. I didn't see burning bodies and I didn't see any of that kind of stuff. If I would have, I never would have forgot that. Because that's the way, that stuff stays with me. But I never was part of that. Bombs were dropped. The bombs killed. They burned everybody. But I didn't see that. I saw it at a distance. Didn't see anything up close.

T: Did those fires buffet your plane at all when you were flying over the target?

H: I don't recall. I don't recall that at all. But I think there is some of that. That heat that comes up that does that. But I don't, I don't...the only time I witnessed that is when we got hit. That is when we got bounced around. I remember that.

T: Talk about that mission. That was your eighth mission, and it was the night of 25 and 26 May, 1945.

H: Yes.

T: What happened on that mission that brought your plane down?

H: Well, I'm sure it was ack-ack [anti-aircraft fire]. It wasn't planes shooting us down. It was just...my job was to throw radar tape out the escape hatch, that tin foil. Now, every one of those little tin foils represents...see, they use radar guns. And every one of those little tin foils is an airplane. So I'm throwing that stuff out like mad, out the top. I was plugged in. Everything was shut down. The electricity was

shut down. All the lights were out in the airplane, so they couldn't spot us with our lights or anything.

So I was hooked up. Standing. My earphones were hooked up to the plane. But when we got hit, the plane shook so much that I fell over, and when I fell over then my connections came apart. My earphone came apart. You're not supposed to do anything until you get orders from the flight commander. What are we supposed to do? Because we don't know what's happening up front. All I could hear was that pounding. Like pistons were hit and they were pounding like mad. Of course, the plane was shaking badly. So I'm more or less blindfolded, and I'm on my knees trying to find where that connection is.

T: So you can't see anything?

H: I can't see anything and I couldn't feel anything. So I thought well, this isn't working out. Now just in front of me is a round door, and in that compartment in front of me is the radar operator. He's in that little section. I'm in the open section between here and the tail. But over here, this is not pressurized over here. And this section is not pressurized. Because we're only there at ten thousand feet. So I can live out there. So the door was open and I got up and the door was open partially and I pushed the door over to the side and I looked in (*pause*) and I think I saw, I think I saw Lt. Wintz. He was the radar operator. I think I saw him standing. He was already away from his table or whatever was there. And it looked like he was getting ready to unbuckle his flak suit. It had a shield that's in the front and a shield in the back. When we're sitting in our blister we have a steel plate that we sit on in case something comes up from below. But he was standing there and it looked like he was getting rid of his flak suit. Because the chute is underneath there. So the only thing I can remember is that I said, "Do we bail out?" Then I don't know if I said it once or twice or whatever it was. But he didn't say anything. He just looked at me. He was scared. He looked scared. That I can recall. So then I took my, I got rid of my flak suit, I dropped that. I didn't take my helmet off. I grabbed my ripcord, the ring, and I opened up the door and the flames were already going past the entrance door.

(1, A, 156)

T: This is the left or the right side of the airplane?

H: I think it was the right side. I think it was the right side. It was on my side. The blister was on my right side.

T: So your number three or number four engine was on fire.

H: I don't know what was on fire, but something was burning. Burning like hell. So all I did was I grabbed, I wanted to make sure I got that ring in my hand.

T: The ring's right on your chest area.

H: Yes. It's right on your chest. So I grabbed that to make sure because I'd never jumped before. Never been in a...(trails off)

T: So this jump was going to be your first.

H: The first. So in our little training we get a deal from the ground up to there, and then you would jump into the sand and kind of played like you were landing, see? But that was it.

T: Oh, boy!

H: Now you can get more thrill out of jumping off the roof down to there [the ground] than there is jumping out of an airplane, because the prop wash picks you up as you dive and you don't go pffft! like that. You go, when you dive, it pushes you that way and kind of lets you go.

T: So it's not straight down. It's almost at a, straight out and then down.

H: Yes. Yes. So you don't get that (*gasps*). I don't know if you've ever jumped off of something, and you get that kind of feeling. It's a funny feeling. But I knew that you've gotta dive because if you don't, if you just jump out, you're going to hit the tail and that's the end of that. And I forgot to take my helmet off. I mean, everything happened in seconds. It seemed like minutes, but it's seconds. So I left my helmet on. Didn't know I had it on. And down I went. You're supposed to count to ten. And I counted to ten and nothing happened. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. And I kept pulling on this cord. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. And I thought oh, geez, this is it. My chute's not opening. Then all of a sudden, whoop! There I was. The chute was up there. So I was coming down. But it's sure a funny feeling. And they say keep your legs together. You know how they do now when you see it. It's just nuts the way they do things now. But with us, I couldn't get my legs together. Because if you're spread out like that and that thing opens up, you get an awful jolt.

T: Right down in your crotch area.

H: You betcha, boy! I don't know. I just, it was not big shock. I didn't get hurt or anything, see? But it was scary.

T: Now it's dark outside too, right?

H: Oh, yes. Dark. And the wind was blowing. Going right past you. And I couldn't see anything. Rolling around. And you're supposed to kind of get your legs together and do all these kind of things, and I couldn't do anything. Nothing would work. At least it didn't seem like it. But the chute opened up. But then I realize—not then—

but I realized it takes a while for the chute to unravel. You know, everything is seconds. But it seemed an hour.

T: So you were pulling and it maybe had come out but hadn't opened up yet.

H: It takes a while for it to unravel and to get that thing up there. In the meantime I'm thinking, it's not opening, and I didn't have a front chute as a backup. I just had the one in the back. But then, thinking years later, that's probably what happened was that it just took a while for that chute to open. So then here I'm floating down there and it was just lovely. What a ride. It was just so serene. See we got hit before the target area, we were hit before the fire. There was some fire down there, but for some reason we got hit before we got there. If we had been hit over the target with all that fire and I had to bail out then, I would have been burned alive.

(1, A, 208)

T: You would have gone down where the bombs were.

H: Yes. So what happened was, is that we got hit early, so I was kind of out in the suburbs. Like that's downtown, that's Tokyo downtown (*motions left*), and here is probably where I landed (*motions right*). Up in here someplace. So when I got to the ground, I hit the ground. Didn't get hurt. I did a lot of skiing in my day, so I kind of, I just kind of relaxed and just kind of rolled with it. I just kind of sat there.

T: Were there people around you at all?

H: They were about from here to across the street. There was a bunch of farmers.

T: Thirty, forty yards maybe.

H: I suppose about that, yes. They were kind of, I noticed that they were looking at me. They were watching me. So I just kind of watched them and I just went, I unhooked all my gear and when I got up then they started after me.

T: What was going through your mind at that moment?

H: I don't know. I gotta get the hell out of here or something. Gotta get going. So I just took off in the opposite direction. Because they were coming with poles and whatever. Because they were farmers, civilians out there. They started chasing after me. It was lucky that I ran into a Japanese soldier. He had a samurai sword but he wasn't an officer. I know he wasn't. He was just a plain ordinary guy just like me, in uniform. But he had a samurai sword. When I saw him I ran up to him and I just held up my arms. I had no gun. I always thought if I ever get shot down you ain't going to get me alive, because they're not going to be sticking things up my fingernails and torturing me. I'll blow my head off. I'll kill myself. But I left my gun behind.

T: On purpose?

H: I didn't expect to be shot down. So I just left my gun back there [on Tinian]. I never had that on me. So he could have just pulled his samurai sword out, cut my head off. That's it. But for some reason he didn't do that. He just grabbed me by the wrist, turned me around, and headed me right back towards the civilians. That bunch of civilians that were there coming at me. So when they came, when they got up to me, then they started poking at me and the soldier was kind of protecting me.

T: So without his presence there you might not have made it?

H: Then they probably would have beat me up and probably killed me right there. So I was fortunate that way. So I kind of relaxed and then we went through the crowd. Went through the crowd and then we went up to an officer. That's when I got it. Not expecting anything. I just thought, now I'm with an officer. He's going to make sure I'm taken care of. I had my helmet on and he had his bamboo pole and he gave me a whack like he was going to hit me in the head—which he did. But it was a good thing I had the helmet on because it just boooom! It probably ricocheted through the whole thing down to his hand. Probably hurt like hell. Then they put me into a sidecar in a motorcycle. A motorcycle with a sidecar. They blindfolded me and then we took off.

T: Were you still the only American here?

H: Yes. I was the only one.

T: Had you ever given thought before this night of what it would be like to be a POW?

(1, A, 262)

H: No.

T: So the idea of ever becoming captured by the Japanese wasn't something you ever thought about.

H: Never thought it would ever happen. Never worried about it. Never thought about it.

T: Even though planes went down on missions over Japan.

H: Oh, yes. Although they did say that, if you are shot down and you're a POW, tell them everything.

T: They told you that?

H: Yes. It's at the end of the war anyway. But it didn't sound like that with Bob [Michelsen of Minneapolis, another B-29 crew member and POW of the Japanese, shot down over Tokyo the very same night.]. Because it seemed like when he was interrogated he wouldn't say things that he should be saying. But to our group, they said, the war is almost over anyway so if they badger you, don't worry about it. Just tell them anything.

T: So you're in this sidecar now. A couple of Japanese in uniform, and you're blindfolded.

H: Yes. And I think there was somebody sitting on top of me. It was probably this kid that took me through the group. After the officer hit me. But he was really jazzed up with banners and that stuff. So he was probably a big hotshot. So then we were in that motorcycle—I don't know how long it was. I ended up in a kind of a jail. Just kind of a jail.

T: Like a town jail?

H: Yes. Yes. It even had, I was in with prisoners, Japanese prisoners. You know, that did things. Japanese civilians. They were in there with me. So they, they didn't hurt me much. They'd push me around a little bit. They took my ring and they took my wallet. My cash and that kind of stuff. Then they kind of bounced me around a little bit, but that was fine. Then every once in a while they'd take me out to the desk and I was interrogated there for a short while. I can't remember what that was all about. I'd go back into the cellblock and they'd close the door and I'd be sitting with these civilian guys.

T: So somebody spoke enough English to interrogate you there.

H: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They were all educated, those interrogators. They all went to school here [in the United States].

T: What kind of things did they want to know from you at this first location?

H: I can't remember. I don't remember what they asked about. I have no recollection of that at all. All I know is that that's where I ended up first.

T: Can you estimate how long they kept you at that location, Harry? More like a day or more like a week?

H: No. No. It was just hours.

T: So it wasn't very long at all.

H: Not in that place. Not in that place. Because after I left there I was blindfolded and I was taken to another building. It was downstairs. I remember walking down stairs, and the floor was tiled. I thought I must be in the Imperial Palace. That must be what this place is. I couldn't see what it was. All I could see was down below me.

T: Underneath the blindfold, you mean.

H: Yes. It's all I could see. Because it went like this (*across eyes motion with hand*) and I could see all of that [below the blindfold]. But I was in with a bunch of people. A bunch of my guys.

(1, A, 316)

T: At this location. Is this the first time you've seen Americans now?

H: Yes. So I'm crouched like everybody else and sure enough, here's my tail gunner sitting next to me.

T: Were the blindfolds on or off now?

H: No, they were on. They were still on yet. But I recognized it was Charlie Snell. Sitting right next to me for some reason. I don't know how that happened. But it just happened that way. So we sat there all the rest of the day, rest of the night, until about noon the next day. And every hour or so somebody would come in and they would jabber and talk about different things and leave. Then there would be silence. Then they would come again and they would jabber. They did that all night, the rest of the night and into the morning, and then finally they got us up and ushered us out into a courtyard. I suppose that's what you call a courtyard, which was adjacent to all these cells that we were going to be in. Which we didn't know. And then more jabbering. More jabbering.

T: In Japanese or English?

H: Japanese.

T: And you could understand none of it.

H: Oh, yes. I wish I would have learned. Not thinking. Why would I want to learn that?

T: But nobody was translating anything for you?

H: No. No. So we're standing. Just standing. Waiting.

T: How many of you? Can you estimate?

H: Oh, there was a lot of people. There was a lot of guys there. All those cellblocks were full.

T: But in this courtyard, was it half a dozen guys, or more like fifty guys?

H: There was a bunch. If there was eighteen of us in each cell and there was ten of them, what's that? That's one hundred eighty. So there was quite a bunch. That's how Mike [Bob Michelsen] got in with our bunch. Because he was probably in other parts of the building and they came all together. So I'm looking down and here I see all this rope and I think, oh Jesus! They're going to hang us.

T: Do you remember fearing for your life at that time? At that moment?

H: I don't know if I feared about it. I just got a feeling. When I saw all that rope down there I thought they were going to hang us. So I knew there were Japanese soldiers around me, and I pleaded to somebody to give Charlie a drink of water because he was suffering. He got burned pretty bad. He got caught in the tail when he bailed out. So he got burned pretty bad. So his skin was just hanging and his hands were all puffed up. When he was captured in the rice paddy by the Japanese farmers, he had an American flag on his shoulder and they cut it out of his shoulder. Skinned him. So he was really bad. He died three days later. But I pleaded with them to give him some water before we were hung. Something. Because he was terrible.

End of Side A. Tape 1, Side B begins at counter 384.

T: You saw your tail gunner at that point. How many other members of your crew did you see?

H: The plane blew up.

T: How many people ultimately did get out? Just you and the tail gunner?

H: Just me and the tail gunner.

T: Everyone else went down with the plane?

H: Yes. They blew up in the plane. There was eleven of us.

T: And Charlie Snell, the tail gunner, died at the prison there. So only you survived the war.

H: Yes. I was the only one left. The only survivor.

T: You are in this courtyard fearing or wondering what's going to happen next. What did happen then from that point?

H: They took our blindfolds off, and they proceeded to push us into these little cellblocks. I think Mike said there was sixteen. I thought there was eighteen. But what's the difference? Sixteen or eighteen, something like that. That's where we spent the next three months, was in that cellblock. Then we were hauled out of there, every once in a while, each person, for interrogation.

Charlie [Snell] was with us for three days, and I thought I carried him out to the back of the building and laid him on some straw because I told them, "This man needs medical attention." I did that. Yelled about that for a couple days and finally they said okay. So I hauled him out. Mike said I dragged him out, but I thought I lifted him up and carried him back there. That part I can't remember. But I never saw him again. He must have died back there. Back in the back there.

T: Let me ask you about the cells themselves, through your eyes. As you recall, how large were those cells?

H: I think they were eight by ten.

T: Eight feet by ten feet.

H: Yes.

T: And sixteen or eighteen men in each.

H: Yes.

T: That's no space at all.

H: No space at all. And we had the toilet, which was a box with a wood cover on it. Then there was a trough that you could pull it out and clean it from the outside. So every day somebody has to go out there. They let somebody out and they go around the building and pull that out and empty it out. But it was so tight there. Somebody had to sleep on that thing or sit on that thing all night. So we had to take turns.

At first everybody for himself as far as the food goes, the water goes or anything goes. I mean, we just, we were like cannibals.

T: So you don't remember that there wasn't a sense of order among the men.

H: No. But then somebody realized, we realized or something, because when the rice balls came in, they come through a little chute—

T: Under the door you mean.

H: Under the door. Under where the bars are. Maybe there's a big one. Maybe there's a little one. Maybe there's a big one. Maybe a little, little, little, little one. Every time one came through, if it was a big one whoever was there would grab that

one. Well, we couldn't do that. What we had to decide to do is when those balls came in you move it around. And whatever falls for you, that's yours. Otherwise we were just, we would claw at each other. We'd kill ourselves. Because we were so hungry.

T: Who made that, or who enforced that system?

H: I don't know who did that [enforced that system]. I don't know it. It was, we had one flight commander, but I'm not sure if he was the one that decided that or not. But I think we all decided, hey, we can't fight over these balls when they come through because we're right there jumping at them. So we finally, I think we all decided, this doesn't work. We've got to do it this way. Which everybody agreed. You might get a big one one day, and you may get a small one the next day. Whatever. But at least we're not fighting at each other.

T: Were there both officers and enlisted in this cell?

H: Just one officer that I remember was there.

(1, B, 428)

T: What was his name? Do you remember his name?

H: I can't remember [his name].

T: He wasn't from your crew.

H: No. I can't remember. I can't remember. But I knew he was a flight commander.

T: Did he, as an officer, assert any authority, or was he able to in that particular situation?

H: All I can remember he was kind of a weakling. I mean, he wasn't what he should be, what you would think a flight commander should be. He just wasn't that. He was kind of a crybaby.

T: So you don't remember him as a take charge person.

H: No. No. That I can recall. I was very disappointed in him, because I thought, well now we've got, he would, if anybody would be grown up, it would be him. But he was a kid just like we were.

T: Here you were twenty-one at this time.

H: Yes. He might have been younger than me. You know what I mean?

T: Yes.

(1, B, 437)

H: But I wasn't thinking along...all I thought was, to be a flight commander he's got to have something up here (*taps head with finger*). Because I can't do it.

T: In a situation like that, who does end up being the person who gains respect or gains authority? How do you do that?

H: I don't know. I don't know. I think we just all got together and decided, that's the way it's going to be. So that worked out. Somebody had to sleep on that box.

T: The *benjo*.

H: The *benjo*, yes. On that box. So we'd all take turns. But that damn light that was up in the ceiling. That was on all night long. Ooooh! It wasn't a bright light, but it was just enough.

T: So it was never dark.

H: It wasn't a nightlight. It was just glaring at you all the time, and when you're head and toe, head and toe—the floor was just solid with us. You couldn't move. You couldn't...you know. That was a cement floor. That's hard. But I can't remember if we laid on blankets or we'd cover, we had blankets. I can't remember. Can't remember that. But it was, I always remember those damn lights up there.

T: So at night it was always on.

H: Always on. All the time.

T: You mentioned the rice balls. Was any other food supplied, or was that it?

H: Yes [just rice].

(1, B, 451)

T: Drinking water?

H: All we could drink. That was good, because we could fill ourselves up with water. But they didn't have much to eat either. So we were lucky to get what we got. Which, we didn't realize that. We just thought well, Jesus! Now if we would have got all big balls of rice like that, we'd have been so sick of rice that we'd never want to look at it again. But they were like golf balls. Most of them were just the size of a golf ball.

T: So the caloric value was very, very little.

H: Yes. So we were always hungry. So I can eat rice today. Just like normal.

T: It doesn't bother you.

H: No. No.

T: How often were you taken from this particular cell to be interrogated that you remember?

H: Now that I don't remember. I know I did it. I was there. I went through that. But I can't remember how many times. There was one time where I made a mistake on the dates, and I think it was the dates that we were shot down or something. Our group, for some reason, our group was something, I think, was something special, that they wanted to know about these fire raids. It was something about, they wanted to hang onto us and learn what's going on. So we were lucky that way because there were a lot of people that came through that were killed after we were shot down. But for some reason that bunch that we were with, they wanted to hang onto them and interrogate us as much as possible. So that's what they did. Three or four times maybe. But I did mention one time about a date and it didn't coincide with the other boys, so they were a little leery about me. But they didn't hurt me or anything. But for some reason, Bob said that they beat him. They roughed him up on some of those interrogations. Which they could have easily done.

T: Do you remember that happening to you? Being roughed up or physically—

H: No. No.

T: So there was questioning, but no physical abuse that you remember.

H: No. No. And then such dumb questions. Where were you married? Where did you go to school? Things like that, to me, didn't seem to have any relevance. You know, if they wanted to know about the airplane, if they wanted to know about our squadron, these things are something. But to know about where did you go to school...

T: So it was some personal questions

H: Yes.

T: They didn't ask you about the plane, or your base, or anything?

H: No. I don't remember that at all. They might have. But so much of it was so silly. That didn't make sense to me. I didn't laugh at them or anything. I just, whatever they wanted, fine. Fine, fine, fine. What's your religion? You know, stuff like that.

T: The interrogator. Was it always the same person or persons?

H: That I don't remember. All I do know is, they were educated. They were educated here [in the United States]. They went to our colleges.

T: So they could speak English to you no problem.

H: No problem at all. And then there would be guards around. Standing there. Waiting. In case anything happened.

(1, B, 487)

T: Just you in the interrogation?

H: Yes. Nobody else. Just one at a time. So they spent all that time doing that.

T: So they would come to get you from the cell, take you out...

H: Yes.

T: Was the interrogation room pretty close to your cell?

H: Yes. It wasn't too far away. It was probably across the hall and maybe down a ways or something.

T: And then you'd be questioned about the things and then brought back again.

H: Yes. And then the next guy would go. So Bob, whether they did all of them in one day or not, that I don't remember. But I think I did it two or three times. Nothing seemed to materialize from it. I don't know what the hell they learned.

T: They didn't ask you anything about military matters?

H: No. They might have, but that part I don't remember. The only thing I remember is anything that's dumb. Kind of silly.

T: Things you hadn't expected, it sounds like.

H: No. No.

T: [Questions like] Where did you go to high school?

H: Yes. Yes.

T: Harry, was there a daily routine in that cell? I mean, how did you pass the time? I mean, from day to day there.

H: Well, I kind of recall that we walked around. We all got up and we just kind of walked around the cell. Kind of exercise. I forgot all about that until I was thinking about you coming. It kind of popped on me. I was trying to right my brain of things that happened. That was one thing I thought about. We walked around. I don't know if we did that for hours or whatever. But we all talked about food, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

T: So there were no restrictions on talking in the cell that you remember.

H: No. No. There was nothing there. We could talk as much as we wanted. But the guards would go by. Walk back and forth. Our bars were about that thick of wood (*motions with fingers*).

T: Softball size diameter.

H: Yes. They were about that big. Everything was wood. But the floor was cement. But we never washed for that length of time. We never brushed our teeth. We never shaved. We never did anything. We were probably pretty strong by the time we got out of there.

T: I can imagine. When you talked about things, you said food was a topic.

H: Yes. That's all we talked about was food. And now when I think of it, and I see [the film] *The Great Escape*, how their minds tried to figure how to get out of here, there were so many smart people in those German camps that they could have had a college there and they could have learned. All that time was wasted for two, three years. Those guys could have, and then I'm thinking, here I've got a flight commander. He could have taught us how to fly. How to fly that damn airplane. Instead of thinking about dumb stuff. But of course, now it's too late. All that time was wasted. There were fellows in there that were educated, I'm sure. What did you do? What could we learn from you? Like you do. Have a teacher. Every day a different teacher. Teach what he knows.

T: That happened in some of the German camps. They had these kind of sharing of information.

(1, B, 525)

H: Yes. I think they did some of that.

T: In your situation, there was none of that.

H: No. No, we didn't. All we did was just sit there. Just sit there. Misery. But it wasn't like the guys that were in the prison camps for three years. Jesus! When we got to Omori, that's when we saw those guys. But otherwise our place was... *(trails off)*

T: Passing your time in there, what kind of things went through your mind? How did you sort of come to grips with where you were and what was happening?

H: I was kind of stunned, I think. I don't think I even thought, tried to escape out of here or try to do things like that. Whatever happens, happens, it seemed like. And I was that way in the service too. Whatever happens, happens. I never was one to go to the CO and, I want to do this and I want to do that, and I won't do this and I won't do that. I just let the chips fall where they may and that's the way I am. So I think when I was in there I was just kind of stunned. I was just, I didn't even know I was going to get out of here or anything.

T: Are you, by nature, would you say you're a fairly optimistic person who at that point figured things would work out, or were you more of a pessimistic person?

H: I'm pessimistic. That's what I am, pessimistic.

T: As you were sitting there, does that mean that you figured you're never going to get out of here or—

H: Now that I don't recall. I just don't recall that at all. I just, I was just there from day to day. Until something happened. Then we knew. That's when we got out of there.

T: But in the months you were sitting there, I hear you saying, you kind of focused on just the day today.

H: Yes. Just day to day. Nothing. It just seemed like every day, every day, every day. You say, now in three months we'll be out of here. Never gave that a thought.

T: So you didn't set up these kind of hopeful dates that didn't pass. You just kind of lived today, then the next day.

H: Yes. Until we knew what was going to happen. We didn't hear anything. They call it a grapevine. Where people coming in after us, they know about things. Then they'll pass the word on through the walls and we'll hear news that way. But I don't recall anything, that something's happened here or anything. That part I don't remember.

T: Did guys arrive there after you? New people to your cell?

H: Yes. But that was not in our block. They didn't bring in new guys in our cellblock. It was already full. It was another section that those guys went to.

T: You were with the same people, then, for those months.

H: Yes. Yes. Never mixed with the other guys. It was just that group. But I can't say who they were. I don't know if I can remember their names. I don't know if we said, when we get out of here, let's keep in touch. Never did that.

T: Did you become, what we might say, friends with any of the people that you were in the cell with?

H: No. No. If you're from Minnesota, well, you're from Minnesota. But any other state it didn't, we didn't keep in touch. Didn't keep in touch with anybody. Except Bob. And he and I didn't get along, for some reason. I don't know.

(1, B, 570)

T: You didn't know Bob Michelson before you were in the camp there?

H: No.

T: When you sat around during the day, was there somebody or more than one person you'd be likely to sit and talk with as opposed to someone else?

H: No. That, I don't recall. We just got up and sat down. I don't know if we sat in the same place. Over here, over there, over here. That I can't remember. That part I don't remember at all. I wish I could, but I don't. Any of that—camaraderie and...
(trails off)

T: So any of the other people in there, if you close your eyes you can't see any of their faces anymore?

H: No.

T: Or remember their names.

H: No. In fact, I don't even know what Bob looks like. I wouldn't know him from Adam if he walked up to the door. I wouldn't know him. I was with him for three months.

T: How well did you get to know Bob in the prison cell there?

H: Well, he must have been with us when we first moved in. Which would be three months. Three months and three days.

T: Yes. But you don't feel, I don't hear you saying you really feel like you got to know any of the other people in the cell very well.

H: No. No. I don't remember any. In fact, even in the service, all the time I was there, for three years, I don't remember any of the guys. But I had buddies who remember their buddies and know where they are. One guy is a B-17 flight engineer. He knows all of his crew. He knows where they live, their family, their kids. And they get together. All that kind of stuff, see?

T: That's interesting.

H: Yes. I didn't. We have reunions, but I don't go to them because I don't have a crew.

T: That's right. You're the only one who survived.

H: See, we were, I was trained with a crew, but I was pulled off my crew to fill a spot in another crew, which is what I was with.

T: So you hadn't trained with those guys?

H: No. No. The flight commander had been switched also. He was new to that crew. So he was new and I was new. So we were dead in the water before we even started.

T: You didn't know the guys at all. Your plane commander when you were shot down, what was his last name?

H: Fox. Lieutenant Fox. He was, I was called four or five years ago from a flight commander. He said, "Do you know that that crew you were on was mine? I had trained with that crew that you were on." That's when I found out, that's when I knew that Fox was not the original crew or original flight commander. But he told me, and he didn't realize it, but he told me when we were in formation, we were over the target, and he saw a plane blow up. He said, "I didn't realize it was your ship." So that's how I knew that it was blown up.

T: Otherwise when you left the plane, bailed out, that was it basically.

(1, B, 612)

H: That was it. Yes. I didn't know, I had no recollection, I had no feeling that I should have, when I'm coming down, should look and see where the airplane was. Because it would be flying with flames all over. I never thought to look at that. I was just in heat. It was so hot. I was so flushed. I was just so, so shocked. I just never had that [sense that] I should have looked to see where that airplane was. So then when this flight commander called and he said, "I didn't realize it was the ship that you were on that blew up." So I knew why the rest of them didn't get out.

T: Right. Even the radar operator didn't get out apparently.

H: No. Nobody got out. They all went down with the airplane. Blew up. Which is good. If they're going to go, they're going to go. See, we hadn't dropped our bombs yet.

T: So your plane was still laden with bombs.

H: Yes.

T: So if it went up, it blew completely.

H: That's why. We weren't at the target yet. So B-29s are known to burn, very easily. For some reason. There's something about them. You get hit, you burn. So that's what happened, and of course, with the bombs on board... So Charlie and I got out. But I got out before I got burned. But he probably got caught with his shoe or something. In that back [tail gunner area], there isn't much room there. So he finally got out. But then he landed. But then he didn't stay. So then I knew that the rest of the crew was gone.

T: In the cell there, how was your health holding up over the three months you were there?

H: Didn't seem to be any problem. I was just losing weight. I think I was 150 pounds, and in three months I think I was down to ninety pounds.

T: Boy, that's a ton of weight.

H: Yes. So you can lose weight. If you need to lose weight you can do that.

T: Eat a golf ball size ball of rice every day, right? (*chuckles*)

H: Yes (*chuckles*). It can be done. But as far as, so when we got on the hospital ship after we got out of Omori, I said, "There's nothing wrong with me." I wanted to get the hell out of here.

T: How much of a problem did you have with dysentery when you were there, or with diarrhea?

H: Yes. A lot of that. A lot of that.

T: I know that weakens you.

H: We weren't as strong. And lice. I can remember scratching. Scratching all the time. But you drink all that water, nothing else is going to come out.

T: What was the most difficult thing for you personally, of the three months you spent in that facility?

H: I suppose being stuck in there probably would be the hardest. But yet it was a piece of cake compared to [POWs in] Vietnam.

(1, B, 658)

T: As far as the length of time, sure.

H: Yes.

T: Does the relatively short period of time you were a POW make you feel fortunate, in a way, when you look at other peoples' experiences?

H: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. At the time we didn't realize that. This is suffering, number one. But really it wasn't. It wasn't that bad. The war was over for us. But we were just stuck in there and we couldn't get out. Couldn't eat like we wanted to. That sort of thing. That was, I think, that was the hardest part. We loved to eat.

T: And you weren't getting anything to eat.

H: No. We had very little. Until your stomach just shrinks down. So even a ball of rice is filling. Your stomach is so much shrunk. But the water. We had plenty of water. So we were thankful for that.

T: Did some guys, from your perception, did some guys handle those difficult situations better than others? As you looked around you.

H: That I can't remember. I think the flight commander bothered me the most. I thought that he would be a man of men, that he would be the strongest of us all. But he wasn't. But not thinking that he's probably younger than I am. He's a kid. But it was just the title. A title to me is something. If you have titles it means a lot, because you have to be somebody to have titles. If you don't have any titles, you're just ordinary.

T: So from your memory he didn't exert himself in a way that you felt would have been appropriate for the situation.

H: No. No. He never took charge that I can recall. He never acted like he was a flight commander.

T: In the absence of authority like that, were there other people who were stronger, who seemed to have more of a personality that says...

H: I don't remember that either. I don't remember any of that, who was stronger or any of that. That I felt was quality. I don't remember that at all. It just kind of...I didn't expect a flight commander to act like that.

T: And you were the only member of your crew in here. The other guys, were any of them, like several of them from the same crew?

H: Oh, yes. Now, I can't say for sure, but I'm sure. Now, they could have been spread out into other little cells. But they were all there.

T: But in your cell specifically, were there any, was there a group of guys from one crew?

H: That I don't remember. That I don't remember. Now Bob would remember, if any of his buddies were with him. Because the only guy he lost was the radar operator. He told me that on the phone. And I think his job was to throw that radar tape. I think he did. So the shrapnel must have gone through the plane and hit him while he was standing there.

T: It could have been...

H: So he was killed. Now, I could have been killed too. That shrapnel could have hit me too, but it didn't. It hit us up in the front. Because the engines were pounded.

(1, B, 713)

T: So you could hear that.

H: Oh, yes. You could just hear the pistons going. But I could have thought, hey, we better get out of here. But I was trained—the flight commander is supposed to tell me what to do.

T: But without your headset you couldn't hear.

H: I couldn't. I had no way of knowing. Other than by visual. Now if Lt. Wintz was sitting, if he was sitting down, that would have been a different ballgame. But he was standing, getting ready to move. I just took it for granted that's what he's doing. He must have been told.

T: And he could hear.

H: Yes. He could hear. So that was my feeling, that that's what it is.

T: You took your cue from him, in other words.

H: Yes. If he wouldn't have been there, if he would have been sitting, I never would have moved. And I would have blown up. We're not supposed to do anything... So with him standing there and jerking on his flight suit, then I knew that he must have been told that we have to bail out. Now, why he didn't follow me out, I don't know. Because he could have.

T: You'd think if he was getting his flak suit off and had his parachute ready...

H: Yes. I can't believe that, unless he got scared or something and froze or something like that. But I didn't have enough time. It just happened so fast. That I just—reflex. If I would have opened, if it was in the daytime and I would have looked out the door and had time to bail out...I don't know if I could have.

T: But it was either get out, you believed, or risk—

H: That's right. It was just like going out at night. Just going out the door. Because I saw nothing. But if I would have had enough time to look down and see ten thousand feet...I ain't going to jump. That's too spooky.

T: And that was your first and only parachute jump?

H: Right. So I would never pay, you know these companies where you can...I would never do that.

T: Once was enough?

H: Oh, God!! My grandkids have done it. It's on film, so I watch their video every once in a while. But ooooh!

T: So you're not tempted to do it again at all.

H: Oh, no! Never. Never, never, never, never, never. But yet they play, they get married. Floating around. You know how they do. Unbelievable.

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

T: The next thing I wanted to ask about is you when you were moved from this small cell, the Kempetai cell, to Camp Omori on the outskirts of Tokyo. Do you remember having much advance warning about being moved from the small cell to the larger camp?

H: The only thing I can remember is we woke up in the morning and lo and behold, rice balls. Almost as big as footballs. Not basketballs but footballs. Well, it would be like a softball. Maybe a little bigger than that. That started to come through the hole.

T: So this is definitely bigger than you've seen before.

H: Oh, yes. We thought, oh geez, what's this? Big, big ones. Big ones. Big ones.

T: Did that set your mind to thinking something must be up?

H: Yes. Yes. Something is happening. We got through eating that and we got our water and then all of a sudden a whole bunch of shoes. See, we were barefooted. A whole pile of shoes came flying in the hall there. In piles.

T: Japanese shoes or American shoes?

H: American shoes. So that's when we started to think oh, oh, we're going to be pulled out of here. Perfect. I don't know if we went out in the hall and took a pair of shoes, or they shoved the shoes through the hole. I can't remember. But we got the shoes. So we grabbed a pair of shoes whether they were big or small. They had mold on them because they'd been sitting someplace. And they were stiff as a board. So we got that. When we got our shoes on—they must have passed them through the hole because we were still in the cellblock, as I recall. Then as we came out they blindfolded us.

T: So they opened the door and you're all to come out.

H: We were coming out. I could tell we got out of the building and we got onto trucks.

T: Blindfolded. Were your hands tied?

H: I think so but I'm not...I think they were. Yes.

T: Blindfolds for sure you remember.

H: Yes. Blindfolds for sure. I remember that. So we got on these trucks and then we finally took off. I don't know how many trucks there were but there were a bunch of them. I can't remember how far away we went. But we went to Omori then. Because that was on the Tokyo Bay. That was right next to Tokyo Bay. So we rode the trucks. I don't know, maybe an hour. I can't remember. Then they ushered us out. Got us out on the sand and told us to sit.

T: Like on a beach there.

H: On a beach. Yes. Outside the camp. Now what are we going to do? Now what's going to happen? We thought, I thought, I don't know about the rest of the guys, but I thought this is where they're going to give us the business. In the sand here. So finally, finally they took the bandages off and then we could see. We kind of go like

this. You can't see too much but...they took the bandages off and we all got up. Then we saw the stockade. And the archway.

T: So nothing happened there at the beach.

H: Yes.

T: In your memory, they didn't threaten to kill you or you didn't see any guns or anything.

H: No guns. We just sat there in the sun. We didn't know what the hell was going to happen. We thought maybe this is where they were going to give it to us. Kill us. All in the sand.

(2, A, 40)

T: So from the beach there they ushered all of you into the camp at Omori there.

H: Yes. Yes. And from there I can't remember if they said, "So many guys go in this barracks, so many guys go in this barracks, so many guys go in this barracks." But the general, in there I think was in charge of everything. He was dictating, I think, where everybody goes. So that's what we did. Then there was a guard at the front door and there was a guard at the back door. Then there was a trough out there where you could brush your teeth and wash. I remember that. We did that.

T: Were these conditions at Omori, from your memory, better than what you had come from?

H: Oh, yes (*emphatically*). We were able to move around. I mean, not outside the building. You couldn't leave it. But it was probably from here to the street. Those buildings were that long.

T: Thirty, twenty, thirty yards long.

H: And of course, there were tiers of bunks. So you could move around.

T: So very different kind of quarters.

H: Yes. But in the other place you had this much room. Eighteen of us in a little room like that.

T: Eight by ten. That's amazing.

H: So that was nice. The food. God! You know, I can't remember the food. If they gave us any food. I should remember that, but I don't. Did Bob say anything about food?

T: Better, he remembers it being better.

H: Okay, then it was that.

T: This room that you were kept in, larger, but were these just B-29 guys or just guys from the prison where you had been?

H: No. I'm sure it was just our bunch.

T: So you were secluded again.

H: But there were other people there in the camp.

T: But not in this particular building.

H: Probably. We were just put in two buildings or maybe three buildings or whatever. When everything was over with, then the guards disappeared. After we spent a week or two or something like that.

T: So you weren't there at Omori very long.

H: No. But we couldn't leave the building. We had to stay inside that building. Until we realized the guards were gone.

T: Were there rumors now that you were here? I mean, you've moved to a different location. What kind of rumors were there about what was going on?

H: This I can't remember. Isn't that funny? I can't remember that, what's happened here, until it happens. I had no... *(trails off)* Maybe the other guys were able to find out from somebody, but I just was kind of like a zombie. I just kind of followed everybody else. Never inquired, hey, what's going on? Talk with the general. What's going on? That sort of thing.

(2, A, 71)

T: So you waited to be told as opposed to going to ask.

H: Yes. I never was assertive. I never went out and tried to find out what was going on. I didn't do that.

T: Were there any kind of work details here?

H: No.

T: You didn't leave this particular building that you remember.

H: No. No. You just stay inside this building and that was it until the guards were gone. But then when we were able to get out of the barracks and move around they still wouldn't let us go beyond the stockade.

T: So in the camp, but you couldn't leave.

H: You couldn't leave the camp, no. They didn't want us to leave that, because they knew that if we snuck out we could be killed. So whoever was in charge made sure, they probably organized MPs out of that bunch to make sure nobody got out of there until the planes started flying over and stuff started dropping into the sea. Supplies.

T: Trying to get to you.

H: Yes. Then we all went nuts—the guys that had been there so long. Because they were just, they would just run off onto the beach and dive into the water and run out there and get all that stuff. The food that was dropping all over the place. God! It was really something. Marmalade was flying through the air and going through windows.

T: So from no food to too much food.

H: Yes. Yes.

T: How did you find out about the end of the war? Was an announcement made by the Japanese or by an American?

H: I didn't even know that they had that thing in Tokyo Bay with MacArthur. We didn't know anything about that, the signing or anything. We didn't know about that until months later or years later or whatever. All we wanted to do is get out of there.

T: How did you find out that the...I mean, the guards are gone. Was there an announcement made that you remember?

H: No. No. The only time we knew the war was over was with Captain Stassen. He was a captain in the 3rd Fleet. He came in and got up on a podium and addressed everybody. That we're here. The war is over. That's when we knew the war was over. Now, I remember that. But I've never talked to Captain Stassen. He's dead now. I was always thinking I would have like to visit with him. He had an open house about a year ago.

T: He was a Minnesotan too, wasn't he?

H: Yes. He was our governor. I was thinking that I would have liked to tell him that I was part of that group that you were talking to.

(2, A, 100)

T: Do you remember him coming? Do you remember him being there and talking to you?

H: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. But at the time I didn't know Captain Stassen. I didn't know who that was. Really. Until somebody said he was our governor. I wasn't much for politics or anything.

T: Right. Well, from Omori there were you taken to a hospital ship?

H: Yes. See, there's where we had to get rid of all of our clothes. Be checked over thoroughly. If there's any diseases or anything like that. We were deloused and washed real good. Then we had the big dinner. All you could eat. And man, did we eat. Eat and throw up. Eat and throw up. It was terrible.

T: Just throw it up and then have more?

H: Yes. Yes. It was just unreal. But we were just so crazy for food. And it was good food too. And then we stayed on the hospital ship until we were checked out. They said, "What do you think? What do you feel? Do you want to stay and we'll take care of you, or are you okay? You can go on and head home."

T: It really sounds like it wasn't very scientific, in a way.

H: No. No. No.

T: They kind of check your health and kind of let you go.

H: Yes. So then we got on the destroyer or some kind of a small boat, and when I got on that boat—it had to be a pretty good size one—to come back. They put us down in the hold where the engine room is. It was hotter than a pistol down there, and I got yellow jaundice. So they hauled me out of this, the bottom of the boat and put me up into a stateroom. Had nice quarters. Shooting me in the butt. So I went all the way home that way. In that nice cabin with about six guys. Otherwise, I would have been in the hold down there. Hotter than a pistol down there. Misery. If I was going to get yellow jaundice, that was it because I was yellow as a Jap.

T: Did the Navy or the Air Force or the Army do any kind of debriefing, asking you about your POW experience? Anything like that?

H: I don't recall any of that.

T: So they checked you out physically, but there was no kind of psychological counseling, as we what we might call it.

H: We could have it if we wanted to, but I was...I felt I didn't need it. I didn't need it.

T: So they offered it to you, that you remember.

H: I'm sure they did.

T: But you don't remember accepting.

H: All I wanted to do is get out of there. Get home as fast as I could. Fly home. That would be fine. But that wasn't...

T: You were on the ship, you said.

H: Yes. So they took us off of there and then put us on board the ship, and that's when I got yellow jaundice. Then I was sick all the way home.

T: You got back to Seattle you said, before we began taping.

(2, A, 134)

H: Yes. But I can't think of the hospital. There's a hospital there. They have a name for it, but I can't think of the name of it.

T: That's okay. How long did you spend there before you were allowed to go home to Minneapolis on leave?

H: That I don't remember either. I suppose a week. My brother was, let's see... My brother, he was a gunnery officer, a first lieutenant. I think he was in some state close to where I was and he was heading home. So we connected with each other and he came and picked me up and drove me home. He and his wife. That's how I got home.

T: So a long car trip. But you got a car instead of a train.

H: Yes. Yes. I can't remember what state he was in. He must have been someplace close.

T: You've still got a several day drive back to Minnesota then.

H: Oh, yes. Whatever it took. Three days, something like that.

T: When you got back, did you see your wife right away?

H: Oh, yes. And the baby.

T: And she was living in Minneapolis.

H: Oh, yes. On Grand Avenue. Mary Beth was three months old.

T: Born when you were in prison camp, then.

H: Yes. Yes. And the couple that was living in the same building in Peyote, Texas, with us, these two guys were on a crew and their wives, and when we split up, of course, we went in all directions. So when I was in prison I thought, geez, those lucky guys. They're probably home now with their wives and the babies. But they were shot down. So those two guys were lost. But I didn't know that until I got home and found out that those two boys... But we lived in the same house. You know, they have these houses. They make them into one room for each serviceman and his wife. And the can is down the hall.

T: When you first saw your wife, Harry, how much did she ask you about your POW experience?

H: I don't remember. The only thing I discussed about my experiences was with the families of the flight commander. The families of the copilot. The families of the radar operator. The families of the engineer. They all came to my place where my wife and I were staying. Because they didn't know. I was the only one that knew what happened to those guys.

T: So they came to see you?

H: So they came to see me.

T: What was that like?

H: Well, there wasn't much I could tell them because I didn't know at the time that the plane blew up. I didn't know anything about it.

T: Did they want to know how the plane had gone down, or were they kind of still hoping that their men were still alive?

H: Oh, yes. They sent, the copilot's folks, they were attorneys. He was an attorney. So he had a lot of things that he could do. So he researched, they sent people over there.

T: To Japan?

H: Yes. To find out if they're still there or what it was. Because I couldn't, I really couldn't help them at all. Because I just... And I was so new to the crew. They weren't really part of me.

T: Right.

(2, A, 178)

H: So I had no, I had nothing with them. At all. The crew that I was trained with, they were over there and came back okay.

T: But the family members of this crew you were shot down with, had they come all together or were there different visits?

H: No. Different times. But they wanted to talk to me first. To see if I could give them, if I could tell them anything.

T: The story of what happened that night.

H: Yes. Yes. Which I did. But I had no, I couldn't tell them what happened to the crew. If I would have seen that airplane and if I would have seen... If I would have had any brains or thoughts to watch where the plane is going, which I never even thought of the plane. Although I did see planes going by, flying over me. I saw that. But that wasn't what I was in.

T: Your focus was probably on yourself, I imagine. Trying to get the parachute to open and everything else.

H: That's what scared me. I think that's what scared me the most.

T: The parachute.

H: Yes. I think that was the one that really shocked me was that. Knowing that I'm going down. And a lot of them have gone down and never opened up the chutes. A lot of pilots. We have a friend that his brother did the same thing.

T: It didn't open.

H: They found him in France. They found him on the ground. His chute was, it never opened. So if I would have seen the plane, I would have said hey, you don't have to go any further. The plane blew up. They're all gone. But I couldn't satisfy them. So they had to send people over there to research where, or if they could find them.

T: Those poor family members.

H: Yes.

T: How long after the war was it that you found out that the plane blew up?

H: Oh, this was just a couple of years ago.

T: So for a long time you didn't know.

H: No, I never knew. I never knew.

T: So the plane was just listed as lost.

H: Yes. It would have been. I didn't think there was any hope, but I thought maybe they might land someplace or something. But I didn't have any inkling of what happened to the ship until this flight commander told me about it.

T: Was it uncomfortable at all to have those people come to visit you and ask you about it?

H: Yes. I felt bad, that I couldn't help them. I felt bad. One of the things that hurt me was Charlie Snell's wife. I think they were divorced. But when you lose your life in the war you get ten thousand in insurance. So his wife called me and said that, "Did Charlie sign anything over to me, because he signed everything over to his folks." So his folks got the ten thousand. But his wife had two kids and they were divorced. And she wanted me to say that on his deathbed, "Tell my wife that the ten thousand belongs to you, and not the folks."

T: She called you and asked you about this?

H: She called me about it, and I said, I'm sorry but he never said boo. I could have said it. I could have said it, but I said, I'm sorry, Charlie never mentioned it. So I didn't know about it until she brought it up.

T: Was that pretty soon after you got back too, that she asked you?

H: Yes. I'm sure.

T: So a lot of things happened when you got back. People are bringing this up to you.

H: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In fact, they had a memorial service for Charlie Snell in Faribault, and I went to that.

T: Is that where he was from?

H: That's where he was from. He and his wife.

T: Was it hard having these crewmembers come to you, and having his ex-wife call? Was that hard for you to keep reliving that stuff?

H: It wasn't really that tough actually. I mean, I didn't suffer at all. I didn't get burned. I didn't get hurt. I wasn't in agony or anything. If I would have gone

through all of that I would have, I would have not wanted to talk about it. But go through all of that without a scratch.

T: You weren't wounded at all, were you?

H: No. No. I supposed all that flak was just flying around me.

T: It's more than once you've given the indication you feel yourself to be fortunate, and that it could have been a heck of a lot worse.

H: Oh, yes. That's right. Yes. I could have gone down [with the plane]. Why I was pulled from my crew to go into this crew and go through what I went through... So the night before I was told that I was going to be transferred to another crew, we went out to dinner and my wings that I wear, I let my wife wear them and that's supposed to be a no-no. According to legend. We come home and the damn mirror falls off the wall. There was another one. And I thought, at the time... Sure as hell, the next day I get orders I'm being pulled off of my crew and I gotta fill this [crew] because they're shipping out.

T: You've left behind the people you've trained with. People you know.

H: So I had to leave them, go in with this crew. Then I didn't know anybody. What else was wrong? The night we took off somebody drove up in a Jeep and took pictures of our crew. That's a no-no, they say. So I'm taxiing out and I'm looking out the blister gunner and I have that feeling. They took our pictures. Oh, God!

T: Did you have a, can we say, a premonition that this mission wasn't quite right?

H: I just had that feeling. I didn't think anything was going to happen, but still they say these things. Don't let anybody else wear your wings. The mirror falls on the floor. Or they take pictures before you take off. Or you have a rider going along with you. These are all things that will give you problems. So I'm just sitting. I'm not saying anything to anybody. But I'm just kind of thinking, as we're taxiing out. Just thinking about that. And that was the, that was the night that it happened. So those things are real. They ain't something that's goofy. It's real. Because those things happened to me. And I think Bob said the same thing. I think somebody came and took pictures of their crew, his crew. I think he said, the night he took off. But at the time we could have said no, you ain't taking our pictures. We just do what we do.

(2, A, 284)

T: Let me get back to, ask about how much your wife asked you about your POW experience at first. Was she curious to know what you had been through?

H: I don't recall that. I don't recall that at all. She was just happy that I'm home. It ended up in the newspaper.

T: Your story was in the newspaper?

H: Yes. It ended up in the newspaper that I was liberated. She didn't know it. But somebody spotted the picture in the newspaper in the drugstore, and somebody from the drugstore, which is a block away, they called. Because it's kind of a community out there, on the end of Grand Avenue. You know, you have your local store and you have... So you kind of know each other. So somebody called her and said, I bet you're really happy with what's happened. That your husband has got a picture in the paper. She didn't know what they were talking about. She didn't know.

T: So she didn't know if you were alive or dead?

H: No. No. She got that missing in action telegram. And then of course, that was before the baby was born.

T: Because the whole time you were in camp she didn't know one thing or the other.

H: I was coming home.

T: Over the years as you've been married, how much has your POW experience been talked about?

H: I don't think we've ever talked about it. Only when the kids had a book report or something that they had to write...somebody interesting. About their grandpa or a title or something. Then they thought of what I went through.

T: So the grandkids could ask you.

H: Both those kids came over and wrote stuff down. I'm just kind of reminiscing about stuff. Whatever could come to my mind. This way works better because you kind of...

T: It's process oriented.

H: Yes. Yes. But see, they didn't know how to ask what did you do, [questions like] how did you feel, what did you eat? I had to kind of bring it up myself. They aren't very good at that.

T: As your kids, now your daughter was born in 1945. And you have two other children. How much did they ask you as they were growing up?

H: Never mentioned anything about it.

T: Did they know you had been a POW?

H: Oh, yes. Yes. But never, “What did you do, Dad?” That sort of thing. I don’t recall them ever being interested in what my war experiences were.

T: So they knew about it, but it was not just something that you talked about with them.

H: Yes. Until the grandkids. You know how grandkids are.

T: The grandkids could ask you.

(2, A, 330)

H: Oh, God! Yes. They love their grandparents, but your kids are something else. They love you, but they love you in a different way.

T: So they could ask you, and was it easy, or easier, for you to answer their questions when they wanted to talk a little bit?

H: Well, they’d ask me a few questions, I think. I just kind of rambled on. And then they kind of fill in the blanks. Kind of make believe. That stuff.

T: So that was easier for you. Talking to the grandkids.

H: Yes. Yes. It’s easy here. They were like you. This is...seems to trigger thoughts.

T: I hope so. You had a number of different jobs after the war. Retail clothing business. You were in real estate. How much did your coworkers know about your POW experience?

H: I don’t really know if they did or not. If I ever brought it up. I wouldn’t remember that at all.

T: So if it came up, it sounds like, then not much at all.

H: No. I wouldn’t be saying, I was a POW. Now I’ve got it on my license plate.

T: What prompted you to do that?

H: Well, it’s free.

T: So you get your license plates for free.

H: It only costs me four dollars. So I’m sure Mike has got the same thing on his license plate: Ex-POW. That’s the only thing that tells anybody who I am or what I was. But there was at the library—we have a library right over here—and one time

I came out and there was a note on my windshield and it said, "I sure appreciate what you did in the service." (*chuckles*)

T: How did that make you feel?

H: I still have the note. It was really nice of them, whoever it was. He just wrote a note out. Thank you for doing what you did. And just stuck it there. Not a ticket.

T: They didn't sign any name.

H: No. No. I don't know who did it, but it was a nice gesture. So I showed it to her. I think I've got it back there in a book or something.

T: Your Veterans Administration, have they offered any kind of counseling services that you've used over the years?

H: I think at first. But at that, I can't remember why or what it was. But they did offer it and I think I went through some counseling but that was... But I don't recall what that was all about. I don't remember any of that at all.

T: Do you use anything at the Minneapolis VA these days? Counseling services?

H: No. But I can.

T: So they've offered and you can—

H: Oh, yes. You can have anything you want. Anything you want.

End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B begins at counter 385.

H: I don't drive anymore like a normal person, because I don't want my heart to stop and then I'm in the automobile killing somebody. My wife, myself, and everybody else around me. So they have a program out there, driver's evaluation. My caregiver, my doctor, Dr. Murdock, said, "Why don't you go to this counseling and just go through there and see how you do?" I guess I passed. I guess I was okay. But still I don't want to—only to the store, to the library. Just little short trips. That's fine. But not on Highway 100 or 35W or any place else. She does the driving. Or my daughter. My daughter takes me to the VA. It may never happen again, but I don't want to take that chance. It's not worth it. It's not worth it. It's a blessing that I have her [daughter] next door. So that she can do that. Otherwise, if I would have had to meet you someplace...

T: That's why I always offer to come.

H: Thank you. Thank you. Bless you. Because I would have had to have her to help me get to wherever you are.

T: It's much easier this way.

H: Yes.

T: Let me ask you this, on the post-war period again. What kind of dreams, or even nightmares, did you have after the war that were about your POW experience?

H: I don't recall any of that. I don't recall any nightmares, sweating or...you know, waking up screaming or anything like that.

T: No memories of jumping out of the plane or of being picked up by the Japanese or...

H: No. No. I don't have any of that after.

T: Did you have it in 1945 or 1946 and have it go away, or nothing you consciously remember?

H: I don't recall ever having...wake up...doing what I did before. Isn't that funny? I just don't recall that at all. I don't think I ever did.

T: Would something like this interview be likely to trigger a dream or something tonight for you?

H: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. But it could. It could.

T: It hasn't been part of your past though.

H: Yes. And you were talking more about what I went through than I've ever done in many, many, many, many, many years. So I could be laying there thinking about it. What you and I were talking about, you know. That could be. But otherwise it...it wasn't something where I suffered physically. Hurt. Stuff like that. I can remember things that I've seen and I can't get out of my memory. But that's the way I am. I'm very touchy that way, if I see stuff. So whenever there's an accident in the road, everybody stops and wants to look at it and see what's going on and they shouldn't be doing that. I don't. I just keep right on going. The police are there. Everything is covered. If I see a car rolled over and I'm all alone, nobody else around, I'm not going to keep going. I'll help out. But never stop to see. Because I'll always keep that in mind. I don't like to do that. I don't even watch them on Channel 2 when these have these operations. I don't watch that stuff.

(2, B, 420)

T: Are there images from the Kempeitai cell that, you were in for three months, things that you saw that stayed in your mind?

H: No. No. It was just a normal cellblock. Little window up on top. Up there. You can't see it. You'd have to get up on somebody's shoulders to look out. But I could see B-29s flying by. Going home or coming or whatever. Off in the distance. They never dropped bombs around us because they...

T: So you don't remember any bombing raids when you were in there.

H: No. The sirens would go off, but they would never let us out. But they never...they knew where we were at. So they would never drop bombs on us. But we didn't think of that. We didn't know that at that time. We just figured oh, God, here comes the sirens. Here comes the bombs and here we're stuck in here. We can't get out of here.

T: They didn't let you out of the cell for that.

H: No. No. See, I didn't remember that until you, I never thought about that. Never thought about that. But that's what was going through our mind. Hey! Let us out of here! We were yelling at the guards.

T: You don't remember bombs falling anywhere close to where you were or...

H: That I don't recall. But I heard the sirens. And they would come at night. And they would come in the daytime. And they were really going at it. Well, maybe I did hear some shooting. Some ack-ack guns. But I can't remember. Probably did. But it's kind of scary when you're stuck in there and they won't let you out and the bombs are dropping. Where would we go anyway? There was no place. There was no place to hide. The bombs would just drop on us and that would be it.

T: From the time you left the airplane to the time you got picked up by the Americans in September there and taken to the hospital ship, what was the thing that brought the most fear to you, from jumping out of the airplane, to being captured, to being...which one of those places along the way made you feel the most vulnerable, the most worried about yourself?

H: I don't know. I just don't recall. Just knowing that the war is over, knowing that I'm heading home. That sort of thing.

T: So you felt a sense of relief at that point.

H: Oh, yes. I'm sure.

T: Of the things you've talked about, which made you feel most scared or most worried about yourself? I think of when you hit the ground and some of those Japanese civilians coming at you.

H: Yes, that was scary. That was scary. Or when we were out of the cellblock out in that courtyard. Or in the sand. About three of those things. When we were shot down, of course everything happened so fast I didn't even have time to think about, I gotta bail out or I gotta do this or that. It just came. It just, just routine.

T: So you didn't really stop to think what was happening. You just did it.

H: Nope. I just had to get out of here. And I figured somebody's got to start. I could have gone back in if I had known that the boys were stuck. You know, the other two of us, the other two gunners. If they were, if they needed help or if the radar operator needed help. I never thought about that. All I saw was that radar operator and he was getting ready to jump. So I might as well start out. I might as well go. So that's what I did. I didn't think about helping him. Or going back and seeing if they needed any help.

(2, B, 460)

T: You had a central fire control and a left blister gunner in the same compartment as you.

H: Yes. Yes. There was three of us guys. Now my left blister gunner, he was equipped with everything he needs. The guy up on top, he just goes over the target in his T-shirt. He don't wear anything. No helmet. He doesn't wear any shield or anything. He just...flying over there just like he's going to Bermuda.

T: So for him to get out, he would have needed to put on his parachute.

H: Oh, hell yes. He had no chute on. He had nothing. He never did. He never wore anything. We were to the gills. We had all of our stuff on. To be ready. But then of course, when you get out of your position and you have to do something else, then you leave everything behind. But I still had my chute. I still had my flak suit. I still had my helmet. But I didn't have my gun. So I'm thankful I didn't have my gun because I might have...I don't know.

T: Do you ever think about that? If you'd had that .45 [caliber pistol]with you?

H: I always said that if they ever, if we get shot down I'm not going to...I won't be around. And that's always the first thing that a guy thinks about. Because he doesn't want to go through that torture. So if you're going to die, you might as well die quick.

T: So you had thought a little bit about what might happen on the ground there in Japan.

H: I suppose. I was concerned about the fire. There was fire here and fire there and fire here. You know, little fires. Incendiary bombs, they're clusters. And they will

blow, but they will throw out little fires and the little fires will pick up all these little shacks that they live in. That's how they do that. And it spread over a long ways. So there was little fires here and there. So they teach us if you're going to go backwards, you want to grab your chute and pull on it and turn it around so you're coming in this way. If you see any buildings or anything and you want to bypass them, you've got to pull or pull or turn, turn around if you're going in backwards. I tried all the movements that we were supposed to do. It didn't seem like nothing worked. I didn't turn around. I didn't go this way. I didn't go this way. I didn't go forward. I didn't go backwards. I thought, well, this isn't working. I'm just going to have to go in wherever I go in. I was just fortunate that I didn't hit the fires. I didn't hit those fires, or jagged buildings. There were just corners of buildings. You smack (*smacking sound*) into those things and boy, you really hurt yourself. But for some reason I landed where everything was flat. I slid right in.

T: Again, it sounds like you feel yourself to be fortunate there. It could have been worse.

H: Somebody was watching over me.

T: Let me ask about religion. Were you a religious person at that time?

H: Oh, I don't think so. I mean, I was...you know, I wasn't a bad person. I went to church. I was raised with a Catholic family after my mother died. So she made us go to church. But I wasn't, you know, what you'd say religious where I don't hear anything but religion stuff on the air, and I don't do anything, and I don't swear, and I don't...you know. I do everything like everybody else.

T: Did you feel at that time that your faith gave you, in a sense, strength to get through what you were going through on a daily basis?

H: It could have been. Although I don't recall praying or saying, God help me, that sort of thing. I don't remember. Although I might have. But everything was going so fast and you stick your head out of the door in your car at thirty-five miles an hour and you can't breathe hardly. The air is going by you so fast. And that's the way you come down. When you're coming down you're going at thirty-five miles an hour. So you jump out of a car at thirty-five miles an hour, you'll see how it works. So coming down like that...but it was quiet. But I didn't say, Thank the Lord. I do everything now. Thank the Lord.

(2, B, 508)

T: Did you in prison? In prison, in that cell? Did you find yourself thinking that someone was helping you or someone was looking out for you?

H: I don't recall that. I know I had plenty of help. Back home. But I wasn't thinking along those lines. I was just, it just happened what happened. But I know guys who

come down in their chutes and they break their legs and they break their arms and, geez, they go through all kinds of terrible stuff. One guy that was in the prison broke his jaw. I don't know if somebody had struck him, or if he hit the ground wrong or hit a wall or something. But he broke his jaw. He couldn't get it open. Just a little bit.

You know rice comes in a little...it was brown rice. It was reprocessed. I mean, it was regular brown rice. Where the shaft is not taken off. And the only way he could eat it is take a kernel and press it through his lips. And that's the only way he could eat. That was the only way he could feed himself.

T: So one more chance for you to feel fortunate.

H: Well, yes. Heavens yes. Here I'm there with not a scratch. Didn't even get the Purple Heart (*chuckles*). And I've had a lot of close calls. A lot of close calls. All my life. But I seem to miss it.

T: And you seemed to in 1945 as well.

H: Yes. Even on the farm I've been in accidents. But never been hurt. On the farm you get a lot of accidents. You sure do. You get a lot.

T: Did you grow up on a farm?

H: No. My uncle, who is in South Dakota, he had a farm. Every summer after school my dad would ship me to his brother, and I would spend the summer on his farm in South Dakota. From eight years old I worked on the farm. From eight years old, and I'm thinking all these kids around here that don't have anything to do, if they would have had the chance of working on the farm and, you know, working all summer long and making a little money and eating good, sleeping good. Without dinging around doing nothing. They should all have that experience. When you grew up, did you have that?

T: No—suburbs. For you, those summers on the farm, good memories?

H: No. I think I should have enjoyed it more. But I hated milking and I hated shucking and I hated haying. That's all hard work. But when I think back, those were good days. Good days.

T: Now when you look back at it now.

H: Yes. In fact, I would like to have a farm but not work the land. Let somebody else do that. But have the setting. The barn, the old house, that kind of a setting.

T: It sounds like it was okay being there in the summer.

H: Oh, yes. No, it didn't hurt me at all. And I've been working ever since. Working ever since. So they say, "When you retire what are you going to do?" You can only play so much golf or you can read just so much or whatever. But I have chores all the time. Taking care of this building, taking care of my kids' houses.

T: So you keep yourself busy.

(2, B, 551)

H: Oh, yes. Yes. I don't regret retiring.

T: You've been retired for twenty years now almost.

H: Yes. But see, you love what you're doing.

T: I do.

H: And you do so well at it that it would be a shame to give that up and then do nothing because you've got so much. I didn't have anything to contribute. But for you, it's different. I mean, you can teach until you drop dead. Until you're one hundred years old.

T: The last thing I want to ask you is this: when you think about that POW experience for you, those months from May to August 1945, how do you think, looking at it from today's perspective, how do you think that experience changed you as a person?

H: I don't think I've changed at all. I wasn't there long enough, I don't think.

T: It was an intense experience. Sometimes intense experiences have a short duration. An automobile accident can change someone's outlook on life, you know?

H: Yes. Yes. I suppose, but I don't think I'm any different that I would have if I would have just gone through the service. I think I grew up a lot more, I suppose. Be more responsible about things. But I'm not sure if I changed my personality. Some people say that when they come out of the service they changed so much. Before they were married, they were one person. They go through the war and they come back and they're a different person. I read in books.

T: Is that true about you, do you think?

H: No, I don't think so. I don't think I was any different before. Although, we weren't married long before I left.

T: You were married in June of 1944, right?

H: Yes. Yes. So I was, we weren't married that long to really know each other. In fact, New Year's Eve of '43 was when we met.

T: So you didn't even know each other that long, really.

H: No. No. So we didn't really know how each one was. So when we came back...I might have been a little different maybe. She would know if I had changed at all. She never said well, geez, since you got back you're sure different than when I married you.

T: Because you didn't hear that from her.

H: No.

T: And you don't feel yourself to have been markedly changed by that experience as a POW.

H: No. No. It wasn't traumatic enough, I guess, to really set in. It wasn't that bad. It could have been terribly worse. Like some of these people have gone through.

T: Have you thought that over the years, that really, it could have been so much worse?

H: Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure. That's crossed my mind. When I see experiences from the other people, what they've gone through. And I go, boy, I'm glad I didn't go through that. I never would have made the Bataan Death March. I wouldn't be that strong. But yet people did. People went through it, and there's some over in St. Paul. I don't know if you've talked with those people or not.

(2, B, 592)

T: A bunch of them, yes.

H: God! That must have been an awful, that must have been an awful experience. And they'll never forget that. Boy! I mean, they will wake up screaming and yelling and screaming and sweating. Because that was brutal.

T: But yours is not?

H: No. No. Mine was a piece of cake.

T: So yours is not something that you wake up from and think—

H: No, it wasn't. It wasn't anything. I don't know what Bob feels about it, if he suffers from it or not, or if he thought it was bad or not, but I...

T: You never drank to forget, that you remember.

H: No.

T: I'm thinking this is something you were having trouble dealing with or putting behind you or anything else.

H: No. Never had that. I never had that experience of doing something to forget something.

T: So when you were discharged and got back to Minneapolis to your wife, your daughter, do you feel you just kind of moved on with your life?

H: I suppose. I suppose. There are times where I thought being in the service is just like a job. Now when you don't have education, you never went to college, and you're just going to have to start out raw, that was tough. That was hard. To find, what am I going to do to make a living to take care of my family.

T: Was it hard to find a job when you got discharged from the service?

H: That's possible. But I don't remember. I don't remember.

T: You stayed in Minneapolis to live.

H: I didn't go anyplace. I didn't go to college, which so many did, learned a trade or whatever. I should have learned a trade, but I didn't. Because I'm good with wood and painting and building and stuff like that. But I didn't realize it at the time, that I could do stuff. Because everything was rented. You rent everything. Before the war. So you don't experience that. All the stuff I did on the farm.

T: So you learned stuff on the farm.

H: Right. I did stuff like that on the farm. I learned to drive on the farm. And my work habits are created from the farm. I was, my mother died when I was six years old, and then I lived at home with my brothers and sisters for a couple years. But then dad said, "I can't cope this way; I've got to put you someplace." So this Catholic family in the next block took us in.

T: You didn't grow up with your dad after a number of years then either?

H: No. No. I never knew my dad much. Never knew my mother much either. I got her on the wall.

T: You were only six when she died.

H: My dad's on the wall, too. But I don't remember them. I was just too small. Although I do, one thing I remember is when my mother died. In the old days the casket was in the living room. With all the flowers. And every time I smell flowers, then I think of my mother. Isn't that funny? Smell. Smells will...

(2, B, 633)

T: Memory works that way too.

H: Yes.

T: So that prompts that thinking of your...

H: Yes. Yes. I don't remember smells. Although I do, too. I do too. In the early morning when you're behind the mess hall you get that smell, that fried food. I get a whiff of that every once in a while by a restaurant. I smell that.

T: And you think of it.

H: Smells. Smells will bring you back.

T: That is one way, it sounds like, your memory works.

H: Yes. That's the way my memory works. And sights. And sound. And smell. So I suppose I'm normal.

T: Yes.

H: Yes. I suppose.

T: At the end here, is there anything that I didn't ask that you think you want to add? I always make people have a chance to include...

H: I wish I could think of things that...it's like I say, it just doesn't come about. I just doesn't come. All the time I was in the service, stuff like that. I should be able to remember. I was lonesome. Geez, I was lonesome in the service.

T: Really?

H: Oh! I was lonesome for her.

T: For your wife.

H: But she was a girlfriend then. I can't do anything alone. I have to have somebody with me all the time. Now like with him [reference to his neighbor], he can go anyplace he wants by himself and enjoy it. I can't do that. I can't go to a concert by

myself. I can't go to anything in the village. I don't do things alone. I can't do things alone. So when she goes, boy, I don't know what's going to happen. With my daughter next door, it's family. But I don't think I could come and live here without her. I mean I'm just that way.

T: So you like having people around you.

H: Yes. I could never live here and come home and not have her here. But it happens. She can live here without me. Because she's always lived here and she's always done everything here. A man is gone all the time. He just comes home at night. So usually if a woman dies, if a wife dies, the husband's not far behind. But if the husband dies, what a relief! (*chuckles*) Because they're alone so much anyway. So it doesn't make any difference. But I don't know what would happen if your family was gone. If you could come home and live in your same house that she was there.

T: It would be hard, that's for sure.

H: I couldn't do it. Every once in a while I make believe that she's not here. And I'm sitting here all by myself thinking oh! This ain't going to work.

T: Harry, anything else you want to add before we conclude?

H: I wish I did. Good to be alive, I guess. Good thing I got through it. I don't know how much time you have left. Everybody had to go through it.

T: Thank you again for your time today, for this interview.

END OF INTERVIEW

