

Fort Hunt Oral History
P.O. Box 1142
Interview with Anton Leonhard by Brandon Bies
Hanover, Pennsylvania
April 2, 2010

BRANDON BIES: April 2, 2010. This is an interview by the National Park Service as part of the Fort Hunt oral history project. This is National Park Service historian Brandon Bies. I'm also joined by Chief Ranger Vincent Santucci and Ranger David Lassman; also joined by Mr. Joseph Marsden [spelled phonetically], a resident of Mr. Anton Leonhard, who is a German veteran of World War II who had the distinction of being a guest at Fort Hunt [00:36] for some time at the end of World War II. So with that, what we'd like to get started with, Mr. Leonhard, would be just a little bit about your own background, like when and where you were born in Germany.

ANTON LEONHARD: Okay, I was born in Osunuch [00:56] [spelled phonetically], Germany, June 16th [01:00], 1925.

BB: Okay.

AL: And I grew up there, and I was unwell. And my father didn't pay my mother -- or pay for her. I was forced into foster home, and then I got to my grandmother, and they said my grandmother should raise me. And then when I was 6 years old, my father met another woman. And then 12 and 8 years, I left home. I had to go to a relative's as a running boy. I had been to school new, and then I was two years there. The first year, I had a pair of shoe, a pair of pants and a shirt, and the second year I had 100 mark, and favorite [unintelligible] it out, and I took it home and my parents said, "We need it right now [02:00]." And when we [unintelligible] it goes in the bank. It never got in the bank. Because where I come from, we were 16 children: 10 boys and six girls, and that was the story.

BB: And so in what part of Germany was that in?

AL: It's called Schwaben [02:28].

BB: Okay.

AL: This is -- now it's Bayern [02:31]. We are probably 80 kilometers from Munich [02:35].

BB: Oh, okay.

AL: North, northwest, like that.

BB: Okay. And when you were growing up, this was obviously the time that Hitler [02:46] was starting to come to power. What do you remember about that?

AL: Oh, we marched. We had our uniform and had the little [unintelligible]. I had the pictures somewhere [03:00], I think, but I cannot find them, you know? So --

BB: Okay.

AL: I mean, we were -- what do you know when you are a young boy, you know, but everybody was [unintelligible]. And Hitler [03:13] was -- it was a good beginning. In the little village where I came from, there were about 64 houses and they had the whole little farm, and [unintelligible] got nowhere in lifetime, only to that church and that church and that church. But Hitler took [unintelligible] for free in the mountain and stuff like that. And that's why the people went for Hitler [03:43], you know? They were not forced to work. I worked for -- later on for a big farmer. He had 300 acres. And that lady was a widow since the second world -- First World War [04:00], and she run the farm, and they were all for Hitler [04:04]. They were all for Hitler. I mean, so --

BB: So was this something -- like when you went to school, was this -- the idealism of Hitler, was that brought up, was that ingrained in everything you did?

AL: Oh, yeah. As I was a little boy, was a little propaganda here Hitler likes children and so

and so. You know, like that. It was that area. But we didn't know that time it was propaganda, you know [laughs]? So --

BB: When you were first going to school, did you have any Jewish friends or were there any Jewish families who lived around? There were --

AL: No, no, no. I have a book from Germany about the history of Augsburg [04:57]. In 1914 [05:00] -- 1940 -- '14, he threwed all the Jews out of Augsburg, and there was a baby and you travelled with your horse and a little wagon to get the rebels down there, and [unintelligible] Jews. They came, they couldn't go into dorf into the village. Outside they had parked there. And so that's why they --

BB: Okay.

AL: That's why they are here, some there. There were Jews, you know.

BB: When you -- when you got older, did you eventually -- did you join the Hitler Youth [05:44]?

AL: No, not exactly. In the little village, it wasn't that strong. It wasn't that strong.

BB: Okay. Was that the sort of thing that you would -- you'd have a choice to join, or were people forced to join?

AL: No, not forced [06:00]. You know, I cannot say it was forced, you know, because everybody wanted to march and things like that.

BB: And so when -- you would have been -- would you have been in high school when the war started?

AL: No, no high school, only grammar school.

BB: Oh, okay.

AL: It is different. In Germany at that time, we had seven years' school, and after that you

have three years' school one day a week.

BB: Oh, okay.

AL: They're called [speaks German]. I don't know, but it didn't do much. And I was not the brightest, you know [laughs]. So --

BB: So what then -- did you -- when you finished with school, what did you do?

AL: I worked for farmers.

BB: Okay.

AL: I worked for farmer. I was -- he has around 45 cows and calves, I think. And there was a big fellow and I [07:00] -- we had to the job. So we got up 4:30 in the morning, had to milk the cows by hand. And the nicest was, what I think now, because I was a boy, and lunchtime we were finished and we were finished till 4:30 I think and I had to go in the field to work. I'm afraid so [spelled phonetically].

BB: And so you were working as a farmhand when the war started? Or --

AL: As a farmhand? I -- there was a war.

BB: Right. The war was already going on at this point.

AL: I got to the farm in '39, in '39.

BB: Okay.

AL: And I was three years with -- I was a farmer. I was [unintelligible] with animal, with the cows and things, and then I went over to horses since that was easier. So --

BB: Did you notice any difficulties -- again [08:00], when you were a teenager -- because of the war, any rationing of food, or was life just like it always had been when the war was going on?

AL: I didn't get the question right.

BB: When you were a teenager, you were working at the -- in the farm. Was life for you just like it had been before the war started?

AL: Just like normal.

BB: So it wasn't -- it wasn't even more difficult? There wasn't rationing of food?

AL: No, no, no, there was plenty of food. The farmers, they had plenty of food. So there was no --

BB: Did that ever change for you as the war went on or --

AL: No, only when I came home as a war prisoner [08:42], we had marks, we had -- we had stamps. You know, but we had plenty of food. I was -- never in my lifetime I could say I didn't have enough food. But the people in the city, what they had clothes or what they have [unintelligible] farm for food [unintelligible] potatoes [09:00] and a little butter or flowers or something like that.

BB: Okay. And as the war went on, were people you knew or friends of yours, did they join the German military?

AL: No, you got drafted: 18 years, you got drafted.

BB: Okay, okay.

AL: You had to go automatically to the service. So --

BB: Right.

AL: So I wound up here for the Air Force [09:29].

BB: Okay.

AL: So that's why I have an Air Force picture, and then, first you had maybe three months' infantry building and then the other times they -- and so I had -- what I want to say is they had -- so it was pretty good, you know? I don't know. Then later on we got to infantry,

see [10:00]?

BB: Okay.

AL: I got to Munich [10:02] first for transfer, parachute -- pack and parachute and [unintelligible] and then I went to other place. And then Himmler [10:15] said, "If the Air Force [10:18] have people there unneeded, you can send them to Gusen Mauthausen [10:24] [spelled phonetically], and we got the Gusen Mauthausen, and we had the outside commanders. We had to build factories and sent -- they made factories maybe 20 feet underneath ground. And the scent was so heavy it started out with an air hammer. And behind there -- we formed a -- [unintelligible], and there were 1,000 prisoners -- not a prisoner, we called it heflinge [spelled phonetically] [speaks German] [11:00]. Wir waren schutzhof. [speaks German]. I don't know what is in English. And we had to pick 1,000 prisoners up with the train and bring them there to work, and then we had an outside commander.

BB: Okay.

AL: And we had over eight hours, and then they got back on the train.

BB: Just on a point of clarification, all boys are drafted at 18.

AL: Eighteen. Yeah, when they're 18, yes.

BB: But you said you volunteered for the Air Force [11:34], yes.

AL: For the Air Force, yes.

BB: So before you're drafted, can you sign up for the Air --

AL: Yes, yes, yes.

BB: Okay. And so did you actually begin to have training in the Air Force?

AL: If I wouldn't have signed up for Air Force, I would have gotten -- I would have got

drafted for the infantry.

BB: For the infantry, okay. So is that why you volunteered for the Air Force [11:53]? You did not want to be in the infantry?

AL: Yes, yes [laughs].

BB: Did you want to fly planes, or just --

AL: No, that wasn't it [12:00]. But I don't know.

BB: And did anybody else volunteer with you? A friend going to the Air Force?

AL: Oh, yeah, a friend, but he got -- I don't know what he was. He got shot down.

BB: Oh, okay.

BB: Okay. So did you do any Air Force [12:19] training?

AL: Yeah, only the parachute.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Hello.

BB: Hi.

FS: Hi.

BB: That's okay, that's okay. Did you have any training in the Air Force?

AL: Only for the parachute and the things.

BB: Okay, so you had some training.

AL: Yeah, yeah.

BB: For how long?

AL: Maybe six months, something like that.

BB: And when you volunteered, were you 18 or were you younger than 18?

AL: Over 18.

BB: You were over 18. So you had just turned 18 then?

AL: First, you had to go -- with 18, you had to go [13:00] first to the [unintelligible]. You had to go three months [unintelligible].

BB: Okay.

AL: Then afterwards, you got transferred. Afterwards you got --

BB: And so what did you do for those first three months?

AL: In the Air Force [13:19]?

BB: Yes.

AL: In [unintelligible]. Exercise with a spade and hoe and [unintelligible]. Then we head -- then it was three months old, we gave the spade to the Hitler Jugend [13:44], and then we got drafted to the Army [13:48].

BB: Okay, okay. So you didn't have any guns or anything at that point? You -- they didn't give you rifles at that --

AL: No, no, no.

BB: Okay.

AL: [inaudible] [14:00]

[lawn mowing]

BB: Let's just pause it.

[audio break]

Okay. So we'll pick back up where we left off. And so we were starting to ask a few questions about, again, your training when you were -- when you went into the Luftwaffe [14:21]. So you had three months or so of this --

AL: About six.

BB: -- yeah, of kind of physical --

AL: Then we had -- we were in two [unintelligible] and this is near [unintelligible]. We had to -- there's a mountain -- a mountain [unintelligible] there's a hose and then we have to fill the thing in there in with -- make a straight [unintelligible] and stuff like that. That's what we have to do. And then a little -- I don't know, we have training -- only with a spade; we didn't have no gun [15:00] at all.

BB: Okay, okay. And so, then after that is when you were inducted into the Air Force [15:05], into Luftwaffe [15:06]?

AL: Then I got home, and then after a week I got a letter where I have to go.

BB: Okay. And do you remember where you went for your Luftwaffe training?

AL: I think it called -- what's it called -- Jesus golly -- I don't know what town anymore we ever went --

BB: Was it in --

AL: -- but from there, we went to France [15:32].

BB: Okay.

AL: -- from France no, to Belgium [15:35] -- you know, then to France.

BB: From Belgium to France.

AL: Then I was in Marseille [15:38], and then I got called back for training for Air Force [15:43].

BB: Okay. What sort of training did you receive for the Air Force? Did you --

AL: The same, the guns and -- like the infantry, you know?

BB: Okay.

AL: We have six months' infantry outfitting, you know? And then when I [16:00] got to the Air Force [16:01], then we didn't have that.

BB: Okay. So it wasn't anything specific, like anti-aircraft, artillery, or airplane engineering or anything?

AL: No, no, no, no.

BB: Okay, okay. And then you said you went through -- one of the courses involved packing parachutes, parachute training?

BB: Yeah.

AL: Packing, packing.

BB: Packing, okay. So not to be a paratrooper, but just -- you were just packing parachutes.

AL: [unintelligible] and the boat, when you had to jump off, you know, and that's what we did.

BB: Okay. And then -- explain then what happened next after you're packing the parachutes. Do you remember?

AL: After parachute, then we went -- I think we went to war. We [unintelligible] somewhere, we had a little bit of training there, and then I got [17:00] -- then we got called up for Gusen Mauthausen [17:05].

BB: Okay. And were you still in the Air Force [17:09] at this point?

AL: Still in the Air Force.

BB: Okay.

AL: But I was -- in April I got there and in June we got through infantry, and older men came with 45, also from the Air Force. They took our job. And then they made them SS [17:29] men. And we got to the infantry.

BB: Okay. So after you left Gusen, you were transferred to the infantry?

AL: Infantry, yes.

BB: Okay. But the entire time you were at Gusen, you were --

AL: Air Force [17:44].

BB: You were Air Force.

AL: -- with Air Force unit.

BB: Okay. And so when you -- when you then were at -- after Gusen [17:56], you were in the infantry. Did you go to additional training [18:00] for the infantry?

AL: Yeah, I went to [unintelligible] if you have a compact -- I hope I say -- I got caught before, you know.

BB: When you were in infantry training, were you trained in any particular type of weaponry, or just --

AL: Only machine gun and other things and the rifle.

BB: Rifle? Okay, okay. And do you remember where any of that training was?

AL: This was in Poland [18:42], behind Berlin, up there.

BB: Okay, okay. At what point were you -- were you eventually transferred to an infantry division or infantry unit?

AL: We were Berlin [18:58] [speaks German] [19:00]. They came from Berlin. They're called Berliner [speaks German]. We were a special troop with the infantry there. When they needed us, they drove us and they pulled us out again [unintelligible].

BB: And so was it a new division or was it lots of veterans that had already been in combat?

AL: No, no, I don't know. Maybe a few. You know, it was new ones who had no experience yet [laughs], you know, and other things.

BB: Yeah. Were these -- were you with the same people in the infantry division as you were at Gusen [19:51], or did --

AL: No, no, no.

BB: So you had been -- you were split up completely. Different people?

AL: Split up completely.

BB: Okay.

AL: This was Air Force [19:59] and this is infantry [20:00].

BB: Right. So they didn't take all of your comrades at Gusen. They all went over -- okay.

AL: No, no [unintelligible] they were all over, all over.

BB: Okay, okay. And at what point did you go into combat with the infantry division?

AL: I got Christmas of '44 [unintelligible].

BB: Okay.

VINCENT SANTUCCI: And just for a date context, do you remember approximately when you went from the Air Force to the infantry, and what year, what date?

AL: April, May, June, July, probably. Probably in July.

BB: Okay. Transfer from Air Force [20:41] to Infantry in July of '44?

AL: Yeah, '44.

BB: Okay. And you said you entered combat for the first time around Christmas in --

AL: Christmastime, yes.

BB: And where [21:00] was that? What --

AL: First, we were in Limburg [21:04], and then we got transferred down to -- more to -- I think it was Overhoven [21:15]; this is by Strasbourg, by Strasbourg.

BB: Okay.

AL: And so we were -- I didn't have much experience and things, so I was much on them.

We were -- Christmastime, after Christmastime, we were sitting in the hole, you know,

watching the war, and then it was that time, like that -- in the morning, the American drove -- no, we drove the American back from that village, and that evening they drove us out, you know? So [22:00] it's always going to forward and back.

BB: So you were fighting at this point against American troops.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay. And were you in combat every day? Was there something going on every day, or was it more specific?

AL: No, it is more -- I don't know. I was not -- every day we were sitting in the foxhole. So - - and then I remember one time there was a mill -- it's a little mountain hide [spelled phonetically]. There was a flour mill down there, and the Americans came down with a tank [unintelligible] without, and then they caught them. And then the SS [22:46] came [speaks German] do you know what [speaks German] is? Rockets made with --

BB: Oh, sure, sure. They made the noise?

AL: Yeah, the noise of them. I don't know how many rockets are in there [23:00], but -- and they shot them, therefore the Americans took off.

BB: The American term for that, they call those screaming mimis [23:10]. Screaming mimis are what the Americans called the German rockets. But they're the ones that make a loud shrieking noise when they move on?

AL: Yeah, yeah.

BB: So they fired those at the Americans?

AL: Yeah, the SS gave them. The SS [23:25] had them [unintelligible].

BB: Okay. What was the weather like?

AL: Winter: snow, maybe that much snow sometimes. And when I got captured on February

11th, there was no snow.

BB: Okay. So you were captured February 11th.

AL: February 11th.

BB: So then you were in combat for about a month and a half?

AL: Yeah, yeah.

BB: Okay.

VS: And I'm assuming we're talking about the Battle of the Bulge [23:56]?

AL: [unintelligible] yeah, there was the Battle of the Bulge [24:00], and then in January we drove the American far back, but --

BB: And what type of weaponry were you using when you were in combat?

AL: I had a -- I think 44 -- not the gun that they -- you know, it had that thing on there, what do you call it -- the magazine --

BB: Magazine, so --

AL: Yeah, yeah.

BB: Was it an MP40?

AL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BB: And was -- so a submachine gun?

AL: Submachine gun, 40 came out in 44.

BB: Oh, okay. That -- so it was a new gun that came out in 1944.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, that was very advanced.

AL: And then I had a binocular in there when they caught me.

BB: Oh, you had binoculars on your --

AL: I had binoculars, yeah.

BB: Did you have a winter uniform [25:00]?

AL: Yeah, Fitschuh [spelled phonetically]. Do you know what Fitschuhis?

BB: No.

AL: Fitz -- what is Fitz in English?

BB: Camouflage?

AL: No, no, they were warmer than leather boots, see?

BB: Okay.

AL: They were warmer than leather boots.

VS: Did you have a white uniform or did you have --

AL: No, it was a little Tomcat.

BB: Were -- so it wasn't -- it was not the color of snow, the uniform?

AL: No, it wasn't. Yeah, they used it for special troops, you know, when it was that much snow. It was not that much snow out there. So --

BB: Was your helmet painted with any camouflage, or was it just --

AL: No, no, no, it was not camouflaged.

BB: Okay [26:00]. I'm intrigued by the machine gun you were using. I think I know what type it was, and it was a very modern gun.

AL: Yeah, it was maybe about that long, you know.

BB: Did it seem -- did it work well? Did it --

AL: Oh, yeah. It worked well. I didn't use it much because one time they came and then somebody came back and that everybody fight around and everybody [unintelligible] he came behind a tree stump, you know?

VS: And so the back-and-forth, were there lots of casualties? Were Germans wounded?

AL: Yeah, it was German on the Americans.

VS: Some killed?

AL: Yeah, yeah. When they captured us, they took us back. They were -- a fellow [unintelligible] American to pick them up [27:00], you know, and Americans were [unintelligible] on there.

BB: Did you capture any American prisoners?

AL: No, no, no, no.

BB: Did they tell you -- did your officers or anyone else tell you anything about what to do if you were captured by the Americans?

AL: No, nothing.

BB: Did they ever give you orders to never, ever surrender, or anything?

AL: No, no, no.

BB: No? Okay, okay.

VS: You had plenty of food?

AL: We had -- we had plenty of food here.

BB: Okay.

AL: I mean, it was not the best. Sometimes it came in the evening, sometimes not, you know, one way or the other.

BB: And can you describe, as much as you remember, how you were captured, what happened?

AL: Me and the other fellow, we were [28:00] all in a barn, and there was break, then we had to hold out and we had our guns out there, you know. And then around 5:00, they shot

through with a tank, and I think I have here -- you feel this.

BB: Oh, yes, wow.

AL: This is a thing. And the other fellow was wounded, and our fellow -- it went through the garage. It went through the barn [unintelligible] at the end of the garage, and then it hit a fellow in our [unintelligible]. He was full of blood and flesh the one side down. And then our old man said to me, "We're not going back yet. We wait until it's dark and then we sneak back." And we took some grain out from the farmer in that barn, and we were sitting there, and then "hands-up" and then that was it [29:00].

BB: So the Americans came in to the barn.

AL: Yeah, the Americans. Because the tank went back, and the fellow that was on the tank and the old man said, "We're not going back. We sneak back when it's dark."

BB: But you didn't have a chance.

AL: No [unintelligible]. That was the end of the story.

VS: And the injury, you had an injury to your hand. Did you have any other?

AL: Yeah, a little bit on here and there is still [unintelligible] out of the liver came a thing out there, maybe, like a match, you know, other thing. So -- but the other fellow has a -- in the arm, a thing, a splinter.

BB: So you -- so but you weren't trying to surrender. They surprised you and captured you.

AL: [inaudible]

BB: Did -- then what happened after that?

AL: They put us in a barn and then they searched us, you know, and then [30:00] we had the Germany -- the spoon and the fork -- took the fork off, throw it away, and give you the spoon. And then I had the two hand grenades in my things, and they threw in the barn.

BB: They threw the hand grenades in the barn?

AL: In the barn, into the straw.

BB: Oh, just to make them -- oh, okay.

AL: No, no.

BB: They -- just to get rid of them.

AL: [unintelligible] Then they put -- the first thing was -- the worst thing was, they put us against the wall this way, and they had the gun behind. That was a little [laughs] -- it was a little tricky, you know, all your -- because in wartime, what I found out was that when the other fellows said, "He's a human being too and the other fellow shoot that son of a gun."

BB: So you were very nervous.

AL: You have to be just lucky, you know?

BB: You were very nervous, I imagine [31:00].

AL: Yeah, nervous, what the heck. You understand that it's the war, put your hands up, you know, what the heck.

BB: Was this morning, afternoon, evening, nighttime?

AL: This was in the evening.

BB: In the evening.

AL: Evening, because 5:00, American drove us out.

BB: Okay. Were the Americans rough at all? Did they -- did they hit you or beat you up?

AL: No one I could say got hit or anything, sort of thing.

BB: Okay.

AL: But I had -- I had -- what they call it -- I had some [unintelligible] they throw that away

and something like that, you know [unintelligible].

BB: Do you know the exact location of that barn, if it was in a particular town?

AL: Overhoven [31:48].

BB: It was in Overhoven?

AL: Overhoven, they called that.

BB: Okay.

AL: Yeah. This is not far away from Strasbourg. This is now French.

BB: So you were in France [31:59] when you were captured.

AL: Yeah [32:00]. At that time, it was not French. That time it was, you know, it was not Germany -- because the thing was before there -- what do you call it -- what -- the bunkers what they made --

BB: The Maginot Line [32:18]?

AL: No, yeah, not the Maginot Line.

BB: Okay.

AL: They called it the -- Hitler [32:21] had a different name.

BB: Oh, right, right. I know what you mean.

(End of Tape 1A)

(Beginning of Tape 1B)

BB: Okay, so then what happened? So did they -- did you spend the night in the barn or did they make you --

AL: They put us in a barn and the cow -- where cows was and it was all cleaned out and all [unintelligible] pushed out [unintelligible] guns, and then they said, "Sit down." And everyone's sitting down [unintelligible]. We were so tired, you know, you slept anyway.

BB: How many German soldiers were there?

AL: Maybe 15.

BB: Okay. At -- I'm sorry. Let me back up. When you were captured in the barn, were there 15 soldiers all in --

AL: No, no, no.

BB: No. So just three --

AL: Only were two.

BB: Oh, just two others. Okay.

AL: Yeah.

BB: But then you were taken to another barn with about 15.

AL: Yeah, that's right [unintelligible] by a little bit [unintelligible].

BB: Okay. So then you spent the night in that barn, with guards, I assume.

AL: Oh, yeah. I was sitting in front of [01:00] --

BB: And then what happened the next day?

AL: The next day, we got transferred to Strasbourg.

BB: Okay.

AL: And we got un-loused, what do you call it un-loused and we got --

BB: They sprayed you with -- to

AL: Yeah, yeah, with powder and then we had a shower and so on, like that. You know, I was there maybe -- I don't know -- around five, six days. And then they transferred us to Marseille [01:32], down there with the river banks.

BB: By train, or by car?

AL: By train. We were 45 people on the train, and there were a lot of that -- that C-rationing

[01:44], and then one canister of water. And if you're -- everything closed, and if you got far south, it got hot in there, and then I had no [02:00] -- I had no American cigarette, and I stuffed them in there. Although, before, in Strasbourg, I got a watch for a pack of cigarettes.

BB: Really?

AL: I still have it and it still runs.

BB: Wow. From an American soldier?

AL: No, from -- no, from the German soldier. The way things [unintelligible] for cigarettes they gave away --

BB: Really?

AL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BB: Where did you get the cigarettes from?

AL: There was a brick factory that we went into one [unintelligible] and there were a lot of Americans there. And when the [unintelligible] left there and I found the cigarettes there. Camel cigarettes [02:49].

BB: Camels?

AL: Camels, yeah.

BB: And so you kept those and traded them with people?

AL: Yeah, yeah. I had them in my pants, far down there [03:00] [unintelligible].

VS: You did not speak English at this time.

AL: No, no, not at all.

VS: Did any of the Americans try to talk to you? Did they speak to you in German?

AL: No.

VS: No questions?

AL: No, no, no. When I got caught, I went -- I got interrogated again, and what company you come from and so on, so on, so on, so they know the company is so many, and so many got caught, you know, and then they know a little bit.

VS: So they ask you those questions.

AL: They asked us question.

BB: And that was as soon as you were captured?

AL: Yeah, yeah.

BB: Okay. Do you remember if you -- did you tell them the truth?

AL: No, I --

BB: Or did you --

AL: No, we had no other -- I wasn't the only [unintelligible]. I came from Berliner [03:53] [unintelligible].

BB: But you didn't -- but you didn't lie to them or try to mislead them or anything?

AL: No, no, no [04:00]. They didn't ask so many questions. They asked -- the lieutenant got in there the lieutenant, and they asked him more questions.

BB: So they captured a lieutenant as well.

AL: As well.

BB: And you think they asked him more questions.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: I don't know what.

BB: Okay. Did they treat you for your wounds, and for your hand and your lip?

AL: No, no, no.

BB: Did they -- so it didn't need --

AL: It was only a little bit here, no.

BB: Do you -- what about the other soldier who was shot in the arm?

AL: I don't know what -- he went maybe back over; why -- I don't know what happened to him.

BB: Okay, okay. And so then when you -- when you went to the one location where you were deloused, there were lots of -- lots more prisoners there?

AL: [inaudible] yeah, yeah.

BB: Okay.

VS: And did they have you in a fenced area, or what [05:00] --

AL: Yeah, yeah, there was fenced area. And some fellows, you know, they had -- I remember they had the American flag up. They [unintelligible] American flag, they [unintelligible] on the entrance, on a pole up there with two canisters of water, with two canisters of water [unintelligible] up there.

BB: Two canisters, you said?

AL: Yeah, on both sides.

BB: So they just had to hold it.

AL: Yeah.

BB: And these were Germans who had a captured American flag?

AL: No, no, the American captured them, and he told that [unintelligible] American flag, and then he allots punishment. He had to stand on the fence pole up there with the two cases of water.

VS: It sounds like he said something negative, like --

BB: Oh, he said something about the American flag.

VS: The [unintelligible] American flag.

BB: Oh, okay, okay, okay.

AL: Yeah, yeah.

BB: So, were you still -- at this point, were you still [06:00] wearing your German uniform?

AL: Yeah, yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: I don't know when I -- when they gave us the other. I think when we were in the boat, then we got there -- what they call it -- khaki pants and the shirt and the things.

VS: And when you were transported by train, were you in a box car?

AL: In a box car, yeah.

VS: So there were no seats.

AL: No, no, no. There was only snow in there.

VS: And you say about 45?

AL: Forty-five people in there, and then a lot of c-ration [06:34] and [unintelligible], and it was enclosed.

VS: And what -- go ahead.

AL: And little bit farther on -- little bit farther back [unintelligible] and they forgot to give him water, and the fellow drank chlorine and they died.

BB: Really?

AL: Yeah, yeah.

BB: And what did he drink?

AL: No, no, no, other fellow. The other tour.

BB: Oh, okay.

AL: They came over then -- to the camp [unintelligible] [07:00]. We had to be careful. We had to close it up. The Frenchmen, they would throw stones and sticks out there against you, you know? So --

BB: Could you see outside of the train at all, or was it just dark?

AL: It was dark. A little bit, you know? A little bit.

BB: Were there American guards inside the train?

AL: No, no.

BB: Outside the train.

AL: It was [unintelligible].

BB: It's hard to remember, but do you remember what you were thinking at that time?

AL: Well, you were captured.

BB: Were you scared or --

AL: No, the train [unintelligible] want more people, you know?

BB: Were you -- were you happy that the war was over for you, or did you --

AL: No, we knew that the war was lost when we came to America, that then tell us they were from the Africa Korps [07:57], we couldn't believe that we lose the war [08:00].

BB: Really?

AL: Yeah.

BB: But when you were still fighting in 1945, did you already think it was over?

AL: Yeah, I think -- I think we lost then. After the Russian Stalingrad [08:13]. The front was too weak. We say in German, "Too many dogs are, but one is dead." [unintelligible]

BB: And so, again, where did you take the train to, when you recall the other prisoners in a train?

AL: To Marseille.

BB: To Marseille [08:35].

AL: There was a big, big camp. There were a few thousand prisoners up there.

BB: Okay. And how long were you there for?

AL: I don't know how long, but when always a convoy went back, they filled one boat up with prisoners, so I was there.

BB: Were you at any point -- at this time, were you questioned or interrogated by anyone?

AL: No, no [09:00]. The story was that the Americans took the fellows [unintelligible] want to show them a concentration camp, and on the boat, you talked about how the situation was. And I said to my other friend [unintelligible] and I said it wasn't that bad. And they reported to the American. That's why I got to the base here.

BB: So, and this was on the boat.

AL: On the boat.

BB: Okay. Had other soldiers on the boat also been stationed at concentration camps?

AL: No, no, no, no.

BB: Okay.

VS: While you were still in Marseille [09:44], in the camp --

AL: No, no, when we went to boat over.

VS: Before you went to the -- got on the boat, you were in Marseille, in a camp --

AL: No, yeah, in Marseille, outside Marseille.

VS: When did you know that you were going to be leaving there?

AL: You didn't know.

VS: You didn't know. When you left, what happened? How did that transpire?

AL: I don't remember anymore. You know? They said PW [10:12] so on, so on, so on [unintelligible] knock on the door and you didn't know where you were going. They didn't talk.

VS: When they took you to the boat, did they take you by truck or by bus or by --

AL: I don't remember. I think by truck, by truck.

VS: And do you remember seeing the boat?

AL: Yeah, we saw the -- there were -- the boat -- there was 16 boats altogether, 16, 17 boats in there.

BB: So it was all a part of a convoy that was all going back.

AL: Yeah, a convoy. When the convoy went back [unintelligible] we rested the [unintelligible], and then the boat came together and then we left it. It took around, I think, I don't know [11:00], around 20 days on we got over here, you know?

BB: So as you were getting on to the boat, was it only Americans that you saw, or did you see British or French or anybody else?

AL: No, no, no, nothing else.

BB: And did the Americans try to protect you from the French?

AL: Yeah, the Sig Field [11:20] was more, you know? Then so -- I don't know it was closed up [unintelligible] couldn't do anything.

BB: But you said that on the train to Marseille [11:32], the French were throwing things at the train.

AL: Yeah, if it would be open [unintelligible]. That's why they have to close it up.

BB: Okay, okay. About how many German prisoners were on your boat?

AL: I don't know. I don't know how many. I cannot say exactly. Maybe at least [12:00] two, 300. Something like that.

BB: Okay. Did you know what was going to happen, that you were going to -- did you know they were taking you --

AL: No, no, no, no, no.

BB: Did you know where you were going? So you didn't even know you were going to the United States -- to the United States?

AL: No, no.

BB: Just they were putting you on a boat and that's all you knew.

AL: That's it, that's it.

BB: Okay.

VS: Were you confined to some areas on the boat?

AL: Yeah, there were four beds there, and there -- you know, and so not confined, probably. I don't --

BB: Could you walk around the boat?

AL: Oh, yeah; we could. Outside we had fights when the -- we boxed and stuff like that, you know [unintelligible] and so.

BB: But there was -- you weren't questioned at all or interrogated.

AL: No, not at all.

BB: So again, could you say again what you think happened that made you singled out [13:00] for additional questioning? What -- how did that happen?

AL: They told the American I was on the concentration camp, and the Americans told here.

That's why -- because I know a few who was -- the group [unintelligible] and then he told me the other ones, and then I knew it [unintelligible] talked about that.

BB: Do you -- do you remember the name of the person?

AL: No, after 60 years, you know?

BB: Sure, sure.

AL: The problem was that when we came over with the boat, it -- in America, they are called -- the comedies are commoner [spelled phonetically] because they were comedies, you know, the fellows [unintelligible]. And then they put us in a different barrack [unintelligible] [14:00] so the German prisoner [unintelligible].

VS: Just one last question before we go further. Was there at any time, between the time that you were captured and the time you were on the boat, that there was ever any attempt for people to try to escape the prisoners?

AL: No, no.

VS: There wasn't. Was there ever any sort of incident where the guards had to take physical -

AL: No, no.

VS: Okay. Was there talk, discussion about trying to escape?

AL: No, I don't know anything about --

VS: Jump off the boat, swim home?

AL: No, no -- swim home. Forget about it!

[laughter]

BB: Okay. What happened when you reached the United States?

AL: First, we said we'd sing for the Americans [15:00].

BB: You said you'd sing?

AL: Huh?

BB: Sing for them?

AL: Sing -- on the board, we'd sing for the Americans. And then when we came to Norfolk [15:09], we saw the German soldiers down there with complete uniform, and then they didn't sing anymore [laughs].

BB: Because you saw people wearing prisoner uniforms?

AL: Yeah, the prisoner -- I don't know [unintelligible] I don't know why they weren't there.

BB: And so then what happened when you -- they took you off the boat?

AL: Yeah, off the boat we got two things [unintelligible] Richmond [15:43]. We got into the mess hall, and our prisoner camp had a lagerkommandant American lagerkommandant [15:56] and a German lagerkommandant, and he salute us with heil Hitler [16:02], because the war was not out yet.

BB: The German commandant.

AL: Yeah, the German commandant would salute us with that.

BB: And what did the American commandant think about that?

AL: They couldn't do anything.

BB: Okay.

AL: They couldn't do anything. And I was -- maybe a few days before Hitler's [16:22] birthday, they took a white sheet and made a Hitler flag and raised it in the camp in there. And the Americans pulled it down and they said it would not go up -- you know [unintelligible] and it disappeared. This was a -- because what the prisoner were from Africa Korps [16:47].

- BB: Okay. So you were now mixed in -- you were mixed in with Africa Korps prisoners.
- AL: Yeah, yeah, because I was an average soldier so the officer would [17:00] [unintelligible] got separated [unintelligible] -- they didn't have to work. Only we had to work.
- VS: So as you approached the American coast in Norfolk [17:10], when did you realize you were at America?
- AL: I think the other fellows knew a little bit more than I did that we get to America, you know? So --
- BB: Okay. And what did it look like? What do you recall it looked like?
- AL: I don't know, I don't know.
- BB: A port, navy [17:32] port?
- AL: Yeah, it was in Norfolk up there.
- BB: Okay. And were there other boats that had German prisoners coming in?
- AL: No, no, only one.
- BB: Only one.
- AL: Only one boat.
- BB: Did your boat -- you mentioned Africa Korps [17:46] soldiers. Were they on your boat, or you didn't meet them until -- not until Richmond [17:51]?
- AL: They were from the camp, and they talk about to commandant, the German soldier when we get off the boat [18:00].
- BB: So when you were taken off the boat --
- AL: Off the boat, they were outside, standing there.
- BB: Okay. And did they put you on trucks or buses or train or --
- AL: I don't know. I don't know exactly anymore, how we got the things to Richmond.

BB: Okay, okay. How long were you in Richmond [18:23]?

AL: I don't know. Maybe a few weeks or what, you know? And then they said, "PW [18:30] so and so, so and so, so and so, in five minutes" [unintelligible] and then they loaded up in a pickup truck. We had two soldiers and [unintelligible] and then we said, "Where we going?" and they said, "We don't know." And then we traveled up here. We saw a monument in Washington. [unintelligible] and then they went to Fort Meade [18:58], to the headquarters, to get the [19:00] paper of -- and then they put us in jail.

BB: Okay.

AL: And we saw the German -- there was the German camp, and here was [unintelligible] what it was. They put us in there. And that time they had Nazis [19:19] and anti-Nazis and there were -- and I think there were anti-Nazis, and they told us you don't worry about it, they said. And then the next day they came out. The [unintelligible] in a pickup truck, and we went under [unintelligible].

VS: So this is -- this is very important information. When you were in Richmond, in the camp, did they have the pro-Nazi/anti-Nazi [19:19] groups at Richmond [19:54]?

AL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They had -- yeah.

VS: Can you tell us more about that? Is there any other --

AL: I don't know more about that. I don't know [20:00].

BB: Okay. Which group were you put in?

AL: The Nazi.

BB: The Nazi camp. You were put in the Nazi --

AL: I know, what the heck, you know? So --

BB: Do you know why they would --

AL: I don't -- I don't know what they said. They probably thought they'd get better treated because in the camp or in the thing the Americans liked the Nazis [20:19] better than the anti-Nazis.

BB: Why is that?

AL: Because they told the truth, you know? And if you say you're anti-Nazi, you don't know exactly -- you know --

BB: So do you think some of the people who were anti-Nazi were just lying or saying whatever they could to be put into that camp, or --

AL: I don't know. I don't know. But we were separated [unintelligible].

BB: Okay.

BB: And were officers separated from enlisted men?

AL: No -- oh, yeah. There were no officers there in our camp.

VS: Okay.

BB: How many people from Richmond [20:57] were put into the truck [21:00] to go up to Washington, D.C.?

AL: We were five people.

BB: Okay. And did you know any of them beforehand?

AL: No, no, no.

BB: You didn't know them. Okay. And again, how did you get from Richmond to Washington? Was it just in a pickup truck or --

AL: A pickup truck, yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: And we got to Fort Meade [21:21] and --

BB: And at Fort Meade, they also had Nazi [21:27] and anti-Nazi --

AL: Oh, yeah, yeah. Separated them too.

BB: Okay, okay.

VS: And you drove by Washington and you saw the Washington Monument [21:36].

AL: Monument.

BB: What did you think?

AL: Yeah, we said, "This is Washington Monument" [unintelligible] but the soldiers said we're going to go [laughs].

BB: Did you think it was interesting [laughs]?

AL: We don't know where we're going, you know -- you know, because being a prisoner, you know -- yeah.

BB: How long were you at Fort Meade [22:02]?

AL: Maybe two days or something like that.

BB: Okay. And what were your accommodations like? Where -- what --

AL: I don't know. We were -- we were ordered two men in a cell. It was nice, you know, what the heck.

BB: And what happened to you -- did they question you there?

AL: Yeah, they -- no, they questioned you at -- I think there. And Fort Meade [22:38], they didn't question us.

BB: Not at Fort Meade, but at Fort --

AL: Not at all.

BB: --what was called Fort Hunt [22:44], they would --

AL: What'd they call it? No --

VS: But I'm thinking it sounds like they pulled him out at Richmond [22:54] and made the decision to take him and a small group to Meade and put him in a cell [23:00] at that point. So there was questioning that went on in Richmond.

AL: No, no, the question went on here, here in that cross barrack.

BB: Okay.

VS: Okay.

BB: And the cross barrack, was that at Fort Meade [23:14] or was that somewhere else?

AL: It was somewhere else. We drove from Fort Meade for three-quarter hour in a covered wagon.

BB: Okay.

VS: I guess where we have to get to the point is where they made the decision to send him to 1142 [23:28].

BB: So at Fort Meade, you were just there in a cell with one other person.

AL: That's right.

BB: And you were there for about two days?

AL: No, maybe only one night [unintelligible].

BB: But they didn't question you --

AL: No, not at all, not at all, until we got there.

BB: Okay. And so then they drove you somewhere for about three-quarters of an hour.

AL: Three-quarter hour.

BB: And how -- and how did you go from Fort Meade [23:58] to the other location?

AL: In a [24:00] covered wagon.

BB: Okay. Could you describe that a little bit more?

AL: Yeah, it was like a -- an open -- it was closed up like a [unintelligible], so you couldn't see nothing where you were going.

BB: How many people were in the covered wagon?

AL: Probably five, something like that.

BB: Was it the same five as came from Richmond [24:28]?

AL: No, no. I don't know -- yeah, yeah, probably. Probably were the same guys.

BB: When you were at Fort Meade [24:41] for the day or two, did you -- were you in a cell with someone from Richmond or somebody new?

AL: I don't remember [unintelligible]. I don't know anymore.

BB: Okay, but that's fine, that's fine. When you were transported, again, just from Fort Meade to the next camp, were there guards [25:00] on the bus?

AL: Oh, yeah. I was in a covered wagon; he was probably in the front.

VS: Were you handcuffed?

AL: No, no.

VS: You weren't treated like a prisoner? Okay.

BB: Did they tell you where you were going?

AL: No. It's not important. You're a prisoner.

[laughter]

VS: Was there some point where they treated you differently in Richmond [25:27], where instead of being like everybody else, they said, "You come with us?"

AL: No, no, no, no.

VS: No.

AL: When [unintelligible] morning, we have to meet prisoner so and so in five minute

[unintelligible] knock on the door. That was it.

BB: Do you have any thoughts as to why maybe they took you to Fort Meade [25:50]?

AL: I had a thought. I had a thought about that, but it wasn't the concentration camp [26:00].

BB: But when you were in Richmond [26:02], they never talked about the concentration camp.

AL: No, no, no.

BB: And when you were at Fort Meade, they never talked about the concentration camp.

AL: No, no.

BB: Okay. You said you had to bring your sea sack with you.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Did you -- you brought that to Fort Meade [26:16]?

AL: Yeah, we had some -- I don't know where we got their clothes, you know?

BB: Okay.

AL: And you got to the camp there where this was. We had a sea sack. You had to take your clothes off and you got a shower, and all the clothes in there, and then you got two men on a cell.

VS: Did you have a different prisoner uniform?

AL: No, only PW [26:41].

VS: PW.

AL: PW.

BB: So it just had the letters PW printed on it.

AL: Yeah, and the back was all here on the pants and back.

BB: And so describe, once you transferred from Fort Meade [26:58], you were in a wagon for

[27:00] about three quarters of an hour. Then what happened?

AL: We had a shower, take the clothes, and then we got new clothes, and then we were two men to a cell.

BB: Okay.

AL: There was a guard sitting here, and here watched the cell and here watched the cell, and this was everything locked [unintelligible] and they put you in the room and locked that up, and when you wanted to go out, [unintelligible] they came in, locked that door and [unintelligible] bathroom, what it was. And then we saw outside the bathroom [unintelligible] in front of the window and there was a little garden, and we saw somebody working out there.

BB: And you said this building you were put in, you said earlier it was -- it was in the shape of a cross? You said it was shaped like a cross or a plus sign?

AL: Here, like this, like cross [28:00].

BB: Okay.

AL: And there were the cells and there were the guards.

BB: And where were the guards at?

AL: In the center.

BB: In the middle.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Would you -- could you draw for us, could you sketch to -- just it doesn't have to be perfect, just kind of what you remember.

AL: [unintelligible] Here was the guards [unintelligible] the cells.

VS: Okay, so what is this right here?

AL: They were the guards in there.

VS: The guards were in here.

AL: In the middle, in the middle.

VS: And was that a separate room?

AL: I don't know if it was.

VS: It was open or --

AL: No, it was a room, probably. It was a room, probably [29:00].

VS: So the guards were here.

AL: Here.

VS: And then what was this?

AL: Here are the cells. A guard came in here, opened that door, locked that door and put you in there, and locked this door. Or maybe if we had to go to the bathroom, you know, they let you in, they lock this door.

BB: So is this a hallway?

AL: This was only -- it seems like, to me, it was only rooms here and here and here and here.

BB: Okay. And so was -- you say there was a bathroom. Where was the bathroom?

AL: I don't know, far up there. There was a bathroom here in the room.

BB: Was there a bathroom in the cell at all?

AL: No, no, no, nothing at all. There was only two beds in there and that's it.

BB: And how many guards here?

AL: I don't know [30:00]. Three, four?

BB: Did they have weapons?

AL: I didn't see anything. But after I got home, some fellows got out there in a U-boat

[30:18], put a ship down, and then they got [unintelligible] they got out, and there was some fellows over there [unintelligible]. I didn't see it. But what he said, he had to walk through there [unintelligible]. What do you call that, when [unintelligible] here and here and you have to go through that?

BB: Run the gauntlet [30:50]?

AL: Huh?

BB: Was it called running the gauntlet?

AL: Yeah.

BB: It's just a slang term.

AL: Yeah, yeah.

BB: So this -- you heard this from a [31:00] U-boat.

AL: From the U-boat. The fellow -- he had an arm patch over here [unintelligible]. And then when we came to the camp again, to Richmond [31:14], we said -- we report this to the Red Cross [31:18] at Meade [31:20] -- but I think [unintelligible].

BB: So -- again, so while you were here staying in the building with the cross, you -- somebody else told you that this had happened to him while he was there at --

AL: Yeah, yeah. After I left this thing, he was there, and he told us thing. But I didn't see it.

I didn't see it.

VS: And did it happen here, or did it happen elsewhere before?

AL: I don't know, I don't know, I don't know.

VS: Okay.

AL: He had to walk [unintelligible] over six foot tall [32:00].

VS: I guess I'll just ask again. Is your understanding that where this occurred was at Fort

Hunt [32:10] or was it before he came to Fort Hunt?

AL: No, no, in here.

VS: In here. That's your understanding, okay.

AL: Okay.

BB: Okay, we'll take a quick break.

(End of Tape 1B)

(Beginning of Tape 2A)

BB: -- is April 2nd, 2010. This is an interview as part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project by the National Park Service. We are here interviewing former German soldier Anton Leonhard at his home in Hanover, Pennsylvania. This is Brandon Bies with the National Park Service. I am joined by Vincent Santucci and David Lassman also of the National Park Service. And with neighbor Joseph Marsden. And this is the second in a series of recorded interviews with Mr. Leonhard. With that I know we asked a lot of questions a few minutes ago about this incident that you remember.

AL: Yeah.

BB: And again this -- so this -- did you hear about this potential beating when you were here or --

AL: No.

BB: -- not until you got back to Richmond [00:59]?

AL: We didn't -- we didn't hear [01:00] anything. We didn't hear anything.

BB: But when did you learn about this? When you got back --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- to Richmond?

AL: When I got back to Richmond.

BB: Okay. And did the U-boat [01:12] sailor go to Richmond --

AL: Also.

BB: -- as well?

AL: Also.

BB: So in Richmond there you were mixed with both Army [01:20] and Navy [01:21] prisoners --

AL: All together.

BB: -- all together.

AL: Okay.

BB: Okay.

VS: And you saw this U-boat with the bandage?

AL: Yeah, yeah.

VS: You saw it?

AL: Yeah I saw the fellow.

VS: Did you talk to him?

AL: I don't know but maybe I talked to him --

VS: Sure.

AL: -- I don't know, so --

BB: Do you remember at all what U-boat [01:38] he was on?

AL: No.

BB: The number. But you said --

AL: Two days before the war the -- he was on a freighter or a [unintelligible].

BB: So two years before the war ended, excuse me, two days -- two days before, his U-boat [01:57] sank a ship --

AL: Ship.

BB: -- and then was -- they [02:00] were immediately sunk.

AL: That's it.

BB: And about half of the crew drowned.

AL: Yeah.

BB: And half --

AL: Got out.

BB: -- got out. And he went to be questioned.

AL: That's it.

BB: Okay.

VS: And he was an officer?

AL: No.

VS: He was an enlisted man?

AL: Probably.

VS: Okay.

BB: We'll be able to figure that one out.

VS: Sure. I think we should maybe talk just a little bit more about the details of what he remembers.

AL: This was right in the -- in the woods. What do you -- what do you call them trees?

MS: [unintelligible]

BB: Were they -- do they have leaves or were they fir trees?

AL: No, no, no it was fir trees.

BB: Evergreen like pine trees.

AL: Pine trees. And then they were German march music up there.

BB: Who played the music?

AL: No, no, no, they played the music. There was one [spelled phonetically] thing higher and they play the German march music up there.

BB: Through a microphone?

AL: Yeah.

BB: A speaker?

AL: Yeah, through the microphone [03:00].

BB: Was this -- did they play it for a long time or just for a short time?

AL: I don't know I didn't hear it anymore anyway when I was in there. But when we came in they played German march music up there.

BB: When you arrived here --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- they played --

AL: They played.

BB: -- just that one time.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Almost like --

AL: I don't remember now --

BB: But what --

AL: -- you know about --

MS: Did they play it on the -- on the -- on the van or did they play it at the site?

AL: No, they played other at the lager you know, what they played.

MS: Okay.

BB: You mentioned about the pine trees.

AL: Yeah.

BB: So this whole area was surrounded by --

AL: Surrounded.

BB: Okay. What -- when you were there was this building, this cross-shaped building --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- was that the only building that you saw?

AL: That's the only building. That's the only building --

BB: Okay.

AL: -- I saw.

BB: Okay.

VS: You were in a cell did they ever take you [04:00] outside?

AL: Oh yeah, one day about a half hour or an hour you could walk --

VS: [affirmative]

AL: -- around there.

BB: To get some exercise?

AL: No, only walking.

BB: Okay. And --

AL: I jump one times in the bed. They had a spring, you know, and the bed made a noise

and right away the guard came.

[laughter]

BB: You just -- you were jumping just for fun?

AL: Oh yeah --

BB: For --

AL: -- I jumped in and then the -- then the squeeze, you know, then right away the guard came.

BB: And told you not to do that anymore.

AL: No, he only --

BB: He just was looking to see what was happening.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: That's it.

VS: Do you remember what it looked like in the cell?

AL: I don't know, like a room, you know.

VS: One bed, two beds?

AL: Two beds we were two men.

VS: Okay. Was there a table?

AL: I don't remember about that. I don't know I think [05:00] they brought us food in a plate or what. I don't --

VS: [affirmative]

AL: -- I don't remember. No, I think there was no -- I don't know. I --

BB: No, that's okay.

AL: [unintelligible]

BB: Did -- but -- and you're doing fantastic. This is --

VS: This is great.

BB: This is great.

AL: Yeah.

BB: So don't feel bad at all about not -- because I can't imagine if 65 years from now somebody came to my house and asked me to describe a hotel room that I stayed in for five days or something.

[laughter]

You know, I -- it -- so you're doing --

AL: Okay.

BB: -- fantastic. This is great.

AL: Okay.

BB: This is great.

VS: Was there -- were there any windows?

AL: There was one window.

VS: There was windows.

AL: The window -- there was a boards nailed a little bit far back, maybe four feet far back so we couldn't look --

BB: So you couldn't see beyond -- so you would let light in --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- but you couldn't see beyond those boards. Okay.

BB: Were there bars on the window?

AL: I don't know.

BB: Was there glass on the window [06:00]?

AL: I doubt it. There was plate -- I don't know.

BB: That's okay.

AL: I don't know. I don't know.

BB: Was there any lights in the room?

AL: Oh yeah. There was light in the -- we had electricity --

MS: [affirmative]

AL: -- and what. I don't --

BB: Do you remember about if there was heat? You would have been there around -- I think around -- do you remember what time of year it was that you were --

AL: Yeah, this is right after Hitler's [06:26] birthday when I got there, there was probably end of April, something like that.

BB: Okay. And did -- so do you remember if there was heat? If there were --

AL: I don't --

BB: -- you didn't need any.

AL: I don't remember.

BB: Okay.

AL: I wasn't cold.

BB: Okay.

[laughter]

Tell us a little bit -- you said you had one other person in your room.

AL: Yeah.

BB: You shared a room. Did you --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- share a room with the same person for the entire time?

AL: Yes. Yeah. The --

BB: Just the same person. Do you remember his name?

AL: I don't remember his name, he was a [07:00] lawyer from Austria [07:03]. And his question -- he got questioned too. They asked him about a free Austria. And something about that [unintelligible] ask him that so --

BB: So he was older than you?

AL: What?

BB: He was older?

AL: Yeah, he was older.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: He was older.

BB: And do you recall how long he had been -- was he already there --

AL: No.

BB: -- or did you go at the same time?

AL: At the same time.

BB: Okay.

AL: Same time.

BB: Okay. Did you leave at the same time?

AL: I think so.

BB: Okay.

AL: I don't remember. I don't remember. Oh yeah, I think he got in the same -- came and -- but [unintelligible] to cut wood, you know.

BB: Do -- what -- and I don't know if we've asked this already. How many days do you think you -- do you remember [08:00] staying here?

AL: Yeah, I don't know; three, four, I don't know.

BB: Okay.

AL: I don't remember.

BB: But not weeks or anything --

AL: No.

BB: -- just a -- just a few days.

AL: No.

BB: Okay. And when you were brought there, did they tell you what was going to happen? Did they tell you anything --

AL: No.

BB: -- at all?

AL: No.

BB: Did they -- did they -- they didn't tell you, you were going to be questioned?

AL: No. I got one day questioned and they locked me in there and the fellow said, "You tell your life story." And I told him and then I said I was transferred to the [unintelligible] and he said to me, "What is that?" I said [speaks German]. And then he showed me some picture of a woman, big hips [spelled phonetically], real skinny legs, and stuff like that. And I said they can't be [unintelligible] too. You understand? You know -- do you know what [unintelligible] mean [09:00]?

BB: [negative]

AL: [unintelligible] means. They take a picture of you and they're --

BB: It's been doctored? It's been -- the picture has been changed.

AL: Changed, yeah. That's what I said. And then -- yeah. Why are [unintelligible] they are -- why is that woman there with their kids. I said I don't know, you know. And then if you don't talk had to stay attention. We send you to Russia [laughs], you know, and stuff like that's under [spelled phonetically]. It's a -- it's a --

BB: And so again how many times were you questioned like that?

AL: I think only one time.

BB: Just one time.

AL: Because they know exactly -- I was too young I didn't know anything see?

BB: [affirmative]

AL: See?

BB: Do you remember, were you questioned the very first day you were there, or had you been there a couple of days?

AL: No, been there a few days.

BB: Okay.

AL: Yeah.

BB: And [10:00] did they take you somewhere else to be questioned? I mean this wasn't in your room.

AL: They -- no, we went out we went -- I don't know that we came out of that hallway and --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- then we went the other -- somewhere else and that this got locked. You got --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- locked up too.

BB: In the same building?

AL: Yeah, same building.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: Yeah.

BB: And you were locked up with the -- an American? They locked the two of you in there?

AL: Yeah, oh yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: This was a Jewish fellow he talked German.

BB: Oh okay. Did --

MS: Only one?

AL: Only one.

BB: Did you -- did he tell you that he was Jewish?

AL: No.

BB: You just -- you just figured --

AL: I know it [laughs].

BB: [affirmative]

[laughter]

MS: How did you know it?

AL: I mean otherwise he wouldn't talk perfect -- I thought though he was Jewish and I --

BB: But was --

AL: He talked perfect Jewish.

BB: But he spoke perfect German?

AL: Perfect German, yeah.

BB: Okay [11:00]. But he didn't -- did he tell you anything about himself?

AL: No, nothing.

BB: Did he tell you that -- did he tell you his name? Did he --

AL: No.

BB: No? He didn't give his name? Okay. Do you remember if he was an American officer or if he was an enlisted man?

AL: I think he was officer; it seems like it to me. He had a -- had a captain uniform on and I think he was an officer.

BB: Was he older? He was older than you?

AL: Oh yeah, he was older.

BB: And about how old?

AL: Oh I don't know; 35, 40.

BB: Okay. And -- so you walked into -- you were taken into a room --

AL: Yeah, the guard brought me in.

BB: -- the guard brought you in.

AL: Yeah.

BB: And then the American -- when -- did he go in with you at the same time or did he --

AL: No, he went -- he went out and locked the door.

BB: [affirmative] And -- but -- and then the American interrogator -- the

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- he came in later [12:00].

AL: But that's -- no, he was in there already.

BB: Oh he -- oh he was already in the room.

AL: He was already in the room.

BB: Okay. And would the guard -- there was not a guard standing there he was --

AL: No guard. I don't know.

BB: You don't know?

AL: I don't know.

BB: Okay. How long were you questioned for?

AL: A half hour maybe.

BB: Okay. Now that -- so just a half hour?

AL: Yeah, something like that.

BB: Okay.

AL: Yeah.

BB: And were you standing or were you seated?

AL: First I was sitting and then they -- then he said, "You stand up in attention. You know, when you don't talk we send you to Russia."

BB: So you started out sitting but then he told you --

AL: Yeah, to stand.

BB: Do you know why he did that?

AL: He thought I am not telling him everything. I didn't tell him everything.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: [laughs] You know, when the -- because [13:00].

BB: What sort of questions did he ask -- did he ask you?

AL: I don't know anymore. I -- know where I was born and so and so --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- and then there and there, and I don't know what he asked, what he actually asked. I know this, you stay attention and then if you are there. And I had a watch -- I had that watch on, is this a dienst [spelled phonetically] watch? A dienst watch. You know, he would took it off. No, I said this is a private where I kept [laughs] it.

VS: Description of the room. When you went into the room was there a table?

AL: A desk type.

VS: Desk?

AL: Desk type.

VS: Was there one chair, two chairs?

AL: I don't know.

VS: Was the -- was the American sitting or standing?

AL: Sitting.

VS: So there were probably two chairs, one for you --

AL: Probably.

VS: Was there anything else in the room?

AL: I don't know. It was a room [laughs].

BB: Yeah. Did it -- did it [14:00] have a window?

AL: I cannot say.

BB: That's okay.

AL: I don't know.

BB: That's fine.

AL: Probably it -- probably it had window --

BB: That's fine.

AL: -- you know.

BB: So he start -- did he start by asking you about your history?

AL: The history --

BB: Kind -- like we did today? Where you were born and --

AL: Yeah, exactly.

BB: And then did he ask you -- he asked you about your military experience?

AL: No, all that -- he asked me more about concentration camps.

BB: [affirmative] And so was that mostly what he was asking about was the concentration camps?

AL: Concentration camps, yeah.

BB: Okay. What did he want to know?

AL: How many I killed and so and so --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- you know, or what I had [unintelligible] and I said I didn't kill anything, I gave him [unintelligible] with a gun one time I felt like he had the hands in the pocket. And I don't know what I talk -- this was, I know, because the fellow [laughs] and many told me that [laughs] you know and that -- and that -- and that consulate.

BB: Okay [15:00]. He -- so he asked you what you did. Did he ask you --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- to describe the concentration camp? There -- or did they already know about it?

AL: They know about it. They know --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- about it.

BB: Can you talk a little bit about the pictures that he showed -- you said he showed you a photograph?

AL: Oh yeah, a woman he wrote [spelled phonetically] with two kids.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: You know, and asked why they are in there I said I don't know why they are in there.

BB: Yeah, so he asked if that specific woman was at Gusen [15:37]?

AL: No, he said "Why are that woman in there," or -- I don't know where she was or if she was in Gusen or was in somewhere else, I don't know.

VS: But you didn't know this woman.

AL: No, I didn't know her.

MS: This was just a woman.

AL: I didn't know her.

MS: Yes, okay.

BB: And but what did they want to know about the woman?

AL: Yeah, why those people so [16:00] skinny?

BB: So skinny. So it was a very -- so they wanted to know if you saw skinny people --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- like that? Okay.

AL: And I say I didn't see anything like that.

BB: [affirmative] Okay.

VS: Did the American take notes?

AL: I don't know.

VS: That's okay.

AL: I don't know.

VS: Did he have other papers?

AL: I don't know. He --

VS: Okay. But he had photographs?

AL: He had -- it was maybe that big --

BB: Oh a big picture? Okay.

AL: Yeah.

VS: Just one?

AL: Just one, I don't know. That woman I remember.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: With the two kids and then I told them they are -- maybe they -- their legs they are
[unintelligible].

BB: Do you -- when you were at Gusen [16:44] do you remember seeing people that
looked like that?

AL: No.

BB: Okay.

AL: No.

BB: So not as skinny --

AL: Yeah --

BB: -- as in the picture they showed you.

AL: I didn't -- we didn't get into the camp.

BB: Okay.

AL: SS [16:54] had the camp over --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: We only -- when they came out of the gate to the train [17:00].

BB: So you never went into the camp?

AL: No. We went one time in the mess hall and we had some women in there; and I think they had a whorehouse in there [laughs]. You know?

BB: [affirmative]

MS: Worked for the German SS [17:16].

AL: No, I think for the prisoners.

MS: For the prisoners.

BB: Really?

AL: There were fellows -- they were -- everything was controlled from the prisoners lagerkommandant and they had lagerpolizei uniform on. Only a stripe [spelled phonetically] in there. Or if it's a criminal or a [unintelligible] and take some [unintelligible]. They didn't have that zebra uniform, you know?

BB: Okay. No one had the zebra uniform or --

AL: No, only the kapos. Some of the kapos -- yeah, some of the couple -- yeah, some -- about higher ranks, yeah, inside controlled stuff like that.

BB: And [18:00] this building that you went into that you said you thought it might have been a whorehouse or something, this was in -- this was in the camp?

AL: Yeah, inside the wall.

BB: Okay.

AL: We heard the women screaming.

BB: [affirmative] And why did you -- why did you go in there? Just --

AL: No, we waited for -- in the mess hall --

BB: Oh, you waited.

AL: -- from the -- from the SS [18:23] from the mess hall. And then we heard the women screaming in there.

BB: Okay.

AL: Because there were -- there was a whorehouse for the SS too already there, somewhere else I saw that.

BB: [affirmative] But you think this was a whorehouse for the -- for the -- for the --

AL: I think so. I think if they had --

BB: But for the --

AL: -- for sure.

BB: But for --

AL: Yeah.

BB: It was for -- you think it was for the prisoners?

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: I think the women were for the prisoner because everything was controlled, you know, thinks, you know [19:00], from the -- from the [speaks German], was controlled.

MS: And again, what was your specific job where you were there at Gusen [19:13]?

AL: Only 1,000 prisoners out and then we had our outside commander the guards.

MS: Okay.

AL: The [foreign language], you know.

BB: And you said they were about -- and you would take 1,000 at a time, is that what you said?

AL: Probably 1,000 at a time.

BB: Okay. Were they all men or were they women or --

AL: All men; there was only men in there.

BB: Okay. And what were they doing? What job were they performing?

AL: They were build the thing -- the factories in there, in that sand hill [spelled phonetically]. Because they made an airplane wings for the -- for Messerschmitt [19:49] and stuff like this.

BB: Okay. So --

AL: But because they made it before or they made inside in the camp and later on -- I don't know what happened there [20:00]. Oh, one other thing, the Americans break everything, what was in there, you know, with diamond and splinter [spelled phonetically] everything. And when I -- I got one time stay on 84 I went to Yugoslavia [20:17] and I had a girlfriend and they [unintelligible]. And then I want to know what happened when the -- when the war was to end. When they -- when the front comes closer the SS [20:35] moved away and the [unintelligible] fire department took the camp over, and the American they opened it up. And the worst ones who mistreated the [speaks German] that was the kapos. And the kapos run all away after that and they killed all of them.

BB: They were all killed [21:00]?

AL: They were killed.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: And that -- and the German [unintelligible] they had to clean them up. They were armed [spelled phonetically] with picks and with an ax and with [unintelligible] they killed them.

BB: And you're -- and you're using the term you said kapos, what --

AL: Kapos, they call them -- they always said -- no crematorium.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: [laughs] Kapos means like he is the boss or what, I don't know.

BB: Okay. So the kind of the ringleaders or the people --

AL: Yeah, I think they -- see 20 men [spelled phonetically] had a kapos; he did work.

BB: Okay, so there was a boss or someone in charge for each 20 men --

AL: For each 20 men.

BB: -- there was one person who was in charge.

AL: That's right.

BB: And he didn't do any work.

AL: No, he --

BB: He was just in charge.

AL: There were fellows in there from the Spanish War [laughs]; from the Spanish War [21:54] were in there [22:00]. We talked sometimes; one time we drove out with a [unintelligible] then the fellow said, "We kill somebody tonight. Somebody gets killed." From the prisoner, you know? From the workmen [spelled phonetically].

Yeah, [foreign language] he was a lager police and he stole the bread pan [spelled phonetically] when they worked, and then he got punished and they got off, you know? Then they had to go to work. And then the kapos then killed -- the kapos drove their [unintelligible] there was a door there, one door there. And the other one was fence that they -- and he want to drive that fellow through the guard thing and that the fellow didn't move, and one of us -- all of a sudden the fellow run and the fellows missed --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- and they got right away arrested. And we had to hunt for him. And then [23:00] [unintelligible] eight hours we 16 hours' duty and this was a Russian. I don't know what they -- this a Russian but I think. And then they caught him again and I was with him too -- and then we took him home and maybe a mile before they took him [unintelligible] and they began to shot him.

BB: [affirmative] Did you witness that?

AL: What?

BB: Did you -- did you see that happen?

AL: I didn't see that it was behind the bushes what there --

BB: Oh.

AL: -- what they told him to shot him.

BB: [affirmative] Did you hear the shots?

AL: I --

BB: Yeah.

AL: We hear the gun.

BB: Were -- could you describe the prisoners that were there at Gusen [23:50]? That -- were they -- you said there was some people from the Spanish War [23:54].

AL: Yeah, there were kapos, you know [laughs] and say --

BB: And there were also Russians [24:00] there? Were there Russians there as well?

AL: I didn't understand --

BB: Were there Russian prisoners?

AL: Oh, there was -- there was every nation was there except the English and Americans.

BB: Okay. Were they -- were they all Jewish? Were --

AL: No.

BB: Were --

AL: Some were homosexuals and --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- there were a lot thing -- I don't know.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: They had their special things on their, you know, on their --

BB: [affirmative] But did you get the sense that most of them were Jewish? Or there was -
-

AL: [unintelligible]

BB: -- a wide --

AL: I tell you something. When the Russian front came close they came from Auschwitz [24:46], the Jews. And they were running first -- the first [unintelligible] they had electric wire [laughs] in there. They had always five together and they counted them, you know.

BB: [affirmative] [25:00]

AL: And they were running, you know [laughs], like [unintelligible]. But afterwards they slowed down there, it was not -- it was not that bad.

BB: And so again there were -- so prisoners from Auschwitz [25:14] went to Gusen [25:17].

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay, when Auschwitz was being overrun --

AL: Yeah they brought them --

BB: They brought in --

AL: [unintelligible]

BB: And was this while you were there?

AL: Yeah they were.

BB: Okay.

AL: Yeah, while I was there.

BB: Okay. And again your job was to escort or take prisoners back and forth.

AL: Yeah forward and --

BB: Just back and forth you didn't -- you didn't --

AL: You didn't have to hit them or [unintelligible] it was not allowed to hit them or something like that. That was not our duty.

BB: Well did they -- were they marched? Did they walk back and forth?

AL: No, with a train.

BB: Oh okay.

AL: With a train.

BB: And so you rode the -- you rode on the train.

AL: Always on the train with the prisoner [26:00].

BB: Okay. And then you would drop them off at where -- at the -- where they were making the --

AL: At the location at the camp.

BB: Okay. And -- but you wouldn't -- when they were working on there -- on building the underground factories or the underground bunkers, you didn't guard them then you just dropped them off.

AL: No, we weren't in charge of that; only the outside commander was.

BB: Okay. And again could you tell us again what were the prisoners doing? What were they building?

AL: They built round things like factories in there.

BB: Okay.

AL: You know, they worked at -- when I was there they didn't work there. But afterward, after I left or the what, they worked in there.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: They worked in there.

BB: But they were -- so some of them actually were building airplane wings.

AL: Yeah, oh yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: They built some things, you know, in the [unintelligible].

BB: Okay [27:00]. But you -- but you -- did you ever see?

AL: I didn't see --

BB: You didn't see anything.

AL: I didn't see it.

BB: Okay. And again at Gusen [27:10] where did you stay? Did -- there were barracks when you stayed in --

AL: No barracks, in Gusen.

BB: In Gusen.

AL: In Gusen.

BB: Okay.

AL: And there -- where they [unintelligible] this was Gusen Mauthausen.

BB: Mauthausen.

AL: And Gusen Sankt Georgen Gusen Sankt Georgen Gusen was here --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- and the camp was here. And then Mauthausen was up on the hill, there were the sick ones up there.

BB: Okay. And did you ever go to Mauthausen?

AL: No, after the -- after seven days that I went through the camp.

BB: Okay. And again coming back to when you were in questioned, when you [28:00] were interrogated --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- is -- are these the sorts of questions they asked you or did they -- what details did they want to get from you?

AL: I don't know, how many I killed and --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- something like that.

BB: And did they want you to name the names of other -- of other people who were there, of other Germans?

AL: No, nobody.

BB: Okay.

AL: Only the fellow who came over with the boat who was charged over there [spelled phonetically]. I know -- I remember two and one I don't remember and then he told me the other [unintelligible].

BB: [affirmative] Did you make up information? Did you lie on purpose to mislead the Americans?

AL: A little bit.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: [laughs] A little bit, you know, I mean I --

BB: And that's okay. We don't [29:00] --

AL: [unintelligible]

BB: -- we don't care.

AL: [unintelligible]

BB: That -- we don't care. We just -- we're just curious.

AL: I tell you one, a story [spelled phonetically]. I was there and they shot an airplane down, you know, when they came in groups. And two came out and they came with a parachute down and then we had to catch them. And then the SS [29:18] got before we got on there and them two they got shot.

BB: Really.

AL: They shot them.

VS: Were these Americans or British?

AL: American, I don't know what they were. They were Americans I think. I only see them dead laying there.

BB: [affirmative] Did you see the plane coming down?

AL: Yeah, that little [unintelligible].

BB: It was -- it was -- was it a bomber? One of the big --

AL: It was a --

BB: Bomber?

AL: Only two came out.

BB: Only two and they -- did they parachute?

AL: Parachute, yeah.

BB: Okay. And so did you see the two parachutes?

AL: Yeah.

BB: And by the time you [30:00] got there --

AL: Their -- they passed on, yeah.

BB: -- they were dead.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

VS: And so was that something that came up in the questioning at --

AL: I didn't say them that.

VS: Okay, so that was something you didn't tell them.

AL: Yeah, I didn't tell them.

VS: Yes. Why wouldn't you tell them?

AL: I don't know. I was German--

VS: Yeah.

AL: -- it was American.

VS: Yes.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: So it -- I mean, you know --

MS: When you were both sitting -- you started by sitting at the table you -- the -- when you were being questioned by the American here.

AL: Yeah.

MS: You were sitting and he was sitting.

AL: Yeah.

MS: At some point he asked you to stand up.

AL: Stand up attention.

MS: Okay.

AL: Attention.

MS: Okay, in terms of the discussion if you can remember what do you think -- why do you think he wanted you to stand up? Was there something --

AL: I don't know. I don't know.

VS: He was unhappy [31:00] with something.

AL: He probably was.

VS: Did he have a sense that maybe you were not telling information you knew?

AL: Yeah, probably.

VS: Or was he just trying to scare you?

AL: I don't think so. I don't know. And I --

MS: Go ahead.

AL: I mean from the camp I told him everything that, you know --

MS: Yes.

AL: -- what is so and so and -- but I was not advised in many -- I told him I pushed them with a gun, he already had the pants in the pocket, what [spelled phonetically]. But I don't know what else I told him.

VS: [affirmative] When you began the conversation here in the -- in the room did the American offer you cigarettes or --

AL: [inaudible]

VS: -- candy or anything --

AL: Nothing.

VS: Nothing.

AL: Nothing.

VS: Was he friendly? Was he --

AL: Oh yes, he said, "Tell your life story," you know?

VS: Yeah.

AL: And I told him.

VS: Yeah. Did he read any information to you about your rights?

AL: I don't know. I don't remember and I don't see it. I don't know.

VS: Okay.

AL: I don't know.

VS: And so it was interesting that at one point he had you stand up at attention.

AL: Yeah.

VS: Can you describe that again and --

AL: Yeah.

(End of Tape 2A)

(Beginning of Tape 2B)

VS: At the point where the American asked you to stand at attention can you give us some more details? Tell us what happened at that time?

AL: I don't know he said, "Stand attention," like this, you know. Something like that.
That's all I remember [laughs], you know.

VS: And what happened then?

AL: Oh yeah, then he asked me some different questions but I don't -- I don't remember.

VS: Okay.

AL: No.

VS: And you mentioned something about Russia, how he'd send you to Russia. When did that come up?

AL: This came up when I was standing at attention.

VS: Okay. And how did he say it?

AL: "If you don't talk we send you to Russia."

BB: Did you -- did you believe him?

AL: I don't know.

[laughter]

I don't know.

VS: Did he say it more than once? Just once?

AL: I remember once.

BB: Okay.

AL: [affirmative]

BB: Did that scare you?

AL: No, not exactly, what the heck.

BB: Did that -- do you remember if that made you [01:00] want to talk more or it didn't really --

AL: I don't know. I don't know.

BB: Okay.

AL: It didn't -- it's too long ago and --

BB: Yes [affirmative].

VS: And once he was finished talking with you was there anything that happened?

AL: He rung the bell and then the guard came there [unintelligible] bells.

VS: So there was a bell there like a doorbell.

AL: He probably [laughs] -- something was, you know.

VS: Next. So you went back to your -- to your cell?

AL: To the cell, yes.

VS: After you went back to your cell did you talk to the other prisoner about what happened?

AL: Yeah, to that fellow, you know, the -- but the -- probably the microphone was on, you know.

VS: No, that's good. This is good.

[laughter]

BB: Did you -- did somebody -- did you think that there were microphones there?

AL: Oh yeah, I saw that. Not -- I was not that dumb [02:00].

[laughter]

BB: Did you -- did you think that at the time you arrived or did you -- did you come to that conclusion after you were there?

AL: I think over there -- over there it was something hidden.

VS: Where was it hidden?

AL: Yeah, I don't know. I didn't look for it.

[laughter]

VS: All right.

AL: We should have looked for it, you know.

[laughter]

VS: And did you have a conversation with your cellmate?

AL: Yeah, sure.

VS: We'd love to hear anything that you talked about.

AL: I don't know if I -- maybe what they ask -- what kind of questions he asked and so and so, you know, I --

VS: [affirmative]

AL: -- told him that, you know. And because when he came back I asked him the question and then he told me the -- you know, what they think about a free Austria [02:50] or the so.

MS: Were you -- did you meet with the American first or did your cellmate meet with the

American first?

AL: What do you mean [03:00]?

VS: Did you go to the American and talk with the American before your cellmate? Or did your cellmate go first?

AL: No, I went first.

VS: You went first.

AL: I went first, so.

VS: Okay. Very good. And did you talk about the possibility that --

AL: No.

VS: -- you were being --

AL: No.

VS: -- listened to?

AL: Maybe, I don't know. I don't know. I never [unintelligible] [laughs], so --

VS: Did the Americans allow you to have things like cigarettes or magazines or --

AL: No --

VS: Did they give you anything special --

AL: No --

VS: -- to make you feel comfortable?

AL: No, nothing.

VS: No? Just the regular meals?

AL: Just the regular meals and --

BB: [affirmative] Do you remember any of the food? Was the food any good?

AL: I think the food was good. I didn't die.

[laughter]

So, you know --

BB: Was it better or worse than German Army [03:55] food?

AL: I don't know.

BB: Oh, that's fine. That's okay.

AL: It's just too long.

BB: Oh that's fine [04:00].

[laughter]

That's totally fine.

AL: I was not over hungry or, you know --

BB: [affirmative]

AL: -- or other things, so it was --

BB: But -- and you ate your food in your cell.

AL: I think so.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: I think so.

BB: Okay.

AL: We didn't go out [laughs].

BB: But you couldn't use the bathroom in your cell. Did you -- if you had to use --

AL: No.

BB: -- the bathroom --

AL: Yeah, the bathroom that -- in the cell --

BB: Did --

AL: -- got overrun [spelled phonetically].

BB: How did you get -- did you just yell for the guard or --

AL: Ring the bell.

BB: Oh, so you had a bell.

AL: Ring the bell. Yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: We had a bell.

VS: You may not remember, but do you remember maybe where the bathroom was located?

AL: In that same hallway.

VS: The same hallway. The same hallway.

AL: Same hallway. The guard he didn't go out here.

VS: Okay. Okay.

AL: Yeah, same hallway.

VS: So you didn't have to pass through here to go to the bathroom.

AL: No.

VS: So somewhere in the --

AL: Somewhere in here it was.

VS: Did you ever go down this hall, this hall, or this hall?

AL: No.

BB: So when you were interrogated it was in the same hallway, just a different room.

AL: No, I think we came through here [05:00] then somewhere else.

BB: Okay.

VS: You didn't leave the building though?

AL: We didn't leave the building. We didn't leave the building.

BB: How did you know that it was shaped like that? You could just -- for when you were in the exercise yard or how --

AL: No, we saw it when we came and when we got out of the truck, you know --

BB: You could tell.

AL: -- it looked like a cross barrack [spelled phonetically].

BB: Okay.

VS: When you came up on the truck and you came out of the truck for the first time, where were you? Were you inside the fence? Outside the fence?

AL: Inside.

VS: You were inside the fence.

AL: Inside the fence.

VS: Okay. And how close to the building were you?

AL: Very close to this.

MS: Very close. So --

AL: We took a shower there somewhere around --

VS: So there was a place to take a shower.

AL: Yeah.

VS: So, let's see, if you would put a spot -- put an X where you think the bus would be relative to this building.

AL: I don't know. It -- if I am not mistaken it was something like that.

VS: Okay. And so was there a fence out here?

AL: Yeah, I didn't see that fence, you know [06:00].

VS: Okay.

AL: Because --

VS: Sure.

AL: -- we drove in there.

VS: Okay. And you got off the bus and then where did you go? Did you go into an entrance here?

AL: No, entrance here more and then at take your cloe off put down the sea sack.

VS: So would you come in like this or how did you come --

AL: I don't know.

VS: Okay.

AL: I don't know.

VS: All right. Did you see any other prisoners in any of the other cells?

AL: No. Only when they walked out here.

VS: Okay.

AL: You know, you see maybe them prisoners walked here and they walked here and they walked here and they walked here. I --

BB: So you didn't meet any other prisoners --

AL: No.

BB: -- other than the one that you stayed with in your room? And when --

AL: Afterwards, you know, afterwards --

BB: Afterwards in Richmond [06:48] --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- you talked to other ones.

AL: Yes.

BB: When you would be exercising outside you were by yourself.

AL: Only with two

BB: Okay [07:00].

[laughter]

JOSEPH MARSDEN: My bad ankle is giving me a fit sitting down [laughs].

VS: Oh sure.

AL: I need to walk around a little bit.

VS: Okay, thanks. So that when you went out to exercise, to walk --

AL: Yeah.

VS: -- the two, you and your roommate --

AL: Yeah, only a roommate.

VS: Okay, that's it.

AL: That's it.

VS: Was there --

AL: But I don't know where we went out there. So I don't know it anymore either.

BB: Okay. Do you remember the fence? You said you were inside the fence.

AL: Yeah, I --

BB: Do you remember the fence?

AL: -- think they had a fence around this --

BB: Okay.

AL: -- [unintelligible], you know, probably they didn't have it open, you know, it seems

like.

BB: Could you see outside the fence? You mentioned earlier about there being pine trees.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Could you see those just -- from the exercise yard you could see the pine trees?

AL: Oh yeah, the pine trees, you know.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: I know the pine trees.

BB: Okay. And [08:00] you described earlier there being a guard tower or something where the guards were; the guards were in the middle.

AL: In the middle.

BB: Were there any guards around the --

AL: [unintelligible]

BB: -- outside? No?

AL: I don't -- I didn't see any.

BB: Okay.

AL: Because they brought you there and then you went there.

BB: Were there ever anything like -- were there dogs or anything patrolling?

AL: Nothing.

BB: Okay.

AL: Nothing.

BB: Okay. Any other specific physical questions about Fort Hunt [08:39]?

VS: I just -- again, I'm -- it's interesting that you thought that maybe they were listening to you. I mean any other thoughts about that?

AL: We are not the [unintelligible] exactly, you know when they put two men in a cell, you know [laughs], you know [09:00] --

BB: Did you --

AL: And that's what -- when I jumped on the bed and the guard came right away.

MS: Yes.

[laughter]

BB: Anything else like that? Anything else like jumping on the bed? Anything else that maybe made you think that there was something --

AL: No, I haven't -- well jumped in the bed, you know [laughs], then we knew, you know, yes there's a microphone hidden somewhere.

BB: Did you think there were microphones when you were at Fort Meade [09:25]?

AL: No.

BB: No? Okay. You -- can -- about how big was the cell? Do you remember was it really small --

AL: I -- it --

BB: -- for --

AL: -- was not really small. But it was two beds in there. I only know two beds there and -

-

BB: Okay.

AL: -- you know, it was not too small maybe. I don't know what --

BB: No, that's okay. That's okay.

AL: -- if the 60 [spelled phonetically].

BB: We know we're asking you tough questions.

[laughter]

VS: And again you probably don't have an answer to this. But do you think because you thought that maybe they could listen you were careful about what you said [10:00]?

AL: I don't know. I don't know, maybe, I don't -- I don't know. I don't know, maybe.

BB: Do you remember at all what sorts of things you and your cellmate, what you talked about? Was it just what you were being interrogated about or --

AL: Yeah, I only remember what he said, you know, what they asked him the question what did they get [spelled phonetically] a free Austria [10:29] and something like that.

BB: Okay. We'll move on chronologically a bit and then maybe come back --

VS: Sure.

BB: -- if we think of others.

VS: So I guess at this point recollections of departure, where did he go, that --

BB: Exactly, yeah. So you -- at -- you were there three, four, or five days --

AL: I think so. It was something like --

BB: -- total.

AL: -- that.

BB: When you -- when you left do you remember if you left with the same group of

[11:00] people to go to the -- to the -- to go --

AL: To Richmond, yes.

BB: To Richmond [11:05].

AL: Yeah.

BB: Is the same people that you came with?

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: I think the other fellow there from the Navy [11:14].

BB: Okay.

VS: The bag. The bag.

BB: The -- you said -- so the fellow that was in the Navy who was on the U-boat [11:22] --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- did he leave with you or you just met up with him at Richmond [11:27]?

AL: With me.

BB: Okay, so he left with you who was on the U-boat.

AL: I don't know how many men we were.

BB: Okay.

AL: Yeah.

BB: That's okay.

AL: I don't know.

BB: And did you go straight from this building back to Richmond?

AL: Yeah.

BB: So you did not go back to Fort Meade [11:44]?

AL: No.

BB: Okay. Then -- so you got back to Richmond [11:50]. How long were you at -- in Richmond for?

AL: I don't know. I don't -- maybe a week, two weeks then I got transferred to La Plata [12:00], Waldorf, Smith's Point [12:01].

BB: In Maryland?

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay. And as you said near La Plata [12:06] and Waldorf [12:07].

AL: Yeah. We work around that area.

BB: Okay. And what did --

AL: La Plata, Waldorf and then we drove over here to Smith's Point [12:16] probably a half hour or something; like -- the camp was right on the Potomac [12:21].

BB: Okay. And how long -- did you stay there for the rest of your time?

AL: The rest of my time until I think this -- until I signed that paper.

VS: Signed the paper.

BB: Until you signed --

AL: I think June -- I think maybe, maybe the 11th or something like that.

BB: Okay. At -- of May 11th of 1946 or '45.

AL: Yeah.

BB: It was -- it was --

AL: '46.

BB: So you were there for a whole year.

AL: Over a year.

BB: Yeah [13:00]. Just -- we'll take care of it during a break.

VS: That's okay.

BB: It's -- I'd rather not make the noise. So you were there for about a year in Maryland at a -- at a permanent prisoner of war [13:13] camp.

AL: That's right.

BB: Okay. And what kind of work were you doing there?

AL: Some -- I worked sometimes for farmers; tomatoes and then corn, you know, had to get the corncob out. And then I worked in a sawmill [13:33]. The -- two miles in there they built a sawmill and then I worked there. And then I cut some paper. We had to make -- we had to cut 1,000 board feet of timber in there -- in their [unintelligible].

BB: And were you guarded, under guard the whole time?

AL: No. Oh and later on we worked paper wood [14:00]. Yeah they made six-foot-long, two foot wide, you know, they made -- and we had to peel that and then we weighed that.

BB: And what was it called again?

AL: Pardon me?

BB: What did you make?

AL: Peel it.

BB: Peel what?

AL: Paper wood. Yeah

VS: For paper, pulp.

BB: Paper wood?

AL: Yeah.

BB: Like -- you don't mean plywood?

AL: No.

VS: No.

AL: They cut the trees down --

VS: [affirmative]

AL: -- then we had to -- six-foot-long and we had to pile them up in two foot -- two-foot-high, two-foot-wide and then we had to make two courts a day. And then what we did we [unintelligible] them around. The guard came and then he put a few pencil marks on there, yeah, with the chalk, and then we cut there -- cut it off.

[laughter]

And afterwards we left; a few thousand [15:00] cords were missing.

[laughter]

BB: And did you -- you traveled back and forth everyday --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- to the --

AL: Every day. See it first they had to make one cord and they worked two days in a week. And then the -- then the -- then the captain says if you make from seven to 12 wood cord you can make from 12 to five out of one then it didn't make it maybe they put them -- they put them 40 -- they put them in jail for 40 days' water and bread and then they made it.

[laughter]

BB: How big was the camp that you were held at? How many -- how many Germans were there?

AL: See I have -- I have this camp the picture the captain gave me that picture --

MS: Really?

AL: -- of the camp, yeah. I have it in West Virginia [15:58].

MS: Oh we'll have to come back.

AL: What?

BB: We'll have to come back [16:00].

[laughter]

AL: [inaudible] camp you don't have to come back. We bought a -- I don't know, about four to five barracks, you know.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: In the mess hall and then the [unintelligible].

BB: And everyone was doing work in the -- at farms or at the sawmill [16:20]?

AL: Yeah, every -- some brought in the most capable man there was [unintelligible] some work for farmer and some [unintelligible], you know.

BB: And this was -- the war was over at this point.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Right?

AL: Yeah, yes.

BB: How were you -- how were you treated?

AL: At the blackboard it says German government exists anymore you have to follow the rule and the regulation of the Americans. That was it.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: And then they transferred their lagerkommandants [16:53] and then they made Democrats out of us.

[laughter]

BB: Then they made what?

AL: [17:00] Democrats out of us.

MS: Democrats out of you, okay.

[laughter]

AL: So, you know, [unintelligible].

BB: And did you -- were you working with American citizens in the farms?

AL: [inaudible]

BB: Just -- so just Germans.

AL: Just -- sure.

BB: Okay. And so you were there for a year. Were there other people in that camp who had been interrogated like you? Did you ever run across anyone?

AL: I didn't know anything. I didn't know.

BB: So other than the five or so people from Richmond [17:39], those were the only people that you ever met who that you know --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- went --

AL: Yeah, the other fellow came with me too. He was in the same camp with me and [unintelligible].

BB: Oh, okay. So some -- one other person who had --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- been interrogated.

AL: So far as I remember, yeah.

BB: Okay. And so again around April or [18:00] May of 1946 you signed that agreement.

AL: [affirmative]

BB: And that's when you were allowed to go back --

AL: Yes --

BB: -- to Germany?

AL: We traveled [unintelligible] so different some English, some were French, some were Americans, some were Russian, some were Italians, some with everybody different, you know. And then we got to -- then we got to bullback [spelled phonetically] and the American promised all prisoners for a year or two years who worked there. And that's -- that was the time that I signed that paper.

VS: [affirmative] Before you go back to Europe, go back to Germany; when I was here the last time we had talked just briefly, Pine Grove Furnace [18:48] in Pennsylvania [18:51]. You seem to be familiar with that camp.

AL: No.

VS: No you don't --

AL: No.

VS: Okay.

AL: No, it was only --

VS: Smiths [19:00], okay.

AL: Smiths [unintelligible] and then Fort Meade [19:03].

VS: Okay. All right. They didn't send you on a work detail in Pennsylvania anywhere?

AL: No.

MS: Okay, all right.

BB: So you got back to Germany; how did Germany seem after -- and was you -- where your home -- had there been fighting where you lived?

AL: They shot [unintelligible] up through here a little bit in the -- some farmhouses were --

BB: Some --

AL: -- a little bit damaged, you know.

BB: [affirmative] But it --

AL: So when the Americans came, first of all the burgermeister [19:43] got arrested because he was a Nazi [19:45], you know. And someone who were -- who were bigger Nazis, they got arrested, you know, the [unintelligible]. And they would arrest my father too but he had -- he had so many children so they didn't arrest [laughs] him [20:00].

BB: [affirmative] And why did they want to arrest your father? Because he was a Nazi [20:04] too?

AL: Yeah, he was a -- he was Nazi too.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: He belonged to the party.

BB: Okay. So were they just arresting anyone who belonged to the Nazi party?

AL: Yeah, who were a little bit bigger, you know, who was involved because in the little village they had the fellow again who was a schwarzer [20:23]. A schwarzer means a black boy, you know, the [unintelligible]. And then he reported to the American, you know, who is -- who was Nazis [20:33] and so and so.

BB: I'm sorry, so could you say that again. That you said what -- what's the definition of that word again? A schwarzer [20:41] you --

AL: A schwarzer. We call them schwarzer.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: You know I -- if he didn't believe in Hitler [20:49] he was a schwarzer.

BB: Okay.

AL: You know, it is an expression, you know.

BB: Okay.

AL: And then like in other village where I was working the [unintelligible] [21:00] the fellow said, "Years ago we saved for the [speaks German] and now we gone -- now we got them here." [laughs] You remember what it means? Yeah, [speaks German] in the Catholic church always gave extra money for the black people in Africa [21:21].

BB: Okay.

AL: And that fellow was a schwarzer [21:24] too. And he said, "Now we got them here."

BB: Okay.

AL: [laughs] You know?

BB: And so you got back to Germany and what did you do once you were --

AL: We got to -- gee, where -- Marburg [21:42] I say Marburg and we could go home.

BB: You got to go home.

AL: Yeah.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: We got a free ticket to the railroad and we got -- I got home the 22nd of June.

BB: And was that the first time that you [22:00] had seen your father then --

AL: Yeah.

BB: -- in three or four -- about three years or so?

AL: Yeah.

BB: [affirmative] Did you have other brothers who were in the German military?

AL: No, they all were younger.

BB: They were all younger?

AL: They were all younger.

BB: Okay. Did friends of yours who you had gone to school with or had worked on farms

--

AL: Next door we -- a cousin lived there he was on the Russian front he --

BB: He never came back?

AL: He never came back.

BB: Did they --

AL: Never.

BB: Do they know what happened to him or --

AL: I don't know who won. He was first in the lazaret [22:36] in the hospital with a fellow from [unintelligible]. And the other fellow got well -- no he got well and he had wait on the other fellow didn't get well and then he got Ernst [spelled phonetically]. We had the working [spelled phonetically] company and then I don't know, then he died.

BB: [affirmative] And how long did you live in Germany prior to coming to the United States?

AL: Twenty-seven [23:00] years.

BB: Okay. And what -- and did that -- you got into carpentry in Germany?

AL: Yeah.

BB: Anything to do with you working at a lumber mill in the United States or no?

AL: No.

BB: Nothing?

AL: Nothing.

BB: Okay.

AL: It was fate to that time. There was no -- the reichsmark and, you know, when we worked on the carpenter the people fed us lunchtime see? And after the -- after that '48, you know, then the -- then the daymark [spelled phonetically] came and then nobody -- everybody got 60 marks for 600 pay marks, or 600 reichsmark you had to give -- no you got 60 daymark [unintelligible] got it anyhow so --

BB: [affirmative] And so you came to the United States in the 1970s?

AL: No, '52 [24:00].

BB: Oh for -- oh in 1952.

AL: Fifty-two.

BB: Okay so, I'm sorry, I thought you -- so you were only in Germany then for about five -
- about five years after you got back; five or six years.

AL: Yeah, working, I don't know, five, six years here.

BB: Okay.

VS: I think he was saying he was 27 years old --

BB: Twenty-seven years old, okay.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay. So you came here in 1952.

AL: Fifty-two.

BB: Okay. And why -- and you decided to come here --

AL: No, I had an uncle here.

BB: Okay.

AL: He -- grandmother -- his mother wrote him, Tony is a good boy, you let him come to America and that's why I [laughs] came.

BB: [affirmative]

VS: And when we had talked the last time you said you had a hard time finding a job in Germany. It was because --

AL: Yeah, hard job there was -- it was lousy. There was -- you know, you had maybe a week's work and then you -- the boss said I don't have no job then you got laid [25:00] off again. And so --

BB: When you came to the United States in 1952 did they -- when you immigrated here did they question you at all about what you did during World War II?

AL: Not at all.

BB: Okay.

AL: Sometimes they came around to other fellows who know me and --

BB: And asked about --

AL: -- [unintelligible] --

BB: Okay.

AL: But they didn't question me at all.

BB: So do you know if -- when you came here, did they know that you had worked at a concentration camp? Or they didn't --

AL: I don't know.

BB: Okay.

AL: I don't know.

BB: Okay.

AL: Probably they know it. The consulate over there in Munich [25:36] knew it.

BB: Knew, okay.

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay. And you -- so you've been here in the United States for, what's that 58 years then, right?

AL: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

AL: That's a long time.

[laughter]

BB: And did you speak any English at all when you got here?

AL: Well, you know, we had English book when I was prisoner here. To the '38 lexionaire [26:00], you know I could -- how do you do and how are you and that's good.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: And then I worked for a German fellow in Baltimore [26:10] as a carpenter. And then he was at [unintelligible] where the other German fellow was there for the nuns he worked there as a painter. And so I got there and -- and then this German fellow went back to Germany, you know, for a visit and he -- and the -- and the fellow said, "Could I have Tony work for me?" And after he came back he had no work, so I was staying with him. And then he died in 1960.

BB: [affirmative]

AL: And then I worked -- then I worked for myself.

BB: Okay.

VS: And you eventually became an American citizen?

AL: Yeah. Oh, after 10 years I came America -- I went always to Mexico [26:58]. I had to go to Washington [27:00] to the consulate.

VS: [affirmative]

AL: And then I -- then I -- then I made the citizen.

VS: Then you got to pay taxes.

AL: We had to pay before.

[laughter]

BB: What I'm -- are any other -- I know we want to go back a little bit.

VS: Yeah.

BB: And maybe show some pictures.

VS: Yeah.

BB: But any other, before we do that, any other questions chronologically?

VS: No, I think that's very --

BB: Okay.

VS: -- good.

BB: Okay.

VS: It was excellent.

BB: We're going to take a little break. Why don't we just flip tapes?

VS: Okay

BB: We're going to take just again another quick --

(End of Tape 2B)

(Beginning of Tape 3A)

BB: Okay. So, I'm going to give one last introduction; this will be the last time we go through this, I promise. Today is April 2, 2010. This is an interview as part of the Fort Hunt oral history project for the National Park Service. We're here interviewing former

German soldier, Mr. Anton Leonhard, here at his home in Hanover, Pennsylvania. This is Brandon Bies of the National Park Service. I'm also joined by Vincent Santucci and David Lassman, also of the National Park Service, and neighbor Joseph Marsden, who was influential and critical in bringing this all together, and we appreciate that a great deal. This is the third, and final, tape of interviews that we're going to be doing. And with that, Mr. Leonhard, we've asked you a whole lot of questions, and you've remembered things far better than we ever could have imagined you still remember [01:00]. But now, we actually -- I don't want to say we know the answers, but we know a little bit more about this place. During the war it was called Fort Hunt, Fort Hunt [01:18]. It was also known as a top-secret name called P.O. Box, like a Post Office box, P.O. Box 1142. Did you ever hear any of those terms? Okay.

AL: We didn't know what it was, or what they called it, or anything.

BB: Okay. We've got a few pictures -- and I definitely want to show, like, the layout and everything -- a few pictures to show you, that I -- and I don't know if you can see --

AL: I don't [unintelligible] like that.

BB: So, you can see that okay.

AL: Yeah. It was cold.

VS: Can you tell us what that is [02:00]? What is that?

AL: We got transferred to bring -- to that camp.

VS: That looks like the vehicle that transported you from Meade [02:11]?

AL: I think green [unintelligible] I don't know what six U.S. marines looked like, you know. They looked different.

VS: Very good. So, no windows.

AL: No, no. No windows whatsoever. [unintelligible]

VS: Very good. So that looks familiar.

AL: [affirmative]

VS: There's some other pictures. Okay. Do we want to show him the external?

MS: Sure. Yeah.

BB: We don't -- do we have the whiteout in there?

VS: Yes, we do. Okay. This photo here; does that look familiar at all?

AL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's it; that's what it looked like.

VS: Can you construct -- can you explain to us what you're seeing?

AL: Yeah. I can't see so good [03:00] either. Can I get my glasses?

VS: Please do. Please do. Okay. So can you tell us what you see in that photograph?

AL: Well, I know the tree in this. This [unintelligible], this is something; the dark house I don't remember. I don't remember a dark house. But, I know it was a cross barrack. You said, the truth?

BB: That is the truth. That's correct. Now, can we show him the cross -- before we do that, okay. That's not in -- yeah.

BB: You can show him that, see what he thinks of it.

AL: I don't remember that.

BB: Okay.

AL: What is this? Is this a bell [04:00]?

BB: That's a microphone.

AL: Oh.

BB: We're listening to you.

AL: Oh, oh. Okay.

BB: That was hidden in the ceiling.

AL: This big? Jesus.

BB: Big, yeah, a big microphone hidden in the ceiling.

AL: That was big. I thought this was a little. No hole there for wire -- I mean --

BB: Do you remember what the ceiling looked like, at all? Probably not.

AL: I don't.

BB: We think it was kind of like perforated ceiling tile, and so it was hidden up above there.

AL: Oh, no. I don't remember that.

VS: There is one picture. It's probably not the same building, or the same cell, but there is a photograph showing how the rooms --

AL: Yeah, yeah. It seems like, yeah, yeah, that's it. They brought the mattress [unintelligible].

VS: Okay, and do you know what, Brandon [05:00] --

BB: The other one's bigger, actually. I think this was --

BB: Yeah.

AL: Oh, a city [spelled phonetically]. Okay, okay. Okay. That's it, that's it.

MS: Would you people like to have something to drink? He didn't offer us a [unintelligible] -
-

BB: He did. He actually did offer us. Yes, he did.

AL: I was in that room down there.

BB: You were down -- do you remember where you came into there?

AL: I don't know; somewhere here was a shower. A shower, or I think so [unintelligible]. It

was a cross barrack. Then, then they had higher -- they had a room set up [spelled phonetically]. The music, I mean the --

BB: And so the music, the music played higher up, you said?

AL: I think it was. From there, up in the middle, it seemed like it did.

BB: Okay. And so, you were in [06:00] one of these rooms, on the --

AL: Yeah. I think we walked from here to laboratory. Yes, yes. A laboratory.

BB: I think so. I can't see from here, but --

AL: Yes, it's a laboratory. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10; 10, yeah, yeah. It was about 10 rooms.

BB: When you were there, did you -- do you know -- did you know there were other prisoners there?

AL: I assumed --

BB: You assumed there were, but you never -- did you interact with them, you didn't hear them, you didn't talk through the walls.

AL: Nichts, nichts.

BB: Okay.

AL: They took that down?

BB: Oh, yeah.

AL: And then, there was something [unintelligible] available; everything is foreign [spelled phonetically].

BB: I assume it is, yeah. I assume.

AL: I went down right after they had -- I didn't find anything at all [07:00].

MS: This is one of the prison [unintelligible] --

BB: Yeah. Well, a couple -- a little bit more information that we wouldn't -- we didn't want to tell you this earlier because we didn't want to bias your memory. The name -- you don't remember the name of the person that was in the cell with you? His last name was Thomas [spelled phonetically].

AL: Pardon me?

BB: Thomas, or Tomas.

AL: Thomas, yeah. He was a lawyer.

BB: We looked him up, and I think that is the case. I think he was.

AL: I think he's probably dead now.

BB: Yes, he dies.

AL: He was older than me, you know.

BB: He probably was. And so, what we have -- you were correct in that the rooms were bugged. There were microphones in the ceilings. What we have, and we can give you, we have the handwritten notes taken [08:00] by the people who were listening in to you while you were in your cell.

[laughter]

There was a whole group of Americans, who you never saw, whose entire job was to listen to you. There were a couple dozen Americans who were all fluent in German; they were in a bunker just outside of this building, and each room had its own microphone. And everything was listened in, and if it was a particularly important conversation, they would record it. And so we actually, we can give you the notes from, you know --

VS: We go in just a few things at a time --

BB: Like this is an example of what one of those would look like. So, you see some of that's

in German and some of it's in English [09:00].

AL: See, the problem, things I don't know, I cannot read so good anymore.

BB: [affirmative]

[laughter]

AL: You did a lot of work.

VS: This is in the National Archives [09:17]. Yeah, this is all at the National Archives in, outside of Washington. This is all -- this was classified up until the last 15 or so years ago.

AL: Yeah, yeah. That's so long, that -- and then they show that --

VS: You've been a state secret.

AL: State secret. [laughs] Okay, okay, okay.

BB: So, don't feel like you have to read it all now, but we'll -- that's for you to hold onto, and if you remember, reading through that, "Oh yeah, I forgot to tell this story," well, then give us a call back and let us know. But, one of the other things [10:00] that they did, is they filled out kind of a -- they, when they questioned you, when he questioned you about your history, when you were born and everything, they filled out a timeline of where you lived, and what units were -- you were in, and everything.

AL: Oh, okay, okay. June '45. Okay, okay. Shucks.

BB: They also, they filled out -- I'm curious if you ever remember filling this out. They filled out a personnel sheet; again, that's just your basic information. You know, just where you were captured, and everything. You notice it says on there, distinguishing marks; it says you have a scar on one of your hands. And I wonder if that's from when --

AL: This must be from [11:00] -- [laughs]. Oh shucks, oh shucks. Secret; it says, "Secret."

BB: This is the actual report from your interrogation, when you were sat down -- and stood up -- that is what the officer typed up, and the information that you gave to him.

AL: Okay, okay. POW [11:33], POW -- yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

BB: That second page -- the second page you were looking at, there -- is a list of names of SS [11:48] soldiers that you gave to the Americans, of people who were stationed at Gusen Mauthausen [11:57].

AL: Yeah, I didn't know -- we had [12:00] no contact with the SS [12:01], because we were Luftwaffe and they were SS. We had no contact with them, you know. I don't know, yet; the rank was different [spelled phonetically] you know, the other.

BB: The other interesting document -- we asked you, how did you think that you were -- why were you singled out? Why did they decide to interrogate you? And you mentioned about being on the ship --

AL: On the ship, yeah.

BB: And you thought that --

AL: I told them a room, maybe for another fellow here; then he reported to the [unintelligible].

BB: And that's exactly -- that's what happened. There was someone on the ship --

AL: Because he wants to hit me [spelled phonetically] there, or something like that -- the other fellows. I think there was someone --

BB: There was someone named Ludwig Muninger [12:53]; Muninger [spelled phonetically] or Mooninger [spelled phonetically]?

AL: Muninger --

BB: That's the person who reported you [13:00].

[laughter]

You can look him up now.

AL: That's a no-good fellow.

BB: So, this is a report on Muninger, and what he told them about you. And also other information that Muninger [13:17] saw. Muninger was an anti-Nazi [13:20] who was actually imprisoned at Dachau [13:23].

AL: Oh, yeah, yeah.

BB: Do you remember?

AL: No, no, no. Maybe he talked about, too, you know, about that situation, I think. And, I can't figure out any information [spelled phonetically] that he got through the army [13:40]; that's what puzzles me, today, you know.

BB: The only other thing to give you -- this shows your name, and then the name of the American who interrogated you, was a Lieutenant Kenner [13:58]; his last name was Kenner [14:00], K-E-N-N-E-R. That's who interrogated you.

AL: Kenner. Was this a Jewish fellow?

BB: You know, I don't know. His name was Rodem [spelled phonetically] Kenner.

AL: I don't know if -- Kenner is not Jewish.

BB: Yeah, I don't know that he was Jewish. There were a lot of the [unintelligible] Americans who were stationed there, like the folks who were listening in; most of them were Jewish. I don't know that Rodem Kenner [14:27] was Jewish though.

AL: If he had a different problem [spelled phonetically] with a dialect?

BB: With different dialects? Apparently they would sometimes assign people to certain prisoners depending on where in Germany they were from. So, if they had --

- AL: Because we had Weischuan [spelled phonetically] who had a different dialect than the Bayer [spelled phonetically], you know --
- BB: There's a few more follow-up questions, but do you [15:00] -- do you have -- I don't guess we have anything else to show.
- VS: No, I think that's it.
- BB: Do you have anything in particular that you would like to follow up on?
- VS: No, I'll let you finish, and then we basically wanted to find out if there was anything else that we didn't ask you, that you felt that might be important for us to know.
- AL: I don't think so. I don't think so; it's plenty.
[laughter]
- BB: I just wanted to close with a few more questions about Gusen and Mauthausen [15:33]. Again, you were, you were -- you didn't volunteer to do that; you were assigned there.
- AL: Assigned there. You didn't know about Mauthausen before.
- BB: Could you tell us, what was the difference between Gusen [15:48] and Mauthausen [15:49]? What was the difference? What -- could you describe one versus the other? What was Gusen, and what was Mauthausen?
- AL: Yeah. Mauthausen was the old camp.
- BB: The old camp [16:00].
- AL: Stone masons. They made stone masons out of the prisoners. And Gusen [16:06], you worked over there, in Sankt Georgen [16:17]. That was the difference.
- BB: And that's where the underground factories were? Okay. So, Mauthausen, they were doing work as stone masons, for stone masonry --
- AL: Before. And then, what they had later on, the sick ones got up there, you know, who was

not able to work anymore, they were in Mauthausen [16:33]. Because we didn't get up before, when I was there; only to Gusen [16:39]. This is all torn down now.

BB: Were -- at Gusen and Mauthausen, were they actively killing people there?

AL: I don't know, I don't know. I happened so -- I didn't see anything [17:00]. I didn't see anything.

BB: And when you were there, you didn't hear, you didn't hear -- this was definitely --

AL: We didn't get there.

BB: Right. So you never went --

AL: This is up on the hill.

BB: Mauthausen [17:11] was up on the hill.

AL: Mauthausen, yeah.

BB: What about Gusen [17:14]? Did you hear if they were --

AL: They had futbol [spelled phonetically] place in there, and they played soccer in there. They had -- had thousands and thousands of things you know; who wins --

BB: [affirmative]. So, you talked about a couple examples of where you witnessed either somebody tried to escape, and they took them and they, somebody shot them. That one story that you told.

AL: That was only one time.

BB: That was the only one -- so, you never witnessed any other atrocities, like people being shot, or tortured, or anything.

AL: No, no. Because we needed people for work, not [18:00] crippled.

BB: Were you -- you said earlier, I think -- that you were instructed not to abuse the prisoners.

AL: Only to get the number, write the number down, and then they got [unintelligible]. I

never did.

BB: Can you describe the physical condition of the prisoners? Were they skinny, were they --

AL: They were not too skinny, but they smelled a little bit, you know. [unintelligible]. I mean, at lunch time they got all, a soup, [unintelligible], something like that.

BB: But were you eating different food from them? You weren't eating the same food that they were.

AL: No, not the same food.

BB: Okay. Did you ever talk to any --

AL: See, we got -- we had one foot in there, too. If you had to place [19:00] under so and so -- I remember the prisoner called Mohaca, Mohaca Kaubaha [19:09] [spelled phonetically]. You know what Mohaca is? This is from the shame [spelled phonetically], you put that on the shame there [spelled phonetically]; this is Mohaca. They could buy that in there, and he gave them five shtalars [spelled phonetically] for bringing the Mohaca [19:23] out, and then they could visit. Then he got [unintelligible] six months a labor camp [unintelligible] -- a German soldier.

BB: A German soldier. Okay. So, did you ever talk to any of the prisoners?

AL: Oh, we talked to them. I gave them sometimes a piece of bread, you know, something like that. Throw it over; they are here. You cannot be able to hand, you know, they are --

BB: So, you would toss them a piece of bread. Would this be through a fence, or something, or just --

AL: No, no. I mean, down where they worked [spelled phonetically]. There was a fence around there. The fence was [20:00], the big fence. We had commando [spelled phonetically] guards. Oh, boy.

BB: Yeah. No, this is great, this is good. I know these are difficult questions, but it's important --

AL: I know, for the history.

BB: -- for the history, to be -- for it to be preserved. So, so yeah. Okay. David?

DAVID LASSMAN: I'm just curious about one thing. You mentioned you got this watch for cigarettes, you mentioned. Was that the same watch you said that was present when you were being interrogated?

AL: I don't hear good.

BB: When you, the watch. When you were captured, you traded cigarettes for a watch.

AL: This is a binz schwarz [spelled phonetically]. A binz schwarz was from the military. I said I know what this is, and they didn't.

BB: So that was the same watch [21:00] that you had traded for when you were captured. And you still have it?

AL: Yeah.

BB: If you do have it, and you can dig it out later, and we can take a picture, that would be great. If you can find it; if not, it's no big deal, no big deal. Mr. Marsden, do you have any questions? You're learning a lot about your neighbor, here. So, well, thank you very much. This is, this is, you've helped --

AL: I hope I don't get knocked out tomorrow.

[laughter]

BB: We --

VS: We're going to do it today.

AL: Today? Not the size, the size [spelled phonetically] [unintelligible] what they say.

BB: Do you have -- like, Vincent, anything that you think we didn't ask, or anything that you want to say?

AL: I don't think so -- everything, he answered the question.

BB: [affirmative] Okay. Did you, do you look back upon [22:00] -- I mean, when you were in the German military, you did a lot of things; you packed parachutes, you were a guard at a camp, and you fought at the front line. Do you look back, as a whole -- and when you remember that time, is it something that you are -- are you proud to have been in the military? Are you ashamed of it? What are your feelings about having been in the military?

AL: You know, what the heck; I got drafted and -- I'm not ashamed of what I did, you know, or anything. I know, I was German; I could not say I was American -- hey, this is wrong. That is the story, you know, so. I mean, you have to tell the truth, you know, or otherwise. Because I was one time in an airplane, we flew to [23:00] [unintelligible] skiing, a skiing tour [spelled phonetically]. And then, three bullshitters went back there to their short dresses and bullshit you know. And I bullshitted too, what the heck, they asked me some questions, so I said I built a second home, a log home, and I sold it to my father. And he gave me the money; that's why I'm going on vacation. And after two years, somebody came to the neighbor, and a friend came with, and then he said, German fellow built that, and he is going skiing, and so and so. And the neighbor said, "I know that fellow [laughs]." And then I met that lady, and she was a stewardess on the airplane [24:00]. See if I lie about, if I was lies; I built the house and so and so; she came and I got caught.

MS: All right, good. Well, thank you again.

BB: You have greatly, greatly increased our understanding of this.

[end of transcript]

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