

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
HENRY F. RENARD
Pilot, Army Air Force, World War II
1996

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Renard, Henry F., (1919-1998). Oral History Interview, 1996.

User Copy: 4 sound cassettes (ca. 186 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 3 sound cassettes (ca. 186 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Abstract:

Henry Renard, a West Bend, Wisconsin native, discusses his experiences during World War II as a pilot with the 773rd Squadron, 463rd Bomb Group, 15th Air Force and as a prisoner of war in Germany. Renard describes growing up on a small farm in Washington County during the Great Depression and graduating from West Bend High School. He worked at a cheese factory from 1939 to 1942, shipping cheese boxes to forces overseas. Renard reveals his uncle, who worked for the draft board, offered to get him a job at a dairy farm to avoid the draft, but Renard declined. Renard enlisted in the Army Air Force in 1942. He had an early interest in flying: as a kid, he built model airplanes with motors, and he once rode in a propeller plane at the newly dedicated West Bend Airport. Renard describes the demanding written and physical tests required to join the Army Air Force. Renard qualified to be a pilot and was sent to San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center (Texas) for basic training. He details his training, stating "it was a class system. First four weeks you were lower class." He mentions he was nicknamed "Mother Renard" in his barracks because he made the soldiers keep the barracks clean to earn extra leave in town. Next, Renard attended officer training and pilot pre-flight training at El Reno (Oklahoma), followed by basic flying school in Winfield (Kansas). Renard characterizes flying school as difficult, with many airmen "washing out." He feels his first instructor was not good because he rushed Renard during take-off, nearly causing him to crash. Renard explains that, with the help of a second instructor, he finally graduated basic flying school and moved on to twin engine aircraft. In November 1943, Renard earned his second lieutenant commission and went on to fly B-26s at Dodge City (Kansas). Renard describes flying maneuvers like chandelles and lazy-8s. He characterizes his fellow pilots as mostly college graduates; however, his class had thirteen pilots who never went to college, including Renard himself. He briefly mentions a dark day during training in which thirteen training accidents occurred after lunch. Renard discusses flying various airplanes including: PT Ryans, Cessna AT-28s, P-38s, and B-26 Marauders. He praises the B-26 highly compared to the B-17 and B-29, despite the fact that it was nicknamed *The Ship That Didn't Forgive*, *The Flying Coffin*, and *The Widow-maker*. In Dodge City, Renard comments that he trained with twenty to thirty WASPs (Women Air Force Service Pilots) who banked airplanes 90 degrees, better than the men. Before Renard entered active duty in 1943, he was given a six day leave to go home to Wisconsin. He reveals he briefly considered going AWOL during hunting season. As his training drew to a close, Renard was assigned as co-pilot to a crew in Rapid City (South Dakota). They ran drills and towed targets for other airplanes to practice shooting. He describes flying to his pilot's hometown in California on Christmas Eve and drag racing with a Corsair. In August 1944, before being shipped to Europe,

Renard was given another six day leave. He tells he attempted to marry his girlfriend during this leave but failed because of miscommunication (she had gone out of town that weekend). In September 1944, Renard flew to England in a B-17, passing through Labrador (Canada), Iceland, and Wales. Renard mentions they stayed in England for several weeks before being stationed in Foggia, Italy. Renard touches on the personalities of the crew. He portrays his pilot and navigator as having problems trusting each other. He also mentions the pilot, originally from Mexico, could speak some Italian. Renard states they received double mission credit because their missions were over ten hours each. Renard describes typical bombing missions. Targets included oil refineries and ball bearing plants in Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and France. He comments that the crew wore sheepskin and leather flying suits and slippers wired like electric blankets because temperatures were so cold in the air. Renard addresses military life: sleeping in tents, eating bad mess hall food, and hitchhiking to the PX in Foggia. During missions, the crew had C-rations, but they often did not eat because of the altitude. Renard mentions he and the navigator had donut-eating contests when they arrived back on base. Renard describes at length his mission over the Czech Sudetenland on Christmas Day. Before the mission, he inspected the airplane and found an oil leak that he ordered patched. While bombing a refinery near Brüx (Czechoslovakia), they were hit by enemy fire right at that weak spot. He portrays the pilot as cowardly, evacuating the airplane before everyone else. Renard tells how his quick thinking convinced the scared bombardier to bail out. Renard parachuted to the ground but got caught in a pine tree. The parachute opened violently; Renard suffered from lifelong back pain as a result and earned a Purple Heart. Renard cut himself down from the tree and walked through woods and snow behind enemy lines. He outlines the contents of his Army-issued survival kit. Renard took to the road to avoid frostbite, but came across a group of children sleighing. He was caught by their father, a Nazi sympathizer. Renard was taken to an interrogation center outside Frankfurt (Germany) where he discovered five of his crew had survived. He remembers his interrogation sessions in detail, stating he was never physically abused but that he was not cooperative. When the Germans pressed for details about his mission and the number of men in his crew; he gave them only his name, rank, serial number, and home address. Renard also claims a German guard thought he was Gestapo because Renard spoke fluent German. (His grandfather emigrated from Germany, and his parents spoke German at home.) His language skills made Renard the official trader for the barracks once he was taken to Stalag Luft One, near the Baltic Sea. Renard describes trading with a German guard for fish, wine, cigarettes, and fuel. He states the guard had his dog deliver the items in its mouth through a window. Renard describes the hardships of being a prisoner of war. The POWs filled burlap sacks with shredded paper for mattresses, which got matted down and shed on the men in the lower bunks. There were two or more men to a bunk, especially on cold nights. Renard was also the cook for his room. He discusses in great detail cooking with an oil drum stove and pans crafted out of bent tin cans. He spends much time talking about food. At first, POWs received Red Cross packages with cheese, jelly, and Spam, but as the war turned sour for the Germans, the POWs stopped getting these packages. Renard describes eating cold stewed vegetables and *ersatz*, a bread substitute that was soggy and bitter unless toasted. His proudest kitchen moments include making bread pudding out of ersatz bread and powdered milk and helping POWs in another barrack make a layer cake with pink jelly frosting and an American flag. Renard portrays the Germans as very suspicious of one another

near the end of the war. He mentions he considered escaping using a method a fellow POW had used to escape from Buchenwald. Renard describes the liberation of Stalag Luft One shortly after V-E day. The Germans packed up all they could, including tower guns, lights, and most of the Red Cross packages, and left camp before the Russians arrived. After the Germans left, the Americans manned the watchtowers but stayed in camp because of rumors of disease among French and Italian prisoners in another camp nearby. Later that day, the Russians arrived to liberate Stalag Luft One; however, they delayed releasing the POWs. Renard characterizes the POWs as worried, revealing his own plans to desert camp. He claims the Russians were planning to march the Americans back to Russia, but the ranking officer among the POWs, Colonel Zemke, wired General Eisenhower, who contacted the U.S. Embassy in Russia with a message intended directly for Stalin. According to Renard, this message stated the American POWs were to be released immediately. Renard describes waiting all night by a bonfire for the airplanes to arrive from England. On May 13, 1945, he was flown to France where he had physical examinations and briefings. He mentions encountering Dwight D. Eisenhower and almost shaking hands with him, but another airman beat him to it. Finally, Renard was shipped back to the U.S. from Le Havre (France) on a boat with 3,000 enlisted men and 300 officers. On the boat, Renard mentions he was asked to be the officer in charge of the galley because of his cooking experience in the camp. He describes getting seasick but appreciating the “plush” conditions after his experience as a POW. Renard describes his homecoming via Camp Miles Standish (Massachusetts) and Fort Sheridan (Illinois). He tells of marrying his first wife on July 2nd, soon after he got home. Renard was stationed in Miami Beach (Florida) until his release from the service in September 1945. After the war, Renard attended the University of Wisconsin on the G.I. Bill, getting a B.A. in five semesters and going on to law school. Renard describes living with his wife in the UW trailer camp for G.I.s. He states he was an active member of the American Legion, serving as finance officer, program chairman, county commander, state commander, and National Executive Committeeman representing Wisconsin at the national meeting. Renard discusses in detail the politics of the Legion and mentions meeting John Moses, the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. Renard describes falling off a ladder in 1975 in Oshkosh (Wisconsin) while putting up a banner for his NEC reelection, breaking both wrists and his jaw. This accident caused Renard to lose the election, but he remained active in local and state American Legion posts.

Biographical Sketch:

Renard (1919-1998) grew up on a farm near West Bend (Wisconsin) where he worked in a cheese factory after high school. His great-grandfather was German, from Alsace-Lorraine, and his family spoke German at home. In 1942, Renard joined the Army Air Force and became a pilot for the 773rd Squadron, 463rd Bomb Group, 15th Air Force. On December 25, 1944, his plane was shot down over Czechoslovakia, and Renard became a prisoner of war at Stalagluft One (Germany). In May, 1945, the camp was liberated. Renard returned home, married his first wife Carol Peterson, and attended college and law school at the University of Wisconsin. Eventually, Renard moved back to West Bend to practice law. He was an active member of the American Legion, serving as county commander, state commander, and national executive committeeman. He earned a Purple Heart and an Air Medal.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1996.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, 2002.

Transcription edited and abstract written by Darcy I. Gervasio, 2009.

Interview Transcript:

Mark: Okay, today's date is May 1, 1996. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, doing an oral history interview this afternoon with Mr. Henry Renard, of West Bend, Wisconsin, a veteran of the Army Air Forces in World War II. Good afternoon. Thanks for taking some time to sit down with me today.

Renard: Good afternoon, and glad to be here.

Mark: Good. Let's start at the top. Why don't you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised, and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941?

Renard: I was actually born over in Ozaukee County. My parents, both are from Washington County, but had rented a farm in Ozaukee County for two years which is just north of the covered bridge that most people know about. And I was born while they were there, on December 2, 1919, in a big snow blizzard, at six o'clock in the morning. And then they moved back to Washington County. Most of my life before service was in the city of West Bend, or near. My dad came from a farm about three miles southeast and my mother came from a farm about three miles northwest. So I lived in the city for a couple of years. We lived out at my father's homestead. He was there with his father. And then we moved back to West Bend. I attended the West Bend city schools, grade school, except for the fourth grade and the first six weeks of fifth grade, when we lived out on the farm southeast of West Bend. Typical country school with one room, all eight grades in one room. One teacher and pot bellied stove for heat, and we had to carry water from a farm about almost a quarter mile down the road. And the big fellows usually put it off but they were the first ones there to drink the water when they got back to the schoolhouse.

Mark: Was this because it was very rural? Or because it was construction?

Renard: No, it was rural. That is what it was. And then we moved back to West Bend and I finished grade school, and went into high school. West Bend High School. At that time, it was the old building that is now Badger Middle School. And high school, four years. That was in June of '37. Jobs were not available. So I took one full year of post-grad courses at the high school. And some certain subjects that I wanted because I wanted to go to college once I decided what to do. And so I took a full post-grad — full year of post-grad, then took a business course — business administration. It was three volumes — fifteen volumes — three on accounting up to the CPA level, and other things. And I was just about finished with that and I got a call from somebody — there used to be a cheese box factory in West Bend — and the first call was to help put up a sign out of town, and a week later, could

I come down and help in the cheese factory for a couple of weeks. That lasted from May, '39, until I went in the service. Which was in the beginning of January, '43. Actually, I stopped working in late fall of '42.

Mark: That's about a hundred and fifty weeks. Is that correct?

Renard: That's correct. And so then I--

Mark: If I may interrupt for a second. You were still planning on going to college?

Renard: I was planning on it, yeah.

Mark: But the jobs were just...

Renard: There were no jobs. My folks couldn't afford to put me through. I didn't have the money, so I was going to work to save some money. And I got this job, and I had saved a little bit but with you start at twenty-five cents an hour, and you get to about thirty or thirty-five, you don't make too much money. So, I was working in this cheese box factory and then we started making boxes to ship cheese overseas. Actually, we had a small farm right there that was in the city limits but my dad was running a small farm. We had about thirteen head of cattle. And rented the land around to get enough feed. So I got a deferment for six months because we were making cheese boxes to ship cheese overseas which had to be made stronger.

Mark: Now was this for the military overseas or just for general...

Renard: No, this was for shipping cheese to our forces overseas. I mean, they'd buy it here and ship it over. Whatever kitchens they had and wherever they were. We had to — instead of three up and down staves between the two — see, the box was made out of wood veneer which the grain ran length-wise around the box. There were different sizes from six or eight inches diameter to sixteen inches and one was almost three feet in diameter. But for shipping cheese overseas was the cheddar cheese box and ordinarily be three staves where the grain ran across to the sideways, but for overseas it had to be five. And that was my job, so I got a deferment for that for six months. Shortly before that was up, my uncle who was appeal agent for our Washington County draft board, called me and asked my father and I to come in. And told me that my deferment was about up, which I knew. And that I wouldn't get a renewal. I said, fine. I'll go and enlist. He had offered me — said he could get me a job on the farm down around Watertown, a big dairy farm — and stay out of it. I said, no way. I said, if this is done, I can't stay here and help my dad on the farm, and when the job ran out, I'm gone.

Mark: You know, you said, no way. You were going to go in the service.

Renard: That's right.

Mark: I grew up after the Vietnam War even, and of course, during the Vietnam War it was a different sort of situation. People were looking for ways to stay out of the service. You were — any indication why it was so important to you to want to go in? I mean, you didn't really have to, at that point, anyway.

Renard: Pretty much everybody was going, and I figured, if I enlisted, I could get what I wanted instead of going in the regular army and into who knows what I would be doing — infantry — and so forth.

Mark: Now, this was still before Pearl Harbor?

Renard: No, this was after Pearl Harbor. So I went — Pearl Harbor was December 7, '41. And, of course, the draft had started, but I hadn't — I had gotten this deferment as far as the draft. So, I went to Milwaukee and inquired, because I didn't have a college education. And I was given the dates. I went down later and wrote the test for the Air Force — actually the Army Air Force.

Mark: Why the Air Force?

Renard: I always wanted to fly. I was interested in flying. A fellow that lived near us — in fact he lived in a farm house that my folks owned — several sons and the oldest one made model airplanes. I helped him with that. And we got to building some that were six or seven foot wings with small engines. And took them out to the airport and flew them. One of them flew away one time and we had to drive miles to get it. So, I was interested in flying, definitely.

Mark: Had you flown before?

Renard: I had been up in a ride in 1929, my dad's oldest brother was head of the J. I. Case Company for all of South America. He would come home every two years and in 1929 they had the airport dedication at West Bend which the American Legion had put on, and he took us all out there and bought us all an airplane ride. On a Ford Trimotor. When I got in the service, when I was in Texas, I found out that the day after we had the ride, they had checked it and there was a broken wing spar — a cracked wing spar. But, being interested, I got — I debated — Army Air Force or Navy. And I figured, if I crack up in the Navy, I don't swim, so I'll go into the Army Air Force. If I'm lucky, I can crawl, anyhow. So I found out and went down and wrote the exam in the morning. About sixty-five of us started and I forget how many finished — it was less than half that completed the written. Through with the written, they said, go out and have lunch, don't drink Coke,

don't drink coffee, don't do this, don't do that. So we were back. And then they had the physicals in the afternoon. And thirteen of us finished up after the physicals. There were fellows who were like football players, six feet and built like — and they'd come out of there with their jaws hung heavy because they had a bad knee or a bad back, and they weren't accepted.

Mark: If I'm not mistaken, in the Air Force, you could only be -- you had to be within certain height parameters, didn't you?

Renard: That's right.

Mark: Because if you are six-six, you aren't going to fit in the cockpit of an airplane.

Renard: That's what they said, but we had a fellow in cadets with us who was over six feet, from Iowa. And the colonel came around one day and looked up and said, "How come you are in the Air Force?" "I got in." They were looking at that time so they weren't quite so strict. But, so I finished — that was early — either late June or early July. "Be back on July 13 to be sworn in," which I was. That was July 13, '42. And was sworn in to the Army Air Force. Thirteen of us.

Mark: As an enlisted man?

Renard: As a cadet. Technically, they called them Air Force Reserve, but it was as a cadet, and said, "You'll be called in about three months." Because they had a backlog. It ended up six months. December — just before Christmas, I got the letter. "You will report for active duty in Milwaukee at January 6, I believe it was, such-and-such a time. So, I did. Reported. And then we were taken by train, on a Pullman train, a bunch of us that were brought together, and down to San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, which is now Lackland Air Field. And there we had — we had had physicals, of course, in Milwaukee, but when we got down there we had physicals and different tests we took. One of them I remember, they had a brass plate about that long and yeah high and a little hole in the middle about that big and you had a brass rod which had like a joint on it — wiggly any which way — and you had to hold it just so and so, and there was an electric current ran into the little rod that you had, with a handle on so you didn't get tickled or anything, and in the plate, and the idea was to keep that rod from touching the inside of the circle with that knuckle — there is a name for those kind of joints. Oh, they are in a car, too, can go either way.

Mark: The point of this was to see how steady you were.

Renard: To see how steady you were. And all the while, all the tests, there were other tests also that you were doing — all the while, somebody was always talking to you.

All the time. Asking questions or talking to you. To try to — so, you got to concentrate on this and not maybe hear the other also, but this is what you are concentrating on. And we got down to San Antonio then and took these tests and then they determined if you were going to be pilot training, navigator, or bombardier.

Mark: Based on what?

Renard: On how well you did on those respective tests. And if you didn't qualify for either, of course, then you went to gunnery school, and that is what the guys hated. I was lucky and selected as a pilot, and we had — well, this classification center, going through this — then we went across the road, as it was called, to the pilot pre-flight section. We were there nine weeks.

Mark: That's now Kelly Air Force Base?

Renard: No. This was all part of Lackland. All part of Lackland. San Antonio. Cause we used to go — we had a little time off and we used to go over the hill, and we could see Kelly, over there. They were coming in to landing. Then we'd sit down and we got sand burrs on the ass, scratching our shins to pieces. So we were there nine weeks, and then we went to — that was pilot pre-flight. Then we had classes and also the beginning of doing officers training. In other words, it was a class system. First four and a half weeks, you were lower class. The next four and a half weeks you were upper class. And as lower class, you took all kinds of — can I use the word shit? — everything they could dream of and the reason they got away with. Tear up your beds, and your cot had to be just so. In fact, all the time that I was in pilot pre-flight, I never slept with a pillow cause it had to be just so. And you had a white collar of your sheet on your blanket and it had to be — they'd bounce a quarter off the top of your blanket so I would take the pillow off and lay it on the foot locker. Sleep like that. Next morning, when we were all done, I'd put the sheet and pillow back on the bed. And what they used to do, they'd come around and they'd measure the white collar. They'd hold a ruler up here. Just five inches. And they'd lay it down hard, and if it spread out, they'd rip up the bed, take out the bed. Or else, sometimes, they would do would be crawl under from the top end — go under between the mattress and the spring and come out on the bottom end. Of course, the whole works is going to go on the floor. Some guys that did that regularly. So we got through lower class and, upper class, we moved upstairs and they had a new lower class that we did that too. Hitting a brace, and standing with your back against the wall, and tucking in your chin, so those things. It was officers training, was what it was. Some guys washed out, a few of them right there. Then from there we went to pilot pre-flight. Which was at Mustang Field. We were the first class to live there, the second class to train there, at El Reno, Oklahoma, west of Oklahoma City. That's where that federal prison

is now — those guys that blew up — that were charged with that. And that was primary training. We flew PT Ryans, the low wing, single wing airplane, nine weeks. There they had civilian instructors but the check riders were military. And one of them was called “Maytag.” You can guess why. Because he washed a lot of guys out. You had to be just so. So, you had check ride civilian at fifteen, military at thirty, then the civilian at forty-five, about or forty, and the last one at — that was military — at sixty hours. And then from there we went to basic flying school. That was at Winfield, Kansas. That was the Vultee Vibrator — Screaming Jeemies — as we used to call them. There I almost got killed.

Mark: How was that?

Renard: We were — in practicing, we had an auxiliary field — it was a mile square instead of having two runways. This way they divided it this way so you would have longer runways. They had a basic ship in the middle with an instructor in it and that was like the control tower. And they had two patterns. One was the regular left hand and one was two right hands. And one day we were — actually we were practicing and, for some reason, they kind of ganged up and there were about four or five planes in a row, so the instructor in the control ship started “Get going! Get going!” And that rushed us a little bit and, in a Vultee Vibrator, I don’t know what you know about flying, but there are trim tabs. Well, you have on your — should have brought the plane along — but on each control surface you have a device on the wings — it’s called ailerons — and if one is up, the other is down to bank, and vice versa, but on each control surface there is a little smaller so-called control surface that they use for trimming. When you are in a small airplane like a single engine, they are fixed. But — except for the elevator in the tail — but on your larger airplanes you’ve got controls that you can move them. And so the trim tab for the rudder for up and down — lift the tail or push it down — there was a wheel about that big on the right hand side. And the throttle is on the left. And so he hurried us and — I don’t know if that was it — but, at least, hurried to get off the ground and I pushed the throttle forward and the minute that airplane was off the ground she wanted to go straight up, and those airplanes didn’t do that. And I remember seeing the air speed indicator and it was dropping below sixty, and that was supposedly flying speed. She was dropping. Then it dawned on me what happened. It must have been the control tab on the elevators that I didn’t bring back to neutral and I reached down and grabbed that wheel and — I didn’t turn it — I just spun it and with my right hand — everything I had in it, I pushed that stick forward. And I just brought it out before she stalled out on me. One guy, in night flying at our base, didn’t do that and went in and he didn’t die, but he was through flying. He was damn near dead. He did the same thing. She just in and down. So, that taught me a lesson. Nobody is ever going to rush me again when I am flying. I don’t care who it is. And I adhered to that, thank God. So, then from there, we went to advanced training — flying training — and then we had to

decide before we went there if it was going to be single engine or twin engine. Well, I had gotten to know in cadets where I was stationed two fellows, one was from Chicago and the other was from just out of Detroit, Michigan. We got to be pretty close friends and if we'd go out, we'd usually go out — three of us would go out together on the town the little time we got the chance to go. So, the fellow came from Michigan wanted twin engine and I wanted single engine. I wanted a P-38 so bad I would have given anything to get it.

Mark: Why was that?

Renard: Just the ship, the way it flew, the way it handled, what I knew about it. It was a terrific airplane. And it's got two engines. One goes, you got one to get yourself someplace. So, I wanted a 38. A good friend of mine flew one, in fact, two friends, but — so all three decided, okay, we'll go to twin engines. So we went to twin engine training — no, two of us got assigned to twin engine and the guy who wanted twin engines went to single engines. He ended up in a P-40 and stood it on its nose at the end of the runway in practice, we found out. But the two of us in twin engine, and from there you got — we were trained in AT — they called them the Twin Engine Cub. AT-28's, by Cessna. And they were a slower airplane and you didn't have to be quite as careful. You had to do it right but, nevertheless — and we had a couple of hours an AT-9 which was all metal and when you were taxiing it sounded like you had a bunch of barrels or tin cans rattling behind you. But it was a hell of airplane to fly because the flying speed, the stalling speed, the take-off speed were all within just a few miles of each other. So that you better be on your toes. Well, we only had a few hours in it because we only had two or three ships on the whole field. And then from there, of course, after we graduated from twin engine, got the wings and second lieutenant commissions, then we went on to other training. And I went into B-26 Marauders. At Dodge City, Kansas.

Mark: Let's stop there for a second. Let's go back and cover some things.

Renard: Okay.

Mark: First of all, I am interested in what sorts of young men became pilots at that time. And I would imagine at these various stages there were a lot of different — there were a lot of people washing out at various parts. I'm interested in who—what sort of people were being selected to be pilots and who was washing out and who ended up actually flying the planes? In terms of their socio-economic background...

Renard: I don't know if there was an economic background. I didn't notice anything like that because we had fellows from different walks of life who made it as pilots.

Matk: A lot more college graduates, though, I would expect.

Renard: Yeah, there were more college graduates. Definitely. But there were, as I said, we thirteen had all not gone to college because that's why we had to take the written test in a way. But when they got to Lackland Air Base, there were a lot more guys there that were — some of them were college graduates. I guess it's just their desires, or interests in flying, perhaps. And I don't exactly know how they determined it but I think they measured somehow all these tests that we had to take and maybe, somehow, temperament. I don't know if there was a test they gave us. There were all kinds of tests. We had written tests, we took also. So that they determined somewhat. In primary flying school is where they washed out most of them. And we had, like we had one guy that washed himself out. We were flying at El Reno and they had two big gas tanks, high ones, big ones, on the field. And there were two weeks we couldn't fly because of rain. This was a new field. Every time it rained — it was level but it sloped sideways on the northwest down to the southeast and the barracks were on the southeast corner. Every time it rained, the board walks they had between barracks were washed away. Good thing we had GI shoes, you had to walk in the water and the mud. And when it was dry and dusty, you cleaned in the morning, as you had to do, and when you came back at night, you could write your name in the dust on the window sills and the window frames, and so. It just blew through. That was it. It had a clean sweep. So, they washed out most of them then. After these two weeks of rain, the morning flight was okay. At noon then, they always refilled all the gas tanks of the airplanes. And after lunch, we had thirteen accidents. The first one, we had three — no, two — officers who had already become lieutenants in the regular Army training who then went into flying. And one of those — he and his instructor was killed. They were practicing forced landings. Go down pretty low and then pull up and about four hundred feet or so, their ship just dropped and down they went and crashed.

Mark: See, I made a note about training accidents. You alluded to a couple already. I thought maybe we should just go over the topic right now. How frequent were such things?

Renard: Well, of course, it varied by bases, but they weren't too frequent. Outside of that afternoon, we had thirteen accidents. Those two — the instructor and he was a captain — were killed. And there was another accident later that afternoon where the instructor was killed but the student was dazed and got out and walked a ways to get help from civilians. The rest of them were accidents but not severe enough to hurt anybody. They were able to either land enough or crash, or something. But, so outside of that, at our base — trying to think — I know we had one other accident. This buddy of mine from Chicago. See, you had a tank in each wing and one of the procedures when you got in an airplane, that first of all you checked —

pre flighted it on the outside, and then you drained the gas from the different tanks and so forth to make sure there was no water there. Of course, after the first flights, you didn't have that much. But that was procedure. You did it. And then when you got in the airplane you checked your tanks and you checked the switch for right or left tank. And there was a gauge for each one, also. You are supposed to switch to the fullest tank. Well, this knot-head, I don't know what he was thinking of, but he didn't switch it. So he took off and he was only up a little ways — I don't think he was hardly out of the traffic pattern — and he was high enough, though. So the engine missed, started spitting. So then he remembered switching tanks, so he did. But the other tank was low, too, and he got around, but, shit, that was spitting also. So he made his plan to come in and land. You always had to check it, where you were and so forth so you would come in on a safer landing. If you are landing this way, this is a down wind leg and you came in, that was the directions, you came in on a forty-five degree angle to that down wind leg. And when you finished the down wind leg, you crossed the leg and you went in to land. And, of course, we didn't have radios in the primary. But that was the procedure. So he came in and he is about here, and then he remembers he is not going down wind, he is going up wind. No, instead of going up wind, into the wind, he is going down wind. And, while he was low enough, he couldn't do it, so he just landed her. Of course, he was going that fast at the upper end of the field, a little way off the runway was a stone fence about yeahh high. That is where he ended up on. Right on the stone fence. But, outside of that, and that afternoon, I don't think we had any other accidents at our field. But I don't know about other fields. Now, it could be, I just noticed, Steermans, that was the twin engine, usually yellow, they had a reputation for ground looping.

Mark: Which was what?

Renard: When you got on the ground, then they would — if you didn't control them, they would go one way or the other and they'd do this, see. Not slow, either. So, that's what they used in crop dusting. So, anyhow, with the Ryan low wing, we didn't have too much trouble with that. I was flying one day and I had checked everything, done it right, and we had a certain area we were supposed to do practice aerobatics as much as we did in primary. And I was out there and doing some chandelles and lazy-8's and things and all of a sudden the engine started to miss. And I flipped back and forth and checked the ignition switch for the — can't think of the name. My memory — my mind — plays tricks with coming up with names — the magneto. In each switch, see. Sometimes if you just flipped them, they would be back on. And it didn't get any better. It didn't quit but it didn't get any better. And I was at about four thousand feet, as I remember, and I just turned tail and headed for the field — just a gradual descent to get to the field. And the wing tips are going like that because the engine is missing. And instead of flying the pattern, they saw me from the tower and so — of course, you didn't have radio

— so I just headed for the — just took it down. But, when I got down there, I just reported it, what happened. What they did with the engine, I don't know. But outside of that, I don't think there were any — that bad afternoon when they had thirteen of them pile in. The first one killed and the instructor after that. But the other fields — maybe at Steerman fields they had more because I had heard other pilots talking at the trainings and they'd ground loop and then they would pile in, too.

Mark: Well, I think you mentioned that you didn't get much time off base. But you got a little bit. I'm going to ask what you did with whatever free time you did have during your training. Did you get to go into San Antonio, or something like that?

Renard: Well, while we were at San Anton, yeah, a couple of times. In pilot pre-flight, we had eleven barracks in our squadron and they put it on a — to get to go to town, you'd have to earn it, so to speak. And they had daily inspections. All the barracks and of the lockers, and so forth. Daily inspections of the individuals — individual cadets. We marched every day in formation. We had a drill. We'd have classes in the morning, classes in the early afternoon. And then we'd come back and we'd have fifteen or twenty minutes to get back to the barracks to change to Class A uniforms and fall in and then march out to the drill field and we'd have drills every afternoon, sixteen man front, with white gloves and the turns. After a half an hour or more of drilling in the hot sun, then we had to come to attention and then they'd go back and forth through the ranks for inspection. And after all that, you'd be dusty and quick wipe off your pants legs without them seeing it. And even when we changed pants, as you were taking the trousers off, you'd split them across — I don't know if you've seen that: down and you'd hold your hand and rip quick and get all the dust and dirt off. I still do that once in a while [laughs]. So, you'd do that and you had to put on a tie, of course. And then you were judged on that marching and those who did the best on the marching also got points. Those who had the most points then went to town. And one barracks out of the — oh, yeah, then on top of it, they had in-rank inspection and there was a fellow who had been in the class ahead of me. He had an appendectomy while he was in so he was washed back to our class. And I was made charge-of-quarters early in the game and I didn't have to fall out — I had to eat but I didn't have to go with the formation. I had to have somebody else there and then I'd go. So, we got to go to town — our squadron won — or our barracks won out of the squadron. Because we had the least gigs as far as the barracks not being clean. They'd check after the guys would fall out for where they had to go. This other fellow and I would go around to each locker, check each guy's clothing. If there was a button unbuttoned, which wasn't supposed to be, we'd mark it on the slip. The guys who had the most gigs were the ones who cleaned the latrines. And we had that system. And I had seen the inspectors come in with their white gloves so every place that they ought to check before they got there, I went around and cleaned it all up. So

our barracks won and we had rain a couple of times, and San Anton — we called it Texas Gumbo — got wet and it was like mud and it would stick right to your shoes. And they'd get back to the barracks and they'd have all that mud. Of course, if you walked in the barracks, trying to clean those. They'd crab like the devil when they had to scrub their barracks anyhow but then to clean that stuff up was worse so I would be by the door when that happened and "Take your shoes off!" Right outside the door. I was called Mother Renard. But when we got to go to town and the other guys were still in the barracks, they were real happy. So, everything was considered, determining who goes to town and who doesn't. And that was — I think there was only one time that we got into town while we were in pilot pre-flight, in San Anton. And when we were at other bases, it would depend upon what we were doing and, maybe on a weekends, like at primary flying school, usually we didn't fly on Saturday or Sunday. So we could go into town. Sometimes we couldn't get back because it would be raining. I'd be out on a muddy road and they couldn't get back. And one time they took us by bus, they got us into town and got us back. But this time it was so bad, busses couldn't make the road. So the busses — we staid in town at the — there was an Elks Club — and sleep on the floor or in a chair or wherever you could find something. And they took us by bus out along the country highway and there we waited until a big truck came in from the field with dual wheels, or double-duals, or so forth. And took us out to the field, actually. And one time we were sitting there waiting for the truck, and we could see the dark cloud coming. And a tornado hit the field. We got back to the field, there were airplanes upside down on hangars, or upside down on each other. It was a mess. Cleaned it up. Then, the other places, Winfield, Kansas, basic flying, we got into town a few times — usually on Sunday. Saturday, we wouldn't fly, I mean, Sunday, so we'd be able to go into town.

Mark: There probably wasn't too much to do in Winfield, Kansas.

Renard: There wasn't. Go to a movie. And I remember we came out of the movie one afternoon at five o'clock and there was a thermometer hanging in the window of a bank, and it was on the side — the south side where the sun didn't get at it. It was a hundred and fifteen degrees at five o'clock in the afternoon. Went back to the barracks and tried to write a letter and you had to put a towel under your arm or the paper would stick to your arm, and when you got through there was a puddle of water right around your chair, like that. Off your body and fell on the floor. So, yeah, it was hot there. And one thing they would do there, when we had drill, when it was so hot, you know, with gas masks, some of the guys got smart and they took those little disks out the front end of the gas mask, so the people in charge kind of got wind of it, or maybe it was done by other classes, and they just thought somebody was doing it here. So they'd come around and they'd throw out some tear gas containers, and the guys would be scrambling to get those little

disks back. Usually you could tell, those were the guys who were scrambling like crazy or maybe couldn't get it in, and went out and over. So, that was then, and twin-engine flying school was at Pampa, Texas, which is northeast of Amarillo, out in the wild country, out in the Panhandle, there, and there we flew principally UC-78's. We had a few — yeah, that is where we had the DC-9's. A little hotter airplane, so to speak, but also harder to handle. I mean, they didn't have too many because they just didn't have enough of them. But the UC-78 was easy to fly. We didn't do acrobatics, of course, in twin engine with either one of the two. But it was just cross country flying and we'd do chandelles and lazy-8's, and so forth. But nothing that was any fancy. In basic flying school, I almost washed out. I had an instructor — it was a new instructor — it was his first time. We were his first class. He had six students. I was the only one of the six that made it. And we had check riders also and they, of course, were military. The first check ride I had with the military, and this instructor I had — there was something about him. We'd be walking out to the airplane that we were flying that day and the whole apron where the airplanes were parked evidently had been on some springs, and different places there'd be water coming up between the sections of concrete. We were walking out, "Renard, why is that water coming up there?" "Well, sir, there is probably a spring under there." All things like that, but what was worse, you start down the runway, you push the throttle forward, and you'd be checking something else, and he'd sneak the throttle back on you. Or back just far enough. Or, worse, he'd change the prop pitch. The engine was still running but it doesn't have the power because in a flat pitch for take off, you have all the power. And he'd slip it back to cruise. And the darn airplane doesn't want to take off the ground. Unless if you'd look around quick. Sure, it was to get you to check, but he overdid it a little bit. So, I got so I just couldn't. So I had this check ride and I goofed, and I didn't fly that airplane as well as the day I first crawled into a primary trainer. I was really loused up. So I got a different instructor, and he was one of the best. The first day flying with him, I got into the airplane and checked it, of course, and got in, and now, he said, before I even started the engine, he said, "I want you to go up. You didn't pass the test. I want you to go up and I will tell you to do different things, and you do them." So, I did, and I didn't do too well. So then we practiced, and while the other guys later were practicing aerobatic flying in single engine, I am still doing some of the basic stuff. But, at least, he got me through. And from there on I went to twin engine, flew the UC-78 like I'd been flying all my life. In fact, the last day I flew, we'd had all our required time and maneuvers done, so the instructor said, "Go on up, the two of us, and go up to the auxiliary field and shoot some landings. Do some what they call ordinary flying. Especially shooting landings." So I thought: I'm able to do this. So I practiced short field take offs. And one of the instructors saw me doing it and he called over the radio and I didn't answer him. All I said was "I am just doing the take off." I got back to the field [unintelligible. chuckles] They offered to do a short field take off. But, I had no trouble with that at all. Then I went to B-26's and

I wouldn't say I had any trouble there, either. That was the B-26 Marauder. That was a beautiful airplane.

Mark: I think that is where we left off. You had just gotten your wings and you went up to B-26's. Where was that?

Renard: At Dodge City, Kansas.

Mark: Okay. Now, when you go through this training, you were learning how to fly the plane. Or do you have crews by now?

Renard: No, no. There is no crew. That's strictly transition as pilot training. To learn that airplane. The B-26 Marauder was quite an airplane. It had the best come-back record of World War II.

Mark: I have to admit. I get my B-24's, B-25's, and 26's mixed up. 17 to 29, I know, but that is...

Renard: The 29 was the outgrowth of the 17. Larger and a lot of other stuff. The 24 was also a four engine but that was the high wing. There was a faster called the Davis wing. It was a faster airplane but they couldn't go as high and if they lost an engine they were throwing stuff out the window like you wouldn't believe because 17 could fly on one engine for as long as the gas lasted, for that matter. On two engines, it even did pretty well. And even if you had one engine out way out on the wing but you had to — not too far. Hope to God you haven't too far to go. But the 25 was the twin rudder, single engine, that Doolittle bombed Tokyo with. They could take off in a shorter area. They were the ones that had the 75 millimeter cannon in the nose. Then the 26 was the other twin engine bomber with the high wing, and this is called the Marauder. That's the one that had all kinds of fancy names. The Ship That Didn't Forgive was one of them, because if you made a mistake, it was probably your last one. The Flying Coffin. The Widow-maker. They had a couple of other fancy names for it. But it was a beautiful airplane. And it was red-lined at three fifty. When we ate here, the fellow happened to be standing in line behind me and I showed him this tag. His father had been a B-26 pilot in the World War II, but earlier than I was. And telling him some things. They stripped them, took some of the weight off them, and used them for what they called AT-23's for towing targets for B-17 formations, pulling a sleeve target back a ways. And also when we first got there, and up to that time, they'd have camera guns in the 17's and we'd do pursuit curves passes at the 17 formations. Dive down about three or four thousand feet. That airplane had the characteristic — if you dove it three or four thousand feet and before you leveled off, you put your engine settings in climbing power settings. Then leveled off. That ship would hold every inch of speed you gave it in the dive as long as those engines were

running. I don't care how far, till it was hit. And that was red lined at three fifty. When you did this pursuit curve pass we used to do four and a quarter. Until one day they had a picture in the bulletin board. Out on each wing there was a little ring for tying it down for boarding. They weren't heavy enough but they did it anyhow. But inside where that was attached there was certain rods or so forth. Well, there was a picture and this ring was that far from the lower coverage of the wing. On the end of this rod there was a big red circle, "HP's, take heed." That was the end of the camera gunners. Because they were lucky. And if it had been any worse, they would have cracked up. So, it was a beautiful airplane and in a way I would like to go into combat. And I wanted to stay as an instructor when we graduated but they said that they weren't keeping any. So I selected tow targets next. Because I had — I was third high in the ground school and my flying record was right up there, too. So, I would have had my choice. There was one place where you had a good record in training, you got rewarded for it. But I went to tow targets in stripped 23's.

Mark: So tow targets, what does that mean? You were the guy flying the plane.

Renard: Towing the target. We towed the target. They had a drum with a big long steel cable on it and they let the cable out through the back end of the airplane, through the bottom. And then at the end of the cable they had what they called a fish head. A clasp kind of thing. The cable was about — where they were shooting at it — oh, about that high, or maybe a little higher, and the front end had like a pipe. Pretty firm to hold it. And the target was about fifteen - twenty feet long. Yeah, at least that. And we'd let this cable out — there was a guy in the back end, of course. Let the cable out to about nine hundred feet or a thousand feet. And we'd pull it past the 17's and they'd fire at it. We made sure it was out there though because before our time some guys didn't and some of the 17 gunners came forward a little bit and put a couple holes in the towing aircraft's tail.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

Mark: That didn't happen in our case?

Renard: No. But at the last while we were flying tow targets — this was about — that was '44. That was fifty-two years ago. Towing targets. They used to send out a ship to tow the targets for the 17's. Well, something happened. By that time, there were fellows — gunners back from Europe — who had finished a tour of duty and had to get to learn to shoot pretty accurately or they are going to be dead. And they were dead accurate. And if they didn't want to fly very long, they'd shoot for that "fish," as we called the beginning, and the whole target is gone, see? Right there where the cable is attached. So they had to reel in the whole length of the cable, attach another fish, and let another target out. Well by that time, a good part of

your flying time was gone for that crew — they could only fly that long — and another bunch is coming out later — formation — so they would send out two ships. Or if something happened to the towing airplane, like engine wasn't working right or something or they had trouble getting the target on, so you had the other ship as a reserve. Then near the end of the time we were there, before we got put in 17's, and that was just about May, just about this time, maybe, they sent us fellows who had just graduated from pilot training. Twin engine. As co-pilots. And some were sharp, and some weren't so sharp. And I had one this one day that was sharp and I said, "Gear." — that meant to hit the switch to raise it. On a 26, in addition to the switch on the dash, to actuate the gear, there was down in the gear apparatus, there was another little kind of like a safety switch. The gear had to go down a little ways to actuate that before it would start up. And that day either there was a gust of wind or I hit a little bump in the runway that I hadn't hit any other time and I signaled for gear so I could set it, he hit the switch and we are going down the runway like on two wheels. The nose wheel had folded up and the doors were closed and we are going down, and she actually settled a little bit. Because we didn't have much room between the end of the props. But it was enough and when I got back, I wasn't even on the ground, radio called "Tower. The commander of the field wants you to report to his office immediately." And I knew what he wanted. Somebody had seen the take off and the guys told me that I was going down the run way, the nose came up and the doors folded, and the two wheels. I thought, I wish I had a picture of that. Close, lucky, but I made it. So it was a beautiful ship. I wanted to slow row it. And it would do it, because it had two engines, two thousand horsepower each. And the old 26's only had a sixty-six foot wing. Then they added three feet on each side and it was a seventy-two. And the original ones had a negative angle of attack on a 26. That is what made them so fast. Then after a while they raised the angle of attack to just above level and they added those three feet. It was still a fast airplane. It was red lined at three fifty. And I said we did four and a quarter in it. I buzzed — the last time I flew there — again,, the instructor said "Have your time in there. Tool this. Let's do students. This other student lived southeast of Dodge City, sixty miles, something like that, seventy miles. So we took off and the other guy flew in the pilot seat first. We went down and he buzzed his home, his folks at the farm. So then we switched seats and — we were up high enough — switched seats and went over and my cousins — my dad's cousins lived east of Ellenwood, Kansas, that was straight west of Dodge City, west of Great Bend. And so we flew over there and I — different times when I had flown and been doing something there, I'd circle above them and rock the engines and wave to them with a handkerchief out the window, and they'd see it. So, this time, I flew over there with the intent to buzz them, and I saw the place, and I went directly west from their place, and gained some altitude. Couldn't get too close to Great Bend, though, because I'd be seen over there, and there were 17's flying over there, too. Well, by that time, there were 29's over there. And I did a one eighty and stuck the nose down. So when I

got just west of them a little ways, I was down — when I looked out the side window of the 26, I could see what they call the cornice in the porch. There weren't many feet below, between the wheels and the ground! [laughter] There was nothing there for that whole stretch, on the south side of the road. The farm house was about three hundred yards — no, not quite — two hundred yards north of the road. I was just on the south side of the road. There was nothing there except on the east end there was a little shed, only maybe this high with a little bit of a roof on it — about that high. So I went through in front of there at three hundred and fifty miles an hour and just as I was right in front of there, just touched the one throttle and *row!* I got a letter in the next base I was at from the lady — my dad's cousin's wife — and she said, "Was that you, Henry?" She had been in the kitchen. She said "I thought the roof was going right off the house!" That was the one and only time I got to buzz. I wanted to buzz West Bend. Oh, a lot of fun. My dream was to get home. But I never could get close enough to us. The closest I was was Chicago and another guy was with me. Our Main Street runs northwest and southeast. And I was going to come in from the north, drop it down over Main Street, and go out the south end at three fifty. They would never have seen me. All they would have done was heard me. But I never got there.

Mark: Well, maybe someday. You never know. Your flying days are over?

Renard: My flying days are over because I pass out starting at eighty and I have to take Lennox and Dedoxin so I can't get at ticket. I haven't flown since October, '85. They wouldn't give me a medical. I didn't have time to fly because I was busy working so — and it takes time to prepare everything, and I just didn't. Of course, when they found those Northwest pilots that had been drinking, that ticked me off quite a bit. Cause I was in a lot better shape than they were. So, I didn't fight it, then. And my daughters just talked now about stopping taking Dedoxin so I could get my license. "No, you don't!" And the doctor says the same thing. "You just keep taking it."

Mark: He's paid to say that.

Renard: I know he's paid to say that.

Mark: So, if you were towing targets, how long was it that you found that you were slated to go to combat?

Renard: Well, I got put on a 17 crew in June. I just looked at my files right after I was making out that form.

Mark: That was June, '44?

Renard: June, of '44. See, I entered active duty in '43. And went through training. It was November 2, '43, when I got my wings and commission. Second lieutenant. And then went through B-26 training. I'm a deer hunter. And when I got my wings and commission, I got almost a six day leave to go home. So I was home in November and deer season is in November. I had to leave on a Saturday night to go to Dodge City and my deer hunting gang leaves the next morning to go up hunting. That was a thought provoking to go AWOL, but I went back to the service. It was June then and that's when I got on the 17 crew. The pilot — I was put on as co-pilot — and different gunners and so forth. When I get in the crew, I remember when I crawled up in the 17 the first day, and I thought — I sat in that co-pilot seat and I looked out and that big wing out there, and I said, "Gee, what a dance floor." But — and I told the pilot, I told him where I came from, B-26 training. I said, "If you want to teach me this airplane, I'll be a good co-pilot. If you don't want to teach me, I'll be strictly a co-pilot. So, you make the decision." So he taught me different things and I flew it as pilot at times, and so forth.

Mark: Now, is this the crew you went overseas with?

Renard: That's right. We formed in that crew and that is what we went overseas with.

Mark: Where did you form this crew at?

Renard: Rapid City, South Dakota.

Mark: I am interested in the personalities. The pilot, and then the gunners. You knew these guys pretty well.

Renard: Pilot, co-pilot, engineer, who also operated the top turret, was right behind the pilots, and the pilot got this fellow on the crew who was from his home town. He knew him before. Got him in the crew. Then you had — back of us was the bomb bay, then. Then came the radio operator; he was sitting on the left side of the airplane, going back through the center. Behind — and the ball turret. Right behind him was like a bulwark — a wall — metal — but there was a door in the middle — an opening — and the ball turret was right behind him. That is the fellow who was underneath. And could get in from the airplane but could also go out directly, if he had to. That is if you were hit or something and had to get out fast. There was an escape — and you couldn't be too big to get out but he could get out of there. He was sitting right with his knees up here by his ears. What they call, the fetal position. For the whole mission. I flew a short mission in the States — a practice mission — in the ball turret. Beautiful scenery.

Mark: Was it beautiful scenery?

Renard: Beautiful scenery, but I wouldn't want to stay there. And I flew one mission as a tail gunner, in combat. Cause in the 15th Air Force, they had the policy that, within each group, the squadron's located position was the lead. One, two, three, and then tail-end Charlie was number four. And that is the way the groups were within the Air Force, also. And they rotated, also, the groups leading the Air Force. So every so often your group would be in the lead. And whenever, in the lead ship, they commander officer of the 15th, the general, most of the time, once or a while if he was sick, there was somebody else, but most of the time he was in the right hand co-pilot seat. And they would then put a pilot in the tail gun position of that lead airplane who then, being a pilot so he knew something about it and what was supposed to be where, and that pilot kept — had to report to the general anything that was out of order. If there was a ship lagging or seemed to be having trouble, you report it to the general and he then made the decisions what to do. So I flew a whole mission in the tail gun — I didn't have to do — I had to shoot the guns — test them when I got in, when we got airborne, but I didn't have to shoot at any fighters because we weren't attacked by fighters.

Mark: So, you gathered your crew in South Dakota?

Renard: That's right.

Mark: I assume you did more training.

Renard: Oh, yeah. We trained as a crew and some cross country missions. And also trained the same way with tow targets. We had tow targets for — alongside in the 26's — for the gunners to shoot at. And in back of the tube, the waist gunners were behind the ball turret, each side. You've seen pictures of a 17 with — they were the ones with just a hole in the side. Then after a while they got windows there with the guns mounted so they could shoot out. And then way back was the tail gunner. And, of course, he just had two guns, and then the later models had a turret back there. When I was — we flew the G's. We also had the nose turret, so navigator, bombardier, in front — the navigator was on the left side looking forward. And he had a little bench there where he worked on, a little shelf. And then the bombardier was over on this side with a seat to sit on, and then the bomb sight was in the middle. Those that used the bomb sight or the switches to drop the bombs.

Mark: And you trained how long?

Renard: Till about early September. We left September — oh, wait a minute — August. We were going to go overseas and I got a leave because the woman I was going with at that time wanted to get married. We were engaged and she wanted to get married. And, ordinarily, but I tried — cause I hadn't had much leave, I got five or

six days to go. Hurry up trip. When I got home, she was off in New York and Washington with some gals gallivanting and came home the day before I had to leave, and I said, “No, not get married now. Have to wait until I come home.” So, anyhow, I had that leave. That was the end of August. We got that and then we shortly after were taken to Lincoln, Nebraska, and in Lincoln we got a new 17. We flew a new B-17 over to England to replace ones that had been shot up or shot down. And we had to take it out and check the compass on what they call the compass road. You’d have to check it against something known to see if the compass works or how far off it was in each of the directions. And make a record of it so they’d have it corrected. And then we left there September 17, flew to this field in New Hampshire — that was one of those long names like this — and we were there a day or two. We left on the 19th, from the States. Went up to Goose Bay, Labrador, and we were there two days — three days. Then from there we flew across — no, we went to Iceland. That’s right. Landed at Iceland. And as we were getting out of the airplane, the guy said, “Should have been here yesterday!” “Why?” “Marlene Deitrich were here!” “So what? That was yesterday.” So, we had food and then they gave us several blankets. And we had these — we were issued before we left the States — these sheepskin leather lined flying suits. We had that and several blankets. And out to some Quonset huts. They had little things like that for a fire. They were worthless. And it was colder than blazes already. So, tried to sleep but couldn’t sleep for much. About three o’clock in the morning they came around and woke us up. Said there is a bad storm coming. Get out now or you aren’t getting out for several days. So, hauled us out to the airplane and started up the ship and took off. And over to the British Isles. And we had to go in from the west side at Wales. Every time we would head toward the field to go in, snow blizzard. So the pilot straightened it out and fly along a little further and try to go in again. We did that four times and the fifth time it was still snowing but we went through it and got into Valley, Wales, is where we had to land. It was kind of a — oh, all airplanes went in that came across and transient and one kind or another. And there we left the airplane and had to put our heavy flying suits on the ramp with two ten-power binoculars that we had been issued, and so forth. And then we were there. Oh, yeah, we were hungry, so they took us over to a place. It was locked. Rapped on the door and some women opened the door. “All we have is tea and crumpets.” Well, take your tea and crumpets, and shove them. We didn’t say that. So, we left. And we were there three weeks. But some of the other guys, see, they were replacement crews. Some of the other guys had already been — were gone out to different bases that they had been sent to. We’re still there. And, talking between us, “Well, there is something wrong here.” So we didn’t know that the pilot knew at — he had been at Rapid City when different groups were trained and ended up in Italy. He had requested to go to Italy but we didn’t know it. So, we are sitting there and saying there is something wrong. So we, two of us, went down to the post office and the sarge came out. “What can I do for you?” “So, we been here so and so long and we haven’t got

any mail. Just what the heck is going on? You know, why don't we get any mail and the other crews got them, see?" They were still there. So, he went back and he came out with a letter for each of us. Asked us our names. Came out with a letter for each of us. And it was forwarded to Italy.

Mark: So that is how you found out you were going to Italy?

Renard: That's right. When I told the rest of the crew, "Why weren't we told?" And we told the pilot that, too. Of course, he acted real dumb but we knew what was going on. Our crew almost broke up in Italy. I would say, see, we sat down Christmas, we started flying Columbus Day. This was about mid-November. We'd been out on a mission and was all these clouds. We only saw the target three times of all the times we bombed fourteen times over target. We got double mission credit for most of it. I had twenty-four mission credits when I was shot down. And the third time that we saw the ground, we did the whole bomb run by radar. There was radar in the first two airplanes, one and two. One got shot, the other was there to lead. The bomb run was made [seven second pause in the tape] of the whole 15th Air Force. We're up above — we're in the clouds. Flying formation. You got to be close. The leader turned a little too tight and we are on the inside of the turn. Of course, they are going one speed. That means we are on the inside so we got to go slower. And all of a sudden I could feel the ship starting to go into a stall. The minute I noticed it — I was flying, which he had me do a lot of the time — the minute I noticed that, I turned her short and put her into a steep left bank and down quite a few thousand feet. And on the way going down, the minute I started going down, I called the navigator, "Give me a course for home." And I dropped down I think it was about seven or eight thousand feet, at least, so I knew I was clear of the other ones. And he gave me a course and I took that compass course and started home. Went a little ways and all of a sudden the pilot starts tooling on the radio compass — that's that little thing that's oblong, tear drop shape on the bottom of the airplane. Sometimes on top. And it's got a system in it and then it registers on the dial what your course is. Usually accurate, but not always. So, the pilot starts fiddling with it and he's got the home base and he takes over the controls and there is a different course. I get a call from the navigator and he is starting to chew me out. "I gave you a course so and so. Don't you trust me?" I said, "Call the pilot. He just took over." So he did. That night the pilot got told off. The navigator said, "If you don't trust me, I don't want to be in your crew. The hell with it. I'm through. Give me another crew." And I talked the navigator and bombardier into staying on the crew and keep the crew going. That is one thing I wish I wouldn't have done, because the day we got hit — and our pilot had said — was it that night or shortly after? — he said, if we are ever hit and on fire, when I tell you to get out, you're going to have to hurry up to beat me. We didn't know that he meant every absolute word of it. He was grounded for ten months before we got on the crew. Out in Rapid City. He and a couple other guys had

been sent out to pick up the crew members of a 17 that had cracked up in the Black Hills, and burned. Which we didn't know. So, he meant it, because when we were hit, and flames the whole side, and flames inside the nose and coming through, so I got out. He was the first guy out. He had directed me that morning — the co-pilot's seat is to the right, the pilot's is to the left. He had directed me to fly in the pilot's seat. We're flying in the number three position. With the wing over there. But I did most of the formation flying. Because I could out-fly him in formation. He didn't easily admit it but wouldn't deny it, either. So, we are on fire, we got hit, we had several close ones. We got hit in the right wing between the two engines and the whole thing was flames — black — you couldn't see out. You couldn't see the right side of the airplane. And he reached back and he touched the engineer, who was in the top turret. The bomb bays were still open because a bomb had hung. I had hit the salvo switch to get rid of it. He dropped out of his seat, grabbed his jacket which was hanging there, and goes down a couple of steps to where the cat walk goes up to the nose. Tried to reach across in front of my feet to the alarm bells which was way at my left ankle, on the side of the airplane. Well, he couldn't reach across because the pedestal is in the middle with all the prop controls and that stuff. And he disappeared. That was the last I saw him until I saw him on the ground in German — by Germans, prisoners. So...

Mark: We'll come back to that.

Renard: Pardon?

Mark: We'll come back to that. I want to talk about some of the missions that you flew first. Let's start with...

Third Person: Yeah, tell him about the women pilots and how you were told when you would take instructions...

Renard: Oh, you've seen a short time ago they had — I don't know when it was — the WASPs. You've heard about them? Well, while we were training in B-26's at Dodge City, we had some WASPs training with us. They had gone through training. They were training to get checked out in B-26's. And I think there were about twenty or thirty — I think there were about thirty of them at our field when they trained. They were assigned to different — of the units, and my instructor didn't have any. But I heard this from other students. And they would be doing different maneuvers that you had to practice. And one of them was, I remember, a ninety degree bank. That means you are up like this, the wing tips — and you have to do a three hundred and sixty degree circle without gaining or losing more than ten feet. So, and the guys couldn't do it. The instructor that had the girls said that the girls could do it. They were a pretty good bunch of gals. I didn't get to know them real well. I just saw a video that somebody had gotten off TV that —

and I thought I recognized a couple of faces. Of course, they are a lot older now, you know, and it is a little hard to distinguish. And I never knew any of them well enough to know their name. Knew their first name, but that was all. But they were cracker-jack pilots.

Mark: You guys knew if [unintelligible].

Renard: Oh, yeah. And the instructors just — well, I got — I figured I could hold my own with any of them because whatever the instructor — I did it. The 26 had a characteristic — when you cut the throttle, it would still — it took a while until it slowed down. Likewise, when you applied the throttle, it took a little while until it got up to that speed, see. And our instructor showed that to the crews when you started instrument flying. Because then you can't see anything. And they took us out at low level along a country road and said to turn so many degrees such as ten degrees to the left and ten degrees to the right, and so forth. But also, advancing the [unintelligible] you could see, you were that close enough, you could see how the delay was there, see. One day — oh, I know what it was — we flew out to — our instructor's folks lived at Van Nuys, California. And so for Christmas, he decided we were going to fly out to California. And, we did. We left and stopped at Albuquerque, New Mexico to get gas, and we stopped and taxied up and the instructor asked for one hundred octane. That was all we could use in the 26. We couldn't land at Lowry Field, at Denver, because it was too high. You'd never get off. You could land but you'd never get her off. Unless you had — well, you didn't go in, period. So, anyhow, we taxied up for gas. The pilot instructor asked for hundred octane. And the tank driver looked at him and said that they didn't have hundred octane. The instructor said, "What's the best hotel in town, and how soon can you get someone here to get us in there? Till you get a hundred octane here. We don't fly without it." The guy with the tank truck said, just a minute, and in ten minutes we were getting gas. And in Albuquerque, when you take off to the west, there's hills up there. I mean, small mountains. So, you got to be careful. You go so far and you turn to your left until you get by them, till you get out of them. And then we landed at Alameda, California. So we had to stay over at — we stayed in Alameda, we landed at the L.A. airport there. No, San Francisco airport. And so that was Christmas Eve day. The instructor had someplace he was going. He knew people out there. So the other student and I got dressed and we went into San Francisco. Well, on New Year's Eve, that town goes crazy. Right there when you get across the bridge, that first main drag where the cars and everything run, there is nothing but people. All the way down. We both went along. And we'd stop in at a bar, in uniform. "Where are you from?" "Wisconsin." Somebody would be there from Wisconsin. "Have a drink!" We could have got so drunk that night, we couldn't have crawled. Of course, we recognized that right away and we had a couple and got the heck out of there. But the next day, when we were leaving to come back, first we were going to go up to Van Nuys, he wanted to see his folks. Took us south first, then flew up along the

coast to show us the valley. We were flying along there and all of a sudden a Corsair pulls up along side of us, on the right side. I was flying co-pilot for my instructor. And the Corsair pulls up a little bit and he is looking at us. He is grinning like that and then all of a sudden he [unintelligible] pulls out and comes off, and comes back and pulls up again, see. So, he did that the first time. The Corsair had the same one engine as we had two. Course, he was a little smaller than we were. But, so he did that a second time and flies along for a while, and all of a sudden you could see him loop the throttle and everyone watched, circling around and coming up again. So, the instructor said, "When I say power, I want power." In other words, full power. And he had that timed just right, recognizing the time it took till the ship took ahold. And also when the Corsair — if he had to cut back, see. So when the Corsair cut back, and when he is at his lowest speed, really, just quit — ours is really pulling out, see. We pulled away from that Corsair. You never saw a more startled guy in your life. He looked at you. We were pulling away from him with a bomber and he's got a fighter plane. We just kept going and he didn't come back any more after that, either.

Mark: Boys will be boys, I guess. In Italy, you were first stationed at Foggia?

Renard: Foggia, yeah. We landed. We were flown down from England, just out crew, on a B-24. And that day we didn't know if we were going to get there. That was after the Marseilles invasion and this 24 had instructions to drop down and take pictures of the Marseilles harbor and so forth, of the damage that had been done. So they dropped down and then they climbed back up. Course they are climbing with this 24 and she just — not far from the stalling point — and we were sitting there. And we talked between us, "Don't stall this s. o. b." So we got there. We landed in Naples, oh, maybe an hour before dark. By the time they got us in from the airport, it was dark. And took us to a building that was — must have been like a Catholic big convent or something — where huge halls and they had cot next to cot there. And took us into a room that was the dining room and our pilot, having come from Del Rio, right across the river from Mexico, could speak a little Mexican. So he knew enough Mexican that he could order in Italian, some bread and some milk and I forget what else he got. That is all we had to eat for supper. And then they put us up and the next morning then they flew us by C-47 over to Bari on the east coast. And there we spent the night and that night I slept in the cot of a guy whose B-17 was blown up with them in it that day. I was thinking. Next morning they hauled us over to our base which was Foggia Number One, the first base north of Foggia on the east side of the road.

Mark: How long after you got there was it that you started flying combat missions?

Renard: I should have — I was going to bring my record along. I should have. It wasn't very long.

Mark: It's not a matter of being that precise with dates, but...

Renard: Just a few days. And see, when a new crew came over, the co-pilots got bumped. The pilot would go to co-pilot and they'd put a pilot flying who had flown some missions. And we had quite a few fellows that had been shot down and got back through partisans — the Yugoslavs and the Czechs would take them in or get them away from the Germans and take them in and get them back. The Allies Air Force would go in at night with C-47's to little fields that they had located and marked. And they would take in guns and ammo and then bring these captured — or recovered — pilots and airmen back. Not only pilots but whatever there was. Bring them back. So those pilots who had some experience would fly about three missions with a crew, depending on the crew. And then you'd go back to your [unintelligible] and keep on flying. So they had at least three missions. And of course our guys, our crews, got three more missions than I got. So I went to the operations officer and I said, "Hey, how long is this going to last? They are already three ahead of me. If you've got any crews that you have to make up, so I can catch up with them," I said, "fine." He said, "Okay." So I flew one mission — also the pilot was a guy who had been brought back from the partisans and I was flying co-pilot, and we hit some rough weather. And there were different crew members that weren't of that crew. They had just been put on — made a crew up. And we got in this weather and it was a little rough and tumble and stuff, and the engineer was in the back end of the airplane. And he came tearing up to the front end and — they had like little curtains hung in where the domes were — and he came popping out of there into the back of the cockpit and he looked — he looked around like that. And I was flying. And he started talking. He said, "Oh, you flying?" I said, "Yeah." "Okay." But when he bust out of those curtains, his face was very much excited. Cause he evidently had flown with this pilot before and he was disturbed about it. But I was flying and he had never flown with me, but everything was all right then, see. Made me feel good. But then, after that, I flew with my own crew but there was one time I was slated to fly with a crew at night. They started flying lone missions at night. Each one would have a definite and different course and altitude and you better stick to it. It was only done in bad weather. And they would have radar mounting. And if the weather cleared up, you came home instantly. No messages, no nothing. You just turn and head back right away. So I was listed to fly in that crew. And I got ready and went down to the operations and I got down there for this crew to get taken out. Our crew is scheduled to fly the next day. So I told the operations officer, "Hey, wait a minute," I said. "I have to fly extra, not instead of. My crew is signed tomorrow. I am going to be on it." So he got somebody else. And that plane cracked up that night. Right after — just after it got off the ground and they were all killed except the navigator and bombardier, and they were in the hospital for six or seven weeks and were sent home. That was close. So sometimes somebody is on your shoulder.

Just like the day I bailed out and a few other times.

Mark: As I recall, you mentioned you got credit for twenty-four missions. You talked about double credit.

Renard: Because we had such long missions, always over ten hours. Yeah, even the one we had over Marlboro, Yugoslavia. We had orders to go in under the clouds because the Germans were pulling out all their equipment at that time. They were losing then. They had ack-ack guns on flat cars and all the equipment — tanks, you name it — it was on flat cars. The yards there were loaded. And they said you go in there under the clouds regardless what level the clouds are. And, of course, we had to go in below nineteen thousand feet, and so we were sitting ducks. And I remember, we did it. But our — yeah, the ball turret gunner called it. He said, “The sons of bitches are shooting at us off the flat cars!” And they were. And that is the only time we flew that low. And it wasn’t that long. But, otherwise, our missions were way over ten — closer to twelve — hours. And sometimes they all didn’t get back. They’d have to be running out of gas and little fields along the Adriatic they could set down at. They may have to go back and take some gas in and fly them out.

Mark: What sort of targets were you sent out after? Could you characterize them? I mean, were they like factories, rail yards?

Renard: Well, at the time got there, they had just finished Ploesti about a day or two before we got there. You’ve heard of Ploesti, I’m sure. So we didn’t have that. But the principle targets — over half the time there was an oil refinery — the one where we got nailed — at a city then called Brüx, [spelled] Umlaut-X— now it’s called Most. And it was in the Czech Sudetenland. That refinery had been hit nine months to a year before and disabled quite a bit but the Germans had rebuilt it and we were told it was producing sixty percent of Germany’s output of gasoline and oil. Right then. That was the primary target. Then there was another one called Blackhammer which was over west further — not quite as far away — and a couple times we were briefed to go there. But every time we were briefed for one of those, there were clouds from here all the way up. So, even though we could bomb through the clouds with radar, doing that in the clouds was unh-uh, so we came home. We had alternate targets. One of them was the ball bearing plant at Linz. Good buddy of mine from West Bend who I had trained in ground school with and we were both qualified in navigation instructors when we went into the service, active duty, he went in before I did and he got shot down at Linz in July of ‘44. Some of the other targets — I am trying to remember — we bombed Vienna quite a bit and the joke there was that if we — if it was Sunday and we had wieners to eat, we are going to Vienna tomorrow. And that happened regularly. We bombed Strasbourg, Innsbruck, Regensburg. Now what was at those

places, I don't know. I don't remember that. They aren't shown on our records, see. But that is just the cities. And those are some of the other targets we were after.

Mark: Tell me about before the mission. We've all seen the movies. You march into the briefing room and the map is covered, and they open it up. Is that really what happened? Why don't you describe what happened before a typical mission?

Renard: Well, sometimes they pulled something or raised it. Sometimes the map was there. When you got in, you saw the map. But they wouldn't always have it marked where you were going to go. But they would point it out with a pointer. Here is the city, here is where you are going to go. And they'd point out anything in between, something that you had to look out for. We usually flew straight to it when we flew in. In the 8th, they had to zig-zag sometimes because of the flak and so forth, but we usually flew to it because we had to climb the Alps and by the time got above the Alps we were at a pretty good altitude already. And usually the fighters, see, they took off later, caught up to us, flew with us to the target and back a ways, and then they had to leave so they'd get back before they fall in for no gas. And so we didn't have the same situation. We usually flew straight to the target. Pretty much. And they'd tell us what we were going after and different things we had to for that mission: the number of flak guns, like this one we got nailed, they briefed us for three hundred and twenty-six guns. I swear to God there were more because it was like a black wall. And then I remember thinking, the ones ahead of us, anybody gets through there is damned lucky. Well, we weren't. We got hit. So, they'd give you important information and then some of it, the copilots would be excused, because my job was to go out with a jeep and pre-flight the airplane, and have it all checked before we got out there. And the day we got nailed, when I checked the airplane, in the number three engine, I found there was an oil leak. And I called the crew chief over and asked him. Well, that's as tight as they can fix them, he said, he might be able to tighten it up a little bit. So when the pilot got there, I was waiting for him. The jeep pulled up and I said, "We can't fly this airplane." "Why not?" He wanted to fly his missions as fast as possible. In fact, we were supposed to be on R & R leave at — what the heck is that fancy place in Italy? The people always went to? — can't think of the name of it. But at least we were supposed to flak leave. The pilot said, "No, we're not going on flak leave. We're going to fly missions and go home." Well, he was the pilot. He made the decisions. So, we didn't like it, we couldn't do anything about it. So, anyhow, the pilot said, "Why not?" And I said, "You want to look at it." And I got a ladder and I showed him. "Look at that." You could see the thing leaking. And he called the crew chief over and he said, "Call the crew chief." So I did. And he got over and he said, "Tighten that clamp up there." And the crew chief said, "Ah, I don't know if that will stop it." "Tighten it!" So he did and he tightened it up, and it finally quit leaking. So, I don't know if it leaked again after a while. But when we

got hit, of course, that is where we got hit, right between three and four engines, and the whole thing was flames and black. And I could see the rpm, so I hit the feathering switch and she wouldn't feather — number three engine was winding out there. Just couldn't do anything with it. So, it was maybe a combination of that and being hit that it went, but that was it. So we had three engines in effect, and she was on fire, and that was it. And the guys around us, after we got back to France, many of the guys who were flying that same day real close to us, and they said, we talked about it, and they said, "Yeah, we were wishing you would get the hell out of the formation because if you would have blown, you'd have hit us — pieces would have hit us — there's no doubt about it. But we didn't, and, of course, we did after I put it on automatic pilot and they turned and went back and we just kept on going straight north, our ship did.

Mark: At your base, I would imagine there was some missions that you would have expected some were more desirable than others.

Renard: Milk runs, sir.

Mark: Milk runs. Which I've only heard come from bomber pilots in England, but you had the same term.

Renard: Oh, yes. Milk runs. And we had a couple fellows, we didn't have many in our group, but we had a couple fellows when we had the bad ones, somehow they would blow a tire on taxiing. See, we had metal on our runways. We didn't have temporary runways. Or even hard black top. We had the ground was built up and then they had metal plates — big sections that they laid down. Then of course, if you got on the edge of this and turned the tire the right way, the tire was gone. There was only one tire on each side of a 17 so they'd call in, "Blew a tire." Got the heck out of it. Taxi out of the way and they are sitting there. They're gone. They're not flying. So we had a few that did that, but not too many. There were a couple of fellows in the group near the — no, this wasn't way at the end — I would say, the beginning of April, they were a little bit lazy and didn't want to fly formation. And so we are coming back from the mission and just after we crossed the Alps to the south, at the north end of the Adriatic, we looked around and we could see a lot of fresh-turned earth down there. After every mission when we came back there was somebody there as an interrogation, so to speak, getting reports on what we saw, what happened, and everything, and this particular day there was a fellow who introduced himself. He was a navigator. And we told him about this freshly turned earth. Could be an airfield. He never reported it. So two days later we were coming back from a mission the same way and the fighters are gone. They had to leave early. And two guys are a little too lazy to fly formation so they are sitting a few miles back in the 15th Air Force and we had just about passed that area. Straight up and down. And somebody called in on the intercom,

four friendly fighters at six o'clock. Twelve is forward, and around the clock. Six o'clock. I turned and I looked back and they weren't friendly. I just picked it up and said, "They don't look friendly to me." Well, by that time they had — they were about up to our level and they just went up. Two fighters behind each of those airplanes, just a little above them. They nailed one 17, shot it down. Everyone was gone and in the other one, they killed two guys in the ship. They just made the one pass and they were gone.

Mark: I want to talk about the mission on which you were shot down, but before we do that, I am interested in sort of life around the base. I assume it was your first trip overseas. In general, describe the sort of area you were in.

Renard: Well, this area was originally — I don't know what it was — whether it was built as a base or not. Runway was down next to the — ran north and south because those were the prevailing winds. Down near the east side, well, we were near that river. I don't know how far away it was. Then from the runway was the area where the planes were parked. There was also a squadron of B-24's at our field. They were flown by South Africans. And they used the same runway but their airplanes were stationed right west of ours. And then came the area where the South Africans lived. They had mostly tents, also. I don't remember seeing any houses there. Then there was some British — "Limeys," as we called them — who had their living area there, some tents and some houses. Both they and the Americans who had been there some time had little houses built by the Italians for them. Permanent personnel. But the rest of us lived in tents. They were sixteen by sixteen umbrella tents, as they called them. And then we came with the tents we had. And when we got there, then we were — four of us officers were assigned a tent and the enlisted men were assigned a tent. Of course, with that, there was six of them. Sixteen feet and then the sides dropped down to about that high, where the roof ended, and it was a little crowded in there. So we did a little finagling and begged, borrowed, and stealing, as you call it. And it had been a German airfield before because there was some JU-88's laying around there and some other things that they had left. So we went and we stole two aluminum pieces of metal sheeting, and so forth, and we took these, what would be the side flap, we extended it out to make more roof, so to speak. Propped them up and for the sides we begged, borrowed, and stole and put that there. Then we put the cots out the four sides with the feet end out underneath it so our heads were in when we had the center door open. And there was a ground floor. Then we somehow located some bricks someplace and had them brought in and laid bricks for the whole floor. And in one side we had between this one and this one we had built a little to keep clothing...

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

...a closet, if you want to call it that. Using the term loosely. Almost up — well, at the backside, there was up close to the tent as you came in, a little bit, it wasn't so close, and one day the pilot — it was dark and we had candles. So we lit a candle and we set it on the front end post of that closet, but from the candle light to the roof was only that far. And all of a sudden I look over and there is a little hole getting bigger and bigger, and just knocked that candle off. I called him a few choice names. So, we had to fix that. Get a piece of tent, and patch it and stuff. Then for heating, most of the fellows used old oil drums, and we would have them set up in the middle. And I don't know what they did later, but what they had before we got there, but then we found a JU-88 shell. They were about that big around. And, of course, we had that, someplace, all cut out so it was just a tube. And then we would mount that — we had bricks in the bottom of the stove, was open on the bottom end — on the one end. And, yeah, it was open on the bottom and on the top it was closed. We used to put food cans up there. And we would put that pipe at an angle and some of this tubing that we had got we'd put — find a barrel and set it outside the tent and then run the pipe inside and bring it up, kind of bend it so it kind of dripped, and we used hundred octane gas for heating. So right until a couple guys, our navigator included, got a little light one day, and he got a little un-cautious and got in further, and all of a sudden she lit and — come back out the pipe. Singed his arm good. Didn't burn him but it singed his arm good. A couple of other guys happened to them. A couple of other guys got hurt more. So that was the end. No more hundred octane. Well, for a while that worked and then gradually they slipped it back in because the fuel oil for the chimney, for the top of the stove, we had a hole cut in there, we had fuel oil pipes. Well, there were no good ones. They had a little kink or something. You laugh. Ours had a little kink at the top. Well, if you burn fuel oil, worked for a while but gradually it would fill up with that damned substance and all of a sudden the damned pipe would shut and the stove don't work. Then you have to pound it and all that crap would come falling through. You'd have to take it off and try and get it out and somebody would get all full of soot in the process. So, that was our heat. Hundred octane gas mostly. Then, outside of that, yeah, we had — we fixed up a little wash basin in there. We found some place — again, begged, borrowed, or steal, and some place to drain the water out. That was about it. Mess hall, of course. There was a mess hall and we were known to have what other units that stopped to eat — ours was known as the worst one. They baked bread. There was nothing like home-made bread. They baked bread there for the mess hall and all kinds of stuff. For flying, they would always issue some C-ration crackers and a can of C-rations. Something like that. Well, a couple of them were good. Chicken was good. Couple of them were lousy. And if you just get it, they issue it to you, so what was good, we'd keep. And then if we didn't want to go down to the mess hall, we'd — the first one we did, we didn't poke a hole in it and Phew! — after that, we'd get smart and poke a hole in it and set it on till it was warm and then we'd eat that and go down and get a loaf of bread first. We'd eat bread and that. And, when you are

above ten thousand feet, you have an oxygen mask on and you're supposed to try and eat? You know, take off — just go without eating and eat when you got back. When you got back, there was always at the end of the mission, the Red Cross was always there. Now, I've heard the Red Cross bitched some places but I never saw the others. Was always there with — if it was cold, coffee and donuts, or orange juice and donuts. Well, the navigator and I got in a donut eating contest. We'd get three donuts and something to drink. Well, that lasted a while and three donuts didn't seem like quite much until — especially if it was early in the day — which wasn't too often. And so we'd have another three. As time went on, we'd have another three. We ended up with a dozen donuts apiece. We didn't eat much that night.

Third Voice: Tell him about going into town. The two or three of you.

Renard: Oh. To get into town, we didn't have a PX at the field. So we had to go into Foggia for, well, the guys that smoked. I didn't smoke. Cigarettes, candy bars, whatever it was. Tooth paste, whatever you needed. Like they got on Army bases. So, our American units had trucks that would go in, periodically, on a certain time schedule, go in down the road into Foggia and come back. The British also had trucks that went in and we had to stand in certain spots to be picked up. The British, with one exception, never would stop for us to pick us up and take us into town and bring us out. Never. One day, one stopped and we couldn't figure out what the hell he was stopping for. And so we asked. "Oh, you want a ride?" We hopped on. And we'd go in there and then get our rations and come out. When we'd come out of the place, the building where the PX was in, the Italian kids would all be standing around. "Chocolate! Chocolate! Chocolate!" That is where I learned *via*. Get the hell out of here. That is the two words I learned: *Via* and *no capisce*. That was the other one we used. So, and that — this friend of mine, he lived — you don't see it down here but just recently, a place was known as Gunderson's Resort, on Big Cedar Lake. For years he ran it while his father had — was it his grandfather started it? I don't know — then his father and then he ran it for some years. After he got back from the service. He was a 38 pilot. And I was standing out in front of the PX one day waiting for a vehicle to ride home and I see this command car go through in front of me. Guy driving it, gee, he kind of looks familiar. And I was sure it was him. So I holler, "Hey, Wally!" There, that command car stopped just like that and he looked around. So we used to get together and then we had arranged that we were going to have a Christmas party. Well, we couldn't arrange it just before so we had to arrange it between Christmas and New Years. Well, I never got there. He found out later why. He asked around and finally found out that I had been shot down. So, and we got orders — some of the guys would go into town and might not get back. They'd find them hanging some place, castrated, and who knows what.

Mark: By...?

Renard: By the Italians.

Mark: Was this for local reasons or what?

Renard: They'd fraternize with — go out with Italian girls. The Italian fellows who were around there would — not many were left but there were some around.

Mark: So it was over jealousy, over the girls. They weren't Fascists?

Renard: No. No. Oh, they were all gone. There were none of those around anymore. They had long been defeated. We had — we used to have for a while — we called them Bed Check Charlie. They flew over at night. It was a German fighter but it never did any firing. He'd just fly over at a certain, fairly low altitude for a fighter, going slow. Fly over the camp. Bed Check Charlie.

Mark: Now, two of the things I hear vets talk about in terms of camp life are drinking and gambling. I don't get the impression you did much of those sort of things yourself. But did you see much of that around?

Renard: I didn't do any gambling. Some guys did. Played cards for hours at some bases, even in Italy. It was always something different. One base we were at we played Pinochle. I'd never — I can't play it today, I've never played it before. A couple of other games we played. I forget what they were. Sheepshead, I knew how to play. In prison camp, I figured there must be some guys around who can play it and I went through our whole compound and I only found two other guys — one was from Saukville and one was a cheese-maker's son from up in central Wisconsin someplace who knew how to play Sheepshead. So we used to get together and play Sheepshead. But at bases we were at, we'd play different games. I'd learn it there. Next place, the guys played something else so I had to learn something else. I've forgotten all of them. Even Bridge. In prison camp, the guy that slept next to me, guy right next to me, Simmons, he was a cracker-jack by-the-book Bridge player. And I learned to play Bridge there. I was cook in our room, of course, but whenever we had time, they'd be playing Bridge and I learned to play. And you played by the book or you caught hell from him, or you didn't play any more. So I learned Bridge pretty well. Today I know the bidding, but I've forgotten all about it. But anyhow, when I came home, I could play Bridge. And then got married, and when I was at Madison school, used to go to my wife's home in Kenosha and we'd play Bridge in the evening, once in a while. She and her mother would play against her dad and I. Do you play Bridge?

Mark: I'm not a card player at all.

Renard: Well, you bid and if people are bidding right you can almost tell what is in each hand, see. But the one who wins the bid, the opposite — the partner — lays his hand out open, see, so only two that are there are opposing players. So, we played several times and this one night we were playing and the bidding went around and I got the bid. So, my father-in-law laid down his hand, face up, and before we started playing, I told my mother-in-law what she had in her hand, what cards, and I told my wife what cards she had in her hand. I missed by one card. All the others threw down their cards and said, “We quit.” Today I couldn’t tell you a thing about the game.

Mark: Alcohol. I hear varying stories about the alcohol use there was.

Renard: We had alcohol.

Mark: Was it brought in by the army or was it...

Renard: Yeah, some of it. Some, and some other. In the States, when we were in training, different places had alcohol. I remember in Kansas, a real popular thing was — forget the nickname for it — was white gin. I took one sip of it once and that was enough. I didn’t want any more of that stuff.

Mark: Sounds home-made. Was it?

Renard: Could have been. I don’t know where the guys got it. It had one hell of a kick, a wallop, to it. I can tell you that. And different places, we had different — or they would get brandy or — and they had beer, of course. And the PXs, you could buy beer. I drank — if I could get brandy, maybe I would drink some, but brandy you couldn’t get. There are many states in the United States where you can’t buy brandy. They just don’t have it. Found that out when we went to the Legion. So, some guys drank quite a bit. Of course, flying, if they got caught flying, that was it. Cause you can’t — when I crop-dusted, our boss said, “No drinking. If you drink a twelve ounce bottle of alcohol, that is one ounce of liquor, within twenty-four hours of flying, your depth perception is off. And in crop-dusting, of course, your depth perception better not be off. Otherwise you are going to have troubles, you’ll crack up, kill yourself. And so — but in flying, also, if you — most of the guys were pretty careful. They did it on the side, somewhat. But, of course, in prison camp we didn’t have anything. I shouldn’t say that. Once— I was a trader for our barracks. They had one fellow who could talk German for the whole barracks. Anybody wanted something, you had to go to the trader and try to get it from the Germans by trading it. And we had — there was an aisle down the middle of the barracks and there were five rooms alongside. On each corner there were small rooms with four people and one was the overnight latrine. The honey-

bucket that they took out to the outside. And from one of those rooms — no I had a chance to trade with the trader — the German trader — and he asked if I wanted some fish. And some wine. “Well, how many you got?” Well, he only had a few fish and part of a — he called it a liter of wine. What it was, it was supposed to be dandelion wine, which can be very good, but it was badly diluted. So I had it in one of the — I traded personally and had it with the four fellows in the one room because it wouldn’t begin to go around with twenty-five guys. But outside of that, we never had anything in camp.

Third voice: It wasn’t permitted in camp, anyway.

Renard: Well, the Germans. We would have had to give it to the Germans and that was a little difficult because they didn’t have much themselves. When we were on the train, they had beer but it didn’t have very much of a kick. It tasted pretty good. It was kind of a heavy beer. On the train, a four day train trip, there was no water on the car except what they carried on. Whenever they stopped, they had a wooden wash tub about yea big, that high, and they volunteered two guys to **[five second pause on the tape]** go along and carry the thing full of water back to the car. That was our water — drinking — till the next stop. You didn’t do anything but drink with it. And it usually didn’t last. But, when we were first captured and taken to the guard house at Brüx — now called Most (??) — evidently the salvoed — the bomb that I salvoed hit their water works. Knocked it out. There wasn’t no water. Got to the guard house and there was no water. I guess temporarily they made it work. The first day there was water to flush the toilets. After that there was no water. So there was no water to make coffee. They’d go out and get snow and put it in a pot and melt it to make coffee. Because they didn’t have that, they’d give us some beer. It didn’t have a kick to it. And when I was on the four-day train trip going up to the permanent camp, the guard that I talked to quite a bit, he got off at different places and he came back with his canteen full of beer. It was good tasting but they didn’t have sugar to put in it so there was no wallop to it. And I had a fair amount of it but it never affected me.

Mark: We have a little bit of time yet. I suppose we could talk about the mission you were shot down on. I think we are at that point.

Third voice: You asked him about the crew, though. That he was with. He can repeat that. Who they all were...

Renard: Well, I don’t remember their names. The tail gunner went overseas with the idea he was not coming back. He was married. He and his wife both firmly believed, when they parted there, that kiss was their goodbye forever. Cause he never expected—He didn’t get back. He was one of the guys that got hit. Probably one of the first guys from flak and so forth. The waist gunner who was with us when

we were hit was not married. He left folks over here. The ball turret — McBride — no, McBride was the radar operator. McBride was married. The ball turret gunner was single. The engineer was married. The other pilot — his name was Claude Raines, like the movie actor —

Mark: A very different Claude Raines.

Renard: Very different. Chicken. Yellow. And of course, I wasn't married then. So that was about it on the crew. There were only nine of us. Oh, the fellow that we dropped off, the other waist gunner we dropped off just before we took the runway because he broke his thumb pushing the gun barrel in, while we were attaching it. We had attached it to the north, then crossed the runway and go all the way down to the south end to take off the runway because you — because of the rain we couldn't taxi on the west side. And we dropped him off and he was left there. You asked about the liquor. We got, after every mission, we'd get two ounces of liquor. And we drank practically none of it. He was, because he went to England and then came to Italy, was the only guy that got a package from home. The only one. I never saw my footlocker until I came home from POW camp. With some stuff missing. So, we'd take our two ounces of liquor and go over and pour it on the fruitcake. So we are flying and we get shot down on Christmas Day, and he is sitting in Italy with the fruitcake with all the liquor, and we're sitting in a POW camp. And we talked about it together. That's all the good it did us. So that is the liquor we got after every mission, see. And that was — I think enlisted men got it too. Some of them drank it and some of them used it like we did. I had a couple times drank it, or drank one of them instead of the two, see. That would be after the mission. You would have all day to catch up.

MARK: So, you were shot down, was it Christmas Day? Or Christmas Eve?

Renard: Christmas Day! We had, at our base, we had a little chapel and we had a Christmas program, but the chapel was so small they couldn't get all of them in it. At one time. So we had two programs. And I sung — I had sung before that in the church choir and different things. So, we had a choir there. We sang for both programs and when we were through with the second church service, we walked over to Operations. Our crew was listed, along with others, listed to fly and it's Christmas Day. Well, they listed it, that's it, that's the way it is. You are in the Army. Air Force. So, we went up the next morning — got up at four a.m., never forget it. Had corn fritters for breakfast. I'd never had corn fritters until I went in the service. And I won't eat them since. And then the briefing and then I went out to the ship and told you about that. Pre-flighted it and found this oil leak. It was tightened up and so we taxied off when it was time and took off. Had no trouble in the air. Flew until we got nailed. And when we were hit, told you what the pilot did. We had several close hits like this — boom — boom. You could feel the ship

bounce like there was Paul Bunyan under there poking. And the tail gunner — we had a policy that on each bomb run, the IP was the initial point. And during that run, then, as soon as possible, we'd have each member of the crew check in. Guns were working, oxygen hose, and whatever else you had to check. And flak suits on, and so forth. And the tail gunner was never later than the second. Usually the first one to check in. He never checked in at all that day. So I figure he was seriously hurt or even dead by that time, before the final hit. And then the other guys checked in. So when we got hit, as I said, the pilot was the first guy out. Bomb bay doors are still open. He was gone. I started the fire extinguishers cause this whole side was fire. They were over on the right side of the airplane, four handles. Behind the co-pilot's seat. And I reached for them and in doing so I broke my oxygen hose connection. But just when I was reaching for them, I also remembered, oh, yeah, I had disconnected those damned things because the chemical they use in them when it hit hot metal would create phosgene gas, which was extremely poisonous. In fact, in training, we had to go through a tent with — at that time I could smell, now I can't. But, anyhow, so they broke, so I forget about them. I remembered they were disconnected. When they hit the toggle switch to engage the automatic pilot — when we took off after we were up in the air a little ways — we always hit a switch to warm up the automatic pilot so all you had to do was hit the toggle switch and she is engaged. So I hit that and then I let the automatic pilot take over and made a couple of adjustments by the trim tabs — made sure it was flying straight and level so everybody has enough chance to get out. I never heard the alarm bell. I tried to call on the intercom. It was dead. It was probably shot out. And by that time, the flames are coming up the catwalk from the nose and there are these four hundred pound oxygen bottles behind each of our seats. I figured it was time to get out. I couldn't do anything else, so I grabbed my jacket, my GI shoes. We couldn't wear shoes because it was too cold. At EAA, two years ago, there was one 17 pilot that I learned he had ordered a size shoe one size bigger than is regular and he wore pair of heavy socks, and he was able to keep that way just barely warm feet. But we couldn't so we'd take off our GI shoes and had like bedroom slippers with wires in them. And connected to the gabardine flying suit we had that had wires in that plugged into the ship's electrical system. Then you had heat until you pulled the plug. So, grabbed that and the B-15 Air Force flight jacket, insulated, and I had that in my left hand and down the nose. And when I got to — as I said, the navigator was writing in his log and I motioned, and he dropped it, and the bombardier hooked his chest pack chute on, and he starts out, and the next thing — because of that bomb bay door that is open — and he was gone. I motioned to this bombardier, out. And he is sitting there and he is shaking his head at me, like that. I was never so surprised in my life. Because we had talked many, many times about bailing out, and how, and to watch out for this bomb bay door if you have to go out the nose, or if you can get out of the front end because to get through the waist, it's a long ways to go. And it might be shot up anyhow, or burning. So he shakes his head at me. I said,

“Come on, Scanlon.” His name was Scanlon. “Out!” And he said, “No. You just want to get us out and get safe and then you are going to take the ship back.” Cause I had said I will never bail out over enemy territory. I said that every time. Never failed, otherwise. Except you change your mind under the circumstances appear. So, he reminded me of that, and I’ve thanked the Lord many times and happened to think. “Scanlon,” I said, “Will you promise to follow if I go?” He said, “Yep.” And I jumped and he followed. I didn’t know it then until — because I’d been off of oxygen at least a minute or more, and at thirty thousand feet the ordinary person — you’re gone. Little thermometer out in front of the right side said sixty degrees below zero Centigrade, and I didn’t want anybody on the ground to know that I was there. That I had fallen out. Because the human eye, if it picks something falling out of an airplane, it can track it. Even small. But if it looks away for an instant, it will never pick it up in flight. So, if they don’t catch you coming out, or if you are not in a parachute falling slowly, they won’t see you. And that is why I fell, fell almost to the ground. When it was getting pretty darn close, I reached and pulled. See, we had — pilots had seat pack chutes. You were sitting on them. They had a harness like this, criss-crossed. And we used to — she’s here and she [refers to his wife] understands — for adjustments so they were tight. And when they were that way, when you were sitting for a long time, the buckles would press right on the inside of your legs, so we would always loosen them a little bit so they were just to the sides so they didn’t. So, the harness was a --what do you call it — rectangular shaped, two short and a long part. And attached to the cable, and the cable went back to the chute. So when I wanted to pull, I reached and I pulled, and nothing happened. And I said, “Don’t tell me that damned chute isn’t going to open!” Then I remembered there is a slack in the cable, so I skeek! and boy, she popped! And I don’t know if you know about parachutes, but they are packed under pressure, about that square and that thick. And then this two little things come up with a hole in it. The pin goes through them. And that holds it, a little cap in there. And when that is out, there is a little pilot chute, is what it’s called, packed in the top, and then the big chute is underneath it. Well, the idea is that when that pressure — when the pin pulls, the pressure pops that little pilot chute out and the air catches that and then pulls the big one. So mine went all at one time, Boom! And I was slowed awful quick. I was going — today, I can’t figure it. I was falling at mach velocity when that chute opened. And I copped one hell of a jab in my back, which I have lived with. Of course, it was cold, and when I landed in a tree. There was — well, I estimate about fifteen or twenty acre area of pine trees. All about sixty feet high. My chute came down right on the top of them. So, the jolt I got when the chute opened, when I landed, it was like, stink! And there I was hanging. I was from here maybe to those books in that shelving unit out from the trunk. Hanging there. The older parachute harnesses, and even like the chest packs, there was a ring and they would have a hook like there with a spring on it. Like the old horse harnesses had. But the newer ones, like we had, had two rings and they would just come together,

and one was a hole in here with a recess, and the other one was a pin with a lump on the other way around, see. So you'd push it through and then turn it, and set it in there, and that would hold it, see. So I am hanging in the tree in that chute. If I used both hands to open it, I am going to fall thirty feet to the ground. And so I had to hold it with one hand to get the pressure off the chute and with the other hand try and twist that thing, and it took me at least half an hour or twenty minutes, at least, to get out of it. Damn chute. So then I reached up and cut off — I had ordered a Boy Scout — a Swiss knife a week after I got to Italy, thinking of such a situation. I got it a week before we got shot down. Had that in the pocket. Reached in and got it out and I pulled these nylon cords down from the chute as far as I could pull them, and cut them off. Cut them off at the long end, of course, and then I'd line them up and wind them, and in the pockets. The pockets were full of them. And when I had enough for what I thought I might need to build a lean-to, or whatever I might need, then I crawled across a branch and down to the ground. And there was no brush. There was one big log, about yea big around laying there, and that is all you could see. Underneath those trees as far as you could see until depressions. And then I looked at my watch, and it was twenty minutes to twelve. Got out my escape kit. There were two plastic kits. One was a soft plastic, oh, about that square. It opened, with stuff in it. The other was about the same size, but was heavy plastic and was about that thick. There was that much room in it. And they had some concentrated candy in there, a couple maps, two compasses, one was yea big around and the other was about like the tip of a little finger. That I had until the last search going into final camp, because I hit it a few times. And a couple other things that we would need if we were shot down. Forget what it all was. And then I looked at the maps and figured out where I was. And I was going to head south for Prague, to get into partisan hands, I hoped. And this is, as I said, all woods, but there was one little opening through them. I don't know if you have seen the old bob sleds that they used to have years ago. The horses pulled them. There was a bob sled track going from there out to the — to the west. And I thought, well, I'll follow that a little ways. And I followed it a little ways and then there was a stream, underground — not underground, but down in the ground a ways, going through there. The bob sled just went — it was just a narrow one. And then went down hill. South, that was the way I want to go. So I started walking down the stream, or near the stream, and then of course you get in the hills a little further, it gets a little — the bottom of the stream gets a little deeper in the hill. And they had briefed us on all kinds of things before I left the States. And one of them was that if you get shot down and there is snow, don't get snow in those boots. They are like the stadium boots the girls wore, lined with that looked like sheepskin liner inside. Don't get snow in your boots, because if you did, you can freeze toes, you can freeze your legs, and you can lose toes, a foot, a leg, and all the works. So, as this stream goes downhill further, the snow comes in more and more, and all of a sudden, and I watched that. All of a sudden, the snow is starting to fall in next to my pants leg. So I stopped and I had to

decide, do I go this way or do go back up to the road. And I — I figured you wouldn't get much medical help, if any. So I decided to go back up to the road, and I did. And I followed that road through the pine trees and then it started going down hill. It came out in this area, which they call a holf, over there. It was a house, maybe a couple of them, and a barn or two, and a big area. And as it — just before I got to that level, there was a fence on either side of the road. And the fence was made of tree trunks that big, to about that big, tight, side by side. About maybe nine - ten feet high. And then across the top there was the same kind of a trunk but smaller, nailed to hold these in place, and one across the bottom, a couple of feet off the ground. There was no gate there, so I just kept to the outside of that fence and walked around and went a ways, and then it went west. And came out over on the south side of the house up there, and the building. And it was down hill from the house to the — there was a gate just like we have farm gates around here, with the boards and an angular brace holding the gate together. And, I don't know, there were three, four, maybe five kids, they were sleigh riding from the house down to the gate, and, of course, they had to stop and they'd walk back. And from the gate to the road was open, except there were trees along the east side of that road. Oh, so big to so big, fruit or nut trees, whatever they were, every so far along that road. So, I got there and then they were — I stood there and pondered a little bit. So I decided, if I can scoot down here a ways, so when they would walk back to the house, I'd scoot for the next tree, and if they still had a ways to go, I had to kind of time—I'd scoot for the next one. Well, I had done that about three or four times, made two trees or if I was lucky and they poked a little bit, you know, maybe another one. So I was down the road. I only had a little ways to go and I'd have been gone. And one of these kids has to — of course, I didn't look then, but just out of the corner of my eye, if they are still moving — and while he is walking, he turns around and looks back. I don't know why. He saw me running. And I heard him yell. And he yelled up to the house, of course. And I learned from the conversation after awhile. So, when he yelled, I stopped. And I was right by a tree, and I was standing there behind the tree. Real still and stiff. Nothing happened for a little while. All of a sudden, an old man comes out of the house. Comes walking down the road to the gate. And he opens the gate and stands there. And this is the Sudetenland, and I was hoping it was — in thinking, it was partisans. Czech. So I started walking toward him. He didn't motion, or anything. Didn't say anything. And I got, oh, from here to the corner of that shelving unit and close enough that I could see he had a Nazi swastika lapel button in a coat he had got on, like a suit coat, see. And just about the same time, a gal got there from the house with a double-barreled shot gun. Hands it to him. I don't know if it was loaded or not. I don't take a chance. The first thing I had done when I hit the ground was to pull my .45. We had them in shoulder holsters. And I don't know if that one was — my dad helped make holsters like that at Amity Crafts, in West Bend. I got one at home, yet. I got, the Germans didn't get. So, I loaded it, and put it on safety, and tucked it back in the holster. So, he motioned,

walk up to him. I came up to the gate and, with the gun, he pointed up to the house. So I walked up ahead of him, up to the house. Yeah, there were a couple of houses there, because I was standing between two of them in a little ah, today, if you would build it shut, you'd call it a breeze-way. And he was the only man there. There were these kids, couple boys among the kids but they were ten years, eleven, maybe, but no older. And a couple young women and a couple older women. And so they were talking, and I was standing facing east, where I had come from. They were talking German. I understood every word they said. They were scared, because I was looking that way, they thought there were other crew members, because they hadn't seen anything. There ought to be crew members coming down that would jump them from the back. And then one of these women said something to the old man, and said, "Did you search him?" This is in German. He said, no, shook his head, and he started talking to me, with the shot gun in his hand. I just stepped back one step and went like this and he — right off. And they just held me there. From their talk, they had called the burgomeister as soon as this kid had yelled. And the burgomeister came up. It was almost dark. Good dusk when he got there, but he didn't get up to the house. There was snow on the ground and up this road came a little winding and up the hill, and he got to about four hundred yards up the hill, and there he got stuck. So he hollered at them, and then they marched down there. I wasn't real close to him, when he said, "Handa hoch!" Hands high. I just threw my hands up and he stepped up, took the .45, and then put me in the car and took me down there. When I got down there, they already had the pilot. Searched us. First they asked for stuff in the pockets. And they had a room on the second floor of this building. And there was, oh, the room was from this corner to where that open shelving unit is there, about almost square, maybe not quite that big. And you came in the door here, and the wall was here, and over here was a German Shepherd dog, tied on a chain. But the chain was long enough that he could get to this wall. So you are in here. So if you try and move, the dog will probably get you before you get out of there. So, they kept asking for stuff, and he was talking German, mostly. I don't know if he could talk any English. So I knew what he wanted and I'd take something out. I knew what they wanted, so *that* they got last. I'd give them a little bit by little bit. I don't know how long it took. And then they brought the pilot in, after a while, and then they took us to separate rooms and searched us to the skin. And then they were going to take us someplace by car, took us down and put us in the car, one in each. Two guys up in front, like a Volkswagen.

[Ten second pause in the tape]

Mark: Okay, today's date is May, the 8th, V-E Day, isn't it?

Renard: That's right.

- Mark: I always forget. Seventh or the Eighth.
- Renard: And I was still sitting in a POW camp, for another five days.
- Mark: We are continuing our interview with Mr. Henry Renard, of West Bend, Wisconsin. A veteran of World War II. And as we last off, he had just been taken prisoner by the Germans. You were taking a train ride. It was to Stalag One?
- Renard: That's right. Stalagluft One.
- Mark: And you were suspected of being a Gestapo agent. That was the last part that I remember.
- Renard: That's right. I talked German to the guard and it was perfect German. Said I was a Gestapo agent, and I couldn't get close to him any more.
- Mark: So, you — how long a train trip was it to Stalag One?
- Renard: Four days. Of course, we spend a little time hiding in tunnels and behind hills and stuff when the Allies were strafing, but it was a four-day train trip. They stop the train in the cities, in the train yards. To go out with their big wooden wash tub with two volunteers to carry it in — that was our drinking water till the next stop.
- Mark: Now, there was a sort of an interrogation center for POW's in Frankfurt. You apparently didn't end up there?
- Renard: Oh, yes, went through there.
- Mark: You did?
- Renard: North of Frankfurt. It's a place — first place we went to when we were shot down. The crew — the five of us that got out — were brought together in the guardhouse at Brück [pronounced "Bricks"]. That's the town we bombed. We bombed that refinery north of Brück. And then when they had us all there, we were taken by train southwest into Germany. If I had a map here, I'd remember the names of the cities. Couple of the places that we bombed. And then northwest up to Frankfurt on the Main. There we changed trains. And we had to go from one depot to the other. And the German lieutenant with two privates formed a triangle and had us between. And we were real tight, close together. He said, "You don't look at anybody, you don't say anything, no comments. You just keep going, because if you don't..." The streets were packed with people. He had to push his way through. If they gave a little problem, he'd just say something about the Gestapo and we had a lane going right through. And from there we went to the other train

depot and the Allies — the 8th Air Force — had bombed that depot that day, because the rails were in — twisted like pretzels and craters in the yard. There we had to go down a stairway, and I had my hands in the pockets because I had no mittens, and it was cold. I just slipped off the first step and a big six foot guard behind me kicked me in the seat of the pants and I kind of flew down the rest of the steps. I didn't fall down but I had to move kind of quick to keep my feet under me. And I turned around and gave him a dirty look, but that was all I could do. And until the next train went out, that they took us up to Oberursel, that was north of Frankfurt on the Main. That was the interrogation center. There you went in solitary confinement. Each cell. And they had little cells that were little rooms, I should say. They were maybe this wide and just wide enough for a cot and to walk alongside of it. They weren't even that wide.

Mark: Maybe ten feet?

Renard: I don't think they were ten feet. Eight feet, maybe. And there was — the one I had there was a window, with bars on it, of course, and there were electric heaters on the short wall and on the long wall, and the door was out that way into the hall. And we had one German GI blanket. Which is smaller than ours, and not as warm. Those heaters were put on two hours at a time, twice a day, twice every twenty-four hours. So one at night and one during the day. And it was cold outside. I learned how to try to make as much of a sleeping bag out of that blanket as I could to keep as warm as possible. From there, you'd get called out to see the interrogating officer at different times. I was there five days. And if you had to go to the bathroom, I forget how you just signaled the guard, or something, something on the door or the wall. And you'd go to the bathroom. It has no hot water. They gave you a razor, but who can shave with cold water and no soap? There was no soap to wash your hands. The container that they put the noon — you could almost call it garbage — it was at morning, we had a sandwich of two thin slices of German ersatz bread, at noon we had this — around noon — they cooked all green vegetables, leaves, together. Big kettle evidently. And they'd come around with that. And it was my luck that they'd usually come around with that just as the guard was getting me out to go see the interrogating officer. So when I got back, that stuff was difficult enough to eat warm. And when it got cold, I don't know if you've ever eaten cold oatmeal, but, if not, let some get cold sometime, you'll know what I was talking about. But that is how this stuff got, and it got cold and almost a little slimy and the glass that they put it in was green. It had never been washed. But, I guess we lived through it. And so we were there five days, and from there we went up then up to Wetzlar, which was the transient, as I call it, the transient camp, another thirty-five kilometers north. And there we got clothing, or the nearest thing to it, that we needed. If what they had, plus these kits, like the kids used to send laundry home from college in. The same — just about the same thing. And there was two sets of heavy underwear in there,

because most of us didn't have any on. Two sets of — two sweaters. Red Cross had knitted. A strip of plastic with six vitamin C tablets in it. A toothbrush [means toothpaste?], and we were supposed to use that for brushing our teeth, but we used it to make the cake rise — a little cake that we did bake in camp. Handkerchief. Three pairs of socks, I think it was. What else did they have in there? Couple of other little things that we needed. And a toothbrush, of course. So that, and whatever clothes — I said I had nothing on my head, so I got a cap. Yeah, this is the one they issued me. Radar's cap. [unintelligible] we used didn't realize that was the cap that Radar wore until last year I wore it to a state legion convention and one of the guys said, "Ah, Radar!" He was in Korea. I had no shoes, because I had those stadium boots on, and of course they took those away. I had nothing on my — no jacket. I got a — some kind of field jacket — American, not German. And I got Limey shoes. This I got for my head. That was about it. That was the place that, because I could speak German, they asked me to stay. I would have been officially assistant chef. Would have had a room as big as this one, or maybe larger, with the other fellow. Would have had a nice insulated B-15 Air Force jacket, and some other nice things. My actual work would have been espionage and intelligence. Because of my German speaking, but I decided not to stay. I decided I am going with my other folks. I was in a crew. But I found out after the war was over that if I had stayed there, I would have been in with the first group, the first unit to go to all the camps, like Auschwitz, Dachau, you name them. And from there, they went to all those different camps. But I was in Stalagluft One by that time.

Mark: And when you got to Stalagluft One, why don't you just describe your sort of introduction to it. In-processing.

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

Renard: Well, you had to — we got into the newest compound. There was a — when you came in the main gate, there was the North One, the North Two, there was a barracks, a road through, a barracks over to the left of that. I thought it was to the left of that. I am sure it was to the west. And then north of Two there was like a mess hall, and then North Three was the newest one that we were in. We got into the — it was dark at night. It was snow falling, there was big flakes — beautiful, actually. But, the way you were dressed, you didn't really appreciate it all that much. And we got — we were registered and given these, with the number on that we came in. So this is 7328. There was 7327 registered before me. Of course, a few of them were out of — we were two hundred and some, and they stripped us. I forget where it was, first when we got in. And checked us, checked our clothes for lice. And the only one in the two hundred and some that had lice was a major. He was the ranking officer in the group. And he had the lice. So he had to go and be deloused. We didn't have to go till the next day. They took us down to some

big steam chambers they had and put our clothes in, and stuff. And then checked us all over, too. Then, that night when we got there after we were registered, we were taken down to the barracks where we were assigned in North Three. There was an aisle down the middle of the barracks and in each corner of the long barracks there was a small room. There were four fellows in each one except one was the night latrine, with the honey bucket that they took to the outside. Because the barracks was locked before dark each night. And the rest of the rooms were larger and there were twenty-five fellows in each room. There were five of them down each side of the hall. One of them, when we got there, was supposed to be an activity room, there was nobody staying in it. Later on, when they got crowded, they sent a carpenter in and they built sleeping units along the side. Let me back up. We put out stuff in the room and then we were taken out to some barracks, or some warehouse, someplace, and there were burlap bags, a little better than the width of a human body. And large enough. Pick one up and then went to another warehouse and there there was shredded paper. Fill your bag with shredded paper. So we did and then we went back to the barracks and whatever bed you picked, there were three layers on one side of the room. They had boards nailed along with one board in front just a little bit, and the boards were like you get at a saw mill, the first boards that come off the log. They weren't full boards. Be a little hollow here, a little hollow there, a knot here. So, that was what you slept on. You put your bag on there. And the first night, it was all right. But after that paper flattened out, if it wanted to be any decent, you'd have to get in there and fluff it up again. Well, it was all right if you were on the bottom, but if anybody from there on up — there were three layers and there were seven fellow slept in each layer — that was twenty-one fellows — then over in one corner, there was two double bunks. Two guys upper and two lower. And they had brought in fellows that had been in camp before we got there. They were to help us and teach us I don't know what. But at least they slept there. So that was twenty-five. And if the fellows in the second or the top layer wanted to fluff up their bunks, their paper, it would be dust, and all the dust would fall on the lower ones, and we who slept up — no, I slept I think on the middle level — I'm not positive — either that or maybe the lower level, but we'd get all the dust from the guys up above. Nix! No freshening up the bunks, so to speak. You just lie on it, flat.. And what you had to learn was to — while you were sleeping, if there were a little hole in the board or something, you had to learn, so your bones, like your hip bones, or something, would nestle in those holes, or something, and if you didn't, of course, that kind of a place to lie, you had to get up several times during the night to go potty, cause it just, that's what it, because it wasn't much different from sleeping right on the wood. You had that burlap bag, double thickness, and that shredded paper packed inside of it. Outside of that, it was hard sleeping. And that is what you slept on.

Mark: I want to ask you about some of the daily life in camp, but I have some other questions.

Renard: Go ahead. I see her handing them to you.

Mark: In terms of interrogation, I suppose back in Frankfurt, what sort of questions were they...

Renard: We weren't interviewed in Frankfurt at all. We just through Frankfurt from one station to the other as if — at Oberursel, north of Frankfurt, that's where the...

Mark: Well that is what I meant.

Renard: That's where the Allied interrogation center was. Now, some maps don't show Oberursel. It's about thirty kilometers north of Frankfurt on Main, and this Wetzlar is shown on the German map. That was another thirty - thirty-five kilometers north. In the interrogation, well, the first day, as I said, they were just there with the hot food and I got to go down to the interrogation officer, and he was a captain. And about — let's see, I got back in early summer — the fall of '45, there was a Liberty magazine published and they had a terrific article, and pretty accurate, on how the interrogation was done. And the interrogating officer had a room oh, a little larger than from that wall this way, just maybe from about that size, and it was square. And then there'd be a window on that side and that side, and the interrogating officer sat on an angle — his desk was at an angle — with his back to the corner. So the light from the windows came in and shone on your face. So that they could see any facial expressions that you might have. So then they started out. They had a folder there. This is all English, and they spoke perfect English. At least the one I had spoke perfect English and the other fellows — the other POW's — said the same thing, the guys spoke perfect, or almost perfect, English. So he asked, "Your name is Henry F. Renard?" "Yep." Name, rank, I was a first lieutenant then. Serial number. So and so and so. "Yes." "Your home address?" Well, S-2 had told us in briefings before, give them your home address. You're going to want to write letters, and all they got to do is copy it off. So, make them feel good and give it to them, so we did. And then he started in, "Your group is so and so." I said — no, the first thing he had did, he looked at it, before he even asked my name, he said, "Bombing on Christmas Day." He shook his head and I said, and I said it in German because I, I said, "*Capitan*, if you had been given such orders, you know damn well you would have gone and you wouldn't have dared even to open your mouth." And right from then on, we were on better — he knew how I felt, so from then on we got along pretty good. But then when he got through name, rank, and serial number, and address, he said, "Your group was so and so." I said, "Captain," --this was in German, as much as I could, almost all of it— I said, "I'm sure you know the Geneva Rules of War, and it says name, rank, and serial number. I have already given you a home address. I don't have to tell you my group, or anything else." And he asked something else

again, and I wouldn't answer, so he pushed the button on his desk, and the guard opened the door. He said to go with him, so I went back to the room. So the next day, back again. And it happened the next day about the same time again. The hot food was — came when I left and then he started right in. "Yesterday, you said so and so," he said, "and your group, you didn't want to tell me." I said, "I told you what the Geneva Rules were, and that is going to be it." And so, he said, "Well, your group is so and so."

Mark: Was he right?

Renard: Sure he was right. Four Hundred and Sixty-third (436rd) Bomb Group. He said, "Your squadron was what?" I said, "Same thing. I don't have to tell you and I don't intend to." He said, "It was the Seven Seventy-third (773rd) Squadron." And he asked different questions then about our flight that day, and so forth. Ah, he went through that and a couple of things. And he said, "Your initial point," — that was the little burg that was the spot you began your bomb run from — "was so and so." He had that wrong. But he had the exact course right. And then he asked what the alternate target was. And I had forgotten it. I couldn't have told him if I wanted to. So he pushed the button again and said, "Okay, you can go back." Called me down the next day I was there, and every day and so. And so then the next day, he said, "Yesterday, you didn't know the alternate target." He said, "It was Linz." The minute he said it, I suppose I had a little facial expression, I don't know. I remember that because a fellow from West Bend — he and I had taken a ground school course before we went on active duty and both had gone down and we both were qualified in navigation instructors when we were called to active duty. He had been shot down July 7th, or 9th, it was, bombing Linz, the ball bearing works there. So when the interrogating officer said that, I remembered it. And then he went through some other things and he was asking questions about radar bombing, and I lied and said I didn't know anything about it, I was never in an airplane that had any, and that told him that all our airplanes didn't have it, of course. Said I don't know anything about it. And he left that and he went to some other things, about — they had started night missions shortly before that — that was lone ships going at different altitudes and courses. I didn't know anything about that. So, after that, it wasn't too much anymore.

Third voice: Tell about the crew members you missed.

Renard: No, that wasn't there. I got interrogated later. He didn't ask about crew members, just about who got out that I knew of. That was the bombardier and the navigator, and the other pilot and the engineer. That is all that I knew of. That ended that there. And after that, I wasn't called in any more. I was there for a few days and that was it.

Mark: I thought perhaps he would ask about your ability to speak German?

Renard: Did he? Well, I guess he did ask where I learned German. I said, well, my folks talked it at home, and my grandpa had come over from Germany way back when, and my great-grandpa had come from Alsace-Lorraine. So I could speak German. I had spoken it all my life, up to that point, see. Yeah, he did ask about that, because I “*Capitan!*”

Third voice: The number in your crew. He missed by one.

Renard: Well, that wasn't there. That was later interrogation. What she is talking about is, yeah, it was while we were in the interrogation center. German guard came one day and said, “Are you Henry Renard?” “Yep.” “Come with me.” And went out of there and went to another building. It was two or three stories, brick building. It was a large building. And went in, up the steps to the next floor, and down the hall, in a room, and he said, “Have a seat.” So, I did. And it was a room, and there was a door off the back of the room to another room. And in just a little bit a German colonel came out of the back room and sat down. He asked me to sit down across the desk from him. And he started talking about the crew. How many? They knew that ten flew in a B-17, see. And how many did we have on board? I didn't answer him. We had dropped off the one waist gunner just before we took the runway to take off because he had broken his thumb taxiing while he was putting in the gun barrel. So I had already guessed that was what he was after. And he said, you had a pilot, co-pilot, engineer, and so forth. Then he asked about the waist gunners. I said, “There was two of them.” Then he started in, “Well, who wasn't on board that day when you flew?” And I wouldn't tell him. So he asked questions for about twenty minutes or so, and then he said, “Continue your seat. I'll be back.” And he went out the back door and he was talking in the back room with somebody else. Not that I could understand what they were saying. Then he came back and we went through another session. I don't remember what all he asked at that time, but I had three or four sessions — I had to spend several hours there. He'd ask questions and he'd go in the back room, and he'd ask more questions and he'd come back. I didn't have my diary at that time so I didn't write anything down. But they were looking for that tenth man. See, they thought he was on board, or they were sure he was on board, but they couldn't find him because they had only gotten four in the airplane and five of us got out, so that was nine members of the crew, and they were looking for that tenth man. But I wasn't about to tell them anything. I wasn't too cooperative.

Mark: Now, was there any sort of physical abuse? To get this information out of you? I mean, that is...

Renard: No, only that the food you were getting was lousy. The bread, of course, was not

the best, but you ate it. Slices about — well, they cut it a little thick. I think the slices were about that thick, and two of those for a sandwich. In the morning there was some German margarine between, and in the evening there was a little German marmalade in between. And then at noon, there was just that — it was a good cupful that they dipped out with a ladle and put into that glass to eat. Come to think of it, I don't think we even had a spoon to eat. We had to drink it out of the glass. I tried washing the glass in the latrine, but you couldn't touch that stuff. We didn't have any soap and the water was cold, so you can't get too much done. So, they didn't go into anything else.

Mark: Okay. So, back at Stalagluft One. I want to cover some topics. Some general life in camp. The relationship with the guards there. Now, in Hogan's Heroes, you had Sergeant Schultz and that sort of thing. Now, you, of course, were able to speak German. I would suspect that you had even a little different relationship with some of the guards than the other...

Renard: Some guards were good, and some were — in the interrogation center, the last night we were there, when they had — I think I said that — this was New Years Eve night. For Germans, the New Year was just like Christmas. It was a holiday and they were gone. So a good share of them took off so they aren't there to interrogate the prisoners but the POWs keep coming in. So they had to make cells available. So they took forty-eight of us out of solitary and put us together in a huge room a lot bigger than this one. And we had — there was a coal burning stove in the middle — that soft coal — with Isinglass, like we used to have around here years ago. My folks had. And so we all sat around this stove, and of course we had to watch the fire go down, we'd add a few more pieces of this soft coal they had, like small bricks. And telling our experiences a little bit. Until it was time to go to sleep, and then they let us out of there into adjoining rooms and there were — I call them horse stalls — mangers is about that they were. Narrow, made out of boards like that. And one guy was supposed to go in each one. Before we go in there, take off your shoes and your suspenders, if you got them on, and your belt. And lay them out here in the hall. So if you tried to get away, you can't go barefoot and nothing to keep your pants up. And then each one assigned a stall, and, again, we had one German blanket. And we had a guard there that was shorter than I was. We called him Little Hitler. We bedded down — he went out so we bedded down and, being cold, the stall was wide enough that two of us could get together so we would use the two blankets and lap them like a sleeping bag so that we were warm enough. Well, we were just falling asleep, some guys were asleep already, and the door opens, and in comes Little Hitler. And he sees us sleeping together. "Deutschmen, sclaffen etc." "In Germany, we don't sleep together." "Everybody, out." Out of the stalls we were in, and roused us out. Somebody didn't get up, he'd pull the blankets off. And back in single stalls again. And he said a few choice words. And then when we were all separated, in

our individual units again, he went out. Well, he wasn't gone too long. We waited quite a while after his footsteps were gone and we were back in, doubled up again. That was the only way we could keep warm. Because the stove had gone down and — there was some fire yet — no, we were in the other room. There was no fire there. Where we were, there was no heat. So, he didn't bother us any more that night. I guess he got tired of us or something. So, we made it through the night, and the next day we left. So we didn't have any problems with that. But, in camp, there were some guards that were — a few of them — most of them were — you could get along with them. We had one fellow that one of our sleeping units was empty from the time we got there and about a week or ten days later — if I looked in my diary, I might be able to find it. No, I didn't have the diary then, yet, either. This was a week or two into January after we were there. Another fellow was brought in. He was over six feet tall. He must have gone over two hundred pounds, or a little better. Great big guy. And he got sick, oh, about the third or fourth night he was there. And he started screaming, pain, in the afternoon. And he curled right up in the bunk. Whoever was sleeping next to him would have had to push to the side because of the way he was curled up. And it was in the afternoon, just before dark, and, of course, it lasted a while, and he just kept on and I would have sworn it was appendicitis, from what little I knew of it. So somebody reached out and broke off a couple icicles and we discussed it, and somebody donated a pair of socks and stuffed the icicles in there and put it on his stomach. That helped a little bit, but not enough, and he was still moaning and groaning, so we opened the window, and I hollered out in German to the nearest guard. "We got sick one." "Ve hamme kranke." Well, the guard wanted to know what we felt was the matter with him. And I told him, I thought it was appendicitis. I think — I've forgotten the word — I think it is "Machen die stomach." Something like that. It's not that exactly, but I've forgotten the word. But that is what I told him I thought it was. So, he evidently, on the phone, called up to the headquarters then. And a little bit later a German guard came in, an older man. He had a World War I uniform on. And so his first question was, "Where is the man that speaks German?" That was me, of course. So, "Come with me." This was all in German. "Come with me." So, we went to another building and got a stretcher and I carried the empty stretcher back, and when we got back there, three more volunteered to help carry the guy. So we had to carry him all the way up to the beginning of the camp, to the headquarters, where the hospital was. We took turns shifting arms, and stuff, and we all felt like our arms were pulled out of the shoulder sockets by the time we got him there. And he was gone a little over a week. And all he had was severe colic. But the way he was screaming, he curled right up in a knot, and he yelled. You could have heard him anywhere in the barracks. So, that guard, we had a fellow in our — I forget if he was in our room or in our barracks — he was a pretty good painter, and he was looking — I think it was in our room or immediately adjacent — and he was looking for oil paints. And got to talking to this guard that came down that night and he had come in a

couple times — he had come down to see about the fellow that we had taken to the hospital — and so this fellow who wanted to paint talked to him and mentioned that painting stuff. So, this guard went out and got oil paints for this POW. And brought them in. And, near the end — this was in April — early April — this same guard came in one day, and, you should have seen his face. He wasn't very happy. In fact, he was, like, crying. He came in to say goodbye. Cause he had gotten orders to go to the Russian Front. His wife had been killed in a bombing raid. His children were gone. Killed. So he was all alone, and yet because all Germans firmly believed — every one, and you wouldn't tell them different — if they ever went to Russia and were Russian controlled, they would never again see Germany alive. And I was told that by quite a few of the Germans. Most of them, if you'd get them alone, so there is no other German around — because I know, near the end, for the whole month of April, you could tell from the German war reports that the end was coming. And they would say, the words were "Krieg ist bald vorleibist (?)." The war is soon over. And they would look around and see what POWs were nearby, and if any German guards were around, they wouldn't say boo, they wouldn't blink an eye. But if there was nobody else around, except people that they knew and felt that they could trust a little bit, then they would — they wouldn't even shake their head. They would just say, "Ya." So that nobody else any distance could see them tell anything. They were all scared of each other. And people in this country couldn't understand that when we came back. After we got back from World War II, the Kiwanis had invited all of us from the city of West Bend who were in service — not only POW's but in service — to come up for dinner, or lunch. And then we'd each say a couple words. And I mentioned that, that nobody trusted anybody else, and, like this guard who accused me of being a Gestapo agent. And then we had the same thing. Rotary had invited us. And after the meal was through and the program was over, different men would come up in each case and you said so and so. "Parents couldn't trust their children. Didn't trust their wives and vice-versa, and children, their parents. Was that really true? How could that be?" I said, "You better believe it was true." And this is why nothing happened. Nobody — well, that attempt at putting out the power of Hitler — word got out and they didn't live very long. So, people, they wouldn't take a chance. Just like when the Germans left and the Russians came in, the very next day, after the Russians were there, that was May 2. They were coming to us with Russian flags hanging out of all the windows. And people, you didn't see — like when we went into town to get those boots, there was nobody in the streets. Except we found those kids playing there and this one woman came out with a laundry basket, and she went — looked around and nobody else around, and zoom, down the street to wherever she was going, to some store, I guess, to buy what she had to get. But, people, they just didn't trust anybody.

Mark: Now, with your ability to speak German, I wonder, did you make any friends

among the guards, or did they get to be that sort of familiar?

Renard: Well, somewhat as much as you could.

Mark: A difficult situation, I realize that.

Renard: There was one guard in our barracks, or in our compound, I didn't get to speak to him that much but he had gone to a college in Ohio and one of the fellows in our room — if I looked in my little diary, I might be able to tell you who it was — lived in that town. So they got to talking. This guy would come in there many times and he would sit and talk with him about the college and that city. Coincidental, but that is the way it was. Outside of that, you didn't get any closer to them or they — in the interrogation center, the night when we were all together, that was the first time I spoke German. Because S-2 had said, "Don't talk German, or they'll interrogate you until forever." Trying to find out what you had learned about the Germans and this and that and anything else you might know. So I didn't talk German until that night. And in that forty-eight of us, one fellow had a bad bone in his forearm. He had been brought up into the interrogation center through a different air field in southern Germany. And another fellow in the group that had the same kind of a wound in his lower leg. I forget left or right. When I looked at those wounds, I was thinking, possible gangrene. It was that bad. So, I spoke German to the two guards we had. "These men need some medical help, now!" The word is "Jett!" That means right now. So, they got medical help for them. So then I talked German after that. But then when I was talking to the two guards that were there, that's all they had for the forty-eight of us in one room. Asked where I'm from. And different guys. And I said, "West Bend." "Oh, is that near Port Washington?" I looked. What the hell does he know about Port Washington? It's straight east of us. I said, "Yeah, that is seventeen miles about as the crow flies, and a little further by the highway." And he said Port Washington, that is where the most efficient coal burning electric plant is. A German guard, ordinary education, tells me. Talk about strange things. So different things like that. What they would know, and fellows that might be from some place they knew about in the States. But that is what this fellow... We talked a little bit about that, so. Outside of that, you didn't get chummy with any one guard. There might have been a few fellows. We were told there was one fellow in North One, he had been there a long time. He had eggs regularly and traded them with the Germans. We did, in camp, they had a system set up to control things. They had an escape committee and the word was circulated, if you had an escape plan, you don't try it. You talk to this committee. Because the plan you had might screw up a bigger, better plan for more fellows escaping than yours. There was also a trading system. In each barracks, one person was made the block trader. That was the trader for that barracks. If anybody in that barracks wanted something to get from the Germans, you went through the trader. Because of my German speaking, I was it.

And so we would trade for different things with the Germans, and the amounts on here are cigarettes. See, I didn't smoke and certain fellows had cigarettes, so I would do the trading and, of course, get back like a liter of benzine, which for various fellows, and they would pay so many cigarettes. We had it figured out that to get another liter would take so many cigarettes, so that is the way it was. And we were not permitted to exceed — if we could get it for less, fine - we were not permitted to exceed this number on here. If we did, and it got known, you were no longer the block trader, because we only had so much. And there was inflation set in. You know what would happen. You are all done. I want to look at that list. I don't remember the thing entirely. We hadn't had any way of cutting hair, and the Germans didn't cut our hair. They couldn't have cared if we walked on it. Let's see. Here is a watch on here. Six hundred to eight hundred. A liter of benzine, yeah, that was a hundred and twenty cigarettes. No, they don't have a scissors on here. But...

Mark: What would you do with gasoline? Benzine?

Renard: Lighters. Cigarette lighters. See, back in World War II, you didn't have what you got today. Lighters, and they had to have something in it. We didn't have lighter fluid but the benzine was closer to it. And that was, ah, the guys wanted benzine, so I traded with this — the trading was done with a German guard at night. They would lock the barracks before dark. And about dark, or right after barracks were locked, one guard would come into the compound — in each of the compounds that there were — with a dog. Most of them were German shepherds. Their shoulders stood about this high. And the one that was in our compound the most — a couple of them, they had these big bulldogs with these ugly faces. But most of them, because they had to take them someplace through camp and where they had all the dogs, and you could see them. They were mostly German shepherds. But the one that this guard had most of the time, the dog was called Wolf. And that dog was trained to perfection. And this guard came in at night, and he would come in with a — like a took chest, and it had a fake bottom. And in the bottom, under the fake bottom, that's where he would carry the things that he was trading with us. And the guard never came up to the window. I would stand at the window. And our barracks — I got a picture here — show the barracks were built up above the ground. Well, I can show it on the little picture, too, if I can find it. This is the picture they took of all of us. And you can see our barracks built up off the ground. The floor of the barracks was about that high off the ground. You could bend down and you could look right through. It was clear. That was after that great escape. You probably saw the movie, or heard about it. Now I got another one here of the older barracks. And they were, the older ones that were built before, were built right down on the ground. This was Compound Number One. See how the barracks were built right down on the ground. That was the difference. And, so the windows were the same thing like in any house, about that

far from the floor so you can imagine how far that was from the ground. The guard never brought what I was trading — getting from him — to the window. And he never came to the window and got the cigarettes. He'd send the dog up there and the dog would put his paws on the side of the window, and with his mouth he would take the cigarettes from my hand. Take them back to the guard and then the guard would give him what I was getting. And he'd come back and put — had it in his mouth, and that was how I got it.

Mark: Why was that?

Renard: So the guard didn't have to come close and would get skkkk! [laughs] Oh, they were careful. And the guard was careful. So nobody else knew what he was doing, either. He'd be looking around and make sure there were none of the Germans around, somebody spotting him, or anything. Because they weren't supposed to be doing that, either, see. But maybe the Germans in charge or authority knew. I don't know. But, anyhow, that is the way it operated. He never brought the cigarettes to me or gave me the thing. He always gave it to the dog, and the dog brought — came up to the window and put his paws against the side of the building and handed it to me.

Mark: That is interesting.

Renard: I wouldn't want to tangle with that dog. I tell you.

Mark: So, why don't you just describe a typical day in camp? What time did you get up? I imagine you had several roll calls during the day. What did you do to occupy your time? I mean...

Renard: Well, some of the guys did nothing but sit around and gripe. Course, as time went on, you learned to do different things. We got up. We had to fall out for roll call in the morning.

Mark: And was there reveille or that sort of thing?

Renard: No, it wasn't it a reveille. I forget how they worked it. Did they fire a cannon, or something. They woke us up somehow. I don't remember what it was. Maybe it was a gun going off. It wasn't a bugle. They woke us up and we had — I think it was eight o'clock, we had to fall out for a roll call. And it wasn't verbal. They would put us, as you see in this picture, in five ranks. So the German guys would just walk through, one step in front of each rank, and they'd look down and see that there were five in the rank. If there was a hole, somebody is missing. So when they got down through, if there had been several, they would have stopped. Because they could only keep track of so much. And then they would get down to

the end and if they were all there, then, fine. That is what they'd report. If not, they would report somebody missing, and how many. And they would go back in the barracks. A couple guards would get sent into the barracks and look where the heck they are. Cause sometimes somebody was sick enough that they didn't have to fall out for roll call. If they were that sick that they shouldn't be outside, or something. Or having to go potty all the time, that they couldn't be out there. Different reasons that were valid. And they'd look for them. And if they couldn't find them, of course, then they are going to put out a real search. Somebody disappeared, and they are going to want to know where. We'd get up in the morning, fall out for roll call, and back in. And then we'd usually have — when we had it — before they cut the rations, we would have our breakfast. And that would be — a few times the Germans sent around a barley porridge. It's made like oatmeal. Looks like oatmeal. But it's made out of barley instead of oatmeal. And that was one of the best things we had. We didn't get it too often. The good things we didn't get very often. And the other times, we would have — well, when we had Red Cross parcels, so that we could have some cheese or something. I used to make — I was the cook in our room — and when I got the powdered milk, I would stretch — so to speak — the cheese. I would mix powdered milk in water and I would put cheese in, and stir it, so we had like a cheese spread. And put that on a piece of bread. Or maybe between two pieces of bread. And then we had the barley porridge a few times. I don't think we — we only got German cheese a couple of times. Maybe - that was not too bad, either.

Mark: I was going to ask you about cooking. Maybe we should just go with that right now. What we discussed last time, there was sort of an art to cooking in the POW camp.

Renard: Oh, yes, it's an art. In each room, they had a heater. It was about — well, what would that be? Eighteen inches. Eighteen, twenty inches, this way. It stood about two feet high. And it was about a good foot wide, from the front, and there were colored — nicely colored bricks around the outside of it. The fire pot was underneath. And the door to feed it, of course. And it was strictly a heater. And on the top there was a little frame — a molding around the top — but right under that, about that far down from there, was a metal plate. And I don't know where they got it cut, but that way, you'd — you could have burned stuff all day and you'd never get anything warm enough to eat. So we took it apart. Took the plate off and they took it someplace and got two holes cut in it. So the fire from the fire pot was close under that plate, for heat. And we had — when we got into the room, we had a earthen crock, oh, about that big. What is that? Almost two feet, twenty inches for sure, across the top diameter. And then it gradually went down to the bottom and it was maybe a foot — a little better than a foot — in diameter. That bottom was heavy earthen crock. And we had two pitchers. They were about also fourteen, fifteen inches on the bottom, maybe. And they sloped gradually to

the top, to maybe nine, ten inches opening at the top. Maybe eight. And they were about twenty inches to two feet tall. And that was to go to the mess hall and get things that we needed. Or else, before we had that, to get drinking water from the latrine building. There were faucets for washing and also for drinking water, also.

Mark: I was going to ask where you got your foodstuffs from. Some from the guards. I am looking at this list here, and there are some food items on this trading list you gave me.

Renard: We didn't get too much food from the — the only thing I got from trading with the guards, that I got, was some fish and — it was supposed to be a liter but it was short of a liter — was a bottle about that big around and yeah high, was supposed to be dandelion wine but they had badly diluted it. So it wasn't enough for a whole bunch of guys, so I ended up having it with four guys in the end room. And I just explained to them, this was all I could get. So that was it. But that was the only food that I really traded with the German guard on. Maybe some of the other fellows that had been there longer did, as I said. The story went around that this one guy was getting fresh eggs every so often. But we never — the war was too far gone for us because the Germans didn't have very much, anyhow. The Germans gave us ersatz bread and there were guys in the room that would go to a certain building and get the bread. I got a picture where they — these are the loaves of bread. That was the kind of carts they used. The fellows would have to pull them. And the loaves were like a half-and-half loaf. So in the morning we would have two slices of that German ersatz bread. That is what it was. It was made out of — there was some flour in it. I was of the opinion that it was more rye flour than wheat, but maybe it was a mixture. I don't know. But they had other things in there, also. When we used to cut the slices, the guys would swear that there were wooden shavings in there, because it looked like little shavings inside the slice of bread. But what it was, I found out later, the Germans had, among other things, what were cut up or sliced up what are called mangolds [mangold wurzel]. They are of the turnip family. I don't know if you ever heard of them. My dad raised them years ago when we had a small farm. Raised them to feed to the cattle. And they'd get bigger than a turnip. Maybe about that long. And they could be from so big to so big on top. Then taper down, like a carrot, or that kind of a vegetable. And that is what those thought-to-be wood shavings inside were from those mangolds. The bread, the first time I tasted it, and that was in Buxton in the guard house. We had corn fritters for breakfast on Christmas morning, at four o'clock in the morning, and then flew. And when you were in the air, you couldn't — even though we were issued these K-ration cans — above ten thousand feet it is an awful chore to take your oxygen mask off and try to eat this stuff, and then put it back on. So we'd just ignore it and we'd take them back and heat them up and eat these things in the tent. But, so we had nothing during the day. And then we were shot down and captured. And at three o'clock in the morning, we got

finally to the guard house. So, you are dead tired. In fact, I was sleeping on my feet. And the German guard was giving me hell because I slept on my feet. I just ignored him. But, they said a good soldier didn't sleep like that. So I woke up. I got to the guard house. Went into the cell there, and bang, the door closed behind me. And you feel like you are all alone in the whole world. Which you are. Then I woke up. I don't know what time it was. The Germans had taken my watch. I didn't have that and couldn't tell time. It was some time in the morning, maybe nine o'clock, maybe later, woke up in that bed on the boards. There we didn't have burlap. We just had boards. And looked around the room. And in the middle of the floor was a white bowl, maybe eight inches — seven inches diameter on top and maybe four, possibly four and a half inches high. And in that bowl was something like spaghetti, couple inches, and there was a cube on top of the spaghetti of meat, about an inch and a half — inch and three quarters square. Or cubed. And next to it was a chunk of this German ersatz bread, of a loaf, maybe two inches thick. I got up — I wrecked my back when my parachute opened, so I got up with a little pain. Got over to the floor and grabbed that bread, and I bit into it. And I spit. Cause this bread, when you'd get it, was kind of wet and soggy. It wouldn't fall apart. It held its shape perfectly. But it was a little — just awful wet. And when you bit into it that way, it was bitter. I don't know if you remember last time, if you ever made a green willow whistle, which kids used to do years ago. I made one once, too. But if you happened to bite into the willow, you had to get the core out of the center of the bark. But if you bit into the bark, it was darn bitter. And that is what this darn bread tasted like. But we found out after a while, when we got to camp, if you toasted it, you had just a slice or a couple slices, toasted it, the bitterness disappeared from the taste.

[End of Tape 2, Side B]

But if you also happened to drop it, or go like this, you had umpteen crumbs, also. So, I spit that out. Then I took the meat and ate that. I had no spoon or anything. So, with my fingers, I had to dip into the spaghetti and then you don't have anything to wipe your fingers except your pants. Or whatever you got. So, that's how I learned what this bread was like. So, in permanent camp, Stalagluft One, we were issued this — a certain number of loaves per room. They figured out it was supposed to be five grams per day, per man. So we would get that many loaves, or part of the loaves. And we'd cut off the heels. I was cook in our room. I don't know how I got that job but I did. Cut off the ends. Cause it tapers down. Then the fellows who got the ends, we'd purposely cut those thicker than the slices would be. The guys who got the ends would belly-ache because theirs wasn't as big around as the slices, through the middle. And the guys who got the slice in the middle

would bitch because the guys who got the heels, it was thicker. Well, so we settled that by cutting off the heels and cutting it in quarters, about a quarter inch, or maybe a little better than a quarter-inch, approximately that, cubes. And then we would toast that so that it didn't mold. And so we could keep enough till we had some so each guy could have oh, like, two or three tablespoons full. We didn't have a tablespoon, we only had teaspoons. But the equivalent of about three heaping tablespoons. For breakfast. Make a little milk out of the powdered milk and water. And they could pour a little of that on there. We didn't have sugar right away. Soon as we got sugar, you could put a little sugar on it and that was breakfast. When we had it. Didn't have it very often. Until late while we were there, this was also in April, maybe got something about it in my diary, I don't remember. I happen to remember that my mother used to make bread pudding. I thought, gee, I wonder how this would work with this bread. So, by that time, the fellows had come back from when they got the rations from the Germans with a little bottle of vanilla in it, and black pepper, and — wait a minute, I didn't use black pepper — I don't think I used any of that. But vanilla and a couple of other things. And so I, instead of mixing it for breakfast, I poured all these cubes of toasted bread into the pot and I cooked it up. And put a little powdered milk in there. And whatever I had. And this was late in the afternoon. So, for evening meal there — I shouldn't call it evening meal — eating, I told the fellows I've got a little surprise for you. I don't know if it is good, bad, or ugly, or what. I said, but I tried something. "What?" I said, you'll find out when you taste it. So they ate the two — no, three — slices of regular bread with some margarine on it and a little sugar sprinkles on there. If we had it. Then, I poured this out into each dish. Divided it up. And the first guy took a spoonful and he just sort of hesitated. And his face got a big grin on it, you know. And, I said, "What's the matter?" Cause we had a couple of jokers in that room, too, naturally. And he said, "Taste it." I said, "Well, tell me, how is it?" "Taste it." So I took a taste and tasted just like pumpkin. How I did it, I'll never know. And I couldn't do it again. I'll bet I couldn't. But they thought I was the world's genius. So that is — then, at noon, we didn't have to fall out at noon. We'd have lunch. After, oh, let's see, about the middle of February until up near the end, after the guys fell out for morning roll call, they'd come back and crawl right back in bed. Cause we didn't have enough things to burn, to heat the room. So they would stay in bed until noon, and we'd have this soup that the Germans had prepared. In the big kettles. And the fellows ran over

and poured it into the cups. And then they'd get up at noon and have that. And they'd stay up for the afternoon. And we'd burn whatever we had for fuel. We'd get just a few lumps of coal a day. But also, in our room, I don't know if they all did it, but in our room, we had everybody under orders, "You see anything that's burnable, you pick it up and bring it in." So, behind the stove there was a little space, not too close to the stove, that we stacked this stuff in. And we had a pile about that high and about from there to that shelving unit, three feet long, of this burnable stuff, so when they'd need a little bit, they'd take a little of that and throw it in with the coal for the heat. So, then they'd be up until the afternoon roll call. Come in from that and they'd have their three slices of bread. Usually, once in a while, we were lucky and got — the Germans brought something around. I think twice they brought some meat. The first time it was edible. The second time it was not, by the time we got it. I swear it was horsemeat. So we had to taste it and — it tasted good but the second time we couldn't eat it. It was all spoiled. A few times we got sauerkraut. Maybe four times in the months we were there, and that wasn't too bad. It was edible. And rutabagas we got until they came out of both ears. I won't eat rutabagas today and I've prepared them more different ways than most women in this country would think was possible it was to prepare. In fact, when we got home, my aunt, who lived out on the farm, invited us, my whole family, up to dinner. So we went out to dinner and, sitting around an oblong table, and she sat down. The food had been passed around. And she had rutabagas. And when they came around, I took just the tip of a teaspoon, just a taste. And she had looked around and she noticed that. And she said, "What's the matter, Henry? Don't you like my rutabagas?" And her name was Harriet. We called her Aunt Hattie. And I said, "Aunt Hattie, it's not your rutabagas. I don't like any rutabagas." And I told her why. I won't eat them today. So, we got those once in a while. But that was about the procedures during the day. And some of the guys, of course, they had library books. Not the hard bound ones. The others, soft-back. That they would move from compound to compound. And they'd have a big cart that they were able to wheel with the library books on. And they'd come in and get those that our fellows had read, that wanted to. Take them to the other compound and they'd bring over, when they came, some so-called new ones, ones that they hadn't seen, see.

Mark: What kind of reading did you get? What sorts of books did you get?

Renard: Oh, it was various kinds of books that were in there. I didn't do much reading because I was busy with cooking and I learned to play cards. And I also helped make pans. We'd cut this material here. Everything we got except packets like raisin or prune boxes, did I show you this pin last time, from the camp? Was cans. Oleo was in cans. The powdered milk. That was in a can. Spam was in a can. We had some Spam from the Red Cross parcels, earlier. We would have that like a hamburger, or something. And a couple times we had Canadian parcels which had corned beef in them, instead of Spam. And so we'd heat that up and we'd have something warm. That was usually for the — well, when we had it, then we'd have it at noon, before the Germans cut that all out. After that, we didn't get it any more. So everything was in tin cans. This happened to be a can which was, I think, cheddar cheese. Cheddar cheese and jelly, or jam, were in the same kind of can. Same size. Then there was either a can of sardines, salmon, or tuna in each parcel. But the Germans, before our guys got them, would, with a cleaver, chop a crack in the top of each one. So you had to eat them now, when you got them, or they would spoil. They wouldn't keep. And those were flat cans, and, of course, they didn't — weren't useable for much. I didn't like sardines. I didn't **[ten second pause on the tape]** See, when it was stirred, you could stick it down in there, like that. This was tight. If it had been bent, it won't go back in there very easy. But that is the way we would do this. Set it up straight and then we'd bend it over to get that width. And then we had two pieces, and we'd lay them together like this. And pound that flat, like this is. And, of course, there was no edges. With just the open edges. And we'd make them as wide as — and bigger cans, of course, would be — with those big cans, it would almost be that wide, itself. And we'd have enough of them for the width of the pan we wanted to make. Well, most pans were maybe like so, a little longer, and edged up on the side about that much, and, of course, the corners, and for the length, we'd have to do the same thing. We'd have to bend this over. If we wanted to have longer than that, and bend it over, and lap it, and that got a little harder. Because you had the two seams. But they did have some pans made, not a lot of them. And after we couldn't cook in our own room anymore, the Germans would bake — well, they never could bake them so they had to take them over to the mess hall between the two compounds and there they had ovens. And you can see the size of those pans. And they never leaked. If they leaked, we'd pound them a little more. [unintelligible].

Mark: I suppose it's helpful to have all those engineers and other handy...

Renard: American ingenuity won the war.

Mark: I think we missed the story of how you made the hammers. I think...

Renard: Okay. We needed a hammer to make the pans, and to do other things. But to make the hammer, we took a bolt out of the wall that was over an inch in

diameter. Maybe an inch and a quarter. And they had a head on them, of course, that was larger. It was a square, four-sided head. And we'd, one way or another, we'd get the nut off the end of the bolt, and we'd pound the bolt out of the wall. And got that bolt out of there. And then somebody found a piece of wood, about the length of a handle. And we whittled long enough until we got a hole in it so we could put the bolt through there, and then found a way of fastening it. I just don't remember how we did that. But the hole was made just big enough so you could get it through with a little pounding, so it held pretty tight, to begin with. And a little something to hold it in there. And then the head would be the hammer that we needed to pound these pieces of tin to make the pans. In addition to those, I understand that there are some at Wright Patterson Field, where they have a POW room. There are some there. Things, I was told. A lot of them came from our camp. In addition to the pans, we made little grinders out of wood. A couple of fellows would make a frame with a roller. You could turn with a little handle. And a hopper. And like, in the Red Cross parcels, there were crackers, like the C-ration crackers, the same shape as our Graham crackers. Looked about the same, but a different consistency. And we'd push those down in there and grind them up. And we'd take a piece of tin the width of the roller and wrap it around that roller tight. But before we did that, we'd take a nail and punch holes through it. Now, if you've ever done that, where the nail comes out, there is always some metal sticking out. That was the part of the grinder that would chop up the crackers. And they made packages for holding cigarettes. Keep them from getting bent and bruised and busted. And I can think of a few other things that we made out of the tin cans. Well, once in a while, if a guy lost a knife; of course, that didn't work so good to make a knife, but we improvised something or put a couple pieces together. Anything that was lost or broken, of the knife, the fork, and the teaspoon, was not replaced. Or the bowl. You had to find something else. Or you made it out of a tin can. They also — the Germans — had a rule that we couldn't have more than so many empty tin cans in a room because, we all saw that movie, I don't know if that movie showed at one place, they dug a tunnel. And they used the cans for shoring in the tunnel. So, because of that, un-hunh! So many cans per man, and that was it. But, of course, as we used them up, you could save that many more. So we got plenty of cans from the Red Cross parcels we did get. Thank God for that. But that is how we improvised and used those for different things. Made things so that we could get by.

Mark: Now, as the war progressed, did you find that your food situation got worse?

Renard: Worse.

Mark: Considerably, or just a little?

Renard: Up to January 1, '45, in this particular camp — we were told that by the fellows

that had been there. In fact, the guys that — the four guys who were in our room, over in the corner, those two bunks, they had been there before then. And other fellows told us, also. Up to January 1, '45, they had the Red Cross parcels. One per man, per week, as they were designed to be. And they had German rations. And they had more food than they could eat. So the extra food, instead of saving it, or letting the Germans know, they threw it in the latrine so the Germans wouldn't know it, and wouldn't cut rations, and also to try to help bleed the German war effort. So whatever they were having to feed us, or our camp, they didn't have someplace else. And the Germans were getting short of food, as well. We found that out. We were told that by different people. Some of the guards mentioned if we'd gripe about it, Well, the poor civilians out there didn't have any more to eat than we did, and maybe not as much. Well, some of that was believable. Some of it, maybe not. But, January 1, we were also told there had been a Luftwaffe officer as commandant of the camp. He was then needed someplace else, so they brought somebody else in, probably the Whermacht or somebody from who knows where? But some military person. So, the food situation deteriorated. They no longer — the first two weeks we were there in January, we got a half a parcel per man, per week. Mid-January, there were cut to a quarter parcel per man, per week. And the German rations were also cut, somewhat. Then the parcels were cut out completely in mid-February. And all we had was the German rations and then, I had hoarded some cans of cheddar cheese and some cans of jam. I think I was able to hoard a can or two of margarine, and maybe one Spam. That was because we didn't use as much, so I had that much left. Which tided us over in February for a while. But starting with mid-February, we had this German ersatz bread in the morning and evening. We got that many loaves. And then at noon, we had this German soup. Germans called it stew. We called the damned thing soup, and that is what it was. And they had ersatz — dehydrated, not ersatz — vegetables that they used with water, of course. And there was no meat in it. They'd put some potatoes in, because once in a while, we'd be eating and we got the grit or sand or something that hadn't been washed off the potatoes that we had to eat. So we know it came from there, because we knew it didn't come from the dehydrated vegetables, because it couldn't. And at noon. So, we had about two and a half to three inches of soup in a cup at noon. Well, these German cups, you probably know what they were like. About that high, four inches or so, and they were filled about three-quarter of an inch from the top, or a little less. The fellows would have to go over to the mess hall with these two pitchers and come back — run if possible, or as fast as they could walk, so it didn't cool off too much. When they got back, all the twenty-five cups would be in the middle of the room — middle of the table. And I was selected to — elected, or whatever you want to call it — to fill these cups. And make them all even. And that is what I had to do. And as fast as possible, so it didn't cool off. So it was still warm as much as could be when they ate it. One of the cups always got about a sixteenth of an inch, or maybe a shade more, than the rest of the fellows.

Cause he always kept saying he was getting gypped. And he came in with a fellow who was a very close buddy of his. Before we left prison camp, that close buddy was no more a close buddy, was not even a friend. Because of his constant he's-getting-gypped. But they had all agreed, so that we don't hear his griping, we'd give him just that shade more, and if he said anything, we could cram it down his throat. "You got a little more than the rest of us, so shut up." And also, then, the bread, to make it stretch as far as we could, we got into a bread-cutting contest. I just made a copy, here, for you of the diary I had. And I noticed with I made this, here, this is on February 29, "Got seventy-three slices of bread today." These loaves, after we cut the heels off, we got in a bread-cutting contest between the cooks, so called, in the different rooms. And I don't think I had started, and the guy in the room next to me came in and "I cut so many slices out of a loaf of bread." And I think it was in the high fifties, or low sixties. So each day, try to do a little better. So we kept building it up about a slice or two a day, and I ended up with seventy-five, and nobody could top that. And I always cut by this knife. You want to feel it? The bumps on your hand.

Mark: Yeah. I saw the...

Renard: And that was sharpened on the top of that earthen crock. We had no knife sharpeners. But my mother and my grandmother, I saw them, that was the way they used to sharpen knives. Butcher knives, whatever they had. Paring knives. Back and forth on the top of that earthen crock. And it was like an earthen grinding stones that the farmers used to have, big wheel that you'd turn. It's about the same thing. It was that kind of little bit porous, hard material, and that is what sharpened the knife. So, when it got a little dull, well, then I'd have to go to work, back and forth, and sharpen the knife again. So, that is what they cut the bread with. And that was two slices in the morning, three in the evening. That's how it came out.

Mark: I imagine you lost a bit of weight.

Renard: What?

Mark: I imagine you lost some weight.

Renard: We had no scales to tell. But I had, well, my waist was, what? Thirty-some inches when I went in. I took in my belt, about five inches. When we were at the lowest part, early April. And it didn't build up very fast because we didn't have too much more then. But, at least, we were getting a little bit more, but not much. So, we were holding. But we were getting, we were told, was nine hundred calories a day, approximately. Of the German rations. And it takes twelve hundred to keep alive, and at even par, someone who is up and walking around. No, twelve hundred if

you are doing nothing. If you are lying in bed. And we got nine hundred, so you can tell, we went down hill. And that is why, after the Germans left us and the Russian commander had given the order for us to march to the Black Sea, we would have had another Bataan Death March. One third of the guys would have only made it, possibly. And they would have been starving.

Mark: Now, did you have some sort of — what sort of physical activities did you do? did you get to play some baseball, or something like that?

Renard: Well, they had baseball, yeah. Inside of each...

Mark: And if food is that short, do those sort of activities where...

Renard: Well, they could only do so much. They'd do a little bit, and then they were tired. Let's see, where is that picture? The fences were about ten feet high, and it was woven, barbed wire woven in rectangles, as you can see. The rectangles were maybe a foot, maybe fourteen inches long, maybe a little bit longer, and about eight inches, maybe only six inches high. It was all rectangular. It was all barbed wire, as you can see here. There were two of those fences, about at least eight, maybe ten feet, apart, and between those two fences, if you look closely, you can see there was barbed wire in rolls at least four feet to five feet high. And real, not just a little bit, thick. So that you couldn't, if you tried to escape, you couldn't get over this fence, the inside fence, and jump down and then crawl the other one because you would have been hung in this. It would have cut you to shreds, cut your clothes, and your body, to get over the outside one. Now, also, inside there, if you look closely, you can see this fence here goes pretty straight. Some places it would be close to the fence, and especially like at the gate, where there was a gate, it would have to come to the gate corner. But it was a certain distance out from the inside fence, so when you played ball, whatever you did, whatever you are doing, if something part of the game, and it went over towards the high fence, and past that warning wire — that's what that was called, the warning wire. You would have to holler to the guard and get permission to go over that — behind that warning wire — to get whatever rolled in there. At the last while we were there, they had guards who had been probably in World War I. And they were scared of everything. And they were trigger-happy, so you didn't dare — you had to be very careful, maybe let the ball lay there until another time before you got it. So the fellows did play games, and they could, and we had to fall out each day for calisthenics. Some place — I've got a picture here — oh, here it is. We'd do, calisthenics...

Mark: Now, were these organized by your American commanders, or the German commanders?

Renard: I don't know if the Germans ordered it, or if our Americans. We were directed by the Americans. The calisthenics were directed by American prisoners of war. And we used to do some of the calisthenics to the tune of Come On, Joe [Stalin], for the Russians to get this thing over. And this is where we are shown doing exercises. You can see the fellows got their hands up and had them actually doing twists and so forth. And I was out there, sometimes, if I had to be doing something in the room for cooking, or something, or a couple of times I was sick. And then you didn't have to go out. You'd have to get — there was somebody in charge in the barracks who would give permission to stay in the barracks and, of course, some times the Germans argued with us. But, that was it. Or else, when they were counting, and somebody is missing, then they would go up to the barracks and how many guys are in the barracks. That total has to come out. So they don't start looking someplace else. So, yeah, we did calisthenics. When it was possible. When it was too cold, once in a while there were a few days we didn't have to go out, because this was up on the Baltic and we didn't have such extremely warm clothes. Some of the fellows wore...as I said, only had a field jacket, and that isn't too warm when it gets cold outside. So, maybe they cut the calisthenics a little bit short. We also were told, oh, mid-March, we were told by our American officers to keep our shoes in the best shape possible, keep one or two, if possible, two pair of socks in the best shape possible. And to walk every day. And we'd walk around the compound, around the inside of the compound there was a walk. In our compound, we had to — there was a low spot and whenever it got a little wet, a lot of snow or rain, at least, we didn't have rain until the last little while we were there. The Germans permitted us, if it was muddy, so the Germans permitted a few of us to go out with a horse and wagon someplace where they had flagstones. And we loaded these flagstones on this wagon and then brought them in, and made a walk out of flagstones around — well, there was two sides to the compound. One, a long side, and the one short side, from the southeast corner. That was the low spot and would get water there, and muddy, and you'd get your shoes all — well, they'd get ruined in a hurry that way. So we were told to walk each day, and we did. At least, most of us did. And different fellows walked different amounts. I got to walking with one fellow towards the end, of less than over a month, and we could both talk German. So we'd keep our German up by walking, and we'd talk English about different things. And we'd walk around the compound as many times as we wanted to. To keep our legs in shape, and so forth. And an incident there. We had heard the Russians bombarding Stettin, east of us, for better than two weeks. Then they finally broke through and they started coming west. But while they were bombing there and bombarding, we heard that. And you could tell, also, from the German news reports, where the things were going on. And this came from the Germans themselves, the Wermacht —, as they called it. And we had learned how to interpret it. So we knew where the Russians were and when they started moving. So we were walking around on this one particular night, and it was — I am sure it was — I'd have to look in my diary but

I think it was a Friday night — and we had gotten in the habit, this other fellow and I, of stopping in the southeast corner. The tower was the closest there. And we'd talk to the guard in German. Both of us. And we were talking this one night, and the bombardment was closer. So this fellow with me told the guard that Monday night, Tuesday morning, we were going to change places with him. And the guard, of course, he's up there a ways, he didn't say anything for a while. In fact, he didn't say too much after that. And we didn't, neither, and we took off. And walked, I guess, a couple times. And that was before we had to get in the barracks before it was locked up. It was locked every night. And so, the Monday night after that, Tuesday morning, we woke up, and our guys are in the towers. The Germans are gone. And I saw that, and I remembered what this fellow had said. And I can't tell you his name, or where he lived. But I knew where he was in the compound. What barracks. So I dashed over to his barracks and the room, and he was standing there talking to a couple of fellows. And I interrupted. Kind of rudely, I suppose. I tapped him on the shoulder and I said, "What did you know Friday night that you didn't tell me?" And he looked at me with a blank stare and he said, "I don't know. What are you talking about?" I said, "You said something to the guard. I said, and you didn't tell me. Did you know that? And just not say anything?" And he still didn't tumble. I said, "Remember, you told the guard, Monday night or Tuesday morning, we were going to change places with him?" And then it dawned. And he looked at me, and he said, "Oh, yeah. I didn't know anything." I said, "Well, who put those words in your mouth?" "I've often wondered." That and when they bailed out of the 17, when my bombardier wouldn't go. And I got the thought. I said, "Scanlon, you promised to follow, if I go." "And he said, "Yeah." And he pushed me. And I often also thought, why did I happen to think, right at that time. Pressure? You don't have much time, and you think of the real fast. And how to accomplish something. And that is the thought that came to my mind. But, it just happened. But you wonder somewhat about some of those things. Somebody else is helping a little bit.

Mark: How much longer was it until the Russians came?

Renard: The Germans left at ten-thirty the last night of April. They told Colonel Zemke, "Get the men ready to move. We are leaving." Because the Germans were going to go west. They weren't going to become Russian prisoners. They knew the Russians were coming. And Zemke said, "We're not going any place." And we didn't. Eleven-thirty, the Germans left. They were evidently packing when the German commander told Zemke. Getting their stuff ready, because they took all their guns. They had to unloosen those because they were fastened up in the towers. Took the guns. They took the lights. And they went to the warehouse where the food was, the Red Cross parcels, and sacked the Red Cross parcels. Took all, or most, of the chocolate bars. Quarter-pound chocolate bars, and some of the other concentrated food that they figured they could use, and carry. Or,

because they had vehicles, too, to put stuff in. And they took off. Eleven-thirty. And the next morning, our guys were in the towers. Evidently, Colonel Zemke and other officers in charge had figured this out, or estimated when the time comes, if we have to, we're going to have guys ready. Maybe they just went and volunteered some guys. But there was one of our American POWs in each tower. No guns, no nothing us, just standing up there. And they could spot anybody coming from a distance. Might have been, also, because of this camp that was a few miles away, of forced Italian and French laborers who had all kinds of illnesses. And Zemke and them knew it. Or strongly suspicioned it. And that is why the order was, keep the fences up, to protect us. Now we definitely stayed inside. You don't go out. To protect us. If they broke out of their camp, that we could keep them out of ours. Because they would have to get in the gates, or crawl the fence. And would have been just as difficult for them to get in as it would have been for us to get out. Now, I had a plan to get out of that camp. But, it being near the end, I debated. The end of Sunday, I'd take a chance. If I am caught, I'd be dead. And there was a fellow who lives in West Bend now, who wasn't there before, who moved in years after the war. He was a POW in three different camps. He broke out but was captured again. But, anyhow, he used this very method that I had thought of to get out of Buchenwald. He and another guy had timed the guard — the night guard — for six months. And they had a definite routine. They had to report, and so forth. And so they knew exactly where that guard was at all instances. And my plan was that, on a dark night or even foggy, if it was, when they couldn't see any distance, when the guard was over on the other end, to go up to the fence. As you can see here. And dig the ground away. And when we were walking around the compound, or being outside, just walking, or playing, or whatever, I had looked this thing over. Some of the guys had said, that's electric fence. And I looked, and I could see it go in the ground. And I didn't say anything. I just said, electric, hell. There'd be sparks flying like crazy. So, to scratch away enough dirt to get under the fence, and roll under this way. Not crawl, but roll under this way. Lengthwise. And the posts were far enough away that you could do it. Roll under this way and just keep rolling under the wire. Get to the outside fence. You'd do the same thing. Scratch away enough dirt. The dirt was loose. It was kind of sandy. At least, it appeared that way. But it was the same out here. It was loose enough. And scratch enough, and roll underneath, and you are gone. And that is exactly how he and this other guy went out of Buchenwald. He was captured. He doesn't know what happened to the other guy. But, he got into a different camp, but at least he got out of there. So, I had a plan, but, playing the odds, if they do spot me. If that wire rings a bell, or rings something, or makes any noise, and we had trigger-happy guys in the tower by that time. And if they just fired those .50s, you wouldn't have a Chinaman's chance. You'd be hamburger. Just like that. So, I decided not to try it unless things got a lot rougher. Which they didn't.

Mark: Ah, and so for a few days then, you were in camp, but the Germans had gone?

Renard: The Germans had left us eleven-thirty the last night of April. Zemke, on May 1, sent out foot patrols in different directions. That is why the guys in the towers, too, could see if anybody was coming from any distance.

Mark: Right.

Renard: And, one of those patrols met a Russian lieutenant and two privates in an American jeep. Off someplace, probably to the east, someplace. And that Russian lieutenant, and the couple guys of our foot patrol, came back in camp about — it was after dark — about eight o'clock, oh, a little later than that. That night, of May 1. His unit came in the next morning. He was the advanced scout, evidently. The rest of his unit came in the next morning and it was lots of trucks, and men, and so forth. A couple of our guys, when the trucks were parked, went and peeked into the curtain in back, and said there was a lot of vodka in there. Which there probably was. And they kind of — well, after the commander gave the order for us to march to the Black Sea — and Colonel Zemke had come down to our compound with an axe. And, as I said, chopped the corner post, and said, "Tear it down, boys." And we did. Then we could stay. But they held us. And we had been promised by Zemke in early April that we would be out of camp in seventy-two hours after we were in Allied hands. Well, these were allies. But there was no move to let us go. Our guys were trying to get us out of there and they just held us.

Mark: What was the hold-up, do you think?

Renard: The Russians were going to take us east to Russia. Colonel Zemke had told the Russian commander about the third or fourth day, "We don't have anything to eat." So the Russian commander sent some of his soldiers out and they came — drove about ninety or more head of Holstein cows through the camp, out to the other end. Up on the peninsula, the Baltic, the cows can't get away. And then the order came out, "Anybody with any butchering experience, report to so and so, to the office, or headquarters, or something. And so they just butchered so many cows each day. Well, till they were all butchered, I and another guy got the idea, also. We went out and got ourselves a little milk. We would sit down and milk the cows. But, they would slaughter so many cows. And most of the time they ground up the meat. And then they brought it around. It would be a pound of meat per person. You can't eat that much. If we had, we'd have been sicker than a dog.

Mark: That must have been a treat for you.

Renard: It was a treat, yeah, but we had to eat what we could, and the rest had to be thrown away because we had no refrigeration of any kind. And we weren't close enough

to the Baltic to improvise a container to drop in the water, or hold it there. So, it was just wasted. Till they were slaughtered. Then a year ago, just about the later part of April, I got a call from a Mr. Simmons, who had slept next to me, from Oklahoma City. He had been from Oklahoma. And talked for almost an hour, and Mary kidded me because we were talking so long. At the end of the conversation, he said that just two weeks before that, he had talked to somebody, and the fellow said, "What camp were you in, and near what city?" So, Simmons told him, "Stalagluft One, Barr, Germany, which is up on the [unintelligible]. The guy stopped talking to him for about half a minute, to a minute. Just looked him straight in the eye and then he said, "You are damned lucky you are here and alive." And Simmons said, "Why?" And this fellow told him, "You were slated to go to Russia. The Russians were going to take you east." And I got written material — I'm on the POW committee and representative for our district, and the post, and so I've gotten some written material from the MIA families organization, and so forth, which verified that the Russians had planned to take us east, and had taken seventy-eight thousand, or a big part of it already. Assistant Secretary Drew heard of it and got the message to Eisenhower. Took a little while to get through the channels, I guess. Eisenhower sent a message to our U. S. embassy in Russia. Orders that it was to go direct to Stalin, nobody else. And immediately, and the message said, "We know you have taken some of our veterans, POWs, and are holding them, planning to take more POWs and veterans. They will be released immediately or there will be dire consequences." Unquote. And evidently, then, the Russians, at least at our camp, changed their minds and decided to let us go. And made arrangements — our fellows made arrangements through Allied command, and 17's came in from England. Landed at a field about three or four miles away from us. I don't know how far it was. Of course, we got a check ride out of there. And the 17s — on Saturday afternoon, before Mother's Day, May 13 was Mother's Day — Saturday afternoon, some 17s came in, oh, mid-afternoon, or later, and they flew out hospital patients and people who were disabled, or something, and needed some medical attention. They had priority ahead of the rest of us. So that night, we were told, they were going to be back in the morning to get the rest of us. That night, twenty-four of us built a bonfire and stayed outside the barracks. We were telling war stories, if that is what you want to call it. Waiting for the 17s to come in. Well, they didn't come in real early. They came in fairly early, but it had been light a while. And when it started to get toward morning, all of a sudden, there is a guy missing here, and a guy missing there. Four of us made it all night. And we saw the first 17 come in. We headed for the bed and got a couple winks of shut-eye, because all the rest of them — we were the Number 9 Barracks, which is the last number in our compound, and in all the other compounds come first. So we knew it was going to be a while. And they had trucks that — I don't know where they came from — that came in and would haul the fellows' baggage out to the airfield. We always had to walk. We had to walk the whole distance. Well, these trucks kept coming back. So when

they got back, and we were the last ones left, and there was no other baggage to be hauled in these trucks, they said, "Hop on, fellows!" So we hopped on the back of this truck and we didn't have to walk to the airfield. That was a fringe benefit for being the last compound in the barracks.

Mark: Suppose there has to be something for that.

Renard: Before we had left, however, the Russians had a list made of everybody in that camp. I know, I helped type them. The list was in the German typewriter, and it also — my memory is that it was also English — I don't know where the heck they got that. And then we had to sign those. They got everybody to sign that list. And our particular barracks, we had to get up at three o'clock the morning or two before we left. To sign that, opposite our name on that list. So they got a list of everybody that was there. That's why, a few years back, when they started having these tours to Russia, of different professions, like the lawyers did, too. And I had a friend of mine that I did legal work for, and also — he offered to pay the cost of one of those tours for me. And my then wife said, "Oh, no, you're not going." And I was a little bit leery of going, too, because they had all those names, and my name is there. And if they would have done any checking like that, I might not have gotten back, and I was not going to take that chance. I would have loved to have gone, yes, but I didn't want to stay there.

Third voice: Tell him about the cake with the flag.

Renard: Oh, I mentioned we had very little to eat, and we got extra Red Cross parcels, or what we were supposed to have, just before Easter. So, we had some pans that were about this long. Well, they were not quite square. They were a little more longer than wide. And the fellows said they were going to eat this, and never eat again. And in one room, two doors down from ours, it was on the other side of the hall. They had made a cake, in layers. Because these pans were only about that high on the side. And they made — they had single pans — they made several layers of — it must have been four or five layers of a cake, like that. And, then, I used to do that, for baking little deserts, or something. Powdered milk, mixed in with — or put the jelly in the powdered milk. Not with water. Just with the powdered milk, as such. And whip it up, and beat it, and you got, like a frosting. And with, they were lucky, they had some kind of red fruit jelly, or jam, so they got a pink frosting. And they put those layers together and then put a pink frosting on there. And somehow they found red and white crepe ribbon, like streamers, you know. I don't know where they got them. But they had red and white streamers coming from the corners of the room, and from the long side, another one to the middle. To above the middle of the room, to above this cake. And on the cake, was a flag. You ever saw teary eyes.

Mark: Where did...

Third voice: Cocktail flag.

Renard: That's not that flag. I got this from the bank. That one was left over there someplace, or maybe somebody took it from that room. That wasn't our room, so I didn't get it. But that is the kind of flag that was sitting in the middle of that cake. With pink icing.

Mark: Someone managed to keep that flag.

Renard: I would imagine so. I would bet on it. But, it wasn't our room, so... And where they got the flag from, I'll never know. Some of those things, you don't ask questions. It is there, and you appreciate it, and that is it.

Third voice: And you nearly took off. Tell him about that.

Renard: Oh, after the Germans left us, if I had known then what I learned a year ago, this was the fourth afternoon. Well, we had roll calls. The Americans kept on having these. Every day. Only one a day, though, and usually later in the day. And each of the days, you'd look around and fellows that you might recognize, they weren't in the roll call. They were gone. And we knew they had taken off for the west. In fact, a couple of them left in daylight so you saw them going from camp. So, on the fourth afternoon, another guy and I were discussing. We had seen this fellow leave. I can talk German well. We're getting out of here, tomorrow. Tonight. And, of course, guys standing around and they hear you. "Can we go? Can we go?" You hate to say no. So there were six of us. We were leaving before daybreak. We were going to get up. We knew what time daybreak was. We're getting up an hour before and we're going to gkkk! gone. Have your stuff ready. We're leaving. We're waiting for nobody.

[End of Tape 3, Side A]

That afternoon roll call, then, they announced who has left, and we know who is here. Anybody who leaves after this to go west, when they get to the states will be court-martialed. Well, in those days, court-martialed meant something, and it scared me a little bit. I had, you know, paid attention to it. Today, I would say, "Stick that court-martial you-know-where, and I am gkkk!" If we had known that at midnight, we'd have been gone. We'd have left that camp, headed west. Because I could speak German and I had no qualms about being able to get through that country, whatsoever. But, we stayed. It was May 13 till we got out of there. And that is what bothered us. Everybody was asking, "How come we are still here?" Because we had been promised or told that by Zemke, and he said the

Russians were holding us. If I had even thought — there was no communication — you didn't get to know about these things, you see. But if I had any idea or had heard that they had taken some guys. Goodbye.

Mark: But you did get out.

Renard: Oh, yeah. We got out. We were flown out by B-17s from England to France. They came in, well, till we — we were the last guys out. They took off — it was still light when we landed at France. They had different camps named after cigarettes. I got into Lucky Strikes. And we landed. But, well, it was still light enough to land, but we were then put on trucks and hauled in to the camp where we went to. And by the time we got there, it was dark. And we were given something to eat. We were each given a shot in each arm. I think it was typhoid and tetanus. I don't know what it was but we were each given a shot in each arm. Then assigned to cots in a place and slept. And then the next morning we were issued different clothes, because we were in rags. From the camp. Something to wear. Oh, we were issued — that's right — regular uniforms, if they had them. And these were greens, winter uniforms. Well, they were green trousers. I don't think we had any pink trousers for officers. And then we also had some seminars that day, or classes, whatever you want to call them. Briefings and different things. And physicals, as fast as they could give them to all of us. And then we were kept there until we were — this was May 13. Practically the middle of the month. At Lucky Strike. On May — I think it was May 29. We boarded ship. Well, I don't even have that in here. We were issued the clothes on the 19th. We didn't get new clothes until — here, I've got it written. "Arrived at tent six miles from Rheims, 1:30 a. m., went to chow and sleep. Typhus shot. No showers. C-47 to Le Havre." Oh, yeah, we were hauled that way. "Truck to Camp Lucky Strike. Got up late. Filled out two forms. Played softball and bridge. Sandwiches and coffee of our own in the evening." And we got our clothes issued on the 19th. And after that, I guess I got lazy and I didn't make any more entries.

Mark: I suspect they were trying to fatten you up. While you were in...

Renard: Probably. Yeah. Except, when you'd go through the chow line, they had a lot of Germans who were prisoners of war doing all kinds of detail work. If we needed anything done, we lived in tents. If we wanted the tent flap raised — "Don't do it yourself. Just let us know. We'll bring some men out." They'd come out with fifteen - twenty German prisoners of war. Whatever we needed done. They would have cleaned the tent. Everything. But when we went through the chow line, they had some Frenchmen working there. You'd go through and they'd give you a little dipper of this, dipper of that, and if you'd ask for more, "Oh, we don't have any more." But when they went home at night, they had a bag over their back that just cleared the ground, full of you know what. The food. And we could have wrung

each one of their necks. But, we didn't. So, I have no use for the Frenchman, either. I've got here, "May 22. Shook the hand of Captain Reid who shook hands with Eisenhower, standing ahead of me." We were standing in the chow line, it was raining, and we had these — we were issued these GI raincoats, with a hood. Olive drab. And with a heavy lining in it. And we are standing in a long, long line for a chow line. And a little ways up was the road. And all of a sudden, somebody hollered, "Attention!" And everybody snapped to, and somebody got out of the jeep up there, and came walking down the line. It was General Eisenhower. And every so often, he would stop. And he stopped right where we were. And he shook hands with a guy about two away from me. And stuck our his hand, and I was about to shake it, and the guy next to me stuck his hand out. It was a Captain Reid, from Topeka, Kansas, where Eisenhower was from. So, I almost made it.

Mark: A brush with greatness, there.

Renard: Almost. So, I still got that coat. I carried it in the car for if I got in some trouble, or something. It's not too water-proof, but it will keep out the cold. Just for roughing. It's old, so it doesn't make any difference.

Third voice: Tell him what happened on the ship, coming back. Your cook.

Renard: Oh. We got on board ship at Le Havre. I think it was the 29th of May. And loaded the ship. Got on, and we were assigned to a state room. State rooms made for six guys. We were assigned twelve. So we were a little doubled-up. But there were one heck of a lot better that what we'd had. And it was like, plush. To us. Maybe on board two hours, and a couple of fellows came around to the room. I suppose to the other ones, too, also. And they carried a light load of ship personnel, and used POWs so they could carry more. And this was a Liberty ship they were on. Let's see. Nine Liberty ships that were loaded. And started out together. And they came on, and they had lists of all the fellows that we had, and, of course, where we were assigned. And came on, so and so this, and so and so that. And I was assigned in charge of the galley and the officers mess. The ship supposedly had a maximum limit of three thousand people. There was a ship's crew. I don't know how many that was. There were three thousand enlisted men. And then about three hundred officers. So the first day and a half, I was put in charge of both mess halls, the galley and officer's mess. Under me, there were three eight hour shifts. Each shift was sixteen men, and there was a black who was — I don't know what his official title was — but it was directly under me. And over the three crews, as well. And so the different troops had different jobs. For the period of time they worked. Well, I did that for the first almost two full days, and actually we were in — we got on on the 29th and the ship pulled out of there. No, it must have been May 30 we got on board ship, about Memorial Day. And we pulled out of Southampton, England, harbor. We loaded at Le Havre, went over to

Southampton, then we got with the other — that's where we joined with the other Liberty ships. And so there were nine of us starting out. On June 3. We docked at Boston on June 11. But after two days out, I went to whoever was in charge on this ship, and I said, "Hunh-uh. I can't handle all this." I was going from five, or five-thirty, in the morning, until late at night, and after a couple days, you are run down to begin with. You still hadn't really built up. And I said, "That's it. I'll take one or the other." How I got assigned to that, I'll never know unless somebody squawked that I was cooking at camp. I don't know. But here I was given this detail and responsibility. So, he said, "Which one do you want? Will you take the galley?" I said, "Sure, I'll take the galley." So, from then on I was in charge of the galley and had to — I got up every morning at six o'clock. And we had fresh water showers. When I say plush, that is what I mean. Shower and get dressed, and down to the galley. And check and see what had been done, and what had to be done. Because the fellows started eating at breakfast. What time was that? I think it was eight o'clock. They'd come down and go down the steps into the galley down below, where they ate. Then come up on the other side. So, be down there to make sure that stuff was — at least, I had a little time, if something wasn't done, to get it done. But usually it was taken care of. If it wasn't, you has time to do it. And then, finished from breakfast. Technically, there wasn't supposed to be a lunch at noon. But each day, we would have something. Start out with some sandwiches, I guess. For a day or two. Then we went a little further, and we had soup, and so forth. Something light. After about the fourth day out, third of fourth day, it started getting rough. Up and down. The day after that, in addition to up and down, it went sideways, as well. And that is when the lines decreased. And when the guys came down the line, too, they — where they had to go down the steps to the galley, there were little latrines. And there were quite a few in the line. There was door up at the other end, and a door right before they came to go down the steps. And you'd see the guys go in the upper door, and they'd come out the lower door. And you heard people talking about people were green in their face? I never believed it, till then. When they came out of the lower door, some of them were green in the face. Poor guys, I felt sorry for them. But that is when the food usage dropped off greatly and the second of those mornings, I woke up in the morning and my stomach was going like this. And I didn't — that is one morning I skipped the showers. Skipped the showers, threw some clothes on, and down to the galley. And, on the floor where we prepared the food, there were ice boxes with the door from the floor to the ceiling. The ceiling wasn't much lower than this. That is how tall they were. And, open the door, and all that was in there was some sliced, cold pork. And some bread. I grabbed a slice of pork and I grabbed a piece of the bread, and Bum! I ate. And I had it down, and the wooziness was gone. That's what I did every day, from four o'clock to just before five, everything was set for the evening meal. And I'd go out on deck. One day, I couldn't go out. I got to the door and it was so wild out there. The water was flying. If you'd gone on the deck, you might be swiped right off the deck. The

water would have taken you right off. So I didn't go out. I was by the doorway, but that was it. But, otherwise, I went out on the deck.

Third voice: Tell him about the banana pie.

Renard: Oh. Back where we were preparing our food, in fact, next to the ice boxes, over there, was a baker's shop, and they baked the bread there, for the ship, and they baked the deserts, also, for the ship's crew. Not for us. For the ship's crew. So, they had different things, and one day they were baking banana cream pies. And, of course, you'd stand there and you'd see all this going on, and I guess, that is when I went out on deck. I don't know when it was. Came back, and banana cream pies were all gone. Usually, this black fellow would snatch a little bit of this desert, whatever it was, and put it in the ice box for me. And for himself, too, of course. So, I came back, and I looked. The pies were all gone out of the baker's shop. I went and I opened the ice box. There was nothing in there. And he was someplace, doing something, and he came back. Went like this. "What do you want, boss?" I said, "Where's the banana cream pie?" "Oooh!" He disappeared, and he came back a little while later, and he had a quarter of a banana cream pie in his hand. And he said, "Here, boss." And for a long time, after I got back to the States, I didn't care for banana cream pie. I ate every bit of it, but I had more than enough. And I wasn't going to let any go to waste, either. And when we got back, we were issued fatigues for the ship.

Mark: When you got to Boston?

Renard: When I got to Boston, on June 11. My mother's father had come over on a sailing ship when he was a kid. Took him eight weeks. I made it in eight days, from Southampton, England, to Boston. And we docked at Boston. Ah, before that, the second day we were out, when I was up on deck, in fact, just before I got up, I had heard the ship's engines starting to pound a little heavier. And I got up on deck, and we had started out with five destroyers out ahead of us. And that day, got up on deck. And the destroyers were just barely visible. They are gone. And these guys were spreading out. Each ship on their own. The captain, or whatever he was, in charge, had started pushing the engines. And we made Boston, in spite of the bad weather, in eight days. June 11, we docked at Boston. We got off the ship, and went into a warehouse, and the Red Cross was there with sandwiches and soda, or punch, juice, or whatever you wanted. And we had that, then we went out the other side of the warehouse and got on a train. A beautiful train. Went north up to Camp Miles Standish. There we were for just over two days. We got on board a train — it wasn't as fancy as that one taking us there — it was a troop train. And we went — our group was taken to Fort Sheridan.

Mark: Well, you weren't discharged. You weren't discharged yet?

Renard: No. Just released from active duty. No, wait a minute. Not even released from active duty. We had a sixty day leave. All POWs. And so we were taken there for processing. Certain records upkeep, updated, and so forth, and then from there you went out to your homes. We had sixty days leave. And then we had to report down to Miami Beach, Florida, in sixty days time. Just after Japan had surrendered. So, but that troop train, usually troop trains always waited for everybody else. That troop train waited for nobody, and everybody waited for us. We went through rail yards of like Niagara Falls, Buffalo, New York, wherever that train went through. The first class passenger trains were sitting on the siding and we went zip! right by them. We made Fort Sheridan in just over twenty-four hours. We were rolling.

Mark: That's pretty good. About as fast as I can drive.

Renard: We never stopped. We never stopped anyplace except slowed up a little bit, maybe, in some yard. We just kept rolling.

Mark: So, after Miami Beach, finally, did you get a discharge, or were you in the Reserves?

Renard: No, had to report to Miami Beach. I got married. Actually, my first wife, I wasn't here. I had been home. In August, before we went over seas, for five days. We had met and talked about my coming home. And she wanted to get married. Before that, my dad had — when I was in training — gone with her and bought her a diamond. She picked it out, but he paid for it, of course. So, she had the diamond. And came home, to get married, supposedly. But I didn't know I could get a leave. We were told we wouldn't get one. Well, I kept asking, and finally, all of a sudden, before we are leaving Rapid City, I got five days leave. So I was lucky and got a flight got the heck out of there, and got home. And she lived in Kenosha. Got to Kenosha. And she's not home. She's in New York, or Washington, with a group of girls on a little vacation trip. So, she got home the day before I had to leave to go back. And she wanted to get married then. But I said no. I said, "I came back. I'm sorry I couldn't tell you beforehand. I didn't know. That's the Army." And I said, "But, you'll have to wait now until I get home." And I left the next morning. Had to go down to — this was while I was in the service — went back to Rapid City, South Dakota. And from there, we flew new 17s to Lincoln, Nebraska. And from there, overseas, as I have mentioned. So, after I got back from POW camp, then we got married on the 2nd of July. And we were sitting in the car — my dad's car — at the West Bend train depot. For her to go to Kenosha, to pack her stuff. And I would come a couple days later, to go to Miami Beach. When they announced the Japanese surrender. So I knew that that was over. So, she went home and packed, and then we rode together down to Miami Beach. On the train. Flights weren't too much available. And got to Miami

Beach on — that was late in August, and we were there for several weeks.

Mark: What did you do?

Renard: Well, had to report for a few things to get checked. You went through a — well, it wasn't an interrogation, but some record-keeping, record up-dating. And asked what happened. Were you injured? This and that and the other thing. And I said, "Yes." And I told them about my back injury, and the fellow wasn't writing it down. And I said, "I want that written on the record." Because I had heard of guys in World War I that things had happened to, and after a while, when they needed something, "Well, there's nothing here." So, I said, "You write it down." And he did. And then he asked if I had the Purple Heart. And I said, "No." He said, "Okay." And he made out my [unintelligible] and he said, you go over to such and such a building, and there is where I got my Purple Heart for my back injury. And then we needed flying time. So, I think it was one day, we went up to — was it Boca Raton, on the east coast? There was a base there. It was actually a radar training base, but there were B-17s there. So, two of us went together. He had driven one of those cars, so we rode with him up there. And we made the flight. We flew up to almost to the west coast of Florida and came down the east coast. And saw all those trees sticking up there. They looked like a bunch of overgrown toothpicks. And got our four hours of flying time in. And during the day, we'd play volley ball and go swimming a little bit. And just took it easy.

Mark: It was a relaxing experience.

Renard: Yeah. And then we were released from there on the day before Labor Day, and there was a couple there, also, from Kenosha — that my wife knew from Kenosha — and they were driving back, and they had driven down there, so we rode with them to Kenosha, only she was six weeks pregnant. So we would go a little ways, and have to stop. She'd get out and walk a little ways, and we'd pick her up. Drive a little further. And then we also had to spend one day in Chattanooga. We stopped because she was pretty sick. She was just six weeks pregnant. It was a pretty rough trip for her. We had some experiences with lousy motels on the way back. But we got back, and then I — oh, when I got down there, they asked, "Do you want to stay in or out?" And I had been thinking about this. I knew I wanted to go to college, because when I was sitting in the POW camp, we had heard about the GI Bill. And so we knew that was available. And I had originally...

Mark: Let me interrupt for a second. How did you hear about the GI Bill in a POW camp?

Renard: We got the message, somehow. See, we heard BBC every night. Somebody had gotten either the pieces of a radio, I don't know how, and they could pick up BBC.

So they would get the news report from BBC each day. Mainly, about the war, but something like this. And also when President Roosevelt died. We heard it that day. And a lot of our guys didn't believe it. I said, "If it's on there, I'm sure it happened." So, we got that. Then, after I was out of high school, I took a post-grad full year course. I knew I wanted to go music, aeronautical engineering, or attorney. So, sitting there in camp, last a while, I had decided I would definitely want to go to college, and with the GI Bill, I could do it. Cause my folks couldn't offer me much. And I decided that I was probably go to law, because aeronautical engineering was pretty much east coast and west coast. Well, that was pretty far from home, and to get there, and everything. So, I gave that up. Music, it can be, if you are fortunate, it can be good. But you are going to be teaching music, and it wasn't the best end, so I decided on law. Because then you got an education, and that's what I decided on. So when I came back from Miami Beach, after a while it got full and they sent the rest of them all to Texas. A little while there and they asked if you wanted to stay in or out. So, I said, if I stay in a year, I figure I can stay in a year and save up some money to go to college. And then, if I wanted to get out, how assured am I that I'm getting out? He said, "None." A year from now, you might not get out. At least, until your term expires. I said, "I'll get out right now." And I did stay in the Reserve. I said, "I'll go in the Reserve, and that is it." Which I did. And I went back. When I got back to home, I drove down to Madison and inquired about registering at UW. I had no college, whatsoever. If I had had college, I would probably have been flying for an airline. Because they had all kinds of notices on the bulletin boards down at Miami Beach. Pilots interested in flying commercial, contact us. TWA, all of them. United. You name them. So I called a couple of them. First question they would ask: "How much college have you had? Have you graduated from college?" "No." "How much college have you had?" "None." And, I think it was TWA, said, "Well, we can give you a job in flying down in — what's that Central America company? Country? One of those Central American countries. "We can give you a job flying down there." I didn't tell them, but I thought, "Stick it." And I am going to school. So I came back, and I went to college. I started up. Enrolled. Started at Madison, at mid-September. School of L&S. I wrote an exam for — because of my German — and I missed about nine questions, about grammar. Otherwise, I would have had the equivalent of two years of German for credit. So I missed that. So then I enrolled, and in five semesters, I took heavy loads. The first summer, I had to take off. I was so nervous, you drop a piece of paper behind me, I would just gkkk! And I took off, and I worked in a washing machine factory that was there in West Bend. Barton Washer, it was called.

Mark: Now, this was in the summer of '46?

Renard: '46.

Mark: So you had done a year of college?

Renard: I had one year of college. And I had a rough time when I started, because I had graduated from high school in '37. Took the post-grad course before the year was ended. Then, next year, I was out. Then, in '39, before I went in the service, I had a home study course in business administration. Three volumes out of thirteen. They were on finances, up through the CPA level. CPA work. And, so, I had that background. But, you forget your study habits. So I had to re-develop. And the first, started mid-September, October, about the first six weeks, until about the beginning of November. I got so I would read a page, I'd read it ten times, and I couldn't tell you a word that was on it. I'd stay up until midnight, one o'clock, as long as it took to do it, see. And finally, I thought, this ain't working. So I'd work until ten-thirty. And try to do as much as I could of each of the subjects. Whatever I could do on the other ones. Then go to bed. And after about three weeks, it improved. I could read it once, and it was there. Whatever I could get. The one that I couldn't get, first, was calculus. I had a rough time with that. But I — one of the guys in the class happened to live right across from where I lived out on University. In the UW Trailer Camp, as we called it. Lived in house trailer. A mobile home. And, which [**approx. fifteen second pause in tape**]

Mark: GI Bill. And calculus was a problem, but you got your study habits in order.

Renard: I met this fellow. He lived across the University Avenue from me, and he said, "Come on over." So I went over there three nights. And the third night, he explained something the third night, and Bingo! From there on, it was a breeze. Because I had always been good in math. I always had 90's in high school, in math. It was a breeze. No problem.

Mark: You mentioned being nervous, before. Nervous out of the service. That was kind of a catch-phrase at the time. Do you think that might have had something to do with getting your grades in order, getting your study habits back together? And adjusting to life on campus, and that sort of thing?

Renard: I never thought of it. It might have had. Because I was always conscientious and I remember in college, and I was taking Philosophy 1, and I blew the six weeks exam. I went home and cried. My wife was upset with me because of that. I always had good grades. I was almost the salutatorian of my high school class. In the service, I was third in Dodge City, Kansas, ground school. And in the top in the flying. Well, each of the classes I was at, except where I almost washed out in primary because I had a new instructor, and he was — I was the only one that got through of the six guys he started with. Only because I was assigned to another instructor and started flying basics, with him. With the new instructor. He was an older fellow. But different from me. And he got me through. And from there, I

went to twin-engines. And I flew twin-engines like I been flying all my life. Just came naturally. So, but the GI Bill you mentioned, I had the privilege of knowing the guy that wrote the GI Bill.

Mark: Right. I have a note about that, and I was going to ask you about that. This might be a good place to tell that story.

Renard: I met him through the American Legion. I became active in the American Legion. And as I have told you, I was state commander. And then national executive. First alternate committeeman, and then committeeman. And we'd go to Washington each spring. Used to be late February, early March. And appear before Congressional committees, and state the veterans,' the American Legion's, position on different subjects for veterans. And we'd be there, for about three or four days, yeah, at least that, so the last night that we were there. I was the Wisconsin — we pretty much stayed together — and there was a fellow that had been — he was from Antigo, Wisconsin, originally a judge. Then was appointed to U.S. Circuit Court Judge. And lived in Washington, had lived there for years. And he knew this Harry Colmery, who was an attorney from Topeka, Kansas originally. And he and five other fellows had been appointed by the national American Legion group at that time, because they had nothing when they came back from World War I. And they realized that education was the big thing, and some other things, also. But education was the big thing. So, they got this idea of setting this up, help for veterans going to school. And they had several meetings, different committee members told me this, but I also knew. I feel fortunate, that I had that experience. And they mentioned and they said that, while they all had different ideas that they had added, but Harry Colmery was the guy who wrote it. After these different meetings, they had one national convention. He locked himself in his hotel room. The next morning, the bill was written, just about the way it was passed in Congress. They had to do a little bit to add a very little bit, for Congressional purposes. I mean, the way they do things. But, that is what it was. And it was passed. And the American Legion — it wasn't — everybody wasn't for it. But they worked at it, and got the thing passed through Congress. One Congressman, when the vote came up, was sick. And they got him in there. He wasn't that sick that he couldn't. But, instead of coming in by himself, they got him in there. And it carried. And they passed the GI Bill. And I had the experience, also, of being in on several increases of the Korean War, and after Vietnam. Having been at national level. Well, one was here in the state, when Lucey was governor. We had had the second mortgage program which Governor Goodland, and other programs, had started that time. And second mortgage program. But they were asking for some more, needed some more. And Lucey proposed the first mortgage, also. But, in addition to — see, they had issued these bonds, and had to, of course, collect enough interest to pay the interest on those, so it wasn't taxpayers' money, but then they had tacked on a quarter percent, half

percent, for this and that and the other thing. And one of them was a half percent for the build-up of a fund in case there were defaults. Well, in the second mortgage loan program, the veterans had proven that there were very few, if any defaults. Very small amounts, if any. And, so, therefore, we hammered at that, and a couple of more things they were proposing. And I was state commander at the time. We had a hearing here in Madison. And it was in the evening. And all different veterans organizations were there. And being commander of the Legion, it was my prerogative, or right, or what you want to call it, protocol, for me to do the speaking. So when we got there, before the hearing began, John Moses was Veterans Secretary at the time. And I had known about that. That day, the legislature, they hadn't passed it, but in their workings, they had amended it to add another — they originally had a hundred thousand in the bill. They added another fifty thousand that day, but they also added some veterans who had been made eligible to use it. And so when I got in there, I asked John Moses, "What do you expect as an average loan amount? And how many per month?" Cause they wanted this thing for a biennium, for two years. So, I was pretty good, still am at doing figures in the head, and I totaled these figures. So when I appeared, when I spoke against this first half percent for that, and a couple of other quarter percents, and "The big thing," I said, "is you haven't allowed enough — provided enough money." "Well, what would you suggest?" And I doubled it. I said, "Three hundred thousand." "Well, how did you arrive at that figure?" "Well, I was told that the average mortgage would be about so much. And they were expecting about so many a month. Multiply it out, there it is." So, they allowed, they amended it, they allowed three hundred thousand, and it lasted till March of the second year. So I feel a little proud of having had my hand in it. And then, of course, when the Vietnam affair came, I wasn't directly effected, but on the federal level, I was at the national level and the national executive committee helped get those things passed. And the amounts that were necessary, that we were able to provide.

Mark: Yeah. Back to your own years with the GI Bill, did you think that you would have gone to college without it?

Renard: I couldn't have done it. I absolutely couldn't have done it because my folks, they both grew up on the farm. My mother was actually the first woman to work for Amity when Bob Walsh started it years ago. But factory workers didn't make that much. My dad also worked for Amity for a while and went to the other leather goods, but they couldn't make that much. And they just didn't have it. So, they helped me when I was there. With bringing food down, sending food down when somebody came home. Or needed things to do, like building a little addition for the shed, for the trailer I lived in. And so forth. But, once in a while, I would use my dad's car to come back, if I was only here for a short time, and back again. But that's when he wasn't working in the factory any more, just worked in the little

farm he had. I would not have been able to go to school.

Mark: Did it cover all your school expenses? Your books and tuition?

Renard: Well, I had to work part-time, also. I worked, I had a little job. At different times, after the first year, the school had bought the apartment buildings that are now out on the west end of University, where it goes over the hill. Shorewood is on the north side. To the left in there there is a bunch of red brick apartment buildings. At that time, that was an open area. Somebody, years ago, had it as a commercial cabin camp. They had some driveway, and some little cabins around like you would see for tourists years back. They'd come and stay a week, or two weeks, whatever they stayed, and then they'd be gone. And so the school bought that. And there was room. They had room for four Quonset huts, and the rest of it were trailer spots. And you brought your own mobile home, and you parked it there. You'd pay rent. And there was a building there, which had been there for showers and washroom, upstairs, and the basement for laundry machines. And of course, a heating unit for that building. But, so, that is where we lived. And I was resident manager, there. And got a little income from that. That, plus I found out at the end of the first year, right near the end, the authorities under the GI Bill, the VA, told us that we could get a thirty day leave, during the summer. Well, I was in pretty sad shape, and that was a good idea, so I signed up for it. Then I found out that if the total time you had carried you over half a semester, that VA had to carry you the rest of the semester. So, I figured it out, and, by God, I am going to be short. So I quick declined the thirty day leave before I got it. And that summer, of course, I got this job. I didn't start until July 4. Had to recuperate a little bit. So, worked all summer and then, after that, school time. But I went around the clock after that. Regular semesters, and summer school, as well. So I made senior standing. At that time, you could get senior standing, you could go into law school. So I had senior standing in five semesters. I was pushing. And then I went into law school.

Mark: Here in Madison?

Renard: Here in Madison. Yeah. I graduated from Madison June 6, 1950. And I had a little trouble in a couple of courses. And so I went to one summer school and made those up. And the other summer school was for a summer course. And I graduated in June, of 1950.

Mark: Now, you were not the only veteran on campus, at the time.

Renard: No. One of most, one of many. In fact, the first couple of years, it was practically all veterans. And they established a scholastic record here that I don't think anybody has come close to since. They were really, I mean, they were here to

work. They knew what they were here for. They had been in service. Some of them, as I also did, came close to not being here any longer, and they made the most of it. There wasn't partying, or stuff. They had a good time, sure, but it wasn't like a lot of what goes on now, and has since. They were here to work. That's what they came for. That's what they were paying for. And most of them were in the same boat. They were just existing, making a go of it. I won't drink — I won't have tomato soup today. At that time, I had arranged it, lived off in the trailer camp, and my wife, of course, had the baby, our oldest daughter, didn't sleep very much here, so she went and lived [interruption for forty seconds] and I almost ended up in Korea, also.

Mark: You almost got called back?

Renard: No, I almost enlisted. I was in the Reserves, as I said, from Miami Beach, I went into the Reserves. But I wasn't in a flying Reserve unit. Just attending meetings, and so forth. But the fellows sitting next to me, in three of my law school classes the last semester, was in the flight unit out at Truax. And, of course, being a pilot, you'd sooner do than eat. I would have done, and still would, if I could. So, we talked about flying and he said, "Come on out and sign up," he said. "They'll sign you up. They'll even re-train you for whatever they need." And I thought about it seriously, and I almost did, but I was thinking, I went through all these years of school, and law school, just ready to get out and start. I sign up, you never know what breaks. Regardless of what happens, they might need you someplace, and there you go. So, I decided, no, I am not going to do it. I graduated June 6, and, you know, June 20, Korea broke. They were gone by the end of the month. And I would have been gone, too.

Mark: There were other parts of the GI Bill, the most famous being for the education. But there were other parts. Unemployment insurance, which you apparently didn't use. There was a home loan. Did you ever use the veterans home loan at any time?

Renard: No, I wanted to. We had an apartment the first years in West Bend. In fact, my wife was down with her folks in Illinois. Because starting a law practice wasn't very lucrative. At least, for a while. It wasn't then. Today, it's a little different. So, I had an apartment. Then, I needed a home. My folks had a small farm there and I've got a lot now that is one of the most beautiful in the city of West Bend. It is right next to [unintelligible] Park, and it's up on a hill, in the woods. Where you can hear the frogs, and all that stuff. And the birds. So, I was going to build a house there but we needed a place to live. And my first wife said, "No, it was woods. And there was nobody close around." She said, "I won't live out there." And I even had the letter of eligibility from the VA Department here in Madison. But then she wouldn't do it, so I bought another place, and it was over the limits that you could buy, and so forth. I never used it. I did, for one year, when the

daughter was born. We were short of money and somebody said, “Why don’t you get the state grant?” So, for five months, I got the \$20 a month from the state. And that helped out. But that is the only thing I ever got.

Mark: I want to cover two left areas. One involved medical problems, and readjustments, and that sort of thing. And the other is veterans organizations. Having been a POW, I suspect you had some sort of medical adjustments. Either physical or psychological. You had to readjust back into civilian life. You mentioned being nervous.

Renard: Yes, I was very nervous. In fact, I knew there were fellows in school here that were getting nervous disabilities. And they were not as nervous as I was. Getting those disabilities and pensions depended a lot on the doctors at the time. I mentioned, at Miami Beach. The doctor didn’t put down when I said my back injury and that stuff. He didn’t even write it down. And I said, “Now, wait a minute. I still got a sore back, and it bothers me.” It did for years. I had it all my life. So he did write it. But I got a hunch that, after a while, either he erased it — because after a while, when I did apply — when the oldest daughter was born, well, I had asked for these grants, then the fellow at the Wisconsin VA said something about disability. I said, “No, I don’t have any.” So we arranged it for me. He went out to St. Mary’s Hospital, where we lived right across from, and had x-rays for half a day. And took months till I got a report, and the report came back, all it had was flat feet. And I have got flat feet today. They never improved, once you got them. It’s your feet, you know how you’re doing. And I said, “The hell with it.” And I didn’t bother with it. But I know, I do get free dental care at the veterans hospital, for my teeth. I had one tooth broke off. Part of it broke off in POW camp. And when that happened, of course, you don’t know what is going on. So, I made the dental appointment. Well, it took a couple of months before all this stuff, and one day. you got an appointment, in a week or two. And I hadn’t had any pain, had no trouble. So I said, I didn’t know what kind of dental work you’d get over there. So I said, let somebody else use it, and I waited until I came back from — got back to the States, and got it repaired then. I’ve thought many times that probably — my back, of course, as I have said, gave me aches all my life. And a couple of times, I had serious enough, after I was practicing law, that one day I couldn’t get out of bed. Sciatic nerve, from the hip down to the tip of the toe. And I couldn’t lie, I couldn’t stand, I couldn’t sit, I couldn’t walk. Anything. Anything you did, it was just constant pain, all the time. But it finally went away, and I called the doctor that time, from my clinic, and he came up and examined me. And he said I had a slipped disk. And the next day a guy came up and fitted me with one of those lombard belts, and I wore that for ten months. In fact, I still carry it in the bottom of my suitcase when I go up north, because it used to be, if I stepped wrong, you’d think that level is higher, or it is lower, and one time when I was practicing for crop dusting, I bounced the airplane just right and my spine

went shhttp! right up to the top. But I still think my hearing loss is probably due to the engines. Because a B-26 engines, they have four thousand horses howling in your ears.

[End of Tape 3, Side B]

But that was only for so many hours a day. But 17's, ten, more like twelve hour missions, daily, or almost daily, and there was no insulation. That was it. And I got a hunch that that was were some of my hearing loss went, or came about from. My stomach, maybe. I got stomach problems. Maybe some of that came, too, but I don't know. That's one thing that has never been diagnosed. I am going to go — there is a physical exam that POWs are eligible to have. I've never taken it. But I am going to arrange for it. And I am also going to check on my stomach problems with the gastroenterologist at the Zablocki Hospital.

Mark: Well, what I was wondering, a lot of the POWs of the Japanese came back with a lot of really serious chronic problems. You weren't in camp nearly so long, and you had a bit more food than some of these guys did. But I was wondering if you had gastro-intestinal problems?

Renard: Well, I have got that stomach problem now that — had it a little bit, but it has gotten worse the last few years. And so, it may have started then, and as you get older, these things start creeping up, or getting worse on you, and you can't do anything about it. So, I take Zantac pretty often for the — a doctor's prescription. I had it. Now you can buy it over the counter. And take soda. For a long time, I took, I still get it. Keep it in the kitchen cupboard. Maalox, I'll take that. A couple times. It's a little better right now. I am taking something, also, that, recently, you've probably heard, they've come up with the idea that stomach acidity is not just the acidity, but little microbes are causing that stomach problem. And a client of mine, a tax client and legal client, and a farmer, almost as old as I am but not quite, in World War II was turned down because he had a peptic ulcer. And he told me about this. It's a by-product from bee hives. When bees go out and collect nectar, they come in and they also pick up something else from the flowers, and when they go into the hive, that seems to rub off of them. And that, mixed in a certain lotion, or something, or in something liquid, acts as an anti-biotic. And I been taking that. In fact, my wife's got some with her. Three times a day. You can put it in orange juice. I just take a section of orange, a slice, and put a few drops in there. And that seems to help me.

Mark: In terms of veterans organizations, when did you start getting involved in that? Was it in college? Right after the service? Or did you wait?

Renard: My dad was a post Legion commander in West Bend in 1941. And I remember

driving up to Antigo for a state convention. As soon as World War II, we're eligible, he signed me up. And I came home, and he called, and he said, "You are a Legion member." And, of course, I was at school, and I attended a few Reserve meetings down in Madison, but I didn't have that much time to put into those things. So, when I got home, June of 1950, I think it was — our post met early in July, it was the first Tuesday. I went to a Legion meeting.

Mark: Your first one?

Renard: And, the commander came over and said, "You are the program chairman." I said, "Oh?" "Yeah." And I said, "What do I have to do?" So, he explained what I had to do. So I was program chairman, and I worked up through the chairs, and I was adjutant. I had every office there was. I was finance officer. I came up through. I was commander. In fact, we also have a Washington County Council. Each council does. And I was elected county commander before I'd ever been a post commander. Against, opposing a guy who had a lot more years in the Legion and experience than I did. But that is the way it happened. Went up through district commander ranks, and became state commander in '74 - '75. And then after that, one year, I was just "blue cap" again, and then I became alternate NEC for — it's a two year term. And then became NEC. And Wisconsin had...

Mark: What was NEC?

Renard: National Executive Committeeman. That's the important — that's from mainly — all the main decisions are made. I know it. A lot of guys don't. And I was, in 1980, when I had to run for re-election that year, and I had my campaign all made. It was at Oshkosh, and I was putting up a banner. I had somebody else do it, and they didn't do it right. And it was laying in a heap on the floor. And I had gone up there before the convention to find out where we could put posters and banners, and what their restrictions and rules were. And **[ten second pause on tape]** a couple of days before. And I said, "Is there a ladder around?" "Yeah. Over on the end of the wall, over there." So went over and got it and put it up. Took the banner and was going to crawl up there to hang it. And I checked the ladder. I looked at it. And there were feet on the bottom. I mean, it sit flat on the floor. And got up about three rungs and, the banner, like oil cloth, about fifteen feet long and three feet wide, and jumped several times on the ladder. And it looked just as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar. When I got up on the top, I reached like that to put the first hook in, and fsst! Out went the ladder. I thought of jumping off, sliding down the wall. The fixing must have slowed me up a little bit. Well, you got to have something to jump from, and I was flat on the ladder when she hit. And got up off the floor myself. And was sitting on a chair. And some girls were helping the fellows to set up for the convention. Some bleachers, and so forth, some chairs. One of them ran down and told the fellow that somebody had fallen with

the ladder. He was pretty sure it was me. He came tearing up there. I was sitting in the chair and he came over there. I left a pool of blood on the floor about like that. So, he said, he just looked at me and he had had some Red Cross first aid training. And said I was breathing with extreme difficulty. He said, "Put him on the floor." And heard him say that, and I stiffened out. The gal grabbed me by the ankles. And he grabbed me under the shoulders. And they slid me on the floor. Until some other people came, then. I was going to get up after that, again. The state Legion officer came. I was alone there at that time. And he came. I was going to get up, because I knew him well. And he held me on the floor until the para-meds — I heard him holler, the minute he saw me, holler for the paramedics and an ambulance. And he held me there on the floor until they came. And I spend one week at Mercy Medical Center in Oshkosh. This was on a Thursday afternoon, at a quarter to four, about, when it happened. And I remember, the ambulance stopped some place, and I said, "What have you stopped for?" I thought they were in a hurry to get to the hospital. He said, "We don't do that, anymore." So I had the honor of being the first one in the newly remodeled emergency room. I said, "You know what you can do with that honor?" But they took good care of me. And so, emergency room, two doctors were in there, and this state Legion service officer; he's dead now. And they checked me over. And this was all plastic sleeves and slats, and so forth. When I was on the floor, I got my four front teeth—the one that's broken off now; I gotta get fixed—on pegs. And it felt like they were out. And I remember saying, "I think my four front teeth are broken." And these guys were pawing around in the blood, feeling for those teeth. I feel sorry for them. But, anyhow, they couldn't find them. But the upper jaw was broken. So in the emergency room, the one doctor said, "Your upper jaw is broken." And that is why it felt like that. So, that had to be done, and my wrists both were smashed. You have to start it. Thank you. And so they came in on Friday morning. I told them, I said, "I'm from West Bend. You guys can be the best doctors in the world in your field. I'm from West Bend and I'd like to go to West Bend, for the hospital, St. Francis Medical." And they came in on Friday, both of them, and they said, "We've called your hospital and they said they don't have any room for you." I thought, Now, somebody is lying through their teeth, because they had just finished a new addition. So I didn't say it, and they said, "We got to do something." And I'd heard of operations and stuff, and I said, "I got one question. Can you both do what you have to do under the same anesthetic? The same time under." They said, "Yup." I said, "Okay." This eye was completely closed, from swelling. This one had opened enough so that I could see a little bit. Wear reading glasses. And they brought in the thing to sign, after a while. I always read it first, being an attorney. With one eye, I read that release, and signed it, with the hand in the cast. So on Saturday morning, they put me under. And I had told them, "If I come to, and one of you says I have to go under again, you are going to have the biggest fight on your hands that you ever had." So they both accomplished it, and these hands are in casts, casts up to the elbows. And pins in

there to hold those two bones in place, because one is shorter than the other. And, there I am laying in bed. So a nurse up there watched over me like an eagle. She — I thank God for her, because she made sure that everything was — as much as she could help, you know. So I spent the following Friday there. And this is all wired shut, and wires up here holding it, and two little loops in, like little pants buttons there so the skin wouldn't grow, I guess. So, then they said, "Well, we can't do anything more for you here." And I had my daughter inquire in West Bend, at the hospital. They didn't want me. And so this fellow that I mentioned, that I had done work for, he had sponsored and practically built Cedar Lake Home when it started. Reverend Reese. So my daughter went to see him, and they took me in from August 1 till September 5. I was there. I was like a baby. I couldn't do anything. Couldn't wash myself. I couldn't wipe myself. I couldn't do anything. I could walk. But that was all.

Third voice: They have re-done your hand. Re-done your wrist.

Renard: Well, this is still left there. And, so, that was August 1, Friday. The next day, my wife and daughter came up, my youngest daughter. Oldest one lives in Madison. And they visited a little bit, and they were going to go back. And there was a bed, like this, and this table over here. And there was something on the table they were supposed to take along. So, they went over and they couldn't find it at first. So I leaned back in the bed like this, to look. And something nailed me here. Then this kind of told me it was the pin, or one of them. But I didn't want to admit it. So, I called her, there was a nurse's aid standing in the door, and I said, "I want to see a nurse. Get a nurse in here, please." So she left and came back. The nurse came in. "What do you want?" I told her, I said, "I leaned back. I think that pin popped. I want to see Dr. Rannick as fast and as soon as I can see him. Please call." So she went and called and came back. She said, "Dr. Rannick is at the hospital. He will see you in the emergency room, if you can get up there fairly soon." My wife and daughter are walking out the door of the room. And, just as they were out of sight, I said, "Hey, come back here." Popped their heads back. "What do you want?" I said, "I'm going with you." "Where are you going?" And I said, "You are taking me to the hospital." So they did. Up to the emergency room. Had to sit there and wait a little bit. It's like this. The emergency room is here, and then there is a bench here. And a kind of office, there, where they keep the x-rays and stuff. There is a hall comes down here. And Rannick came down the hall and — he's the orthopedic surgeon. I wouldn't trade him for anything. He's known in this country and over in Germany. So, anyhow, he came around the corner. He said, "Which pin?" I pointed. He just touched it and pulled it out. It's a steel pin, about that long. I still got it. And then he said, "Where are the x-rays?" I said, "In there." So he walked into that little office. They had them. I had held them in the car all the way down there. I rode down in the car from Mercy down to here. Or down to West Bend. And so he got the x-ray and held it up. Looked at it a little bit. And he

laid his head over his left shoulder and said,” When you do a job, you do it well, don’t you?” And I kind of got the gist of what he meant. By that time, my family doctor came down the same hall and said, “Where’s Rannick?” I said “There.” He went in there and they talked a little bit, and my family doctor came out, and said, “You better sit down, Hank.” He was two years behind me in school. In fact, he went with the same class as my daughter [means his sister?]. So we knew each other well. I called him Larry. And he said, “You better sit down. It ain’t good.” And then he told me, Rannick said he’s never seen such badly smashed wrists in his life. So then they called me in there and Rannick explained a few things. He said, “I want an x-ray right now.” He said, “I want one in ten days. If that shows me what I think I see now, I would like to re-do your wrists.” And I said, “You mean, re-break them?” He said, “No. Wrists, we don’t have to do that. Because of all the fine bones. We don’t have to do that.” So that’s what happened. And next thing, ten days later, I had another one, and then he explained it to me. And I had some questions, and so forth. What was involved. I said, “Will there be pain?” He didn’t answer that.

Mark: Never a good sign.

Renard: Yeah. I caught on to that. So, then, he said, “There will be some pain.” That’s all he said. So in mid-August, that is as soon as it could be done, he re-did my wrist. Or I would have done nothing since that day, to date. I’d have frozen stumps, like this. Disabled elbows, and disabled shoulders.

Mark: Fortunate for you.

Renard: Yep. Very fortunate.

Mark: While you were involved in the American Legion, obviously, did you join any other organizations? I think of the American Ex-POWs, specifically.

Renard: I joined them several years back. I’ve got a life membership in the POWs. But I didn’t join the local chapter because I couldn’t stand the guy who was in charge of it, and running it. Because he didn’t follow the rules. I mentioned something. I went to a meeting. And right then he turned me off. The chapter is now named after him, because he did a lot for it, but his wife still belongs. But the POWs, the wives, some also belong. As members. It is set up that way. Other organizations, they can’t belong. So, and then a few years back, they had a dinner or something, and they invited me to come, and I went. Mary was, I was going with her then, and we went to that dinner. And I joined the local outfit since then. I’m legislative chairman but that doesn’t amount to much. But the Legion is where I have grown up. When I was NEC, at one time, I had originally thought of, or would have liked to, thought of being national commander, but that takes some doing. I won’t

brown-nose. I never did. I didn't do it in high school. Won't do it now. And the little bit that you have to do with some people, I wouldn't. But, also, I wanted to be national vice commander, and haven't been. But I was NEC. Because I fell off that ladder, I didn't — I held off my election, for re-election, at Oshkosh. And I many times wished that I hadn't. Because I had all my material there. And the reason I called it off was because I hadn't — when I went — there is twelve districts in the state, and you go to each conference of each district. And make your spiel. And I purposely had not said something, because, if you do, then the other guys hear it and they will counter it with something, true or not. So, I purposely, at the convention, at their caucuses, I was going to do that. Now, here I am lying in bed, and I can't do it. And, plus, they used the argument, I am in bed and I wouldn't be able to do the work. So, another guy beat me by a few votes. And, so I didn't do it then. But that ended my national level in the Legion. I am still active and judge advocate for the state several times. And I have been for our post, as long as I can remember. The town meeting and the district for years. I still carry a good reputation.

Mark: We have got a little bit of time, yet. What is it about the Legion that keeps you interested in it, and why that particular group? There are a lot of different veterans groups.

Renard: Well, as I said, the American Legion did the GI Bill. Now, I know that, I've heard comments a couple of times. The guys have made the comments that VFW had something to do with the GI Bill. They did not. The programs they have, I'm a little disgusted with them, too. Because there is guys in it, like in every other organization...

Mark: The VFW or the American Legion?

Renard: The American Legion. There's guys in it who—we have certain rules. If you go to conventions or meetings, and different things, you can be allowed a certain mileage of so much, and some of the guys don't follow the rules. They cheat a little. And I have some friends of mine who have been in outfits or positions where they have seen it happen, and know it. And that irks me to no end. After I fell, at our own Second District Conference, we have two a year, spring and fall. That was in the fall. And I appeared there. And this hand was out of the cast, and that one was still in the cast. This hand, between the two casts, was in a cast for three months. From July until October 26. And so I had this hand in the cast, and I got up and spoke. And I told them, while I was in that bed, I did some serious thinking. I had just sent in, two months before this, a lifetime membership to the American Legion. So I didn't have to pay annual dues. And I got up and I spoke. I told them what I thought. And I said that, as long as the American Legion came

first in whatever they were doing and working at, I'd be there and I'd help. I'd still be there and help. But if they started to think of me, personally, themselves, personally, don't waste my time. And I got a standing ovation. I mean, it was just like that. It wasn't good. It was Bumm! And I felt the same way. And this is confidential. When you are a state commander, in the twenty-fifth year thereafter, you get a special recognition, and a chance to speak. And that is somewhat going on, in the Wisconsin department, and I'm not going to hesitate to lay it on the line. When they appoint people for a position, they aren't able to handle it, or they don't do it. And that irks me, to no end. Because I'm just a little too conscientious for that. That's the way I am put together, and the way I've always been, and I guess I'm not going to change. So, I had a habit of speaking my piece. And when the rules are there, it comes to the constitution and the by-laws, which is aggregate, that is what it says, and this is how you do it, and not some other way. And some people don't like that. They want to accomplish something and, well, skip the rules. Hunh-uh. Because when do you stop skipping, or when do you stop bending? And you know that. It doesn't work in life. So, there comes a time when you got yourself in the hole, and there you are. So I won't do it.

Mark: Those were pretty much the questions I had. Is there anything that you want to add, or anything you want to say?

Renard: Can you think of something else? I've got these pictures, here, if you wanted any. I showed you this, if you want to copy that. And I also made this copy of the diary.

Mark: To keep?

Renard: Yes. Keep that in the file. Here is some pictures. Here is a picture, it's a blow-up

[End of Interview]