

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

JOHN RYAN

Army Air Forces, 15th AF, 304th Bomb Wing, 456th Bomb Group, World War II

1999

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Ryan, John L. Oral History Interview, 1999.

Approximate length: 1 hour 54 min minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, John L. Ryan, a native of St. Paul, Minnesota, discusses his service during World War II from 1942 to 1945 in the Mediterranean and European theaters, a nose gunner in the 304th Bomb Wing, 456th Bombardment Group, Fifteenth Air Force. Pre-war Ryan worked as an assembler of B-26 medium bombers, an experience that changed dreams of naval service into a desire to enlist in the US Army Air Forces. Aviation Cadet Program enlistment required Ryan, being nineteen years old, to seek approval from his parents at home in Goodman, Wisconsin. He enlisted in 1942 and reported to Fort Sheridan, Illinois on February 6, 1943.

Ryan finished basic training at Sheppard Field, Texas, was sent for “IQ” college courses at Texas Tech in Lubbock, followed by classification in Santa Ana, California, Armor School in Denver, and Gunnery School in Panama City, Florida, graduating around January 1, 1944. His crew, formed in Massachusetts, was sent to Georgia to train as replacements, and staged for overseas at an airstrip on Long Island, New York. They flew a brand new B-24 “Liberator” heavy bomber on the southern route to Africa and to the 15th Air Force base at Cerignola in southern Italy, joining the 456th Bomb Group. The 15th AF suffering aircraft losses, their plane was confiscated and Ryan’s crew given one of the “old battered things that could hardly hold up.” A week after returning their flak-crippled aircraft to base after a bombing run on a railroad yard west of Marseilles, France, nose gunner Ryan and his fellow crewmen were not as fortunate. They set their bombsights on a railroad bridge north of Marseilles, but flak received upon return over the prior week’s target disabled two engines. Unlike the co-pilot who subsequently belly landed the craft, Ryan bailed as ordered, and found himself in ambiguous relation to a minefield in southern France, July 17, 1944.

Ryan relates his shock at being captured by a Russian soldier for the Wehrmacht. He speaks of his interrogation by an Eton-educated German officer. Placed on a train to Germany, Ryan was subjected to solitary confinement and further interrogation at Frankfurt. At the separation point at Wetzlar, Ryan was sent to a POW camp for Air Force non-commissioned officers, Luft IV. Guards beat or bayoneted some POWs during the mile and a half forced run to the camp at Gross Tychow near the Polish border. Ryan would be held there from August 1944 until the camp was evacuated on February 6, 1945. To evade advancing Russian troops, the inmates of Luft IV, under German guard, left camp, heading west and south, participating in “The Black March,” a forced march of POWs over 500 miles, often in blizzard conditions, across Germany. Ryan details the

conditions he and his fellow POWs faced and chronicles his encounters with the local populace. If not on the road, scores of men shared a boxcar with horses. As the Russians got closer, the guards disappeared. Ryan sketches scenes from the road he set out on. A 6x6 American truck to Halle in central Germany and a C-46 flight to Rheims, France, brought a deloused and re-clothed Ryan closer to repatriation. At a “cigarette camp” in Le Havre, amongst 65,000 ex-POWs, Ryan and friend, rather than await low priority steerage, obtained a temporary assignment to Scotland. Finances and the desire to see something of Scotland split the two; the cash-strapped Ryan, though, not destined to return to the States before a lengthy and back-and-forth sojourn in the United Kingdom.

Once home in Wisconsin, Ryan joined, but soon left, the American Legion, finding membership in the Disabled American Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars to be more in tune with his needs and philosophy. He attended both the University of Wisconsin and Madison Business College, later working sales territory for Monroe Calculating. Ryan was a National Service Officer of Ex-POWs for the State of Wisconsin.

Biographical Sketch:

John L. Ryan served during the Second World War, from 1942-1945, in the US Army Air Forces in the Mediterranean and European theaters, a nose gunner on a B-24 “Liberator” heavy bomber. After the war he returned to Wisconsin and worked for Monroe Calculating. A member of Disabled American Vets and of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Ryan also was a National Service Officer of Ex-POWs for the State of Wisconsin.

Archivist's Note:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript, if possible .

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 1999.

Transcribed by Joshua Goldstein, 2012.

Abstract written by Jeff Javid, 2018.

Interview Transcript:

- McIntosh: So, now, we get back to the beginning. You were born in St. Paul, Minnesota?
- Ryan: That's right.
- McIntosh: And you worked as an assembler in aircraft business? What kind of a craft—I can't see—
- Ryan: Well, uh, in '39 I went down to an aircraft school in Lincoln, Nebraska, and took a sheet metal course which was ten weeks long. And then from there I went up to Omaha [NE], and at that—it is SAC [Strategic Air Command] headquarters, has been for years, but I used to put B-26s [medium bombers] together in Baltimore [MD] and fly 'em to Omaha. And then that would be, oh, final assembly they'd put the belly tanks in it, armor plating between the pilot and co-pilot etc. When they got done they'd tow it across the runway to 7th Corps Area Headquarters, and the Army would accept 'em and fly 'em away.
- McIntosh: I see. That was before you were in service?
- Ryan: While I was there I enlisted in the Air Force.
- McIntosh: Ah, while you're doing this?
- Ryan: I was always gonna go to the Navy—
- McIntosh: Oh, really?
- Ryan: And I got the bug. I got the bug watching those B-26s. That was before they added the three feet on the wingspan.
- McIntosh: They needed that.
- Ryan: The ferry pilots before that, pick up a plane out in Baltimore, set down in Indianapolis to refuel. They'd take one look at it and walk away and say, "Take that son of a bitch." [Laughs] it was too hot. I found out from talking to guys that were on '26s, it took a pilot's pilot to fly that thing.
- McIntosh: It tended to flip because of the short wings.
- Ryan: Uh-huh, but while I was there an Army officer took a B-26 up and cut one engine and flew the whole length of the runway which was, I don't know, a half mile long. And then he restarted that engine. He did it just to prove that it could fly on one engine [laughs].

McIntosh: Right [inaudible] an experienced pilot[??]

Ryan: [laughs] That's right.

McIntosh: So when you enlisted you probably went right up the ladder quickly because of your experience?

Ryan: No, I didn't. I enlisted in the Aviation Cadet Program, and they told me I wouldn't get called for about three or four months, and at that time I was nineteen so I had to get my parents' approval to enlist. And I wrote home and said—my home was up in Goodman. It's up in Marathon County, the northeast part of the state [WI]. So I said I don't want to be in the infantry. I won't get called in for three or four months, and I want to enlist. They wrote back and says, "Okay, if you come home before you go in and wait for the call." So I enlisted and took my oath Friday the 13th [laughs] but then I went home and it wasn't till the 6th of February. I notified the Air Force and I went home, and they switched me from 7th to 6th Corps Area out of Chicago, Fort Sheridan and sent the letter, oh, around the 1st of February, and I reported in in Chicago on the 6th of February.

McIntosh: And where did you go from there?

Ryan: Went down to Sheppard Field [Wichita County, TX] for basic training which for me they were crammin' 'em through. I had two weeks of basic training. I don't even—never learned the banding[??] of arms, you now [laughs]. From there I went to Texas Tech [Lubbock, TX] on the college program for three months.

McIntosh: Training for what?

Ryan: I think it was an I.Q. test mainly. We had regular college courses. We had a history course, a little short professor, and every Friday he wouldn't teach us history way back. He'd say, "This is what's going on in world." And it was fantastic [laughs]. After the war, I came down here to school, and I met a couple. Bob's dad ran the Dr. Pepper bottling plant here out on University Avenue [Madison, WI]. It's a gun shop now. He had run Dr. Pepper plants from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But later a friend of mine that was familiar with the industry said, "He's doomed." He said, "I could show you a Dr. Pepper bottler in St. Louis that in the summer runs his plant twenty-four hours a day." But he says, "Dr. Pepper is a nigger drink."

McIntosh: Oh really?

Ryan: And it didn't go, and after about five, six years they went bankrupt here.

McIntosh: So that took you to where?

Ryan: Well there I was at Lubbock at Texas Tech, and then I went to—we shipped out to Santa Ana [CA], classification, and I washed [tested?] cadets, and then I was shipped to Denver [CO] and went through Armor School, which was about three months. I got there the 4th of July right around then and stayed until a week before Thanksgiving. Then they shipped us, about 250, down to Tyndall Field in [Panama City] Florida and I went through Gunnery School. Got there right a week before Thanksgiving and graduated around the 1st of the year.

McIntosh: That's in '44?

Ryan: Ah, yeah. I got a ten day TDY [Temporary Duty] and reported back up in Springfield, Massachusetts where they formed the crew. They would form thirty crews at a time. In our case thirty crews, that's 300 men, B-24s [heavy bombers], and then they shipped us to Chatham Field out side of Savannah, Georgia for RTU—Replacement Training Units. We were there three months, and then we went up to Mitchel Field on Long Island [NY] and staged for overseas. Picked up a brand new B-24, flew it for about six or eight hours, and then we went the southern route. Mitchel, Palm Beach, Puerto Rico, Dutch Guiana, British Guiana, Belem [Brazil], Natal [Brazil], Dakar [French West Africa; present day Senegal] , Marrakech [Morocco], Tunis [Tunisia], and then across the Mediterranean to Italy.

McIntosh: How long did that take [John laughs]? It sounds like it would be like several, several days.

Ryan: We had to come in fast at Palm Beach [FL] to beat a thunderhead. God, it was up 20,000 feet, just a hammer, you know, dark blue. When we did the navigator's eardrum would pop. So they threw him in the hospital, and that's a story in itself. Levine's father had a clothing store on the edge of Harlem [New York City]. Levine was Jewish, and he had a big mouth. He was kicked off three or four crews. Partially, I think he engineered. He didn't want to go to combat. I think he knew what was going on in Europe for the Jewish. And the story that we got—

McIntosh: This is your navigator you're speaking of?

Ryan: The navigator, and he went through—he did not go through Air Force clothes. The Air Force contracted with Pan American so he got celestial training. They said to him, “You SOB, you're going to combat this time.” So he got on our crew, and he went with us to Italy. The pilot was a Texan, and they love Jewish people, and Levine got in the Officers' Club and started a row, “How come all navigators weren't at least first lieutenants. The pilot went to the group operation's officer and said, “Get

that SOB off the crew. I can't stand him on the ground; I can't stand him [microphone bumped], and the group operations officer said, "Keep him. They give him a sheet of paper and a ruler, and he'll take you from here to Bucharest [Romania] and come right in on the button." In fact, when we made the hop from Natal to—What the hell was it? The city on the west coast of Africa.

McIntosh: Dakar [Senegal]?

Ryan: Dakar. We could take the beam 600 miles out, and then it faded, and then we'd pick up the beam from Dakar. And Levine said to Ben, he said, "You can follow the radio instruments, you know. I'm going to shoot celestial. Let me do it. If I get way off course, way off the beam, okay." He took us right straight across. We came out ten miles north of Dakar, and then we flew up from there to Marrakech up in the desert. But [laughs]—when he was in the—at Palm Beach we had to go in the hospital and let his eardrum heal.

McIntosh: Well, they kept him with your plane.

Ryan: The whole crew, we couldn't go anywhere. And here's the field, and here's a road, and Levine's in the hospital. So at night we'd watch the beacon come around. We went under the fence. We'd run to about thirty yards of tumba trees 'cause it was a golf course and then watch for the beacon and run again, and we'd go out and go in. And we went out and in five days and six nights.

McIntosh: This is before you went over?

Ryan: This is POE [Port of Embarkation]. We're not allowed off the base. So we came back on that final night at about eleven o'clock, just got in bed, and a guy came through with a flashlight, "Hill's crew, get up you're takin' off for Puerto Rico." Well, we went down to the flight line, and Hill had been with us as a pilot. So he talked like hell, and he said, "Look, I've been in the Officers' Club for five hours. I can't fly to Puerto Rico tonight." So they said, "Okay, you got till nine o'clock tomorrow morning to clear the field." What happened, Levine got into a fight with a nurse in the hospital, and she says, "I outrank you." And he says, "The hell you do." They were both second lieutenants and she outranked him on time so he got thrown out of the hospital, and then [laughs] we started our trip overseas.

McIntosh: With him?

Ryan: Yeah, we took him along, but he was not with us the day that we got knocked down.

McIntosh: Well, don't get too far ahead of your story.

Ryan: [laughs] Okay.

McIntosh: You flew into Morocco?

Ryan: Yeah, we flew up to Marrakech in the desert, up to Tunis, and then across the Mediterranean to the 15th Air Force in southern Italy and they picked up our bomb group designation of where we were going to be. Stayed there overnight, and a pilot came down, and he guided us the last 150 miles to the bomb group.

McIntosh: Where was that?

Ryan: In Italy, Cerignola [Airfield, part of the Foggia Airfield Complex].

McIntosh: That was your base?

Ryan: That was the base. Yeah, that's—

McIntosh: That was the 15th Air Force Base.

Ryan: That's where most of the B-24s ["Liberator," heavy bomber] in Italy were located. The B-17s [heavy bomber] were north of us.

McIntosh: Now, before you get involved in the next step, tell me about your crew. How did you get along with them?

Ryan: Very good.

McIntosh: Nice boys?

Ryan: We had a helluva crew, we had a helluva crew.

McIntosh: You got along with Levine, okay?

Ryan: Ah [laughs] didn't see him. In fact the pilot used to come down to our tent, you know, which was—they had officers and enlisted men and he'd come down at about six o'clock, and we'd think, "What's the hell's up?" We'd ask him, "What's goin' on? What the hell you doin' down here?"

McIntosh: With the grunts.

Ryan: [laughs] He'd says, "Oh, I just want to see how you guys are doin'," and then we'd talk.

McIntosh: He's a good skipper.

Ryan: Yeah, and finally—

McIntosh: His name was what?

Ryan: Ben Hill.

McIntosh: Where was he from?

Ryan: Texas. Finally, we were goin'—we were flyin'. We were in this one squadron. Takes us two squadrons: one here, one here, one here, one here, and the runway in the middle. We were in this squadron—Levine shot his mouth off about rank. We got railroaded diagonally across the field within the same bomb group. But that day that bomb group put up six B-24s, and five of 'em got knocked down off of Vienna [Austria]. So we got transferred across the field, and we got a brand new plane. They had taken ours away, but when we joined the bomb group they take it away, and they give it to the older guys. We were flying old battered things that could hardly hold up. So we really start flyin', and when we went north of the 39th meridian we got credit for a double. We were going so good we got credit for seven missions in four days. We had three doubles.

McIntosh: How do you do that?

Ryan: Well, if you draw a big arc from Italy north of this point, Vienna, Bucharest, that was north of the 39th meridian, and you got credit for two. We had to put fifty—

McIntosh: They asked for fifty missions before they'd send you home?

Ryan: That's right.

McIntosh: Fifty?

Ryan: Fifty. So we were at that point ten, and we got credit for seven in four days. So Ben is comin' down and get talkin', and we said, "Okay the way things are goin' by Thanksgiving we'll have our twenty-five in and then you go to Capri [Island in the Bay of Naples, Italy for "flak leave" [slang for R&R, rest and recreation leave] for a week. So we figured by Christmas we'd be home. Well, two missions more—a week to the day that I got knocked down we went up to west of Marseille. This is about the fourteenth of—the second week in July.

McIntosh: 1944.

Ryan: And we're after a marshalling yard, west of Marseilles about forty miles, and we bombed it, and then a piece of flak, a little tiny fragment came in on the top of the wing—one, two, three, four that's the position of the engines. The third one, the first one to the right of the fuselage, that controls hydraulic pressure, and that little fragment of flak—it was about like that and J- shaped, came down through the top skin and cut four lines. That was all the hydraulic pressure we had to lower the flaps. We got back to the base, and we had to circle, and the co-pilot is trying to manually pump the flaps down. He could reach up, but he couldn't push down. I saw what was going on, and just like that, we were standing there right behind the pilot—co-pilot. I says, "Come on, get over." I laid down on the floor, and he would pull it up, and I would pull it down, and we manually pumped the flaps down and landed the plane and went clear to the end of the runway before it stopped. He had one application to brake pressure, and by the next morning the crew chief on the ground had that repaired. In fact, he gave me that piece of flak. It fell on the inside of the skin of the wing. In that week we hit that marshalling yard. We went back up in the same area a week later. And, ah—what in the hell was I gonna say? Oh, the pilot came down, and we got talkin' about how we were goin' on missions. And like I told ya we figured by Thanksgiving we'd half a tour in, and by Christmas we'd be back in the States. These two guys got, I mean, talkin' and Hill said, "I gotta be home this fall," and Harlan says, "Me too." "Well why?" Well, then it comes out both men's wives are pregnant. Okay, but we're flyin' then. The crew is united. You know, I mean, we have melded into a crew.

McIntosh: What was your duty?

Ryan: I was nose gunner and armor. I flew the nose on a B-24. Okay, we went up, we got hit, we went back a week later, and we went in between Toulon [southern France] and Marseilles [France], and we went up just south of Evian [France] which is north of Marseilles to hit a railroad bridge. And we hit it, and then we rallied to the left to go back to the Mediterranean, beautiful day, it was sunny, bright—it was a "milk run," easy, and the lead navigator took us right over that marshalling yard that we hit a week before. And I saw three bursts, bursts of flak ahead of the plane, and all of a sudden "BOOM," my turret was plastic from here up. And a piece of flak hit that plexiglas and cracked it, and the whole thing flew off, but I was just sitting there—

McIntosh: Out in the air.

Ryan: Out in the air and immediately we got hit in the left inboard engine, between the engine and the fuselage, and I heard the engineer cry out,

“Ay, ay, ay,” and the pilot called back on intercom, you know, “Pilot to engineer,” and there was no answer. Right after that we got hit on the right inboard engine. So we now we got two engines, and we’re dropping back from the formation, and we went back out over the Mediterranean, and then we turned around, and we’re going to follow the coast of Spain because the manifold pressure is building up. I could see Marseilles; we were probably ten miles off the coast. When we got west of Marseilles the pilot says, “Okay, as soon as we get over land we bail out. This thing is gonna blow up”. So most of us went out through the camera hatch back in the waist. Engineer’s in his turret, dead. It leaves the pilot and copilot in the plane. The co-pilot we picked up on Mitchel Field because the original one that went through training with us said, “I gotta have my tonsils out. When I fly on oxygen I can’t breathe.” He married a beautiful babe in Arkansas in final cadet training. That’s why—so they pulled him off, and they gave us Jimmy. So he really didn’t have a hell of a lot of time on a B-24, but we got him. Now comes the final day. The plane is on automatic pilot, slowly coming down, flat and level. The pilot says, “Okay, Jim, go!” We crawled through the engineer’s hatch, down over the wing. Jim says, “The hell with you. I’m not bailin’ out.” The pilot says, “That’s an order.” Jim says, “If you want to bail out, you bail out. I’m gonna ride it down.” Which is shit, I mean, we had films before we left the States if we ditched in the ocean, if you come down nose down you go straight in the water. If you come down tail, and it hits it flips it, and you go down. So it’s gotta be set down perfectly level. So the pilot bails out, Jim goes back and takes it off automatic copilot, picks out a pasture and belly lands it. I got away for a day when I shot down.

McIntosh: You were in France?

Ryan: In France, southern France, I got away for a day. Jim got pinned in the wreckage, and the French men tore way the side of the ship and pulled him out, and the Germans came over the hill, and he went to Germany with the rest of us. He was so damn lucky he wasn’t killed. Take that damn plane with only two engines and belly land it in a pasture, you know, even if a pasture is flat—

McIntosh: Right. It’s difficult.

Ryan: It’s difficult.

McIntosh: So how was your parachute ride? [John laughs]. You’d never done that before.

Ryan: Better turn that off because when I—we used to stand in the morning and tighten up the leg straps on our harness, you know, so you could hardly stand up, and if they were too tight we’d loosen ‘em, did that all the time. I

tightened, and I loosened. I bailed out head first, made a somersault. Your body follows the head. So I'm comin' down like this, and I pull the rip cord, and it goes "Shhht." That's the pilot's chute. Pull on the rest of that thing loose, and it opened, and I got a testicle under the strap on my right leg—

McIntosh: Oh my!

Ryan: —And boy, am I doin' a dance. Then I'm drifting, oscillating, and I pulled the shroud line so I come straight. By then I could hear rifle fire, and I figured they're shootin' at us from the ground. So I let her go, and I kept looking at the ground. I figured I have a long ways to go, and all of a sudden, "Boom." Here is the ocean; here is a strip of land maybe fifty yards wide and a backwater. The tail gunner, first out, he came between the shore and the edge of that minefields. For fifty yards ahead they had mines that were like quart cola bottles sittin' on two by two pegs above ground. There's a tripwire about eighteen inches and then a long main wire. I came down on the north side of that damn minefields. I didn't know it till I'd been there about twenty minutes. Then all of a sudden I saw these wires. I just came down to the ground. I landed on hardpan [hard soil impervious to water] because of this backwater. I collapsed my chute and I ran for this big clump of grass, you know, like sage grass. I buried my chute. Then I noticed I was in a damn minefield, and I watched 'em take three guys in. I was gonna be a hero; I wasn't gonna give up. Well, then, later that night I crawled on the edge of that minefield so that I could be on the east side of that backwater, and I took off, and I started walkin' in the sand dunes about so high. Finally, I lay down to sleep. I woke up the next morning, and I'm on the edge of the backwater, and I watched two men German patrols walkin' along the damn shoreline. Bullshittin' like a bunch of GIs, you know. I thought, "Holy cripes." We had orders. "Don't try to contact the underground till you're fifty miles inland." Hell [laughs], I'm a half mile.

McIntosh: One inch.

Ryan: So about 2:30 I said you better get some rest, kind of catnap. I had these two sand dunes, and I was watchin' these two man patrol, and I was just kinda dozing and I heard behind me "Achtung". I just rolled over like this, and here is a guy with a Wermacht [the unified Nazi armed forces] German Army captain, stripped to the waist, tanned Wermacht pants. He kept the rifle on me. I was told to get up, but I had the surprise of my life. He said to me "Americanski?" I says, "Yeah." "German?" No, "nyea, nyea, nyea, nyea [nyea: informal Russian for "no"—Mr. Ryan pronounces it "nay."]. "Petersburg, Saint Petersburg?" "Nyea, nyea, nyea." I finally figured it out. He's a Russian kid about sixteen years old captured around Leningrad by the Germans, a whole damn company down there and forced

into the German Army. I've often wondered what the hell happened, but anyhow he took me right back to where I came down, and right in the middle of that minefield was their command post, and we went on a path. The German sergeant gave that Russian a quart of cognac and three packs of cigarettes for trackin' me down, capturing me. So they made the telephone calls. They asked me about my parachute, and I pointed, and [laughs] they weren't about to go out and dig around to get it, you know, and walked up a ways, maybe a half mile, and they came

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

with a donkey cart, a two wheel cart, and I rode in that for an hour. Got up to an intersection. It must have been the command post for that area, beach zone defense. They took me into a room, and here's all these Germans, and they're tryin' to talk to me, and I'm listening and tryin' to answer. Finally, they threw a mattress in the corner which was a burlap bag with wood shavings about that thick, and they said, "That's where you're gonna sleep. Well, I was tired, and I laid down, and all the guys cleared out of that room. And it quieted down, and all of a sudden I heard the door open for another 150th time, and I heard very precise English, "Get up," England, Eton [College, an English boys boarding school], you know, "English" English. I turned, I looked up, and it was two German officers. This is contrary to every damn thing that the Army said, they said. They said, "You don't talk." The officer—it was like a mess hall for these guys, and he said, "Sit down. "And he sat on this side, and he said, "Empty your pockets". Well, my mother had given me a *New Testament*, you know, about this high and about so wide with a piece of metal on it. I carried it in my coverall. I put my Zippo lighter down. I took my escape kit out of a pocket, and I put that down. I didn't even—because the night before when I was—I didn't open the escape kit to get the compass. I kept lookin' at the North Star pointing to the Big Dipper. So I put it on the table, and one officer, he was the one who did all the talking. Now you're going to think, "Well, you're a dumb shit," pardon me, and I was dry. I had laid out all day in that hot sun. He said, "Would you like a glass of wine?" I said, "All right." So, there's only these two officers and me and the sergeant sittin' by the door, and he spoke in German to the sergeant, and out he goes. And in five minutes he comes back with a quart of orange brandy and three glasses, and [laughs] then he goes and sits by the door. We sat there for about an hour and drank that damn brandy. I didn't get drunk, and I was wondered what the hell's comin' off. Is this an interrogation, you know? He looked at that *New Testament*. He said, "I used to read this about thirty years ago when I was in school in England, but I haven't had any time since then." And eventually he got around, and he said, "What do you think of the War?" Number one, I used to sit and listen in '38 and '39 on the radio news broadcasts with my dad in the evening, the blitzin' in London. I used to go to the orderly room [administrative office of a small

military unit] in Italy at six o'clock and listen to BBC. I just wanted to know. So this guy says, "Well, what do you think of the war?" No, first he says, "Why do you bomb our hospitals?" I said, "I never had an order for a combat mission on a hospital." I said if I was given an order like that I would refuse to fly." I don't know why I said it, but I said it. I think I wanted to impress with him—I said, "All my targets have been military not hospitals." He got off that. Then he said, "What do you think of the war?" Well, this is where listening to the news, you know, came in. Now, this is the 17th of July of 1944. D-Day is six weeks before that, roughly. We were down in South America when D-Day happened. So I said "Well, Captain," I said, "We are just—we're breaking out of Normandy. They're just startin', and they got a helluva battle at Cannes. We've just taken Rome." I said, "I could see St. Peter's [Basilica in Vatican City] from my nose turret as we came up across Italy. We had just taken Rome. The Russians have started their summer offensive up in Western Russia/ Eastern Poland." He said, "Well so what?" I don't know how or where all this information came playing back, and I said to him sincerely, I said, "There's gonna be some big battles coming up. If you win the war's gonna be shorter. I said, "We're comin' out of France, the Russians are comin', we're comin' up Italy." He just said, "Uh-huh." So tell me, Roosevelt stands with one foot on Hitler's body and shakes hands with Stalin. Then what?" That smartass Bob Ayre[??] says, "Hell, Captain, that's when we quit to go home." So help me that's what I said. That was the end of it, but then we talked generally about the war, you know. I gave away no military secrets. We're talkin' about the battles. The three of us drank that bottle of peach [inaudible] brandy. I wasn't drunk. He told me, "Tomorrow a truck will come down. You'll have to pick up all the parachutes, put 'em in it, and you will join your crew. They're being held, and you'll be going into Germany. For you the war is over." And the next morning a truck came down around seven, and I picked up all the parachutes and harnesses, put 'em on this truck, and rode up, stopped at another command post, had lunch. At about four o'clock in the afternoon got south of Avignon on the edge of the town, and it was an old French ag[riculture] college. They had made—they had a square—they had about twenty solitary confinement cells, like concrete blocks with iron doors. So I got there, oh, about five o'clock in the afternoon, and I was counting chutes of a plane that got knocked down as we were comin' up almost on the bomb run. In fact, the pilot said, "Shut up. We're on the IP [initial point] now." I counted five chutes or something. So when I got to this facility I said to the Germans, "Comrade?" "Ya, ya," and he took and opened up a cell door, and it was a guy off the other crew. I said, "Nix, nix." So then he knew I was off the other crew. So, okay, he locked [laughs] him and opened another door, and it was my waist gunner. Lonny said, "Jeez, we thought you killed yourself, Bob, wandering around that minefield." I said, "No, no I'm all right." So then, okay, then they locked it up, and about 8:30 they opened it up, both crews came in the courtyard. An officer said, "Tomorrow

morning at seven o'clock you leave for Germany." And that's what happened.

McIntosh: You have all the crew [inaudible]?

Ryan: We had all the crew that was left and the other crew.

McIntosh: You only lost the one that was shot in the plane. Everybody else made it down?

Ryan: That's right. In fact, how funny history is. Later I got out of prison camp I talked to the old radio op, and he had talked to the copilot. And the copilot said he met a guy in prison camp, an officer's camp in Luft I Barth, Germany]. They established that, yeah, Jim is off this crew. The guy says, "Look, you lost a guy by the name of Harless." "Yeah." "Well, the Germans buried him. They put a wooden cross and nailed his dog tag to it". The Germans buried him down there. So when Jimmy got out of the prison camp and went through [Camp] "Lucky Strike" [one of the nine Army staging and repatriation camps at Le Havre, France—nicknamed "Cigarette camps"], which was the Recovered Allied Military Personnel [RAMP], up around Le Havre. All ex-POWs funneled through that. He told 'em, he made a report, and he said, "This is where you will find Harless' body," and I've have read since then his wife had his body brought back, yeah.

McIntosh: So now we're into a new life.

Ryan: [laughs] We're goin' up the Rhone Valley.

McIntosh: In trucks?

Ryan: No, we went to Avignon. You got Marseilles, Avignon, and way up here is Dijon [all in France]. That's the seat of an ancient trade route from Czechoslovakia way back to medieval times. We came up, and as we got outside of Dijon we could see the effects of the bombing. Then tracks were built—all blown up, but the Germans put ties and rails together in thirty foot sections, and here was apartment buildings four stories high, forty yards away from the railroad tracks. And here on the edge of the roof of the damn apartment building is a section of track, and they only had one line goin' in and one comin' out from that depot in Dijon. The whole damn roundhouse was caught loaded with locomotives. It was just a twisted metal and bricks. We kind of looked at each other, you know, because we're in compartments, European style. Then the train went east, and when we got to Mulhouse the German said, "Now you're in Germany." And then we went up to Frankfurt am Main, and it's like going into the main depot in Chicago and then takin' an interurban [train] out to

the suburbs because we went through interrogation there at Frankfurt. You go into solitary confinement. They take you out and question you. Boy, I'll tell you, they knew more about everybody. We had a briefing before we went overseas. Now they said, "Watch for this if you get knocked down. They'll call you out for questioning. They haven't been feedin' you very damn much, and you're hungry, and if you walk in and here is this "Kraut" [disparaging slang for a German person] sitting with a saucer full of grapes, and very deliberately he eats one at a time and starts askin' you questions, and he's eatin' those grapes and relishing 'em," you know.

McIntosh: That's what they told you would happen.

Ryan: And it happened to me. I thought "You [laughs] son of a bitch."

McIntosh: It's just exactly what they—

Ryan: Exactly [laughs]. But they knew. Our colonel of our bomb group had left two weeks before that to go back to the States and form another group. He said, "What's your bomb group?" I said, "I don't have to tell you that, name, rank, serial number." He said, "Don't give me that shit." Pardon me.

McIntosh: Just in good English.

Ryan: In good English. He says, "I can see on the markin' on your tail that you're all the 456th Bomb Group." He say, "Your Colonel Steed left two weeks to go back to the States to form a new bomb group and bring 'em over." That's exactly what he did, what happened. Now, they knew so much it was fantastic.

McIntosh: What did they really want from you?

Ryan: They didn't want so much from me. There was some new radar equipment. They really went over the pilot and the radio op tryin' to find out if we had that new equipment and both guys says, "I don't know what the hell you are talkin' about." Because Jimmy—belly landed that plane in a pasture, you know. It didn't burn.

McIntosh: So they could examine it all day.

Ryan: Sure. In fact, I'll tell you something. I am one of two National Service Officers for the Ex-POWs for the State of Wisconsin. I am right now. I brought our National Officer in. As such, if I'm workin' on a case—I was nominated—I met our National Service Officer in Missouri. The VA at that time says, "We have Operation Outreach. We're gonna talk to every ex-POW in the state." And here's [inaudible], and here's all the rating

department from the VA in St. Louis. Took 'em two years. And I'm visiting a friend of mine. We were in the same room in Luft IV [Tychowo, Poland].

McIntosh: That was the name of the prison camp?

Ryan: That's right. [Approx. 20 sec. pause in recording]. Okay. What the hell? Oh, so this guy calls me from Park Falls [WI]. He's got 90% [military disability rating], and he wants to apply for unemployability. Do you know about that? If you have over 60%, and you cannot work anymore—

McIntosh: Disability?

Ryan: Disability, VA Disabilities, they can grant you unemployability which would take you to 100%. Now 60%, is dollar-wise is about \$725 a month, a 100% for unemployability is about \$1950 a month. So this guy is going in—he's been workin' with the VA boards up in the northwestern part of the state. The guy says, "Bob, I don't know what the hell to expect or—how do I? I got some problems." I said, "Okay let's talk about it," and I was gonna go up next Tuesday and talk to him, but he's now being called down to Tomah for that examination. And they'll have a psychiatrist down there talk to him. He said, "I'm sacred of it." I said, "What the hell's it—why?" He said, "What the hell's he's gonna ask me?" I don't know what he's gonna ask me." I said, "Tell him what the hell you know. You can't work anymore. How old are ya?" "Well, I'll be seventy-six." I said, "What's your physical infirmities?" "Well, I got a bad back. My shoulder's all shot to hell." "Well, then you can't work, and this is why they have unemployability." I said, "Shit, you can't even cut pulp anymore." [laughs] He had his own company, a fishing tackle.

McIntosh: Let's get back to the prison camp.

Ryan: Okay.

McIntosh: Tell me about life in the prison camp, that's what I want to know.

Ryan: Okay. From Frankfurt we went to Wetzlar. From Wetzlar they separated us; officers go to either Luft 1 or Luft III. Luft 1 is on the Danish border. Luft III is down in Sagan [now known as Zagan; part of Poland after WW II] in the Silesian part of Germany, Eastern Germany. Air Force men went to non-commissioned officer's camp. We went to Stalag Luft IV. They had two, practically three compounds, lagers. Lager is a compound. They had three about built. They were workin' on the fourth one. Have you ever seen a map or a picture of what a prison camp looks like?

McIntosh: I saw one, but I don't remember exact details.

Ryan: All right.

McIntosh: Well, we can't put that on tape. We can't put that on tape so we'll save that.

Ryan: That's what the hell it looked like, and I was in—when we got up there we're jumpin'. We're gonna have to go real fast because we're not gonna get all this in an hour's time. You have A, B, C, and D compound. C, they were building. We went into A, and we slept in a tent on the ground for the first four months. Then they finished C, and we moved over to that compound. From—when we got off the train at Keipheide [railroad station] which is a little town. It's about two and half, three kilometers from the camp. We got there in the evening. We had to stay in the train because at six o'clock the guards could come down and get us. We got 200. The next morning the guard on the train came through and says, "When that captain says do something, move". He was in charge of security for the camp, and a homosexual son of a bitch. We got out, and filed in ranks of three. We had a little suitcase like Bakelite like as a kid used to send the laundry home in. We got the Red Cross [POW parcel] when we got out of interrogation at Frankfurt. It's got underwear, shirts, carton of cigarettes, a carton of gum, etc.

McIntosh: They gave that to you?

Ryan: That's right, to get you started. We started out, we were walking twenty steps, and we ran twenty steps all the way to that prison camp. We got there, and out here is the number four lager [camp] and they said, "Okay, just plop on the grass. We'll take you in." We went through a strip search. So the tail gunner, Jack Bergman, and I, and Al Blondick the ball gunner are on the grass, and Al looks like he's gonna pass out. We said, "Al, what the hell happened to you?" He said, "Well, I was in back of the line, way back. I fell in a ditch. The guards beat me with their gunstocks and worked me over with their bayonets." We went in to the exam. You had to strip. They had a table, a bench here. If you went to sit down the big stupe [slang for a stupid person] of damn German guards would come down and hit ya in the fuckin' face. Then the guy behind the table says, "You're not allowed to sit down." "Well, what the hell is this bench here? How we gonna get our shoes off?" "Well, you have to get 'em off." So Jack and I undressed. Al—and his back was like a hamburger. We went out from that and into A Compound and stepped over the warning wire, and a Dr. McGill, captured in North Africa, stepped up, threw him over his shoulder like a sack of spuds [potatoes]. We had a little hospital in two rooms in one barracks. There was ten rooms in our barracks. We visited Al. We were in the same compound. He had eighty-nine bayonet cuts to his back.

He didn't feel like eating so they would put his food at the head of his bunk. The Germans came through, and they said we gotta confiscate this. This guy is planning an escape. McGill says, "In my country they don't call that confiscation; they call it stealing." They called him in front of the commandant and says, "You don't talk to any German like that, or we'll forbid you to practice." He died a few years ago, but they eventually got C Compound and all of us in the tent, twenty guys we got in a room together in C Compound. They were from all over the country. Jim was from Joplin, Missouri. Huey was from Louisiana. I was from Wisconsin. Jack, my tail gunner, was from Buffalo, New York, you know [laughs]. We were a United States of America practically. You know, like the pilot was from Texas, and the co-pilot, of course they're up in the officers' camp. They were from New Jersey. Hell, it was the way they made crews up. So we were there till the 6th of February when we evacuated that camp. Now the first ones in that camp came from Heydekrug which is up in Lithuania. Have you heard about that?

McIntosh: No.

Ryan: You can't have prisoners within thirty miles of hostilities, Geneva Convention. So the Russians are coming through Lithuania. So they took these guys down to Riga or Memel and put 'em on barges and brought them down across the Baltic [Sea] to Swinemude where the Oder [River] empties in and then by train. When they got up to Keipheide, the depot, that was a month before I got there. They handcuffed my peers, and they were ran up and bayoneted. Then we followed, and a couple of other groups got bayoneted. And then we really got the Swiss, the protecting powers that came in once a month. And they raised hell with the Germans. It was a big game that was going on. Things got so bad at Heydekrug that prisoners were trading with the guards, de-rationed chocolate bars. All the Red Cross food parcels were apples and onions. Well, then now you got the damn guard blackmailed. Now you start, "I want a radio too. I want this, I want that. I want a camera, I want film. "Oh no, let's go see the commandant." It got so bad up there at Luft VI they called the Gestapo in, and one of the guards hung himself because one of two things is gonna happen. He's gonna be shot or he is goes to the Russian front. So we elected in each barracks a barracks captain, first a room captain, then a barracks captain, and than ten barracks in the compound.

McIntosh: How many men in the barracks?

Ryan: Ah, 250.

McIntosh: To a barracks?

Ryan: To a barracks, and then the whole camp elected our “man of confidence” [a role in POW camps]. This is the guy that represents us to the Germans. Rank doesn’t make a damn bit of difference. In fact when we got out of interrogation in Frankfurt we went up to Wetzlar about forty miles away, where the separation took place. They wanted to get enlisted men to go up there as aides to the officers. Well, we found out what the hell the aides had to do in a prison camp. They had to polish those fuckin’ officer’s shoes and do his dishes, and make his bed. And we said—we got together [laughs] and talked. We said, “Look those bastards are in the same boat we’re on, and we’re gonna go up there and be a maid on top of it? No way!” So none of us went up there. So then we had the vote, and an Englishman by the name of Dixie [James] Deans [Royal Air Force bomber pilot who became a famous POW camp leader] had trained a guy by the name of Paulus, an American. He’s in retirement in Florida right now, as our man of confidence to the Germans. He represented the whole camp, and Paulus was a staffer tech sergeant. The German colonel commandant said, “If I find any radios in this camp I’ll kill every man connected and twenty hostages.” We had two radios. I had BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] read to me six days a week in my room, always by the same guy. We used to put on a skit.

McIntosh: Where’d you get the radio?

Ryan: Don’t ask me [laughs] because I don’t know. I can tell you—

McIntosh: But not from the guards?

Ryan: See if find a paperback called—what the hell’s the name of it? Ah, *Escape Factory*. It was on the edge of Washington. They would take a playing card and slice it this way and put a silk map in and ship it through to the prison camp.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

And in this book the escape they mention that they took a revolver apart and shipped it through the food parcels and clothing parcels from next of kin, and it got through.

McIntosh: So it was sent to you. You didn’t get it from a guard.

Ryan: No, no, but we had ‘em all blackmailed. We got everything else that we wanted. Chocolate for onions, for apples and then now you got them blackmailed, and now you can start makin’ demands. In fact, the one guy in New Jersey had ‘em bring a camera in. Then take the film out and get it developed and bring it back [laughs]. He’s written several books about this whole damn thing, [Joseph] O’Donnell [laughs].

McIntosh: He was in your crew, or he was just or a friend?

Ryan: He was a member of this camp. In fact, when we get together at [American Prisoners of War] National Convention, a guy in Indianapolis by the name of Len Rose; he was an analyst with Ford Motor Company. He was in B Lager, and before we left the camp—there's ten crews in a barracks, they got the name of every guy in that room and where they came from. And they sewed all these names inside the lining of their overcoats in case the Germans had a strip search of the barracks, which they used to do. Everybody out, and they just go through the whole damn thing. As strange as it seems in C Compound, I was in Barracks II which was the second one from the gate, and they never did it. They would come in—we would fall out for roll call in the morning and just before lockup in the evening. While we were out at roll call this special crew would come in, put a guard at one end and the other end of the barracks, and they would shake down the whole damn thing lookin' for contraband. Lookin' to see if you were takin' bed slats for a tunnel. Well, I got there about the—around the twentieth of August. Let's see—July—I was knocked down on the seventeenth of July—yeah, it was around the first of August, and right after that we weren't planning an escape. Shit, we just got—but the order came [approx. 8 sec. pause in recording]. And we packed. We'd been told about it. In fact, the best thing to make a packsack out of was an RAF shirt. It only had four buttons down, and it was big enough to be like a tent. And we rolled the shirttail up and sewed it across and sewed the sleeves to the side and put the four button front on the back, and that was our packsack. When we left the camp, when went out this gate—all right, I'll give you another figure here—you got ten barracks. You got five on a side with a common latrine. I wondered, "How big is this damn thing?" I thought about it for a long time, but here was the warning rail, and if you stepped over the warning rail the guard here or here or here or in the middle could shoot you. So I walked as close as I could to the warning rail. It was about 350 paces by 450. That was the inside dimensions of the lager of that compound. Okay. Then the—

McIntosh: So anyway they're gettin'—you're movin' your camp.

Ryan: The next day we walked out, and we walked and we slept in barns. The second night out we slept on the ground because we're gettin' near to Swinemunde, and we couldn't have any fires because of air raids at Swinemunde. We slept on the ground a half a dozen times because of that, and/or if we got in a little village—they were like America in 1900, where the guy had his barn in the backyard and he went out to work his field, same thing in Germany. So you'd have 200 men in this barn. You'd have 300 over here, you might have 500 over here, and we would walk, and sometimes we'd lay over. Maybe we'd be on the road for twelve straight days.

McIntosh: They didn't tell you where you're going?

Ryan: Shit, it got so bad we figured they didn't know where in the hell to take us. Really.

McIntosh: But you're headin' away from the Russians?

Ryan: We are headin' away from the Russians, but then, hey, the Americans are over here somewhere. In fact, we got way up. From Swinemunde we went across the top of Germany just south of the Baltic, maybe forty kilometers. And it looked just like the area up around Eagle River in Three Lakes [WI], the lakes and the birch trees and everything. I wondered what the hell it would be, what was gonna be the conditions when I got out of that camp. I knew where in the hell we were, you know. But what's gonna happen the last day I walk out of that damn mess camp? And I could see that great big German flag with the swastika, and it just billowed. Well, we left on the seventh of February, and the snow was this deep. I had three pairs of cotton socks on—four pair. I never took 'em off in three months. I never got out of my clothes for three months. My shoes I took off every night. You and I buddied up. We shared our food. Germans are supposed to give us bread, but when we get to a barn that, you know, the farmer had water tanks where he used to do the slaughtering of his hogs. So they had to cook potatoes, and we would each get several potatoes. That is what we got per day, and we're supposed to augment it with our Red Cross. Well, shit we ran out of Red Cross food supplies after a month.

McIntosh: So you lived on potatoes and water?

Ryan: And rye bread. When I walked out the main gate they had a great big packin' case like this, this high full of new GI shoes. I just had my shoes resoled and reheelled by our own shoe department in the camp, and I had 'em broke in. I was gettin' ready for this, and I as I walked by that box I reached in, and I found a pair of 9.5 D, my size, that GI shoe. And I picked 'em up, and I tied 'em to my packsack. And I carried those damn shoes for about six weeks like that. Now, you and I buddied together. So finally, in three months we got a total—they would have bread, seven guys on a loaf of bread. So you got about that much of the loaf, a kilo and a half. Get pretty hungry, I went up to this farmhouse—because we fell out, by eight o'clock in the morning we were counted, and off we went. I knocked at the door, and a German wife came, and opened it, and said, "Nix wasser, nix wasser, kaput, kaput." No hot water. They used to give us hot water to go with our soluble coffee out of our Red Cross food parcel. And she says, "Nix wasser, nix wasser," and I had my toe in the door, and I had my hand on my shoe, and I said, "Brot?" [loaf] "Nix wasser, nix wasser." "Brot? Brot? " "Nix wasser, nix wasser." "Brot?" "Ya, come, come, come." She

took me in the kitchen, and there is her husband. They were about I'd say fifty-five, and her mother who was probably seventy. Nice warm, got an old coal burning kitchen range like when you and I were kids, you know. And we haggled over that pair of shoes. They wanted to give me half a loaf of bread. I says, "Ach shit."

McIntosh: [laughs] Schiesse.

Ryan: We haggled and I settled for two and half kilo loaves of bread, and I had 'em put it in my packsack. The husband tried to untie it from my straps, and he was so excited. I looked, he had more patches on his shoes than he had original shoe, and he couldn't—and she pushed him aside, and she untied 'em, and they had like wainscoting in the kitchen, and she had pictures up around. And I says, "Kinder?" "Ya, ya". This one's in France, this one's in Bucharest [Romania], this one's in Italy, you know. She had six sons in the service. She's damn near balling. She's telling me this, and I start to get the feeling of who's the captor [McIntosh laughs], and who's the captive? Really, she was like my mother, you know, very human person. She's got six sons, and the war is goin' to hell on a one way ticket and she's worried. I start moving towards the door, and I didn't know what the hell to say. I got up to the door, and I looked at her, and I said, "Der krieg ist schiesse." Know what that is? The war is shit. She says, "Ya, ya," and I went out the door. And Jim came across the courtyard. You know, they had barns on three sides with the house across it. He came running, and he said, "Bob, where in the hell were you?" He said, "I thought you escaped. What the hell—I've been looking for you for a half an hour. Where the hell's the shoes, Bob?" I said, "Shut up. I just traded those fuckin' shoes off." He said, "What'd you get?" I said, "I got two and a half loaves of bread, and you and I are going to share it. We do that." Boy, so then later as this march developed, I traded my watch that my folks gave me for graduation from high school, Hamilton wristwatch, seventeen jewels. Jim traded his watch that his folks gave him for another couple of loaves of bread. This is how we kept going, and what we could steal, bread or potatoes, kolrabis in the barns.

McIntosh: How could you be so loose from the group?

Ryan: Everybody was doin' it. You were in this barn, but you had—you could—well, you had the body functions. At night you'd holler, "Guard, posten [post], posten," and he knew you wanted to go to the bathroom, so, "Ya, ya, come," and you go out by the pile of manure. Some guys took off. Jim wanted to escape. I said, "You're crazy."

McIntosh: No place to go.

Ryan: I said, "Look we're going west to get away from the Russians. What's between us and the Russians? The SS [elite military unit of the Nazi Party, Hitler's bodyguards, and a special police force]. They're moppin' up. You think they're going to put you back with another bunch of [inaudible] comin' through? They'll probably shoot you." I said, "We got more strength with the group."

McIntosh: [inaudible]

Ryan: Exactly. So then we got way in the hell up in north central Germany, and they put us on a train. A "40 and 8," you know, forty men and eight horses. We had eighty-two men in our boxcar for two days. We got down to around Magdeburg [Germany] on Maundy Thursday [Holy Thursday], Easter time of '45. They got like a big circus tent, big flap you know, shit, it'll hold like 400 guys. They put us in there. This is inside the barbwire, and they said, "Okay, everybody shut up. We're gonna give you a news report." We got a radio. "Now listen." So they said, "The Americans are only about forty five, fifty miles to the west of us, and the Russians are about seventy-five miles to the east of us, you know. Just sit tight." It was so inconceivable. We couldn't figure out how in the hell both armies got so close. We had been on the road for damn near three months. We couldn't believe it. We said, "Shut-up. Get the hell out of here. You don't have to come in here and give us that bullshit because we don't believe you." Our own guys—five days later the Russians came through.

McIntosh: They got to you first?

Ryan: They came through. First thing a Russian came through on a motorcycle. Then a couple of bicycles and then the main troops and they're goin' north to—they were going north because we were near Berlin, and they wanted to get in on the fighting of Berlin.

McIntosh: What about your guards when those guys showed up?

Ryan: Shit, they had disappeared a couple of days before that. We were—

McIntosh: So for two days you were totally unguarded. Am I right?

Ryan: We finally—Jim and I left the group. From Madeburg they started to hit the road again. They said if you can't make it on the road go down the street about four blocks, and there is a compound. Well, we went down there. Okay, now this is another part of this whole continuing story. This was a four story building with barbwire around it, but it was a hospital. Now, if you were French, English, American and battle wounded and so bad that you are up for repatriation you had an exam by three German doctors in your prison camp. Then they sent you to this compound, and

there you had an exam by three Swiss and three German doctors, and if you were still so bad then you were put on a hospital train for Switzerland and exchanged. And this is what this camp was, and it was like a hospital and then huts around it on the ground, about thirty huts. We got talkin' with the English there—they were both English. Some of these guys had been captured at Dunkirk [France, site of a major battle], some of 'em in North Africa, give you an idea how long they had been prisoners.

McIntosh: So you stayed there until the Russians came?

Ryan: Well, we stayed there four days, and the Russians came through.

McIntosh: Your guards you say were gone two weeks?

Ryan: The guards were gone.

McIntosh: So what'd you do about eating and all that? Just whatever you could find?

Ryan: We walked out of the camp and scrounged around town.

McIntosh: People still in town, or did they leave too?

Ryan: Ah, fifty-fifty. Right next door was a—outside of the fence was a two story brick house. When the Russians came in they checked that house. That was a German dentist. He was married and had two kids. The whole family was found in the house. They killed the two kids. He killed his wife. Then he committed suicide. The bodies were layin' there because provo [provost sergeant] says when the Russians come they're gonna kill everybody.

McIntosh: Did they? [John laughs] [inaudible] you probably wouldn't know.

Ryan: Well, they did a mixture of it. What the hell, we were—oh God—the Russians came through, and a German mole [spy] surfaced, you know what I mean?

McIntosh: Yes.

Ryan: He took a Russian officer all around that town and showed him where the Germans had supplies, material, food, war material, and they buttoned that town up. And we were staying—by then we left, and we walked about fifteen miles down. There was another POW camp. They had about 160,000 people out on [inaudible], workin' on factories, on farms because, according to the Geneva Convention, privates, PFCs [privates, first class], and corporals had to work on non-defense, non-war production. This camp, the man of confidence was an American tech sergeant. They had

people out for about fifty miles working on factories and farms. They were getting fifty Americans a week of malnutrition. And that fuckin' American tech sergeant was "like that" with the German colonel. He was turning Americans in. So help me this is the truth. He was turning Americans into that fuckin' German.

McIntosh: Did you get his hat[??] and settle his hash?

Ryan: The Russians liberated that camp, and within five minutes that son of a bitch was hung up to a telephone pole. They hung him.

McIntosh: How did the Russians know?

Ryan: The Russians didn't know; the Americans did; they took care of him.

McIntosh: Oh, they did it themselves.

Ryan: The prisoners themselves, the Americans, they hung him. That is the truth.

McIntosh: Well, that sounds logical.

Ryan: They—well, they were so mad at him. He had turned his own buddies into the Germans to curry favor. They couldn't wait for that day to come, and they hung him.

McIntosh: Did you talk to any of these Russian soldiers?

Ryan: We lived with 'em for about two or three weeks because the Germans blew all the bridges over the Elbe River. The Americans met the Russians on the Elbe. Then they pulled back to a temporary line of demarcation, about forty-five, fifty miles away; the Mulde River, and we walked it. An American lieutenant came through, and he says, "don't go straight through because the SS are holding up in that pine forest. You go around it. Stay in the open fields". So we did it.

McIntosh: So you got back to the American lines?

Ryan: We walked the first day about twelve miles, and we're in a town like Oregon [WI] used to be. There's four of us, all Americans. One guy—Jack and I slept in the same barracks down in Georgia when we were training before we went overseas. And we were wondering where in the hell to go. This town is just crawling with Russians, and this guy comes up, and he says, "Would you like a place to stay, a bed for the night?"

McIntosh: In English?

Ryan: Perfect.

McIntosh: Perfect English? Amazing.

Ryan: We talked to him, and he says “Yeah.” He says, “Okay, come follow me,” and there were five of us altogether. He put Jim and I in one building and then the other three guys about two blocks away. And that happened to be VE Night. The next morning, two incidents: where the other three guys are, there’s about fifty Russians over there, and this is why they wanted Americans in the damn building because when the Russians came looting and raping they’d say, “Oh, the Americans are here, you know.” And the Russians would say, “Well, hey, they’re takin’ care of this house.” They’d go and find themselves their own place. But this time they didn’t. There’s about forty Russians, and they had food and vodka and everything and a radio, and these guys are listening to the radio, and it’s comin’ Russian, and the Russians would drink, and the American would tune in Air Forces Radio and get the VE news, you know, and listen. And then pretty soon the Russians figured out, “Hey, that’s English, not Russian,” but they had three or four women in a couple of bedrooms. And they had a gangbang that was going on until five o’clock the next morning. Our guys said, “Shit, it went on in a steady stream of guys one after another, and about one o’clock in the morning one babe says, “That’s enough,” you know, enough is enough. One of the Russians grabbed one of those little burp guns, little Tommy guns. He went in there. There’s some screaming and hollering, and it’s German, and it’s Russian. He comes out, they start filing in. Those women were raped at least ten, fifteen times each that night. When I got back, I said America couldn’t stand a Russian occupation, really to be honest. But, hey, this is what the Germans did in Russia.

McIntosh: Right it was reprisal.

Ryan: I’ve heard one report that they made a German father sit in the corner of the bedroom while his daughter was raped—she was raped thirty-nine times in one night.

McIntosh: [inaudible]

Ryan: Yeah.

McIntosh: So then what, you flee back to the Americans?

Ryan: Okay, we got [laughs]—all right, one funny thing—all right, those three guys are there, the two of us are here, and we hear some shouting and hollering downstairs. This German housewife comes and says, “Bob, come up, come, come.” I went down, and here’s a Polish woman. To make a long story short, she worked as a domestic in this apartment building.

Now she's free, and she's going home to Poland, but she wants something upstairs. And I can't understand her. I go, "Come, come, come." We go up to the third floor and she goes right [laughs] in a closet and comes out with a vacuum cleaner [laughs]. She's going home to Poland with that damn vacuum cleaner [laughs] going with her. Honest to God [both laugh]—funny. I said, "Get the hell out of here." And the German housewife she looked at me, and there's nothing she can do. She's damn lucky she didn't get her hide taken off, you know, and the Polish woman went out the door with the damn vacuum cleaner. But then we walked about three days, and we saw signs on each—as you come close to a little village—Allied Military Government in English, German and Russian: "No German is allowed to leave his home community without a pass from the Allied Military Government." So the guy that we met that got us these rooms that I told you about, he was the asthmatic corporal in the German [inaudible] where the American and British mail went out and came back in. He was a censor there, and his home in Bremen or Hamburg, and he hadn't heard from his family in three months. So he wanted to get out of the Russian zone, and he wanted to walk back to Bremen. So we made a deal, you get us three meals and a place to stay, and we'll take you through. He had a Wehrmacht cap on, an English battle jacket, Wehrmacht pants, German Army shoes, and he posed as an American. You know, like there were thousands.

McIntosh: You could have[??] picked up [inaudible].

Ryan: Sure. So we said okay, and that's what he did. And for three nights—he got a stamp with food. Jeez, he went into one—we stopped—they went out and killed a couple of big fat chickens and made a great big pot of chicken and dumplings, and the six of us sat down and ate [laughs] the whole damn thing. But now we get up to a ridge, and down below is the Mulde River. This side is the Americans'. They pulled back. It's a temporary landing demarcation. This side is Russian, and there's a Russian guard down there. We went down, and we said to the Russian, "Amerikanski?" "Ya, ya, ya. America, America, America," you know, "Can we go over there?" He says, "Ya, you're 'sposed to—all traffic is 'sposed to go from nine o'clock in the morning till eleven." This is about 1:30 in the afternoon. So we went across the bridge, and across—when we were up on the hill lookin' down, we could see the Russian guard down there. We can see the American flag flyin' in the breeze. Buy, tell me about the American flag. So—and this was a quartermaster outfit. Their headquarters was in Frankfurt. They were a laundry outfit. So we went over, and there in this factory, a guy says, "Upstairs on the second floor, that's where the office is." So we went up there, we got this [laughs] damn "Kraut" along with us, and we said to the lieutenant behind the desk, "We want to report in, lieutenant". He said, "Who in the hell are you?" "Well, we're Air Force men, 8th, 15th, 12th Air Force, just comin'

out of the Eastern Zone." He says, "You hungry?" We says, "Yeah." He said, "Go down

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

and get some—we got a mess hall, and then come on back up here".

McIntosh: You still have the German with you?

Ryan: So we went down and went to the mess hall, and we got this fuckin' [laughs] "Kraut" with us, and so we're talkin' [both laugh]. This is near Halle in central Germany, and we said to him, "Look, you will never make it walkin' from here to Hamburg.

McIntosh: Did he speak good English?

Ryan: Oh yeah. He understood. We said, "Look, at least let us turn you into the Americans, and with your asthmatic condition you won't be turned over to the Russians." Well, we talked about that for forty-five minutes, and we went back up, we finished eating, we went back up, and a lieutenant said, "How was the chow?" We said, "Boy, we each ate a loaf of white bread, just like cake." [laughs] He says "Okay, now go down and get deloused." You go through, you drop your clothes, and you go in, and when you come out of the other end they'll use a flit gun [hand-pumped insecticide sprayer] and spray you with DDT, and your clothes would all be deloused." He said, "Glad to see you back." We said, "Glad to be back, but Lieutenant, we got a prisoner to turn in."

McIntosh: Who said that?

Ryan: We did, to him. We said, "We got a prisoner to turn in [laughs]. Yeah, it gets comical. He looks up [laughs], and he says, "Well, bring the son of a bitch in." [laughs] We said, "Lieutenant, he's here". And he looks up, you know, two, three times. He's perplexed. This was so beautiful you couldn't have staged it. Finally, he says, "Well, who's the son of a bitch?" [laughs] "The guy at the end. He was an interpreter in the mail center for American and English mail goin' out and comin' in. And he got us food and whatnot for about four or five days, and he wants to get up to Hamburg and see his folks. He hasn't heard from 'em for three months". He says, " Take the son of a bitch downstairs. We've got a little one room cell, lock him up." He said, "Come on back up". [laughs] Which we did and then we went back up, and he said, "Were you guys shittin' me about that guy?" We said, "No, 'cause we were—been together for about a week now, and we talked with him. Yeah, he is an asthmatic". In fact, after I got home, about a year later I had a letter from him. You know, and then it's '46, '47, that tough year, and he's been released by the Allies, and he wants to know if I could

send him a couple of cartons of cigarettes. Well, that's a king's ransom at that time.

McIntosh: In Germany, yeah.

Ryan: And I thought, "Fuck you."

McIntosh: Oh really?

Ryan: Yes. He showed us a picture one time. We said, "Who's this?" He said, "That's my son." "Well, where's your wife?" "Well, that's a Hitler baby." You know Hitler provided girls for recreation. I thought, "You got yourself in the mess; now you get yourself out of it." I never answered his request or a damn thing. I figured we did enough to get him out of the Russian Zone. He's just damn lucky he's got his whole hide[??]. Now, that's an overview of the whole damn experience.

McIntosh: So there from—quickly you went from there to where?

Ryan: Ah, from there we got deloused, and a couple of days later they took us by Army 6x6 [medium class cargo truck]. It had been prisoners comin' in. We had a whole Army 6x6 truck. We had twenty-eight guys, and they took us up to Halle. Halle was an airfield on the central German defense. We got up there, and here's groups of men by twenty-five, twenty-six down two sides of that field. I bet you it stretched for a mile and a half, all English, been deloused, reclothed, waitin' for transportation out. I had our truck driver—drove right up to the front of the line, and the English howled like hell, "Back of the line Yank, back of the line." And we stood there and the pilot came out. This is honest-to-God the truth, the pilot came back, and he stood in the doorway of this C-46, and he said, "Who in the hell are you guys?" I mean, we still looked like a ragbag [laughs]—

McIntosh: There were how many of you?

Ryan: Twenty-six. We said, "We're 8th and 15th Air Force and some 12th Air Force guys just comin' out of the East Zone". "Oh," and then he said, "I had a friend. I'm from the 8th Air Force originally, and I had a friend that got knocked down, and nobody saw a chute come out of his plane. I think the whole damn crew perished." And he said his name, and one guy in the truck said, "Was it Lieutenant so and so?" "Yeah". "I processed the same time. He's alive, he's up at Luft I."

McIntosh: Hah! Where you were.

Ryan: He was up at Luft I which is the officer's camp on the Danish border, and I was in a non-com camp. This was the first he knew that his buddy was still

alive. And then about that time one of the guys in the truck says, "Hey, Lieutenant, when the hell do we get out of here, you know, with all these guys?" He said, "Get your ass off those trucks, and get on this plane." We had twenty-six or twenty-seven guys, and when the English saw us getting on that plane they howled, "Back of the line," you know, and all this and that, "favoritism and everything". We got on—that was about one o'clock in the afternoon, and we flew to Rheims [France], and you would think the armies went through the day before. The trucks had to snake their way down through the streets. They threw just enough bricks out to make a passageway, but we went to an Army camp and went into the mess hall. We talked to the cook, and he said, "Who in the hell are you?" "We're ex-prisoners, and I guess we go from here to Le Havre [France] to the RAMP [Recovered Allied Military Personnel] Camp." He says, "We're short-handed. Can you help us? We're feeding about eighteen hours a day. Can you help us? Just serve on the line. You can eat all you want." We said, "Sure". So pretty soon some of these English that raised hell that we [laughs] got on the plane, you know. They came through, and some of 'em were right near the front of the line and recognized us. One guy says, "Weren't you the Yanks on that truck that got out ahead of us?" We said, "Yeah and now we gotta work to feed you guys." Because they—from Halle they flew to Rheims. They processed for one day and then a C-46 to England. They were home that fast, and, hell, it was two months before I got home.

McIntosh: You were there two months and then?

Ryan: Well, I went to Le Havre, and Jack and I were together, and we got there—there's 65,000 guys ahead of us. Number one priority is sick and wounded back to the States. Number two is units going to the CBI [China-Burma-India Theater], the Orient directly. Fourth priority was to the States, furlough, and ship out to the CBI and then ex-prisoners of war. There were 65,000 ex-prisoners in this camp waitin' for a boat. Jack and I talked it over, and we could get a seven day TDY [Temporary Duty Assignment] in the U.K. So we signed up for it, and they flew us from there up to the wash[??], and then we got a plane up to Prestwick [Scotland]. We talked with the operations officer at Prestwick, and he said, "Who in the hell are you guys? Which way you going?" "Well we're ex-prisoners." "Out of where?" "Well, we're both in the 15th Air Force." We explained it to him. He said, "You want to go home?" We said, [laughs] "You're damn right." "Let me see your orders." So we showed him our orders, "7 day TDY in the U.K. and at the expiration report at Grosvenor Square in London for the first available surface transport home." He says, "Shit, I can't put you on the damn plane." He said, "Look, that plane is going down to London." He said, "Get on it, and I'll call my buddy that you're comin' through, and you see him tomorrow morning, and he'll change your orders from surface transport to flying, and then he'll fly back

up tomorrow night, and I'll put you on a plane at nine o'clock tomorrow night for the States." I looked at Jack, and I says [laughs], I says, "Jack, do you want to do it?" He said, "I don't know, Bob. We're up in Scotland now. What do you think?" I said, "Well, I don't expect to come back here for forty years. Aw hell, let's stay here." So we thanked and explained to the op officer, you know. He said, "I don't blame you a damn bit." So we took the train into Glasgow and then over to Edinburgh, spent about a week. Then we went back to that B-17 base, picked up our luggage, and went down to London. And I had about a week in London, and we got two hundred bucks at [Camp] "Lucky Strike." I'm about broke so I said to Jack, "I'm gonna turn myself in. I'm broke, I'm ready to go home." He said, "Oh, I'm gonna stay. In fact, I'm going down to the Red Cross club and wire home for money." So we parted friends. I reported in, they sent me to Southampton [England]. I was there about three—three and four weeks, and here comes an order to go back up to Scotland to catch a damn Liberty ship and supposed to leave at seven o'clock that night, and at 6:30 in the gate comes Jack from London. He said, "Shit, I thought you were back in the States?" I said, [laughs] "I'm leavin' tonight. I said, "What the hell?" He said, "Well, I wired home, they sent me money, I had a hell of a time. Now I'm ready to go home, too." It took me thirteen days from Boston. The next day they took Jack and sent him up to Plymouth, and he beat me back to the States. My folks met me at Pembine [WI] which was eighteen miles from my hometown, and my mother says, "Bob got a telegram." I said, "I got a what?" 'Cause I had a ninety day furlough. I said, "What the hell does it say?" It said, "Dear Bob, arrived home safely, family's fine. Love and Kisses, Johnny." My mother says, "Did you get mixed up with a WAC?" [both laugh] I was drivin' the damn car, and I almost went in the ditch I started laughin' so hard. I explained to 'em about my friend Jack [laughs].

McIntosh: Where is Jack now?

Ryan: Never heard from him. He lived on Long Island [NY]. I have never heard from him once we split.

McIntosh: You don't know who he's [inaudible] at?

Ryan: I don't know, and I've looked in our directory.

McIntosh: Yes. In that directory, what is that directory?

Ryan: Of all ex-POWs that belong to the organization, but hell I didn't know there was such a thing as an ex-POW organization until about 1985.

McIntosh: Is that the only organization you joined after the war?

Ryan: I joined the Legion, and I quit within a year. I didn't like the way they were going nationally. They were too damn conservative.

McIntosh: How about the VFW?

Ryan: I didn't join any, and then I had some problems on some physical exams. I had been told, hey, if you got a claim get ahold of the DAV, and I did, and I've been a member of them ever since.

McIntosh: The Disabled American Veterans?

Ryan: Yeah, and I belong to the DAV, and I was up north in my hometown, and one of my friends from Milwaukee was there, and we had breakfast, and he said, "Bob, before we finish breakfast you're gonna be a member of the VFW. I says, "You go to hell, Nelly". Well, I was a member, and I took a life membership out.

McIntosh: How nice. Tell me this: what did you do after the war for work?

Ryan: I went to school, two years to the "U" and then two years at Madison Business College, and I started workin' for Monroe Calculating down here with a guy by the name of D.J. Caswell. He's still alive. He's ninety years old. He's in the same building I'm in. About a year here and I wasn't any great success, I was learning the business, and by a fluke I pulled a transfer to Wausau, which was a sub-office of Oshkosh. Wausau was the entire Wisconsin River Valley. I had the territory myself and one service man. Mechanical calculators, adding machines, bookkeeping machines, that made [inaudible]. I put on 40-45,000 miles a year. I had a very good friend who worked for Marathon Bait[??] and Battery, and we both had a meeting in Minneapolis, and we were both active in the Jaycees. I said, "Rog, ride with me." So we went up, and comin' back we got talkin'. I knew Rog was kind of nosy about how much money I made 'cause every other year I traded in and got another new Mercury. So finally I told him. I said, "Well, I'll tell you Rog, I don't get any mileage. I don't get any expenses. I run ten counties. I put on between 44-50,000 miles a year. So out of my gross has to come my cost of doing business." I said, "Last year I made \$17,000, and I had \$3,000 car expenses and everything else". Yeah, but my friend, this was way back in the late '60s, early '70s—

McIntosh: Yeah, but you should have deducted that automobile.

Ryan: Oh, I did.

McIntosh: Oh.

Ryan: See. I did seventeen [\$17,000], and my expenses took me down to about a net of twelve [\$12,000], see, and I told Rog that. He says, "You're shittin' me, Bob." I said, "No, why?" He says, "You make more damn money than the bank president here in town."

McIntosh: I'll be damned.

Ryan: I said, "You're kidding". He says, "No." How—he knew.

McIntosh: So have you kept track with anybody that was with you in Europe?

Ryan: Yeah, that's—now that's a roster of our Badger Chapters. There are eight chapters in the state. These are the ones in the Madison unit, and it gives their name as you can see, their present address, the prison camp they were in. I gave not only this list but the other list of the state membership to Judy Alexander at the VA Hospital [Madison, WI] so she could make her mailing to members all over the state on the aneurysm test that they were running here for about three years. I got one of the first mailings on it, and I got in on it, and a year and a half later I had the operation.

McIntosh: Oh my goodness, lucky they picked it up.

Ryan: And I called my buddy up in St. Paul. He's five days younger than I am, and I told him about this test, you know. He said, "Am I glad you told me. I got my annual physical. He worked for 3M all his life, and so he asked his doctor, and his doctor said, "Well, yeah I check you for that". And Bill says, "How?" And he says, "When I give you a procto." Bill says, "You're a lyin' son of a bitch because you can't check that with a procto". And they got in a battle, and then the doctor admitted. He said, "Oh, I have to send you to a specialist." They detected it on Bill. They watched it, and about six months after I had my operation Bill had his operated on. Then he told his brother-in-law who is a mining engineer out in Utah, and he had the same surgery.

McIntosh: So this is the Wisconsin folks who were POWs, right?

Ryan: This is only Badger Chapter, our chapter around Madison. These are all ex-POWs, and this is one of eight chapters in the state.

McIntosh: Would it be possible for me to copy this list? If I can copy—to find some other guys?

Ryan: Ah, that's right. That's the reason I brought it with me.

McIntosh: Thanks, I appreciate that. All right, any last words?

Ryan: Amen [laughs].

McIntosh: Thank you so much, outstanding.

Ryan: Well, I want to say one thing. I know I talked.

McIntosh: Just what I want.

Ryan: I'm used to talking. Every word that I told you I tell you, and I'll tell you I could talk. I said to my friend, "If this guy doesn't—these people don't know the hell that's going on I'm gonna walk out. If this is just a political damn thing because—" Well, okay, I was talkin' to the guy from Park Falls [WI] that's workin' on 100% [disability rating]. He's gotta go down and appear before a shrink at Tomah which I think is a bunch of horseshit, and I told him. He said, "Bob, what am I going to run into?" So I told him. We got talkin', and this guy—like I was in C Compound, he was in B. This was just three days ago, four days ago. We're reminiscing. He says, "Bob, can I tell you a war story?" I said, "My friend you can tell me any damn thing you want." I've never met him, but I know from talkin' with him we were in the same place. He said, "Well, this you won't believe, but I'm gonna tell ya." He said, "We had a guy in my room in Luft IV in B Compound. He said, "You were in C, I was in B." He said, "First, I'll ask you this question. Do you think that any American flier can end up in prison camp without pullin' a combat mission?" I said, "What the hell are you talkin' about?" He said, "Do you believe it?" I said, "No, I don't believe it. Why?" He says, "We had a guy in my room. I don't know where they were flyin' from, if they were flyin' the northern route from Newfoundland down, but the son of a bitchin' navigator got lost, and he called to the pilot, and he says, "We got to get down below these clouds because," he says, "I'm lost, and our gas supply is gettin' way low. We're gonna run out of gas". I mean, they talked on the intercom, you know. So just then they spotted an airfield, and the pilot lands the plane, and they land there, and it's a fuckin' German airfield! [both laugh] The guy was a POW for fifteen months [both laugh]. It actually happened; the son of a bitch went through an Air Force Navigation School. I've been trying to get ahold of Bill up in St. Paul to tell him this, and I can't—they're gone for the weekend, I know. But the funny things that happened, the more preposterous the more truthful, and it happened. I got a guy in my hometown—oh, you'd love to talk to this guy.

McIntosh: Oh yeah.

Ryan: Jack Sours.

McIntosh: He's on this list?

Ryan: No, Jack was a Japanese prisoner out of the 19th Bomb Group in the Philippines, and I lost touch with Jack until about ten years ago. He married a classmate. Jack Sours, S-O-U-R-S.

McIntosh: S-O-U-R-S. Okay, where is he?

Ryan: Goodman, G-O-O-D-M-A-N, Wisconsin. It's a regular P.O. Box.

McIntosh: Well, I can call him on the phone.

Ryan: Sure. After I got re-established with Jack—and this is a long story. He was in Chicago, he was in the UP, then he was in Niagara, then he was in Goodman. Then his wife died, and she was a classmate from kindergarten. They had eight B-17s out in the Philippines. They had 'em all lined up in a row like a parade. "Father God" MacArthur [Gen. Douglas MacArthur] never said disperse 'em.

McIntosh: Even after he knew about Pearl Harbor.

Ryan: That's right. Jack went to Mechanic School at Chanute [Rantoul, Illinois]. He had one engine on a B-17. They heard about the damn Pearl Harbor. They're standing there. Jack's on the end of the row. The only thing he's got is a .45 [caliber handgun], and a Jap Zero [fighter plane] comes down strafing, and Jack pulled that .45 out, and he fired a whole clip at that Jap plane, and he says, "Honest to God, Bob, that plane went up over the trees and crashed into the jungle". He says the next morning at roll call they're all out, and the lieutenant commanding says, "Is Private Sours here?" Jack says, "I was standing way in the back, and the lieutenant says, "Is Private Sours here?" Jack says, "Here, Sir." He said, "Front and center", and Jack went up, and he says, "From now on you're Corporal Sours. You shot down the first Jap in the Philippines, and I am advancing you from PFC to corporal". And he was leaving to go to Australia, and he never made it, and Jack went into captivity. Five guys escaped into the jungle for three months, and then had to give themselves up because they were getting' malaria. Jack thought, "Well, I'm a corporal." He got out of three and a half years in Japan and found out he's still PFC [Private First Class]. Oh my God, the funny things that happened, and I talk to Jack about every two weeks.

McIntosh: Would I have to go up there, or could he come down here?

Ryan: Do you go up there?

McIntosh: No. Well, Goodman's quite a ways away, isn't it?

Ryan: Two hundred and forty miles.

McIntosh: Right. What is it near?

Ryan: It's seventy miles east of Rhineland, and it's ninety miles north of Green Bay right up near Iron Mountain, Michigan in the UP [Upper Peninsula].

McIntosh: That's a long way.

Ryan: Yeah.

McIntosh: Does he ever come down to Madison for any reason?

Ryan: I might be able to get him down here.

McIntosh: If he'd come down to see you we could get it done 'cause that's a pretty long way for me to go.

Ryan: I know it, I know it.

McIntosh: I've been up to Wausau, but that's an easy route.

Ryan: Wausau is ninety miles away. Do you go to Wausau?

McIntosh: Once I went there, but that was a bunch to go up there.

Ryan: Oh, okay.

McIntosh: If you could talk him in to come down and visit you.

Ryan: Give me some of your business cards. Do you have 'em?

McIntosh: Not [inaudible].

Ryan: No, but do you have one in your office here?

McIntosh: Oh no, I don't have an office here. My stuff's at home, but I'll give you my name and address and phone number.

Ryan: Okay.

McIntosh: That's easy [inaudible].

Ryan: That's what I want.

McIntosh: Yeah. I'll give it to you. I'll get a piece of paper.

Ryan: Let's see now, where in the hell's all my stuff? This and this?

McIntosh: See, here—my name and—

Ryan: All right.

McIntosh: Address here. I live on the west side?

Ryan: Okay. Where on the west?

McIntosh: Oh, just off of Old Sauk Road. And that cell phone is [inaudible].

Ryan: What the hell's that ring?

McIntosh: That's my grandfather's ring, It's originally a Masonic ring. You can see the old Masonic sign. And my father wasn't a Mason, but when he inherited the ring he had it modified. He didn't want to pretend to be a Mason when he wasn't so he had it modified, and then, of course, I inherited it from him. It's a gorgeous ring. My son has already discussed it with me. I said, "Listen pal, I'm still [inaudible]. Don't even think about it." [both laugh].

Ryan: You're not a Mason, either?

McIntosh: No.

Ryan: Too bad.

McIntosh: I'm nuthin' [Ryan laughs]. That's all I am. Let me copy this.

Ryan: Okay.

McIntosh: This list [inaudible].

Ryan: Yeah.

McIntosh: Sours is not on this list, but he's not in the Badger—

Ryan: No, no. I'll get that address for you though.

[End of Interview]