

Lenard Hornbeck

Interviewer: I'm with Austin Peay University and I'm here today with Mr. Lenard Hornbeck a veteran of WWII. He was a member of the 101st division and his particular outfit was the 506th and the man was a paratrooper also a prisoner of war and we're going to talk about his experiences in the war to some extent and his experiences as a POW. I would like to back up though and ask you some questions first about where you grew up and things along those lines. Where did you first of all where were you born and what year?

Mr. Hornbeck: I was born February 11, 1921.

Interviewer: 1921

Mr. Hornbeck: In Roseburg, Oregon.

Interviewer: Roseburg, Oregon were they doing the had they already done the clear cuts by then? Or were they in the process?

Mr. Hornbeck: See I left Roseburg when I was a two year old.

Interviewer: Oh okay okay

Mr. Hornbeck: I went to Concrete, Washington.

Interviewer: Concrete, Washington

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh

Interviewer: Okay what did your dad do for a living?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well he was a farmer and in Oklahoma and they decided if they could ever get to where they could sell their farm and move west without having any debts they were going to do it. So that's what they did in between my next older brother and myself they moved west. He was born around Quinton.

Interviewer: Okay so they moved prior to the depression?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Okay okay and once he got to Washington what did he start doing?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I'll back up a little ways. In the Roseburg area he got started with the bureau of public roads and they had a project in Baker Lake area and so he came up with that figuring on starting in that project from Roseburg. And the as it worked out they just barely got started on the project and they had a forest fire which canceled the project. But they were at that time started to build a dam on the Baker River. And he also was a carpenter so.

Interviewer: So he had experience building roads, dams

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh

Interviewer: Things of that nature.

Mr. Hornbeck: Of course back in those days horses were what they moved material with. It was a matter of fact my mode of my transportation was mostly on wagon and

Interviewer: Wow

Mr. Hornbeck: But it was because of the being in an isolated area there were cars considerable cars by then.

Interviewer: In Washington did he start farming again?

Mr. Hornbeck: No no he stayed with the carpenter work most of time but during the depression there wasn't all that much carpenter work wasn't that much work period.

Interviewer: What did ya'll do for recreation if there was recreation?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well we played ball and the coming from Oklahoma my dad kept a pony for my older brother and I we had to share it but. During the depression he had lots of chances to sell it but he wouldn't sell it away from us kids. We enjoyed that.

Interviewer: You were you mentioned earlier that the depression and your absolutely right didn't affect the rural areas quite to the extent that it did city dwellers. Were ya'll fairly self sufficient as far as did you grow any food at all or did you

Mr. Hornbeck: Grew most of our food.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: And we didn't have an orchard but for a short period of time right at the start of the depression we did have an orchard we rented a farm and my dad had I think three teams of horses at that time. So we had to have a farm to keep them on and we did have an orchid there but it was a rented.

Interviewer: So ya'll were tenant farmers?

Mr. Hornbeck: No no we just rented the farm then there wasn't much sharecropping like there is here. I don't know there might have been in some areas but not in our area.

Interviewer: Okay what kind of food did ya'll grow?

Mr. Hornbeck: we grew vegetables of course corn and potatoes and the main staples.

Interviewer: Did you keep any animals as well?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh the I think when I started school we were on this place it was the farm with an orchard and the following year we moved into Concrete. Which is a great big place about 700 or so population at that time matter of fact it's not that much different now.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Hornbeck: The population in the town itself is probably 800 or so. But it was well I went all through school there.

Interviewer: Did you go through high school all the way?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Okay graduated from high school?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Okay did you have any thoughts about college?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I went to college for two quarters to pick up enough math I was trying to get into the aviation cadets. And I didn't the small school didn't provide enough mathematics so in order to qualify you had to have two years of college or pass the test which is rated as being the equivalent.

Interviewer: So you wanted to fly planes?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh

Interviewer: Ultimately for the military is that what you

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh that was the idea.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: All though that period of time see I graduated from high school in 39 well the war in Europe see they had already invaded Poland by then and

Interviewer: Germany and France or France and Great Brittan had declared war and Germany invaded so yeh we were in full swing so you were already anticipating involvement?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh but the it was a sure thing that war was going to we were going to become involved they said not but they were surely preparing for it and not very fast.

Interviewer: Did you work at all while you were going to school or prior to that had you had any experience inside a field?

Mr. Hornbeck: Almost immediately after getting out of high school I got work in logging industry and coming from a small community I had three older brothers and they were all had pretty good work

record. So by the time I got up where I could go looking for a job sometimes I'd get a job they would think they were hiring the next older brother .

Interviewer: Did ya'll look very similar or just by the name?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Oh okay would you describe a typical day logging if there is a typical day?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well

Interviewer: As far as your activities kind of your job description what you would be doing.

Mr. Hornbeck: Well started out bucking logs or bucking trees into logs they had a set of fallers to cut them timber and there would be normally there would be two buckers behind each set of fallers.

Interviewer: You have to excuse my ignorance but is the buckers I'm assuming is that where you'll have one guy on each side and the giant saw?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh no we used just having a bucking saw and one man ran the there was no such thing as having on a falling saw you had two men running it. But most of the timber well I'd say the average tree was probably somewhere between 5 and 6 foot in diameter that we were cutting.

Interviewer: That sounds like really hard work.

Mr. Hornbeck: It was and you had to if you did it steady well it was no different than any other work. You worked eight hours a day.

Interviewer: Eight hours okay what was your pay?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I started out at 75 cents an hour.

Interviewer: That was above minimum wage at the time was it not?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Well above minimum wage.

Mr. Hornbeck: There was a cement plant in our town which was the other local industry you might say. As a matter of fact the cement plant that we had in Concrete was their rock supplier was such that they had a very high grade of cement that they could produce from it. And as soon as they started the Grand Coolie Dam you've heard of that haven't you? Okay the plant that we were next door to it produced a fair substantial supply of all the cement that went in there.

Interviewer: Wow did ya'll own a radio?

Mr. Hornbeck: I remember the first radio probably that our family had must have been about 29.

Interviewer: 29 okay during the depression Roosevelt of course was doing his fire side chats do you recall any of those? Did you sit down as a family and listen to those?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: You did?

Mr. Hornbeck: Avis and Andy and

Interviewer: What was your favorite program did you have one?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I imagine the Rescue music my dad was from Oklahoma and I think there was a station in Calvary, Canada I can recall he used to listen to all the time. It was you heard the name Wells?

Interviewer: That doesn't strike a cord.

Mr. Hornbeck: Well that's surprising that's way back then. I remember the see my dad's folks and my mother's folks both Homesteaded in the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma. So they were neighbors when they grew up and so I think dad went to I doubt if he got more than three or four years of school and yet his dad taught him to read a square. And you'd be surprised what a square can divulge in the way of angles he could do stuff he was kind of surprised at me when I was in high school I took algebra and geometry and all that stuff. And he I could cut rafters and everything because I could figure the angles and all of that. He as impresses he thought you had to do that off of a square.

Interviewer: When December 7, 41 and the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and of course what you had been anticipating all along and expecting and of course now we were at war of course not with Europe just yet. Do you remember your reaction to Pearl Harbor and how you felt about that?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh my older brother and I were coming back from a show

Interviewer: What were you watching?

Mr. Hornbeck: I forget what it was but we had gone as far as Bellingham which is about 15 miles from our hometown. And when we came back we were just about half way home from there when we heard the first broadcast. But at the time I was living in a logging camp and I stayed there I had see that was December I think I had to wait till the middle of January before I got I had a schedule to test time. And so I still worked in the woods then I took time off to go take the test.

Interviewer: The physical?

Mr. Hornbeck: The physical.

Interviewer: You were drafted then?

Mr. Hornbeck: No

Interviewer: Oh you enlisted?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: But I was taking the test this time for aviation cadet. And I passed the written because I had my back in college to pick up my math that I wasn't able to get in a small school. But for some reason or other well for one thing I was just a little impatient working in the woods might have contributed to it. But I had what they called Accede Heart it was enlarged but they said the only thing that was comparable was distance runners and stuff like that would develop that type of heart but then running a sweet fiddle also developed that type of heart evidently.

Interviewer: Is that right? So that excluded you from flying planes?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I don't know if that was the only factor my blood pressure was slightly elevated. But at that time they had more volunteers for aviation cadets then they had planes to fly. So rather than wait and try it again I waited until February and then I went in and enlisted as soon as I turned 21.

Interviewer: What kind of when you were accepted what kind of a well they probably didn't even use the rating the rating they used for the draft 1A things like that. So you enlisted you probably never received one.

Mr. Hornbeck: No I got my draft papers I think I was in Camp Recall I had been in

Interviewer: Just gave them right to you in boot camp huh?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh I sent back answer to them if they would get me a furlough I'd be happy to come back and register for the draft. But they didn't give me a furlough.

Interviewer: How did your parents feel about you enlisting did you discuss it with your folks first?

Mr. Hornbeck: No I didn't

Interviewer: How did that go over big?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh they knew it was inevitable a matter of fact my dad of course he was a little bit impressed. His dad was a union soldier in the Civil War.

Interviewer: Is that right? Wow so in a sense you were carrying on a tradition of sorts.

Mr. Hornbeck: Carrying on a tradition.

Interviewer: Sure and where did you did you have a steady girlfriend at the time?

Mr. Hornbeck: No not really.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: I think I was going with a girl but I didn't want any entanglements.

Interviewer: Sure what about your brothers particularly you older brothers had they enlisted as well or were they drafted?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well the two oldest brothers' one was nine years older the other was eleven years older. And they both had families that kind of put them out of that category. Plus the fact they were in industry logging was an industry that was quite important at that time so they weren't subject to call. And the next older brother was in logging also he was they kept trying to keep him deferred but he wound except it. Finally after he was waiting for his first child to be born and after that he got in the CBs.

Interviewer: Okay when you learned that you wouldn't be going to fly planes then did you volunteer for the paratroopers?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well yeh during basic well I guess I probably volunteered for that prior to basic but you had to go through basic somewhere.

Interviewer: And where'd you do the basic?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well they sent me to a communication basic training and then as soon as I qualified well they sent me then after basic training to Fort Benning, Georgia to go through jump school. The school had just been started in May of that year and I was in the 21st jump class.

Interviewer: So it was new to everybody.

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh they'd had chess platoon and I think they already had one battalion formed might have been well I'm sure they had more than that at least forming at that time.

Interviewer: Was the jump training difficult?

Mr. Hornbeck: It was riggerous.

Interviewer: Oh course you had been sawing logs for quite sometime and wood cutting with hand saws so it was probably a walk in the park in same dismay.

Mr. Hornbeck: Well yeh as far as any of the well where you used your arms and shoulders climbing ropes and all that fun stuff.

Interviewer: It wasn't too difficult for you?

Mr. Hornbeck: No

Interviewer: Did you have to over come any fear of heights?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well actually I had done high rigging in the woods I don't know if you've seen pictures of that.

Interviewer: I have indeed.

Mr. Hornbeck: Well

Interviewer: Those trees are awfully big.

Mr. Hornbeck: I had a brother that was a couple of three years older and I was in between jobs and there was a job that was open for high rigging so I got the job and then I came home that night and asked my brother how to do it.

Interviewer: Probably a wise choice if you're up that high in a tree you probably want to know what you're doing.

Mr. Hornbeck: The fellow of course that hired me as soon as I climbed up I had to hang the pass block that's the block that you use to lift the guide wires and everything up to get everything tied in place. And he knew that I didn't have any experience when I came back down he said you want to rig tomorrow? I said yeh. So that was it I was a rigger then.

Interviewer: You were inducted. You mentioned you had training in communications could you be more specific what precisely did you do?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well actually we had both radio and telephone and then in a communications company or in a headquarters company whether it was battalion or regimental in regimental they had a whole platoon which consisted of a radio section a wire section and then a message center section. The message center section took care of coding and decoding and of course the radio and wire they just provided the facilities for communication.

Interviewer: Did you volunteer for the communications or did they place you there based on your college?

Mr. Hornbeck: As I recall it really wasn't a matter of volunteering they gave aptitude tests and that's what my they said showed so I ended up in that in basic. And then I hit the parachute outfit early enough they were looking for anyone with any special training. And especially in communications so they didn't ask me where to go after I finished jump training they just kept me as an instructor for awhile there in the communications school.

Interviewer: Oh okay

Mr. Hornbeck: Then they sent me to an advanced school and then ok that was about 12 or 14 weeks then I ended up back at the school as an instructor for awhile and I put in for a transfer.

Interviewer: I was going to ask you if you enjoyed it.

Mr. Hornbeck: No

Interviewer: Doesn't sound like it. Was it the teaching part that you didn't like or was it the subject matter or both?

Mr. Hornbeck: I liked the teaching I liked the subject matter but I probably had a guilty conscious that was keeping me from being in a combat unit.

Interviewer: Duty?

Mr. Hornbeck: So I transferred out as soon as they could the strange part of it is the 506 trained the regimen and they had their basic and they had their jump training out at Dakota, Georgia. And they were known as the walkie talkie non jumpy outfit because Colonel Sink had I think all of them had a forced march from their base in Georgia or Dakota down to Fort Benning. And so they had the name of the walkie talkie non jumpy outfit. Strange part of it was that I said that I liked to transfer anywhere but to the 506 turned out that's where I got sent. After I got there I was well satisfied with the outfit a kind bunch of fellows.

Interviewer: During your basic training did they take you up in a plane and jump out or was it more jumping off of platforms and the like?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well they had the first that we did in the way of any type of a tower they had a cable that was suspended and you went from oh I'd say a 45 foot elevation down to about 15 maybe 20 feet elevation. And as I recall it must have been about 80 foot and what you do you jump out the door the planes that we were using at the time you faced left going out every door. There was a door on one side and that was it that was the only exit that they had what they call the markup tower and you jumped out and you had a parachute harness on. And this cable which was sloping toward the ground you jumped out and you were on a little pole that was attached to your parachute harness and you'd slide down this cable or roll down whichever. Then when you got just about oh three or four feet from the pit of sawdust they would were able to trip that harness you were attached on and you freefell then into the sawdust pit. And you were supposed to make a tumble as you hit the ground so you simulate landing with a parachute and of course we didn't if you stood up at that time you were in bad trouble. You'd get at least 50 push-ups it was quite a deal.

Interviewer: Your actual first jump from a plane in your training process were you very scared, anxious is there a word that can define it?

Mr. Hornbeck: I think that anybody said he wasn't scared when they jumped had to be lying but it was it was fun as soon as you got out the door and the shoot open. But most of the see at that time they didn't have any well they didn't have any time for players it was strictly training. Our first jumps our first jump I think was at 1500 feet and it might have been the second jump that was 1500 to give you time to they figured you needed the chance to open your reserve shoot if you had a malfunction. But after that I think we dropped down to about 1000 feet and then most of the jumps I made after that were 600 feet or so.

Interviewer: Did you feel prepared through all your training?

Mr. Hornbeck: I thought we did pretty well I thought the training was quite thorough I ended up in a regimental headquarters company and when I transferred in to the outfit I mentioned that I was a well I didn't train with them as a regiment initially. And most of the ratings were open in the outfit there were some cavities that had formed with the outfit but the when I transferred in then within oh I don't know just a few weeks two or three weeks they gave a test on written and oral on communications' problems

and what not then. I ended up with the they said in the second highest rating so there was a master sargent job open and there was a staff sargent job open and then there were two of the cadre that had gone through jump training before. See they one had the message center and one had the wire section and so I got the staff Sargent wire section or radio section.

Interviewer: Okay so now you kind of had the best of both worlds you showed an aptitude for and an interest in working in communications and you would be able to jump as well is that correct?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Okay were you please about that?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh actually well like I said most of the boys that were there they were from the east and the south. But I seemed to fit in very well and of course when I got the section there I was working in the woods at that time before I went in the service they used to have a saying there are three men for every job. There was one coming one going and one on the job. And it was pretty well that way because you had to earn your money or you didn't have a job.

Interviewer: Sure so you had a strong work ethic and you were used to working hard?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh it wasn't that I was any different than anyone else you just had to perform or you didn't eat.

Interviewer: Nothings so motivating like an empty stomach or something like that.

Mr. Hornbeck: That's right.

Interviewer: What kind of weapons aside from the M1 were you if any were you trained in?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well weapons we had a very limited experience with. We had to qualify on M1s and O3s but being in a communication outfit we didn't well we had to carry other equipment had to carry radios and such as that. And we most of the weapons we had were purely for self defense.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: And I when we went into France I got a Thompson sub machine gun.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh and which is for me anyhow it was affective about the distance of across the road because those are there hard to hold on to.

Interviewer: I've heard that.

Mr. Hornbeck: As a matter of fact if you just open up the clip I think there's 20 rounds to the clip. And if you starting started pointing at the ground you'd be hitting the moon by the end of the clip.

Interviewer: Wow

Mr. Hornbeck: Unless you have powerful arms I wasn't that husky.

Interviewer: As the Staff Sergeant in communications in a battle situation what was your job description?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well actually we were to establish communication between us and the division and also between us and the battalion command post.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: And of course the it went on down the line the battalions would establish communications to the companies and right on down.

Interviewer: Were you generally expecting to be or operating in front of the lines behind the lines or?

Mr. Hornbeck: Behind the lines.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: Supposable but we didn't get to function that way. There were three plane loads of us and mostly from Headquarters Company and there were some from supply that were dropped in the general area and we when we went into D-day we went in the night before of course.

Interviewer: Sure if you don't mind Mr. Hornbeck I want to ask you some questions before that.

Mr. Hornbeck: Okay

Interviewer: Because I kind of want to go up to that. I'm curious to know when you when you were on your way to England you took a boat I imagine.

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Did you was it a military vessel or was it a British commercial vessel?

Mr. Hornbeck: British commercial that we were in.

Interviewer: Do you remember the name of it?

Mr. Hornbeck: I can't remember.

Interviewer: What was the sleeping arrangements like?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I would say that in an area comparable to this room it might have been slightly bigger but we had a company of people sleeping in it.

Interviewer: A little crowded.

Mr. Hornbeck: It was hammocks and during the day we kind of got them out of the road I forget how. But as I recall we were on C deck which wasn't bad, fairly close to the middle but

Interviewer: How was the food?

Mr. Hornbeck: I thought it was loudly.

Interviewer: Was it British food?

Mr. Hornbeck: It was British.

Interviewer: Yeh lack of sugar lack of salt.

Mr. Hornbeck: It to me it was tasteless.

Interviewer: Was that the general consensus among your

Mr. Hornbeck: No it either taste bad or taste find.

Interviewer: Not a lot of um um good?

Mr. Hornbeck: No

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: But they did have a commissary.

Interviewer: You could buy some stuff.

Mr. Hornbeck: You could but stuff.

Interviewer: How concerned were you with the possibility of a submarine attack?

Mr. Hornbeck: I don't recall being all that shook up about it it was a big convoy we hit some ruff seas oh two or three days off New Finland but outside of that it was

Interviewer: Did you get sea sick?

Mr. Hornbeck: No as a matter of fact sea sickness and air sickness are quite comparable.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh

Interviewer: Did they have Dramamine or any?

Mr. Hornbeck: No

Interviewer: Okay so if you get sea sick or air sick whichever the case you there wasn't a lot of medication at the time.

Mr. Hornbeck: No the on air sickness I was one of the few that wasn't affected too much and I didn't have run around with a slop bucket. And they tried to contain it as much in buckets because it gets

pretty slick to try and jump from the plane with and there was a lot of it. And sometimes it one boy there was another Sargent and myself we didn't have an officer in our stick and we told him we'll vouch for him you don't have jump he says if you don't get me out of here Sarge he says I'm going to die.

Interviewer: He's not even worrying about jumping he just wants to live.

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh no he then after he got out of the plane and got on the ground for a few hours he did come out of it.

Interviewer: Once you arrived in England where exactly did you come in at Liverpool or?

Mr. Hornbeck: We came in at Liverpool.

Interviewer: Okay your first contact with the British civilians did you for an impression immediately was there did they

Mr. Hornbeck: Odd that you would ask that question we had to study a little booklet that they gave us when we started for England and of course what impressed us most about the booklet is English are supposed to be reserved and American troops were not to be boisterous and everything when they were around them. It as it ended up it didn't seem anywhere near as reserved as I was use to.

Interviewer: Is that right? Both the men and the women or the men or the women?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well to be truthful I didn't go out very much.

Interviewer: Okay so when the British said that the problem with the American GIs is that their over paid, over sexed, and over here probably didn't apply to you?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I don't claim any high moral standard that would be intent but no, I didn't go out much.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: And I didn't really have too much although I did go to a British outfit for two weeks. They were trying to get better relations between the troops. They send me to a British outfit for a two week period and I stayed with them and

Interviewer: How did that go?

Mr. Hornbeck: It was fun it was it was interesting. And its kind of strange here I was a I was a Staff Sargent and the unit I was with was commanded by a Major and his salary and mine were practically the same.

Interviewer: That would have been the over paid part the British were

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Wow was that a source of contention on between yourself and the British Officer?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh I'm sure it had to be. But like I said I really didn't get out and a lot of fellows when ever they could get leave they'd take it and go out.

Interviewer: I'm curious did you not go out because were of course a Sargent and trying to set an example or were you just not that interested in

Mr. Hornbeck: Well the only time I'd go out was when I could get a two or three day pass or I even stayed there long enough to get a furlough. And I went up into Scotland with another boy and that was a very pleasant experience.

Interviewer: Did your training while you were waiting for the invasion did it heighten or did it slacken up a bit compared to say boot camp or basic?

Mr. Hornbeck: Probably you'd have to say it intensified.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: The right before the invasion we oh we spent the bigger part of a week and we should have spent two or three weeks more I suppose. But they they were trying to get what they call a dress rehearsal for the invasion and we were getting some nasty weather and they finally jumped us and they told us when we left the airport we're just going to get the pilot practice flying in formation too much ground wind to jump. But first thing we knew we had a stand up and hook up order

Interviewer: Wow okay

Mr. Hornbeck: I don't know what the ratio of entry was it was pretty heavy. I ended up in the hospital.

Interviewer: That's what I was going to ask the inaccuracy of the jumps during the invasion was appalling for the 101st for the most part. But conditions were a bit different obviously taking fire and so on under normal conditions training conditions clear skies no one shooting flack at you how accurate were these drops in general?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well we hit the drops alright but see if they flew a formation that was they got three planes and then they would have the other one slightly behind the three planes and then over on this side three planes. And of course we did fly wing tip to wing tip but then they would have that would be six deep and then they usually that is about as big a drop area as they had if you flew a wider formation you would end up not everybody being where he'd hit the drop.

Interviewer: Spread out

Mr. Hornbeck: And so really what happened on this night jump it was a dress rehearsal was that obviously the each the lower the higher you were or the closest you were to the front of the formation the lower you had to jump. Because the planes that were behind couldn't be flying lower or they'd clip your shoot off.

Interviewer: That's right

Mr. Hornbeck: And so being in regimental headquarters company we were at the front of the formation and it necessitated you having a lower elevation for jumping. And it wasn't a great deal starting out at maybe 600 feet for the average you might be down to 500 but this night jump they had well the dress rehearsal I obviously was lucky by the time I got out of the plane the first thing you have to do on jumping was stabilize your shoot so you were coming straight down rather than oscillating.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: And by the time I stabilized by shoot I was looking we jumped on the slope and I was looking down hill and the way you determined your closest to the ground was I don't know if you've ever been out in meadow country or even in like the areas here. When you got to tree top level things turn darker and you knew that say that you was a t 100 foot tree level tree top level I should say you'd know that you were within about 3 to 5 seconds of hitting the ground and you'd be prepared for it. And when you lift if you grab your risers just before you hit the ground you could take a major portion of the landing shock away because you'd be lifting yourself up at the same time you were hitting the ground so you kind of offset that. And also you had hold of the risers and go into a tumble as you hit the ground and but this dress rehearsal a young pilot I ended up passing out when I jumped or when I hit the ground.

Interviewer: When you hit the ground okay. So you hit on an angle?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I it wasn't so much the angle I just wasn't ready to hit the ground. And I lost my back up and

Interviewer: And how close was this to June 6th which brought the evening of Jewish

Mr. Hornbeck: About three weeks.

Interviewer: Did you spend any time in the hospital?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh I was there for about four or five days I was afraid they were going to go in the invasion without me and I had trained with these boys all that time. So I had some big knots on the back and the big muscle right along your back bone those were all knotted up on me still yet. One of the boys see were a headquarters company so we had medics that were and there was one that was pretty good at giving massages. So he was working me over even when we were getting ready to go into the invasion. I ended up being in reasonable shape.

Interviewer: The night of June 5th when you of course the weather hit horrible and the invasion was planned of course the day earlier but it had to be postponed.

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh they postponed one day it was really really storming that day but they thought they had what they called an opening in the storm. And actually from the standpoint that somebody was just riding along or going along for the ride, the weather didn't appear all that much of a factor. Although we did hit intermittent patches of both clouds and the really we were supposed to be at 68, 100 foot

elevation anyhow. I didn't think it should have made that much difference but live I say really we weren't qualified to know what we were judging in that respect.

Interviewer: I'm assuming you had undergone some kind of briefing as to what either during your training or just prior to getting into

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh we were studying the contour maps and we had the tables set out and everything but

Interviewer: Short of being shot or captured what was there a couple of things or one thing in particular that you were scared of as far as geographically? That you thought would be a very real threat or danger?

Mr. Hornbeck: Not really

Interviewer: Hedgerows for example

Mr. Hornbeck: I found out when we got down yeh the hedgerows were definitely they were all

Interviewer: Of course in Ronal of course had flooded a lot of the land behind were you warned and briefed about that particularly concerned about it?

Mr. Hornbeck: Actually we weren't but we were always taught on jumping to try to keep your feet the width of your hips apart so that you were prepared to land at anytime.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: Especially on night jumps.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: Because you wanted to land on your feet and that's all there was to it. But the last order we got on jumping they said now when you jump this time keep your feet together. And of course we didn't know why but then we found out after. Well what the Germans had done in addition to flooding all of the low lying areas they had driven posts and they had oh like four by four some of them were heavier some were lighter but anything they could use as a post they drove into the ground and sharpened the upper end of it too. And so the you had the double hazard the area photos that we were looking at did not show the area as being flooded it showed it as being vegetation which it was because there was I called it swamp grass but there's a better name for it I guess a more accurate name. And see when we jumped then we knew that we were way off in our formation but our last instruction was if you were over land you were to jump. The plane they told us that we don't know where we are but

Interviewer: So you knew right away even before you jumped that you were not where you needed to be?

Mr. Hornbeck: Right

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: But we were under well I'd say reasonable heavy maybe you'd call it real heavy fire from the time we got close to the peninsula and so we flew down and around the peninsula and were supposed to jump coming out the idea was that the channel was full of ships that were going to hit the beaches and they didn't want us flying over and calling attention to all of the boats that were there. So

Interviewer: When you said peninsula you were referring to the Carrington?

Mr. Hornbeck: Sharberg

Interviewer: Sharburg okay

Mr. Hornbeck: See we flew clear around the tip of the peninsula.

Interviewer: And doubled back.

Mr. Hornbeck: We were supposed to jump on the way out actually.

Interviewer: What was the mood as far as general mood I realize there's going to be fluctuation from men to men during in the plane crossing the English Channel was it anxious, hesitant, somber, boisterous or was it

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh I would say somber would come closest to fitting it. Of course there was a certain amount of joking going on because well that's how you approached it.

Interviewer: Sure

Mr. Hornbeck: But it wasn't parachute troops weren't different from anything else I guess we thought we were maybe.

Interviewer: How would you describe your mood?

Mr. Hornbeck: I would say I was actually I was pretty thrilled to be a part of what was going on there was a lot of anxiety I suppose but I think the main main concern I had I had some responsibility as the second in chief and of course they say that there were no atheist in the fox holes there probably weren't any atheist in the paratroops either. But I can recall doing a certain amount of praying that I wasn't going to in any way act cowardly. And I didn't at the time I didn't feel that I really had any right to pray for anything else I I didn't think that I had earned any special privileges with God I was pretty sure there was one. I wanted to be respectful

Interviewer: What was it like looking down over the English Channel of course it was cloudy the weather was still fairly bad.

Mr. Hornbeck: Well when we left we left Exeter or close to it Exeter airfield and Exeter was one of the ports that we could see boats as far as we could see.

Interviewer: That's what I was getting at so you could see all of the craft stretching across the English Channel?

Mr. Hornbeck: And we like I say we skirted them rather than trying to draw any attention to them. I think also part of the idea of going in south and around the peninsula was to give the idea we were going to land somewhere different than where we did. Of course we ended up the plane load that I was with we were quite a ways different from where we were supposed to be.

Interviewer: Where were you supposed to be end up and what was your mission?

Mr. Hornbeck: We were supposed to be right out side of St. Maurer at least and when we got on the ground of courser there was a lot of ground fire going on.

Interviewer: Were you taking fire coming down?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh but it was just small caliber stuff. See we were flying at an elevation your heavier flack was ineffective but they could use come I think 20 caliber or 50 I don't know how they rate the flack but anyhow most of what we saw was small arms fire.

Interviewer: Okay just German troops riflemen shooting at you?

Mr. Hornbeck: Machine guns it seemed like you'd approach where they were shooting at you and about the time they got to where they were pretty well on to the ship then you'd be out of their range. And it just like a big arc and you'd see that most of it went below actually I don't think that our plane got hit at all.

Interviewer: Oh when you jumped you said you were off from where you didn't end up coming down in the town of St. Maurer?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh no we were we weren't any where near any town that I knew of.

Interviewer: Where'd you end up? Of course you didn't know at the time.

Mr. Hornbeck: Never found out.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Hornbeck: We hit the ground and we assembled probably oh I'd say somewhere close to 20 out of probably 45 to 48 that jumped in a I'd say maybe a half mile radius there.

Interviewer: How effective was your cricket?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh it worked very well to start with but we never got close enough around anybody else to see but within a half hour of being on the ground we had about like I was somewhere close to 20 or 25.

Interviewer: And who was the were you the highest in command of these 20?

Mr. Hornbeck: No we had a Master Sargent in our platoon he was there and then we had a second lieutenant that was there with the group. And we stayed together throughout but then we picked up one other lieutenant from Supply Company. And of course he wasn't from our company so he outranked our lieutenant and he was going to take command and he was Master Sargent and I told him no we don't think so.

Interviewer: So now your 20 guys 20 plus guys you don't know where you are so therefore you can't possible complete your objective what did you do what did they decide to do?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well after about two or three hours of daylight in the morning it might have been as much as up to noon of that day we packed our radios and what communication equipment we had because we weren't sure that we were too far off to be able to regain something in the way of joining an outfit. And so we packed our radio equipment the wire equipment but by I'd say somewhere before noon we had pretty well given up because we had run into a skirmish here and a skirmish there.

Interviewer: Okay so you were engaged in battles firefights.

Mr. Hornbeck: Somewhere not too long after that I mentioned I had a Thompson sub which was except for a carbine which were semiautomatic that was the only automatic weapon. And we had run into something up in front and they thought it was a pill box originally and I never did get to see the pill box but of course we had to back off we weren't qualified and we didn't have the stuff to take the pill box. So they asked me to come up and give cover fire while they pulled back which was a logical thing no big ole hero deal or anything like that. But I went up and gave cover fire and as I left after the others had pulled back well I don't know if you know what a newsette bag is. It was small bag that you hooked on to your either the back or the front of your harness you had a kind of a vest like type of harness that you could clip these newsette bags on them and then you could flip them over your head and they'd ride on your back. Well while I was giving cover fire I had the bag out and I was getting another clip or something out of it and some how other I let it get loose it unsnapped. And so when I drew back I found out here I had left all of my ammunition.

Interviewer: You don't have any ammo.

Mr. Hornbeck: So I asked the boy that was next to me the last I remember I asked him to wait and I was going to go back and I had to run 75 or 100 feet so I ran back and by the time I had got back there the Germans had moved up and instead of shooting at me one of them threw a hand grenade. It was one of those concussion type it went between my feet because I didn't know that it went there but it ripped all the pants on the inside so I don't know how long I was dazed but after awhile I realized that where I was again. And they were kind of leading me around that must have been an hour or so maybe two or three hours.

Interviewer: How did you when you came to do you remember the first thing you saw?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh one of the boys who was holding me and leading me around.

Interviewer: How old were they? Were they of different ages were these young kids?

Mr. Hornbeck: This one was about my age he was probably about 22 or 23 but.

Interviewer: So you go back to get your ammo they chuck a concussion grenade at you knock you unconscious you wake up a prisoner.

Mr. Hornbeck: No I wasn't a prisoner yet. The I stayed with the outfit oh I I don't know how many more engagements we had.

Interviewer: Oh I apologize they your guys came back for you. I assumed the German hand grenade.

Mr. Hornbeck: The one closest to me said that I got blown up in the air and he said that fortunately I turned around and that when I hit the ground I gained my footing and run back toward him.

Interviewer: Oh I see

Mr. Hornbeck: He just grabbed me and

Interviewer: I apologize I was I thought that when you woke up it was the Germans you were with.

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh no

Interviewer: Okay good good please continue.

Mr. Hornbeck: But well we had small engagements for the rest of the afternoon finally we got pinned down in the area that they plotted. And we just didn't have anything to throw back at them as a matter of fact I didn't have anything left to I had a bit I think part of a clip of ammo was all I had left all that day. Of course I wasn't in any shape to shoot anything anyway. But so after we were pinned down there and we ran out of stuff to throw at them the other Sargent and Lieutenant decided well it was ridiculous to get everybody killed we took a chance on surrendering.

Interviewer: How what did you figure your odds were that even if you did surrender that they wouldn't shoot?

Mr. Hornbeck: We figured it was pretty slim but we were practically kneel anyhow so it was a chance. See they had machine guns set up we didn't have anything that would reach them. My Thompson sub if I had had ammo for it it wouldn't I don't think it could fire over 50 yards something like that. The carbam they didn't amount to anything I think there were one or two M1s see we were all headquarters company personal and we just we didn't have the well as far as that goes we didn't have the training for that either because we were supposed to maintain communications.

Interviewer: So once you surrendered what did the Germans

Mr. Hornbeck: Well it was just an hour or so before dark. And I think the Master Sargent that was with us and the Second Lieutenant they got somehow they got the Germans to take me to a hospital. There were two of us that they loaded up. The hospital was kind of a joke. After we were there the Germans said you boys came in with more medical supplies than we had initially.

Interviewer: Did you have the sulfur and two little morphine?

Mr. Hornbeck: We used some on a couple of the wounded there was one fellow that was taken to the hospital with flesh wounds they didn't bother to we gave morphine to a few of the boys that were hit. But we actually I wasn't hit with anything just this concussion grenade. And I felt pretty ruff.

Interviewer: I suspect so.

Mr. Hornbeck: But I really wasn't that severely injured I was oh I don't know whether the testical area was it was feeling extra ruff.

Interviewer: It makes marching very very tuff I would imagine.

Mr. Hornbeck: It didn't make much difference whether I was shot anyhow because I wasn't gonna be much good for anything.

Interviewer: Oh that must have stung. Did you still have your 20 plus guys with you when you were in the position to surrender?

Mr. Hornbeck: No we were something less than 20 but we would all during the day and when we'd rub into engagements with the Germans we were so poorly trained and the boys with us were so poorly trained in acting as riflemen which they weren't. We just didn't establish and maintain the contact that we should have. Basically wasn't that we were all that dumb our training wasn't along those lines and also our equipment that we had. That wasn't the job we were supposed to be doing.

Interviewer: Eisenhower himself said something along the lines of all training is fine and great until the shooting starts all preparation and all plan.

Mr. Hornbeck: Eisenhower was there when we were loading up to take off that evening. He and Montgomery both they were there that evening.

Interviewer: So once you were at the hospital for awhile it doesn't sound like they could do a whole lot for you.

Mr. Hornbeck: Well actually they didn't there were three or four American doctors that were taken prisoner they were there and they were trying to take care of some of the boys that were a lot worse off than I was. And I remember one in particular he got caught obviously he had thrown a grenade one of our fragmentation type. And he threw it too soon or somebody with him had threw it too soon and the Germans had time to throw it back at him. And he grabbed it again and he had all kinds of fragment I guess he just what he had left of his hands were just bones and part of them were blown off. The I think that was that was when I kind of woke up I guess. And the idea of being a prisoner and being messed up I think you develop a certain amount of self pity or whatever. And then you see cases like that it sure makes you ashamed of yourself thinking about anything you run into. And if I recall that was pretty close to the last time I indulged in self pity. Really there wasn't much room for it and it didn't help anything.

Interviewer: Where did they take you? Well you didn't even know where you were let alone where you were going.

Mr. Hornbeck: Well the hospital I went to was in Failois which was fairly close to the middle of the peninsula. And it wasn't too much of a they kept you know something similar to a weapons carrier. I would say from the length of the right we couldn't have been over maybe 15 miles or so from the Vinalines initially that's a heck of a long place from where we were supposed to be. But well we knew we were way off because we couldn't even here the bombardment when they were shelling the fort a fact positions before the prior to bringing the troops in. The airpower the Americans' and the British had air dominance if the weather was suitable for flying. See a good share of that day they took off and flew over formations but they had to go back because they just couldn't see what they were doing. So there were very few missions that were flown that first day that were even I don't think they even dropped a bomb or anything. But it was pretty much of a no win situation as far as air using air superiority was concerned.

Interviewer: Once you were did they take you camp did they take you to make shift camp or

Mr. Hornbeck: After we were in that hospital for I'd say five or six days somewhere in that area. During that time they had anti-aircraft all around the hospital and of course the Americans tried to wipe out the anti-aircraft and the hospital was shaped well like this part and then there was another comparable part of here and then there was a wing in between. And it formed an H and most of the prisoners were say in this area they knocked off part of this wing and part of this wing and part of this wing but this wing where most of us were. We had some scratches because even those fragmentation bombs were and that's what they were using not heavy bombs. They'd had quite a concussion and the windows blow across on both sides and most of the glass from the windows ended up fairly close to the middle of those rooms. It's amazing how it worked and flying glass and what have you there was a few small injuries. But how they avoided wiping us out I'll never know.

Interviewer: How long did they keep you at the hospital?

Mr. Hornbeck: About four or five days.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Hornbeck: Maybe six at the most.

Interviewer: How did they treat you as far as the guards?

Mr. Hornbeck: At the hospital they were pretty reasonable. And of course they got riled up about being bombed and under the circumstances they did lots of threats about shooting you but then I didn't see them shoot anyone. And it was oh after like I say around at the most six days they force marched us off the peninsula. It was supposed to be a I think they told us two, two and a half days something like that and they gave us supplies for that which were pretty meager for two and a half days. I think you'd rather have that for one meal or less. But we ended up the weather got better and the American aircraft were over there so they had a heck of a time moving us.

Interviewer: Sure were you picking up more prisoners along the way or did it stay the initial group?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well initially we just had the ones from the hospital and I think there were about what they considered walking wounded there probably was 50 or 60 of us and I think we picked up one or two other smaller groups. We had relatively close to 100 moving. And we went back to a place called St. Low and then that actually wasn't a prison camp there it was just a holding area. From there we got sent to a place called Alansude and.

Interviewer: Now where they seemed to be pulling you in further as the allies were advancing?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well actually St. Low was relatively close to action at that time that they had us there but I say relatively close I'd say we were still between 40 and 60 miles maybe from the actual front lines at that time. They had quite a time getting around away from those hedgerows. But after they hid the St. Low area the country opened up quite a bit.

Interviewer: They call it the break out?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh of course all I did as far as learning about that was from reading like you did only my reading was a little bit closer to the action.

Interviewer: Sure

Mr. Hornbeck: But they had from Halenson they took us to Shatress and then from there the most we traveled was by train. The troops that were going back for one reason or another they would use them as guards. And I don't know whether they had a system of doing that but for the most part the guards were actually on furlough or leave of some type or another. So we'd end up with about as many guards as we had prisoners.

Interviewer: Did you find that there were certain actions on your part or on the part of your men that would instigate some kind of smack in the head or any kind of retaliation on your part or the reciprocal of that was there anything that you could do to

Mr. Hornbeck: Well the main thing you were conscious of was they used to threaten not daily frequently during the day anytime that you weren't in a stabilized position they'd say now if you try to escape we're going to shoot you. And if you do escape we're going to shoot 10 for every 1 that escapes. And so I don't know you didn't look as hard for the opportunity to escape.

Interviewer: Sure it's a lose lose situation.

Mr. Hornbeck: The well when we were on a forced march at one place we were bombed by American planes they saw us moving into a small town and I guess it was antipersonnel type bombing. But fortunately none of us were hurt seriously. There was one kind of amusing incident a guard tried to hit the basement and he had his rifle more or less in the port arms position and crossways of his body and he tried to dive through a window. And it was it was even amusing and part of the fact we were under a bomb attack. Cause he got his nose I don't know he may have broken it he hit pretty good.

Interviewer: Were you allowed to communicate with you're with your fellow prisoners?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: I'm sure it wasn't encouraged but.

Mr. Hornbeck: No

Interviewer: They didn't threaten to shoot you if they caught you talking or anything?

Mr. Hornbeck: No but we came in to a place when were after we were in Sharpez that was a a small village or town which ever but the town was on the right hand side and we were headed toward Germany. And on the left hand side was fields and we saw some P39s are you acquainted with that?

Interviewer: How different is that from the P37 the tank getters?

Mr. Hornbeck: P39 I'm pretty sure I'm right in they had a the cockpit was right in the middle.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: And the well the engines were on either side and so the machine guns were set to fire almost straight ahead. And most of the ones where they had them mounted in the wings they have them synchronized so that one group would go out 800 yards maybe and another 1000 yards and you fired accordingly. But they sprayed bullets all over and when we were in this we just had pulled into this station and saw these planes we told the German guards now you're going to catch it. And the guards the training stopped they ran us out into the field and the planes of course they strafed up and down the track because they didn't want to fire into the village. And they flew over the village and then they'd strafe the plane going towards the field. They pound up the ground all around us and we I think the biggest thing we had to hide behind was little trees about this big it was kind of an orchard out there. And the remarkable thing of it was not one of us got hit.

Interviewer: Not one?

Mr. Hornbeck: Not one and they didn't even hit a guard then we came in to Cologne, you know where that is?

Interviewer: Yes sir. Wow so you're in Germany now?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh they had bombed Cologne just a half hour or so of us getting there. So they had to put us in trucks and take us through the town because they knocked out part of the railroad yard. And that's the only time I was brutalized by the Germans. The civilians in town got on to us.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Hornbeck: They of course we couldn't hit back but the German guards finally ran them off and backed us up against a building and kind of encircled us and they were pointing their guns the other way they were trying to keep the civilians from beating on us.

Interviewer: I'm assuming you weren't really did the Germans any of the Germans speak English fluently?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh

Interviewer: Did you ever or anybody in your group ever have conversations with them anything other than telling you what to do or

Mr. Hornbeck: For the most part no. We did have well like I say there were guards that could speak English. I know when we went into a air core kind of a separation center they tried to keep air core separate from regular ground troops so they treated us as air core because we were parachute troops and in the German Army parachute troops were part of the air core evidentially. Then they decided we didn't fit so when we left there they shipped out I think it was about 25 of us and we were all non cons a Sargent or better and they shipped us to a place New Brandenburg was the name of it well the name of the nearest village. And they I don't know they probably had I'd say 5000 maybe 7000 prisoners there. There were 14 nationalities and the only Americans were this group of about 25 of us and the oh we stayed there as I recall about 6 or 8 weeks.

Interviewer: What kind of time line are we talking are we still talking 41?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh this was

Interviewer: I mean because drawn all the way to Germany so

Mr. Hornbeck: Well see

Interviewer: 41 what am I talking about 43.

Mr. Hornbeck: No 44

Interviewer: Yeh 44 back to Pearl Harbor all of a sudden.

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh

Interviewer: Are we still in 44 or is winter approaching is it starting to get cold?

Mr. Hornbeck: Not yet. In this camp we hit there probably in the latter part of August

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: They started to move us I would say it had to be roughly the first part of October.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: But they decided we didn't kit there. Well they said we were going to all go out on work detail if we all passed the physical. And they decided it was too much bother to have somebody that you know if you resisted working then you had to have closer supervision. So it wasn't worth wild for them to do it and the only option I guess was to shoot us.

Interviewer: Sure

Mr. Hornbeck: They didn't but if they'd have threatened hard enough sure we'd have had to work but they didn't. And so they sent us clear to Hammerstein initially from there and Hammerstein is almost on the Baltic Sea close to the old polish border and we got up there and they unloaded us they marched up into camp they wouldn't take us so they put up back on a train. And took us then to Frankfort on the Oder there was a camp just outside of that and we got there and they wouldn't take us there. So from there they sent us to a place called Kurstin I think Kurstin or something like that I don't know if that's how you pronounce it. Any how it was eat of the Oder River. And that's where we stayed then until we got the news.

Interviewer: This is a silly questions you mentioned October did ya'll do anything to recognize Halloween?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh no

Interviewer: It just passed you by they didn't

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh no there was too much occasion for levity there.

Interviewer: You mentioned they gave you very sparse food initially did that ever improve?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I neglected to say back there where I was one of about 25 only American prisoners in the camp there after I'd say we'd been there two or three weeks we got frost bite.

Interviewer: Is that right okay.

Mr. Hornbeck: And a Red Cross parcel was roughly a 10 pound parcel which probably somewhere close to 8 pounds of it was food.

Interviewer: And the Germans the guards they didn't take it or part of it?

Mr. Hornbeck: No you could do some trading if you wanted to with the German currency a certain amount of that was done. We were too interested in eating so we didn't do much trading. You could trade cigarettes for I suppose if you had enough of them you could trade cigarettes and coffee for passage back to the United States somehow. They were pretty good merchandise. I we had Red Cross parcels I think for probably three weeks in a row and then we got shipped out of there. And then after we got into the final camp that we arrived at we weren't there too long before we got Red Cross parcels again but they weren't once a week like they were planned for. We did get a prior to Christmas we got a Red Cross parcel I remember that had plum pudding.

Interviewer: Germans weren't known for their plum pudding were they?

Mr. Hornbeck: No there diets for us anyhow consisted mostly of sauerkraut and potatoes.

Interviewer: Was that the first time you had had sauerkraut?

Mr. Hornbeck: On no it was pretty close to the last.

Interviewer: I imagine so. How long were you were you a prisoner till the end?

Mr. Hornbeck: No they about let's see 31st about the 27th or 28th they told us to get ready to move out. And we more or less went on a sit down strike and told them we wouldn't go until they gave what Red Cross clothing was available and so we made it stick they took a day and they did distribute as far as we knew what Red Cross clothing there was. And as I had pretty ruff clothing cause most of it was blown off I got a pair of pants and I got a field jacket. And so then the next they said well you ran in and we said no you've got to give us Red Cross parcel too and once again they let us get by with it. The third day or the evening before the third day I think was a Colonel who was in charge of the camp he said well boys he said you're going to move tomorrow he says if you don't move well you won't be any trouble for anyone. And they moved in extra troops so they marched us out but we only left the camp oh I'd say an hour, hour and a half we ran into a Russian tank hold and they opened fire on us. And the guards scattered and we scatted and part of them some of the boys right next to me got a couple of riffles from the guards that tried to surrender to us but that didn't work for them. They took them immediately I think they were kind of court marshaled pretty bad process.

Interviewer: Yeh they say that Americans who would take Germans hostage to the Germans at least Americans seemed very pompous very arrogant and so when they stayed to become too arrogant particularly officers they threatened to hand them over to the Russians they said that usually straightened them out pretty quickly.

Mr. Hornbeck: Well there were Russian prisoners I seen.

Interviewer: I meant to ask you about that how were they treated by comparison?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh like dogs or worse you wouldn't treat dogs that way. And their compound was there was a roadway in between they kept us segregated and the wagons that they brought in the bread you got a ration of bread every second day third day something like that. But they brought it in on wagons and they'd be hauling those Russians out a lot of them were dying from Typhus fever I think was the main cause.

Interviewer: Did you have any kind of epidemics in you're?

Mr. Hornbeck: No

Interviewer: Did you have any guys in your group suffering from or dying from malnutrition or?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I don't think so I don't know that they had hospital facilities available for the most part American troops had had the full quota of shots. We did have enough in addition to what they fed us like myself I told you I got a new pair of pants well I got a pair of 28 pants 28 waist. And they were loose.

Interviewer: They were loose

Mr. Hornbeck: They were loose I had lots of room.

Interviewer: I'm assuming you didn't wear 28s loose before?

Mr. Hornbeck: No I think I probably about a 32 or 33.

Interviewer: Did you do you know how much weight you lost?

Mr. Hornbeck: Never did really weight.

Interviewer: But you went from a 34 to probably sounds like a 27.

Mr. Hornbeck: Somewhere in that area I would say I was probably down something less than 120. Actually physically I was not in all that bad of shape. Now our accommodations I think our barracks was a little bit long than this room and it was probably two thirds the width of this room and it was divided into three compartments and each barracks held 100 people so.

Interviewer: Ya'll weren't playing volleyball in there?

Mr. Hornbeck: No and you couldn't all stand up at one time. And of course that was one of the coldest winters they had over there.

Interviewer: Fifty years what did you do to keep warm were you permitted to have a stove in the barracks or

Mr. Hornbeck: We got you could have had our weekly coal ration you could have stored it in there. Probably at most two hours or so their going to wonder what's going on with me waving my hand the flies.

Leonard Hornbeck

Interviewer: So you broke into smaller groups okay I'm going to back up just a second. The Russians in a sense you were liberated by the Russians they took your captives but it was a tank

Mr. Hornbeck: It was a tank colony yeh.

Interviewer: And so then you were broken into smaller groups and

Mr. Hornbeck: We just naturally broke into small groups when you get right down to it.

Interviewer: And are we still talking about the end of October or we're in winter now?

Mr. Hornbeck: That was the 31st of January when we really got loose.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: And we had to stay in this village well we stayed we went back to the camp originally and we stayed over night there. And then it might have been two nights that we stayed there it's been quite a while ago. But anyhow after oh I'd say four or five days we were able to get back along the lines the Russians were controlling they controlled the road system that was running east and west. And we found out later they had made three spearheads and we were in the middle one. And just that we were just lucky.

Interviewer: Just lucky

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh

Interviewer: When were you throughout your entire time as a prisoner were you permitted to take a shower?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh yeh they would delouse you once in a while.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well it was welcomed you get there's no smell like bed bugs and lice well you were lousy all the time. And that's why the Russians were in such bad shape and if we hadn't had the shots that we had we those lice I think they can their airborne so they can travel but they stayed with the Russians mostly because we had shots.

Interviewer: And they kept them segregated as well.

Mr. Hornbeck: Or as far as that goes we just weren't subject to typhus fever for a long time. The Russian troops when they came there and they were questioning the German guards and when they got tired of questioning them as far as I could find out they shot them.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh I didn't well we kept our nose clean we weren't in command there so the

Interviewer: No sense screaming at the man with the tank.

Mr. Hornbeck: No but they it was pitiful as far as the hatred between those people we have no conception. And even going back through Poland well Eastern Germany at first a lot of them houses were abandoned and we'd go through and try to find groceries and anything to eat. But after we got back into Poland we found out heck the Polish people didn't have anything so we were ashamed to bum off of them and we'd so directly to the Russians and we wouldn't move from one village to the other until we got something to eat. And if we had something to eat and maybe a loaf of bread to pack with us well we'd go to the next village so it took quite a while to get across Poland.

Interviewer: So you were with the Russians now pushing eastward.

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh

Interviewer: And then of course the allies were pushing west. Were you aware the allies were making the headway they were making?

Mr. Hornbeck: No

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: You didn't get that much from the Russians.

Interviewer: By January the Battle of the Bulge is is going on of course the counter offensive has begun. But during the counter offensive but of course that fizzled out relatively quickly and it was pretty much the beginning of the end. But you weren't as far as the access to that kind of information you weren't aware that very soon you would be meeting up?

Mr. Hornbeck: No to start with we headed for Warsaw.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: And we thought that we'd get back in to allied hands but we didn't.

Interviewer: Were you permitted okay as your moving east obviously your in Germany and your were you encountering squermishes and fights?

Mr. Hornbeck: No the first maybe week or so we were subject to we'd see groups of soldiers not in groups of soldiers that were actually kind of in guarding a road system is what it amounted to. And there were still German troops that were somewhat isolated that were still functioning so when they drove in to those tank colonies they just paid three spear heads. Then they consolidated their positions and we were very fortunate that we were where we were because if they'd have brought us across the well the camp was only about five miles from a bridge that crossed the Otter River. And if they'd have got another hour or so march on us we'd have crossed the Otter River and the Russian tank colony wouldn't have affected us what so ever. And we'd have probably been force marched like a lot of the troops were

from then until the later part of April first of May. See some of those troops had to leave the camps and they were just on forced march from then on.

Interviewer: Were you finally when did you finally run into some Americans?

Mr. Hornbeck: Oh they stopped us in Luveman area and when they got about 2000 of us they put about 100 in boxcar they had about 20 boxcars loaded up and they shipped us down to Odessa then on the Black Sea. But actually I think the overall experience that I had and the one that impressed me most was really when I got out of prison camp. Because we don't realize the hatred that there is between people. We have racism here yes and it was a lot more racism during WWII times but the actual hatred that exist over there we just don't have any conception. Especially somebody like well I grew up in a place where racism was well it was minimal. You just didn't see it one thing we didn't have any Negroes in the area the cement plant were I lived next to where I lived there were quite a few Italians and a few Albanians. Southern Europeans of one type or another but heck they were just part of our society you played with the kids and they were no different from us.

Interviewer: What types of things did you did you experience that lead you to this conclusion?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well

Interviewer: Or this observation?

Mr. Hornbeck: Actually the main things that was noticeable in Poland actually was by the time we got into Poland we were also encountering we even in East Germany to a small extent we encountered Ukrainians, Houstonians, Lithuanians and all of those people that had gone back in to Germany and Poland as forced labor and they were trying to find their way home. And in fact the Russian soldiers at that time well even back in Germany I remember one time we Russian soldier a couple of them shot a pig for us. They said they didn't have anything they could give us but they'd shoot a pig so we butchered that pig and it was probably 125, 150 pounds. And of course there was only there were two troops of Americana and British prisoners I think we had a couple of British with us by then. Or we were traveling I think six in a group at that time. But the British group that we were close to they also go to join in this pig feast anyhow. And after we both ate all we could or wanted to anyhow and then some to pack along we invited some of these forced labor people to finish it off. The Russian soldiers they came in there and they run them out with rifles and bayonets. They told us then they said after this if we shoot something for you or give you something it's for you not for those people.

Interviewer: And these weren't soldiers these were

Mr. Hornbeck: They were forced labor.

Interviewer: Forced labor

Mr. Hornbeck: And because they had been accepted being forced labor rather than being shot that's the treatment they received. And of course even in you realize that Poland was where a great deal of the Jewish people were

Interviewer: Where the concentration camps were. Did you see any of that?

Mr. Hornbeck: Not really we saw the effects of it. We saw a few of them but by the time we saw them we couldn't tell who we were seeing really.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well they might have been mixed in with these forced labor people because there in Poland there were still quite a few that didn't get exterminated. And well in Warsaw proper when we were in there they were telling of one occasion when they rounded up about 6,000 Jewish people and just shot them in the town square. And the strange part of it was see Poland is heavily Catholic and these people would well we talked a lot with them we had a boy with us that spoke polish and of course we looked after him like a long lost brother we made sure that he was around to interpret. But then I spoke some French and we all got to where we could understand a fair amount of German maybe we couldn't speak it but we could understand it. When we got back into Poland we didn't attempt to show any formilurarity with anything German because they were the Russian soldiers were pretty well they were pretty well on the look out for any German that could have gotten American soldiers uniforms and were hiding away.

Interviewer: I don't know where but there was an incident around the time of Bastogne where there was an actually SS Davison armor division I believe under a guy name Piper I'm probably butchering the pronunciation of his name but apparently he had a bunch of no I'm sorry that was the guy responsible for the Ommaney Massacred. The other gentleman I'm speaking about were Germans who spoke immaculate English and they were going behind the lines and turning road signs around and creating a lot of confusion and it created quite a bit of kais among the Americans. And they became they started using passwords and watchwords and things of that nature so perhaps they caught wind of that or had something similar happen and were looking for looking for kind of someone in disguise. It certainly

Mr. Hornbeck: Well that was when we finally got down to Odessa there was a colonel I think that was from the 507 that was taken prisoner on D-Day or close to it and he came around and he said told us said boys you forget this business about just giving your name, rank and serial number. He said if you don't identify yourself and your unit and don't satisfy these people your not going to get out of her. And so we

Interviewer: They hated Germans that much?

Mr. Hornbeck: Well they were really looking for them. During that period of time I understand there were some that got back in to Russia well they were taken back and they didn't get back repatriated. Oh it's I was really thankful for especially looking back on it for the idea of well seeing the difference between our country and we have lots of faults here but the hatred is not established like it is over in those counters over there. And I guess it seems to be getting along toward the freedoms that we have and what we fought for are being turned around and used for selfish gain. Different groups are well their abusing the freedoms that they have I guess that's the only way you can really explain it.

Interviewer: I have one more question for you. Being in Poland and seeing first hand the effects as you say of the Holocaust in the concentration camps what would you what would you say to somebody and there are those out there who contend that the Holocaust never happened that the Germans never killed people in mass.

Mr. Hornbeck: It's absolutely ridiculous. There were German soldiers that were never (the tapes began making noises and you could not hear Mr. Hornbeck well). Maybe to check up on their own people and the way they were treating prisoners. And the guards would warn us they'd say now we've got if they knew that they were coming they would warn us. They say now these SS troops are going to be here at such a time and don't you goof off.

Interviewer: Wow

Mr. Hornbeck: And it was a diffident ball game while they were there. And it was ridiculous you're not going to get out the idea of being gun hoe that was just no place for it. If I got gun hoe one time while I was being interrogated. By the way I was interrogated probably the first time at least and half maybe closer to three and a half months after I was taken prisoner.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Hornbeck: That's right

Interviewer: Why so long?

Mr. Hornbeck: Because when I was first taken I was in the hospital and the I didn't have any information that was worth wild going after anyhow. And so when they interrogated me the interrogated me strictly on a political basis. And of courser they were smarter than I was part of the idea was and I realized it afterwards they interrogated you and questioned you with the idea of making you angry to the point that you would talk when you should be listening. And I did I told them basically more or less to go to hell. So they put me in solitary for about 18 days.

Interviewer: Oh gosh

Mr. Hornbeck: But actually that was well in a sense that was the roughest treatment I had as a prisoner. Because solitary isn't very inviting.

Interviewer: No I imagine not.

Mr. Hornbeck: But It I knew as soon as I spouted off that I should have kept my mouth shut. I don't know you more or less you think what the heck you don't know when you're going to get shot you expect to get shot one time or another.

Interviewer: Sure

Mr. Hornbeck: But this guard or this he was a I think a lieutenant that was questioning me. Well I think part of it what he was trying to get me mad about he said well what what prison was I in. They kind of maintained the idea that parachute troops were recruited from prisons.

Interviewer: From prisons yep perhaps that was a propaganda tool by the Germans to make them shoot on site make them fear maybe. You wonder how that got started or maybe its just who paratroopers where.

Mr. Hornbeck: Well I think it was part of the propaganda was for their own troops as well as for us. See all of our questioning they kept trying to get you to what they said identify yourself so we didn't have to treat you as a political prisoner rather than a war prisoner. And they had a certain amount of time that they'd spend on a person I guess and if he got insolent which I ended up doing well they had solitary that they'd put you in just to teach you a lesson I guess. The big threat at all times that you'd be treated as a political prisoner of course that would be getting shot and maybe worse.

Interviewer: I'm curious to know about the chain of command and as a prisoner was that still observed?

Mr. Hornbeck: How do you mean?

Interviewer: I'm sure it was observed to some extent or another but when you were prior to being captured as you said there was a specific in the military there is a specific chain of command. As prisoners was that chain of command still observed? Did you still or example you were a Sargent did you still have people calling you Sargent and were you still giving orders as a prisoner?

Mr. Hornbeck: No

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: There were ranking noncoms that as they came into a camp say there was a First Sargent there was a Master Sargent there normally the ranking one would be acting as a spokesman for the camp.

Interviewer: Okay

Mr. Hornbeck: And as it happened I was never in a ranking capacity so I was in the small group I was in yeh I was one but we were such a small group they were all Sargents or better. And I think I might have been I think I was as high as any of them in rank I don't know whether I had my rank as long as some of them. But the now there was no question there although there was now in most camps well the only camp that was organized really was the last one I was in and there the word came around don't try to escape just cause as much of a just be as much of a nuisance as you can be. Because we weren't valuable enough to where they wanted to jeopardize any underground that could have been effective in helping us we just dind't have that much value as combat people or whatever. If they lost their life protecting trying to help us escape they didn't gain all that much. So that word was passed around and actually that was the only thing we got in the way of scuttlebutt from on the inside. The like I was telling we got Red Cross parcels and clothing distributed it was a joint effort but the ones that were the ranking

noncoms and the ones that had been there the longest undoubtable were the ones that made the contact. We didn't do that personally each one of us they did it for us.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that I've missed or that I should have asked you and failed to that you'd like to add?

Mr. Hornbeck: No I do think that one of the main things I see wrong in our society today is the fact that all too soon we forget what it cost to have the freedoms that we have. And I'm the same as anyone else I owe a lot to the fellows that gave their lives for it. But more than that we owe it to the ones that are coming along to realize that hatred breeds hatred and we see it in our schools Columbine deal and we see it cropping up here and there. And it's absolutely ridiculous that society has gone to level where that can exist let alone grow and flourish. I don't know what I think one of the things I grew up in a period where the family was you might say well it was held in high esteem and now families are so many of them broken its just a society that there too much hatred and envy and everything bred. And its just not healthy I think the United States if you look at the history of our country like I mentioned my grandfather was in the Union Army in the Civil War you go back his grandfather could have been in existence in the Revolutionary War time, I don't know that he was but it is conceivable and three generations here we have a country that's world dominate and if we don't change we're gonna be like the old Roman empire we're gonna be history. And bad history at that don't you think so?

Interviewer: It could certainly happen.

Mr. Hornbeck: Yeh it could happen. Part of us us veterans fought we've seen better or we've seen enough to where we know better but we came back and got interested in trying to catch up on what we'd lost out on during the time we were in the service. But we I see Vietnam Veterans here a lot of them as far as I'm concerned the way the American people treated the Vietnam Veterans is probably one of the most shameful things that ever occurred in American history. To my way of thinking it is cause those boys were doing a job it was a nasty job and they were fighting with almost both hands tied behind their backs compared to WWII its we didn't have a picnic but compared to what they had its no comparison. Because when we came back we were treated with respect and the Vietnam Veteran was treated like almost like a misfit in society and that's not right.