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Place of Interview: Longview, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Marvin B Edwards.

Date: Mar. 6, 1971

Oral History Collection

Mr. Marvin Edwards

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Longview, Texas Date: March 6, 1971

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. Marvin Edwards for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on March 6, 1971, in Longview, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Edwards in order to get his reminiscences and experiences from his activities during World War II. Mr. Edwards was a flyer. He was shot down over Belgium in 1944, spent some time in the Belgian underground, then was subsequently captured by the Germans, and spent the rest of the war in various prisoner-of-war camps in Germany. To begin, Mr. Edwards, why don't you give us a brief biographical sketch of yourself--where you were born, your education, your family, things of that sort.

Mr. Edwards: Well, I was born in Forney, Texas, in 1923. That's a little town about eighteen miles east of Dallas. My father was a druggist there. I went to school in Forney, graduated from Forney High School in the class of 1941. I attended what is the University of Texas at Arlington now--it was N.T.A.C. at that time--and studied chemical engineering for one year there. I started school in September of 1941, and in December '41 the

war came. And when school was out in May--the North American Aviation Plant had just been built in Grand Prairie--I got a job over there in the engineering department. School started again in September '42. I did not go back to school.

I stayed on there until along about November, and then I enlisted in the Air Corps. I went through basic training, navigation training, in Monroe, Louisiana. I graduated there as a navigator in July, 1943, and started training for a B-17 bomber crew. We trained out at Pyote, Texas, and Dalhart. Then in November of 1943 we shipped overseas from Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, on the Queen Elizabeth, and we ended up in Greenwich, Scotland, up by Glasgow and went through the replacement group in the pipeline. Our crew wound up in the 95th Bombardment Group. The B-17 squadron was based at Eye, which was close to another place called Diss, a larger town. And it's about halfway on the line connecting Norwich and Ipswich; we arrived there in November of '43.

Marcello: Did anything exciting happen on the ship over?

Edwards: No.

Marcello: Very uneventful trip.

Edwards: Routine. The ship was meant to carry some . . . , oh, perhaps 2,000 passengers and crew of 1,000, maybe, and we had, I believe, 18,000 troops on there--all sorts of troops. And we were in a stateroom intended for two people, but we usually had sixteen or eighteen. We were really crammed in there.

But it was a quick crossing. The Queen Elizabeth went very quickly on the zig zag route. It wasn't a convoy or anything like that.

We were down with the 95th Bombardment Group, 336th Squadron. We started our training about the middle of November, and this involved learning the English radio system, learning what the English countryside looked like as far as the navigator goes. There were an awful lot of airfields in a small section. This was in East Anglia, the part over close to Holland, Belgium. The landing patterns for our airfield, I remember, we were in sight of five other American air bases when we circled the field to land. It was quite different from flying in West Texas where things were quite open. We spent perhaps two weeks in training, and along the first of December we flew our first combat mission.

Marcello: This was December of 1943.

Edwards: '43. That's right.

Marcello: What were your thoughts on the coming of your first mission?

Edwards: Well, at that time a crew flew twenty-five missions; and then they returned to the United States as instructors. We were anxious to get our twenty-five over. The casualties at that time among bomber crews were really terrific. The Schweinfurt mission, for example, occurred in October of '43. They sent out some two or three hundred planes, and sixty were shot down in a single day--600 men. So we knew the odds were long, but

we felt we were well-trained, and we wanted to get it over with.

Marcello: Now apparently at this time the American bombers were flying all the daylight missions. Is this correct?

Edwards: Yes, that's correct.

Marcello: And there was no fighter escort.

Edwards: Yes . . .

Marcello: Not all the way in other words.

Edwards: That's right.

Marcello: No long-range fighters had been developed yet. Isn't that correct?

Edwards: That's correct. And in my experience we seldom went beyond the range of our fighters. Now quite frequently at this time we had a briefing. This was winter, and the weather was bad. We would have a briefing. You'd go in, and they'd pull the curtain away from the board, and you would see this red line going all the way into Berlin. You'd say, "Oh, good gosh!" Well, before you ever got off the ground they'd say, "Well, the weather's too bad in Berlin; we'll go to Hamburg instead or some place close." So this would have been way beyond the extent of our fighters. I don't remember now for sure whether we got beyond the fighters or not on any of my missions. I imagine we did because the P-51's were just coming in, and they were longer range fighters. The RAF cooperated with us on some of the missions or at least that's what our people told us in briefings.

Marcello: How many missions did you make before you were shot down?

Edwards: Let's see. I had completed seven missions. I have written down some place the various ones; but I made a couple to Bremen and Ludwigshafen and Münster, and the fifth mission was to Paris, I remember. This was Christmas Eve, 1943. And it seems like we went to Hamburg, and I don't remember the other towns, but somewhere in Germany. The eighth mission--the one I got shot down on--we were going to a place called Elberfeld which is very close to Düsseldorf.

Marcello: Did you have any close calls in any of those missions up until the time you were shot down?

Edwards: Yes, I believe it was on the fourth mission that we had a good deal of fighter opposition, and there were some holes put in the plane. And the gunners on our plane . . . one of the waist gunners was firin' away; and he slipped and fell while the machine gun was still shooting and shot part of the tail off our own plane. And this slowed us down a good deal, and we trailed behind the rest of the formation getting back. We got back to England, and we were almost out of gas, so, we had to land at the first airfield we came to. And as it turned out, it was the 100th Group, which had a field about five miles north of where we were, but we just hit the first runway. We got down to the end of the runway and didn't have enough gas to get off the runway. It was that close.

Now when we got into the 100th, there were a bunch of

fellows in the Officer's Mess that we had known back in the States; and they hadn't flown any missions yet, so we were the big experts. I had a chance to snow them that night.

There's another interesting story, I think. We were only five miles from our own base, and the plane wasn't badly damaged, so they patched it up during the night. We wanted to go back the next day to our own field. It was just five miles away. So we went down to the plane and asked for clearance to land. The weather was too bad; the fog was too bad. There wasn't a plane in England flying that day, so we waited and waited and waited, and finally in the afternoon it let up a little. The weather people still didn't want us to go; but the pilot said, "I'm going to go." He didn't have his full crew because, you know, there's no need for the gunners all, but there were three or four of us. We finally took off in complete pea soup going five miles. Well, as soon as we got off the ground we realized that we were not going to be able to see anything, so we called by radio to our airfield and told them to start shooting flares so we could see where the field was. And eventually we saw some flares. We came down for our landing, and instead of being on the runway we were on the flight line where they had all the planes landed, and, man, did people ever scatter! Anyway, it took us about thirty minutes to get that thing down. We were just doing five miles, but this always impressed me as being real bad weather.

Marcello: What did you find the worst--the fighters or the flak?

Edwards: Well, the fighters were the worst I think; and if you had to ask me before the last mission, I probably would of said different. But it is difficult when you see a barrage, a three dimentional barrage, of flak. You can see where the bursts have been. You realize you are going to have to go straight through it. But I think it's worse when fighters come in. When you're defenseless, the fighters can come in close. That brings us up then to the last mission.

Marcello: Okay. Let's start with the time that you took off from England. . .

Edwards: Okay.

Marcello: . . . and you were on your way toward your last mission.

Edwards: Okay.

Marcello: Let's start off at the very beginning--what you did when you got up in the morning and this sort of thing.

Edwards: Okay. Well, we got up for breakfast about three o'clock or four o'clock, quite early in the morning. At this point we found out by checking the bulletin board in the squad room whether you're going to be part of the regular effort of the group or whether you're flying what they call the "spare ship." I'll explain the spare ship later on. We found out that we were the spare ship, and this meant we might not have to go on the mission. At this time in the war each group sent along two or three spare ships on each mission; and if one of the

regularly scheduled planes had to return to base for mechanical trouble, the spare ship just slipped into his slat in formation. The theory of these planes was that they would interlock and have over-lapping zones of fire and that no fighter could penetrate. So they went to great lengths to observe this. It didn't work out all that well in practice, but this was the idea of the spare ship.

Marcello: Where were the spare ships flying before they got into the regular formation? Were they trailing on behind?

Edwards: Yes. You normally fly in a V or V's. There would be six ships, and there'd be three of them in one V and another V behind. So the spare ship would come up to the back V and make a diamond out of it. So it would sort of lag back until it was going to be needed. Well, the idea here was that the formation would be full. See, it would present the best possible defense against enemy fighters. If no plane had to turn back because of mechanical trouble before the group crossed the English Channel, the commander of the spare ship--that's the pilot--had the option of either filling in a diamond and flying on the mission and getting credit for this mission. This would be one of the twenty-five that would get you home again. Or you could turn around and return to base, and that way you would get no credit for the mission. However, by this time it's nine or ten o'clock in the morning. You put in like six hours, and you've gone through a lot of the hardest part

of the mission. That's the tension and nervousness of getting started. So most people preferred to just go ahead.

Marcello: I was just going to ask you what usually happened in a case like that--if the crew did want to go ahead or if they did want to return. You mentioned that by nine or ten o'clock you'd already been up for six hours. What time did one of these missions actually start?

Edwards: Well, we had been awake that long. We hadn't been in the air that long.

Marcello: Sure, I understand. . .

Edwards: Yeah, okay.

Marcello: . . . when did this typical day begin?

Edwards: Well, it'd be about two or three o'clock in the morning. But, you see, there would be a central mess hall. The squadrons would be dispersed all over the countryside so we couldn't be bombed easily. The trucks would have to take you into a mess hall. It'd take maybe an hour to get everyone fed. Then they had the various briefings. They had a general briefing where all the crew members would go together.

Marcello: What would they tell you on these briefings?

Edwards: Well, the first thing they'd pull the screen back and show you the red tape that shows where the target is. The intelligence officer would tell you what the target was and why it was important to be bombed and any precautions like if there was food or hospitals in the area, this sort of thing--how do you

recognize these and avoid them. And they'd usually show you some general photographs of the area and tell you to some extent about the opposition that you might expect. Of course, we always took this with a grain of salt naturally. Then the various commanding colonels and so forth would speak. Maybe some guy would be down from Wing--a general or somebody--who would give a short pep talk. Then the chaplain would say a prayer, and then they'd break up into the smaller sessions. The gunners would be briefed; the navigators were given an extensive briefing to get our maps in order; the radio operators would get the frequencies which they were going to be using.

The precautions with the different radios were interesting. We had manual radios which you had to tune. They changed the frequency every four minutes, and they changed to one of four frequencies. And they changed the call letters at the same time, so you got what they called a radio flimsy on onionskin paper so you could eat if you needed to, you know. And, boy, you talked about a Chinese fire drill. Trying to tune a radio like that and the navigator playing with it was really something, because you were changing it every four minutes to one of four frequencies. So about the time you got it tuned in, your four minutes are up, you changed it to another one of four, so you start doing these four. But somehow or other the Germans would find these things, find out the frequencies or

either capture a flimsy, and they just picked up these homing beams and just broadcasted them right back to us. It would be an authentic beam, so there was no way . . . it was just like a mirror, you know. Well, anyway, each guy would have his separate briefings. The bombardiers would be looking at pictures, you know, like you would see through a bombsight. The navigator's was more, "here's where we want to turn into the target, and here's how we're going to get out," this sort of thing.

Well, on this particular day . . . well, this took a good deal of time, and we'd take off at six or seven o'clock in the morning, something like that. It took an awful lot of time to assemble all of these planes into proper groups and get them stacked up and all ready to form a single line of battle going over the channel. So quite frequently, it would be ten or eleven o'clock before you ever left England. You were just circling around waiting. Most of this time that you were in England, though, you usually were not high enough in altitude to be on oxygen, so, you know, it's not quite as wearing, and you're not in any danger of any other airplanes running into you. But it is tiring. You see, we're talking about a thousand-plane raid here. This raid I mentioned on Christmas Eve of '43 was, I believe, the first thousand-plane raid.

Marcello: A thousand planes?

Edwards: Yeah.

Marcello: That's a thousand B-17s or . . .

Edwards: _____. A thousand B-17s; the escorts were not counted in, that's right. And, of course, toward the end of the war, they got to where they were much, much larger. That's an awful lot of people to get in any orderly sequence.

Marcello: That's a lot of airplanes . . .

Edwards: Yeah.

Marcello: . . . in the air, also.

Edwards: It is. And you say you've got a radio, but all B-17s look alike. They did have, oh, various, you know, squares and triangles, circles and so forth, painted on the back. And they had code letters and so forth. But usually you wouldn't get close enough to them to be able to see that in forming up. But each outfit had rockets or flares that they'd send up, you know. I was in the 95th Group, so maybe we would have, say, two purples and a green. And the radio operator would be shooting these out the back, and when we were forming up, we were supposed to be looking for two purples and the green. There was a lot of pyrotechnics.

Well, on this particular mission we're talking about, this was the fifth of January, 1944. Our briefing that day was for Elberfeld. That's a steel and chemical center in the Ruhr Valley near Essen. Our take-off and rendezvous with Group and Wing were normal. About eight o'clock we were

heading out over the English Channel towards the Coast of Holland. This particular mission we crossed south of Texel Island. Our pilot, Bob Currence, called each of us on the inter-phone and asked us if we wanted to continue and get credit for this mission or turn back.

Marcello: And you were a spare, is that correct?

Edwards: Yes, we were spare ships on this mission. So we voted unanimously to go on. There were really two reasons for doing this. First and most important, after we got credit for twenty-five missions, we could come back home. And we'd be an instructor for awhile which was a good assignment. We were all anxious to get home. And the second reason was that nearly half of our time and work for the mission was over. And it kind of seemed a pity to do this much and have it go down the drain, not get credit for it. The hardest part for the pilot was really over because this is the toughest kind of flying for him--getting into formation and wrestling the plane around. Once you got into the right flight in formation, holding it there wasn't so bad. In trying to bring these large groups of planes together, they had to really force their planes, you know, gun it a lot or hold it way back, which they said was very tiring physically. So they were always anxious to go on.

Marcello: I'm very curious about one thing--this one thousand planes again. Now, they all, of course, weren't taking off from one base.

Edwards: Oh, no, no, no.

Marcello: This ship was going in the air from various bases throughout England . . .

Edwards: Yes, that's correct.

Marcello: . . . and what-have-you. And then did they have a certain rendezvous or were they all going to different places?

Edwards: No, well, we'll talk about that a little bit in a minute. Now, the particular base that I was at, 95th Group, we put up thirty-six planes. So this was a typical group. I don't know how many thirty-six's it would take to make a thousand, but it was a whole bunch of them. We were in the 13th Combat Wing, and the other group in there were the 100th and the 390th. So this entire wing put up maybe 100 aircraft. So that would mean ten wings, and this would be about right because there were three air divisions. And each one would have about three wings. The maximum estimate would be about 1,000 planes. That would check pretty closely.

Well, we'd all done our work. The pilot had done his hardest flying, the gunners had cleaned their guns and assembled them and test-fired them and everything, and the navigator and the bombardier had begun all of their preparations of maps and charts and calibration of instruments. And, as I mentioned earlier, an important factor was the tension, tightening of the stomach, and all that sort of thing. And this was behind you--you were actually doing something. I

guess it was like before a football game. After you've been tackled or blocked once, the tension is over, and you think about the game. And this is about the way we were on a mission. Well, it did seem silly to go through all of that physical and emotional trouble and not have anything to show for it.

Marcello: By this time you were all pretty well calmed down like you were saying?

Edwards: Oh yeah. You're ready for the mission at hand. Well, I ought to mention here that this option of turning back was given only to the one or two spare ships that were sent along with every eighteen planes. If anybody else had turned back without serious mechanical trouble, you're subject to court martial for desertion. And this had to be used some, but word does get around, you know. So if the guy did try to come back with engine trouble, there was an investigation to make sure that there was actually engine trouble or that he had some legitimate reason to turn around and come back.

Well, we voted to go on and get mission number eight and . . . under our belts. Well, the first indication we had that anything was wrong was the appearance of a large city right straight ahead of us. (Chuckle) I identified this city as Dusseldorf by the two elephant-ear lakes in the center of town. We'd seen the place before; it was very unique. Well, somebody appeared to be mixed up. And the course that we had planned and were briefed for called for us to come in well

south of any of the large cities in the Ruhr. Now, there's only one navigator in a group like this that does the navigating. He's the lead navigator; he may be a major. Every other ship has a navigator; this is just in case you get lost or split from formation and can't find your way home. To find your way home you need to know where you are at any time, so the navigator supposed to keep up with that. So it looked like somebody was mixed up here and that we were coming north of what we were supposed to be. But anyway, we flew right straight over Dusseldorf, right over the two lakes. There was no cloud cover at all. And the flak was very thick, very active. But somewhere over Dusseldorf we were hit in this number two engine.

Marcello: By flak.

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: Did you meet any fighter opposition over Dusseldorf?

Edwards: No, not at this point. So we just bored on through this pretty much continual barrage of flak because we were in the Ruhr Valley, and this was solid flak for miles around there. We could see Cologne, some fifteen or twenty miles away. And we could see Elberfeld. But when we got there, it was just under the very edge of a thick blanket of clouds that stretched out to the east as far as we could see. I guess it stretched all the way into Russia.

So the 13th Combat Wing of the 95th Group and the 100th

Group and the 390th Group had turned back for the secondary target which was a small chemical plant about seven miles north of Cologne. I might mention why it was only the 13th Combat Wing, some 100 planes or so here in the Ruhr Valley. The theory for this mission was that what we really wanted to knock out was this target in Elberfeld. But in order to ease the way for us, the 8th Air Force had sent the B-24 bombers. The entire 2nd Bomb Division had gone down to Bordeaux in the southwest of France. And this would like, you know, 400 or 500 hundred planes. And up to the north to Hamburg they sent the 1st Bomb Division of B-17s and all the 3rd Bomb Division which was 100 planes. The idea was to send a big force to the north, a big force to the south, and we'd sneak in the middle with 100 planes. But I don't think we quite accomplished what we intended to.

Marcello: Didn't fool anybody, huh?

Edwards: No, we didn't fool anybody. So after this turn over Eberfeld, when the rest of the group headed toward the secondary target, our plane began to fall behind the rest of the group.

Marcello: You said you had caught some flak, is that correct?

Edwards: Yes. I don't think I realized at the time that we were going to have engine trouble, but I realized later on that this was where we were hit because, well, it would have had to have been because it was over the Ruhr that we hit the flak.

Marcello: What does it feel like when you're hit by flak?

Edwards: Well, it bounces the plane a little bit, and it's a little bit like, oh, you're in a tin-roofed shed, and somebody throws a few rocks on there. Little pieces of metal hit against the thing, and, well, it's just like, say, you're in a Volkswagon convertible and an East Texas Motor Freight comes by it and whoops you over a little bit. It's somewhat similar to that.

We started falling behind, and the pilot called over the inter-phone for Werner--this is John Werner, who was our bombardier--to salvo the bombs. Well, this is bad news. This means we're giving up the bombing mission. And also, it was at that time that people didn't just salvo bombs even if they were over Germany because, you know, you might hit something other than a military target. So Werner put up a little bit of an argument that, you know, "What do you want to salvo them for?" But Bob cut him short; he wasn't in any mood for talking about it. And about this point, Bob said that the number two engine . . . that is, you turn the blades to face the wind so that the edge faced it. Otherwise the air would just make it turn faster and faster and the engine would tear the wing off of the plane. We feathered the number two, so that meant she was going with just three engines, and we started losing ground. So John did get rid of the bombs there; the plane fell farther and farther behind. We kept losing altitude. We continued to fly to the northwest toward Cologne.

Marcello: When you say you "Salvo the bombs," you simply drop them?

Edwards: Yeah, there's a red button that drops everything at once. Normally, you'd string them out or drop the big ones, then some little ones, make a pattern. But with the salvo the red button it's "Whst." Everything goes.

Marcello: This is something that I've always been curious about. On these missions, you never did return with any bombs, isn't that correct?

Edwards: Yes, that's correct.

Marcello: You got to get rid of all of them?

Edwards: Yeah, yeah, that's right. And this would be over the North Sea . . .

Marcello: What if . . .

Edwards: . . . if you had trouble coming back. See, we were very close to . . . our base was very close to the North Sea, so most of the crews would just drop their bombs in the North Sea.

Marcello: What is the danger of coming back and landing with bombs?

Edwards: Well, I guess, you know, the shock of landing . . .

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: . . . can shake something loose. I know there was great concern . . . lot of times, you know, you would push the salvo button, and they all go but one. Somebody has to go back and kick it or beat on it, you know, and get it out. But there are things that you can cut, things you can do, and eventually you'll get it down, and it's very frustrating. There's a propeller on the front of these things that's

supposed to make so many turns before the bomb is armed. But, you know, so it had to make 100 turns or something like this, which means a pretty good drop. But still, you know, with a whole bunch of TNT in a small space you don't want to land with it there.

Marcello: Anyhow, you were falling farther and farther behind.

Edwards: Yeah, we were farther and farther behind. We were losing altitude, and we were continuing to fly to the northwest towards Cologne. But at about this point, the clouds were covering the ground everywhere. We could still see the bombers ahead. So I realized that we were on our own, and I started plotting our position the best I could by dead reckoning to get back to England alone. Well, the formation was still in sight when Leo Landy, who was the tail-gunner called out, "Fighters!" My last log entry that I remember was 12:35--fighters attack. Hank--that's Henry Hankins, the co-pilot--called over what they call the B-channel on VHF radio. He called on our fighters, the American fighters, for support. A few seconds later both the radio and the inter-phone were shot out, and from that point on, I was out of touch with everybody except the bombardier who was up in the nose with me. So the only news of the battle before the inter-phone went out was Landy's message that one of the tail guns was shot out. So he saw the fighters coming in, and they hit him and knocked one of his guns out. So I didn't do any more navigating from

that point on beyond glancing at the gyrocompass from time to time. The reading was always the same--330 degrees which was, I thought, about what we should be flying in order to get home. So I didn't worry too much about it; I thought we were pointed in the right direction. From then on, I couldn't get a very clear picture of what was happening. But later on I talked to a couple of the gunners on the ground, and the three of us spent a lot of time piecing together real carefully what happened. And this is the best we could make out, that is, that there were eight Focke-Wulf 190's which attacked us.

Marcello: This was a pretty hot fighter plane as I recall.

Edwards: Yeah, it was too hot for us. (Chuckle)

Marcello: Where was the most vulnerable place on a B-17? Obviously they must have had some behind some place?

Edwards: I don't know. The most effective turret was the top turret. It had a sort of computer sight, very crude, I'm sure. But the fighters that were shot down were generally shot down by the top turret. The tail turret was pretty effective because they generally attacked without much deflection--pretty well straight in. The front end, nothing. We had no computer. I had a single gun which fired just in a very narrow arc to the front and to the right. The radio gunner had a single fifty-caliber, just hand mounted, useless. The waist gunners each had a fifty-caliber just, you know, mounted on a piece of pipe. They were useless. The ball-turret had a computer. It

was good, but you couldn't keep the ball-turret gunner in the turret because this was the weak spot on the structure, and if it breaks in two, it breaks there, and the turret will come out just like snapping a pea out of a pod. You could only get out of that little old turret when the turret is facing forward and the guns are up. Well, if you lose your electricity, everything like that, you are supposed to do this manually. Well, you can't blame a guy for getting out. So when you needed him he wasn't in the turret. Nobody could blame him. So this left the underside pretty well vulnerable. I'd have to say that that was a vulnerable pot, not because we didn't provide a good gun there, but because you couldn't get people to stay in there.

Marcello: I'd assume those waist gunners had a hard time hitting fighters, did they not?

Edwards: Oh, they didn't hit anything. For one thing nobody came in straight . . . came in straight from the side.

Marcello: Right . . .

Edwards: They never hit anything. There were two guys exposed for no use at all.

Marcello: And were they called the radio gunners, did you say?

Edwards: No, no. They were called waist gunners, and the radio operator had . . .

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Edwards: . . . a gun that shot up over the tail. His was like mine.

It was just sort of . . .

Marcello: I see. I wasn't sure if you were saying radial or . . .

Edwards: No.

Marcello: . . . radio gunner.

Edwards: No. Well, as I said, in piecing this thing together later, we decided we were attacked by eight of these Focke-Wulfs, first from the tail and then from both sides. Now the tail-gunner shot down one of them before his guns were shot out, and he was wounded himself. I don't remember where now. But he got out of the tail and went back to . . . there's sort of a tunnel back there. So he got out so that he could leave the ship if he had to because he had no guns back there. Three of the German fighters concentrated on the nose of the ship, and they just made pass after pass. It seemed like they came in closer and closer. The only return fire that we could give them was the bombardier's . . . what they call the chin turret. There were two fifty-caliber guns sort of like a chin down on in the front of it. They were remotely operated, but they weren't very accurate. And I had a single fifty-caliber machine gun, and as I said earlier, the field of fire was real restricted by its mounting so that I couldn't actually fire straight ahead and couldn't fire to the left side at all, just to the right. So Rabinowitz--he was the top turret gunner and flight engineer--he got hit in the leg by a thirty-caliber slug, and he had to abandon the top turret. As I said, this

was our most effective turret. And Campbell, who was one of our waist gunners, was wounded in the hand and in the leg. And Kelleher, who was the other waist gunner, was hit. So we had no waist gun to return fire. And Rabinowitz, after he got hit in the leg, had to get out of the top turret. So we were getting pretty close to defenseless at that point.

Marcello: Apparently, that plane had been pretty well chopped up.

Edwards: Well, yes, and as the fighters kept coming in, they'd come closer and closer. I mentioned the thirty-caliber wounds that Rabinowitz and Campbell had. The Focke-Wulf, the principal armament was a thirty millimeter cannon, but they'd use these thirty calibers for range finding. When they'd get the range with thirty caliber, then they'd open up with the cannon.

Marcello: Did the B-17's have much armor plate at all?

Edwards: The pilot had some; his seat was armor-plated. There was virtually nothing in the front part. We used to make little nests, I guess you'd call them--we'd carry a lot of extra ammunition aboard. They were starting to issue flak suits, and they were so heavy that nobody ever wanted to wear them. So we set those down in the floor, and we put boxes of fifty-caliber ammunition around them to form a place where we would be when firing the machine guns. But I guess that's kind of silly, too.

Marcello: Well, that nose up there where you were was nothing but plexiglass.

Edwards: Yeah, it was plexiglass and some aluminum around it, also. Well, our other ball turret gunner, Davio, he'd come up out of the turret so he'd be able to jump if he had to. And all ball turret gunners did this, and nobody felt too bad about it. So we were getting to where there just wasn't much to defend us with.

When the German planes were attacking up front there, they scored a hit in the floor of the nose there on just about the first pass. And this put a terrific amount of smoke in parts of the airplane, splintered some ammunition boxes we'd made our little nests out of all, and completely littered the nose, so I opened up the astrodome, which was a little opaque, plexiglass thing. And the theory was that the navigator had a sextant, you know. And if he was flying at night in the Pacific or something, he could get out his sextant and stick his head in this dome, and then he would shoot the stars and all. But this thing had a quick opening thing. You'd open it, and this cleared out the smoke pretty good so we could tell what we were doing. But I know one thing that really impressed me, and I still remember it. This big old hole in the bottom of the ship there, about six inches square and just a foot or so behind where the navigator would normally sit if he was working at his table--I was over on the other side at my gun--but there was a great big hole there. And there was all these radio parts and all in there. I didn't even know

there was any radio down there. (Chuckle) You could see all the guts of the plane in there, and it was darn near a big enough hole to fall down in.

Well, I mentioned that my gun was on the right side, and that little nest I'd made out of flak suits and machine gun ammunition boxes was on that side, and my navigation table was on the left side, so I wasn't over there when it was hit. Well, the second time the Germans attacked the nose, they were coming in pretty much straight, and they hit bombardier's chin turret right straight on. I was looking over there and could see old John just shudder and slump in to his seat, so I thought he was dead. But I walked over there and shook him, and he said he was okay. I didn't believe him (chuckle) because I thought, you know, he was badly hurt and just wasn't showing it. But after awhile he got up and put on his chest parachute and told me to put my parachute on. We normally wear a harness, and the parachute was a thing that you could snap on; you had more freedom of movement that way. So John went up to the flight deck to talk to the pilot and co-pilot. His machine guns were out; he didn't have any bombs; there wasn't anything to be done there. So I stayed in the nose because I still had my machine gun, and if anybody came in that direction, I'd fire at them. I probably wouldn't have hit anybody.

They came at us mostly from what you'd call eleven-thirty o'clock, you know. Straight ahead is twelve o'clock, and a

little bit to the right is one o'clock. My gun would fire at one o'clock and two o'clock, and it was still firing. So they come in just a little bit the other side of the nose--very frustrating.

Marcello: This was the third pass now?

Edwards: Well, yes and actually . . .

Marcello: By this time . . .

Edwards: I don't know how many passes. I know there were a number. I wouldn't really know how many any more. But somewhere along in here we . . . see, there were only two guns left--this gun and the radio operator's which fired up over the tail. Nothing to the bottom, nothing to the sides. So, we were just about defenseless, and they were coming in close enough that you could get a darn good look at the German fighter pilots.

Marcello: They came that close that you could actually . . .

Edwards: Oh, yeah . . .

Marcello: . . . get a good look at them?

Edwards: Oh, yes, yes. And you couldn't see what color the propeller hub was at all. I don't remember them all, but I do remember it was either yellow or orange. Anyway, they were coming in quite close. So we took another twenty millimeter cannon shell. I believe I said thirty millimeter a while ago, it's twenty . . .

Marcello: Yes.

Edwards: Millimeter cannon shell in the nose, and, you know, there was

this smoke business again. The bombardier came down from the flight deck to see about me, and I was blasting away at one of those Focke-Wulfs down below us. And Werner told me to stop shooting, that the P-47s were there. The American fighters had come in answer to the call that we'd sent out, I guess. So several of them . . . I was still firing, and I saw several of them come right . . . looked like they'd gone right straight down, right on the tail of the Focke-Wulf I'd been shooting at. And I don't know how many Americans there were, but there was a whole gang of them. And this is the last we saw of the Germans. There were no more battles.

Marcello: How long did all this take place? How much time was elapsing here?

Edwards: Well . . .

Marcello: From the time the German fighters attacked you until the American fighters arrived?

Edwards: Well, I believe this was about thirty minutes. The last entry I wrote was twelve thirty-five, and we hit the ground . . . I hit the ground at about ten minutes after one. It took about ten minutes to fall, so I guess it was about a thirty-minute air battle, and as air battles go, this one was long, drawn out.

Marcello: Is that right?

Edwards: Oh yeah. (Chuckle) Usually it's "pff," and it's all over.

Marcello: How long did it seem that that air battle lasted?

Edwards: Well, it actually seemed like it went pretty fast, I guess. You know, its really kind of hard to remember.

Well, the fight was over when these P-47s showed on the scene. We didn't see them fighting with the Germans. The last I saw them, they were diving after this one German I was shooting at. They were gone. There was nobody but us in the sky anymore. So I walked up to the flight deck--the intercom was out, you know--to talk to the pilot. He said to give him a course home, and I told him to fly 270 degrees. Based on the fact that every time I looked at my compass it said 330 degrees for such a long time. But the compass unit, the gyrocompass unit, was located out between the number one and number two engines, and it must have been shot out in the very first pass because the compass was frozen on 330 degrees. So it should have been changing as we made these violent maneuvers. I guess it should have registered on them, but it didn't. So I went back up to the nose to try to find my maps to see if I could look out and see where we were by the pilot--he'd recognize something on the ground. But I couldn't find my maps, and I couldn't find my log, and I wasn't making much headway. But during the course of the battle we'd had a good deal of the other trouble in the plane. The number two engine was already out, and we'd lost number one. It was feathered. And I looked out on the other side, and number three engine was coughing. And just as I looked out, Bob had

feathered number four. But he got number one going again, and all this time we were losing altitude pretty fast. He was just sort of nursing one to the other, and, you know, there just wasn't much left. So at this point the altimeter was down to ninety, showing 9,500 feet. We'd been up around 22,000, something like that. We were down under 10,000 feet. The compass was still reading 350. So at this point he rang the alarm bell, and I guess I just threw a fit. I guess I wasn't to jump somehow or other. And finally I looked out between number one and number two and saw the thing was on fire. Well, I didn't have anything else to do but jump then.

Marcello: Had you ever jumped before?

Edwards: Oh, no. No. I hadn't jumped at all, and you get down there and get to looking how far 10,000 feet is and being inexperienced and all, I just sort of froze there at the door, you know. Well, the bombardier was behind me, and he wasn't in a hurry to go either.

Finally the co-pilot came down, and I guess you could say he kicked us out. He said, "Its on fire; you gotta go!" And he sort of kicked us out. Well, I kneeled there by the hatch, and Hankins gave me a little shove, and I was out. The slip-stream caught me at that point and died away, and I started pulling on my parachute. Although you hadn't jumped before they tell you how to jump. They say you don't want to get out there and have the wind blowing you around. You can't reach

your ripcord. Don't grab the ripcord because you might, hit your arm or something and open it, and the shoot might catch on the plane. So what you do, you grab the harness up above the ripcord, and then as soon as you get out of the plane, you move your hand down, and you count to three or ten or whatever and pull it. So I held my harness up here, and as soon as I could I moved my hand down. I pulled that ripcord so hard that I pulled the wire all the way off of the parachute and carried it all the way down to the ground. And in talking to a lot of other people who jumped since, it was one of the few times anybody has ever pulled the wire (chuckle) all the way off. (Chuckle) So I was real proud of my own strength there.

Marcello: The parachute did open okay, I assume.

Edwards: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. We couldn't see the ground, but you could see the clouds down there.

Marcello: Now, the German fighters had disappeared by this time.

Edwards: Yes, everyone was gone. And once you get out away from the planes, its very, very quiet. You couldn't see the ground. I could see some other parachutes--two in front of me and two back behind me. Going down toward the clouds, I remember being worried that . . . we'd heard that turbulence at the top of the clouds will sometimes make all the air spill out of the chute and it drops, you know. The chute will collapse. And I was worrying about that, and there was some turbulence going

through the edge of the clouds. But it was over in a hurry, and you were out on the bottom, and as you're coming down, you could see the little village there. So I motioned to the guy in the parachute closest to me, and I wasn't sure who it was. I thought it was Hankins, and I'd hoped it was Hankins because we'd always planned that if we had to jump out, we'd try to get together and escape. He was a Texas boy, and in fact, professionally he was a prison guard at the federal prison at Texarkana before the war. So we'd planned on escaping together if we'd ever had to. I motioned to him to some woods over there that we could see with the idea of meeting there.

I hit the ground and pulled off my parachute. Of course, you're still pretty much in a state of shock, but after all these years I do remember kneeling down and giving thanks. It was twelve fifty-eight.

Marcello: What sort of things go through your mind when, you know, the alarm goes off and you're told to jump . . .

Edwards: (Chuckle)

Marcello: . . . and then the next thing you know you're floating through the air, and you finally hit the ground.

Edwards: Well, I don't know. (Chuckle) It's another world, I tell you. It's another world. You don't know . . .

Marcello: Do things happen so fast . . .

Edwards: They do and you don't . . .

Marcello: . . . that you really can't think?

Edwards: . . . you have no choice. There's no conscious thing to be made up. Just like the alarm bell, you know, it's an awful thing to hear. We'd never heard one seriously before. We'd had drills and knew what it sounded like. Just like the jumping business, you just think it'll never happen to you. Well, we hit the ground there, and this little village . . .

Marcello: Were you all pretty close together now? Had you drifted pretty far apart?

Edwards: Yeah, I couldn't see anybody else.

Marcello: You were all alone.

Edwards: Yeah. I was out in this field. It snowed there on the ground, and the ground was frozen. I guess this little village was two or three hundred yards away, and I remember some kids playing in the village there, you know, out in the school yard. And they just kept on with the game. They appeared not to notice, just like guys come out of a parachute everyday. It's hard to believe; you know how kids are.

Well, a truck drove by the road that wasn't too far away. I waved to the driver, but he didn't stop. And I kept waiting for the Germans to come, but the Germans didn't come, and I was standing there in the field.

Well, you began to get your breath a little bit. I remember what our intelligence officer back at the base had told us in briefing. He said we were to bury our parachutes and our May West flotation gear and our throat microphones and

all that sort. Get rid of it; that's the first thing--get rid of as much of your uniform as you can. Well, I did. I buried it in the snow near a haystack there. I didn't do a very good job of burying it, but anyway I got out of it.

I walked away from the road and back towards these woods that I motioned to. I went into the woods for a short distance and sat down, stopped for a smoke, and tried to think this thing out. Somewhere along here the numbness, the shock, started to wear off. I realized for the first time that I sprained my ankle when I hit the ground. My leg was bleeding from several small cuts that had been caused by twenty millimeter fragments or splinters. I don't know which. The shock wore off; I began to realize how intensely cold it was there. We were wearing the real light blue RAF electrically-heated flying suits. The Americans had not developed any yet, and the RAF had let us use these. Of course, we plugged them into the electrical system of the plane. These were of very light-weight. The shoes were very light-weight, too, like felt house shoes. We'd wear fur-lined flying boots on top of these. But when the parachute opened the flying boots, you know, the shock pulled the flying boots off.

Marcello: Is that right?

Edwards: We were in the snow in house shoes, is what it amounts to. Our gloves were the same way. Gloves were very light-weight with electric heat, like an electric blanket. Well, I didn't have

any gloves, so it looked like a long, cold night ahead.

We had this little escape kit they used to give everybody--a little plastic thing about so big that had all sorts of goodies in there. It had a little compass among other things. My compass showed that the woods that I was in ran east and west. Since England was to the west, I headed west.

After about an hour I came across a good-sized road that was running sort at the bottom of a valley or ravine. The woods were cleared away around the road pretty good, sort like they clear around the main highways around here. I was afraid to cross it, so I just lay down in the bushes there a little while along the hillside. I watched the road to see how much traffic there was. Pretty soon I heard a car engine, and it stopped. I heard some doors slam. A few minutes later I saw Hankins, the co-pilot, marching up the road with three or four Germans behind him. They were keeping him covered with these rifles like Hankins was a dangerous criminal, you know. He had his hands up, and he looked pretty blue about the whole thing.

Marcello: About what time was this now? I mean, what time of the day? Morning, noon?

Edwards: It must of been maybe two o'clock.

Marcello: Were you armed? Did you . . .

Edwards: No.

Marcello: . . . have a .45 or anything?

Edwards: No, no, we didn't ever carry a pistol in our crew. Some crews did, but at this time all of Europe was occupied. There was no invasion, not even down in Italy any place. The entire continent of Europe was German-occupied, and there just wasn't anybody going to shoot their way out. There wasn't any lines to shoot your way through. The only way back was to get to Switzerland or Sweden or Spain, then the American Embassy on back.

Marcello: This is something in which I've always been interested. If you did manage to get to Switzerland or Spain or Sweden, you sat out the rest of the war, did you not? Weren't you interned?

Edwards: Yes, in Sweden and Switzerland you were interned. In Spain you could go on back home. Spain would let you go back; but when you got to Spain, you had to get all the way to the American Embassy in Madrid. Most of the Spaniards would turn you back over to the Franco people. That was not the preferred route. One reason, of course, was the Pyrenees Mountains.

Well, I got real dejected to see that this one was Hank because he was the guy I planned to escape with. So I layed there and watched the road for awhile longer. There was no more traffic, so finally I crossed the thing.

Marcello: About how wide was this road?

Edwards: Oh, it was a two-lane road, but it looked like it might be what we correspond to one of our state highways or something like this. You know, it wasn't just an alley or something like this,

or a farmer's lane. It was a paved road. So I finally crossed the road and saw this great big house that looked like a chateau, sort of, over in there. If I may, I would like to refer to some notes that I have here somewhere. I remember this thing looked like a castle. Yeah, here they are. I'm referring to the notes I made in Moosburg in Germany of May of 1945. Well, this chateau looked awful impressive to me, sort of like pictures you see of Versailles and all. I was sure somebody lived there, so I gave that a big, wide berth. I didn't get within a mile of it. I continued around it and then headed west there, still for no particularly good reason.

Marcello: Why'd you avoid the chateau? Did you figure perhaps it was a residence or dwelling which had perhaps been commandeered by the Germans or something?

Edwards: Well, actually I thought I was still in Germany.

Marcello: Oh, you didn't know where you were?

Edwards: No, no, no.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: The compass had been out, and if I was where I thought I was, I would of been in Germany. And everybody would have been unfriendly, and my only chance would have been just to avoid all contact with all people. I had had no idea of getting in with the underground.

Marcello: I suppose the German people, the civilians, didn't have too much love for American pilots or American . . .

Edwards: No.

Marcello: . . . bomber crews.

Edwards: No, they took a dim view of our activity. So I stayed away from the Chateau here and circled around it. By this time it was getting along late in the day around four or five o'clock. It was getting dark and getting much colder.

Marcello: The only Germans you saw up to this time were the ones that had captured Hankins, is that correct?

Edwards: Yes, that's correct. That's correct. Well, I was real disappointed, too, at not finding any of the other crew members or even seeing a sign of them because I had seen four other parachutes.

Marcello: Were you getting hungry?

Edwards: Well, I was beginning to think about that. This little emergency kit had the food in it; it had some chemicals to purify water; it had "No-Doze" pills to keep you awake so you could stay alert; and it had sulfa powder; it had had some language cards, all the basic phrases of different languages; and it had a few other things like that. I remember they had some maps that were printed on silk handkerchiefs that were real popular as souvenirs.

Well, like I say, it was getting cold, and I just didn't have the clothes to spend the night in the woods. So I just decided to give myself up. I kept on walking, and I came to a small village. I just decided I would bring things to a head--give up if there was anyplace to give up. The village,

I believe, was Murwart. This is based on what people told me later on. So I walked up to a house on the edge of the village there and knocked on the door. There was nobody at home, or nobody came to the door. I tried another house or so, and nobody came to the door. And sort of at the crossroad and the middle of this little place there was a . . . looked like a big building with big wooden doors and a bunch of signs tacked to it, you know. I went up there, and I thought at least maybe the City Hall or somebody there could at least tell me what country I was in. I couldn't because it was foreign writing; I couldn't tell what language it was. That didn't help much. I knocked on that door, and nobody answered, so I started walking on down that street.

Finally, a door opened, and a little, old, gray-haired lady there opened it a little bit and motioned for me to come in and I did. She opened the door and whisked me inside--a real dark, dingy room in there--and there was all this foreign jabber going on in there. But I got my language code out of my escape kit, and by pointing to phrases and all, I found out these people were Belgians and that I was in Belgium.

Marcello: They speak French, do they not? In this part?

Edwards: Yes, in this part. We were very close to the border of France, just a couple of miles from the French border. So these people were really glad to see me. They just couldn't do enough for me. They kissed me on both cheeks like General De Gaulle used

to do in the newsreels and all.

Marcello: About how many of them were there in this room?

Edwards: Oh, gosh, I don't know. There must have been ten or twenty of them.

Marcello: Was it a fairly large room?

Edwards: Yeah.

Marcello: And they were part of a resistance?

Edwards: No, I don't think so. I think they were just villagers. This lady must've been . . . you know over there the peasants live three or four generations together. They must have sent the kids out to gather up the men, you know. I don't know how many hours they'd been watching me as I walked down that street. You had, you know, the feeling that . . . no cars, no trucks, no bikes, no people, you know. It was almost like a deserted village, and you can almost feel the eyes on you. This little lady was the only one who had enough guts to say anything.

Well, she had a young fellow there with her. I don't know if he was kin to her or not. He was a kid named Henri. He seemed to be particularly friendly. He was about our age. Well, these folks . . . I guess just before I left with _____ Henri; we were all kissin' on the cheeks, and they were loading me up and getting ready for the trip back to England. They weren't real practical in the way they went at it. They were strictly amateurs at this sort of thing. I had a railroad map of France; they gave me this

railroad map. They gave me a couple loaves of the bread they had made there, and they gave me some eggs. And I had on my flying suit, you know, with all the different pockets. I had raw eggs in the pockets of this flying suit and the loaves of bread under my arms.

Marcello: They were going to try to get you back to the coast?

Edwards: They were going to send me all the way through France dressed like this. They showed me what train to catch and all. I didn't have any money or anything like that, but they had the best wishes in the world. Anyway this Henri showed up. He was about twenty years old, about our age.

Marcello: None of them had any qualms about helping you?

Edwards: No, no, no, no, none at all, none at all. They, of course, didn't want to get caught at it, but they were very outgoing.

But this Henri seemed to have a little better idea about how to do things, and he took us over to his house for a little while. We went sort of the back way, and he was perhaps in the same block. He had a little place down in the cellar there. Well, he was married. He had a real lovely wife about the same age--a French girl from Rhiems. These folks fed me real well, and we played with their little baby. This kids name was Christian. He was just a few months old. This Henri, of course, at his age he should have been in prison in Germany as a laborer--forced labor--and he was hiding out from these people.

Marcello: This is what the Germans did with most of the able-bodied civilians in the occupied countries?

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: They sent most of them back to Germany as forced labor?

Edwards: Yes, if they were able-bodied, and this fellow was. He lived out in the woods a good part of the time. Well, Henri had a lot better idea about how to go about things, and he started combing the town to get me civilian clothes. And he fixed me up with passable clothes. They didn't have much to spare, but they gave me what they could.

Marcello: You got rid of your flight suit in other words?

Edwards: Yes, I did. I gave it to Henri. These people are very sentimental, and they all wanted to exchange souvenirs, so Henri gave me his wedding picture that he apparently had made up as a postcard. Anyway, it was on cardboard. He had a whole bunch of these pictures. He gave me one of these as a souvenir which was not real smart in my situation. Anyway, I took it, and I carried that with me. I gave him something out of my escape kit. I don't know what.

Well, the news traveled around that part of the country that other people had parachuted into the area, and word came to me that a couple of my comrades had been captured--not captured, but had been found by the Belgians, and these were wounded, and of course I was glad to know that they were alive. And this Henri said he'd take me to meet them, and he did. We

met them in another house there in the village. I don't know just where. I know they had a doctor there. This Rabinowitz I mentioned, you know, had a thirty caliber slug in his leg. It had gone in and didn't come out. Campbell had a wound in the same place with a thirty caliber, but his had come out. It made a neat hole going in and a bad one coming out. Campbell's hand was cut up pretty bad too. Again, I don't know whether he cut it getting out of the plane or whether it was a twenty millimeter fragments or what.

Marcello: What were your first reactions upon seeing these guys?

Edwards: Well, it's pretty sentimental again, too. You were awful glad to see them still alive. And their wounds weren't to the extent that . . . it was obvious they weren't going to die from them, you know, anything like that. And this Belgian doctor put a salve on his hand, which seemed silly to me. The guy had a bullet in there, you know. You'd think you ought to be taking it out, but he didn't. He just put the salve on the outside of it. Apparently they healed up okay.

Somebody along in here . . . let's see . . . Henri. . . . Somewhere Henri had a buddy named Emil, and I don't remember where he comes into this thing. They were about the same age, and Emil and Henri had took the three of us out to this Boy Scout hut out from town out in the woods there.

Marcello: This was a Boy Scout hut, was it?

Edwards: Yeah. Yeah, it was a little cottage out there where we could

build a fire, and he brought food to us. And we lived out there for a couple of days.

Marcello: Something I wanted to ask you. How old were you at this time?

Edwards: Let's see, I was twenty the month before I was shot down. Is that right? Yeah, I had my twentieth birthday in England and twenty-first in Germany. I was born in November '23, and twenty years later would make it November '43. So I was just barely twenty at the time.

Marcello: Anyhow, you were out at this Boy Scout hut.

Edwards: Yeah, we had this hut out there. We stayed out there for a couple of days, and, of course, this wasn't getting us anywhere. We were just holed out. And the underground . . . by this time we were with the active underground.

Marcello: How did you get in contact with them?

Edwards: Well, they contacted us.

Marcello: Through Emil or Henri?

Edwards: Yes, Emil or Henri. I'm not sure whether they belonged or not. I just don't know. I imagine they did. Certainly they were close enough that they knew. But they arranged to get us into the mainstream, and they took us into this large place, Hastierre-Labaux. They took us in one at a time. They . . . you go from these places always at night, and usually the person that is conducting you will walk, say, a half mile in front of you. If he goes in a house, you go in that same house. You don't ever go together with them. I don't remember whether it was this trip or another one, but I

remember they provided me with a bicycle. And we had several miles to cover, and the guy in front of me was on a bicycle. And he wasn't even the same guy who told me that after awhile a guy would come by with a bicycle, and he was going to have a white package on the back. I was to follow him. If he turned in a place, I was to go on with him. Well, I followed the guy and went in where he went in. But I never saw the guy again, but he got me to the right place. We did a lot of that sort of thing.

Marcello: What sort of characters were these underground people?

Edwards: Oh, they're real fine people. They're the folks that are really the super-patriots, I would say--the folks that really love their country and really love freedom. And they're ready to do something about it. They're just the top 1 per cent or so. The particular branch of the underground we got in with was the branch that was the old . . . you could call them Royalists. Anyway, they supported the old King Albert, who was the World War I king, and whom they loved very much. The backbone of this resistance was the Catholic priests, sisters, the World War I veterans. Hell, if I had been a German, I could have picked out the underground people. In the first place they were grey-haired; they were World War I veterans; they wore their World War I decorations. Or they were Catholic priests. If you had gone around and gathered up everybody who was wearing these ribbons on their civilian clothes, you'd

have the brains of the thing.

Marcello: These were all the people who mainly composed the underground?

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: These were the leaders?

Edwards: Definitely and it was their children who were largely helping them.

Now Emil and Henri got us into this place in Hastierre-Labaux, and the place where we were living was there. The lady of the house was called Madame Gozee. And we went in there one at a time like I said. We all got in there the same night. This Madame Gozee was quite a character. She was about seventy years old at the time and spoke no English at all, but she hated the Germans with a passion. She said that in her lifetime the Germans had come three times--1870, 1914, and again in 1940. And this Hastierre-Labaux is on the edge of the Ardennes forest, and it's close to the invasion route that the Germans have traditionally followed in going into France. So she couldn't remember much about it, the 1870 war, but she still hated the "Sale Bosch." I don't just know what "Sale" means, but it must be something very bad the way she said it.

Marcello: "Bosh" is a derogatory term, is it not?

Edwards: To them, the way they say it, it's very much so. Well, Madame Gozee's son was a banker there in town, and he was a World War I veteran. As I said, he always wore the decorations and was very active in the underground. Well, this first

night a priest came, and he took our names and home addresses and our units supposedly to let the folks at home know. But we come to find out later that what he done was checking us out. They wanted to make sure that we really were Americans, not Germans--you know, this spies spying on spies type of thing. So they cleared us all right.

Marcello: You really had not seen too much of the underground apparatus in work yet, had you?

Edwards: Oh no, no, no, no, no.

Marcello: This was very early.

Edwards: Yes, very much so. Now, this Gozee, the banker, had two daughters there; and the oldest of these girls, Suzanne, later married a fellow named Jean de la Gosse. Jean was really in the underground. He was twenty or twenty-one, but he had been in the Belgian West Point when the war broke out. He was a sophomore there. And he took off for the hills in a literal sense; he was living off the country. Jean was really a professional underground man. And he came there to Hastierre-Labaux to take us into Namur, which is the city on the Meuse River. We stayed there in Hastierre-Labaux for about a week, and it was an awfully pleasant week because these were really delightful people. They did everything they could to make us at home. A doctor came several times to take care of the wounds and so forth.

Marcello: You were all still together yet?

Edwards: Yes, we were all still together there. I remember we spoke the American slang, and it always upset them when we said, "yeah." They thought we were saying the German "ja." "You're sure you're Americans?" (Chuckle) But these were real fine middle class people, good christian folks. We had a real good time. The two little daughters, Suzanne and the younger girl--I don't remember her name--they used to kid a lot, and they were trying to teach us French, and we were trying to teach them English. The older girl, Suzanne, was about a senior in high school, I guess. She had something like eight years of English and could barely speak English.

Marcello: About how long were you with these people altogether?

Edwards: We were there, I believe, seven days I've had some correspondence since the war, and they speak of a week there, and that would check out about right.

Marcello: I assume you have to be constantly on the move, is that correct?

Edwards: You couldn't stay in any one place too long certainly. This seven days was about as long as we stayed any place.

Marcello: But you didn't see many Germans except the ones that captured Hankins, is that correct?

Edwards: That's correct. Of course, we hadn't been outside this house. Once we were inside the place we stayed, and I don't know even if there was a German stationed in this town of Hastierre-Labaux. There may not have been. You got the impression that

they were garrisoned with a platoon here and a company there, you know, and by radio they could move pretty quick. There also was a good deal of talk among the village people that there were informers in the village, and they would watch such things like where food was going, unusual traffic in and out of the house, and this sort of thing. But the people we were with were very discreet.

Well, as you said, we did need to keep moving, so this Jean de la Gosse, whom I was talking about, started taking on the underground with the idea of getting back to England. Of course, in a small village like that it was a bad place to try to hole up.

Marcello: Everybody knows where you are . . .

Edwards: Yeah, everybody knows . . .

Marcello: . . . and what's going on in the town.

Edwards: . . . so the idea is to get to Brussels, get Namur or Brussels, Antwerp, or some place like that. So de la Gosse started us out to Namur and this trip took several days. This was the town that in the Battle of the Bulge the Germans almost reached. It's on the Meuse River. This trip . . . I don't remember how long it took me to get to Namur, but some of it we were to go by bicycles, some of it we'd walk just behind Jean, we'd stay at various farmhouses. This was a very pleasant sort of thing. These were fine country people . . . do anything in the world for you. In fact, they were doing

that. They were risking their lives just to give you a night's lodging.

Marcello: I assume the penalty for being caught helping downed fliers would have been death.

Edwards: Yes. This is right as I understand it.

Marcello: And I assume this would have happened to anybody caught in the underground.

Edwards: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: Did you ever think about the fact that you were in civilian clothes?

Edwards: Well, a little bit; but this was sort of like jumping out of a plane. You figured that you weren't going to get caught. (Chuckle) Let's see. We were talking about going to Namur, weren't we?

Marcello: That's right.

Edwards: I don't remember just how long it took; I don't even remember just how we got into the town there. I remember that Jean was telling me that when we got to Namur that I was going to stay with the Mademoiselle, and this is what I'd been waiting for. He said, "You've heard about the Mademoiselle you're going to stay with in the underground?" I said, "Well, fine but . . . ." We didn't go there right away. The first place he put me up when we got to Namur . . . I guess we got there by bicycle, and it was in a little pub right across the street from the jail, the city jail.

Marcello: About how big was this town?

Edwards: Namur?

Marcello: Yes.

Edwards: I'd guess 100,000 people, something like that. It's about . . .

Marcello: Third or fourth . . .

Edwards: Yes, third or fourth largest city in Belgium. So they had a good size jail over there, and, of course, the guards were all German soldiers. This was the first German soldiers I had seen. Now I was separated from Campbell and Rabinowitz at this point. We were leaving one at a time going to Namur. And I didn't see . . . I haven't seen Rabinowitz since then. I saw Campbell again later in prison but not to speak to him. Well, we spent the day in this little pub there.

Marcello: They split you up in other words . . .

Edwards: Yeah.

Marcello: . . . in various places.

Edwards: Yes, yes. The other fellows were wounded and couldn't get around so well, so we went on ahead. This lady that ran the pub there . . . the jailers spent a lot of time over there, you know, in the evenings. They'd sit around and drink, sing drinking songs. But when we were there in the morning there wasn't anything going on, so we cranked up the old piano and played old World War I songs, you know, K-K-K Katie, Over There, this sort of thing. They were driving me crazy. You

looked out the window and could see German's patrolling the prison over there, and here she is singing World War I songs.

Marcello: Where did she put you in the evening when the Germans frequented the pub?

Edwards: Well, I didn't spend the night there.

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Edwards: This is when I went to see Mademoiselle. So they sent me out on streetcars. They gave me some change and sent me out on the streetcar and told me to get off the streetcar when another guy did. We sat in separate ports of it. So they gave me a bunch of this aluminum Belgian money, you know. I didn't know one from the other. The conductor came by, and I gave him what I thought I was supposed to--three or four coins--and it was wrong, and he jabbered at me for awhile. So finally, I just put my hand in my pocket and held out everything I had, and he took what he wanted. He was bound to know something was wrong because I couldn't speak French. The guy up front didn't say anything. I didn't either. We rode on out on the streetcar. We got off and I saw then this place where Mademoiselle was.

Marcello: No last name then. All you knew . . .

Edwards: No.

Marcello: . . . was Mademoiselle.

Edwards: No, that's right. Actually these other last names I've given you were the ones I found out much later. They took great

pains . . . they would give you a name . . . even Henri may have been a code name. I don't know. Jean de la Gosse is that man's correct name because I've corresponded with him since the war.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: This Mademoiselle was a hard-looking character. She must have been fifty years old if she was a day, and you can imagine how this impressed a twenty year old boy. But she worked some where in town all day, gone all day. The house was cold. She had a bucket of fish that she kept out there, and I don't know if she served them . . . she couldn't have been serving them raw. Sure seemed like it was raw. Every night she'd go out in the garage there and drag one of these fish in and cook it. Well, I'd stay in bed all day long to keep warm. We stayed there, I guess, about ten days.

Marcello: What would you estimate the temperature was anyhow?

Edwards: Oh, gosh, I don't know. I was awful cold all the time.

Marcello: It's pretty nasty over there in the wintertime, is it not?

Edwards: Oh, gosh, it is. It's always cold there. The only thing she had to read in English there was a book on Canadian forestry. It was, oh, about 1919-1920 book because it showed some Canadian soldiers in World War I in the army of occupation. So I learned a great deal about raising trees in Canada. But this was about ten days--very long--and time was hanging very heavy on my hands. So this takes us until about something like the

25th or 26th of January.

Marcello: 1944.

Edwards: '44. A fellow came to take me to Brussels. I didn't know anything about the guy. He was a middle age fellow. He had the little ribbon decoration on his suit like all the rest of them did.

Marcello: They made no qualms about hiding these decorations, . . .

Edwards: No.

Marcello: . . . is that correct?

Edwards: No. There must have been an awful lot of them still around. Of course, the ones we saw all had them. I guess there were a lot that had them that weren't involved. They seemed to wear them with very great pride. But this guy took me to Brussels. He took me on the train, and this was, I guess, as hairy as any experience I ever had in the underground because . . . we rode on the train. It's about--I don't know--sixty, eighty, maybe a hundred miles on the train. We went at night, but the European trains, you know, are all compartments. They don't have coach cars, as far as I know, like we do here. We were in a compartment for the night with four other people. One of these guys was a German officer. I was sitting right by the German officer . . .

Marcello: In uniform?

Edwards: Yes. They wear a ceremonial sword. This guy's sword was poking me in the side all the way. I couldn't speak a word of

German and, of course, no French; and I just didn't have any business there. I had civilian clothes.

Marcello: Did you have to have all sorts of passes and so on and . . .

Edwards: I had a pass. Somewhere in Namur they took me into town again on the streetcar . . . took me into town--Jean did. We went in a big department store there. He bought me a little ice cream of some sort. I was amazed that these poor occupied countries would still have ice cream. But he bought me some ice cream and took my picture in one of those booths where you put a coin in. And he had a big stack of carte d' identité, card of identity. He had a whole stack of these, and they forged some German major's name on there. And they put my picture on there, and he wadded and threw it down on the ground and stomped on it. He said, "You've had this thing for four years, you know. It's got to look old." It did when they got through with it. And this described me as a . . . oh, I forgot, but anyway I was a native of the country. And I was a worker, and it gave some reason why I wasn't in Germany--bad health, something or other. So I still had this carte d' identité. Anyway we were in this compartment. The guy's sword poked me in the side here, you know. This courier that was with me saw what was happening and struck up a big conversation with me. Ha, ha, ha, ha, laughing.

Marcello: You call him a courier?

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: Yes. And he made a good conversation, laughing and joking and all, you know. Every so often he'd whisper to me, "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid." He had this briefcase with him. He reached down there in the dark and came out with a piece of sponge cake or something like that. He pressed that in my hand in the dark, you know. Then to keep my courage up he whistled some World War I songs: K-K-K Katie, Over There, Roses Are Blooming In Picardy, this sort of thing.

Marcello: Did the German officer know what he was saying and so on?

Edwards: No, no, no. Why in the devil the guy thought he had to do that, I don't know. Well, anyway we got on into Brussels, and he took me to this house in Brussels at 24 Rue de Ligne. And this was where a lady lived that was named Madame Dufois. She was about forty years old, I guess. Her husband was in the French Army. He was a captain in one of these native outfits. I don't know which one. Anyway he was a prisoner-of-war in France. They had served in the Camaroons, Madagascar. Their house was full of these native souvenirs. I guess they were Senegalese troops that he officered. They had a son with them who was about nineteen to twenty, very sickly boy, very pale. He looked like he could barely get around--intellectual type, awfully friendly.

A lot of folks from Belgium came to see me, a lot of different underground types. I know one guy came to see me,

and he sketched out for me the plan for the antiaircraft defense for the German fighter headquarters for this part of the country to take it back to England, you know. I said, "Yeah, yeah." But I got to thinking--this was on a Friday that we went to Madame Dufois'--I got to thinking that if I were captured, I had a lot of stuff on me that was bad, for example, this picture of Henri and his wife, you know, Christian's mother. But, gee, you know, that's their death warrant, and this diagram of the Germans' antiaircraft defenses was my death warrant. So I just got rid of a bunch of it, just burned it in the fireplace. This was on a Friday. We got there, I believe, on a Friday night, and we left Saturday. An awful lot of people came in to see us.

Marcello: These were all people from the underground?

Edwards: Oh, yes, all from the underground. And they would always ask you, "When is the invasion," this sort of thing. And they were asking a second lieutenant, you know. You don't even know where the mission is going from day to day, much less an invasion. But they were real fine people.

I guess it was about Sunday afternoon that this lady and her son were concerned that I didn't have anything to read. The boy said he knew where he could get me some Shakespeare that was in English. He'd go get it. I said, "No, no, I don't like Shakespeare," I don't guess I did. But he said there was no bother at all, and he would be glad to go get it for me.

So he took off, and we had supper, and after supper we were still sitting at the table there waiting for the boy to come back. The door opened a little bit, and then it just busted open. And the Germans came from everywhere, uniformed Germans. There was about ten of them.

Marcello: What did you think when you saw them?

Edwards: Oh, man, it was bad news, you know. I didn't think it was going to wind up like that. But they just took the lady off somewhere. They sat me down on this chair there in the kitchen. There was a clock over the German. One German guard got out his pistol. He sat in one chair, and I sat in the other. And he held his pistol on me for a solid hour. He was a little bitty guy with a great big pistol. And in the German Army it seemed like the lower the rank, the bigger the weapon. The captain has a little tiny P-38 and the private carried a huge Lugar. This guy must have been a private. Anyway, he held this gun on me for about an hour. They searched the house, and they came up with my passport, the carte d' identité we were talking about. And that was about all they had on me. And they didn't make any attempts to interrogate us there. I asked them for . . . the underground had given me an overcoat and hat. I asked them for this before we went into the station. They ignored that.

Marcello: Now these were German soldiers, is that correct? This wasn't the Gestapo?

Edwards: Well, the Gestapo stands for Geheimstaatspolizei, secret state police . . .

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: These were GFP, Geheimfeldpolizei. They had GFP on their thing. They either wear uniforms or civilian clothes just like our military intelligence.

Marcello: I see. I see.

Edwards: This was the Feldpolizei. Well, after this hour or so there . . .

Marcello: What do you surmise happened? Did they apprehend this boy, or do you think . . . obviously the boy didn't go straight to the Germans . . .

Edwards: No, no, no, no, no, no. No, . . .

Marcello: . . . anything like that.

Edwards: . . . undoubtedly they made a routine search of streetcars. They probably just blocked off the street every so often and just searched everybody on there and wanted to see their papers. And they must have seen this kid with this set of Shakespeare books in English and said, "Let's go home and see about this thing." So I didn't see the boy again there. I never saw the lady again. I've heard since the war that that they both survived. I saw the boy later in prison, but that's later in the story.

So they took me down to the station house, regular police station type thing except most of the folks working there were

in this German field grade Field Police--GFP. So they wrote me up, you know. The guy asked your name and all this sort of thing. Anyway, it seemed like they were treating you like a civilian, not a military, prisoner. They didn't ask your rank, your serial number, your unit, or anything like that. This was not too good. I was kind of watching this clerk-typist who was typing the thing, and he came to the charge, and what they held me for was spionaje verdacht. Well everybody knows . . .

Marcello: Now, what was this again?

Edwards: It didn't take much imagination to know what spionaje meant, but verdacht, I didn't know what it meant. And this word (chuckle, chuckle) bothered me for a long time. Verdacht apparently means "suspected." So the charge was "suspected espionage."

Marcello: You had never participated in any espionage activity at all . . .

Edwards: Oh no, no, no.

Marcello: . . . had you? Your whole contact with the underground up to this point was simply their trying to get you to the coast, so that you could get back to England.

Edwards: Yes, and I don't even recall any talk among these people like "Let's go blow up a train or let's go shoot a German."

Marcello: There were never any efforts to recruit you, in other words?

Edwards: No, no, no . . .

Marcello: . . . to stay there.

Edwards: . . . no, no. They had their own people to do that sort of thing.

Marcello: They didn't want an amateur, I guess . . .

Edwards: No . . .

Marcello: . . . messing things up there. (Chuckle)

Edwards: That's right, that's right. And they were really very well-organized. They had learned the hard way, a lot of things. This Jean, for example, was, I guess, a real pro of the bunch. He told me how he sent a radio message back to England. The Germans had radio direction finding deals. If you want to send a message back to England, you get a portable radio and get on the train, and you go in the men's room, and you lock the door. You send your message and get off at the next station and catch the next train back. It was a way of life with them. But he was a real pro, and they had no time to train anybody. They took such precautions that each person just knew so many of the others because they took it for granted that if a guy was captured he would talk. He would eventually tell everything he knew. And I really don't know of any exceptions to that because if they wanted to find out, they would find out.

Marcello: They operated in very small groups, then, like you said?

Edwards: Yes, yes, they had to.

Marcello: One group really didn't know too many people in the other group

and this sort of thing.

Edwards: Yes. This 24 Rue de Ligne thing nobody said that; I just saw it on a letter on the mantelpiece. You can't, you know, plan that far ahead to shield the identity. Okay, we're in the police station there in Brussels, and nobody made a serious attempt to question me at this point. They treated me just like a routine arrest. But this was when the questioning started. They took me back, and a guy in civilian clothes started questioning me. And I don't remember too much of the gist of it.

Marcello: What was the room like? Was it the typical scene that you usually see in war movies?

Edwards: Well, it was very small, rather private. There was a guy again in the field grey uniform and a typewriter in the corner there. I just ignored the guy. And he seemed to be just typing away, and I thought he was doing routine work. The interrogator and I sort of sparred around a little bit. This was the point where everybody, I guess, just assumed that I was a spy or something up to this point. And the guy tried speaking in French, "Parlez-vous Francais?" And "Sprechen-sie Deutsch?" "Perhaps you speak English?" And I said, "Yes," you know. And we talked for a little bit, and he wanted to know, of course, who was helping me. They had no interest in the military part of it because there wasn't anything that I could tell them. I was just a second lieutenant who had been

shot down thirty days ago. You know, it was all old, and I couldn't tell them anything. They weren't interested in that. They wanted to know . . . real interested in how I got to the place where they found me, and who these people were. And I didn't know any of that stuff. I didn't speak the language, and I didn't know anything about them. A guy just took me there. Well, he said something to the effect that "You got to do better than that," you know. "Just tell me how you got there the best you can." I said, "I don't know any names; I don't know any of the places." He said, "Do the best you can."

Marcello: There was no physical violence . . .

Edwards: No.

Marcello: . . . or anything at this point yet?

Edwards: Not at this point. And, so okay, I told them; I made up a story.

Marcello: Was he giving you threats or anything, or was he rather . . .

Edwards: Oh, he was . . .

Marcello: . . . calm about the whole thing?

Edwards: He wasn't threatening. He just said, "You've got to tell," you know, and that seems to have been his point.

Marcello: Was he yelling, shouting, anything . . .

Edwards: Oh, no.

Marcello: . . . like that?

Edwards: No, no, he just said, "You've got to tell us how you got there."

So I did. I made up this wild cock-and-bull story. It went back to the time we jumped out of the plane, and it was wild. I mean, you know, there was no resemblance to the facts. And he said, "Okay." And he left the room, and he came back in a little while, and he had this type-written document. And he said, "Sign this." And I said, "I'm not going to sign anything." He said, "The typist over there was transcribing what you were telling me. It's true, isn't it?" "Oh, yes, it's true, yes sir." "Sign it." "No, I can't sign anything." Well, anyway you wind up signing it; you always do. So then I had to try and remember what it was he told me. Well, they took me down to a cell then. This was, you know, like midnight.

Marcello: This was in the local jail, now, is that correct?

Edwards: Yeah. I'd like to tell you about the jail. This jail . . .

Marcello: Please do.

Edwards: . . . this jail was called St. Gilles. There was a little story about it in Reader's Digest towards the end of 1945 when Belgium was liberated. The guards came through just before the jail was liberated and threw hand grenades in each one of the cells.

Marcello: The German guards did this?

Edwards: Yes, yes. And anyway, they put me in one of these cells by myself. This place was built like a wheel, and the spokes of the wheel were the cell blocks. And you went down one of

these spokes to a central gate system. There was a central guard there. And each of the spokes had another gate, and you went into the cell block which was three stories high, three layered cell with twenty cells on each side. Now that was 120 on each spoke so five spokes would give you 600 cells. This is what it had. We had 600 cells to the thing. It was a federal penitentiary all run by the Germans. Well, they put me in a cell, and there were three steps one way and six steps the other way.

Marcello: This is all the bigger it was?

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: Three steps by six steps?

Edwards: Yes, and they had a faucet and a sink over there, and they had a metal can for a comode. And they had a window up high, way up high, and you couldn't see out. It just had a black thing on it that was for the blackouts. And the door--great big, old, thick door--had a little peephole in it to be opened from the outside but not from the inside because it had glass in it.

Marcello: There was nothing else; there was no light or anything in this room?

Edwards: Well, yeah, they had a celling bulb controlled from the outside. Well, this particular night they left the light on all night. Every once in a while you'd hear the peephole open, and sometimes an eyeball just watched you, and then it closed again, but I wasn't going to sleep anyhow.

Marcello: You could lie down in this room?

Edwards: Yeah, they had a metal thing over there that was a table, and it folded out, and you had a straw mattress that you could unfold and put on there. And they gave you a blanket also.

Marcello: Was the room very clean, or couldn't you really check?

Edwards: Well, it was kept pretty clean. I remember we had a broom of some sort that we could sweep out with, but nobody ever came in to clean it. They came by once a day to get this metal bucket and empty it and bring it back to you. They brought food by in the morning and in the evening. They opened the door and handed something in.

What I was telling you about was this peephole. In some of the cells the glass on the inside was broken out, and you could work it with your fingers to see out and see what was going on in the outside world. It must have been in that cell . . . this particular cell was number 399 or 499. It has been a long time, but I'm sure the glass was broken out once you got the nerve. You know, once you're not afraid the sky is going to fall in you open it after a couple days.

Anyway, this first night was very difficult. The worst part of it was that I couldn't remember what I'd told the interrogator. They have a little piece of wood on the wall there that looked like a soap rack of some sort, and I could lift this up, and I could make marks on the wall with one of these aluminum Belgian coins. I could make marks there to try to shorthand my story. For example, if there was a house

here, a two-story house--mother, daddy, and two children--I'd make two big marks and two little ones. You know, it was a shorthand version--the best I could make. I tried to memorize that because I was sure that we'd go over the story again.

Well, morning came and this German officer comes in with a retinue of guards. He was a little, short, very fat fellow with a dueling scar and a bunch of silver things. He was a major. He said, "Where's your uniform?" I got out my dog tags, you know. He said, "That's not a uniform. They fly over in an airplane, and they dump these out by the barrels, the dog tags. Where's your uniform?" The only thing I had left was my English socks, so I showed him my socks. And he just sniffed and walked out (chuckle) and said he'd be right back.

Marcello: Did they really throw out dog tags . . .

Edwards: No . . .

Marcello: . . . for the underground? (Chuckle)

Edwards: . . . but they could have. It sounded like something that could easily happen. They hadn't done this, but I guess they could. Anyway, he wasn't real impressed with any uniform and I wasn't either. I was real sorry that I didn't have it. I don't know if I told you, but I had given my flying suit to this fellow . . .

Marcello: To Henri or . . .

Edwards: . . . to Henri . . .

Marcello: . . . Jean?

Edwards: . . . Henri back with the peasants where I was hiding out. He had the little boy, Christian. Well, I don't remember whether it was that day or the next that they called me out for further interrogation. And this time the interrogation was by a fellow named Steimel, who was not a professional policeman or Gestapo field policeman. He was a professor of English from the University of Cologne. He was just a young fellow. He told me that he was in the Luftwaffe. I never really saw him in uniform; I always saw him in civilian clothes. Steimel did most of the interrogating from then on in, and we spent a lot of sessions together.

Marcello: Did he want you basically to repeat your story that you had given previously?

Edwards: No, I don't know that he even knew about the other one because he never pulled it out on me. But he wanted a story, so I used, the best I could remember, the story that I had written in shorthand on the wall. And I had it down pretty good by that time.

Marcello: How long had you been in that cell before they brought you up for interrogation?

Edwards: I'd guess probably two or three days, just to let you simmer for a while.

Marcello: Let you think about it?

Edwards: Yes, and this was good because it had given me some time to

get a story together. But Steimel did ask questions about England and general preparation and all that.

Marcello: This was still a rather rational interrogation . . .

Edwards: Oh, yeah.

Marcello: . . . up to this point.

Edwards: Yes. Yeah, no real sweat. He knew an awful lot about our organization. He knew the names of my other crew members and something of where they were from, and this always takes the wind out of your sails. You say, "I'm not going to tell you anything about my crew or anything else." He knew the whole works.

Marcello: He knew the rest of the crew members?

Edwards: Oh, yeah, and I don't know how they do this but he did.

Marcello: Well, perhaps, it is safe to assume that they had already captured some of the other people?

Edwards: They had and they may have talked, but I wouldn't have thought so. From talking to other prisoners, I know that they had a pretty good roster. Occasionally, if there was a last minute substitute, if a guy had a stomach ache and couldn't go and the gunner took his place, they'd have the wrong name there. But generally a crew came overseas together and stayed together, so they'd have them pretty well pegged.

He was interested in this, but he was also interested in the underground. And we had some real long discussions on that. Now Steimel did threaten as a consequence, and, you

know, he just pointed out the position you were in. "You were in civilian clothes. You say you are a flyer, but how do we know? I'll turn you over to the civilian courts."

Marcello: What did they tell you would be the punishment dealt . . .

Edwards: Well . . .

Marcello: . . . out to such prisoners?

Edwards: . . . there was nothing said about . . . they said civilian courts, but there was certainly never any implication that you would come out innocent. It was just, you know, the firing squad. As I said, I told him pretty much the same story that I'd told before. It was a made-up thing--no names, no places. I told them that I didn't know who these people were, and I didn't know who it was that took me to the place where I was captured. I said I didn't know anything about the activities of these people. I really didn't even know their name, and this was true.

Marcello: In most cases, I assume, that all you knew were first names . . .

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: . . . from what you've said thus far.

Edwards: Yes, that's right. And they took great pains to try and conceal the rest of this, this Dufois business. As I said, I had read this off the letter. But they didn't have to know that, so nothing was said there. Well, after about a week . . .

Marcello: They were shuttling you between the interrogation and your

cell . . .

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: . . . is that correct?

Edwards: Yes, back and forth. Yes, that's right. In solitary still. After about a week, they brought in this boy, Campbell, and put him in a cell across from me. He was our waist gunner.

Marcello: That's correct.

Edwards: He'd been wounded, and this was bad because . . .

Marcello: Campbell was one of those . . . one of the three, isn't that correct?

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: Rabinowitz, Campbell, and yourself.

Edwards: Yes. Campbell was the youngest of the group and character-wise perhaps one of the weakest. And it was bad that he got captured. Rabinowitz, the Jewish boy, was very tough, good physical specimen, very dedicated.

Marcello: I wonder what they did to Jewish flyers.

Edwards: Well, he wondered, too. (Chuckle) He was eventually captured about six months later. I corresponded with him some after the war, and as far as I know, they made no distinction.

Marcello: Maybe he changed his name or something. (Chuckle)

Edwards: Rabinowitz, that's pretty tough. (Chuckle) My Senior Officer was Herb Klein. He used to wonder, too. But as far as I know, there was never any discrimination. Well, they interrogated Campbell, too. I don't know who did it, but

Campbell talked pretty fast, and so Campbell took them back to the village.

Marcello: You mean he took them back personally?

Edwards: Yes, he went back with them and pointed out, "I was here and I was there. That guy helped me." So on this basis, they picked up this Henri and brought him in for me to identify. They had him in a little room there, you know, and you looked through the glass, and I said he was not the one. And I guess it stuck. I gather from this letter here that . . . I don't know whether they believed me or not. This is what I told them. I hope they believed me, but I felt real bad because the boy still had on my blue RAF flying suit. He hadn't destroyed it.

Marcello: Henri had it on?

Edwards: He had it on. You could see the blue sticking out the top, so it was just possible that the Germans didn't know what that was.

Marcello: Did it look as though they had worked him over any?

Edwards: Didn't at this point. They wouldn't have there anyway, I don't believe. I am surmising that Campbell identified this boy. He may not have actually identified him. I'm not sure Campbell ever saw him. He may just have been one of a bunch who just got picked up. It may have been up to me. So Campbell wasn't in this room where they gave me the stuff.

Marcello: That's correct. You mentioned that.

Edwards: Right. Although Henri did take us out to the Scouts' cabin . . .

I hadn't talked to Campbell since the war. I haven't had any contact with him. Well, other Belgian people have written me that one of the gunners took them back, and it would have had to have been Campbell and not Rabinowitz because of the time.

Marcello: Did you say that Henri was freed eventually?

Edwards: Yes, apparently so. I haven't corresponded with him since the war.

Marcello: Well, was he an able-bodied man?

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: I was just wondering why he hadn't been shipped back to Germany.

Edwards: I bet you he did. I bet you he did after this thing here. He probably was after he had been picked up.

Marcello: Is this the one that you had talked about earlier, who had been avoiding the Germans all this time . . .

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: . . . for that specific purpose?

Edwards: Right, he was the married boy. Emil was hiding out also, but he wasn't married. I bet you that's what happened. He probably was sent back. Well, the interrogation continued for a period of about a month there--solitary confinement. And it's kind of interesting the way they mark these cells. They had a little hook on the front of the cell to indicate the class of the prisoner. I don't remember, but they had black ones, a lot of black ones. They had green ones, and they had

blue ones. But mine and Campbell's were red, and they had an "E" on it. I guess it stands for English probably. Out of all these 600 cells most of them were crammed with criminals. There were an awful lot of German submarine people there who were being held for desertion, I guess. They wouldn't go out to sea. There were literally hundreds of them. They'd line them up in the morning right there in the corridor. You could look through the peephole, and you could see hundreds of them.

Marcello: German Submarines?

Edwards: Yeah, they were mostly quite young, and they treated them terribly. They'd really beat them up and move them on out somewhere--the Russian front probably. But they really moved them too. They'd put . . . you know, I told you how big the cells were. They'd put five of these guys in a cell and think nothing about it. They would usually just do that overnight. So I spent a month there. I was captured on the thirtieth of January, and I spent all February and a day or so into March in solitary.

Marcello: What were the meals like?

Edwards: Well, they had this bread in the morning. It was round, sort of a sawdust-like bread. And they had a soup around lunchtime with bread and then bread and soup again in the evening. It was very sparse, when a fellow first came in there, he just couldn't eat it at all. But, you know, after a few days you get hungry.

Marcello: Were you in fairly good physical condition at this time?

Edwards: Yes, I was in real good condition when I was shot down, and in the underground I was probably in as good or better shape. But it began to go down pretty quickly on a poor diet, and there was no heat. It began to get very cold, and you wound up where you were having a cold all the time. And I had a real bad infection, a boil or something, up over my ear here that I tried to get some sort of treatment for. I couldn't, but you still had a lot of fever and all this sort of thing, but there was no care for that.

In all this time there was no physical torture. One of the guards, a private, might hit you with a rifle butt or kick you or something like that, but there was none of this pulling the fingernails out or knocking all the teeth out. Now I saw a good many people in the underground that did have this sort of scar, but they didn't do this to me. You know, the threat of this sort of thing is almost as bad as doing it. When you know people will do it, that makes it pretty bad. You used to hear an awful lot of screaming at night. I don't know whether they were putting us on, but it was easy enough to imagine somebody being tortured in the next cell.

Marcello: Had you seen any Americans other than Campbell?

Edwards: No, there was some other cells that had this "E" on them, perhaps. We were down in 499. That was next to the end one, and we passed like nineteen on one side and twenty on the

other side and very seldom saw an "E" as we'd come and go. You know, an "E" would be there and then it'd be gone again.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Edwards: But after about a month, I don't know why they finally put me in with some other Americans who'd just been shot down. They'd just been captured a few days before. These guys were just fresh out of England. This was a real picnic because they still couldn't eat the German food. They'd get some of the German bread and kick it around like a football. You know, "We can't eat this slop." I really enjoyed that. I was also glad to see an American uniform again. I was still in civilian clothes, and I was awful anxious to get a uniform.

Marcello: Did they interrogate you every day?

Edwards: No, not every day. There wasn't any set schedule. They continued interrogations . . . after I got out of solitary there were usually four or five of us in a cell. These guys would be there--maybe four or five of them--just for a couple of days; then they'd send them on into Germany. But I'd always stay, and they'd bring other people in. And they moved us around to a number of the different cells.

Marcello: They were all the same, I gather.

Edwards: The cells were all the same.

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: Some of the prison incidents in the prison might be of some interest.

Marcello: By all means.

Edwards: When I was still over in cell 499 in solitary, they moved a bunch of Canadians into cell 500 next to me, and they were a wild bunch.

Marcello: Now this was a group cell in other words?

Edwards: Yeah, there was a whole gang. They weren't flyers. They apparently . . . well, I really don't know. There wasn't any land operation. They were in civilian clothes when they had been captured somewhere. I guess they were flyers.

Marcello: Now the Normandy invasion had not taken place at this time?

Edwards: No, this was another six months away.

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: They must have been flyers. They must have been in civilian clothes. I don't guess I ever really saw the guys, but you could hear them raising all this hell in there. That's hard because the walls must have been a foot thick. But they were raising hell and singing and stuff like that. And one day I heard somebody in English say, "Hey, you got a match?" I knew I was in solitary, and I thought I was going crazy, but they said it again: "You got any matches?" These guys had dug them a hole. There were some steam pipes that went through the back of the cell there, four or five of them, and apparently they ran steam up when they were doing the cooking in the morning, and a couple times a day steam would come through. This was the only heat there was. They did at least run it

through the cells. These things expanded and contracted, and there were little spaces around. But these guys somehow or other dug through the bricks and mortar and got enough of a hole that they could talk through, and they wanted to know if I had some matches. I didn't have any matches. I got my mattress over there and covered it up the best I could, so that anybody else didn't think I was trying to dig over there. These guys were really wild, but there was a song in those days that they used to sing over here. It was something about "Heil, heil, right in the Fuhrer's face." Have you ever heard that song?

Marcello: No, I sure haven't.

Edwards: Oh, it's real wild. It's kind of an ugly song, but it's derogatory to Hitler. They would sing this at the top of their voice. The guards would come and raise hell, you know.

I mentioned this thing being in the spokes of a wheel. Down at the end of each of these cells there was a little exercise yard, and they would take you down . . . occupants of each cell would go down, oh, maybe twice a week for some exercise. You'd go outside and exercise and all that.

Marcello: But they never took you down with anybody else?

Edwards: No, you come back in . . .

Marcello: You were still in solitary.

Edwards: . . . and the next one goes out.

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: But you can holler over the wall, the brick wall. I remember there was a guy there named Palmer. We just exchanged names, what states we were from, that sort of thing. But at least I got to hear another American voice. I never did get to see Campbell. I was there a total of three months, and they took me for a bath twice.

Marcello: You were in solitary for three months?

Edwards: No, I was in solitary one month . . .

Marcello: One month.

Edwards: . . . and two months with other Americans.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: I went for baths a couple of times. They had a guy, a German soldier, who was a prisoner also, a trusty, who would come by and shave you once a week, and that's an experience, too--the first time a German soldier comes in with a straight razor to shave you when neither one can speak the language. I guess that's about the highlights of the thing.

Marcello: What were you thinking about the whole . . . obviously you had a lot of time to think . . .

Edwards: Well,

Marcello: . . . while you were in solitary.

Edwards: . . . the worst thing is that you'll disappear and never leave a trace of any sort. It's one thing, you know, to be killed in this battle or that battle, but it's another one to just, you know, just disappear into nothingness. I think this bothered

me more than anything else.

Marcello: Well, did anything happen during the last month . . . two months that you were not in solitary?

Edwards: No, it was an awful lot easier. I found things much easier when you had other people to share your problems or to talk with or tell stories and this sort of thing. It made a tremendous difference. The mind is such an enemy; you can imagine so many things when you're completely by yourself.

Marcello: And you were put in, then, those last two months with other American flyers?

Edwards: Other Americans and some were Canadian, English; I met some real swell fellows.

Marcello: By this time had you convinced the Germans that you had been an American flyer . . .

Edwards: Oh, they . . .

Marcello: . . . or weren't they convinced yet?

Edwards: Nah, they knew that all along. They just wanted me to tell them something about the Belgians. That's the only thing in the world they wanted to do. Sooner or later they'd get something on the Belgians. And I suppose they eventually just needed the space for somebody else. That's the only thing that I can think of. Some of these other guys that were with me later were guys that had been in the underground, also. Some of these had experiences essentially very similar to mine. A couple of Canadian boys, in particular, made an impression on

me. One--I don't remember his name now--but he had been in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He'd been captured in Holland some place. He was very worried because a lot of the Canadian people that were working with the underground were recruited from the Mounted Police. So he knew this and he was real worried. He had been with the underground a good deal longer than I had. There were other branches of the underground which I had no contact with and didn't find out about until later. The Communist branch, for example, was not active in getting Americans back. They were more active in shooting Germans and blowing up railroad trains and that sort of thing.

Marcello: What did they do with you or to you during the last few months here in this penitentiary? Did they do anything?

Edwards: Well, I'd still go out for interrogations, and we'd have a battle of wits there. And you would come back not knowing whether you'd won or lost or staved them off or whether they were going to take you out and shoot you or just where it would finally end up.

Marcello: And this prison was being run by the military, is that correct?

Edwards: Yes, yes.

Marcello: The Gestapo did not have anything to do with this camp?

Edwards: No, not as such. Again, the GSP and the GFP were very closely . . .

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: . . . related. So long about the end of April, they marched me

out one day with a bunch of guys in uniform and put us on a train for Germany. And it took us a good while to get there. When we finally did get started, the Americans bombed the tracks up in front of us and we had to come back to Brussels two or three times until they got the tracks repaired. There were about six of us, I guess, and about ten German guards taking us into Frankfurt. I was the only one in civilian clothes.

Marcello: Did you go by train in a regular passenger car?

Edwards: Yes, we did on this train here. They kept us in a separate compartment again. We got to the Frankfurt station, and the place was still burning. The British had raided that night, and that town was black. It had been raided so much that there was just almost nothing left. There were refugees still leaving the station, pitiful people with a bundle of clothes on their back maybe. And you could tell there were some substantial people there, like doctors and professors. But these folks were really mad. They'd see a bunch of Americans, and they'd get after them with walking canes, anything they could, their fists and everything else. The German guards would keep them off. They seemed to be particularly after me because of the civilian clothes, and this really seemed to bother me. And I guess that was one of the more harrowing experiences I had. We had heard that sometimes they lynched these guys if they found them, and this seemed like a real

likely spot in Frankfurt station when it was still burning. Most of the civilians were leaving. I think if they'd been a little more able-bodied, these probably would have also, but these were old folks and the very young.

Marcello: I was just going to ask you if you could describe this incident in any greater detail?

Edwards: Well, I'd rather not. (Chuckle) It's just a terrible thing. And emotionally, it's a terrible thing because in your country you're a hero; you're a soldier defending your country. Over there, you were the worst kind of scum, and this is a difficult adjustment.

Marcello: About how many people were there in this mob?

Edwards: Oh, gee, I don't know.

Marcello: I suppose you could call it a mob.

Edwards: Yeah, you could call it a mob. There were a lot of them. The German soldiers--these were Air Force people that were taking us in--were spit-and-polish type people. They weren't taking any guff from any civilians. The sergeant in charge of the thing was ordered to take six prisoners to Dulang Luft, and he was going to get six prisoners. This is out on the edge of Frankfurt.

Marcello: Now all the prison camps were run by the Luftwaffe, is that correct, most of those in Germany?

Edwards: Well, all the Air Force camps were. They were what they called a Stalag Luft.

Marcello: Oh, I see. The Luftwaffe administered all the camps for the captured flyers.

Edwards: Yes. The Stalag without the Luft, the straight Stalag, was the German Army.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: The concentration camps were under the SS.

Marcello: So you had the SS running the concentration camps, the Army running the regular military . . .

Edwards: Stalag.

Marcello: . . . prison camps, Stalags . . .

Edwards: Uh-huh.

Marcello: . . . and then you had the Luftwaffe, the Air Force, running these Lufts.

Edwards: Luft, yes, the Stalag Luft. Dulag Luft was the central interrogation center where all flyers were supposed to come that had been captured. Most of them, of course, had been shot down over Germany . . .

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: . . . and they would go there. And most of them would get there pretty quick for interrogation, and this was the place that had a lot of solitary-type facilities. Usually a guy would be there maybe two weeks. The more likelihood that he had military information, the sooner he was captured after the time he was shot down, and the higher rank, the more questions he got.

Marcello: Probably when you look back upon it, it was kind of a blessing in a way that you did get shot down over Belgium than it was being shot down over Germany. Is that correct?

Edwards: No question about that. Very much so. And this got worse as the war went on because it wasn't real bad at this time. See, Berlin had not been razed for example. At this time we were still real careful about our military targets, and later in the war it reached the point where they were not so careful. Anyway, there was a lot wider destruction later, and a lot more bitterness.

Well, I got through Dulag Luft very quickly because this was strictly military questioning. I had been shot down three months before. We had American food there through the Red Cross and . . .

Marcello: They didn't hold the food back from you?

Edwards: Not at this point. We got a good ration there. The Red Cross had American uniforms there. I got an American uniform again which was very good because I could now try to retreat into the woodwork at this point.

So we spent maybe two or three days there, and then we went on into Germany in the regular prison cars. And these are cars with bars on the windows and so forth. They hold about maybe fifty men. There were guards inside; they just put you in and locked it. And if you were traveling at night-time, and if there was an air raid or something, they just put

the prison cars out in the middle of the railroad yard, you know, sort of as a target; and this is a bad deal, too.

Marcello: Did this ever happen to you?

Edwards: Yeah, yeah. It happened on two occasions.

Marcello: Would you like to talk a little bit about this?

Edwards: It's not much to talk about. We had enough Englishmen with us that they told us how the English do these things--the night raids. The Americans all came over, you know, pretty much in a body or a steady stream in formation, and they drop blankets of bombs, you know, literally a blanket.

Marcello: Saturate an area, in other words.

Edwards: Yes, yes, that's right. And the English came over about five or ten minutes apart with a great big old bomb, but the English marked their targets. A guy came over in a pathfinder plane, maybe a "Mosquito." He would come in low and drop a red pathfinder thing, and then they came along with a--I don't know--green or yellow something and make a circle around it. Everybody tried to get in the circle. So you get out in the yard in one of these cars, and you know, you look for the red. And if you see the red, man, it's tough. (Chuckle) So we had one--I don't even remember the town now--our first night out. They dropped a red flare and then the green, but nobody was hitting the target. They were far enough away that there wasn't anybody hurt that night.

So we went on into Germany--took two or three days in this car--and went on into Stalag Luft Three.

Marcello: Now when you say that you went on into Germany, you just mentioned awhile ago that you had been at Frankfurt, Germany.

Edwards: We went farther into Germany . . .

Marcello: Farther into Germany, right, okay.

Edwards: . . . into Stalag Luft Three which is located at Sagan.

Marcello: Were you able to see any of the German countryside or any of the German cities . . .

Edwards: Yeah.

Marcello: . . . or so on?

Edwards: Yeah.

Marcello: What did it look like so far as destruction and so on was concerned?

Edwards: That big town was flat . . .

Marcello: Frankfurt itself had been completely destroyed.

Edwards: . . . block after block after block. They were bombing the rubble, and this was a year and a half before the end of the war. They were just moving the bricks over and over in many cases. When you got out in the countryside or the small towns or away from the heart of the city, you wouldn't even know there was a war on. So we got on over in Sagan, and this is where Stalag Luft Three was. And it was at this time all flyers.

Marcello: What was it close to? What big city or major city?

Edwards: Well, it's not really close to any of them.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: If you drew a line from Berlin to Breslau, this would be halfway between the two. It's in Poland now, just across the border.

Marcello: Breslau is in Poland?

Edwards: Yes, and Sagan is, also.

Marcello: Sagan is also?

Edwards: Yes. Now this Stalag Luft Three had been there for some time. This is the place where "The Great Escape" was out of.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: This had happened while I was still in prison in Brussels.

Marcello: Just to get it into our records, "The Great Escape" that you are referring to was a mass escape, I guess . . .

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: . . . you could say, mainly by British flyers . . .

Edwards: That's right.

Marcello: . . . was it not?

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: And I think eventually most of these flyers were rounded up, were they not?

Edwards: Yes . . .

Marcello: Didn't they get most of them? In fact, they shot a lot of them, did they not?

Edwards: Yes, they did. They shot just a little over half of them.

Marcello: Do you remember how many had broken out in that "Great Escape?"

Edwards: Yes, a hundred plus or minus five got out the tunnel. They'd hoped to send about 300.

Marcello: They had tunneled?

Edwards: Yes. And about a hundred got out, and they shot just over half of them. Out of a hundred, I believe, there were two that got back, completed the escape, and they were not Englishmen. They were in the RAF, but one was a Dutchman, and one was a Norwegian or something like this. So nobody really made it.

Marcello: About how long after this escape had been made did you arrive at this particular . . .

Edwards: About six weeks.

Marcello: . . . prison camp? About six weeks later.

Edwards: Yeah. I had been in Brussels when this was going on. And the guards were awful ugly about this time, but we didn't know why. And we found out later it was because of this.

Marcello: What was the camp itself like? What did it look like?

Edwards: Well, it looked like an Army camp in this country. They split it up, though, into what they called compounds. And a compound is surrounded by a wire fence, and you can't go from one to the other. For example, "The Great Escape" took place in the north compound which was all English. There was a south compound which was all American. You couldn't go from the north to the south.

Marcello: They segregated you by nationality . . .

Edwards: Yes, yes.

Marcello: . . . in this camp?

Edwards: Yes. There was a central compound which was American and an east compound which was English. And our group was one of the first ones to go into the west compound. Like I say, you can see across into these, but there are fences, and you can't cross them. And around the whole business, on the outside, they got a real high fence with the guard towers and all and warning wire and so forth. So this whole thing was surrounded by pine forests and was just hued out of the forests more or less. Pretty well isolated. So I lived there from late April in '44 until late January of '45.

Marcello: What did they have you doing while you were in this camp?

Edwards: Well, we didn't really have anything to do, except we made the roll call in the morning. They counted everybody; you lined up five deep, and they count to see if everybody was here. And if it comes out right, if everybody gets the right number, you get to go back in. If it doesn't, you stay there and they count and they search and they hunt and finally locate everybody.

Marcello: But they really don't have you . . .

Edwards: There was no duties. As an officer, you don't work.

Marcello: What was the food like?

Edwards: Well, we had American and English Red Cross parcels.

Marcello: Which they didn't hesitate to hand out to you?

Edwards: No, not at this point.

Marcello: This was very different from the experiences of those who were captured by the Japanese.

Edwards: Yes, that's right. We did very well as long as we had the . . . the Germans in addition gave us potatoes and bread. We'd get a loaf of bread a week, a seventh of the loaf a day, and this was adequate. But along about August or September, I guess, the parcels, you know, got thinner.

Marcello: This was 1944?

Edwards: Yes. They got thinner because the German railroad system was getting shot up. The parcels were available in Sweden and Switzerland, but the Germans just couldn't get them in. I think they wanted to but they couldn't. And this was much better than the German civilians had that they didn't feel greatly obligated to, and you can't blame them.

Marcello: Did you get very much meat?

Edwards: No, there was no meat from the Germans. I got a list here of what they had in one of the American Red Cross parcels, if you'd be interested in that.

Marcello: Sure.

Edwards: It's probably not written down anywhere else. I'll find it. Yeah, now this is the American Red Cross parcel, and it's supposed to run one man for a week. You got a pound of prunes, six ounces of jam, eight ounces of cheese, twelve C-ration biscuits, eight ounces of salmon, a pound of oleo,

twelve ounces of meat and vegetables or can of corned beef, a can of spam, milled paté--that's a sort of a goose liver paste of some sort--five packs of cigarettes, two chocolate bars, sixteen ounce can of powdered milk, and a bar of soap. This was fine.

Marcello: You got a fairly large package, in other words.

Edwards: Yes, if you get a full package you can maintain . . .

Marcello: And how often did you get one of those . . .

Edwards: Oh . . .

Marcello: . . . or were you supposed to?

Edwards: You were supposed to get one every week.

Marcello: Uh-huh.

Edwards: And if you did, you could maintain body weight. You wouldn't gain any weight, but you could maintain it. And you could sustain pretty good physical activity.

Marcello: Did you maintain your body weight at this camp?

Edwards: I did at that camp. I'd lost a good deal in Brussels. I don't remember just what I weighed when I got there. When I came back home . . . when I got out of prison, I weighed about 130, and I'd weighed about 155 when I went in.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: We're talking about a good span of time.

Marcello: Were there ever any escape attempts while you were there?

Edwards: Oh, not of any significance. See, after this big escape when they just executed people they recaptured . . . these people

were not shot escaping. Some of them were in jail for ten days, and then they took them out and shot them in the head. And we knew this and the English knew it, too. So our orders from our American officers were not to attempt to escape on our own. If we had a plan, we were to come to them with it. And I know of none out of this camp. Now when we left this camp and got on the march again, there were attempts and some of them were successful.

Marcello: Did you ever see any evidence of collaboration at this camp?

Edwards: No.

Marcello: None at all?

Edwards: None at all. We were governed here entirely by American officers.

Marcello: In other words, you maintained a system of discipline in this camp?

Edwards: Yes, and it was very good. I don't know about other camps, but I think this was generally the history in Germany--that the folks really respected their officers. In many respects this was convenient for the Germans because the German commander would just tell an American senior officer what he wanted done and how he wanted it done, and this pretty well covered it. Now I think it was a real shock to me as little as five years later in Korea when the thing had disintegrated to such a large extent, and I don't know why. It's got to be that they divided the people from their officers, or it must be something like that.

Marcello: I have some general questions with regard to your stay in this particular camp. Did they treat all the nationalities alike? Equal treatment for all nationalities?

Edwards: No, no. There was a Russian camp over to one side, and these people they worked them unmercifully. They weren't under the Geneva Convention, and we had Russian colonels coming in and cleaning up our latrines, this sort of thing.

Marcello: They really worked the Russians over pretty well?

Edwards: Made no distinction between officers and enlisted men. See, the way the Germans operated this thing, even non-commissioned officers didn't have to work. Just the sergeants, corporals. So this left nobody but privates and Pfc's.

Marcello: Do you think . . .

Edwards: There weren't many American privates and Pfc's overseas, you know. They make corporal before they get there, usually.

Marcello: Do you think in a way this is also a carry-over from the German military—the great difference between the officer and the enlisted man?

Edwards: Yes. Even among the English prisoners, the English officers of our rank had English enlisted men quartered with them. They took care of them; they were the batmen.

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: They shined their shoes, even served them food, brought them tea out on the grounds. We didn't try (chuckle) this. I don't think we'd get very far.

Marcello: I don't think you would have gotten very far.

Edwards: We did have some American sergeants that lived with us, and they ran the cook house. And this was a communal place where they . . . they did furnish us hot water to make instant coffee and so forth out of. And they boiled potatoes and all, and the sergeants did this for the entire group. But as a man-to-man service, we didn't attempt to do this, but the English did.

Marcello: Well, there really weren't too many enlisted men among the Americans, were there? I would assume most of the people on the airplanes were officers, were they not?

Edwards: No, no. A B-17 crew would be four officers and six enlisted men.

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Edwards: But the sergeants were in separate camps for the most part. There would be a few sergeants in our compound--the west compound--and maybe out of 1,200 men thirty would be sergeants.

Marcello: But they did segregate the officers and the enlisted men.

Edwards: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Those were segregated.

Edwards: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Did you ever get into contact with any individual Germans? Let me put it to you this way: were there any individual Germans who stood out that you can think of in this initial camp?

Edwards: Guards?

Marcello: Guards, commanders, commandants, whatever you wish to call them.

Edwards: No, I guess the only fellow that really made an impression on me was a fellow--I guess he was what you'd call a master sergeant--named Robert. I don't know what his last name was. The guy was from Hamburg. He was a big, tall, Nordic type. He lost his wife and mother and four children in an air raid up there. And, man, people were giving Robert a wide berth. He was always a pretty cold character, and after that happened, I mean, everybody tried to stay out of his range. Particularly when we were on the March, later on out of this camp, Robert was awful quick with the trigger. Most of the guys carried a pistol or rifle or something, but Robert always had a submachine gun or machine pistol.

Marcello: Was there . . .

Edwards: Well, he made an impression. He's the one who stands out now. The commander . . . each one of these little compounds was commanded by a captain. In our compound was a fellow named Eiler. But these were the guys who spoke English pretty good. They'd been, maybe, in America with the German-American Steamship Line or businessmen-type. They were older guys, not big Nazis.

We were in this camp when the attempt was made on Hitler's life, July 20, 1944. You could really feel the tension outside.

Nobody came in for a few days for roll call. You couldn't really tell what was going on. You had radios where we could listen to BBC, and so we at least knew the BBC version. The German radio said very little. When they did come back into the camp, they were the same people, but there had been some changes. Oh, little things. For example, prior to that time at roll call, which was at the parade-type formation, and we used the western military salute. After this, it was the Heil Hitler. It would no longer be the other one. It was just this sort of "Mickey Mouse" stuff. Apparently, none of the German officers or guards were involved in the attempt on Hitler's life.

Marcello: Did you have nicknames for any of these guards? I know most . . .

Edwards: Yes, we did.

Marcello: I'm sure you did.

Edwards: But I don't remember any of them now. But we did. The names didn't mean anything to me.

Marcello: Did they ever pull sneak raids of the barracks and so on?

Edwards: Yeah.

Marcello: . . . to look for contraband?

Edwards: Yes, they were good at this. It was typical German thoroughness. The way they would do this was usually. . . . I mentioned these roll calls in the morning and afternoon, and they had to account for everybody. If a guy just overslept or was sick

and slept in and didn't report in, this upset the count, and that's a lot of people to count. And it'd upset them, and you just had to stand there until they got them. So while you're out like this, they'd come in and search the barracks, and they'd keep you out while they completed their search. And they'd usually find something.

Marcello: What were some of the things which they considered contraband?

Edwards: Well, they were always after radios. They were after tunneling tools--any kind of tools, that sort of thing.

Marcello: Did you ever have any way of getting news from the outside world?

Edwards: Yes, they had a radio that got in somehow or other. In these Red Cross parcels in among the cigarettes and all, occasionally there would be a radio part, compasses, that sort of thing.

Marcello: In other words, would they send in enough radio parts in each package and hope that the prisoners would be smart enough to put it together or what?

Edwards: (Chuckle) Yeah.

Marcello: Is this what they did?

Edwards: That's right. And this is one of the first things our people told us. Of course, it was interesting with an American going into this camp because they had to make sure you were an American, too. So I had a good deal of time in Stalag Luft Three that wasn't as good as I thought it was going to be. It looked real good to me as compared to the federal penitentiary,

but everybody avoided me. They said, "You know that guy?" Nobody knew I'd been shot down three months before, and this was a new compound. The fellows that I had known in the States and in England had gone to other compounds or to Stalag Luft One at Barth up on the North Sea. So all my other crew members went there--my pilot, Hankins went there, Werner, all the other officers went up there. And finally, enough people came into camp that had known me in the United States--guys that had been wounded and in the hospitals or other guys in the underground--to where I could establish myself.

Marcello: About how many people do you think were in this camp altogether?

Edwards: Well, there was, oh, perhaps 1,200 in our compound and adding the four other compounds that I know of--about 6,000 something like that.

Marcello: Pretty big place in other words.

Edwards: Yes, it was pretty good-sized. Pretty good-sized for an air force camp.

Marcello: Did the Germans ever harass you physically, that is, was there any hitting, any harassment of this sort in this camp?

Edwards: No, not to amount to anything. They left us pretty well alone in this camp. What we did to pass the time . . . I mentioned we had pretty good rations the first summer. The fellows organized intramural softball teams, and a lot of us would just get out and walk around the edge of the wire and talk

just for exercise. We organized a lot of classes and everything we could think of--French, German, algebra. Most of us were of college age, and we were interested in getting into college when we got back.

Marcello: When you say "they" organized classes, the Germans didn't do this?

Edwards: No, no, this was . . .

Marcello: This was done among the Americans themselves?

Edwards: . . . yes, yes, that's right. We had fellows who could teach almost anything. The fellows spent a lot of time in hand work. For example, we liked to cook with the stuff we got in the Red Cross parcels. We did our own cooking on these little stoves in our rooms. In a barracks there would be, maybe, ten rooms with about ten guys in a room. And these ten guys would mess together, do all their cooking together, and their KP and so forth. One guy would cook for a week, and then another would cook for a week. We'd make these cans by cutting open tin cans and hammering them out and making a seam--very slow hand work. We dug up stumps for the fire. The Germans gave us a briquet of coal, one per man per day. It wasn't big, so it didn't give us much fire. But when you cut down these pine trees, there were a lot of stumps left in there, and they let us have a couple of axes and some shovels under oath. You know, you give an oath that you won't use them to escape. You know, we did. The only trouble is that two is not many for that many people.

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: So we'd loan them around from one barracks to another. One barracks would have them a day, but a room might have them an hour out of the day. So we'd chop like crazy for an hour. The rest of the time we worked on the stumps with teaspoons or with your bare hands. If you get a hundred guys digging with their bare hands, you can move a lot of dirt. Some of the guys tried to raise a garden. They got some seeds from the Germans. This was the first summer, and it was pretty nice. They had a library. Prisoners that had been there longer could get book parcels from home. A Tree Grows in Brooklyn was popular there, and a few guys had that, but you could read it in a morning. I averaged one book a day. I had a list somewhere of all the books I read, but I averaged a book a day. You know, I liked to read them.

We were talking, Ron, about classes there. We had them in French, algebra, geometry, and most everything you'd think of. Reading, of course, took a lot of time. A lot of fellows played bridge and got really good at it. So that was pretty well the way summer passed.

We got into fall . . . of course, and the invasion came in June. We got into fall and the American armies were moving very quietly. They went on through Belgium early in September and liberated the part of the country where we had been captured.

Marcello: Let me just get this straight before we go on. You were more

or less in the eastern part of Germany. Is that correct?

Edwards: Yes. Very much so. So in September things were going very good for the Allies, and people expected to be home by Christmas. The Allied armies went to Belgium. They liberated the towns where they stayed. And three of the gunners from our crew were still hiding out. They were never taken prisoner and were there for nine months. This was Landy, our tail gunner, and Davis, the ball-turret gunner, and who's the other one? Woznicki, the radioman. He was there. But these guys hid out with farmers in the area and acted like they were slave laborers. Every farmer there had people with them, so they stayed out the whole nine months. Rabinowitz was captured in July of that year. He had been in the underground for about six months. I don't remember now what happened to him. I know he survived the war because I've corresponded with him since the war, but I don't remember the details of it.

So we go into September and October, and the Allies stall out. They hit the border of Germany, the Siegfried Line, and they stall out. The food gets harder to come by. Along about September we were going to a half a parcel per week per man. And the weather started getting cold. Along about October or November the Russian front became active, and we could envision them coming from the other side.

Marcello: Did you really have much thoughts about the Russians at this

time? I mean, they were an Ally and this sort of thing.

Edwards: Yes, we were saying. "Come on Uncle Joe," I believe was the expression. We were all for them. We were much closer to his side than we were to the other. The Russian prisoners that we were in contact with were very helpful to us. I mentioned finding tools in the barracks and all. The Russians were doing the work. Say a Russian electrician would wire the barracks. He'd toss you some wire cutters or pliers or wire. They were very helpful in this sort of thing, because they were in and out of the camp. So they were real good to us, and we got along with them very well.

So, I guess along about December with the Russian front becoming active and with them really moving in our direction, we realized that we were probably going to be moved out of there. So we started to make preparations for the march. By this time we were down to like a fourth of a parcel per man.

Marcello: This time you didn't get the luxury of the train . . .

Edwards: No, no . . .

Marcello: . . . from one camp to another?

Edwards: . . . this was going to be a march this time and we knew it. So we toughened ourselves up as well as we could. The ones that were, you know, the conscientious prisoners, eager-beavers, I guess you could say, the ones that used to walk around the perimeter three times a day, now they did it ten times a day. They were really determined to survive. And fellows were

fashioning packs and so forth, getting ready to leave. Christmas I don't remember too much. We did get a Red Cross Christmas food parcel. They always put together special parcels at Christmas--pudding and so forth. We did get, I believe, a full parcel for Christmas.

All the month of January we were expecting to move at any time. Toward the end of the month we could actually hear artillery fire from the Russian front. But we never saw any Russian airplanes, but frequently we could see American planes. There were never any Russian raids.

Marcello: Did the Americans ever raid this camp, or did they know it was there . . .

Edwards: I hoped . . .

Marcello: . . . that is, the Air Corps.

Edwards: . . . I would assume that they never knew it was there.

Marcello: They never laid any bombs on the camp in other words.

Edwards: No, no. No, Sagan was just a little, old, tiny place. An American general showed up there along about December. We thought, "Oh, great!" He has come to negotiate the peace. His name was Bardaman, and he had been the military attaché in Berlin before the war. We figured that he'd come to accept the surrender of the camp or, you know, that sort of deal. But he was just a prisoner like everybody else.

Towards the end of January we were hearing Russian artillery, and we knew for sure we were going to be moving

out, but we were just waiting for when. The weather got bitterly cold. Finally, we moved out, I believe, around . . . I refer here to some notes I made back during the war. It says here that it was on the twenty-seventh of January that we were alerted about ten-thirty that night. And it happened that our particular barracks was one of the first out of the march, so we left camp about midnight.

Marcello: Was there snow on the ground?

Edwards: Oh, good God, yes. There was snow all over the place, all over the place. I see these notes were made on this piece of paper here which was done in Nuremburg. I transcribed it because the paper was falling apart.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: So it was extremely cold at this time, and we started out about midnight on Saturday. Then on Sunday the twenty-eighth of January we were marching all that day. We made our first real stop at a place called Freiwalden.

Marcello: This consisted of all the prisoners, is that correct?

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: All nationalities?

Edwards: Well, yes, this would be English and American. They are the only ones I know about. The Russians were probably behind us somewhere.

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Edwards: But there were English and Americans there. We were very close

to the head of the line of march. So the first stop we made we had marched twenty-seven kilometers out. It was extremely cold, so cold that, say, you carried a can of spam or something and you stopped to eat it. You got the thing open, and you tried to bite into it, and it would freeze to you, you know, freezed to the can.

Marcello: You mean the metal off the can would . . .

Edwards: Well, the spam itself would.

Marcello: Oh, really?

Edwards: Yes. You know, it just wouldn't come loose. When it would come loose, it'd took the skin with you. A guy would fall out from exhaustion; he'd freeze to the ground, this sort of thing. It was supposed to have been the coldest winter since Napoleon's retreat from Moscow.

Marcello: What would happen when a man did fall out?

Edwards: Well, his buddies would try to get him and keep him on his feet--slap him, encourage him, and carry him, anything they could do. Some of us had these old wooden-bed-type-things, and we had made these into sleds and tried to carry them along with our possessions on them with ropes and all, home-made ropes out of strips of cloth. So we loaded a guy on there, and after a while, he'd get to where he maybe could be helping you next.

Marcello: Being a Texas boy, I guess you weren't used to all that snow.

Edwards: No, I wasn't used to the snow, but I was young and, compared to

the other fellows, in good condition. I was in good condition. It seemed like that the older fellows--and some guys were twenty-six and twenty-seven--seemed like they had a heck of a lot worse time when you were really expending yourself.

Marcello: Did you lose anybody on this march?

Edwards: Yes, we lost a lot of them. Out of our barracks of 100-110 or so, there were only six or eight of us that actually made it to this place. We thought at the time we had lost everybody.

Marcello: Out of over a hundred men there were only six or eight of you that made it?

Edwards: That made the march.

Marcello: Oh, that made the march.

Edwards: The rest of them straggled in. There were some that died and some were shot. I don't know just how many.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: If I had to guess, I'd guess maybe ten out of this 100 that I was personally acquainted with. Some of the guys froze; one fellow I know was shot; one guy just flat went crazy, and the Germans sent him off to a hospital.

Marcello: You said a man was shot. Was he shot trying to escape, or did he just fall and was shot then, or what?

Edwards: Well, you fell behind, and the story that I got was that this fellow Robert was bringing up the rear. I feel sure it was true because he never was seen again. There was an awful lot of firing going on.

Marcello: Would you say that this was perhaps the toughest part of the whole internment--this march?

Edwards: Well, in some respects. At this point we'd just gone twenty-seven kilometers. We stopped at this point and we got . . . you know, we just stopped marching for a little while. We didn't get in any shelter or anything like that.

Marcello: What sort of clothing did you have?

Edwards: Well, we had overcoats. The Red Cross had gotten us overcoats, and we had woolen caps--these kinds of hats that you wore under helmet liners.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: So guys were putting on everything they could.

Marcello: How about so far as shoes?

Edwards: We had good shoes. Knowing the march was coming up, the International Red Cross had seen to it that everybody had shoes that fit.

Marcello: I think it was amazing that the Germans were making all these things available to the prisoners.

Edwards: Well, this was really a show-place camp. They did real well by us.

Marcello: Was this camp under fairly close scrutiny by the Red Cross, or were there ever any Red Cross observers or anything like that?

Edwards: Yes, we saw a good deal of Red Cross observers.

Marcello: Oh, is that right?

Edwards: Yes, probably more so than any other camp.

Marcello: Do you assume that this is probably the reason why the camp was kept in such good shape or . . .

Edwards: No . . .

Marcello: . . . that you were treated so well or as well as prisoners could be treated?

Edwards: Well, yeah. I think this had to do with it. I think that mainly it was that Goering and some of the General Staff people were, you know, professional military men. They still carried over some of the code chivalry, shall we say? They weren't afraid of the Red Cross, I'm sure. So this was Sunday. We had gone twenty-seven kilometers and, you know, still hadn't had any hot food or anything like that. People had thrown away about everything they could. We marched all the rest of the Sunday, and finally at eight o'clock Monday morning we got into a place called Moskau. And they put us up there in a paper factory. I have it written down here that it was a newspaper factory. Anyway, this was a place where they had a bunch of ovens and all. It was nice and warm in there, and there was straw you could lay down on. The Germans did provide us with some soup and German bread. We were still eating what Red Cross food we brought along with us. We marched a total of eighty-nine kilometers on this march by the time we got to this little village.

Marcello: Which is equivalent to how many miles about?

Edwards: Oh, about fifty miles.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: But during a lot of this the weather conditions were real bad, you know, blizzard-type condition. A lot of it was in ice, up hill and down hill, you know, where it was very difficult traveling. It was cold and difficulty in breathing made it pretty tough. But as far as physical hardships were concerned, this was the toughest we had. Now we had marches later in good weather, and these were a picnic. It was nice to get out of the camp. This one was not so good, however. But we rested up pretty quick there at the paper factory when we got in out of the weather and were warm. We spent Tuesday there, the thirtieth of January, and they even arranged for us to get a shower there. Wednesday we left the paper factory and marched another eight kilometers to a town called Spremberg. It's a pretty good-sized town, kind of a rail center. The weather was a good deal warmer by now, and it wasn't a bad march. We slept there in a garage of a military barracks, and it was comfortable there. And on Friday, the second of February we boarded a . . .

Marcello: How many were you by this time?

Edwards: Gee, I don't know, and, of course, we were split up. I . . .

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: . . . was in the paper factory and others . . . you know this could only accommodate so many. They must have been all over town in every place that had any room at all. So the second of

February, on a Friday, we were still in Spremberg; and they loaded us up on trains to go to our new camp. And they loaded us up in these old French forty-and-eight cars from the First World War. You know, it's forty men or eight horses. And the first thing they did was put two guards on each car. The guard stretched a rope across one end of the car, so that way they had a third of it to themselves. They wanted room between their rifles there and so forth and room for themselves, so that left the other two-thirds of the car for the prisoners. And in this area instead of forty men they put fifty, so this made it impossible to sit down or anything else. So we started out from Spremberg on that basis. This was a Friday. Saturday we were on the train, and Sunday late in the evening we got to our new camp point which was in Nuremberg.

Marcello: Was there anything which stands out on this train trip that you think ought to be part of the record?

Edwards: Well, . . .

Marcello: You had to stand all the way, you said?

Edwards: Yeah, we had to stand all the way. It was just awfully crowded when you get that many people in that small a space. But yeah, yeah, there's one thing that stands out. I realize we're kind of highlighting the insignificant things and maybe letting more important ones go. But I remember that these were the same guards that had left Sagan with us. They were much older than we were. Most of them were World War I people.

Some of them had been wounded, and they were having it rougher than we were. Remember, we could throw ourselves away, but the German couldn't throw away his gas mask, his rifle, or any other thing he had. So we were almost at the point where we were helping them. And I remember they stopped at a station someplace, and the German guards got off and got some coffee, and doughnuts. And the train started up, you know, and we were hollering at the guards to come on. They were a little bit late. The train was going faster and faster, and the guy couldn't get back on. "Hey, give me your rifle." So he give us his rifle, but still couldn't make it, so we pulled him on. (Chuckle) This stuck in my mind.

Marcello: Of course, there was nothing you could do with the rifle anyhow.

Edwards: No.

Marcello: There was no place to go.

Edwards: No, we weren't going to do anything; but we really wanted to help him. We didn't want him to get in trouble. We were getting a good deal of sickness around this time, and this was bad.

Marcello: What sort of sickness?

Edwards: Stomach trouble. Of course, some of the fellows had real bad colds, and for the most part, you know, they just kept going.

Marcello: There really hadn't been too much disease up until this time had there?

Edwards: No, no, there hadn't. We'd been in good shape to this point. One thing, all our innoculations were still in effect, and this was good. Later on these started wearing off, and this was bad news. I think this is one place where the fellows in the Japanese camps had a lot of trouble. I'm sure their shots had worn off.

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: And they were exposed to a lot more things than we were.

Marcello: So anyhow you were on the train.

Edwards: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. We got into Nuremberg, and this was on a Sunday, so we spent Friday, Saturday, and Sunday on the train. We were camped there at Stalag 13B, and this was not a Luftwaffe camp. It was a regular army camp.

Marcello: Were you still going farther east now . . .

Edwards: No . . .

Marcello: . . . or west?

Edwards: We were going back towards . . .

Marcello: You were going west. I was going to say . . .

Edwards: . . . the American lines.

Marcello: . . . Nuremberg is west.

Edwards: Yes, I was going back towards the American lines. This camp in Nuremberg was interesting in a number of respects. As I said, it was administered by the army. It had some civilian sections or compounds. It was not a death camp in the sense that Auschwitz or Buchenwald was. There was an old gas chamber there because I remember the first time we went for showers

everybody was a little uneasy because it looked just like the other buildings.

Marcello: Had you all heard about the death chambers . . .

Edwards: Yeah, well, . . .

Marcello: . . . and the gas chambers and the ovens and so on?

Edwards: I don't think we really believed it. We heard about it, and we were much distressed really at the way they built these damn shower buildings. Why would you build an airtight shower building with the doors that seal it? It just didn't look right. And this one was built the same way, and, you know, it looked overdone for a shower building. And we'd heard the other stuff, but I don't think we really believed it.

This camp was located about a half mile from the two stadiums that Hitler had there in Nuremberg. I remember they used to have these mass rallies there where they'd all carry torches and go crazy. Well, the British seemed to take great delight in just blowing the hell out of these things. They were made from big marble blocks. They'd come over again and again and just bomb the rubble. So this was of historical interest to those of us who had seen it in the news. We always hoped that somehow or another we could go over and take a good look at it, but we didn't.

The part of the camp they assigned us to was really filthy. It was a real mess. It had been occupied by Italian field-grade officers. What they were doing there I don't

know, but the whole barracks had been Italian. It was absolutely filthy. Now when we were in Sagan and also in Dulag Luft in Frankfurt, we had double-decker bunks at first, and then when we got more crowded, and . . . we put triple-decker bunks in. But this would be just three guys in a bed--that's not too bad. But then we got to Nuremberg, it was twelve in a bed--that would be four across and three high. So it'd be twelve here and twelve on the other side, so it'd be twenty-four to a kind of a stall.

Marcello: Four men to a three-tiered rack in other words . . .

Edwards: Yeah, that's right.

Marcello: Is that correct?

Edwards: Sort of like an egg carton or something like that.

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: Anyway this was not real good. There was no heating. We were getting an awful lot more sickness there partly because guys were building fires in the building to keep dry and to keep warm, and the smoke just stayed inside the building. See, in Sagan we had little stoves with flues, and out here we didn't have any of that. There was no fuel, and pretty soon we started stripping the wash shed and outside latrines and so forth for wood to burn. And this made the Germans mad, and we had some problems there. All the smoke in the barracks kept everybody pretty miserable. Food, I don't remember. There was no American food at all by this time. I guess we were just

living on soup and potatoes. I remember one time they brought in some meat, but it turned out that it had been painted with ammonia because some . . . the Americans had bombed the plant somewhere, and the meat had gotten ammonia on it. So this was pretty bad. We were all mixed up by now. The guys we were with at Sagan we weren't with anymore, but still the senior American officer in the barracks still ran the barracks. That particular officer here was a fellow named Hogan from somewhere in Mississippi. He was a major. He had been a Boy Scout executive in civilian life. We had some real fine officers in Sagan. Hogan I don't think met up to this standard, but still he was a major, and people did what he said to do. This was an entirely different group of men.

Let's see. We got there early in February, and the third week in February we had some air raids. The British came three nights, and the Americans came in the two intervening days. And they just blew the daylights out of that place.

Marcello: Did any of the bombs hit the camp?

Edwards: Yeah, one of the British raids hit one of the barracks, and it just, you know, disappeared.

Marcello: What do you do in one of these air raids, or what did you do?

Edwards: Well, the Germans had let us dig some slit trenches. They had loaned us the tools again on parole that we would not use them to escape, and we dug slit trenches. So you had the option . . . I say you had the option but on some raids we didn't get in the

slit trenches. We stayed in the barracks. I remember the pieces of flak from antiaircraft guns that hit on top of the barracks. We'd go out and gather it up after the raid.

Marcello: What could you do with that flak? What could the Germans do with the pieces of shrapnel and . . .

Edwards: Oh, . . .

Marcello: . . . flak?

Edwards: . . . nothing. You mean, how did they protect against it?

Marcello: You were saying you went out after the raids and gathered up the flak . . .

Edwards: Yeah.

Marcello: . . . or the shrapnel.

Edwards: Yeah. Well, this was for just a souvenir-type thing.

Marcello: Oh, I see.

Edwards: I'm gonna have to take that back. We didn't have slit trenches at Nuremberg. We had them later on. We just stayed in the barracks there and just hoped that it didn't hit. The barracks that was obliterated was not an American barracks. It was a British barracks. They were still keeping the Americans and British segregated here. I'm sure there were many other nationalities in Nuremberg, but I don't know just which ones.

Marcello: From what you could see of Nuremberg it had also been leveled like Frankfurt. Is this correct?

Edwards: No doubt about it. It was very flat and desolate, and this

bothered our people. We didn't realize how badly we were tearing up these cities. You know, you looked at a photograph, and this was a ball bearing plant, and they had ball bearings in Focke-Wulfs. You don't see the human side of it. You know, it's a job. And I suppose the fellows in the Far East now feel much the same way. They look on it as just a military target. And the fellows who would come into Germany from, say, down in Italy where they hadn't seen so much devastation. Their conscience didn't bother them much. But this helped the German interrogator, you know, because he could then play on your better instincts, I guess. Well, we stayed there in Nuremberg . . . this was along the 22nd, 23rd, or 25th of February.

Marcello: Was there anything at Nuremburg that stands out in your mind other than the raids themselves?

Edwards: The raids really stand out because these were full-fledged raids. I've got a friend that works where I do now and who was on one of the raids. He was a navigator, also. He's told me since about what big raids there were for the Eighth Air Force. Of course, we saw planes getting shot down, and actually some of the fellows when they parachuted out landed right in the camp. This was very unusual. There were different guards now, but some of the guards were still around. But there were more Luftwaffe Wermacht guards than Luftwaffe guards at this point.

Marcello: Was the routine still the same, the daily routine? You really didn't do anything?

Edwards: No, the routine wasn't the same anymore. Nobody was interested in classes anymore. There was no more of this sort of thing. Nobody walked for exercise. You know, there wasn't enough food. Health was beginning to deteriorate.

Marcello: What was your own physical condition at this time?

Edwards: Well, I was bothered a lot by . . . now, I didn't have any stomach trouble that many guys had, but I had an awful lot of respiratory trouble. And a lot of this was just the eternal smoke inside the barracks and always being cold. We did a lot of . . . I guess you would call it bundling. A bunch of us--twelve people--would get so darn cold, and everybody would get under the covers together. And, of course, you slept in your overcoat and things like that. So we stayed in Nuremberg through February and March. I guess it was in early April that the Allies started coming.

Marcello: Was there very much physical punishment at Nuremberg by the Germans? Obviously the raids had been increasing and so on, and surely some of those guards had been losing loved ones and so on.

Edwards: Well, I don't recall anything along that line. I just don't remember seeing much of it. We didn't do all this business of parades and counting business. I don't remember being counted one time there, but we must have been. There sure wasn't any

of this twice a day business. Everybody was concerned with survival. The guards got awful nervous and uneasy right after these raids.

Marcello: How long were you at Nuremberg altogether?

Edwards: February, March . . . about ten weeks, I guess.

Marcello: How often did the raids occur, the air raids?

Edwards: Well, the five big ones in three days were the ones that stand out. There were a couple others but not big ones. The two American raids were, I would say, maybe 800 plane raids, something like that.

You know, I was telling you about how you dropped them by the blanket when you were on the dropping side. When you're on the receiving side, this is when it's tough because you know it's a pattern. The English, like I say, were regular for maybe two hours. It's Boom, and maybe it's ten minutes and then another boom somewhere else. The Americans . . . let's say there are 800 planes, and that's what--3,200 engines.

Marcello: You can see those bombs . . .

Edwards: Oh, Jesus Christ!!

Marcello: . . . walking in, I suppose.

Edwards: Yeah, well, you can hear them coming, you know.

Marcello: They just get louder and louder.

Edwards: Yeah, some guy is going to drop early, you know, so they go "pop" "pop," and then it's "brrrrrrrrrrrrrr" sort of thing. And then it's the late guys that worry you, too, you know,

"boom, boom," "boom" . . . "boom." (Chuckle) So the guys that worried the most, I think, were the bombardiers who knew how sloppy they were with them and . . . you know, this late dropping.

Marcello: Did you, yourself, ever have any pangs of conscience and so on about the destruction that was taking place?

Edwards: Yes, very much so. I didn't feel personally responsible for it, but it seemed . . . well, you know, just really terrible that entire cities would be wiped out. The statistics on some of the raids on German cities show there were more people killed in Hamburg, for example, or Dresden than there were in Hiroshima, and they are not isolated instances. The old towns that, you know, Americans never heard of that, you know, maybe 50,000 or 100,000 people were killed. So this was tough, and I was sorry I had to have a part of it, but I don't know what I could have done any different than this. I think it bothered everybody. It gave you very little comfort to say, well, they did it first or they started it. Hell, that's first grade thinking.

We were in Nuremberg when the Americans crossed the Rhine. And, man, this was great, you know. We figured they were on their way, and they did move faster after that. And we followed this day by day. I kept some old German newspaper maps here that I colored in, and also on some of these things here I sort of listed where Patton is and so forth. I don't remember

precisely when we moved out of Nuremberg, but we got to thinking escape real seriously at this point. I had a good friend from Texas, a boy named . . .

Marcello: Why did you want to escape at this time? Did you think that perhaps with the Americans that close the Germans might get a little trigger-happy?

Edwards: Well, yes, there was this thought. Of course, always for the prisoner, you wonder about that final day. You want the war to be over, but you wonder what happens on the final day, you know. Do they turn the machine guns loose on the camp? Well, just like in the prison I was in in Brussels, I mentioned the Reader's Digest article that they came along and threw hand grenades in all the cells just before they left town. You know, you've always got these nuts. So it looked like a question of survival, and, of course, by this time we had American lines on the continent. It looked like a guy had a fighting chance, and we knew a little more about the ways of the world. We learned some German, we learned some French, we learned some of the ways of the people. We learned a lot about living off the country.

Marcello: Did you ever have very much contact with German civilians in either one of these camps that you were in?

Edwards: None at all in these camps, virtually none. Hell, the only German civilian we saw, I believe, was a chimney sweep in Sagan to clean out the chimney with. Just no contact at all.

The West compound of Stalag Luft Three, I didn't believe that little fenced circle from the time I got there in April until we marched out in January. So there was just no way. They didn't come in, and we didn't leave.

We were talking Nuremberg and the Allies coming along. And I don't remember exactly when we marched out of there, but prior to the march, a lot of us were planning escape. I've got this little map here that's falling apart. I'd traded some chocolate to a fellow if he would let me trace a map he had there. I traded some more chocolate for an escape compass that somebody had smuggled in from one of these escape kits that they had on the plane. We made us what we called "iron rations" to escape. Some of the fellows still had little bits of chocolate they had left from the old Red Cross parcels, and they mixed these with the prunes and raisins and margarine--a very concentrated dynamite-type ration that you could go for days on. Anyway, we were getting this stuff together. And I buddied up with a fellow named Berkovsky, who was from down around Yokum, Texas. Berkovsky was of Czech descent, you know. He spoke Russian, and Slovak, Czech, just enough to get by. I'd learned enough French in my stay in Belgium, and I thought I could pass myself as a French laborer and him as a Russian. And we were dead serious about escape, you know. And we knew there would be marching again in a short while, so we were ready to go. When we did leave Nuremberg it must have been

around the middle of April, spring, real nice weather. Well, we left there in the morning, and we were marching to the west this time. We were headed to a place north of Munich, called Moosburg. But on the first march we were marching to the west out of the camp there as I remember. They told us to expect air raids. By this time the part of Germany that was left to the Germans was getting smaller--the part between the Americans and the Russians. So you could see sometimes maybe three outfits of American planes, you know. One bunch bombing over here, one bunch over here bombing, and another one over here looking for something to bomb. And these were not the big guys. These were the lower-flying fellows, the intermediates, medium bombers, they call them fighters, also. We never saw any Russian planes and seldom any German planes.

We marched out this first afternoon. The Germans had told us that we could expect air raids, strafing, and so forth. So when this happened, we were allowed to run a little ways from the road and lay down. So Berkovsky and I decided that the first time this happened we were going to run and keep running.

Marcello: You were the only two in on this little escape attempt.

Edwards: Well, this was among ourselves, yes.

Marcello: Just you two.

Edwards: Yes, just us two. And a lot of the other guys were doing the same . . .

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: . . . sort of thing. It wasn't going to be a mass escape-type thing . . .

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: . . . and I don't think that would have been practical anyway. A lot of other guys were talking the same way, but as far as this plan was concerned, it was just me and "Berky," and we didn't clear it with Hogan because we felt like we knew more about it than he did, really.

So we were going out on this afternoon, a real pretty day, and some American planes came in to strafe, and everybody started running. Well, "Berky" and I started running, and we were together, and we just kept going, you know. And finally, one of us hollered for the other one that this was far enough. We laid down there a little while, and we could hear the guards calling the other guys back to the road, and it looked like most of them went back. We got up and went farther on, and I'll be a sonuvagun if there wasn't a German upon the outside of us there another ten yards. This old guy must have been fifty years old.

Marcello: He was ahead of you.

Edwards: He had a rifle, he had his pack, he had his gas mask, he had his shelter half, boots up to here. And he had gotten farther out than we had. So we went back with him. (Chuckle) But anyway, that was a good march. We were down in Bavaria.

Marcello: Now, what time of the year was this?

Edwards: This is in April.

Marcello: This is in April?

Edwards: In April, nice and warm. The evenings were cool, but it was real nice. And we were in Bavaria, but civilians here had been largely untouched by the war so far as damage goes. If a fellow was strong enough to get up to the head of the column and he had any cigarettes or anything to trade with, there would be very good trading. If you were at the head of the column and could get to a little village, you could trade one cigarette for a loaf of bread, this sort of thing. In all probability, they'd even give it to you, if you'd ask them for it. Soap was the same way, for it was very valuable. Later on after about an hour and they were running out of bread, and other guys with more have cigarettes would come, then you couldn't get these things at any price.

But as far as food goes we did much better. "Berky" and I found that if we could stay at the head of the line of march, we'd hit these little farmhouses along the way where they would put us up for the night there. Well, this farmer would have potatoes you know, and he'd have barley, and he'd even have sweet corn and things like this. Being old country boys, we knew pretty well where to hit. Man, we had all the food we could carry. You could make little stops. We adopted a lot of things that the old Confederate soldiers used to do on the

marches. For example, instead of trying to make packs and all, you would take your blanket lay it down, roll stuff up in there, take a shoe lace and tie this around it, and sling it over your shoulder--very simple way to travel. A lot of these things were very practical, and we learned to live that way. This march took, I guess, a week or ten days. I remember we were still on the march when President Roosevelt died, and the Germans thought that this was really great, you know, and that our country would fall apart.

Marcello: What was your reaction when you heard this?

Edwards: Well, we were very sad. We knew that it wasn't going to break up the country, but all the American soldiers were very sad that he didn't live to see us to victory, and there was no question then but what it would be a victory. The Germans knew it and we knew it, and it just seemed real tragic that he didn't live. Nobody had ever heard of Truman, but we didn't figure it would make any difference because there was too much momentum built up at that time. But the Germans seemed to think still that some miracle would happen and they would win.

Marcello: This was the feeling among the German soldiers and . . .

Edwards: Yes, I think so . . .

Marcello: . . . civilians, also?

Edwards: . . . I think so from what we could make out, particularly among the guards and all. We stayed a lot of places on this thing. I remember we were quartered in a little church one

night in some little village there. It was very much like the American churches becaus they had the roll of honor of the boys from the town that had been killed. Usually we'd stay at a little farm; they'd put us in the barn.

Marcello: How many of you were there in this group?

Edwards: Oh, in the line of march going on this route, I guess there were probably two or three thousand, but we were pairing up pretty . . .

Marcello: Oh, I see . . .

Edwards: . . . pretty much.

Marcello: . . . I see. In other words, just groups of you, groups of those two or three thousand would be housed in a barn there . . .

Edwards: Yes, small groups . . .

Marcello: . . . or a farm there or something like that.

Edwards: . . . yes, yes, yes. It would be a continuous line of march more or less but in other words everybody would try to get moving at the same time at night. But you might still stay in every barn in the village, something like this.

Marcello: How were you physically at this time? Were you getting enough to eat?

Edwards: Yes, there was no Red Cross or anything like this, but even then we'd go out and dig up a farmer's potatoes. And they had enough food. We weren't depriving them. They were . . .

Marcello: Did they give the food to you voluntarily; did you trade for

it; or was it simply commandeered by the German soldiers?

Edwards: Well, I'd say we stole it really. There were just too many of us. They couldn't watch everybody, and they weren't shooting people for stealing potatoes, so we just did it. I think in many cases we got it before they knew what we were doing. And I'll have to honestly say that Berkovsky and I fared much better than most people did because in the first place we saw to it that we got there first. There was no set position in the line of march where you had to be. If you were strong enough to get to the head, you got there, and we did. And we knew what to do when we got there. We had a better feel for a barn than, say, a Bronx boy had. You know, we knew where the barley was likely to be and this sort of thing. And a lot of fellows didn't know you could eat barley, and "Berky" and I were getting fat on it. (Chuckle) People thought it was cow food, you know. So, we went on into this camp in Moosburg, and that was Stalag 7-A. This was a very large camp run by the army rather than the Luftwaffe. We still had some of the guards with us. There was everything here now. This was the last big camp in this part of Germany. There was Russians, Rumanians, Indians, Scotch Highlanders, everything. They didn't have any barracks left at all there. They put us up in tents, and this wasn't particularly bad because it was the spring of the year, so there was no problem. We didn't have any facilities for say . . . well, there were about 2,000 of us in

this particular group in camp. We had three water faucets. These were the only places to get water from, so, you know, you took all the bottles and cans you could find, and you stood in line two hours, got some water and brought it back to your buddies. Bathrooms, we didn't have any bathrooms, of course, and there were outside latrines where maybe 200 people could go or something of this sort. And there were no beds or anything so we spent the night on the ground. But you were in out of the rain, so it was okay.

Marcello: Did you have any blankets?

Edwards: Yeah, we did. We had the blankets that we brought with us.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: This was okay. Food . . .

Marcello: And it was getting . . . the weather was . . .

Edwards: Fairly warm.

Marcello: . . . fairly warm . . .

Edwards: Right.

Marcello: . . . as warm as you could expect, I guess.

Edwards: No food from the Germans. They did have some bread, but nothing else. There was no Red Cross food, but we brought in a lot of stuff with us from the march. So the month of May . . . no, no, the month of April, the latter part of April we were there. I don't remember just now how long we were at Moosburg. It must have been two or three weeks, something like that. But the war was very nearly over at this time. Hitler

was killed the twenty-ninth of April, I believe, and we were liberated just about then. I guess the real thing that stands out is the day we were liberated, and I can wind it up by telling you about this day because I remember it well.

Marcello: Please do.

Edwards: Again, the night before we had heard a lot of artillery fire, mortar fire. So we knew they were getting very close. Early in the morning--we were liberated, I believe, the twenty-ninth --we got up, and we looked out, and we saw this line of tanks coming over a hill, about ten or twelve of them. They weren't what we expected; they weren't olive drab with the white star. They were real rusty looking. They were pretty, but they were not new. I don't want to say they were not pretty, but they did look like parade-type tanks. There was a straight line of them coming over the hill here. And they were way off; I guess two or three miles off. I didn't see anything happening, so I went over . . . and "Berky" and three or four of us were living together and sleeping together and all, and I had the water stuff, and I got in one of these lines back there. And I'd been in line, I guess, thirty minutes or so, and it didn't seem to be anything happening. And all of a sudden the guy up in the guard tower started firing into the line. And, boy, you know, everybody just pushes you into this little brick building that the faucet was on. It was a bathroom, but it had two or three faucets here, and there were three lines. You know,

there we were just "jillions" of guys in there in this brick building, and we stayed in there until the firing stopped. I don't know how many guys were hit out there. They hauled them off somewhere.

Marcello: These were . . .

Edwards: Prisoners . . .

Marcello: . . . prisoners?

Edwards: . . . yeah. They were just indiscriminately firing at them.

Marcello: Do you think he panicked or . . .

Edwards: Yeah, he must have panicked. But I got out and went back over to where Berkovsky was. And this was the place where they let us dig the slit trenches. So Berkovsky and I and a bunch of other guys get out in these slit trenches, and we wanted to see what was going on. And it wasn't too long until an American P-51 came in, and he was right down on the deck. He lined up a couple of these guard towers, and he opened with all his machine guns. They just disappeared, just chew them to kindling. Wire, searchlights, rifle, guard, and all--just looked like a pile of matches. He was getting them in two at a time like that. He lined up two and then another two, and, man, he was through in about five minutes. There were no guards in the towers, including the guy who had been firing in the back line there.

Marcello: Did you witness the man who was firing? Did you witness that scene when the guard was firing into that group of men?

Edwards: Yeah, I was in the line there. I don't know what made him do it. I don't even know whether he was Luftwaffe or just what, or what would have possessed him to do it. There had been some trouble during the night. The SS came in and we heard they'd had a pretty . . . there was a good deal of firing during the night--small arms fire. And we heard that the SS had wanted to move selected ones of the prisoners down on into the redoubt area, and they did move just a handful of them. But the SS had wanted to move a lot more, and our old Luftwaffe and German army guards wanted to stay there and surrender the prisoners that they had and, you know, get better treatment for themselves. So Berkovsky and I were out in the trench there; the guardhouses were all gone. And by this time the tanks were getting in pretty close, and there were a lot of American planes right down over the camp just sort of like a mother hen sheltering her chicks, you know, just taking care of the fellows. The tanks were getting pretty close and beginning to fire into the town. There was a great church steeple in Moosburg sort of overlooking the town. Anyway, there was a German sniper up there firing down on the tanks and infantrymen, and one of the tanks hauled off and blew a great big hole through the thing. And a little while later--I guess ten minutes later--there was a great big old American flag out of this thing, huge thing. I don't know where they got it or how they did it, but it was the first American flage we'd seen in

a long time. We'd seen an awful lot of the swatstika, and it really looked good. So by afternoon the thing was all over. The first Americans had showed up at the gate, and we were . . . the war wasn't over. We were uneasy that the Germans would come along and reverse everything, you know, that the lines would move back. You know, like the Battle of the Bulge and the counterattack and all. But they didn't and pretty soon the American Army got some food into us. They didn't right away. It was, oh, a couple or three days, but that same day guys who had brothers and all in the infantry, and soldiers were coming into camp and seeking out their friends and all. Some of the people went out in the German Headquarters and got our identity cards and mail for the last six or eight months, you know, and brought that in. So we had a big mail call. There wasn't any food out there to distribute, so we didn't eat any better for a little while.

Marcello: What happened to the German guards?

Edwards: A lot of the fellows that had been with American prisoners for, you know, maybe four or five years were killed there by the SS.

Marcello: The German guards themselves . . .

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: . . . were killed by the SS?

Edwards: Right. This was in the night before. This was what the firing was for during the night.

Marcello: I see.

Edwards: I don't know any of the names of any of these guys. I do believe that a number of them were killed there.

Marcello: Did you have very much contact at all with the SS?

Edwards: No, no, no, not at all. And this suited me just fine. They were a hard-looking lot. This last march when we were coming down from Nuremberg to Moosburg, we passed an SS unit that was going up to the front. It was a hard-looking lot, you know, the black uniform, the two lightning SS stripes on them. They were quite young and had excellent equipment, but, boy, were they were a hard-looking lot. We were glad to be rid of them.

Since we had been in tents, we were the first ones that were sent back to, you know, to the United States. So we went over to this airfield there along about the 2nd or 3rd of May. I don't remember the name of the field, but it had been a German fighter base. And they started flying them out, and they come out ten planeloads of full colonels. And after that the rest of us got to go, so I was on the eleventh plane that started back home.

Marcello: What were your first reactions when the camp was finally liberated?

Edwards: Well, we just couldn't hardly believe it. We were afraid something would go wrong and that we'd still, you know, go the other way. But we were much impressed with the efficiency of the ground forces in doing the thing. We didn't see how this sort of thing could be done without a lot of bloodshed--such

things as taking out the guard towers the way they did. You know, it's tragic that anybody has to get killed, but if you want to look at an exercise in military efficiency, it was just as neat and precise as one could imagine under the circumstances.

Marcello: How did they go about liberating this camp without much bloodshed?

Edwards: I don't know what the planning was on that.

Marcello: Did they surround it with those tanks?

Edwards: No, I don't think it was surrounded. I just got the impression that the line went past it. I'll tell you, it may well be that intelligences knew something about this going on between the guards and the SS that night, but I don't know, don't know. I don't know if you're familiar with an attempt that General Patton made along about March of that year, not too far from Nuremberg in a little camp Hammelburg. Did you ever hear that story?

Marcello: No, I sure haven't.

Edwards: It was an officers' camp that was about fifty miles beyond the American line. This was along about March. It was pretty close to Nuremberg. And we were in Nuremberg at the time. Patton's son-in-law was a prisoner there in officers' camp, mainly ground fourth officer. It was about fifty miles beyond the American line, and Patton sent this picked crew that was supposed to go in and liberate this camp and bring

these guys out. Boy, this was a disaster. I mean, the guys going in were killed; a bunch of the prisoners were killed. The Germans came out smelling like a rose. It happened that their intelligence was bad; there were German tank divisions there bivouacked in training. And all they had to do was just give the alert, and they were just slaughtered.

There were a lot of incidents on the march, on various marches, that I'm telling that perhaps, are not personal things . . . not a lot of what I heard and saw. I do know that on this march down from Nuremberg to Moosburg . . . I was telling you how pleasant it was for me and my people. There was a group of British field-grade officers--majors, lieutenant-colonels, and colonels--in the same line of march, and Americans mistakenly raided this group and killed some fifty of them. These were guys that had, you know, been at Dunkirk and all. Like the slit trenches that my buddy and I were in the day we were liberated there were a couple of guys there from Dunkirk there, British guys.

Marcello: It seems to me this has been one of the tragic things--to have all through the war just to be wiped out at the very last minute.

Edwards: The very last day. And that I suppose . . . I guess if we all knew when the last day was . . . but we were interested in observing these Dunkirk fellows. They had grown children; their children were the age of my buddy and I. And they were

almost in a daze, almost beyond the point of reaction.

Marcello: As you look on it, what do you think was the key to your personal survival?

Edwards: Oh, I don't know. I guess just a lot of good luck. I don't think there's any one thing that's responsible. I think the thing I'm proudest of is the fact that I didn't crack in solitary, and I don't know what to attribute that to. In reasoning it out, however, I decided that if they were going to kill me, they were going to kill me, and they weren't going to be sentimental about it and trade me anything for any information I had. I think this was a question of just sheer, cold logic. Now if they'd have applied physical torture, I would have submitted just like everybody else. It's been funny to me to see how successful the Communists are in breaking people here.

Marcello: Well, apparently, it's a lot more of working on the mind and so on. I think it's a lot more psychological with them.

Edwards: It's more psychological. And what they are doing . . .

Marcello: Ideological. I mean, there was never any attempts so far as I know in either the Japanese or the German camps, let's say, to convert anybody to Fascism or . . .

Edwards: No serious attempts. And if . . .

Marcello: . . . National Socialist doctrine or anything like that.

Edwards: Yes. They didn't give a hoot about that. They would rant and rave against the Russians and say, "You and us ought to be fighting the Russians." Well, this was just conversation; this

was leading into other things.

Marcello: The German officers would say this or the German soldiers?

Edwards: Interrogators and it was a general feeling mostly of interrogators with whom I came in contact.

Marcello: Apparently, they didn't have any love at all for the Russians, isn't this correct?

Edwards: Oh, no.

Marcello: I guess a lot of the Germans actually considered the, the Slavic peoples as being somewhat inferior, did they not . . .

Edwards: Oh, yes . . .

Marcello: . . . to the Nordics . . .

Edwards: . . . very much, very much so.

Marcello: Was this quite a good deal in evidence in the camp?

Edwards: Yes, very much so. They considered them just as animals, and the worst punishment the German soldiers could get would to be sent to the Russian front. This was just almost like a death penalty. What the Russians and Chinese and all are doing is undoubtedly exploiting the use of solitary because once we got in with our own people and we had our own commanding officers, we could bolster each other . . .

Marcello: There was comfort in numbers.

Edwards: There sure was and after that we just didn't have an awful lot of contact with them. But if they had kept us really isolated, we were no different from the fellows nowadays. In fact, they probably have better training and know more what to expect than we did.

Marcello: What was the thing that was the most constantly on your mind while you were in these camps? What were you thinking about the most?

Edwards: Well, I don't know. You wanted to get back, of course, and you wanted to survive. I look through the few fragments of notes I still have with me, and I see that food was very much on my mind.

Marcello: I was just going to say that just about everybody that I talked to that had been a Japanese prisoner-of-war always had food on their mind.

Edwards: Yes. Let me show you something. Nuremberg was, I'm sure you gathered, one of my low points. And I can't for the life of me tell you why I wrote some of these things down now.

Nuremberg, Germany

> Since a diary is verboten, and I want some way to record this snail's-pace passage of time, I am recording here more or less chronologically some of the ideas that pass through my mind. Some will regard food; you may read and criticize. Others may be sentimental; I ask you not to laugh. If I should lose this book or from some other reason be unable to carry it back to the States, will the finder please (And this is a bit ragged and I'm sure it said something about, "Take it to my parents and they will reward you.")

Okay . . .

March 1, 1945

> Apple rolls with whipped cream and grated cheese.

And . . .

March 2, 1945

Americans reach (some town here) reach the Rhine fifteen miles from camp. Brownies with grated cheese and (what's this?) . . .

Marcello: Spam.

Edwards: . . . spam with onions. (Chuckle)

March 3, 1945

Strawberry custard pie with nuts and marshmallows.

And the next day is:

Doughnuts with chocolate sauce and chopped nuts.

And . . .

March 5, 1945

Over the Rhine. Fried pies. (Chuckle)

But anyway . . .

March 6, 1945

German rations cut 20 per cent.
Things are looking real black. It's got to be over soon.

March 7, 1945

We're out of smokes again. Bet with me, June 15th; Berky, June 1st; and Tex April 10th. (That's when the war was going to be over.)

Marcello: I see.

Low man to treat the gang at the 'Chicken Shack' in Fort Worth. (These are all Texas men.)

But see, everything is food here.

Marcello: I noticed.

Edwards: This, this March eighth:

Bonn. (In other words, the Americans had reached Bonn.)

Marcello: Right.

Edwards: Pecan cheeseburger. (Chuckle)

Marcello: You've really got some great combinations in there, I've noticed.

Edwards: Yeah and I picked this up last night, and I couldn't figure out what in the world I was . . . why did I write down all this food stuff? But here I guess I was a little bit off on my dates. It says:

March 17, 1945

> Heavy RAF raid. Sliced spam, melted cheese. RAF Mosquitoes the next day. Peas and carrots.

Marcello: For my secretary's benefit, you're referring to RAF Mosquitoes. That was a type of bomber that the . . .

Edwards: Yeah . . .

Marcello: . . . that the Royal Air Force used.

Edwards: Yeah. . . .

April 1, 1945

> Easter. Americans fifty-six miles away. Spam and fried potatoes.

Well, anyhow, here we are:

April 3, 1945

> Alerted at nine o'clock.

April 4, 1945

> Hospital moved out at six o'clock.

So, to be honest, I'd have to say food was very much on my mind.

Marcello: I'm sure it was. There's just one last thing that I want to get into the record. Just awhile ago we were looking at some pictures that had been taken of various scenes in the prisoner-of-war camps, and as you explained to me, these pictures were taken by a German who had migrated to Brazil, is that correct?

Edwards: Um-hum.

Marcello: And then eventually to the United States . . .

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: . . . where he then entered the Army Air Corps.

Edwards: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: And he apparently was taken prisoner and had gotten on rather good terms with the Germans and had been allowed to take these pictures.

Edwards: Yes.

Marcello: And in one of the pictures, which was taken of a scene inside the barracks, there were two men who were manning a radio.

Edwards: Um-hum.

Marcello: Tell us a little bit about that radio.

Edwards: Well, I don't know how they got the radio. I do know that when we first entered the camp, the American officers gave us a little indoctrination talk. And they said if you open your Red Cross parcels and you run across something strange you were to take it to your barracks commander. It might be a radio part or a compass or something like this. It might be in margarine, or it might be in cigarettes, or it might be

anywhere. I never saw any of those things, but obviously they got hold of a radio somehow. And it was good enough that it picked up the BBC everyday.

Marcello: You never did get any of the parts in any of your Red Cross parcels?

Edwards: No, I never saw any parts, or as far as I know, nobody in my room did. But every day after lunch a runner would bring the BBC news in and read it to us. Of course, we couldn't get caught reading this, so they had a ritual that they would go through to maintain security. We'd have a watch at each end of the barracks, and they'd announce the news. Some guy would go down the hall hollering, "The soup's on!" And each room would send one delegate to get the news. We'd get one hundred people together, but each room would send one man. And so we got the BBC news that way.

They had some other, I guess, folkways to identify the Germans. In the movie, The Great Escape, they used some of them. Most of them we adopted from the British. For example, the Germans would show up in the barracks. Anybody seeing them, you know, was supposed to shout out, "Tallyho!" And this infuriated them because they knew what we were doing, but they couldn't stop us from saying tallyho. (Chuckle) Sometimes one German would get ten tallyhos, and it got to eating on him after awhile.

Marcello: What did they do with this radio after they had received the BBC newscast?

Edwards: I don't know where they hid it. I know it was moved around from time to time. I know on the march it was in various places.

Marcello: You never did see the radio itself . . .

Edwards: No, no, I never actually saw it. I know that on the march it was split into several pieces and different people carried different parts of it.

Now the way we got the German news might be of interest. They had one loudspeaker in the camp that carried the German radio, and we had a number of people who would speak German well enough to take that down. So they would take it down and write it out and post it--the official news. And the maps that we had cut out of the newspapers and had in our rooms, the battle lines would be marked by the German news, not the BBC. We had to be careful, you know, not to get ahead of ourselves. But I had a good friend, a boy named Pittman, who had a master's degree in geography--a little unusual at the time. The guy was quite a linguist, and he used to go over and take down the German news. And when the battle was quickly, the lines were moving rapidly, people liked to come and look over his shoulder. And this disturbed him to have fifty people crowding around trying to see. So he started taking down the German news in French. Well, this cut the fifty down to maybe fifteen, but enough of our fellows could read French to give him trouble. So finally he started taking it down in Spanish,

and there weren't enough Spanish-speaking (chuckle) people to (chuckle) . . . he was taking the German and transcribing into Spanish, and then later he would transcribe it into English. We did get German newspapers. I don't know on what basis. I know there wasn't a shortage of them because there were many people who were too interested in reading them.

Marcello: How much credence did you place on the information that you were receiving in the German publications?

Edwards: Oh, not a great deal. In the first place, they didn't lie about where the battle line was. If the battle wasn't going to suit them, they just assumed there was no battle, you know, just ignored it. We had a day by day comparison with the BBC, and they seldom gave false information. They very largely ignored the war in the Pacific. We knew almost nothing about that, almost nothing, very little in the German papers about it.

APPENDIX

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25

Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben

Kriegsgefang. Lager Nr. 3 d. Lw. (Oflag Luft 3)

Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke
Nr. 4259
Lager: Oflag. Luft 3

Des Kriegsgefangenen

Name: EDWARDS
Vorname: Marvin Belton
Geburtstag und -ort: 22.11.23. Texas
Religion: Prot.
Vorname des Vaters:
Familienname der Mutter:

Staatsangehörigkeit: U.S.A.
Dienstgrad: 2. Lt.
Truppenteil: USAAF Kom. usw.:
Zivilberuf: Berufs-Gr.:
Matrikel Nr. (Stammrolle des Heimatstaates): 0.80807h
Gefangennahme (Ort und Datum): Belgien 30.7.44
Ob gesund, krank, verwundet eingeliefert:

Lichtbild

Nähere Personalbeschreibung

Grösse	Haarfarbe
1.85	d. bld.

Besondere Kennzeichen:

Fingerabdruck des rechten I. Zeigefingers

Name und Anschrift der zu benachrichtigenden Person in der Heimat des Kriegsgefangenen

Mrs. B. G. Edwards, Box 326, Forney
Texas.

EDWARDS, M.B.

Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke Nr. Lager: Name:

Bemerkungen:

APPENDIX I - II.

Personalbeschreibung

EDWARDS' DOSSIER AT OFLAG LUFT THREE

Figur: schlk.
Größe: 1.85 m
Alter: 22.11.23
Gesichtsform: lang, schmal.
Gesichtsfarbe: ges.
Schädelform: oval
Augen: grau
Nase: lg., gd
Gebiß: 2.0 unreg. 2 06kf.
Haare: d. bld
Bart:

Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke	Charaktereigenschaften u. a	Besondere Fähigkeiten	Sprachkenntnisse	Führung
Nr.				
Lager: OFLAG LUFT 3				

Strafen im Kr.-Gef.-Lager

Datum	Grund der Bestrafung	Strafmass	Verbüsst, Datum

Schutzimpfungen während der Gefangenschaft gegen

Pocken	Sonstige Impfungen (Ty. Paraty., Ruhr, Cholera usw.	
am	am	am
Erfolg	gegen	gegen
am	am	am
Erfolg	gegen	gegen
am	am	am
Erfolg	gegen	gegen
	am	am
	gegen	gegen

Erkrankungen

Krankheit	Revier vom bis	Lazarett—Krankenhaus vom bis

Versetzungen

Datum	Grund der Versetzung	Neues Kr.-Gef.-Lager
		Dulag Luft
4.5.44	OFLAG LUFT 3	

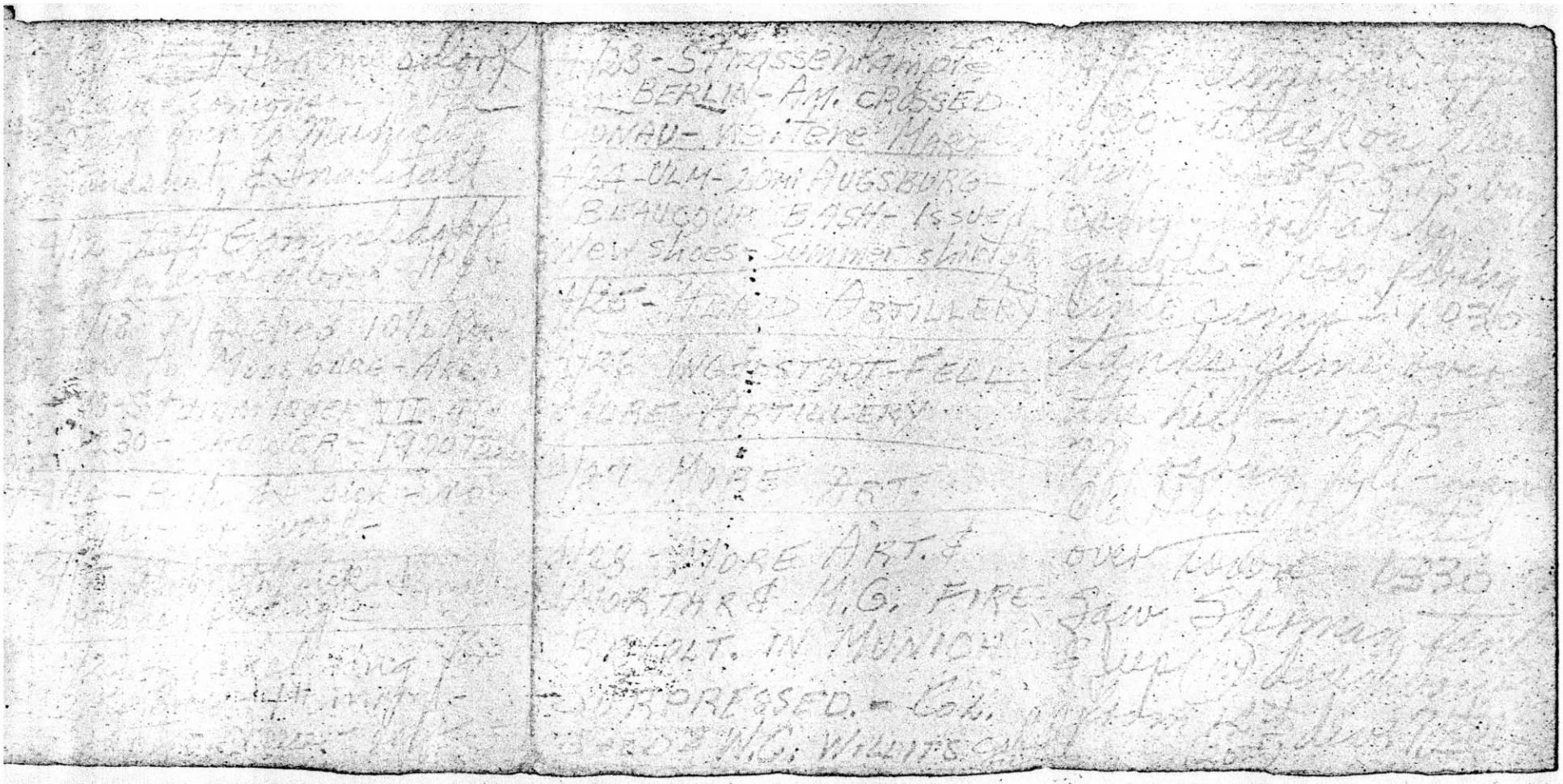
Versetzungen

Datum	Grund der Versetzung	Neues Kr.-Gef.-Lager

Kommandos.

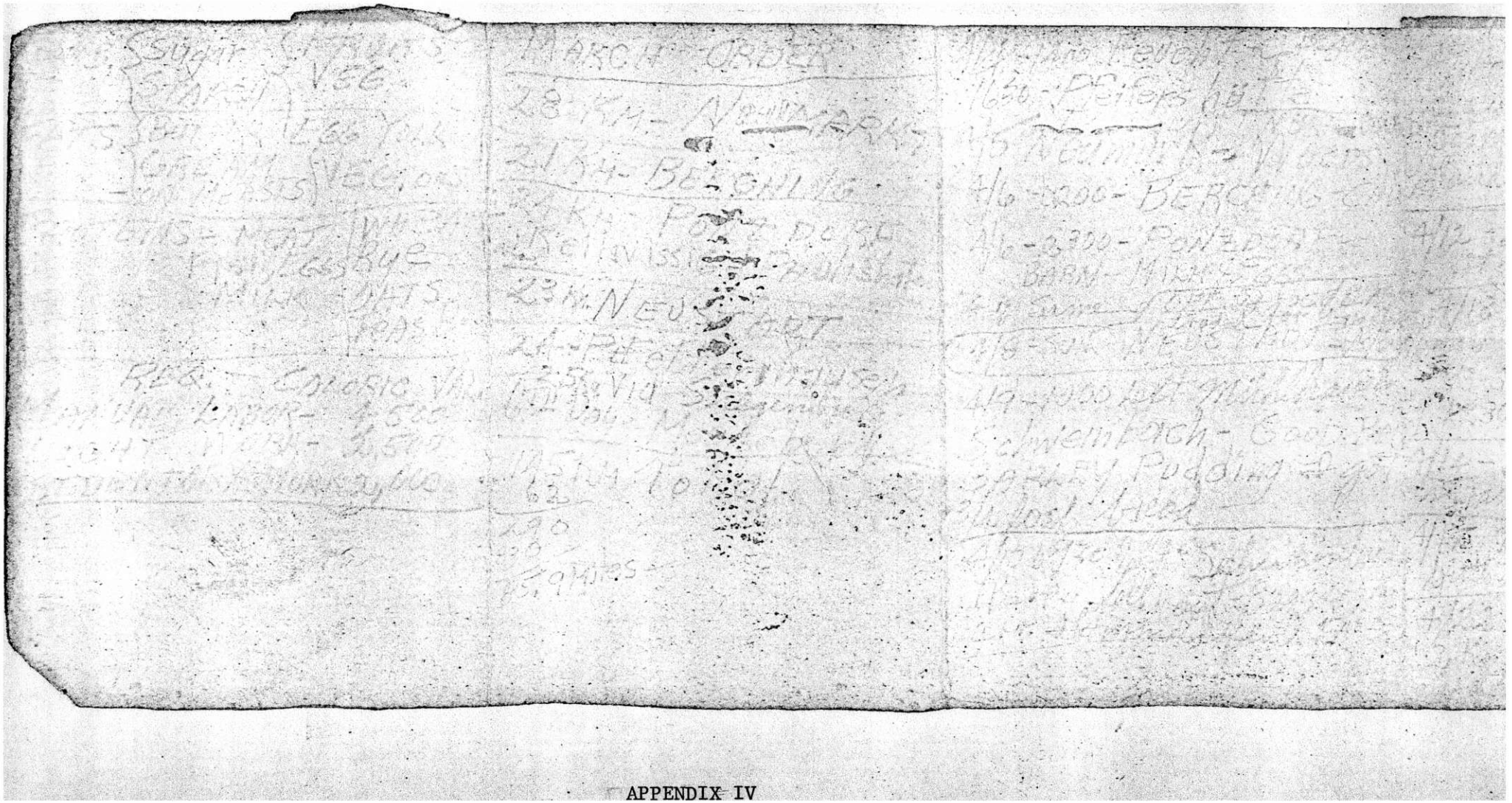
Datum	Art des Kommandos	Rückkehrdatum

APPENDIX II.

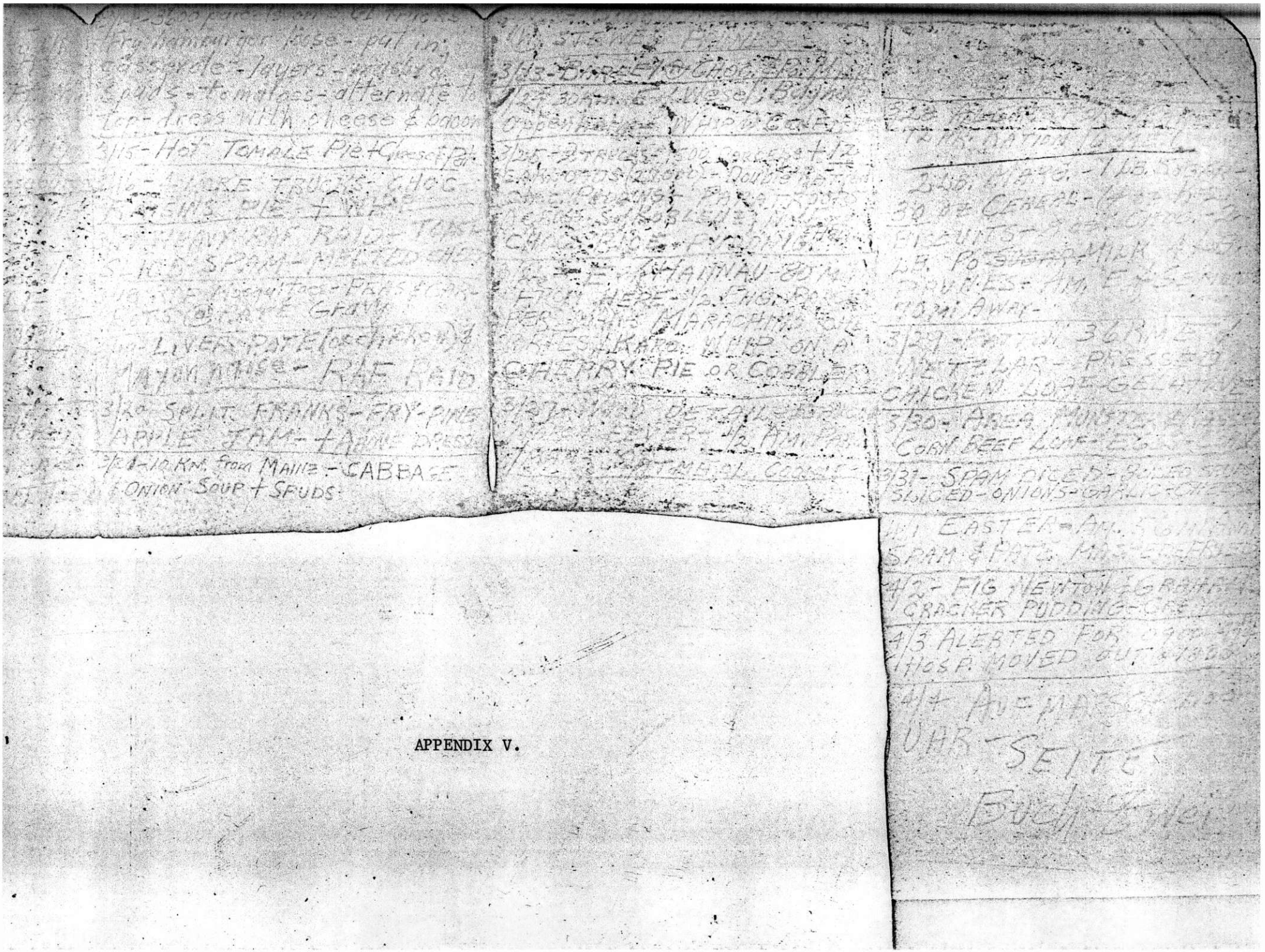


APPENDIX III - VIII.

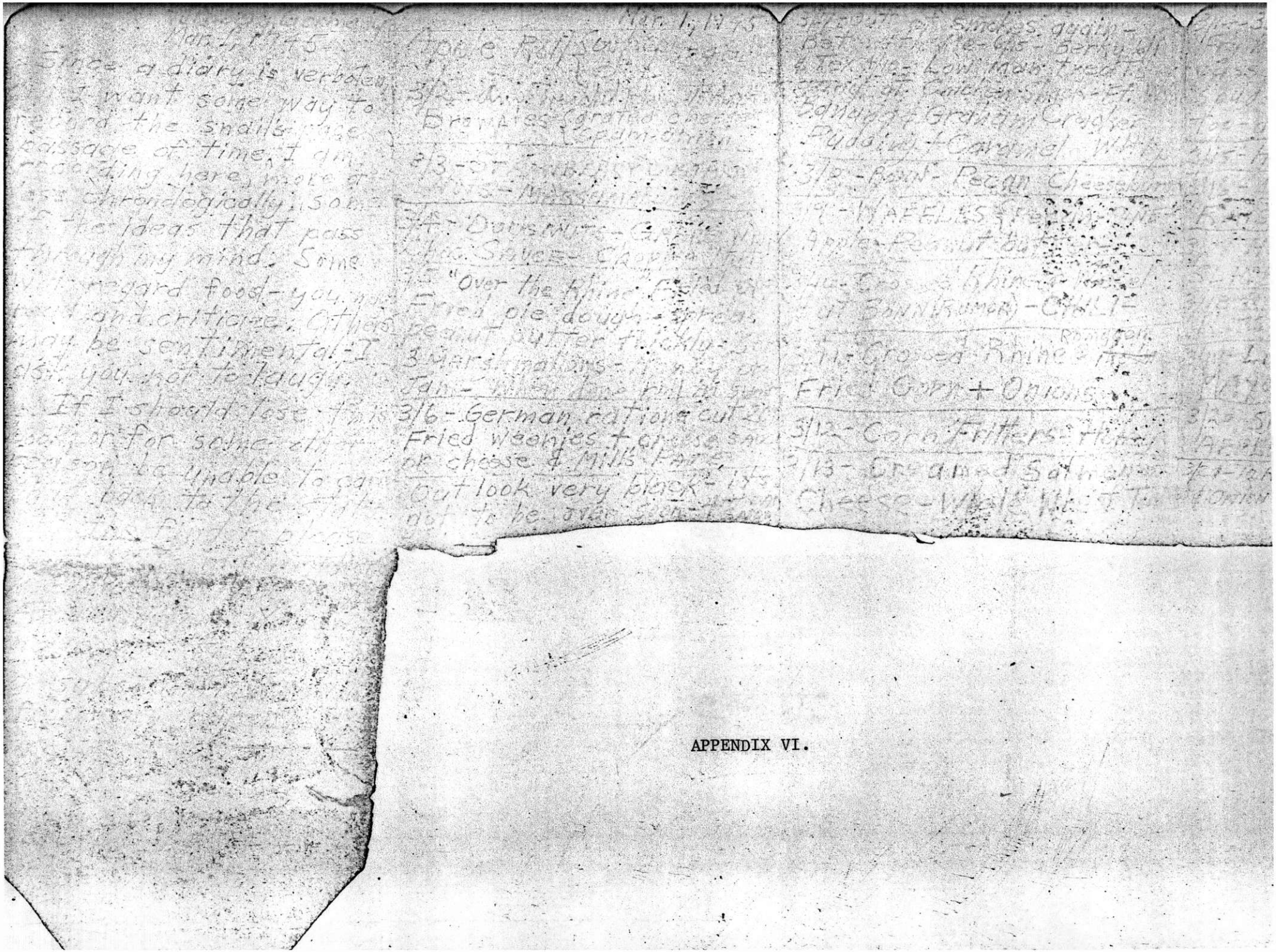
EXCERPTS FROM EDWARDS' PRISON DIARY



APPENDIX IV

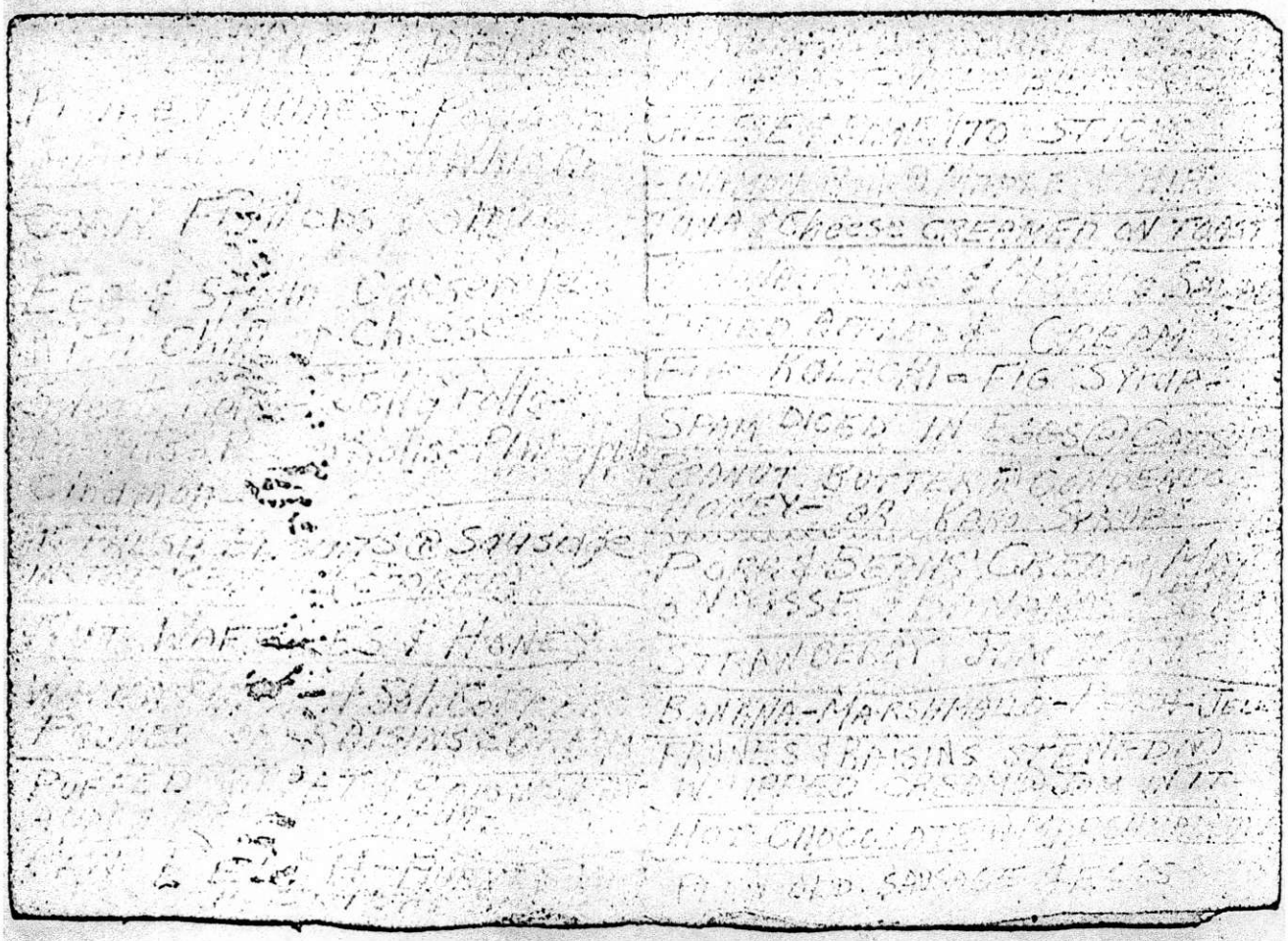


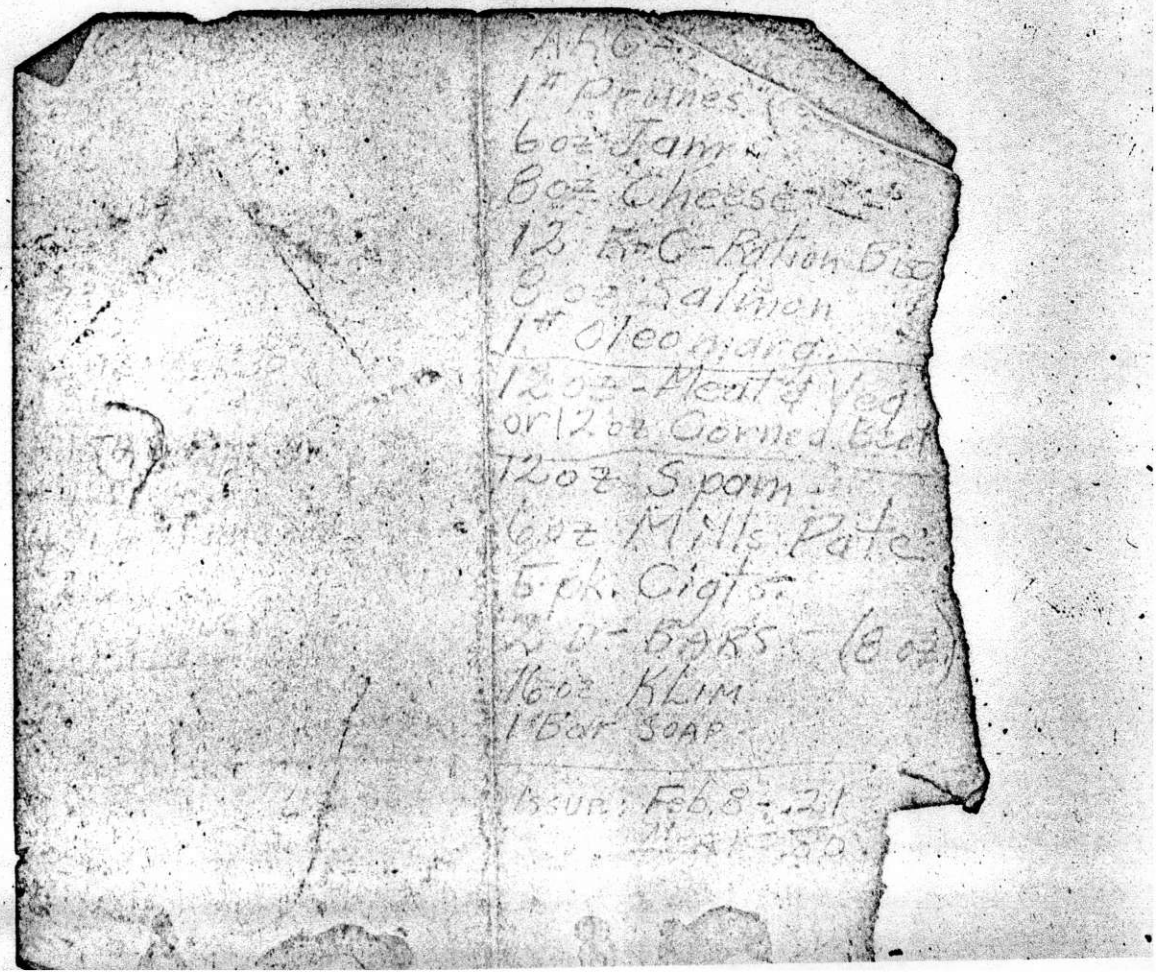
APPENDIX V.

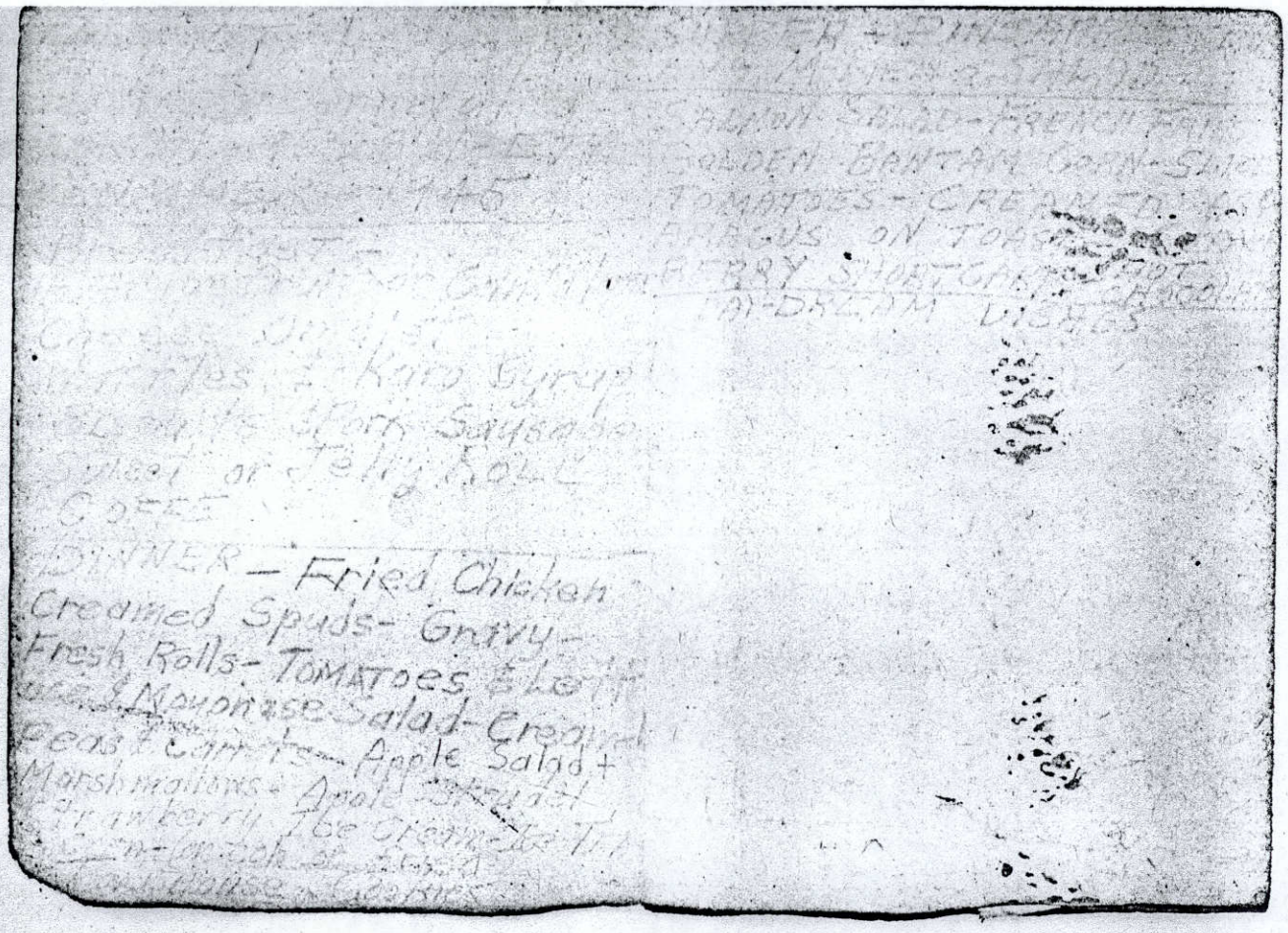


APPENDIX VI.

APPENDIX VII.

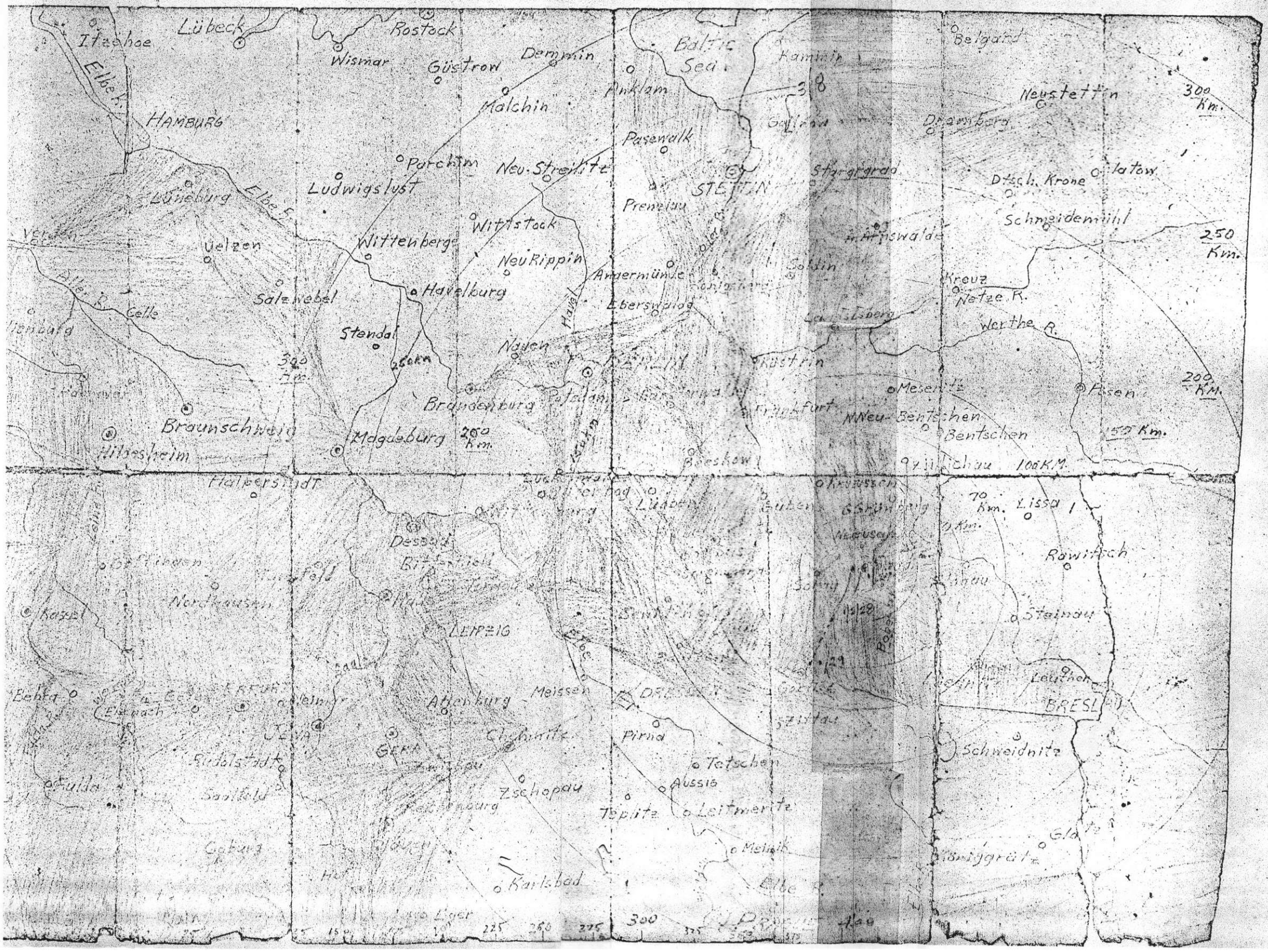


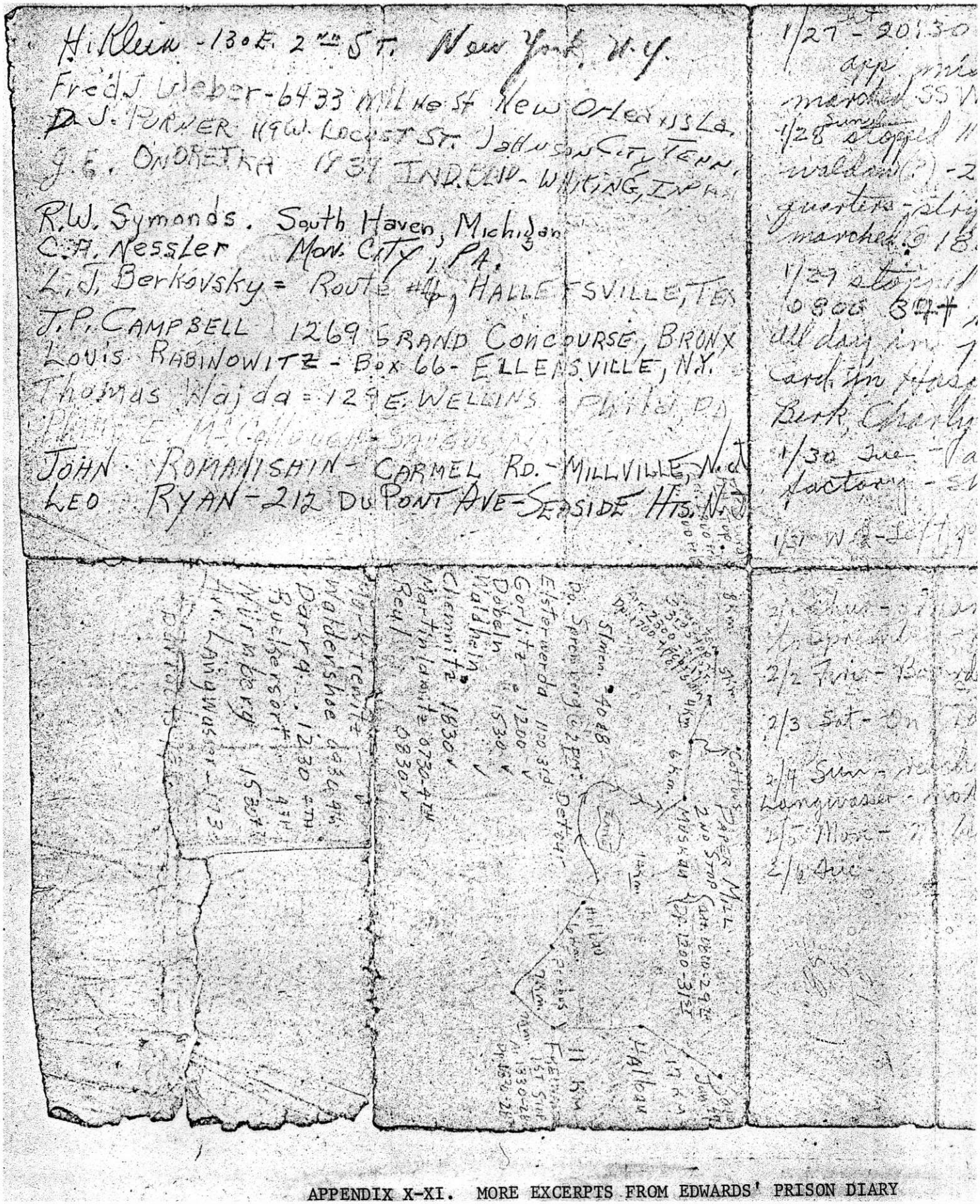




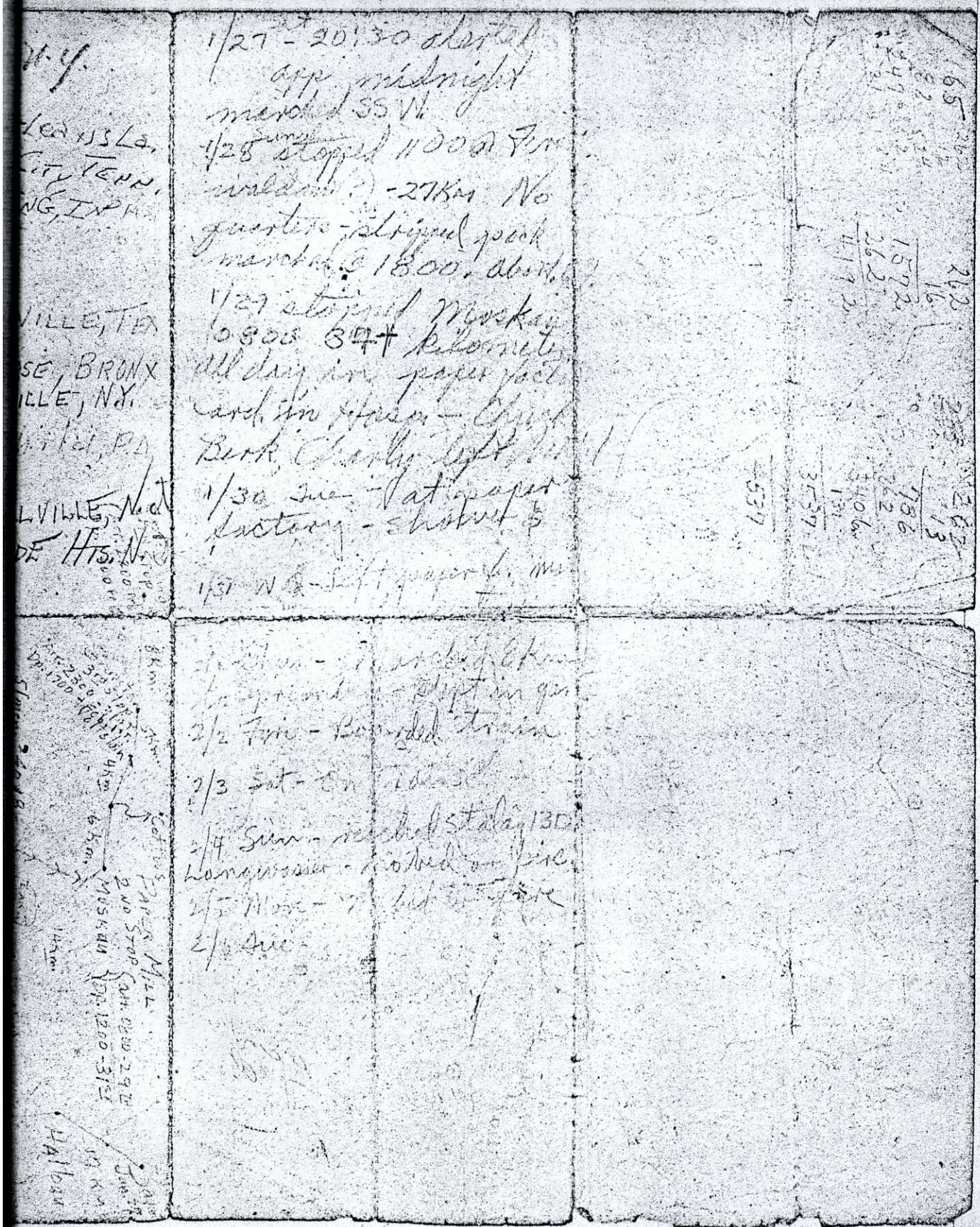
APPENDIX VIII.

APPENDIX IX. EDWARDS' ESCAPE MAP





APPENDIX X-XI. MORE EXCERPTS FROM EDWARDS' PRISON DIARY



APPENDIX XI.