

## Larry Jenson

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**Question:** Now again your name and correct spelling, just so I have it on tape.

**Answer:** Okay, Larry Jensen, J-E-N-S-E-N.

**Question:** S-E-N. Okay. Now what -- what branch of the service were you in?

**Answer:** I was in the Air Force. I enlisted in 1942. Well, I graduated from high school in '42. Went to work in the shipyards as an electrician. And then right at the end of the year they were going to stop enlistments in the Air Force and it looked to me like the alternative as the Infantry, which I wasn't interested in at all. So I managed to get into the Air Force as a -- well, hopefully an aviation cadet. And so there was going to be a time before they called me up so I kept on working until -- until I got my orders. And when I got my orders I was in bed with the mumps. So we let them know and they extended it. So I worked in the shipyards then until -- in Tacoma

**Answer:** And it was spring, I don't remember exactly when I was called up, and I took my basic training at Kerns, Utah, which was outside of Salt Lake City and now is a part of Salt Lake City. I was through there a couple of years ago. I took my basic training there. Then I was sent to Missoula, that was college training detachment because the -- at that time -- to begin with, pilots are well, pilots and other Air Force officers -- Air Corps -- the Army Air Corps, was supposed to be college graduates. And so they -- we was supposed to be there three months but after one month they had an opening for -- for us as cadets so I was sent to Santa Anna where, oh, I should say, at Missoula they gave us ten hours of flight training. Which was really sort of neat. They were in -- in Piper Cubs. And that was great. I enjoyed that.

**Question:** The one picture you have of you standing by a plane -- was that Missoula?

**Answer:** Yeah, that was -- that was, yeah, at that time.

**Question:** And so how old were you then? Say 17, 18?

**Answer:** Probably 19. Let me see. I was born in '24 so -- no, I must have been 18. Eighteen or 19.

**Question:** Just a -- just a kid though.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Now I'm going to rewind just a little bit. You worked in the shipyard --

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Now was that after Pearl Harbor had been --

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** How did you get involved in the shipyard then?

**Answer:** Well, at that time, any -- anybody that was breathing could get a job. And I lived, oh, within a very short distance of the shipyards. And it was -- it was convenient and they paid well and yeah, I -- I had to get a special permit because I was under 18 when I went to work there. And I went to work as a -- as a helper and then I had classes after --

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after work. And I learned the basics of being an electrician and became a mechanic and so I was -- I was working as a full-fledged Marine electrician which -- but very specialized sort of things. You know, we only did lighting -- we didn't do anything else.

**Question:** Do you remember what type of vessels they were building?

**Answer:** Yeah, we were building the baby flat tops. You know, they'd taken the Liberty ships and put a flight deck on them, and I think one or two guns in the back and said they were a combat vessel. And I worked on the -- most of the time I worked on what they called the gallery deck which was just below the flight deck and wired the lighting into the gun platforms and that sort of thing. I remember they had a -- a railing built of 2 x 4's on top of the gun platform and then it was just a short distance up to the flight deck. And I had to go back and forth quite often. So instead of going back down through the ship and up the ladder and everything, I would just get up on the railing and reach up and pull myself up on the flight deck. Now this was 80 feet above the water. And never thought much about it until I knocked my hard hat off one day. Watched it fall and fall and fall and fall -- never did it again. (laughs)

**Question:** Not quite OSHA standards either there on the --

**Answer:** No, OSHA would have just -- (laughs)

**Question:** So you must have been -- I assume that they were pumping these out as fast as they could --

**Answer:** Yes. I worked on the first -- the first one that they -- they built, and it took us a long time for that one. But each one was a little quicker and a little quicker and a little quicker until you didn't even remember which ones you worked on, you know, you just go in and do your job and go on to the next -- next one.

**Question:** So were the -- all the Rosie the Riveters working around you? I mean was the female work force in there at this point?

**Answer:** I don't remember -- I don't remember any women working there. There may have been, but it certainly didn't impress me. I was, oh, OSHA would have been really unhappy with it. Very, very noisy. One of the things we did, when they welded these steel decks, why they would -- they wouldn't be flat. They would sort of swell. And so what they would do was heat -- heat them with a torch until they were red hot and then -- I think they were called shrinkers, but anyway, these guys with these sledge hammers would pound on them to flatten them out. Well you could imagine in that environment, the steel, it was just terribly noisy. Then they had a lot of air tools that were very noisy. They -- there were a lot of arc welders working and I know that getting -- getting flash burns in your eyes from the ultraviolet was a very common thing. I had that happen one time and I was off work for about a week and my eyes never were as good after that.

**Question:** Was there a sense of pride? I mean did -- was it just a job or did you realize this was the war effort you were working on?

**Answer:** I suppose it was -- the war effort thing. Although I think that sort of got lost in just the hustle-bustle of going about the job.

**Question:** Cause we were just coming out of the depression and times had been pretty tough and I assume just having a job was --

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**Answer:** That was a really big thing because, yeah, the depression had been pretty -- pretty bad. My dad was out of work for a long time. He finally got a job shoveling dirt out -- oh, that place, Point Defiance, they were -- there was a -- they were putting in a fill and they did it manually, you know, there weren't any big machines. And the night before he was go to go work, he cut his hand really badly opening a tin can with the -- you know with a can opener. And I can remember that. That he shouldn't have been working but there was no way that he could not go ahead and show up.

**Question:** So you then ended up -- well, let me ask one question before I got to the flying. Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

**Answer:** Yeah. There were some kids in the neighborhood that were out playing touch football. And I went in the house for something and I -- I guess it was on the radio. I don't -- don't really know. And then I went back out and started playing football again. You know it -- the enormity of what was happening just, you know, there was no -- no realization of that until later.

**Question:** Cause like you said, you were just out of high school, you were just a high school kid and --

**Answer:** Yeah. Actually I hadn't -- hadn't graduated at that time. It happened December of '41 and I graduated in June of '42, so that was -- and in fact I remember our graduation exercises were held in the Armory in Tacoma

**Answer:** And the very first thing they did was give instructions for what to do in case of an air raid.

**Question:** Cause there was that real fear around here, wasn't there?

**Answer:** Yes, there was. In fact there had been at least one alert -- there was -- I don't think there was any air plane around but we were told that it could happen. And I can remember buying blue cellophane. We didn't have plastics in those days. But we did have cellophane. And I can remember buying cellophane to put over headlights and -- and any -- any sort of lights that might be on. I don't know if we had really gotten to the point of black-outs yet but probably would have.

**Question:** Do you remember the rationing, the stamps and all that or --

**Answer:** A little bit. I really wasn't very much involved with that because I was living at home and my parents took care of that. I can remember the, what was it A, A sticker, I guess for gasoline, which was the least amount. I don't remember how much it was but you didn't go very far.

**Question:** To work and back.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Now, so you ended up -- did you end up as a gunner, a pilot, what did you end up doing? What was your duty?

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**Answer:** Well, I washed out as a cadet. I -- I've always been secretly glad that I did because I didn't think I'd make a very good (laughs). One of the problems I had when I was taking that -- that ten hours of flight training in Missoula

**Answer:** I kept getting lost. I thought this is really not very good. So secretly I was sort of glad when I did wash out. And so we had our choice of going to radio school or what, to be a fight engineer, or something else. Oh, armorer. The guns and things. So I had always been curious as to how you could make any sense of code. so I took radio school and I went to Scott Field in Illinois. And I learned by repetition. You just -- we'd spend six hours a day in class. Three hours of it taking code and three hours on radio mechanics. And that -- I, you know, there was a great big room and each person sat there at a table with head phones on. And copied the code. Well you wouldn't be able to get everything but you'd do what you could. You'd gradually get better. But it was also very frustrating. And every so often you'd hear somebody stand up and throw their headphones out and -- and expletives deleted I guess but it would -- it was really tough. And anyhow.

**Question:** Now when you said code -- Morse code.

**Answer:** Morse code, yeah.

**Question:** Boy that must have been -- so you had to learn both to receive it and to --

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Be able to tap out Morse code.

**Answer:** Yeah, and not only that but you had to pass -- well, 22 words a minute was about as fast. We would copy them with a pencil. Now real radio operators used a typewriter, but being in a plane, why you had to copy it with a pencil. And there's only so much you can write. So 22 words a minute is what we had to pass and our graduation requirements, I think was to pass three out of five -- I can't remember how long these radio checks were but they were fairly long. And they would send them through static so you weren't only copying the code but you were trying to sort it out from the static. And if you didn't do it, why you went to the Infantry or something.

**Question:** Wow, that's fast. I mean 22 words a minute for a continual amount of time is --

**Answer:** Well, you know, really, one of the very interesting things as we entered -- when you're taking code. Now we were taking code groups. It wasn't plain language, so it was simply letters and numbers. And the better you got, the farther behind you would copy. So you'd watch somebody copying code, and it would stop and they'd keep on writing. And they were probably at least five, five or six characters behind. And you talk about total concentration. That's it. You don't -- you don't know what you're writing. There's just a connection between your ears and your hand without -- without going through the brain really.

**Question:** Wow. So you have to almost disassociate your brain to a certain point because you're hearing and writing and there's a time delay in between.

**Answer:** Yeah. And it -- they -- they did a good job. I really have to say that the Army did an excellent job in training us.

**Question:** So the code was a -- was a shorthand to a certain extent too.

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**Answer:** Well, it was -- in those days voice -- voice transmissions weren't very good. Also code, you could -- you could encode it, you know, so that theoretically nobody else knew what you were saying. And it -- it would get through because it was so much different from the static it was -- you could sort it out. Sometimes, at least. And so at that time it was a pretty important job.

**Question:** So what type of plane did you end up on then?

**Answer:** I ended up with B-17's, which -- put us in heavy bombers, why B-17's and B-24's and if you were in B-24's you thought that was the best plane and if you were in B-17's, you knew that they were the best.

**Question:** Take me through getting ready to go on a flight. Tell me about putting on your gear. What all did you have to wear? Because again you served where, you were over in Europe, right?

**Answer:** I was in Europe.

**Question:** Okay. So you're not in the warm weather, you were over in the cold weather.

**Answer:** It was miserable weather, yes. And I can't tell you very much about that because I flew -- well, stretch a point a little bit, I flew two missions.

**Question:** That's two more than I've flown though.

**Answer:** And I -- I really don't remember very much about -- about getting ready. Except that it was in the middle of the night when they called us. And we had -- we didn't have, you know you see the pictures of the -- the sheepskin, leather and everything. We didn't have those. We had more modern ones which were, I think, also a lot cheaper to make. And we had -- we had heated suits but we didn't -- we didn't use them. I can't remember why. But they were just sort of heavy, heavy cloth, and as far as getting ready, I'm pretty well blank on that outside of the fact that we would go to a briefing and they'd have separate briefings for the -- for the officers and the -- well, like radio men all got a separate briefing as far as codes and like that. And then we -- we picked up our guns, B-17 had, let's see, how many guns did it have, ten, ten I guess. Two, four, six, eight, probably ten. Depending on what part of the war because they changed the -- a little bit. And you'd pick up your machine guns and then go out to the plane. You know I'm really unclear on that. I don't remember -- I can remember installing them. Because for some reason I got the job of putting the guns in, and so I can remember doing that.

**Question:** So where -- do you remember where you sat? I mean --

**Answer:** Oh as far as the radio operator?

**Question:** Yeah.

**Answer:** Well, on the B-17 the radio operator had a -- a little room back of the bomb bay. If you see a picture of a B-17 you'd see a window on the left side and that was right by where I was -- that was how I could see out. And it was behind the wing and sort of looking down at number two engine. And so --

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**Question:** So that was your view was number two engine, I mean you kind of --. So was it a -- is it a little cramped area they put you in or what's --

**Answer:** No, actually it was pretty -- pretty roomy. There was a plywood table up against -- there's a bulkhead -- that was a bulkhead between the radio room and the bomb bay. And there was a plywood table that I sat at with a little swivel chair, and then the -- the receiver was on the table right in front of me. In back of me were the transmitter, IFF transmitter, I believe, I can't remember for sure, but that -- that was Identification Friend or Foe. This was -- you had -- theoretically it -- it was a transponder and it would tell them that you were friendly. However they had a tendency to shoot at anybody they couldn't identify, so you hoped it worked. Also my job in case -- in case we would have to abandon plane or anything, was to throw a switch that would destroy the IFF. Which I did. Later on I did that. The radio room was also the crash landing position. There was -- bulkhead was ahead of us and there was a door there into the bomb bay, and another door back in the waist of the plane. And in case of crash landing, I was supposed to stay where I was and the rest of the crew could sit down. There -- I guess there were two that had their backs against the bulkhead and pull their knees up and then the next two would sit down with their backs against their knees and so on. So there was room for eight of us, I guess in there. And there was a hatch over the top of the radio room, which originally it had a machine gun mounted in it but they later took that one out, so. It was just the hatch.

**Question:** Now you talked about in -- in your class, that you get a little static to listen to. Now I can only imagine -- cause I've seen -- they're little hard earphones, weren't they? Little hard plastic earphones?

**Answer:** Well these were -- well, I guess they were hard plastic but they normally have the sponge rubber deal over them so they cover your ears pretty well.

**Question:** Now I can only imagine, I've never been in one of the big planes, but I can only imagine how loud the plane is and now you're trying to pick code out of it. Was it isolated enough that you could actually --

**Answer:** You could do it pretty well, yeah. Some -- it was sort of interesting because we had during -- well, when I got out of radio school, then I was assigned to a crew. And we were -- after I got out of radio school, I was assigned to a crew and we was sent to Alexandria, Louisiana for what they called phase training. And that was three months. And we flew -- we flew missions. Actually we flew cross country, and we'd go out and have air to ground gunnery or air to air gunnery and that sort of thing and it was -- it was sort of fun. We'd fly down over the Gulf and what you do is -- is fire a few shots into the water and then you'd shoot at the splashes. That was fun, that was like going to an arcade or something. And so that -- some of the long missions, we'd fly six or seven hours. They were pretty boring, and so, lots of times you didn't have anything to do, especially the gunners. And radio operator didn't have an awful lot to do either so you'd sleep. And I was sleeping one day and woke up and we were in a storm. And we ended up landing at Barks -- Barksdale -- anyhow we landed at some other field. And the next day when we got back to where we was supposed to be, why the pilot and the co-pilot and the radio operator were standing at attention explaining why they didn't let anybody know that they were going to land there. Lesson there. But we -- we flew a lot. And in Louisiana in the summer time it is awfully hot. So you -- you'd get in the plane and you'd be soaking wet with sweat. Then you'd go up to altitude and it would freeze. We -- we didn't have any warm clothes to wear at altitude, you know. So that's -- but it was all right. And then, let's see, I guess we went -- were sent to Lincoln, Nebraska

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**Answer:** Got a furlough. First, first furlough I've had since I'd been in. And when we came back we picked a new B-17 that we were going to deliver to England. And we were really proud of that plane. Of course when we took off to start for England we had an -- oil pressure I guess on one of the engines -- it wasn't right, so we made an emergency landing in Moline, Illinois. And Moline, Illinois had -- I guess you could say it was minimal conditions. Because they landed and locked the brakes. Wore -- I looked at the tires later. They had flat spots on them where. But here we were in this little -- in this little airport, with one wing extending out over the street. And boy, you think we didn't make an impression on -- on the townspeople. So they -- they didn't trust our pilot to take it off from that little field. They sent in an expert and we took it back and fixed it. So then we took off again. That time we got as far as Presque Isle Maine and they had smoke in the cockpit. So we made another forced landing. Spent the night there and then went on to, oh boy. Goose Bay in Newfoundland, where it was really cold. And spent the night. And then we flew to Iceland. And flew across Greenland. And there was an emergency field there but boy looking at all the ice and snow and everything I was -- I was sure hoping we didn't have to land there. I had -- I remember I made - made some points with the pilot because I -- just more to keep -- for something to do than anything else, I kept copying weather reports as we were flying over there. Well, he -- when we got close to Iceland he called me up and told me to get a weather report and I said I got one, you know. That, he thought that was great. Landed in Iceland which is a miserable, miserable place. Thing I remember most about it was how bad the toilets stank. And they only had one or two gas trucks and they couldn't get to us to refuel us so we couldn't leave the next day. So following day we flew into England, or Wales, I guess it was where we landed.

And, oh taking off from Iceland. We had a gunner, name was Smyth and he spelled it with a "Y". That's why he was known as Smyth with a "Y". And he was a pretty immature kid. We had all been issued 45 automatics, and he was sitting back there with the other guys in the waist of the plane as we were taking off. Now this is a guy who's been through gunnery school and supposed to know about guns, right. He -- he pulled the slide back on his 45 and checked to see there was nothing in the chamber. And then dropped the clip out, aimed it out the window on the other side, sitting in between two guys just a couple of feet from him, and squeezed off a round. Shot a hole in the window. (laughs) Scared everybody to death. But when we got there, we thought that was going to be our plane but turned out it wasn't, we was just delivering it. So we didn't even say anything about it and they never came back to find out what had happened.

**Question:** Boy, you were probably glad to get rid of that plane. You'd had two emergency landings, you shot one window out and you haven't even got to the war front yet.

**Answer:** Yeah, we was still on our way.

**Question:** Now were you guys just flying solo? Just a single plane?

**Answer:** Yeah. I mean there were a lot of other planes in the air but they all were flying individually. I remember that this was when the A-26, not the Martin B-26 but the A-26, I can't remember who made it. It was just brand new, and the first time I ever saw one was at Presque Isle. And they were the classiest planes I'd ever seen. I thought they were just wonderful. And I remember they were flying, I remember those. I would hear transmissions from them. And so there were a lot of planes going over but we didn't see any of them. We ended up being assigned to 509th Division, no, 509th Squadron, 351st, you know it's been a long time when I can't --

**Question:** I don't see how, you know, all these guys that tell me their squadron and their this, and I don't see how you guys can remember all the numbers and names of villages of all

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that. I mean I'd be lucky if I could remember how to get home with all the information that was pumped into you in such a short time.

**Answer:** It was the 351st Bomb Group, I remember that, I'm pretty sure that's right. 509th Squadron. And we had a little orientation. I was pretty impressed. We got there and a plane had just come back from a mission, had an anti-aircraft shell go out underneath it, and it had torn out the ball turret gunner, ball turret and gunner, and a good part of the fuselage. And they had flown it back and landed it. And I, myself, you know this isn't just hearsay, I did it. I took hold of the tail and by lifting up on it or pushing down, I could bend the fuselage in the middle. How that thing ever flew I have no idea

**Answer:** But they got it back and down safely.

**Answer:** So we then flew our first mission, or we started out on our first mission. And I don't know what -- what was wrong exactly, but the pilot aborted the mission, came back and then they couldn't find anything wrong with the plane. So he was disciplined by being grounded for a week and being sent to ground school. The next day we flew again as -- as an alternate. If somebody had engine trouble or something and dropped out, why then we'd take their place. And the pilot that we had, was -- now there's -- I just recently found a book on the -- the Mighty 8th I think was the name of it, where they had interviewed a waist gunner and this pilot's crew. And he said that he was taken away from that crew to fly with us because our pilot was grounded. Now that wasn't the story we got. We heard that he had been sick and his crew had gone on and finished and so he was just trying to finish up his missions. I don't know what the right story is, but anyhow, I never saw him. It was dark, it was just like, well, like here in Washington, you know, in the wintertime, this was in October. But it was still dark when we were out there so I never -- never saw him.

**Question:** And you were flying out of where again?

**Answer:** Polbrook, which was south of London, I guess. I never got it -- I wasn't there long enough to even have a pass. So turned out somebody aborted and so we took their place and we were going to Politz, which was a synthetic oil factory on the Bay of Stetin in Poland, actually, right on the Baltic Se

**Answer:** It was a long flight. It was -- we were carrying 5000 pounds of bombs which sounds like what you'd hang on a fighter these days but it was a pretty good load for us when we had to fly as far as we did. We had extra gas tanks which were called Tokyo tanks. I think it came from when they bombed Tokyo and they -- you know, it was a long distance, anyhow what the connection was exactly I don't know. But Tokyo tanks meant you were going a long way. And we -- we flew over Denmark and got shot at there but not nothing serious. And then we started our bomb run and we were 27,000 feet which was maximum with that load. And we lost a supercharger. Well, without the supercharger we had one engine that wasn't putting out a lot of power, and we couldn't stay with the -- with the group. So pilot called up and told me to change -- they had some -- an amplifier, an electronic amplifier, and I have no idea what -- what it did, but they had one for each -- each engine, each supercharger. And so I put our spare in for that one. I'd never done that before -- I'd never -- you know, this is one place where the training sort of slipped because I had never even known about them before. But I put that in and it didn't help any so we started dropping back behind our -- our group, and losing altitude, and so the pilot -- we should have done right there was jettison his bombs and go home. But he wanted credit for that mission and you didn't have credit unless you dropped your bombs on the target. So we made a one plane bombing run on what I read later in the official history of the 8th Air Force was the most heavily defended target in Europe. Of course we didn't know that at the time, but we -- we made our bombing run, but we didn't

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have a bomb site. So the idea was, we had a togglear. We had an enlisted man who would simply drop the bombs when he saw somebody else drop them. And we were so far behind we couldn't tell when they dropped their bombs. By the time we decided we weren't going to see it, we were already past the target. So then we dumped our bombs on, which I guess was a -- was a village or something, tail gunner said that there was a cross roads there and the bombs landed right in the middle of the cross roads. So what they did, I don't know. But we were hit. Number two engine, which was right under my window, the oil started pouring out of it and running back from it on the -- on the wing. And the engine stopped but they couldn't feather it. You know, to feather a propeller, why you turn it so that it's edged into the slip stream so it isn't as much resistance. So number two was wind milling. Number three and number four were both feathering. I don't know exactly what happened to them. Also, we'd lost all but 110 gallons of gas. So we -- we were not in good shape and we were a long, long way from home. The pilot called up on the intercom and asked, he said, do you want to bail out over Germany or do you want to try and go to Sweden, which was neutral. Well, in those days, at that part of the war when people came down from B-17's in parachutes, they were hanging them from the nearest telephone pole. We didn't think that was a good idea so we were unanimous in trying to go to Sweden. We headed out across the Baltic. Oh, there was a big argument over the intercom. Where was Sweden?. Because too many people had been going to Sweden without any excuse. So they had taken out the maps that showed Sweden. We knew it was north someplace. And then the argument was whether -- which was Sweden and which was Norway because nobody could remember. Well there was only one guy in the whole crew that had been to college and that was the tail gunner. And so he -- he told us it was the one on the east and they debated that a little while and said well, he's been to college, he probably knows. And I'm not sure that -- because they didn't have a heading or anything, we just sort of headed in the general direction and we were meanwhile throwing everything that we could move out. I had to hang on to my radio because I was busy sending SOS's out. I figured I could get court-martialed later but I wanted somebody there with a rescue boat when we hit the water if we did. So we kept flying. And then we flew -- there were clouds under us, under-cast, we were losing altitude all the time. We were flying, flying, flying. Turned out, we found out later, there was another plane in back of us who didn't know where they were going either so they were following us. And we flew as long as we could and finally went down into the clouds. Now had we been in the right heading, we would have gone over the southern tip of Sweden and we would have been high enough to bail out. But we didn't know that and so we came down into the clouds and when we came out we were low, too low to bail out, and it was trees -- looked like forest. And there were some fields and what we found out was people were picking -- were potato fields, people were out picking up potatoes. And we -- we tried to turn in to belly land in the field and whether we stalled out or I -- I don't know what happened because by this time we were all getting in crash landing position. And I was going to get out of that seat; I thought that was the stupidest place in the world to be. And so I was going to get down on the floor with my back up against somebody's knees. And then the ball turret gunner, J.K. Blake, he -- came just sort of running in and bounced down there, where I was going to -- I was already standing up to move over there. Then there was no place for me. So I sat back down in my chair and I -- we had chest parachutes. There were parachutes that snapped onto couple of D rings on our harness. And I grabbed my parachute, snapped it on, turned it crossways and then slid down in my chair, wedged myself down just as tight as I could get behind that plywood table. And then as we were coming down, the tail gunner stood up and took the hatch out -- that escape hatch or whatever it was which was probably the smartest thing he ever did because. Then he sat back down and then I saw the tops of trees going by my window. And then we hit and then things got very, very confused. I felt like I was in a cement mixer with a bunch of tin cans because it was really noisy and I can remember myself being -- sort of whirling around. And I remember very clearly the thought going through my head, if this doesn't stop pretty soon I'm going to get hurt. And the next thing I knew I was out on the ground, the plane had plowed up some -

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- some of this soft dirt -- my face was pushed down into it. I had dirt in my eyes, dirt in my eyebrows, just, you know. And I could hear flames -- I could hear something burning, but everything was quiet. And there had been a movie, I think it was called Test Pilot, Spencer Tracey and Clark Gable, and they had crashed a B-17. And I kept thinking about that which was probably not the smartest thing to be thinking about but that's what kept going through my mind. Anyhow, I -- I tried to stand up and I couldn't straighten up because my -- I had the wind knocked out of me, my chest hurt. Found out later I had a broken rib. Then I heard somebody calling, and it was the navigator who was back quite a ways from the plane and we had knocked down a barbed wire fence and his leg -- his flying suit was caught in barbed wire and his -- his foot was just flopped back and forth, he had a badly broken leg. And he couldn't remember exactly what had happened but he was afraid that the plane was going to explode. He didn't remember that we dropped our bombs. And the plane was burning, we hadn't gotten rid of the ammunition out of the front of the plane; we had dumped all of the ammunition in the back. But there were guns for the bombardier to use. Anyhow the ammunition was going off, we had these rockets for the very pistol and every once in a while, why a rocket would go up on there. And he was afraid the bombs were going to go off and he said get me behind a rock. So I untied his flying suit and started dragging him back and there was some big rocks. Our plane had come down through the trees and then hit the ground and run up against a big rock, and broken in half. So I started dragging him over and about that time the tail gunner, who had been knocked out temporarily, but he was in pretty good shape, and he came over and he helped me. And then we found the other guys were all sort of along a path. I had been, well probably I was the last one out because I was farthest forward. And I think, later on the tail gunner and I tried to figure out what had happened, and the only thing we could figure was that we had all gone out through that little hatch that was about big enough for one person to go out at a time. But the two of us were lucky enough not to hit anything too hard on the way out. So we found all the rest of the crew except the pilot and the copilot who were up in the part that was burning. And we dragged them behind rocks and then some -- the Swedes who had been out in the potato field started showing up. And I can remember they gave us some juice and we couldn't speak any Swedish or they couldn't speak any English. But eventually they managed to get word and there was some taxis showed up and they took us all to the hospital which was about 18 miles away and in taxis. And 18 miles, I'm not sure that's right but that was -- that was the impression I had anyway. So we ended up in a hospital, the navigator, the tail gunner and I were in one room. The rest -- the rest of the crew had either died instantly or on the way into the hospital except for bombardier, was a, delirious and you could hear him screaming and yelling down the hall. And so three days later the navigator died from shock. He actually had been, you know, coherent and didn't seem to be in -- outside of a really badly broken leg, why he didn't seem too bad. But I asked the doctor if we'd had morphine, if he would have lived, he said probably. But they had take morphine out of the first aid kits because people were using it for recreational purposes. So we were a big hit. Especially with the nurses. Oh, you know, there were big headlines in the newspaper and I have copies of them someplace and I have no idea where they are now, but big headlines about, and of course the Swedes were all on our side. They were neutral but they -- they really related to us. And we got, oh, there were hundreds of people that came and seen us. The hall outside our room would be full when everybody come in for a few minutes, then go out, then somebody else would come in. And every one of them had a relative in the United States. And everybody brought cakes, fruit, you know, just all kinds of stuff. And every day after visiting hours we just had this great big huge pile of -- of gifts and so we invited the nurses in to have a party. And there was one -- one nurse in particular that was on night duty. She was what, 17, 18, very young anyway. Spoke very good English. Had never talked to a person whose native language was English but had studied English in school, went to see movies in English and all that, Ingabrita was her name. And she spent all of her time down there that she could. And there was a head nurse who she

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called the dragon, who was continually chasing her out. So it got to be a big, big comedy sort of thing.

**Question:** So at this point did anybody say you're prisoners.

**Answer:** I don't remember. Yeah, I guess they did. I can't -- I think we got a visit from the Swedish authorities telling us we were interned. I think we got a visit from the American ambassador or, you know, whoever, I don't remember what the -- but anyhow we weren't very impressed. We knew we were going to be interned. Figured well that's not -- not a bad thing. And so we were in the hospital ten days. And just getting to, well, obviously, we were getting well. The tail gunner had, let's see, what -- he had a concussion or something. He'd been knocked out. I had my chest and I had a cut on my head and all that. Oh he had something wrong with his leg, too. But anyway, we were -- we were getting around all right. And just really started to enjoy the attention from the nurses when they transferred us out of there. They sent us to a place that was normally a summer resort on Lake Vättern and probably no -- no Swede worth his salt would recognize the way I pronounce it, but it's a long thin lake in the middle of Sweden which is -- it has resorts and things; it's a place they go in the summertime. And we were sent there. And that was an internment center. And we were paid per diem and we lived in a hotel and we paid -- we paid room rent. Wore civilian clothes, and it wasn't a bad life at all. It was too late in the season to be really good as a summer resort, but aside from that. And boredom. Boredom was a big thing really. There was a little town there and they had coffee shops. Condatarias?, I can't remember now. But anyway we spent a good time -- a good part of our time sitting at a table in one of those shops, eating - eating the little cakes and drinking coffee.

**Question:** So it sounds like you were fairly -- I mean did they have any form of guard or anything or they just said stay here.

**Answer:** There was a Swedish -- well, we actually they have -- the organization of the camp was through the internees. That is the highest ranking officer was the commanding officer. And they theoretically had -- we had to go out for PT except that I didn't have to because I was -- I had been injured. And they had roll call every day except for the guys who were living in town with some Swedish girl. (laughs) It was sort of loose. And we got a three day pass once a month and I remember, well I was only there two months so I only got one pass and we went into the nearby town and that's the first time I ever had a Swedish bath. And the shocking part of it, was when you went in, took off your clothes and came out, there was a woman handing out towels. That took us aback a little bit -- but I -- oh, I remember I was -- from the waist on down I was purple and yellow and green, bruises. I had never been so bruised up in my life. But anyway. It, you know, like I say, boredom was our biggest enemy. And the idea of going back to combat was not -- not a big thing.

**Question:** No escape efforts.

**Answer:** Nobody tried to escape. In fact when they told us we were going to escape, they flew a guy in from England, a major I think to conduct the escape. And probably because -- otherwise they would have got very little cooperation. So when we escaped we all marched down the middle -- middle of the street to this train station, and here -- I can remember several of the girls that were being left behind standing in the crowd crying, and it -- it was a sad occasion. They put us on a train and sent us to Stockholm. And we got to Stockholm we went to the American legation and they took all of our money, all of our identification, they cut all of the labels out of our clothes so that -- now why this would fool anybody I have no idea

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**Answer:** But then they gave us enough money to ride a cab to a train station. There was -- that's where I was led astray by bad companions because this one guy said we don't need to spend this money, I know how to get there. Why he should know how to get there I don't know, but anyhow there were several of us that decided to walk to the train station. Well he didn't know how to get there. We were lost and it was dark and in Stockholm. And I don't remember exactly how -- how it went, but I know that all of a sudden there were only two of us left, Lloyd the tail gunner and I. And we finally -- we found somebody that spoke English and they told us how to get there. You take the streetcar. Well, streetcar came along and -- and as often the case in those towns, it was full. So there were people hanging on the outside of it. Well it stopped and Lloyd got hold of it and it started out. And there I stood, watching it disappear into the distance. All by myself, didn't have any idea

**Answer:** I did have, well they give us tickets on the train so at least I had that. Next streetcar that come by I got on it, so did the conductor and he nodded so I just hoped that he had an idea of what was going on. And eventually he told me to get off and I did. Geez, here's this deserted street, nobody around, and then I realized that the street was an overpass and there was train -- train tracks under it and I walked over to the side and heard this big cheer go up. Everybody else was at the station; I was the last one there. So we rode in to -- it was an interurban or something, I don't know just what. Anyhow we were sent to this big old, old, old hotel outside of Stockholm. And the first thing we had was a big meeting. And they said there is a house of ill repute down through the trees there and there are German girls working there and they're going to want to know when you're leaving. So they're going to come in and they're going to try to get that out of you. Oh, oh, oh. We hadn't any idea when we were leaving but we were willing to be questioned. (laughs) So they said we've got to post a guard, keep them out. So there would be two hours on and -- I don't know. Anyhow, Lloyd and I were the first two guards. And we spent two hours chasing girls. They'd show up, they -- they'd go in the door, we'd run, chase them down the hall, somebody would open a door and let them in their room, slam the door. And it was hilarious. It was -- I mean -- writing a movie, they couldn't do any better. But anyhow, I don't know what information they got, but they couldn't have gotten much about us leaving because we didn't know. Anyhow, we were there for several days and what we were told was we were waiting for bad weather, because we were going to fly up north to where Norway is very narrow and then duck across the clouds and come back down. So eventually we did. We were told we were leaving. We got on buses. I don't know if they said airport on the front or not, but we went in convoy to the airport. Went through Swedish customs, and then they had, I think there were two B-24's that they had converted -- they put seats in the bomb bays. And for B-17 people who had just been through an airplane crash, riding in -- in a B-24, and there were all kinds of little motors and things and so there were funny noises all over, aside from all the regular noises of an airplane. So we, oh, as we were waiting to get on there the pilot came by and he said, well, don't worry about a thing. Said I've only been shot at by night fighters once on this trip. And so we spent six hours sitting in that bomb bay. And it's dark. I mean it -- there's no lights at all. And it was cold, and six hours is an awful long time when you don't have anything to distract you. We landed someplace, I have no idea where it was but it was probably in Scotland. And there was an abandoned RAF field there and they had some of these tar paper barracks with the windows that were all knocked out of them so the wind was blowing right straight through. And they had cots and I can remember I got into my cot and one end of it collapsed. So it was -- the head end fortunately was up, the other end was down. And I just -- I just stayed there. I was too tired to worry about it. The next day they put us on a train and sent us back down to Stone, which was the -- where the Air, the Air Corps -- everybody went through Stone, England. And this was a bit -- I mean a bunch of military age guys, you know, on the train. And the English were really curious about us and there were a lot of stories. Guys were -- everybody was making up a story about who we were and what we were doing and everything. So we got back to Stone and that's the

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most miserable place I've ever been. They had -- they had steam heat. I can't remember what it had been before the war, but anyhow they had steam heat and this -- this is in wintertime, this is December of '44 and it was cold. If you put your hands on the steam pipes, you could feel that they were warm, and that was all. I had every bit of issue that I could find on my bed and I was still freezing to death. On Christmas Day, '44, I was supposed to be on KP that night. And I got my orders that afternoon that I was leaving that night so I didn't have to have KP. Oh, and I guess, actually, I forgot, went to Stone then was sent back to -- to Polbrook to our base to sort of finish up things. I remember walking in and the guy looked at me, he said, I thought you were dead. But, and the -- our regular pilot was still there and got to see him and everything. He later finished his tour. We flew back. We flew -- flew on a C-54 out of Scotland.

Went to the Azores. Now going from -- going from that environment to a Tropical environment was really a nice change. And what made it even nicer was there was a hurricane in the vicinity and they wanted to carry more gas so they were going to have to bump a few passengers so Lloyd and I and a few others got to stay in the Azores while the plane went on. And we sat there in the PX and drank pineapple juice. Finally flew into Miami and then took a train home. So that was my -- my military experience.

**Question:** God, like you said. It's a made for TV movie. Better writing than you could create, I mean the German female interrogators, the -- so when, who -- was it the Swedish government that arranged for the pilots to come in and tell you how you were going to escape?

**Answer:** I think so. They couldn't do it officially but unofficially why they could.

**Question:** I just love the idea of you checking through customs.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** What was your -- are you here for business or pleasure? No, I was a prisoner of war. I mean what did they -- did they give you papers or how did they or did they just kind of --

**Answer:** I had bought some things. I remember I had bought some lace, because I was going to bring back. And I don't remember what else, but you know a few little things and I just showed it to them and they said okay, go on. You know, it was not a big deal but evidently they -- they had - had their procedures and so they (laughs)

**Question:** Gol, that's amazing.

**Question:** Now, again, a lot of it's pretty funny but when you were going down, were you afraid of -- I mean, what was that like?

**Answer:** You know that -- that's really curious because I wasn't. More than anything else it was like sort of standing inside and watching, you know watching it happen. And again I think we were very well trained because we -- there was no panic. There was -- everybody did their job. When they were throwing out the stuff from the plane, of course the ammunition, 50 caliber ammunition comes in long belts. And I guess -- I wasn't back there because I was busy sending out my illegal SOS's, but they -- they threw -- they got this belt of ammunition going out and suddenly somebody realized it was wrapped around one guy's leg. And somebody else made a dive and caught it and stopped it until they could get him disentangled. But that could have been a -- pretty bad thing. But generally speaking everybody was -- was very calm and very professional, if you could say that. And so I

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thought, you know, for a bunch of kids, because I think -- I think the oldest one on the crew was 23.

**Question:** Wow, huh. Did you ever -- so you never got reprimanded for your illegal SOS's?

**Answer:** Nah, there was a lot of that kind of thing that went on.

**Question:** Yeah, I would imagine that --

**Answer:** You know, when you say that you're going to -- you think you're going to land in the Baltic where you can expect to survive about 15 minutes before you died of hypothermia, you didn't worry too much about what might happen otherwise.

**Question:** Who was your radio contact -- was that plane to plane, or how good was the technology then when you were --

**Answer:** Well, they had what they called command radio. Actually there were two different command radios. There was one that was a -- a high frequency, and the other was lower frequency. And it worked, except when you needed it. Of course I found that out later in my career too that radios work fine when you don't really need them. Yeah, it wasn't -- it wasn't great but it worked plane to plane, generally.

**Question:** Did you change your code, mission to mission. I mean did you --

**Answer:** Well we would be issued a code book when we got ready, I mean at the radio operator's briefing, you'd be issued a code, yeah. That was one of the things that we found out we were going to. They -- they had this thing called chaff which is like, oh like Christmas tree decorations, you know strings of aluminum. And you would dump that to confuse the radar. And there was little -- little chute was built into the side of the plane in the radio operator's position where you'd dump this stuff out. Well, when we found out that we weren't going to get back, why one of the things I had to do is get rid of my code books. This one code book was - it was reinforced with fabric so it was pretty -- pretty strong. And I remember ripping that thing up, just, geez, I didn't think I could do that. But a little adrenalin makes a big difference. So I got rid of that. I pushed the button to kill the IFF, and so I done what I was supposed to do.

**Question:** I was going to say, it's amazing, you had the mind set to be able to go through all your training and to do that.

**Answer:** Like I say, they did a pretty good job.

**Question:** So you -- it sounds like you had a fair amount of time between, we're going down to getting down.

**Answer:** Yeah, there was. I don't know how long it was. It's pretty hard to tell on something like that, you know when you're busy and all that, but, yeah, there was quite a bit of time. But I don't think any of us really thought anything bad was going to happen. I mean in spite of the fact that we only got one engine running, and everything, when you're -- you're invulnerable when you're that age. And we thought we was going to -- well we thought we was going to bail out is what we thought, and then when we was going for a crash landing, why, we all did exactly what we was supposed to do. And I -- I had enough presence of mind to wedge myself in there, you know. We -- we did all right, I think.

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**Question:** Well, you'd seen those planes come back after being pretty shot up so you probably had a pretty good idea that you'd be able to maybe get it down to the ground.

**Answer:** Yeah. I had -- well, of course this was a new pilot, I didn't know him. But just in general, I'd always had confidence in -- in the pilot and, you know, what he did. I had flown with at least one pilot who I didn't have any confidence when we were in training. We was supposed to be making some practice bomb runs and there was clouds over the target. This was in Louisiana

**Answer:** And so he decided -- this idiot decided to dive bomb the target with a B-17. He pushed it over and when he did, everybody became weightless. I was sitting in my chair and as I floated up out of the chair I got hold of the table and held myself down. We had two other guys in the radio room because they come in there to smoke cigarettes or whatever. Had one guy that was sitting on a box and he was up -- up at the top of the plane sort of clawing around there. The other guy had been sleeping, and he was just laid out flat about half way up. And then when he pulled out, why everybody slammed down pretty hard. I -- I was in good shape because I was still in my chair but the others got banged around quite a bit. But this -- this guy didn't think about that. He was just playing games with the airplane.