

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

*Mrs Melovidoff joins conversation. She was a young girl in Germany during the war.*

**Question:** I think that's the irony, you've been doing a little remodeling (bombing) and now you're..

**Answer:** Amongst it.

**Wife OC:** Well, you know I can exactly feel how those kids must have felt, because I know how we hated them.

**Question:** See that's it the other side of it.

**Wife OC:** Ja, sure luft gangsters and I mean they were the enemy and they bombed us night after night, after night, after night.

**Answer:** And daytime, the British bombed at night.

**Wife OC:** Oh well.

**Answer:** We did daylight bombing.

**Wife OC:** Yeah, and so I mean gee of course they wanted to.

**Question:** Now we know how the Iraqis look at us right now. We're remodeling Afghani's over there the innocent vs. the people that are.

**Wife OC:** When Alex talks about stray bombs I mean.. towards the end of the war there was no such things as stray bombs. They knowingly.. bombed the civilians, because we lost our house, we lost everything.

**Question:** Oh, is that right.

**Wife OC:** Oh yeah. We were bombed.

**Question:** Now which city were you in?

**Wife OC:** We were living in a smaller town called (Rüste?) which is in the southwestern part of Germany close to the Black Forest, very close to (Guttenthau?) Where they used to make the Messerschmitt Fighter Fliers and so we were you know very heavy heavy.

**Answer:** Her grandfather was a major in the Luftwaffe. Her father was a major in the Wehrmacht, Her great-grandfather

**Wife OC:** That's the way it was. They were our enemy and I know civilians were bombed.

**Question:** Now would you have thrown rocks at them?

**Wife OC:** At the time probably.

**Answer:** Churchill at the end of the war with the bombing of not only London but Coventry. Coventry was destroyed literally by German bombers, and Churchill says forget about this other business, we're going to go in. That is what happened to Leipzig.

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** Basically said.

**Answer:** Yeah, and he talked the Americans into the process because actually as far as the Air Corp was concerned they were they said we do precision bombing, that's all we're after. Well, you can't precision bomb with the equipment we were using. Bombs do go astray.

**Question:** Especially now I'm trying to remember what elevation were you when you actually, you flew in high and dropped the bombs?

**Answer:** No we dropped them from twenty-eight anywhere from twenty-five to twenty-eight thousand feet.

**Question:** Yeah, so if you're that much off at twenty eight thousand feet and its got to travel twenty eight thousand feet down you're lucky if you got it in the right country.

**Answer:** But Churchill talked, the US into changing their method of bombing.

**Wife OC:** I even remember having those little fighter planes come in unannounced, they would fly at such low level they couldn't be detected and they'd just go down the main street in the city where we lived and bing bing bing.

**Answer:** Yeah, strafing.

**Wife OC:** Killed civilians.

**Answer:** Anything that moved.

**Question:** That is when war becomes, I mean there is this very for lack of a better word surreal aspect of war.

**Wife OC:** And I feel for those people. I feel for those people in Bosnia. I feel for those Afghanis, and I feel for the Palestinians cause they need help.

**Question:** That's one of the ones we talk to that say if people could just get along. War isn't the answer.

**Wife OC:** no it isn't, and especially this holy war we are involved in.

**Question:** It's getting more and more holy.

**Wife OC:** Anyway you're doing good. You seem very relaxed.

**Question:** OK so we're at the train station

**Answer:** We're at the train station, I forget the name, but it is a huge station, boarded the train went up through Germany to Frankfurt on the Main River And then transported by truck by bus to the interrogation center where we were confined. I was in solitary confinement for seven days, which was normal during that period of time. Interrogated by a German officer. Started out by giving name, rank and serial number, which didn't get very far. He wanted to know what was our target? What was our base? All of that. And it actually wound up, he knew where I was from. He knew the base I was on. He knew our target and he even showed me a slip of paper from our base in Italy which was a receipt for a

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

sleeping bag. So they had a very, very good intelligence service in fact some of the people I talked to they were shown pictures of their graduation from flight school. They had gleaned from local newspapers they had subscribed to throughout the US. They went into Switzerland and there were people that did nothing but in the intelligence section clip out things that referred to military people. And they had pictures of guys getting their wings with their family and of course I had been you know I hadn't been in the papers that long for them to get anything like that, but they knew where I was from and everything. So I didn't have to tell them anything they already knew it. But I still stayed for seven days in solitary in a room that was six feet wide, eight feet long and you count the nails. You have a window but you can't see through it. You hum songs to yourself. Anything to keep yourself occupied and every once in awhile someone opens a little trap door and looks in at you. There is a single light bulb in the ceiling, which is turned out at night. You are in the dark, you have a little cot and you're given two meals a day and you sit there and you ponder. You think about what is going on and as I said you count the nails in the wall do all sorts of things just to keep your mind busy.

**Question:** And there are other people in solitary?

**Answer:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Question:** And I assume you can't yell to them.

**Answer:** No you can't because the place is sound proofed.

**Question:** Seven days?

**Answer:** Yes, and I know people that were in there two weeks.

**Question:** You'd think you'd go crazy your mind would start. So what's the, when they bring you out and start to interrogate you and work with you, what's the attitude, is it like the movies, we have "vays" to make you talk, do they try to buddy with you or?

**Answer:** No it's in between. You're threatened yes, but they're friendly, they offer you a cigarette which was great you know, hadn't had a cigarette in a long time cause that's one of the first things they take away from you when you landed. But they offer you a cigarette and when you tell them you aren't going to tell them anything then they start you know telling you well I think you'd better talk. And you say no. The interrogator speaks fluid English but he tries to be a little friendly but you know still reserved but there was no business of "we're going to take you out and shoot you". I never got that but I can't speak for the rest of them.

**Question:** Had the military trained you well for what you were going to face? I mean did you know pretty much of what would happen.

**Answer:** We knew fairly much of what would happen so after the interrogation and the time we spent there we were sent to another compound where we were given all new clothes through the Red Cross. All old US army uniform, a packet in a plastic suitcase, which I still have, through the Red Cross that contains toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, razor, soap, washcloth, all of the things you would need, an extra pair of underwear. But basically all we got was army shirt, army pants, army socks, an old army overcoat. And then we after that we were sent to our basic primary camp which was on the Baltic coast in northern Germany north of Berlin. So we took a railroad train where we were clear across and we went through the Leipzig area and we were on this train when the British came over. Now the British use what they called the Pathfinder. There is an airplane that goes over, spots the target and

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

sends flares on the target and then their bombers come in eventually and bomb on that flare. We were locked in this railcar and the bombs are going off alongside the railroad. We can't get out and you get kind of scared after awhile.

**Question:** Were you moving?

**Answer:** No, the train stops during the raid and a very odd thing. I sat in that thing in Berlin in the train yard on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1944 and I thought the Americans are going to celebrate Pearl Harbor by bombing Berlin that day, that's what I thought. I thought well they would come over with a big raid on Berlin because that was getting to be a big target then. But fortunately they didn't, so we were in the train yard overnight and taking the train up to our camp. We were not too far from the German test base for their missiles, a place called Peenemünde, where they were testing the V bombs and their other missiles. We didn't call them missiles at the time, rockets, that's right but it was a rocket test station and we used to see them go up every once in awhile. And we were in a place called Stalag luft One which was a base for airmen. Now there were approximately eight thousand British in that camp and about roughly ten thousand Americans so it was quite a large camp and we were placed in a barracks. It was raised on stilts to keep us from. They finally after the great escape in the big tunnel they put a stop to the tunneling by raising the barracks off the ground on stilts. And at night they would put their dogs inside the compound and let them run through just in case somebody decided he wanted to get out, and they had the German Shepherds that would roam the compound at night as a deterrent to keep the guys inside. We were twenty-six men to a room and we were in tiers, bunks, alongside the room, in tiers, four tiers high and it would lay foot to head along those shelves. I was in one corner of the room where they were just three high and there were six guys in that small area. One room, one small stone with a table, that's it. We had to turn that stove into a cooking stove because they had given up on using the mess hall because they had too many prisoners at that time.

**Question:** You said there was about eighteen thousand roughly? You said ten American and eight British.

**Answer:** No there were about ten thousand, eight thousand American and two thousand British, that's where I was wrong.

**Question:** So about ten thousand, I'm just trying to get an idea of the size, Puyallup Fair Grounds, bigger or smaller?

**Answer:** I think the camp would fit in the fairgrounds.

**Question:** About that size. That's still a lot of people fenced in barracks in not a huge area, ok.

**Answer:** And there, I kept a drawing of the compound, in fact one of the books I brought has an aerial view of the prison camp and twice a day we would be called out into the open, stand out there in rows in front of our barracks for a head count which would be taken by prison guards. Of course we did everything to mess up the count. Changing places you know and what not and we would have to go through the count several times. Now this was in the middle of winter on the Baltic coast. It was the worst winter in northern Germany in a decade. So the compound commander said you guys want to stand out here in the cold we'll go through the count as many times as we have to until we get it right. And many of us became frost bitten because of standing out there in the snow, and to this day I still suffer from frostbite in my hands and my fingers get white if I get extremely cold. So after awhile you finally realize standing out in the cold isn't the greatest thing so we didn't always screw up

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

the count but they would also use that time to inspect the barracks. They would run in a crew we'd call ferrets who would inspect the barracks looking for contraband because there were some radios in the barracks that were hidden, other things that they were looking for anything they could find they would inspect.. The sent the guards through the barracks looking for things.

**Question:** Did you ever have any contraband in your barracks that they found?

**Answer:** No. It was pretty well hidden, but they got pretty wise to the ways of the prisoners. Sometimes they'd leave stuff out so they could find them but that was only rare.

**Question:** Were the guards kind of separated from you, or was it the type where you could actually have conversation with the guards?

**Answer:** No. Only during the head count and when they had their inspections were there guards inside the compound. Most of the time they were outside but you had guard towers on all four corners and in between with machine guns and search lights for night so you couldn't get out.

**Question:** Did you ever think about getting out?

**Answer:** Oh yeah, you always think about getting out. There were a few people that made it but not very long.

**Question:** What did you do all day?

**Answer:** Well, fortunately through the Red Cross they provided books but mostly it was walking around the compound trying to get some exercise. There was some who stayed in the sack all day but they were advised don't do that, get up, get around. We would call it going around the bend, which was a term for anybody going off his rocker. We would use the term he's gone around the bend.

**Question:** So you had some of that?

**Answer:** Oh yes, we had some of that.

**Question:** Just the stress of war and prisoner?

**Answer:** Uh huh.

**Question:** And you said you had twenty-six men to a room.

**Answer:** Uh huh.

**Question:** Do you remember some of the people?

**Answer:** Yes, I remember some of them.

**Question:** From all over the place?

**Answer:** Yeah, yeah, but I belong to the American x prisoners of war and they published a directory of all the POWs and I only found one who was in that room with me that also

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

belonged to x prisoners of war, the rest I've been unable to find. Some have been lucky to find you know roommates. Maury Bauer found a couple of his.

**Question:** How long were you in?

**Answer:** Well I was captured in November of '44 until we were liberated by the Russians in May of '45 so roughly seven months.

**Question:** It sounds like there was a lot of time to pass?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** What did you guys talk about?

**Answer:** Food.

**Question:** Food?

**Answer:** Everybody would recite their favorite restaurant in their hometown. Everybody would write their favorite recipes that they had and talk about that and to help us one of the main topics of conversation was either your hometown or the food that you missed.

**Question:** So not women?

**Answer:** Nah, there was no interest of women at that time.

**Question:** That is interesting, cause John, again John was younger, a sixteen year old boy, and that's what he said. There seems to be a certain biologic aspect that would be in there and physiological and all that but that was it, men in that situation, but the movies and books always point out that here were these prisoners and they have a picture of their gal and whatever and that's all anybody talked about and I don't think I've ever seen and I'll have to watch the Stalag movie again, The Great Escape, and see but I don't think the movies reflect they think about food, recipes and restaurants.

**Answer:** Well, that might just be our bunch in our room?

**Question:** I've heard from others.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** I've heard from others, I think Warren Schwisow Talks about pancakes, butter and syrup and that's all he can talk about and to this day I guess almost every day he has pancakes. I wonder if that's because food is comfort, or home, or because I assume the food you had wasn't real good. You said you had to do your own cooking?

**Answer:** Yes, yes, we divided ourselves up by taking turns, by taking care of the food, cleaning up after wards, cleaning the rooms, keeping it tidy, everyone was responsible for their own bunk and keeping it you know presentable.

**Question:** Did they provide you with utensils?

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

**Answer:** Yes, we got what I would call a tablespoon and we had to create everything else. Guys made pans out of tin cans, taking them apart, melting the solder on the seams of the tin cans taking them open and using the solder to solder up the pans that we made.

**Question:** What did you have for food?

**Answer:** Ersatz bread and had to make sure everybody got their slice of bread however thin, and whoever was slicing the bread was watched by everybody you know to make sure it was evenly sliced. We got probably one loaf of bread for each room for each meal. The Red Cross food parcels were very sparse. They were well filled but sometimes we didn't get too many. Sometimes they would give us enough parcels to split among four men of course in our room we combined all of the portions together. Other rooms I understand, people would get a parcel and keep the parcel and then say it was for four men and four guys would get together and they would make their own and another group would make their own, but our room decided to share every parcel as much as we could canned milk, sugar, powdered coffee, and there was a lot of trading going on between others like we would trade with the British, we would trade for the Canadian bacon that would come in cans, trade with the Scots for their oatmeal. This was trading across compounds because the English were mixed in a compound of their own and now mixed with the Americans but there was enough movement through the area that you could trade. You trade cigarettes. Each Red Cross parcel had a large piece of chocolate and it was supplied by the government and that was a favorite trading piece. A D bar that was called. So there was a variety of food you could get through trading but it meant trading cigarettes for candy or something someone else wanted.

**Question:** That was the valuable one, the chocolate bar.

**Answer:** Yes, it was.

**Question:** Huh, I didn't hear that either. I didn't think about it, of course I should have bit the fact that you got your goods from the Red Cross I assume so that's why you had different food supplies.

**Answer:** And we were issued either potatoes or rutabagas by the camp besides the bread. That was the only fresh stuff we got was the potatoes and sometimes the potatoes were frozen half black so you couldn't use it all. But you could make potato soup. Rutabagas they fried them, they baked them, they souped them, they cooked rutabagas any way that you could and it was a long long time before I could eat rutabagas. Of course we were served the big rutabagas they used for cattle food, locally. Not the nice little rutabagas you get here these were the great big ones and you open them up and they are all pithy and so.

**Question:** Did you get mail?

**Answer:** I didn't get mail. Some of the old timers that were in our camp did finally get some mail and some food parcels. Some got cigarettes. I'll have to tell you one of the letters I had written home I was already home when it arrived in the mail.

**Question:** You beat it home?

**Answer:** I beat it home. Of course by that time, transportation in Germany was pretty sad by that time. They even had trouble getting around because their railroads were all bombed. Their tracks were all bombed. The only way they could get out was by horse and buggy or the cars were used for military.

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** Did the, was, did the Germans organize anything within the camp I mean activity or anything like that. They basically gave you a place to sleep at night and made sure you were there at night and in the morning? And then in between it was all?

**Answer:** That's right. Like putting a dog in a cage and feeding him twice a day other time you left him alone. No the prisoners made their own activities as much as they could. In the wintertime there wasn't much you could do but try to stay warm. You got your exercise by walking around the inside of the compound.

**Question:** Like you said you were segregated too. The Brits were over in one place so when you would do trading of food did that have to be done on the sly or whatever you did in the day as long as you didn't dig a trench they didn't care?

**Answer:** Not quite, there was some you know trading on the sly and whatever we could get from the guards. We would bribe the guards with cigarettes or what not for equipment. Many of the guys in the older compounds got radio parts, got cameras through trading with the guards, they weren't above taking their cigarettes.

**Question:** So it is like they say everything has a price?

**Answer:** Yes, yes.

**Question:** Again it sounds like the guards were kind of separated from you, but did you see some guards you knew stay out of the way of that one but that guard is ok.

**Answer:** We were told about certain people, yes, but as a whole our contact was somewhat limited and some of us not speaking German did not choose to strike up an acquaintance.

**Question:** Now you ended up in two camps, one or you were at luft one all the time? So that's where you were when the raids occurred?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** So what happened then?

**Answer:** The night before the Russians arrived at the camp all the guard dogs were put to sleep because they didn't want to release their dogs. You know they were trained to be guard dogs and you let them loose and they would attack. So the local constabulary put them to sleep, shooting them. So one evening they had all this shooting going on and we found out later they had gotten rid of the dogs and then they all disappeared. All the guards left and there wasn't anybody around, that's when we knew we would be visited by the Russians. They came in and they wondered why we hadn't torn all the fences down? Well I don't think it had occurred to us to tear the fences down. We had the gates, we could get out the gates. So there was an American come by in a jeep and arrangements were made to get us out of camp by flying us out. We were near a German airfield that had been used as an assembling plant for a jet aircraft, which we found very interesting. I walked into the plant and could see various stages of assembly of the new German jet. They had rolled bombs out on the runway but we had people who were expert in disarming bombs and they were rolled off the runway because the 8<sup>th</sup> airforce was coming in with airplanes to take us out. In the meantime we wandered all over the area and we were cautioned don't go off on your own because there are still pockets of resistance by the Germans, and besides that there were these Russians who nobody really trusted. They used the Mongolian troops and shock troops to come in and

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

terrorized the locals before the regular troops came in the occupying troops came in so there would be no trouble. But these Mongolians were, they didn't care if you were an American or not.

**Question:** I hear they were

**Answer:** Pretty rough.

**Question:** Yes, much worse than the Germans.

**Answer:** Yes. Their method of fishing was to go out in the bay there, drop a couple of grenades in the water and then pick the fish up off the top of the water.

**Question:** Concussion fishing there.

**Answer:** Yes. The German's did slaughter a few local cows for us to have fresh meat, but I don't know if you've tasted freshly slaughtered beef, milk cows, that's what they had there was no what we classify as cattle. They were all milk cows and a few of the boys got sick because their system was not used to eating that freshly slaughtered beef.

**Question:** How long did it take you, once you got out, to get back home, quite a while?

**Answer:** Yes. We were flown out of Barth. First they came in with transports to haul the sick out cause there were a number of guys who were ill who had been injured and hadn't fully recovered so they brought in what we would call today DC-3's, C46, C47 and they got nurses on board and the sick and injured were put on these and flown out first. Then they brought in B-17's, and we all climbed aboard these things and sat where ever we could in the airplane to make sure it wasn't overloaded and then flew into Le Havre, France to a place called camp Lucky Strike. And there were thousands of us there and we were told to wait for the next transport to take us by boat back to the states and that was the longest wait. We were there almost two weeks before our ship arrived to take us and in that two week period a lot of boys disappeared to Paris because anybody in uniform could ride the French railroad for free. So they would go into Le Havre find out which trains went to Paris and spend a few days in Paris. I'm just sorry I didn't. I was gullible enough to believe when they said don't leave there might be a ship here tomorrow. So I didn't make it to Paris.

**Question:** Was your health pretty good?

**Answer:** I was pretty skinny is all.

**Question:** Do you know how much you weighed when you left?

**Answer:** No I really don't.

**Question:** I talked to people who lost half their body weight. They went in at 160 and left at about 80 some pounds.

**Answer:** Yea, but while we were at camp we were deloused, getting clean uniforms, we were deloused with DDT. They put that thing down your front.

**Question:** It's amazing you guys aren't dead, I mean that's..

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

**Answer:** And the first white bread we ever got tasted like cake and we were advised not to eat too fast or too much but to go easy on your stomach. So we would eat several times a day what was available, milk shakes and ice cream things like that. And then finally a ship arrived. It was the troop ship SS Simon Buchner named after an old navy admiral I think and it was a troop ship. Now the guys that got on first got the best accommodations. They got into the state rooms and were able to eat in the dining room with linen table cloths and the rest of us that didn't get there fast enough were down in the hold in a troop ship. Where the bunks were stacked up and we had two meals a day. That's when we got navy beans for breakfast. We didn't mind but the five-day trip across the ocean was spent on the deck because it was fresh air. Nobody wanted to stay down in the bottom and we landed at New Port News, Virginia at a place called Camp Patrick Henry. And when we got there we found German prisoners working in the mess hall and it created quite a furor, and we told the commandant we're not going in that mess hall until you get rid of those German prisoners because they were in there waiting tables and eating the food and were living the life of Reilley so to speak. And unfortunately one of our guys observed a German prisoner working in the garden and he went over and he beat him up, which was not right but he was just mad enough to do that.

**Question:** This is interesting because again this is the surreal aspect of war. The war ends, they sign the papers, and then we're not enemies anymore.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Did you feel that way, oh I think its kind of interesting you got married to the enemy back here but is that something that war was war and after war is after war?

**Answer:** Not quite. Not quite no. We were pretty upset because we never got treated like that in Germany. We didn't work in the German mess halls, eat their food, wait on their tables we were put in a compound whereas German prisoners were treated very well in this country. Sure they worked on the farms in eastern Washington, there was a contingent of Italian prisoners in Seattle in a compound down there and they were treated very well. There was a lot of fraternization going on between the Italian prisoners and some Americans and I'm sure there are those working on farms in eastern Washington and in Oregon that had pretty much run of the area. So there was a certain amount of bitterness by the American prisoners to find out and to see what the US government was treating German prisoners of war.

**Question:** Did you hold that bitterness towards people, government, or I mean do you separate the two or is it just feelings in general?

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Yeah, it was, I know a woman wrote a book named Stalag Wisconsin and there was a good German population there and the German prisoners would "escape" for the evening, go into town, and come back so I can see that would. It becomes that thing of "fairness", the Geneva Convention. So how did you end up marrying a German?

**Answer:** Well, we were both separated and both had children and we joined an organization called Parents Without Partners, PWP. And we met at one of those meetings and I had two children and Elizabeth had three and we started dating and going to the dances sponsored by PWP and we got to like each other and we said heck let's get married, so we did, because we were both in the same situation raising children on our own.

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** Was that ever an issue? Did you discuss, here you are bombing the cities and had been captured over there?

**Answer:** It was never an issue with me because, it was never an issue.

**Wife OC:** No. We talked about it and we were both adult enough to know that happened 30 or 40 years ago. It wasn't anything personal. Why should there be any animosity? This is you and I. Alex did apologize to me. I'm so sorry we bombed your country and I thought that was great, very gracious and very special thing.

**Answer:** I'll have to tell you something.

**Question:** Did she ever apologize to you for the treatment by the Germans, no I'm teasing.

**Wife OC:** War is heck, is hell, I don't care circumstances you're involved in. War is pure hell. You have to be mature enough to say it wasn't our personal conflict that got us there. You have got to be able to forgive, be able to forget and to make amends and say this is a new start and we're all different and you have to be human enough to forget the differences.

**Question:** It was sixty years later and life goes on.

**Wife OC:** I mean I was a little girl, I was only ten years old when the war ended.

**Question:** Huh.

**Wife OC:** It was hard on us it was hard on them. I mean being incarcerated at age 18, first of all being shot down and taken prisoner and being confronted with totally different country. You don't know what is going to happen tomorrow, you're frightened to death, you're starved, your cold, your lonesome I can just imagine what all these guys had to go through in order to make it through that period. It must have been awful. I have a lot of compassion and I can see how difficult it was. It was difficult for us of course. I think it was more difficult for the older generation, my parents at that time, my father was fighting the war in Russia. My mother was here with us children trying to protect us and make things go and we were starving too. We didn't have any food. Everything was rationed. By rationed I mean one ounce of bread a day, maybe one quart of one percent milk a week if you could get it. All your clothing was rationed. Everything was rationed. Only a minimum amount of food, so it was hard.

**Answer:** Unless you lived on a farm in Germany during the war you really starved. Fortunately those people on the farm could have chickens and ducks out in the backyard and.

**Wife OC:** But you couldn't in the city. I still remember.

**Question:** Can I interrupt just a minute. I think it's really important because what you're explaining I think people need to understand. We teach a very geocentric view of World War II. We went off and we fought and there has to be people talk about we were doing our job and they were doing their job but not from the perspective of you as a child you know again seeing the position here which I think is important because it shows more of the absurdity of war.

**Wife OC:** True. You'll have to help me though, because I'm not very good at talking anyway.

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** Is that ok with you?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** OK.

**Answer:** When Elizabeth's father died we flew over for the funeral and it's a custom in Germany the oldest walks behind the casket to the gravesite. I stood with her and marched behind the casket. He was a retired military. He was in the military during the war, he was a professional and after the war he was selected by the US to help form the new German army and he was with the mountain division in Bavaria and retired as a major in the new German army. Now I want to show you how ironic it is we were in the city of Munich. A city I had dropped bombs on, and I'm walking by the casket of my father in law who was a former German military officer. Now when I dropped bombs on Germany I had no idea that I would be back there doing what I was doing. Now isn't that ironic. Now again it becomes more than ironic it becomes surreal.

**Question:** Have you ever gone back?

**Answer:** Yes, we've been back three times.

**Question:** Is that right, what was left there to Luft 1, where you were, is there anything left?

**Answer:** No, nothing left there, there's a monument there, but outside that there is nothing. That's what happened to all of the prisons, they are just no longer there. They are converted back to farm country.

**Wife OC:** (Inaudible.)

**Question:** Oh that's right, yeah.

**Answer:** (inaudible) was in the same camp I was in, Luft 1.

**Question:** Have you ever compared notes?

**Answer:** To some degree.

**Question:** Were you there are the same time?

**Answer:** Yes, he arrived there before I did, maybe a month or two.

**Question:** I can't remember if he was the one interviewed, somebody told the story they were in a prison camp and they were getting really hungry and there was this cat and they debated and debated and they were going to do it one night and they couldn't bring themselves to doing the cat and then later on they got hungry enough and they couldn't find the cat. And he said he read this book by somebody that was in there at the same time only in a different barracks and he got that cat.

**Answer:** That's right.

## Alex Melovidoff

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** Yeah. From your experience in war is there a message to leave for the generations to come about World War II?

**Answer:** Yes, to avoid it as much as you can. I mean not individually but making sure the people running the country understand that is always a last resort and I don't mean last resort is to capitulate you have to stand up for not only your rights but for what you believe in and if war is the only solution so be it.

**Question:** I'm reading the book, "We Were Soldiers", the Viet Nam book and there are both perspectives in it and you hear the Vietnamese telling their troops talking about the one thing you do not want to lose is your freedom and your rights and again there is that position were we are so Americanized we are fighting for our freedom and our rights that's the only way and I mean we're so lucky the country we live in the freedoms we have but ours is not the only way for the world but we get stuck that way sometimes.

**Answer:** Yes.