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**Question:** So when you were in the camp, did you actually volunteer to do that -- I mean do they come and have a list of jobs, say, okay, who's going to do this, or how did -- or did they tell you?

**Answer:** When I first came into the camp, I was interrogated by the local, the inmates, the fellow prisoners who were there. And there was -- there were teams that interrogated each of the prisoners that came to the camp. And they were interrogating you for several reasons, one of them was they wanted to find out what kind of skills and talents you may have, because there were a lot of things that were going on in the camp and drawing upon these particular skills was very helpful. The other part of it is they wanted to screen you to determine what kind of security risk you might present. And the object here was to find those people who had talents and skills that could be exploited who were in fact no security risk. So when I was there I was interrogated and one of the things they learned was that I had a certain fluency in German and that if I worked at it and involved myself, I could probably get along with conversing with the guards and the like and that might be useful. And so eventually I was recruited to perform some of these functions. And not very gradually, rather swiftly I was assigned to these kinds of duties. As part of that, then, after a relatively short period of time and when I gather they decided that I had been vetted sufficiently that I wasn't a security risk, I began -- I was incorporated into what was then the internal camp intelligence and security organization. So there was, in addition to the overall camp administration that is under the Allies, there was a separate organization which operated sub-rosa so to speak and my role was to then use whatever opportunities -- exploit whatever opportunities I had to subvert or corrupt guards who would become assistant -- helpful to us in accomplishing our objectives, which was maintain communications between the people in the camp and the Allies and the other was to support whatever escape and evasion activities that were under way. And over time I was assigned various tasks and duties by the hierarchy of this committee -- we called it the XYZ Committee but it was simply an internal organization under the command of a colonel by the name of McCullough, and he directed these activities in all of the compounds of the camp.

**Question:** So you had -- you kind of like couple of hierarchies working then.

**Answer:** Well, you had two. Two hierarchies. You had the senior Allied officer who was in command of the camp. When I arrived there it was a British group captain -- he was replaced by an American colonel by the name of Barley. Barley was replaced by a colonel by the name of Spicer, and Spicer was then replaced by a colonel Szempke and there were reasons for all of these replacements and displacements. And they -- they represented the Allied command that interfaced directly with the Germans. So that Colonel Spicer or Colonel Szempke would relate to the German Commandant of the camp and it was through them that the directions and orders were routinely directed to the prisoners as to how they should conduct themselves and what they should do. Separate and apart from that was this secret organization that we had operating in the camp which was there for the purpose of continuing to wage war against the Germans. And it was part -- I had a role as the custodian of these rations and the like under the administration of the general overall camp directors and then I had this role to perform in exploiting that role to provide for the support for the intelligence and escape and invasion and communications into the camp. We had -- we had maintained radio reception in the camp so that we knew we could -- we listened to BBC regularly and knew what was transpiring. Weren't dependent entirely upon German sources. We also had transmitters that we were able to transmit to the Allies regularly and give them information as to what was transpiring in the camp itself. The -- the radio receivers of course being passive, simply received information, and all you had to do was keep those secure from the Germans so that they didn't find them and discover them and the transmitters were quite different. Because when we transmitted, we were sending signals.

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Well, the Germans knew we were doing that, but they weren't able to find it. And we had -- the people there that constructed these radios were very clever. And they had them, of course, all assembled in pieces. So that the minute the transmission was concluded, the systems would be dismantled and the pieces would be distributed and they would end up all over the camp and only when the word went out that we were going to transmit would these all come back and converge in one place, be reassembled and transmit, and then immediately re-distributed.

**Question:** So how -- how would you get the elements for this -- transmitters and receivers. Did you have to negotiate with the --

**Answer:** We negotiated with the German guards, mostly.

**Question:** Cigarettes --

**Answer:** Cigarettes, candy bars, or in some instances, promises for asylum or other kinds of inducements that we could use. Whatever we figured they were vulnerable to, we would exploit.

**Question:** So there's this very -- it sounds like there's this very human one on one level at that point.

**Answer:** Well, sure that was one -- people such as myself. My task was to establish a relationship with the guards or the people that I interfaced with to the extent that I could ultimately cultivate that relationship and ultimately corrupt them and get them to cooperate. And of course you would explore their family relationships and all kinds of things -- their health concerns or whatever it was. And what they were vulnerable to. If a guy was addicted to cigarettes, you could figure out a way now to encourage him to smoke Camel cigarettes instead of these abysmal things that the Germans were giving them to satisfy their craving. I don't know what it -- you -- you just did whatever was necessary to get it done.

**Question:** So the war didn't stop then when you became a prisoner?

**Answer:** Oh, of course not. Of course not. That was -- we were actively resisting the -- our captors in every way we could. Constantly were attempting to dig tunnels and tunnel out of the place or one way or another cause them grief.

**Question:** Now is this -- a huge camp of thousands of --

**Answer:** The end of the war, it was over 9000.

**Question:** It's a city.

**Answer:** Pretty big. Pretty big.

**Question:** So the thing that amazes me is -- is within this, to be able to establish this covert communications and meetings and things like that. I mean -- but it was interesting, cause you talked about having to kind of be indoctrinated by your fellow servicemen because they had to make sure you were okay first, right?

**Answer:** Well, I wasn't -- I wasn't indoctrinated as much as I was interrogated and vetted. They wanted to make absolutely sure, one, that I was who I said I was, two, that they could confirm this, that in fact I was what I said I was, and that there was not anything in my

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background that would cause them to be suspicious. Now you can imagine, if I had a certain degree of fluency with German, they would now immediately wonder, okay, now how did he obtain this fluency in German. Where -- where did that come from? And you know, it -- they -- they -- they spent quite a little bit of time making sure that I was reliable before they entrusted me with any information as to what was going on. But see, they had -- there were people there who had skills as tailors. There were people there who had skills as engravers. There were just about every kind of skill that you could -- cartographers. So these people would sit down and they would make maps. Or they would fabricate work permits and travel permits and all kinds of German documentation that would allow a person to travel in Germany using these bogus documents as authentic -- to establish their authenticity. Clothing. Take the garments -- military garments and convert those into what would pass for civilian garments in a particular section of Germany. There were people in that camp that understood Germany -- knew the difference between Westphalia and Pomerania and other sections of Germany. And they knew how people should be clothed when they were traveling -- what a person who was a German farmer would look like instead of a German business man. And you -- you'd be astonished at the skills that were assembled there and the ability of these people to put together these kinds of arrangements.

**Question:** This was again that -- that Yank ingenuity that was one of those elements that helped win the war because --

**Answer:** Absolutely, absolutely. Plus the fact that the Americans were not only ingenious but they were determined. I mean, there wasn't any -- any question at all that we were going to prevail. But --.

**Question:** Now what was the -- in a broad brush stroke, the -- the demeanor of the guards that you were facing. Were they pretty easy to persuade over, were they still extremely committed? Or is that too broad of a question?

**Answer:** Yeah. It is too broad of a question. An SS -- member of the SS -- was a hard nut to crack. Most of the time we didn't really spend any time trying to convert or subvert an SS. And these weren't officers that we're talking about. Mostly they were noncommissioned officers and low -- low grade enlisted personnel. One of the things that they were terrified about was being sent to the Eastern Front. If -- once they got out of the Eastern Front, if they'd been there, and got themselves assigned to a post at Stalag Luft One, the one thing they didn't want to go back was to end up back on the Eastern Front again. They'd rather fought a war anyplace, the deserts of Africa, before they would go back to the Eastern Front. So if you could compromise an individual to the point that if that individual were -- if it were to be revealed that that individual had cooperated, or you had just marginally subverted it, you could rely upon some of these rather righteous Nazi officers to come down very hard on this guy. So as a result you had, always the leverage that, you know, you don't really want this to be exposed, you know, you like it here. You certainly don't want to go to the Eastern Front. I mean, that was one way you could leverage it. There were a lot of other ways, just enormous number of ways one could leverage these things.

**Question:** That's amazing cause you're using that SS discipline against --

**Answer:** Always. We would exploit -- exploit it as much as we could. I remember one particular instance, there was a -- a guard that was assigned to me for a period of time. And he decided he wanted to take a shower in -- in this mess hall there was a -- a rather Spartan arrangement for a shower. So he went in to take this shower. I think he was going on a date or something that night. And he wanted to get himself all prettied up. He took off his uniform, and when he took off his uniform, here was the holster of his pistol

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sitting there on his belt. Well I slipped that revolver out of that -- out of that holster, and it was one of these holsters with a lid on it. So that you -- it wasn't readily apparent whether or not the weapon was in the holster or not. But I slipped it out of there and I pitched the -- the weapon over the fence to a prisoner on the other side and it went off into the -- into the possession of - whoever it ended up in possession. And when he came out of the shower he was getting himself dressed. And when he finally got himself dressed and was getting ready to go, he was checking his uniform and realized that the weapon wasn't there. He searched around for that weapon -- he was absolutely terrified, just terrified. And so I told him that I would see what I could do and if he could avoid an inspection for 24 hours without revealing that he had lost his weapon, I might be able to help him. Well, of course I was able to go and get the weapon back and return and restore it to him. And when I did, he -- but the weapon I restored to him was not his weapon. The weapon I gave him back was a weapon similar to his. Different serial numbers, different everything else. So now he had a weapon which on casual inspection looks like he has his. If he ever had to account for it, it's gone. And he was very cooperative.

**Question:** All you had to say was check the serial number of his weapon.

**Answer:** Well, he knew that. Yeah.

**Question:** Huh.

**Answer:** I too, I told him that I was sorry that I was -- I don't remember how I said it, but he knew exactly what it was. And there he was. And he had a problem. Now we did things like that to them all the time.

**Question:** So how much -- as a prisoner, how much fear did you live under? Or did you figure you had the upper hand, most of the --

**Answer:** How much fear were we under?

**Question:** Yeah.

**Answer:** Well, every now and then the Germans would do something that was calculated to intimidate. Colonel Spicer who was a towering figure -- a man of immense courage, had, I think it was shortly after the attempt on Hitler's life in July, I believe of '44. Hitler had issued an order that the airmen, Allied airmen, were to be executed. And the -- this order, I think had something to do with the bombing raid on Dresden, which was a terrible, terrible raid. And so as a result, there was this apprehension that the Germans would begin to execute Hitler's orders. We had learned about that, we knew that had happened. The -- at that time the German commandants decided that one of the things they would do would be to try to substantially alter the relationships between themselves and the prisoners through intimidation of the commander, and compelling the commander to adopt the Nazi salute in return for the German salute to the commander. Well, Spicer understood right away that what they were trying to do was to undermine his authority and otherwise compromise the position which would have been -- had disastrous affects on the morale, and erosion of morale. So he refused. They then court-martialed him and sentenced him to death and put him in solitary confinement. And that's when the command of the camp passed from Spicer to Szempke. Well, this didn't work. The -- the reaction of the prisoners was exactly the opposite. Spicer had now become a symbol, a focus of -- of prisoner cohesion in opposition to the Germans, and as a result, we became probably less cooperative than we were before. But nevertheless, there was an attempt on their part, and this -- this did it -- we were guarded by dogs. And in -- at night, the guards who would come into the compound at the end of roll call

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would have these very ferocious dogs, guard dogs. And they would use the guard dogs in an attempt at intimidation. And every now and then, if there was a light glimmering in a cell block or something like that that was beyond the hour when lights were to be extinguished or the like, then they would turn these dogs loose against the outside shutters and they would just raise a racket out there. And it made it very clear to you that the last thing you wanted to do was get into the clutches of those dogs, because that -- I mean, you'd be pretty -- pretty terrifying experience. That's the kind of thing that they'd do. And all -- I can't think of all of them, but there were a lot of them that they did in order to try to maintain control. And, you know, they had a limited number of soldiers to guard us, and there were 9000 of us. Well, you -- you've got to use whatever tools you have at your disposal to keep those people cowed down. And obviously, we weren't. So we represented potential trouble for them all the time. And of course, that was our objective.

**Question:** Did you -- cause it's a hard concept for me to understand, never having been there. Did you view all of those -- did you view the Germans as a whole as enemies, or did you look at each of these individuals as a person and then from there you made the decision?

**Answer:** Well, insofar as the guards are concerned that guarded us, I don't think I ever had any ideas that they were anything other than enemies. The intensity of that depended upon who they were. Some of them were fairly passive about it all, others were more aggressive. You didn't have much difficulty in identifying who was who. One of the guards was a German colonel or lieutenant colonel by the name of Schroeder. Schroeder had been a Pan Agra pilot in South America before the war. So he had been a pilot along with a whole lot of other American and British pilots who flew transport aircraft throughout South America

**Answer:** Well, another one was a guy by the name of Von Bueller -- Captain Hauptman Von Bueller and he had been in the United States for a protracted period of time, somewhat of a socialite, and was a member of the Santa Barbara polo team. Well, you know, you ran into these kinds of folks, but you didn't have much difficulty realizing that there was nothing friendly about these people at all. They were all on the other side. But there was - there was a German underground. There were Germans who were resistant to the Nazi rule and were helpful and cooperative. But they were -- I mean, you -- your contacts with them had to be very carefully constructed and be sure that nothing got betrayed because these people would have been gone in a heartbeat.

**Question:** So as you were working these guards --

**Answer:** Hm-hmm.

**Question:** And again I'm kind of understanding, they're enemy, but you're also trying to get on a personal level with them. Did it become that type of thing where it was, you know, what's going on in town, what's your family, did you become somewhat of a friend with them?

**Question:** Oh, sure, sure. At -- one guard that I -- Rudy. He was a fellow, probably in his, oh, late 50's, and by this time they were dragging -- the Germans were dragging into their services anybody that could breath. And he was a guy that just was in terrible health. I think he had liver problems and every -- I don't know what -- heart problems and all kinds of things. And he was -- he was a frightened guy. This is just what he was. He was frightened. If you thought of him and you were with him for a little bit of time, you would say to yourself, this guy is frightened, about everything. His wife, whom he adored and was very close to, was important to him. She lived in Berlin. And we, by this time, we were bombing Berlin rather regularly, and the Russians were driving toward Berlin. I mean you could see the Eastern Front was collapsing. And so what we'd do with Rudy is we would simply tell him all

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of the terrifying things that was going to happen to him and his wife and you just capitalized on this. And he just became next thing to a basket case. Well a guard who is in those circumstances is pretty easy to manipulate. I had another guard that worked with me by the name of Struck. And Struck was one of these individuals of great correctitude. He was -- he was a square man, physically he was powerfully built and square faced and -- and boxy type physique. And he was always very correct about everything he did. But he was also always very congenial toward me and correct toward me. He never did anything and so he allowed me to do a lot of things that I would not be allowed to do if I were, or had a guard there who was very active in his administration and oversight of what I was doing. Well, in the middle of 1944, we had received -- or the Germans had given us a barrel, and this barrel had -- I think it was beer -- nonalcoholic beer. Whatever it was, it was terrible. Just terrible. And nobody wanted it. And even if, I mean if we were down with no water rations, they wouldn't want this beer, it was that bad. Well, I drained the whole keg. And when I drained the whole keg, there was, oh, somewhere, I've forgotten how it came about, but anyway, I ended up with raisins. And I ended up with some boxes of raisins. So I stuffed all these raisins down in this barrel, then I put some yeast down in the barrel and put some sugar down in the barrel, and I stuck this barrel over in the corner of this ration room and I hid it under loaves of bread. And I left this thing there for the rest of '44. Well, in December of '44, the German command -- the war was going badly for them. And the German command decided that he would in fact allow intercourse now among the various compounds of the camp. And it was predicated upon the fact that we would all agree that for this period of time, 48 or 72 hours, I don't remember -- it was just a brief period of time, we would cease all activities and we would not try to escape and we would all give our parole that we would in fact abide by the rules. So we all -- we all agreed. The commanders negotiated it and made very clear to us that now we were going to have the gates open and we could visit friends in other camps -- other lagers for a brief period of time. And this was on, I think, Christmas Eve. I had received a second parcel -- I received two Red Cross parcels while I was in the camp. The year and a half I was there I got two. One of them came just in advance of Christmas. And this parcel -- this parcel had all kinds of things including -- I mean nutritious things, and they -- this included some -- some canned milk and some jello and things of that nature. Well, it was cold outside, so we manufactured some ice cream, or kind of a frozen desert, and a couple other things. Fact of the matter is it turned out that our meal was so rich I couldn't keep it on my stomach and I had to regurgitate it all. But as part of this little celebration, Struck comes in and he's got this -- a couple paper sacks. And in these paper sacks he's got sausages and pieces of, oh, white bread. And he had a couple bottles of schnapps and a bottle of wine. And so he said that he wanted to participate in our celebration and -- and that -- he was a Christian and he wanted to do this and -- for the sake of the season. But at the same time Struck said to me, and we'll open up that barrel of wine that you've got stashed over there in the corner. And he knew that was there all the time. And never one time did he ever betray it or did he ever use it against me as an infraction of the rules.

**Question:** Boy, that's interesting when you -- when you break it down that one to one level.

**Answer:** They -- this was -- this was really, insofar as my function in the camp was concerned, it was all one on one. I didn't -- I didn't deal with anything beyond that. And of course, you know, I was so low down on the totem pole that I didn't have anything to do with the -- the strategic planning or -- I just did what I was told to do.

**Question:** Just like -- just like the rest of the Service. You did what you what your job was.

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**Answer:** Well, sure. Sure. I was -- I didn't have any difficulty understanding that I was there to perform my function, and my -- the performance of my function was related to the performance of everybody else's function. And if we all did it together we could accomplish our objectives, and that was essential.

**Question:** Was there -- it sounds like I could pretty much get anything I wanted from you, somehow, through the camp. If there was something I wanted, if I started asking, somebody would find it for me.

**Answer:** I suppose that's true. Not that I -- I originated this, but if someone came to me for something, I could, if it was available, I could turn it up.

**Question:** What was the most valuable trade commodity you had?

**Answer:** I think cigarettes. We -- we would receive Red Cross parcels. And these Red Cross parcels would be delivered in to my custody, that is those -- that portion of the camp that related to that were delivered into my custody there in the north compound, and then I was responsible for the distribution of those parcels. Now all those parcels, the Red Cross parcels, contained cigarettes. And so I would take a certain number of packs of cigarettes out of each ration so I would -- I would short the camp whatever number I was directed to short. That body of cigarettes now became trading material for us to utilize for whatever purposes. And it was -- it was kind of ingenious. There was three guys, Mayczeck, Raheo and lePresto. And these -- these three guys were -- I mean -- they would have been -- made great hustlers or con artists anywhere. They were -- they were really a terrific crew. And they organized a -- a gambling game. And they encouraged the prisoners to come and gamble for cigarettes. And, of course, some of them would win and some would lose. Well, the result of this, of course, that this whole operation mask the fact that a certain portion of the cigarettes was being diverted before it ever got out there. So these three guys ran this kind of floating crap game around the camp and they were able to obscure the fact that a certain portion of the rations were being retained by the -- the intelligence committee for purposes of trading with the Germans.

**Question:** I like that -- the intelligence committee.

**Answer:** Well, whatever it was.

**Question:** Yeah, no, but I mean that's it. You -- you established -- I mean it's amazing how all that could quietly develop and you know, just had to evolve and --

**Answer:** Well, it's interesting to me -- Colonel Szempke had written a book and he came to Seattle and he was at the Flight Museum and he was going to promote his book. I went out there and listened to him talk and he related things. And his perspective was different from mine. Not in any great detail, but in some parts of his recollection. So when I had finished -- when he finished, I approached him and asked him, said, Colonel, how is it that I was here in the camp under these circumstances and your recollection of what had transpired is different from mine. He said -- his response was that he deliberately kept himself separate from Colonel McCullum's activities so that if, at any time, Szempke was subject to any kind of interrogation like Colonel Spicer had been subjected to, Szempke would not have the knowledge that -- about these activities. And as a result, there was nothing he could reveal. And here was a man I thought -- I've always thought that Szempke was a man of enormous courage, and he had deliberately kept himself ignorant of these facts because he did not want to be put in the position where he could possibly compromise them. And I thought, well,

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that's - that's quite a -- one, quite understandable, but two, a manner of complete loyalty to the cause.

**Question:** Wow.

**Answer:** And they lived together. McCullum and Szempke lived together in the same cell block.

**Question:** Wow. I guess that discipline the --

**Answer:** Yep.

**Question:** And again the belief of what they were fighting for, I would assume helped.

**Answer:** Well, these guys -- it's quite interesting to me that here these guys were -- they were fighter pilots. I mean, Szempke was a fighter pilot. And a very successful one. And Francis Gabreski was the -- the leading Ace in Europe at the time. I mean these were people who -- that's what they were was fighter pilots. And here they were, on the ground, and they were really soldiers first.

**Question:** So how did you get liberated from the camp then?

**Answer:** Well, we weren't actually liberated. What happened was the Russians had moved west and the Russians were probably -- it turned out they were about three or four days distant to the east of the camp. And the Germans were the guards in the camp who were -- I mean these were old, old guys or wounded guys. These were the kind of members of the German forces that -- they weren't their top tier soldiers. And they acted pretty frightened. I guess. And as a result, they decided that they -- they didn't want to be there when the Russians arrived. So one morning we woke up and the -- the guards had come down out of the towers. So immediately when they came down out of the towers we saw that this was an opportunity not to be neglected, we immediately went up in the towers and seized control of the camp. And as a result of that, within the next day or two, we were able to capture, I think ten towns and a hundred square miles of territory and an airfield, flak school and quite a little bit of territory there. So when the Russians arrived -- we also sent out patrols trying to make contact with the Russians and with the British and Canadian forces on the west. And when the Russians arrived, we were already in control of the camp and control of a rather substantial part of Germany right then. And of course we were well armed by then, we'd taken -- acquired weapons carriers and anti-tank guns and a variety of other weaponry so that we were pretty much in control. And did have an airfield and there were some flyable airplanes on that airfield and as well.

**Question:** Boy that's amazing, I mean the fact that you never stopped working and thinking so that when that opportunity did arise, not only did you be able to take the -- were you able to take the camp, but I mean, your military action was --

**Answer:** Well, we were organized. I mean, it wasn't a disorganized group. We had, in anticipation of this kind of development, we had organized squads and platoons and there were tasks that were assigned and they were under command direction and went out and did what we did. And then the Russians wanted to move us, that is they wanted to liberate the camp. The Russians came in and they wanted now to run their tanks around the barbed wire and liberate the camp. And Colonel Szempke said no, wasn't going to happen. And we had them kind of -- there was a standoff. Because we had control of the peninsula and we had road blocks and -- and we were armed and ready to resist. And the Russians made it clear



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that they wanted to do this and their -- their effort was they were going to transport us across Russia to Odessa and then from Odessa debark us by ship back to the United States. And again, Szempke said no, that wasn't going to happen. And there again was an exhibition of his courage because this Russian colonel, I think he was, might have been a Marshall, no, might have been a general. I don't remember, but anyway, he rode in with -- on a horseback. Beautiful horse, oh, just a gorgeous horse. And he rode in on this horse and he argued with Szempke, and Szempke is standing there on the ground, facing this Russian soldier, with an aide with him, on horseback. And I witnessed this. This Russian officer pulled out his revolver and pointed it at Szempke's head and ordered him to surrender the camp and Szempke literally said no, it won't happen. And ultimately the standoff ended and this guy retreated and then a little later the 8th Air Force came in and landed at the air field that we had secured and flew us out.

**Question:** And that's who you were with, right, the 8th Air Force

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Yeah.

**Answer:** They came in and landed and flew us out.

**Question:** It's interesting, cause -- in two regards. A, being in the air, and then B, being in the POW camp. You're somewhat removed from some of the travesty of war, I mean you aren't right close to it. Or am I perceiving that wrong?

**Answer:** Well, yes and no. One, we were constantly receiving new prisoners. And we fully understood the air battles that were being waged and these individuals would come to us in various conditions. So some of them had been badly burned, bruised, shot up, all kinds of ways. And the other part of it, of course, is that our -- our rations were constantly diminishing. We were getting less and less to eat. Less food to sustain ourselves, and that was a problem. The other part of it is that the air battle was still going on around us and we were -- we were witness to it. We could see the -- the bomber streams coming -- they'd come across the Baltic and turn south, go to Berlin or wherever they were going. And we would see every now and then, aircraft that was knocked out of the formations and were crashing there. And in one or two occasions we were witness to the air battles right there in our proximity. This one time a couple mosquitoes came in over Berlin and they would make the circle -- they would go in over Berlin, and then they would immediately turn north, get to the Baltic, and then after they got over the Baltic, they would be free of anti-aircraft fire as they were retreating. And these Mosquitoes came in and they'd turn right there by our camp, and when they'd turn by our camp, here was an ME108 that came in and lined up right behind the first mosquito. And of course we were all terrified that that mosquito was going to get shot down by this ME108. Big problem was the 108 neglected to look at his rear and realize there was another mosquito flying right behind that one, and he blew that 108 right out of the sky. And you -- the jubilation in that camp lasted for a couple days. So we -- we weren't entirely divorced from the war. It -- it was going on around us. Of course we were not as actively engaged in it as we had been when we were flying.

**Question:** Do you -- I asked your wife this question, too. Looking into the future, to people that you and I will never meet -- I mean, I think if I had the opportunity to go back and interview a Napoleon and a Hitler or somebody and say why -- tell me what was going on in your head. Is there something that should be left with the future generation -- a message or I guess a point of World War II? Maybe a message, I don't know.

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**Answer:** Well, I would say that it sounds trite, it's often a cliché, but freedom isn't free. And if a person believes that they should live free, as free as they can live in consistent with the freedom of their fellow man, they have to understand that there are individuals, ideologies that are hostile to freedom, that see freedom as a condition in which man is not well organized, doesn't do the kinds of things that these people perceive that he should do in order to achieve whatever their objectives are. And this largely, I believe, surrounds the institution of socialism. Command economies. Places where there is an elite, selected, elected or anointed, that makes the determinations as to how people should organize and conduct their affairs and subordinate their notions of liberty and freedom for the common good. I think this is -- is often betrayed by individuals that say the end justifies the means. I think that one has to understand that in order to preserve freedom and preserve individual liberty, the end never justifies the means. Every means has to be justified, measured against the condition of freedom and liberty. If there was any lesson that I drew from my experience in World War II, it was that I do not want to ever live, and I wouldn't want any of my children and their progeny to live under circumstances where a central authority such as Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union, Stalin, Breszhnev or the like -- any communist dictator, calls the tune. I mean, the most precious thing that we have -- and it became increasingly apparent to me as I came out of World War II and have lived since then, that we have the blessing of a United States Constitution. We have a constitution that declares that all men are created equal and they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. Now that means that there is no group of individuals who can legitimately confer those right or withdraw them. Those are rights that are there, they exist, and they are there because each person is a creature of a creator and this then says to me, you must not compromise that. You cannot conveniently say we'll set that aside just for now. You have to say, this is something that we are going to preserve and conserve forever. And it requires that it be attended, always. It cannot simply be put on auto pilot and say, okay, this is going to happen. It's going to work. Because it won't. The field of liberty has to be constantly cultivated and cared for. And I think that our history tells us that. From the time that we -- our forefathers at Valley Forge and Antietam and all of the places in our history where the fields have been watered by the blood of Americans, it has been occasions when our fundamental attachment of the Constitution and the concepts it embraces were under attack. And we have managed, so far, to keep it pretty much intact. But there is no assurance that tomorrow it won't be under major assault again. And I think it's a better assurance that it will be. And we have to be -- take great care that we support and sustain those institutions of our society that function to preserve those liberties and freedoms. And it can't be neglected. And it costs -- it has a cost. It means that from time to time we have to respond to the nation's call and we have to go forward, willing to do whatever is necessary to secure that. And if it means waging conflict in Viet Nam or Korea or the Persian Gulf or World War II or World War I or the war between the states, War of 1812, the Revolutionary War itself. All of this has one common thread and that is the preservation of the constitutional republic that Ben Franklin said to us, here it is, now you can be tested as to whether or not you can keep it. That's sort of the message that I would like to convey. I -- I think that young people need to understand that they're going to be called upon to deny themselves things in their life for the nation's purpose, to ensure that that Constitution is not violated, not corrupted, not compromised. That's it.

**Question:** When you see the American flag -- now, I'm never -- I was too young for Viet Nam. What do you see that I don't see?

**Answer:** Well, I see a symbol that is the embodiment of the aspirations of a nation. And this symbol is something that each of us can relate to in a way that no other symbol can. The flag itself, and the pledge to the flag, says in effect, I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States, and the liberties for which it stands. Well, it's not -- it's not there genuflecting before some piece of bunting. It is reaffirming on each occasion that I see the flag, that I am

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committed to these liberties that are embraced within this United States Constitution that says here we are. And that each of us is the equal, is created as the equal of the other. I lose complete patience with these people who -- who began to -- to beat their breasts over previous failures to meet the aspirations. Sure, did slavery exist here? You bet. Was it a bad thing? Sure. Was it an unqualified evil? Yes. But having said that, that's simply an expression of the human condition and it doesn't have anything to do with those concepts that are embraced within the Constitution of the United States that declares our attachment to liberty. And when I see the flag, that's what it says to me. I say to myself, okay, I understand that. That flag flew at Fort Sumpter. That flag was raised at Suribachi on Iwo Jim

**Answer:** In my own experience I can absolutely tell you. We had fabricated an American flag and when we got out of that camp and we took down the German flag that was flying on that flagpole over the German headquarters, which was their major battle flag, and put the Stars and Stripes up there on that flagpole, it was one of the greatest days of my life. Because I knew. Now, that not only had we done this, but we had reclaimed all of Europe. We have said to our self, Nazi Germany is dead. Done, finished. And all we had to do now was to reconstruct. And I -- you know, I go to the ball game. And how does -- how do all those people in that ball park react? They -- they stand up, the Star Spangled Banner is played, the flag is -- is in the field, and everybody feels good about it. This isn't anything profound at all. It's just something that infects us all. It's the symbol of the nation. And that's how I feel about the flag.

**Question:** Thank you very much.

**Answer:** You're entirely welcome. I hope it's helpful.

**Question:** It is. It's a big puzzle I'm working on, and there's all these pieces of tapestry. You know there is one thing that I think we need to do. And I think it has to do with the Viet Nam experience. I think that we, as a nation, we need to recognize the service of those individuals who served in Viet Nam as being every bit as significant to the defense of our liberties as the service that was performed in Desert Storm or in Korea or World War II or World War I. It's all part of a continuum. And those individuals who served in Viet Nam I don't think have been properly recognized, not appropriately recognized. There's -- there's attempts at this. But somebody has got to stand up and say, you know, everything that you did, you did in the -- in the service of liberty and the defense of our Constitution, and it's no different -- no matter how imperfectly we were commanded or whatever we think about as to the political directions of the war, that has really nothing to do with how those men and women served there. And the -- their identify with similar service that has been performed since the days of the Revolutionary War.

**Question:** And I think that's one of the -- you're tested on one of the hardest things to -- to break apart. I mean, do we say a war is a war is a war, or do we say, the individual person, again, the young men and women that went over to Viet Nam were doing exactly what you did when you went over to Europe.

**Answer:** Of course.

**Question:** Now, what the war was, that's -- at this point, I don't mean irrelevant in a trivial way, but they were serving their country, doing their duty, in what they thought was right.

**Answer:** Well not even what they thought was right. What they understood to be right. It isn't -- it wasn't speculative as far as they were concerned, they understood it just as well as the person in Korea or person in Germany did. Or Japan or the Pacific or at Verdun or

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Belleau Woods or wherever you want to pick it. The one thing that -- the United States is unique. It is absolutely unique on this planet. We're not here because we were born here. We're not here because we were born into some landed gentry or some trade or something else and our family's been here for 300 years. Or a thousand years. Or we can trace our roots back to prehistoric times. We're here because we elected to come here. You can go over this whole world and you probably could find somebody, in every village in this world, that's got a relative in Philadelphia

**Answer:** I mean you can't -- it's inescapable. You go to -- you go to Russia or you go to Sri Lanka or you go to Uganda or wherever it is, somebody's got a relative in the United States. One thing we have to understand is that people who come here didn't leave all of their prejudices at water's edge when they entered the country. They brought them in here with them. And we have gone further in bringing together these people of these diverse ethnic back-- and religious backgrounds, and reconcile them and making them into -- and transforming them into what it is to be an American. And we have Americans of all different stripes, characters, backgrounds, history and the like. And yet we have developed a common culture and it all surrounds one basic thing and that is the United States Constitution. It is there within that Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, growing out of the Continental Congress, that says to us these are the principals that we accept, we endorse, we will defend. And that, to me, is unique. We are -- we're not like anybody else. And it also is something very precious. And the prospects of our being able to over come these little setbacks and disability (end of tape)