

Fort Hunt Oral History
George Washington Memorial Parkway
Interview with Laurence Dennis
by David Lassman
June 7, 2009

INTERVIEWER: My name is David Lassman. I am with the National Park Service of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. I am with Mr. Laurence Dennis, talking to him about his experiences in World War II as a code user, which is in relation to Fort Hunt Oral History. I'd like to thank you for talking with us today, Mr. Dennis, and I'd like you to start telling me a little bit about your childhood.

LAURENCE DENNIS: Well, I grew up on a dairy farm in a little town called Farmington, Illinois. Well, we milked 40 head of cows, and I graduated from high school in that town, and I couldn't get away from dairy farming and milking cows fast enough, so I left and went to Peoria, Illinois, got a job there at the First National Bank in Peoria and stayed with the bank for two or three years until time to go in the service. I went into the service in September [01:00] of 1941. I wanted to fly, but I was wearing glasses at the time whenever I had to read and so forth, so my glasses kept me from passing the physical exam, but they told me I could be a radio operator or a mechanic. So I chose radio operator. Consequently, after basic training, I was sent to Scott Field [01:26]. We spent about four to six months there, learning the Morse code [01:32] and the normal procedure that's used when you're flying on an airplane and communicating with the ground station regarding landing procedures, regarding SOSs and so forth. I joined and was assigned to the 92nd Bomb Group [01:59] in February [02:00] in 1943. I beg your pardon, 1942. We received training, flying training and radio training at MacDill Field [02:14] in Florida, and at Sarasota-Bradenton Air Force Base [02:18]. We had to live under field

conditions there. That means we lived in tents and ate out of our mess kits there and so forth. Later on, we were moved up to Massachusetts. War had been declared and submarines were bothering ships on the East Coast, so we flew out of Massachusetts for a month or two looking for submarines. Didn't see a thing. Moved us on up to Bangor, Maine. We were at Bangor, Maine, four to six weeks, again still flying out over the ocean looking for submarines and making various [03:00] types of training flights. Sometime late in July or early August, we received orders to fly overseas. Actually, we were the first bomb group, the B-17s that flew overseas. We left from Bangor, Maine, one day and we landed in Newfoundland first, waited for 24 hours and then we left at 9:00 or 10:00 at night for Prestwick, Scotland. Had a very quiet trip; the weather was good. I don't recall quite how long it took, but somewhere between seven or eight hours. We left Newfoundland, and we landed in Prestwick, Scotland, next morning about 8:00. From there, we went down to Bovington, England. That was about 20 miles west of London. We received a little additional training there from [04:00] radio operators and so forth. We flew two missions out of Bovington, was all, because we had B-17 Es. They were old B-17s; they had only a .30-caliber machine gun in the nose. From there, first week in September, I flew my first raid over Europe and our bomb group went to Lille, France. In the Stars and Stripes magazine a day or two later, they told us that there was about 100 planes that flew over Lille that day and that it was a big, big raid. Well, it was nothing compared to what came a year or so later. But on that first raid, an 88-millimeter antiaircraft shell broke beneath the airplane, blew a hole up through the bottom of the plane, knocked out one engine, and when we managed to limp back to

Britain [05:00] on three engines, five of us went to the hospital. One man never flew again. So that was my baptism under fire. But from there on, I did manage to complete 21 additional missions. On the 13th mission, which was Labor Day, 1943, we went to Stuttgart, Germany. Just after we left the target, a whole flock of German fighter ships attacked our bomb group, and we got nicked a couple times, so we lost one engine, consequently couldn't keep up with the rest of the group, so we fell back further and further from the bomb group, and the fighters got after us and nicked us a second time. So we limped along on three engines, and we were losing gas out of one wing, and pretty [06:00] soon we ran out of gas completely and had to ditch in the English Channel [06:06]. I spent 12, 13 hours in the English Channel [06:10], but we were finally picked up at 3:00 the next morning by British gunboats who were patrolling. They took us on board, gave us dry clothes, and a shot -- a glass -- a cup of tea, and put a shot of rum in it, a pretty good deal. We all went to sleep real quickly. By 9:00 the next morning, we woke up; we found we were at Portsmouth, Southern England, I believe it was. Went back to the base. Do I keep going? We went back to the base, and the colonel came out to see how we were doing, how we got along. Told him, "Just fine." I said, "I'm looking for that two-day pass to London now." "Oh, no, no," he says [07:00], "we've got a maximum effort tomorrow morning. Go get some flying clothes and be ready to go. When you get back from that one, then you can have your two day pass." So unfortunately, I did go on that one the next morning, and I got back, and I had a two-day pass. Things went along, and one interesting incident I'll tell you about is late in July, we bombed Le Bourget Field [07:29]. I couldn't help but think of Charlie Lindbergh landing

there when he flew overseas. But we bombed the runway on that field, and that was one of the more easy raids that went on. Most of the long raids were to Schweinfurt, which I did go on, and to the Ruhr Valley. I went to Hamburg [07:54], I think, twice. I tell you this because it had a bearing on my future [08:00].

INT: Let me just interrupt you for a moment. With all these missions you were going on, one of the things that was going on with Fort Hunt [08:13] was that they were trying to make it possible, especially airmen, if they were either shot down or found themselves behind enemy lines, had the means to escape or evade capture. So in your experiences, did you have like a uniform that had a compass in a button, or were you given an escape kit that had like foreign currency or a silk map? Do you remember anything like that?

LD: Not in 1943, in early '43. I think those things came along later. But in the fall of '43, I think we had an escape kit of some kind either fastened to our Mae West [09:00] or something we could put in a jacket pocket. Up to that point, we did not have the vests that would protect us from antiaircraft fire, nor did we wear a steel helmet. We didn't have steel helmets at that time. And -- but we did have conversation with one or two boys who had been shot down, managed to escape with the Underground [09:35], and they passed them along down to Spain. Then they were flown home or back to England, and those fellows came and talked to us and told us what was the best way to try to escape or evade capture. I could -- they suggested, said, "If at all possible, talk to the ladies. Get with [10:00] the ladies, especially over France. They're the most soft-hearted and will help you quicker than some men will."

INT: That's interesting because we've heard similar stories from our research that are along

the same lines. But this is important because basically the field representatives of Fort Hunt [10:17] who would be working with the servicemen overseas on escape and evasion activities would actually often take men who successfully escaped and evaded and use them as instructors for other servicemen going overseas.

LD: Right. I continued on and winter drew nigh. I had twenty raids then, and from that point on, I was entitled to choose what raids we went on. What we thought would be the easier ones, we called them “milk runs [10:54].” When the opportunity came to go to Norway, we all thought that surely [11:00] is a milk run [11:01], so my crew went to Norway. On the way to Norway, the number two engine cut out, went bad. We were just about to arrive at Norway, so we were too far gone to turn around and come back right then. We followed the bomb group for another 15 minutes to a half an hour. The pilot tried to feather the propeller on the number two engine, and the hydraulic pressure had gone down to the point where it would no longer cause that propeller to be feathered. Consequently, the airplane shook like a Model-A Ford with the shimmies, and that’s pretty bad, if you recall. So we decided we would not go back across the North Sea to England. We’d been down the English Channel [11:58] once and spent 12 hours in [12:00] water. In November, in the North Sea, we knew we wouldn’t survive, so we turned to go to Sweden. We told the tail-gunner to come out of the tail and get ready to bail out, all of us, get ready to bail out, so some of us gathered in the waist of the airplane, ready to bail out. We hadn’t seen any fighters at all, and we were still cruising along and vibrating very badly, but had turned to go to Sweden. All of a sudden, there was explosions on the side of the airplane and then the right wing. Looked out the

window and the fighters had caught up with us. We hadn't been looking for fighters because we were all gathered at the back door ready to bail out. The fact that the fighters had found us and shot up our right wing and wounded another man, we all bailed out immediately. I ran loose for two weeks. The Norwegian Underground [13:00] helped us out. They brought us food twice a day, and we stayed in a hay barn out in a pasture somewhere. Pretty cold sleeping in a hay barn at night in Norway with six to eight inches of snow on the ground all the time, maybe 10 or 12, I don't remember, but it was pretty cold. Eventually we were caught because our pilot, who was the last one to bail out, was captured rather quickly because he had his G.I. shoes on, and the "U.S." in the bottom of the shoes showed up in the snow tracks when he was trying to walk -- evade. Some German soldier must have noticed that "U.S.," so they just followed his tracks right up the farmhouse and threatened the people inside if they wouldn't turn him back over or tell what happened to him. So he walked [14:00] out of the closet and gave himself up. Then they took the pilot's clothes, and a German soldier of about the same height put on his clothes, went on down the road another five miles, and says, "I'm the pilot from that airplane. Will you take care of me?" So the Norwegians took this man in, thinking he was a pilot and a U.S. soldier and treated him and passed him down the line to the group with us, the four of us, and we'd all be, hopefully, passed on to Sweden. Well, by the time that so-called American pilot who was actually a German got to where we were, they called in the troops and came out to the hillside and the hay barn where we were staying and hollered, "Hands up" at you [15:00]. So you put your hands up when you saw those machine guns pointing at you. One man had gone down the hill a little ways to

cautiously check and see if these were actually the Norwegians because they hadn't answered our signal, which was a couple of short whistles. He hid behind the bush when he saw who they were and what they were. So he watched them from behind the bush march us off, the three of us. They knew there was a fourth man, but they couldn't find him, so took the three of us in and lined us up against the Norwegians' home who had been feeding us. Scared the heck out of a couple of us because the man behind us, a German soldier, threw the bolt on his rifle. A couple of us who had been hunting in our younger days knew what that was and were scared we were going to be shot right then. I turned my [16:00] head to the left to look and see what was going on, and the German guard hit me in the cheek and bounced my nose off the home, so I didn't turn around and look again. From there, they put us in a car, a nice '38 or '39 Dodge sedan, and took us down to the local jail. We spent the night there, and then they put us on the train the next day for Oslo [16:29]. We arrived in Oslo [16:32] late in the evening. It was dark. From there, out to a guardhouse. I think it was at an airport because we could hear airplanes going and coming. We were there three or four days, and they took each one of us, one at a time, to a country club, and set you down in front of a coffee table, and two German officers on the [17:00] far side of the coffee table interrogated you. All the time, they threw a package of cigarettes at you and asked you, "Lucky Strike or Chesterfield?" "Sure, I'll have one." I smoked continuously, I think, because I hadn't had any cigarettes in several days. When I left, I took what was in the pack with me. [laughs] But I didn't know anything about the future and what was going to happen, and they knew that. I was a tech sergeant; I wasn't an officer. But we were all interrogated and taken back to the

guardhouse. A couple days later, we were taken down to the dock, put on a boat, and off we went to Germany. In the hold of that boat, along with us, were four or five German soldiers. One of them could talk English, and he hadn't followed his orders completely and correctly because he was a German soldier in occupied Norway, and he fell in love with a Norwegian girl and [18:00] intended to marry her. So he brought in a radio to have music. About that time, a German officer told them they weren't allowed to have radios, and they shouldn't give them to the Norwegians, so they arrested this young man and brought him back to Germany, and he was in the hold of the ship with us, and he didn't really get completely married and was feeling very bad about that. So we learned a couple of things like that, of human interest, while we were riding the boat back to Denmark. We got off at Arhus, Denmark; they put us in a jail, two or three of us in one cell. Next morning, the ladies came by, sweeping up the hallways in the jail and wanted to talk with us, and she could visit with us as long as there was no guard around. I don't know if it was a German guard or a Danish guard that was -- turned himself over to the Germans [19:00], working with them. Anyway, they held us in that jail for a day or two until one morning, they took us all out, 10 of us. They had a junior German officer probably the equivalent to our second lieutenant, and two sergeants, or one sergeant, I guess a private, and those last two carried burp guns. The G.I.s know what a burp gun is, but I'll explain that's like a Thompson submachine gun. Off we went, got on the train, went down through Denmark. I believe it was the second day -- no, it was the first day we came to Hamburg [19:48]. Before we arrived in Hamburg [19:51], the German officer told us we would not get off the train for a few minutes; we'd wait till all the

people got by, and then when we [20:00] walked over to get on another train, we'd have to go through what was left of the station, and we wouldn't stop, keep on walking.

“People might holler at you, but just keep going, and we'll look after you.” Well, this made us all wonder what they were talking about. So after all the people had left and we'd got off the train, started walking across the open part of what was left of the railroad station. All that was left was the corner of a two-story building, with a canvas draped over it, drawn taut so it wouldn't rain under there, and that was what was left of the railroad station. I'd made two bombing trips to Hamburg [20:53], and I was amazed at the way things looked sitting, how it was bombed out. But while we were going across the railroad station [21:00], somebody saw us, recognized us, and said, “American fliers.” First thing you know, we had a crowd following us, and our guards had their guns pointed toward the crowd instead of toward us. They backed us up against the brick wall and turned around and faced the crowd, kept them from getting to us. It was quite surprising. We had women call us dirty names. Some people tried to spit on us. I think that worried me more than flying my missions. Nonetheless, pretty soon the guards were able to disperse the crowd. Our train arrived, and we got on the train, and we went from there to Stuttgart, Germany. There we were put in solitary confinement for a few days, until they got around to interrogating us again. My interrogation officer [22:00] seemed pretty decent. He asked a lot of questions that he knew I wouldn't be able to answer or I refused to. He said, “Well, if you won't answer me, I'll tell you about it.” He reached up behind him and brought a loose-leaf notebook down that had “92d Bomb Group” on the cover. He opened it up and told us when we went overseas. He told me what missions

he thought we had gone on. When he finished, he looked at me and he said, "Did you go on the Schweinfurt raid?" I said, "Yes, I did." He said, "You didn't have any trouble getting home, did you?" I said, "What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "all you had to do was look down and see all the airplanes burning along the way and just follow that pile of burning airplanes back to the coast." We lost 60 airplanes that day, and there was a lot of them spread out across Germany. So after about a week in solitary confinement there, they let us out one afternoon to exercise a little bit [23:00]. That evening, they herded us together, and we got in the boxcars. Those were the 40-and-eight [23:07] cars that the men in World War I had named. They were capable of holding 40 men and eight horses. Well, they jammed 155, 160 men in there. They had two boxcars, I guess, but there was 75 to 80 of us in each boxcar, and that was pretty rough. The boxcars were identical what you might have seen in the movie called "Holocaust." They had one large bucket in the middle of the boxcar, and that was your toilet or whatever you want to call it. You didn't have room to lay down or sleep; kind of slept standing up or leaning against the side of the boxcar or leaning against a buddy. You weren't given anything to eat for 24 hours, and you shook [24:00], rattled so much that pretty soon, you'd vomit, and if you didn't do that, you'd get dysentery. So that went on for about three days and, I think, two nights, or it might have been three nights and two days. When we arrived at Krems, Austria, it was 5:00 in the evening, late in the day, and we marched in from Krems, downtown, which is on the Danube River, about 20 miles west of Vienna. We marched five miles up the hill in the bluffs to the POW [24:41] camp. There was quite a bit of snow on the ground there, too, and it was cold. When we got up to the POW

[24:51] camp, they took us into one big room. One of the German guards told us what we had to do [25:00]. Do you want me to tell this whole story?

INT: Absolutely. In about three minutes, I will stop the cameras and flip the tape over, so you can talk for another few more minutes if you want to.

LD: I didn't quite get it.

INT: You can talk for a few more minutes, then I'm going to flip the audio cassette over.

LD: Okay. They held us in this one large room and told us to take all of our clothes off and hang them on the clothing racks that were stuck up there on a cable. These clothing racks were like a hanger, but it was just about a five-gauge rod hanging down with about four crossbars on it, and you took your clothes off and hung them on these crossbars and button them up so they couldn't fall off. You had to strip down plumb naked. The clothes on the chain started to roll; your clothes disappeared, and they went into the gas chamber. What was it that they used? A cyanide gas chamber [26:00], and meantime, you were ushered into the next room, and a German soldier shaved your head, and you moved on to a cold shower, and a German officer checked you for lice, and you moved into the next room and stood around and waited. I think it was about two hours before they got done shaving all our heads, and we all got showers, and our clothes got deloused and came back to us. Unfortunately, there were the two boys that still had a pack or two of cigarettes in their clothing pockets that went through the cyanide gas chamber, but that ruined the cigarettes, and they couldn't smoke them. But anyway, about 11:00, 12:00 at night, they took us all out of -- they called it the hospital or the Lazarus [26:50], and marched us down into the POW [26:53] camp. It was a cold night, snow on the ground.

Opened about three or four gates, you'd go through one [27:00], it'd be shut behind you, then you go to the next one, there'd be guards and they'd open that one, and on you'd go through it. Finally they marched us into a barracks, and one 40-watt light bulb, it seems, was all the light in there. There was already 10 or 15 guys living there. They had what they called the barracks chief by the name of Jonesy, and Jonesy got us all lined up and gave us each a German blanket. It had a swastika on it, so we slept under the German swastikas. But anyway, the bunks were double-deckers, and they held eight men. One deck, four heads together, and the top deck, four more. They were identical to the bunks you saw in some of the German movies about the Holocaust.

INT: I'll pause right here for one sec.

LD: Judy, go around and sit down in your chair.

(End of Tape 1A)

(Beginning of Tape 1B)

INT: David Lassman with the National Park Service. We're listening to the second part of the interview with Laurence Dennis. He had just started talking about his experiences as prisoner of war [00:12], and for the record, today is Sunday, June 7, 2009. Please continue.

LD: All right. Anyway, after arriving at that barracks, we slept two men on a bunk next to each other, and as I mentioned earlier, there was four men on one level and four men on the top bunk. The top bunk was up pretty high, about six feet up. It was cold; there was no heat in the barracks at all. As I mentioned, one 40-watt light bulb, it seems, all was there. The next morning -- and my memory's stuck kind of tight with me on the next

morning at roll call -- outside [01:00] bright, sunshiny day, just beautiful, and six to eight inches of snow on the ground. We had roll call, appel, they called it. We all had to line up and the German guards count you, report to the captain that we're all present and accounted for. He hollered, "Guten morgen," and we hollered back, "Guten morgen" to him. Then roll call breaks up and all the older prisoners come running over, and say, "Anybody here from the 92d Bomb Group? Anybody from the 306?" "Yep, here we are, 92nd," so about six or eight of my buddies that got shot down ahead of me were still in the camp, or were in the camp, and they kind of helped me find out what to do, and one of them gave me a toothbrush so that thing was the only thing I had to clean my teeth for a year and a half. I learned quite a bit and found out how to kind [02:00] of make the most of things. You had to be quite innovative to get along as a POW [02:05]. Being a POW [02:10] is a whole different story. Now, how far do you want me to go with this?

INT: This is very much part of your story and the story of Fort Hunt [02:20] because they very much actually worked with the POWs [02:24] in their work.

LD: Well, one of the most difficult things about being a POW [02:31] is the mental duress, the depressed moods you can get into. We had one man that committed suicide. He was depressed, and we didn't pay enough attention to him, and he walked out across the yard, stepped over the warning wire and decided he would climb the outer fence, and as he had hoped, the guy in the guard tower machine-gunned him. So from that point on, anybody we thought was distressed and thinking about [03:00] committing suicide, we looked after him. If we noticed that he might be thinking about that, we tried to take him into our comradeship and keep him from doing that. Also, you wrote letters home. We were

given two letters and four postcards a month. Writing the letters home, why, you told your parents what you needed and asked them to send you a parcel. I asked for long underwear and socks and gloves. I sent my letter probably early January, and it got to my folks six months later, and they fixed up a package and sent these things, and the package got to the POW [03:50] camp six months later. So it took about a year, round-trip, for some of these things, it seems like.

INT: Real [04:00] quickly, you had mentioned last night a quick story about -- you mentioned you needed socks to your family, so why don't you just continue about the socks, the story you had about socks?

LD: The story I had about socks. Oh, all right. During the winter, our hands and feet would get cold. We didn't have -- well, we had sufficient clothing for our chests, but we didn't have sufficient clothing for our hands and feet. Late in the fall of '44, a shipment of sweaters came in through the Salvation Army [04:40]. One man knew how to unravel that sweater and knit a pair of socks. So we broke off two pieces of barbed wire from an old junk pile between a couple of barracks, straightened out the barbed wire between a couple of rocks that were in the camp, and pounded a point on them to make needles out of them [05:00]. He had his knitting needles and he proceeded to knit and make some socks. Well, almost immediately that ability to knit spread through the camp like wildfire. I knitted two pair while I was a POW [05:15]. I have one pair that I brought home. We were short of news. We were short of news. We wanted to know how the war was going, so we wanted radios. That was forbidden, like the German says, "Das ist verboten." So in order to get a radio, we used cigarettes. In the Red Cross [05:42]

parcels, which we received early on, were five to seven packs of cigarettes. These were old 20 Grands, Dominos. Some of you might remember those, and some may not. But with the cigarettes, we bartered with German guards or whoever we thought might be able to bring us [06:00] radio parts. I had a friend from my own bomb group that got shot down ahead of me, a German boy who was already busy working for the hospital and the dispensary, and he did all of my bartering. So in the fall of '44, I managed to get one tube regenerative set going. This was kind of a short-wave radio, but I got it going, and we could listen to the news. At 2:00 in the morning, we'd copy things down and help offer the news to the boys in camp. I believe I must tell you at this time there were several radios in the camp. I only knew of mine. After the war was over, I tell you the one that furnished most of our news most of the time. Somebody in the dispensary, which was one of the barracks [07:00] inside the barbed wire, where a man, if he was just a little bit ill but wasn't necessary to go to the hospital, he stayed at the dispensary. That's where anywhere from two to five guys were there all the time, and we had a couple of doctors. They didn't have any medicine, but we had a couple doctors with us that were captured down in Africa. In that dispensary, somebody was smart enough to put a false bottom in a five-gallon bucket that was used for a slop jar. I hope you remember what that term "slop jar" is.

INT: Yes.

LD: That false bottom held a radio that they never found or discovered. They always left enough material in that that they didn't mess with it. Well, they had it outside once for 48 hours, and they kept us outside with machine guns and dogs [08:00]. They were

looking for a man at that time that they lost track of. They wanted to take him to Vienna, they said, and court-martial him, but they never found him either. We had him hid in a tunnel. But you had to be very innovative to get some things done as best you could. Also, if you had some old buddies there or somebody to make friends with, why, it was good to go see them every once in a while to kind of keep from getting too depressed. About this time I generally ask if anybody's got any questions. Got any questions for me? Judy, you got any questions?

JUDY DENNIS: Well, I was thinking a little bit more detail about how you got that radio from the man in the hospital, how they said that they didn't recognize it.

LD: Well, to get my one-tube generative radio set going [09:00], my friend Sheldon, who worked at the dispensary, he took cigarettes up to the hospital and asked the French medic if he could have the tube from one of the physical therapy machines that was in the hospital. So the French medic, who the Germans had run their hospital, reached inside and pulled out a tube with about six prongs on the bottom, and Sheldon told him, no, he wanted one with four prongs; that's what I wanted. So he finally pulled out the right tube; Sheldon gave him the cigarettes to pay for it, and he put it back in his underwear and brought it back into camp. At this point, maybe I'd better explain. When you left the camp and went up to the hospital, you were entitled to take only a [10:00] partial pack of cigarettes. To get around that, anybody that had a pair of Jockey shorts on let the guy use them, and he put a pack or two in the front and a pack or two in the back. Then when the guard would check him out at the gate, he wouldn't check those points because they'd be getting too fresh, and the guy would maybe hit him or something, I don't know. But

that's the way we got our cigarettes up to the hospital to trade with the French medics. The Germans made these French medics run their hospital. So I got my radio tube, and then later on, I managed to get a dozen flashlight batteries, and I had two pair of headphones that another guard brought in for cigarettes. Early on in December and January, we had a guard at the barracks door, and we hauled the radio out and we would copy the news at 2:00 [11:00] in the morning, and any message for the POWs [11:04] or the French Underground [11:06] would be picked up and copied at that time. To make it a little more clear to you, at 2:00 a.m. in the morning, BBC [11:15] offered and were probably told to broadcast to the various people that were involved in the war. That message at 2:00 might be for the French Underground [11:33] or the French people, or it might be for the POWs [11:37], as it was a couple of times. From the story which you copied, then you could decode the message that was in that story. It was the same as the message that we put in our letters when we mailed it home. The only good message I ever copied was, "General Eisenhower planning for your welfare and safety. Sit tight and await orders [12:00]." Well, detailed news came out about once a week. So the guys that had a radio and from the dispatcher with that radio, about once a week, they'd consolidate all the news that we managed to get, and then a fellow would run around from barracks to barracks reading the news report. And from that, we did keep pretty much up to date on how the war was going. Of course, when the Battle of the Bulge [12:29] started, we all heaved a terrible sigh and thought that'd probably add another six months to the war. Well, I think it added a few months, but I don't know just how long it did add to the war. But we felt pretty downhearted about that Battle of the Bulge [12:44],

thinking that it could prolong our captivity. At 2:00 in the morning, one morning, oh, late February, I guess it was [13:00], I was running my radio and one of the guys was copying it, and somebody was pulling on my pant legs, and I told him, "Get out of here. I'm busy." I had headphones on and I couldn't hear him, and he give a big jerk. I turned around and looked at him and he had a Luger pointing at me. He said, "Komm, komm." So I "kommed." He took me to solitary confinement, myself and the guy that was copying the news. There I was in solitary, and about the next day, the guard opened the door and threw my overcoat at me, and I asked him, "What is this?" He says, "You can have the coat to keep warm." So I went through the pockets, and my knitting was in there. I'd hoped there was some cigarettes in there, but there wasn't; it was just knitting. So while I was in solitary confinement, I knitted a pair of socks. I could knit a sock a day while I was there. Of course, you're in solitary, you've got nothing else to do [14:00]. Funny little thing happened there. I was busy knitting, and you had a bench, as they called your bed in solitary, so I was propped up on that bench, doing my knitting, and the guard came down the hall and he raised up the cover over the glass and he looked in at me and I looked up and I could see only his eye. Pretty soon the door flew open and he pointed at me and hollered, "Fraulein, fraulein." That meant "woman" in German, and he was making fun of my knitting. All I could holler back at him was, "Get the hell out of here, raus, raus." So that was my experience with the German guard and my knitting. A German captain interviewed me and he said, "I'm a captain in the German Air Force. I cannot buy flashlight batteries. Where did you get these?" I didn't answer him. I'd say, "You'd probably know [15:00] better than I do where they come from." He just shook

his head. He said, "We'll just have to take you to Vienna and get a court-martial." Well, that kind of shook me, and all I could do was think, "You know, maybe the war will be over before then." So another week passed by, and by this time we were hearing the shells from the approaching Russians. One morning, the door opened, and the guard took me back through a couple of gates to my barracks, and our guys were all packing up, getting ready to leave. I asked what was going on. They said, "Get your stuff and get ready. We're going to start walking west." I found out that the German colonel in charge of us said he was going to march us in groups of 500 to the west and turn us over to the American boys, also said, "You'd be foolish to try and escape, because you would have to hide until the German Army backed over you, and the Russian Army [16:00] went over, too, before you stick your head up or you'll get killed." So I don't think very many people tried to escape from that trip, but we had about a two-week walk from Kerns, Austria to Braunau, Austria. They would walk us till 4:00 in the afternoon, and then we could start a fire with the wood around, and heat water, and we'd cook dandelion greens. We lived on dandelion greens there. We had to drink water out of the creek, and of course we all got dysentery. But kind of a funny thing happened. On the Sunday morning, I had heard that nobody went to church; Hitler [16:46] had done away with going to church. But he hadn't. There were a lot of churches that we'd walk by. You'd walk for an hour, an hour and a half, and then you had a 15-minute break. You'd jump over the fence [17:00] and into a field and relieve yourself. About two weeks before we left, Red Cross [17:09] or Salvation Army [17:10] sent in a shipment of toilet paper. It was the first toilet paper we'd had in the 18 months I was there. So when we left that

10-minute break, walking across Austria, and looked back at that field, it was just tufts of white toilet paper all over. On we go, keep walking. Sunday morning, here come some of the older Germans, dressed up all ready to go to church. The church bells, a few of them did ring there. Besides dandelion greens, you begged potatoes or eggs from the Germans, the Austrians. For instance, we were walking in groups of 500 men, there totaled about eight groups, so 4,000 [18:00] men, and about 200 guys couldn't walk, they were too sick to move, so they stayed in the camp. I was with the group that was walking. You'd work your way up to the front of the line when you saw a pretty good-looking German hospice or farmhouse, whatever you want to call it. The old German guard would allow you to go up to the door and beg. I mention the old German guard because by this time, our guards were all home-guard fellows. They ranged in age from 50 to 80 years of age, I think, and they would tell us, "Sure, go ahead and trade." I did this at one farmhouse and asked for potatoes and, "Ja, ja," the lady was very good, and she'd just talk, talk, talk to me all the time, but she handed me 10 or 15 potatoes. I filled my pockets, I opened my shirt and filled my shirt up with potatoes, I think. I offered [19:00] her a bar of soap and she turned me down. I think the woman had a relative or maybe a son that was a POW [19:07] in our country. She was being good to me. But then you'd leave the farmhouse and go back out front and you'd catch up with the tail end of your line and work your way back up to where your buddy was, and that evening, why, you had some boiled potatoes to eat for supper. Where'd we get the pot to boil them? Well, one night when we stopped somewhere; we weren't far from an old dump. They let us go over and look around that dumpsite. If you found an old kettle or

something or other that you thought you could use to heat water in, you took it. You did your best to wash it out in the creek, so maybe the next morning and that afternoon, you'd boil water in it till you felt it was sanitary and, sure enough, to boil potatoes in it. The old guards were pretty good to us [20:00]. I recall when President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt [20:04] died, 2:00 in the afternoon; we were taking out break, and one old German guard came over to a group of us and told us, "You know, your president died yesterday or the day before." So that's how we got our news that he had passed away. Some of them were good enough to visit with you about circumstances of the war. They marched us all the way to Braunau, which was on the banks of the Inn River. That was Hitler's [20:34] birthplace. Some of the men wanted to go over to his birthplace and urinate on his home over there. But anyway, we're in that opening in a timber, probably 100 yards deep and maybe 100 yards wide, and the guards were spaced around it. At each corner out front on the gravel road, there was a [21:00] little tower about ten feet high, a German guard in that tower. That's where we were. Pretty soon, in a day or so -- well, I guess we were there about almost a week, and one afternoon we heard artillery shells. We hadn't seen any Americans, but we knew that we were hearing them, so the German colonel, if he was still with us, one of the German officers, had a little small car, and put an American officer, an American sergeant in there, and they had a white flag on a stick, sticking out the window, and they were going over and across the river and find the American soldiers. They went over there, got back at about 4:00, and an American captain stepped out of that car and he couldn't believe that there were 4,000 American POWs [21:59]. We all ran up and [22:00] tried to shake hands with him and this, that,

and the other, and he just had to back off. He was quite surprised. So he said, "We'll be in over to get you tomorrow morning." "Okay." They took him back where he belonged, and the German officer came back to our place, I guess. So we didn't even fix breakfast the next morning; we just stood around waiting for him to come. Then finally, here came two Jeeps down the road. You had a driver and you had a man standing up in the back seat and he was manning a .50-caliber machine gun. He had a corporal in the front street with the driver, too. That corporal jumped out, he had a BAR gun, and he started telling the guards, "Hands up." Well, they surrendered immediately and dropped their rifles, and that was all there was to it. They were glad to surrender and glad the war was over. We had one German officer, a young [23:00] second lieutenant, I guess, who had refused to surrender his arms or pistol. Well, the corporal with the BAR gun came up to him and told him to drop his arm or his revolver, I guess. The German officer looked at him, and said, "I do not have to surrender my arm. I'm a German officer," and I think that corporal called him every dirty name that I'd ever heard and about 10 that I never, ever had heard. "If you don't drop it, I'll cut you in two." So the officer slowly pulled his revolver out and dropped it on the ground. About five POWs [23:41] ran like hell and dove at the grass right where that thing was. Each one of them wanted it as a souvenir, hoping it was his German Luger. I don't think it was, but they practically knocked that German officer over trying to get up there and get to that revolver [24:00]. Everybody shook hands, hugged each other, cried. Oh, boy. And in good time we got settled. The Germans -- or rather, the Americans told us to march down the road about two more miles. There was an aluminum factory down there, and we could go into the office

building and we could make ourselves warm for the night. We'd been sleeping in the rain, cold. It was about April, oh, early April, I guess, when we were in that timber. So we went down to the aluminum factory and started to get dried off and spend the night inside. I got on the scale and I'd lost about 15, 17 pounds [25:00]. I only weighed about 125 at that time. Practically everybody had lost weight. Foolishly, when we ate the first meal that the Americans made for us, we ate too much; we all vomited and got sick. But pretty soon here came a train, boxcars again. This time they'd been swept out pretty good and had some fresh straw on the floor. We had to get about 40 or 50 guys in each boxcar and off we went to Le Havre. There we had to be deloused and medicated and cleaned up for civilization. About that time, when they started checking with us and going through the tents and asking you who you were and what outfit were you with, you had to step over to another officer. "What's your name, sergeant?" And I told him. He went down the list [26:00]. He said, "You got anything for G2 or S2?" And I said, "Yes, sir." He went down the list and there was my name. He said, "Okay, you're going to Paris." I said, "Paris?" "Yeah, we'll fix you up with a ticket. You'll go from Le Havre to Paris, the Hotel so-and-so." They don't tell you what to do from there. So I took the train in that night. I got up the next morning, and I woke up when it was daylight, on the train. I was in Paris. I had a piece of paper with the hotel's name on it. I think it was the hotel Des, D-E-S for "the" [unintelligible]. I asked a guy with a bicycle and a buggy behind it if he could take me there. "Yeah, yeah." So he took me there. I don't know, we went 10, 15 blocks, and I gave him some money. No, I didn't have any money at that time. So he waited out front while I went inside [27:00] and told somebody about it, and

they came out and gave him some money. But anyway, I was interviewed there and told I would fly to the States, not tomorrow morning, but in a day or two. I'll be on one of the first flights. So I did chase around Paris about a day and a half or two days, walked in the American Red Cross [27:22] Club in Paris and saw somebody I knew from the American Red Cross [27:26] Club back at my base, girl from in St. Louis. So we had a long chat and a visit and a cup of coffee, and that was about the last time I ever saw her. But my name appeared on the bulletin board about the second day, 8:00 in the morning. That evening at 5:00 or so, I was put in a car to go out to the airport, along with three other men from the POW [27:55] camp. Of those three men, one was the camp leader. The other was Father [28:00] Steven Kane; the man of confidence, is what we called him. We got on a DC-8 that evening and we flew to the Azores, and then from the Azores we went to Bangor, Maine. At Bangor, Maine, we had to pull Father Kane out of the Officers' Club. He got back where he could finally find some scotch whiskey. But anyway, from there we flew on down to Washington, D.C. They put us up in a hotel. That night we went out and had a big dinner out, couple of drinks. Next morning -- I think it was the next morning -- why, they put us in a bus and off we went, took a ride somewhere, and I guess it was 60-some years later I found out it was Fort [29:00] Hunt. When I arrived at Fort Hunt [29:05], they pointed me toward a certain building, and I went inside. The captain asked my name and I told him. He looked in the file and pulled out a file with copies of letters I'd sent home to my family. On the back of each letter, he had the message that I put in there. We went over each one of them. I said, "Yeah, that's all I wrote. They only gave you a couple of letters a month." "Okay." He thanked me. I left

and never heard from him again, but six months later, I got very nice letter from the War Department, a Letter of Commendation about this. I don't think I told anybody about it except maybe one of my wives, and I never told my children about it at all. So that's about where I stand. I've got one or two letters there, and I tried to decode one the other day and I had trouble [30:00].

INT: Okay. I'm going to pause the interview right here so that we can put a new tape in, and then I just want to talk to you a little bit about your experience as a code user in prison.

LD: Okay.

JD: Get some water, hon. You need some water.

(End of Tape 1B)

(Beginning of Tape 2)

INT: -- for the National Park Service. This is Sunday, June 7th, and this is part three of an interview with Laurence Dennis on his experience as a code user for the Fort Hunt Oral History Project. Mr. Dennis.

LD: Okay. Well, in the spring or the summer of '44, one of the boys that was in my squadron that I flew with once or twice approached me about writing a letter home with a message in it. I, of course, asked him what was going on, and we weren't talking where anybody could hear us. We were out back walking around the exercise field by ourself. He proceeded to tell me that he was sending messages home that the War Department managed to get when the letter got to the States and decode the message that was in the letter, and the letter went on to his home [01:00]. He wanted me to do the same thing because he had received instructions from the code headquarters that they needed more

code writers. So I told him I would give it a try and see how I got along. He taught me the code. The first letter I wrote, I took it to him and showed him, and he said, "That's fine. That's correct, 100 percent." So when I dropped it in the mailbox, I had some pretty good thoughts about, well, I hope this thing makes it all the way through the German censor, that he didn't detect a word or two that might make him suspicious. The letter went through okay, and so as I continued to send messages back through the War Department, I became a little braver, and it didn't bother me as much as the first letter did. I'll back up a little bit [02:00]. When I arrived in POW [02:01] camp, the first few days I was there, I suddenly realized, said to myself, "Well, I'm in this POW [02:13] camp. If I behave myself, nobody's shooting at me anymore, so I probably will live through this damn war." I'll never forget, I thanked the lord. But anyway, I never, ever saw anybody in the POW [02:32] camp roughly treated by a German guard. There were a couple that weren't very good, and there was one on the march across Austria that was pretty bad. If you didn't get up after a 10-minute break and starting walking, he would fire reverb gun at the ground beside you. After we were liberated, he paid for his bad feats and acts [03:00] that he had done because he was one man that several of the POWs [03:06] felt he had a lot coming to him. I was so happy to get out of there, I didn't hold any anguish toward any of the guards. They had a job to do the same as I did, and I was just glad to get it over with. One kind of sad affair happened while I was a POW [03:33] because we had a German captain. I think his name was Captain Piletti [spelled phonetically], and when I first arrived in camp after roll call, he'd holler "Guten morgen" at us. We'd all holler back at him, "Guten morgen." As he walked through the camp, he

was one man that would stop and visit with you. He was an older man, and I had been told he was also a soldier from World War I [04:00], but he was always thoughtful enough to say “Guten morgen,” and talk to you when he had the chance. He disappeared for a week or 10 days and was not there. When he finally did come back, there were no more guten morgens or guten Abends. I inquired what happened. They said, “Well, your bombers bombed his home town and killed his wife and daughter,” and he was away at their funerals and so forth. Well, you couldn’t blame the man, perhaps, for not speaking to us. But we took the attitude, this is war, those things happen, and you just made the best of things and went on with your life. That’s about all I can come with, unless you have any questions, Mr. Lassman.

INT: I do have a few questions. In terms of being a code user, you said that a fellow prisoner approached you. Now, do you have any idea how he [05:00] initially became a code user?

LD: He didn’t tell me, but I think I know. Well, he did tell me a bit about it. His name was P.D. Garcia [05:11], very quiet fellow, very unassuming, you know, from somewhere down in Texas. He did tell me that he had gone to school in London, and he had been taught this code. I said, “Well, tell me about it.” He said, “Well, an American officer got us sent there, and he told us just roughly what was involved, and then if we wanted to get up and walk out right now, if we didn’t want to do this, if you did become a POW [05:40], you get up and leave.” There was a group of officers and a group of enlisted men in that class that he attended. He did not leave. He stayed. And lo and behold, he got shot down ahead of me, so he was writing letters home. I tried to call him six months

or a year ago, and [06:00] he'd passed on, so I didn't get to talk to him. The reason I wanted to call him is because I had read in my ex-POW [06:08] bulletin the fact that the government had declassified this type of work. I was happy about that, and I thought maybe I'd talk to Garcia [06:18] and find out how he felt, but he was no longer living.

INT: Now, in terms of the messages that you would send back, I mean, how was it determined what crucial information you would slip into your letters? Did someone tell you what to slip in, or how did you determine what was crucial?

LD: You were strictly on your own. Nobody knew what you were doing. Nobody tried to advise you. Garcia [06:50] and I, between the two of us, we were the only men that knew who he was and he knew who I was. You didn't tell anybody else, nobody [07:00], because the first time you dropped your first letter in the mailbox, you'd wonder, and you knew what would happen if they caught you. It's just like with the radio, when they caught up with me, said, "We're going to take you to Vienna and you're going to have a court-martial." Well, I knew the war was far enough along that I wasn't sure they'd even get me to Vienna. And I knew that we had a man hid in camp, and they hadn't been able to find him. He was in a tunnel. We had about five or seven tunnels that had been started and not completed, and he was hiding in one of those. They held us out on the ball field in the back behind the barracks for two days, practically, and they ransacked the barracks and under the barracks and everything else, and they took things that were personal belongings that maybe your parents had sent you. But they kept you out there and you slept on the [08:00] ground and they had a machine gun set up in front of you and a couple of dogs. We called them the Hounds of Baskerville [08:08]. They'd grab you

too. When the guards went by with the dogs, they were barking at us all the time, ready to attack you. So we behaved. Had to. Nobody escaped from our camp in the 18 months I was there. We had two men that had tried on a dark, November, foggy night, crawled across the ground, then cut through the warning wire or crawled under the warning wire, which was two foot off the ground, and it was 10 or 12 feet inside the double-barbed-wire fence, and they got as far as the double-barbed-wire fence, and they happened to make a little noise, and the guy in the guard tower heard something, put the spotlight on them, fired the machine gun and killed them both, the only two [09:00] men ever killed in the camp that I know of. We had one die of natural causes. One thing that would irritate the Germans pretty much, we enjoyed doing. The Russians were in the compound next to us, and they were taken out in the summertime, maybe winter, to do work, especially in the summer in the fields. When they would die from lack of food or medical treatment, the Russians would not report it to the Germans. Then pretty soon, I guess the Germans would find out that they had a dead man or two in this barracks or that barracks of Russians. They were right next to us in the next compound. The Russians didn't report it because if they did, the Germans would cut their food ration that much, one less, and they wouldn't get as much to eat. Then when they'd load that man up to bury him, they had to go past [10:00] the corner of our camp and down along one side of it to the cemetery. I guess they buried the Russians in the cemetery. And we'd all run outside there and salute when he went by, because they had this guy in a gunnysack laying on a stretcher, and it just irritated the Germans to think Americans would salute a Russian. They didn't consider them worth anything. I'm sure the Russians thought the same about the

Germans. When the International Red Cross [10:35] man came to talk to us, he would just talk to our camp leader. We had a camp leader that we all had nominated and liked and put in charge. He could talk German; his parents were German. One morning, he said, "Well, guys, we've got to start saluting the German officers." "Oh, no [11:00], I'm not going to salute any German officer." "Well, you'll get treated better if you do, and maybe you might get some more food or they'll be a little more thoughtful toward you if you treat them with a little more respect." Well, we figured out a particular way we'd handle that. If a German officer came along, if he gave us a congressional military salute, we gave him the same back. If he said, "Heil, Hitler [11:28]," we said, "Heil, Eleanor." I didn't get by with it one time. The German officer stopped me and proceeded to lecture me; it was shameful to make fun of my president's wife. Well, I'm not about to salute Hitler [11:47]. I think he said, "I understand," and he just kind of grinned and walked away. But those are just things that pop up [12:00].

INT: Now, out of curiosity, with these letters, you wrote them. Are you aware of receiving any coded letters?

LD: I received one coded letter, supposedly from a girl I went to high school with, and supposedly postmarked -- I don't know where they postmarked, Farmington, Illinois, or what. But it came through from Erma Watkins [12:22]. I'll never forget that name. She talked just like she went to high school with me. I used the code, decoded a message from her letter, and I don't recall just what it said, but it must have had one in about General Eisenhower. It was late in the war when I got it. We knew how the war was going from the various radios and so we knew it was going to last about so long and that

was it. When the Battle of the Bulge [12:59] took place, [13:00] we heard about that.

Boy, were we downhearted for a while until Patton got them cut off or something. Can you think of anything, Judy?

JD: Just the fact that there was no Erma Watkins [13:12] that went to school with you.

LD: No. I come from a class of 78 graduates, and that was all. But along about 1980, '75, I began to hear about American ex-POWs [13:34], so I signed up, and very happy I did. I went back to England in 1982. From England, I went up to Norway, and I found the Norwegian family that helped us out. In fact, I wrote to the newspaper in advance and told them I was coming. So when I arrived over there, I called the newspaper. Boy, they sent a car right over [14:00] and took me right out to where all the trouble was. I talked to the people who pulled me out of the water. When I bailed out, I don't know, two or 3,000 feet up, I thought, "Oh, that's a nice-looking farmhouse. I believe I'll ask them." Well, pretty soon I realized I was going across the ground about 30 mile an hour, it seemed like. I wouldn't stop at that farmhouse, so I had to look down the line and find another one. Well, by the time I found one, I was right over a medium-sized lake, and I landed in the lake, opened my Mae West right away and popped up to the surface, and here was the parachute, bellied out on the water. The wind was strong enough it took me right across the lake and up to the bank. I get up to the bank and I'm gathering this thing in, and here come a couple of Norwegians, an older man and a younger one. [15:00] I said, "Norway? Norway? Norske?" "Nein, nein." No, I said Sweden. We were on our way to Sweden. I said, "Swenske?" "Nein, nein." "Norway?" "Ja, ja." I knew we hadn't made it to Sweden. [laughs] So they took me into their house and they said,

“Okay, we’re going to dry your clothes off.” “Oh? Okay. What do you do?” “Well, you go in this room here.” I took all my clothes off with the guy there and I handed them to him. He sent me up a ladder into the loft. He said, “There’s a cot up there and plenty of blankets. We’ll come back, pointed to his watch, back at 8:00. Goodnight.” So I went straight up there and took a nap. They got me out of there at 8:00 that night and my clothes were all dry. I got back in those to keep warm. They said, “Now we’re going for a walk.” So he explained he had three of the other boys somewhere; a neighbor had them [16:00]. So they walked me over to this neighbor through the snow, and there was plenty of snow on the ground, a cold night. They got over there, barn, “In that hay pile, crawl in there.” Before I crawled in, I named one of the guys, “Sommers?” And he said, “Yeah.” He was burrowed down in the hay, and there was Dean Sommers. He was a boy from the country down in Colorado, and I figured if anybody’d make it, he would. So we were three enlisted men and one officer running around Norway. We overruled that officer. He hadn’t been off the sidewalks of Boston. He wanted to do this or whistle at the Germans or something. “No.” He wanted to start a fire one afternoon to keep warm. We wouldn’t let him. He had no experience with the woods and the timber at all. That’s the way it went. When they came along that morning [17:00] and had that fake German officer, they took three of us into the Norwegians’ home, where they had been feeding us. I thought they were going to kill all of us and the Norwegian. I heard that man throw that bolt on that rifle, put a bullet in the chamber. But he didn’t. We made it. The worst thing about being a POW [17:39] was the mental condition you get yourself into, you’re young, and you don’t have much patience yet, and I don’t know, maybe your mind is

affected more when you're young. You take things to heart too much. But you learn to be innovative and do things that might make your [18:00] life a little easier. You go across the street, talk to a buddy that'd been shot down three months ahead of me, talk about what you're going to do after the war and things like that, you know. Anything to keep your mind occupied, I guess, until you were able to go to sleep. We had all kinds of fleas or bedbugs. The lights would go out at 9:00, so at five minutes to 9:00, the guys would get up, take their clothes all off, including their long underwear if they were fortunate enough to have it, turn it inside-out, and put it back on and get bundled up and get in bed, and hope they go to sleep before the bugs could crawl through their underwear and get back inside and chew on you. But that's the way it went. [19:00] Any questions?

INT: I just want to say thank you. I did mention to you that I'll be seeing one of the other known code users tomorrow. With your permission, I will give your contact information to him, because he was actually asking about if there is any other code users. He was just sort of interested in talking to other code users. Would you be willing to talk about it by phone or not?

LD: Oh, I don't think so. Can you tell me what camp he was in?

INT: He was at Stalag Three where "The Great Escape" took place.

LD: Three-B?

INT: Yes, three or 14, where the great escape took place.

LD: Yeah.

INT: Yeah, he was actually one of the code users there.

LD: At that camp, okay.

INT: I will mention that when he, as a code user, [20:00] as the great escape implies, there was very much a strong inside committee organizing escape activities, just also resistant activities. Once a month, someone -- it would always be someone different -- would walk up to him with a piece of paper that's like two inches by two inches, with a coded message which he was expected to slip into his letter. So your code -- the fact that you were able to determine your information, very unique, different from what his situation was, which was very controlled.

LD: I see. Well, my pilot was up there at that camp, and he got involved with this type of work. He passed away with a heart attack, I don't know, 1970, 1960s, maybe. Real young. So I never got a chance to talk to him. You first come back from the war, you're a young guy, you get [21:00] married and you're raising a family. You haven't made enough money to go out and travel. He was a California forest ranger, and he worked for the government as a forest ranger. They even named a river after him out there, a small river. I would have liked to have talked to him because I found out through his daughter that he was involved in some of this activity. But that's about all I've got, Mr. Lassman. I don't know what else to tell you.

INT: I thank you for the honor and the opportunity. What I'll do is I'll turn off the equipment and then what we'll do is I'll take some pictures of your letters, and if you have any formal questions or if I have any formal questions, we can take it from there.

LD: Well, you can take any pictures you want here.

INT: Thank you very kindly.

[end of transcript]

Index

- 40-and-eight cars, [Tape 1A] 23:07
92nd Bomb Group, [Tape 1A] 01:59
- Battle of the Bulge, [Tape 1B] 12:29, 12:44
[Tape 2] 12:29
British Broadcasting Company (BBC), [Tape 1B] 11:15
- English Channel, [Tape 1A] 06:06, 06:10, 11:58
- Fort Hunt, [Tape 1A] 08:13, 10:17
[Tape 1B] 02:20, 29:00, 29:05
French Underground, [Tape 1A], 09:35
[Tape 1B] 11:06, 11:33
- Garcia, P.D., [Tape 2] 05:11, 06:18, 06:50
- Hamburg, Germany, [Tape 1A] 07:54, 19:48, 19:51, 20:53
Hitler, [Tape 1B] 16:46, 20:34
[Tape 2] 11:28, 11:47
Hounds of Baskerville, [Tape 2] 08:08
- Lazarus (hospital), [Tape 1A] 26:50
Le Bourget Field, [Tape 1A] 07:29
- MacDill Field, [Tape 1A] 02:14
“Milk run,” [Tape 1A] 10:54, 11:01
Morse code, [Tape 1A] 01:32
- Norwegian Underground, [Tape 1A] 13:00
- Oslo, [Tape 1A] 16:29, 16:32
- Prisoner of war (POW), [Tape 1A] 24:41, 24:51, 26:53
[Tape 1B] 00:12, 02:05, 02:10, 02:24, 02:31, 03:50, 05:15, 11:04, 11:37, 19:07, 21:59,
23:41, 27:55
[Tape 2] 02:01, 02:13, 02:32, 03:06, 03:33, 05:40, 06:08, 13:34, 17:39
- Red Cross, [Tape 1B] 05:42, 17:09, 27:22, 27:26
[Tape 2] 10:35
Roosevelt, Franklin D, [Tape 1B] 20:04
- Salvation Army, [Tape 1B] 04:40, 17:10

Sarasota-Bradenton Air Force Base, [Tape 1A] 02:18
Scott Field, [Tape 1A] 01:26

Watkins, Erma, [Tape 2] 12:22, 13:12