

MILLER: just threw me clear.

JH: And the 'chute was organized to go?

MILLER: No. The 'chute wasn't. No, the 'chute wasn't. We were at 25,000 feet. This may also have saved my life, the fact that I was passed out and didn't panic and pull the 'chute because I would have frozen at that altitude in a very short period of time. It was terribly cold. It was something like, you know, 80 /degrees/ below /zero/ up there.

JH: Good grief!

MILLER: And so I fell to a point where I began to pick up oxygen. Now, you begin to regain consciousness at about 10,000 /feet/. So, by the time I was fully conscious I estimated that I had fallen 20,000 feet, and I was now at 5,000 feet.

JH: But you did regain consciousness.

MILLER: But I did regain consciousness. And then I pulled the strap on my 'chute and I couldn't get it loose. And I remember reaching around behind and grabbing ahold of the pack itself and tearing it. And you know you just have strength beyond your means at a point like that, you know. And it tore the pack open, and then I could get the pin loose on the harness on the front and on the cord, the handle that you had that you were to pull. And then the 'chute opened.

And then I . . . and then I was probably at about 4,000 feet and I was descending rather rapidly. Well, I noticed that I had lost my boots at this point and gloves and things, and it was sort of bitterly cold. I was . . . ended up landing in a snowbank. And I wasn't . . . I had just unstrapped myself from the harness and was trying to gather my maps and my currency and . . . when the German air force . . . ground forces were on me and took me prisoner.

JH: All right.

MILLER: So, I didn't have a chance to hide or a chance to do anything.

JH: You were, in other words, taken in instantly.

JH: Where were you?

MILLER: Well, I was north of Vienna. It was a little town. I never really did learn the name of this little town. We were one of the first waves in. As I best remember, they really took me to an air raid shelter; and there were 13 or 14 people in there, civilians and soldiers. And everybody was sort of ho-hum about the whole thing. They'd been at war a long time, after all. And they said, "Oh, it's a small vacation for you," you know.

JH: Oh!

MILLER: The war . . .

JH: Well, now you weren't hurt, I take it?

MILLER: The war wasn't Pardon?

JH: You were not hurt?

MILLER: I was hurt in the left leg, but I didn't notice it too much. It was sore. I had banged it hard on going out, as I later discovered, but right then it was not bothering me. They had picked up a gunner from another aircraft that had a piece of flak in his bottom, and I can remember taking off my jacket and putting it over him because he was suffering from shock and was cold and was in tremor.

Then they . . .

JH: Well now, I'd like to stop there.

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: Were there other people from your plane there? Did you have any . . .

MILLER: No.

JH: . . . notion what happened to everybody else at that point?

MILLER: No. No. I had no notion at that point what had happened to anybody at all. But I was not with them. I was all alone for all practical purposes.

MILLER: They then took us into town. We walked into town and I sort of helped to carry this young fellow. And we went before a German officer who asked us all of the traditional things, you know. What squadron we were out of, where we came from. And you were supposed to give the answers of name, rank, and serial number; and that's all you were supposed to give and this is what we gave. And he got very upset. And they took our money and our watches and all the escape kit kind of things that we were supposed to carry, so that we couldn't get very far. We wouldn't know what time it was and we wouldn't know what date it was. And then we were transported . . .

JH: May I stop you a moment? Did they speak English or did you have to interpret from the German?

MILLER: No, they spoke English. And even the people . . . even the Austrians in the air raid shelter, one of the older men spoke English. Walking around in the streets was a fairly . . . that probably was one of the times when I was really frightened because of the animosity of people who had had their town destroyed. You did see on occasion, what was thought to be at least, a fellow American -- it could have been an Englishman or someone else -- that had been lynched under the emotion of the time.

I had . . . when I got to the steps of the city hall, I did have a group that came in on us and hit us with what they could find at hand, you know -- knocked us down. But the soldiers really stepped in and prevented anything more from happening. I think the difference between having been a prisoner of the Japanese and a prisoner of the German, the Germans did get their ethic from the centuries of wars (commences to laugh) that Europeans have had with one another where they do come to some agreement, you know, as to how people should be treated.

JH: Um hm.

MILLER: And the Geneva conventions and things did hold fairly much, wherever they could. And in that sense, it was more of a Christian concept than it is an Eastern concept of value of life.

MILLER: We were taken then by truck to a place where they trained young Luftwaffe pilots. It was sort of the kind of school that I had been in in Texas.

JH: How many in your group at this point?

MILLER: Oh, just two of us!

JH: Oh, just the two of you!

MILLER: Yeah. Just the two of us. And we were . . . we were put in a cell there. And we were put in a cell with other . . . with some of the German . . . the cadets that hadn't behaved that were being . . . they were in their individual cells. Yeah. And they were being punished.

And the food was . . . we ate the same food they did. The food wasn't too bad. It was very short of meat, you know, heavy on cabbage and heavy on potato and . . . but I can't say that we were underfed. And nothing much happened to us there. We sort of waffled around and I can't really remember how long we were there, but it was about two or three weeks.

Then we were moved by train through this beautiful Austrian

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 3-SIDE 2

MILLER: Well, we were moved by train through this marvelous Austrian countryside. And we were taken then to a prisoner-of-war camp. Now, can you believe it? I don't really think I can remember quite where this was.

JH: Well, did you have any way of knowing where it was?

MILLER: Yes. Oh, yeah, it was outside . . . hm.

JH: Was it still in Austria?

MILLER: No, it was above Munich.

JH: Oh!

MILLER: It was 'way over on the western front, if I have my directions correct. Yes, it was over on the western front. And it was a sizable town. We got off the train at the station. We had two guards. I was amazed at the manpower, you know, that they had to spend on two prisoners. And I . . .

JH: But they did keep you two together?

MILLER: They kept us together. And he had received . . . this boy had received some doctoring. My leg was giving me an increasing problem, and the walking became more and more difficult by this time. They didn't know what was wrong with it. And I didn't know what was wrong with it, but it was very swollen and very hard. And it turns out that . . . that I'm sure that what I had was phlebitis, really.

And then I began to get a set of nodules on my leg which I've carried ever since, which came from . . . I think what happened was that the leg was really just crushed as it went out the side of the plane. It was just . . . and so much was happening that you didn't pay very much attention to it. But it was just black and blue from top to bottom. And I think that that set up a condition where the blood didn't flow very well, and phlebitis set in and all of these other problems that I've had ever since. But we were taken to a center where we were then separated. And this was a huge center for prisoners of war. And we were . . . I was . . . everybody was put into solitary confinement at this point.

JH: Well now, were you interrogated at any time to . . .

MILLER: At . . . here. At this point.

JH: At this point?

MILLER: Yeah, there had been very little interrogation up to this point. And at this point I think that the German intelligence was trying to do nothing more than to match people to squadrons to make sure that things were staying the same or weren't staying the

MILLER: same. But I had insisted on staying with this name, rank and serial number. And so I spent six weeks in solitary confinement.

JH: What was your rank at this point?

MILLER: I was a lieutenant.

JH: All right.

MILLER: Yeah. And being . . . what I didn't know is that I was the only one that survived my aircraft. Everybody else had been killed.

JH: When did you find this out?

MILLER: Well, I didn't find it out until later . . . in this interrogation process. There was a little electric heat in these cells. And the electric heat only came on between about three and five in the morning. Otherwise than that, why you had to exercise yourself. It was a small cell. It was probably about five feet by eight feet.

JH: And what did it have in it?

MILLER: It had nothing but a mat on the floor and a blanket.

JH: And that's all?

MILLER: That's all. And your food was passed to you under the door in a slot. There were no windows. There was a window 'way up high that let in a little light, and it didn't have any glass in it. That was your ventilation.

JH: So it was really cold?

MILLER: So it was quite cold. And it was decidedly uncomfortable in that way.

JH: Well, now what did they do about . . .

MILLER: And if you wanted anything, why you had to pull on a big switch, which evidently made a signal go up on the outside, and a guard came and asked you what you wanted through a little slot in the door.

JH: What'd they do about sanitary facilities?

MILLER: Well, you had to pull on this thing.

JH: Then they would . . .

MILLER: And ask and then they would take you to a central latrine, one at a time.

JH: But then they did take you for this, then.

MILLER: Yeah.

JH: So, you got that much walking.

MILLER: That's right. And then you got . . . you got . . . the only exercise you got is when you went back and forth to interrogation. And this was to make you want to tell everything that they wanted to know, which in essence wasn't really much at this point. You know.

So, after about six weeks, why this captain . . . this Hauptmann said, "We think we know where you're from, lieutenant." He said, "I know you're not supposed to tell." He said, "If you'll just nod your head if I read off these things." He said, "I'm going on vacation." (laughs heartily) And he said, "you'll have to wait eight weeks more in solitary confinement." So, they read off the name of my crew and he said this was out of the 449th bomb squadron. He said it's the only plane in that area that day that was short a person. And I said, "Well, you know who I am then." And I was then taken out and within a couple of days, transported to a regular prison camp, which is . . . was outside Munich at that point.

There was a lot of sort of tapping on the walls back and forth.

JH: Was there?

MILLER: But you were never sure who was on the other side, so you had to be very guarded in the kinds of messages that you sent, you know.

JH: Well, now was this in Morse code?

MILLER: This would be in Morse code. Sometimes if there was a little crack, you could talk well enough, you know, to . . . that if you put your ear right up to the crack, you could hear the other person.

JH: Well now, what did you learn through this grapevine?

MILLER: Not an awful lot. (laughs) Truthfully. Sort of who the other guy was and the fact that he was as scared as you were. And the fellow next to me, they had threatened to execute him because he wouldn't tell. They were going to execute him as a spy and he was looking for reinforcement. He didn't know what to do. He was a captain, as a matter of fact, I think. And he was . . .

JH: Do you have any idea what happened to him?

MILLER: Have no idea what happened to him. No.

Except that I just don't think that things like that happened. I think that there was a lot of psychological pressure that way -- much like the vacation it was, you know, for me. And on young kids, why that's . . . I would probably be better able to stand that now. Although I think that youth itself is almost an anesthetizing agent. You just can't imagine what might happen to you. You're so confident.

JH: The risk of fatality is not . . .

MILLER: No. It's not . . .

JH: . . . with you.

MILLER: No, it's not with you and I think that . . . I think that when you're young also that you always have such hope about things that you don't realize that things can . . . you know, that they're out of control. You have no control over what's happening to you and maybe the other guy doesn't either, you know.

JH: So, it's part of the need of having a young military.

MILLER: Well, that's true. But on the other hand, I think . . . I think that young people suffer most in that kind of solitary confinement thing because they don't have that much to fall back on. I was really going through my memory for everything I'd ever learned, you know, in the way of . . . hymns, prayers, poems, (laughs) schoolbook kind of things and . . .

JH:: Well, how did you consume your time?

MILLER: Exercise was a great part of it.

JH: What kind of exercise? Calisthenics is about all you could do.

MILLER: Calisthenics is what you did. You did pushups and situps, and you got as far back in the room as you could get and try to look out this little window and see if you could see anything up there. An occasional bird might go "fllllllt" -- flit by (laughs). I thought if I could ever see a tree again, you know, life would be all right.

You did a lot of searching back into things that you had learned and that's . . . extra schooling really helped, you know -- even having been a freshman at college which wasn't, certainly, a very . . . a large amount of learning. But it . . . there was more there than I thought that had been retained by the memory.

JH: You . . . now you were . . .

MILLER: But it was a long time. It really got to be fretful hours.

JH: But you're . . . as an artist yourself, did you have any inclination to make drawings or do anything like this? Did you have anything to draw with?

MILLER: Well, no, there was nothing to draw with. No.

JH: There weren't any loose stones lying around that you could . . .

MILLER: No. No. There was nothing at all that you