

Frank Kravetz

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Interviewer: Todd DePastino

Transcription: Ellie DePastino

Frank Kravetz: My name is Frank Kravetz. I was born October 25, 1923. I was the third child of three boys. I grew up in the area where the Westinghouse electric plant in East Pittsburgh in the Oak Hill section behind the plant. My dad and mother had a house there, so I was born in that house in North Versailles, PA. When I got to be about three and a half years old, *(it might have been younger than that, I don't know,)* my mother passed away during childbirth. I didn't know that till many years later and in the meantime, my dad remarried. It wasn't long after, maybe a year, year and a half. So I ended up with a new mother. When I was younger I didn't even know my mother. We moved to a brand new house in east Pittsburgh and in that time, things were starting to get better and my dad was working more. They bought a brand new house in a (undistinguishable) part of East Pittsburgh. That was my first place of residence that I remember. There were street cars coming up and down the front street, and the bakery truck was a horse drawn wagon, bringing the bread. The milkman delivered, and I would run to the window and see all those things and say "The milkman's here! The milkman's here!" and things like that. But it was very vivid in my mind those kind of things that happened in that time. Of course I was playing with various toys and books and trucks and little toys like that.

Interviewer: Did you ever play with airplanes?

Frank: Later on, yes, the airplanes came later on. I got to be ten to twelve years old. In fact, I remember going up to see Amelia Earhart's plane up at the airport before she took off for her famous trip. So I kind of still am looking out for that story now, seeing how it was going to play out. There was another woman that took her place and was flying a type of plane she went down in to various places. I went up to the airport and saw that, too. It was very interesting to see.

I: Were you captivated by it, as a child?

F: Yeah, and at that time they were coming out with DC-3's (?) and planes were coming into the Allegheny County Airport. I would take the streetcar up and watch the planes taking off. On Sunday, my aunts would come to visit, and they'd give us a streetcar pass so we could go anywhere we wanted, like going up to the airport to watch the planes. But, to answer your question, I had a fetish for building small planes out of paper-maiche and gumbands, and flying them off my back porch. And when they'd wreck, I'd repair them, and start all over again. Aviation at that time was just something fascinating to a lot of people. And when the Zeppelins came over across the Westinghouse valley, I remember seeing the graph zeppelin (?) before it went to Lakehurst when it crashed. I read about it in the paper. When I got to be nineteen, I started wandering out, getting into higher grades, and things started turning out different. But I was always interested in airplanes.

I: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

F: Fortunately, my dad was a lead man where he was working—a large rotating apparatus. He would get two or three days sometimes with some kind of pay coming in. And my oldest brother was an entrepreneur, so he found a paper route that he latched onto. He had a monopoly on the paper in East Pittsburgh, so we all followed in his footsteps, and it was handed down to us. Of course we sold the suntelly(?) for three cents, and I think we got a penny and a half for it. I inherited that later on and I became a paper boy, too. What's interesting though, at that time, when there was a tragedy going on, for instance, shootings and when Mayor Turmac (?) was killed in Chicago, there were extras. We'd get papers thrown on our porch to sell the extras. We'd go out on the street, selling our extras: "Get your extra!" Everybody was hungry for the new news. There wasn't TV, and they wanted to read about it. The price of the paper was three cents, but everybody wanted that thing, so they flipped you a nickel. Your penny and a half plus three cents, and now your making real money! So you'd come back home and throw it all on the kitchen table, and mother would count it.

I: Can you tell that story when your brothers put you in an airplane on the porch roof?

F: I was the youngest of the three boys and kind of small. My parents went to visit brother-in-laws or sister-in-laws somewhere, and us three boys were left at home by ourselves. So my two older brothers had the idea of building a little airplane out of the scrap wood that was in the backyard. They made a glider, supposedly, and put me on and from the back porch they launched me into the tomato patch in the backyard. Needless to say, I hit with a crash. That was the first time I crashed in a plane! And, to boot, my brothers did some things they shouldn't have done, getting cigarettes and smoking them. Low and behold, they didn't figure at the time that Mum and Pap would come home. So they come home and they're smoking the cigarettes and they put the cigarette butts in the laundry. The laundry was smoking! There was Hell to be paid that day. I told them, "I wasn't smoking! I wasn't smoking!" That was a memory from childhood that we lived through.

I: Bad day at the Kravetz household! Do you remember where you were when you heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

F: I was a senior in 1940 and I had to mass enough credits so I could get my diploma in June, so I didn't have to go to school anymore. On December the seventh, my second oldest brother, Mickey, was already in the service, stationed in New Jersey in an anti-aircraft battery. He was home for the weekend, and when we were around the table for Sunday dinner, the news came on the radio that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. The President came on with his message. I really didn't know what Pearl Harbor was. I was too wrapped up in my high school career and activities. Everyone was crying, and the word came that anybody that was in the military should report back to their base immediately. We hurried him off, and he got on the train and went back to New Jersey where he was stationed. And from then on things started happening all around; there was news every day. That was in December, and then in February, my oldest brother, John,

went to see the movie *Balls of Mount Zimmer* (??) with his girlfriend. The next day, he went down and joined the Marines. So we had two right away in the service. I would graduate in June of 1941 and I wanted to volunteer then, too, in the Air Force, and my dad and mother said “no, you’re not going.” My oldest brother had heart problems so he wasn’t eligible for the service, so I was next. My dad went down and got a deferment for me. I had already been on the Westinghouse trace training program (??) to become a tolled eye maker (??) . So I accepted their wishes. When one deferment ended, they got me another deferment, and I said “That’s enough. I’ll go through the second one. I’m not going through with the third.” So by that time, I wouldn’t need a signature—I was eighteen then, so I could sign myself in. So I prepared to go sign up for the Air Force, and got into the Air Force.

I: Why did you pick the Air Force?

F: With my interest in planes and everything, there was no other thing for me to do but try to get in the Air Force and become a pilot. That was it. Some of my friends were going in and they liked it. I did pass the exam, and I got into the Air Force. They wouldn’t take me right away because I was five pounds overweight. I was 176 lbs. I had to lose those six pounds. So, with football season, I was on the football team. I would quit eating, and my mother would say, “How come your not eating?” I’d tell her nothing about it. I finally got rid of the weight and I went down, stepped on the scale, and I hit 169. I was weighing myself. I signed up for the Air Force and they took me then.

I: Where did you do pilot training?

F: Well, that’s the other part of the story. Because of the influx of so many people being in the Air Force, I had my papers ready to go to Syracuse University for my second year of college eligibility. I waited and waited and the sad story came that I was to be sent to gunnery school and mechanic school instead of flight school. And I accepted that. As long as I was going to be flying, it was okay with me. And so I went to gunnery school in Kingman, Arizona, and I went to mechanic school in Mississippi. Then I was assigned to a crew and we met in McGill Field (?) in Florida. We even had to wait there because there weren’t enough planes to be flying and practicing. We stayed at a stadium, now a football stadium, and we slept under the bleachers. They had bunk beds in there and we played ball. Finally at McGill Field I met my crew, the other nine men I was going to be flying with. It was quite a reunion. The schedule was you flew eight hours, whoever was on duty, at daylight and the second flew at midnight. Planes were always in the air and always going down in Tampa Bay, too. We took all our training and they prepared us for going overseas. When we got our new B-17, we went to Hunter Field in Savannah, Georgia to pick up a new plane. In the new plane, we left and went up to New York and flew around the Statue of Liberty to say goodbye. Then we stayed over in Connecticut or New Hampshire and then we went on the Goosebay Labradorian (??) It took us about nine days to get over to Europe because of the weather—there was snow and rain and everything else. We finally got over to England. We landed in Valley, Wales and from there we took it to the Wash, the part of England that has the indentation, on the Channel. We stayed there till we were assigned to our base. I was assigned to the 457 Bomb Group

with the 8th Air Force. Our crew went down to Glaton, where the Air Base was for the 457 Bomb Group. We had more training and everything else for combat. Slowly the pilots and officers would fly and some other groups would get indoctrinated into combat flying before we went up. After they felt we were ready for combat, we made our first mission. The first three or four missions were very uneventful. We were saying, "Boy, this is easy!" We'd come back and maybe there would be a couple of holes in it. You'd say, "we had some fighters coming but nobody was near us." It was, at that time, that our bomb group took a terrible beating. That was in October, 1944. We lost so many planes and documents and books. We didn't have enough planes to even fly. Until we were going to get new planes and replacements, they told us to go to London for a five day furlough. So as it would be, I went to London for my 21st birthday on a six day furlough, it actually ended up being. I enjoyed the sights of London, and got to see Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral. It was quite an interesting time. And when I went to the USO in Rainbow Gardens, somebody told me, "if it's your birthday today, line up and you'll get some special things." So I went up and signed up. They said "well, we got a room for you in the best hotel in London and you can take a friend with you. Your going to have breakfast in bed and a meal in the dining room." So I was treated royally that day for my birthday! They said for the entertainment there were several things. They had shows to go to, and I opted to go to the London Opera House and see the Mary Widow live show. I was by myself because no one else wanted to go. I was in the glee club in school and I sang a lot, so I said "Well, I'm going to the Opera." I hadn't been to an opera before, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. I later found out a lot about the Opera and everything else. Those were pleasant memories I had of my stay on my furlough in London. As innocent as I was I admitted I didn't go to all the brothels that everyone was going to. I guess they scared me enough, if you were going to get some kind of disease. So I just shied away from it. That wasn't for a good Catholic boy like me! If you're going to be playing around, something's going to hurt me! I stayed away from that kind of thing. We got back to the airbase after that eventful five days that we were there. I did happen to see Bing Crosby and Bob Hope come into the Rainbow Room where fellows were. There was some kind of show on that night. We just said hi and I just saw him walk past. Glen Miller, I saw him, too. They all congregated in that area. When I got back to the base, it appeared that they had brought their base up to full strength for planes. So now we were practicing for a few days to be taken on trips again. We had a few flights to simulate going on a bomb run. We went on our fifth bomb run and that was very uneventful. But the next mission made my life change around completely. That was the flight of November 2. We went to the briefing room and the board showed what the path of the flight was going to be. It was going to be Merseburg, Germany at synthetic oil refineries that were bombed many times before, but they had to take this one to get the supply of German fuel for the war effort. As bad luck would have it, it would be our last mission. On this mission, after we'd dropped our bombs, we didn't actually hit the target because of wind. This path of our bomb run was deterred to another town, so we bombed another town. We did drop our bombs and after we dropped our bombs, we weren't mainstream then. We were by ourselves, the whole bomb group. We were attacked by enemy fighters. It wasn't shortly after that that I was flying in the tail position because the tail gunner had taken sick, and I said, "I'll take the tail today." I looked out the left of the plane and looked up at the sky and saw FW-190s. I radioed back to the crew, "enemy

fighters, 6 o'clock high!" The radio airways were full with all kinds of talk because all the other planes were reporting to the pilot, too. Very shortly after that, the German planes, FW-190s, circled down from 3 o'clock level down to 6 o'clock level, straight into the tail and exchanged fire. We survived that, but the next wave of FW-190s came in, and that's when I was hit in the tail and the artillery exploded in the back of the plane. The back of the plane filled up with smoke, and we were trying to report back: "Tailgunner crew! Tailgunner crew! I'm hit! I'm hit!" I didn't get any response and I blacked out. I don't remember everything after that. But I did come to, and I found out that I was all bloody and wounded. Two of my crewmates came from my radio operator and navigator. We worked our way back through the fuselage (??) . If you've ever been in a B-17, you know there's not very much room back there. So we moved our way back in there. I was coherent then, and their procedure was to try and drag me from there, and it must have been one hell of a job to get me prone and get me under my armpits and drag me along the tail wheel and in the fuselage and then into the radio room, which they did. Up until that time, I'd had no first aid at all. I was in pain. They got me to the radio room, got me to the floor there, and they proceeded to use the first aid kits to put sulfur powder on me and put comcases(?) on my wounds and gave me a couple pills. They made me comfortable in there. My leg was blown out and it was all bloody. There was a lot of activity in the airplane. They dropped out the ball turret from the ceiling of the plane. They salvoed (?) all the guns and ammunition to lighten the plane. Hopefully we could stay airborne, maybe to get back across the Channel and back to our base. We lost three engines and we're limping along with one engine. I found out later that we were down about 6,000 feet and ordered everybody to get out. They had a problem with me. What they did was the salvoed the door and opened the chute in the plane, put the parachute on me, rolled it up in my arms, took me over to the door, with one guy on each side taking my hands and feet and threw me out the door. The chute was already open so that's how I survived the mess up in the air. I floated down and I thought I was going up to heaven because I thought I was standing still. I said "Boy, where am I going? Am I going up or down?" As a descended, I soon found out that the ground was coming up to me real fast. I didn't prepare for anything. I just hit the ground and tumbled like a jackrabbit on the hillside. I stopped at almost the base of the place. I got out of the chute because the wind was billowing it out and it was all bloody. I let it go and it wrapped around a tree not far off. About fifteen or twenty yards I had to crawl my way on my butt with my hands because there was debris from the place being picked at—it must have been a cabbage patch. There was a pile of debris over there, and I shimmied my way up on my rear end and that's what I leaned to. I gave myself a shot of morphine at that time and sprinkled some more powder on my wound. Shortly after that there was some farmers in the distance because it was a farm. At the same time there was a panel truck that came down the road which was about 50 yards from where I was laying. Two German soldiers came up with their fixed bayonets and were coming to me. I immediately took my 45 out and put it on my hands in a surrender position. I couldn't offer any resistance. I made sure I pulled the gun out before they were close because they probably would have taken a shot at me. They surveyed the situation and one of the German soldiers stuck his rifle in the ground and the other fired some shots in the air to ward off the civilians that were headed toward us.

I: What might the civilians have done to you?

F: They've got picks and clubs and everything. I'd have been a dead nuck. That's what would have happened. If you got in a tree they'd warn you that if you were going to hang up there, they were going to throw rocks at you. If you hung up on the side of a building, people in stores would say get yourself down on the ground and find yourself to the woods or someplace out of sight. If some military would catch you, maybe you'd have a better chance. If civilians got you, you were in trouble. Especially if they'd just bombed you town. Maybe you had relatives that were killed before that. They were very vigilant. One of the people that was coming with the shells and picks, the Germans ordered to come closer and gave him orders to go back to the farm house and get a cart. They came back with a two-wheeled cart and a part of a picket fence. That's what they carried me down to the road in where the panel truck was. They put me in this panel truck on this makeshift stretcher. I didn't have any medical attention. Shortly down the road we met at a crossroad, and at the crossroad they stopped the cart. Coming from my left was my right waist gunner with his hands behind his head and his face was all bloody. So whoever captured him let him communicate with me when they stopped the cart and I talked to him because they knew we were probably on the same plane. My first question Bill asked me "How are you doing?" I said, "Well, I got hit pretty bad. What happened to you? You're all bloody." He said, "They beat the hell out of me." After that little conversation, they took Bill his way and they put me on the cart and wheeled me back to the farmhouse. Once I got to the farmhouse, they put me in the barn where the cattle were, and there were some bales of hay for the cows. It was stepped so they put me on there and I could sit on there and lean back against the other bale of hay. That's where they sat me. They put two Hitler youth in charge of me, and they left. These two Hitler youth were my care-takers. They could speak English and they jibber-jabbered to me. They asked me questions: what kind of school did I go to, do I have a car, what religion I was. They were just curious questions. They wanted to know more about an American, like what kind of plane were we flying. And I told them. They asked "Where did you go to school?" And I told them "University of Pittsburgh." "What are you in?" I told them "pre-engineering." They were very well-versed and curious. They were, maybe, 10 or 12 years old. But they were very kind. I asked them for something to eat. They gave me an apple and they asked me if I wanted something to drink, and they brought a bucket that they use for the cows. And I drank out of a bucket! I spilled it all over myself. It was an interesting time. Then, as it was, I would go to sleep or lean down like I could on that straw. And you lose what time frame you're in. But being in and out of a coma and everything else, you really come back to life. It wasn't long after that that somebody came for me. They parked a panel truck down on the road and they took me down in this panel truck.

We were right near Hanover so they took me to a hospital in Hanover. That was the first attention I'd had in 24 hours. That was the next dusk when they took me to the hospital. When you say "hospital," it wasn't Magee or any of our hospitals-not very clean at all. When they took me into the hospital, they took me right up to a small room that was no bigger than a small bathroom. Maybe the size of a closet, about six feet wide and twelve feet long. In this was a table, an operating table, and they had a pull string that you pull on for the light. They put me on that table and a doctor came in and a nun came in. They

were going to do something for me. They weighed the situation. As I was laying there the nun had a strainer with cotton in it. I know they gave me chloroform for an anesthetic. The doctor told me "count backwards from 100. As I'm counting, she's putting this strainer with cotton in it on me. I didn't last very long. I went out like a light! They did operate on me. My first thoughts when I got up were "did they amputate it or didn't they?" My gesture was to take my left hand and follow my thigh down to where my leg was. It was there. When I asked the nun if she was going to amputate I motioned with my hand. She said "Nein, nein." But I had to see for myself. I still had my leg. Then, I was taken into another room where there were about 20 beds, and there wasn't an American in there at all! I was on an upper bunk. I was going to be there until they decided where to send me to. But, unfortunately, the first night I was in that upper bunk, there was an air raid on Hanover. The British were going to come over that night and bomb. Prior to them being there, the air raid sounded and the orderlies (?) that were there took everyone down to the air raid shelter but me. I was alone in that room during the air raid, and when they came to me with the stretcher, they said "Nein, nein." I was a terror flyer. So, they left me there for my own medicine. I was on the second floor, I know, from when they carried me up on the stretcher. But I went through that air raid. I saw the glass from the windows blowing out. The horrendous feeling of concussions from bombs being dropped. This was the British dropping thousand-pounders. It was a very traumatic experience. It was all over when the air raid sounded and they brought everybody back. The bed shook and everything. You can't even imagine what it was like. The result of that is what made me, for the rest of the time that I was there, very fidgety and everything else. I reached down to where I was on the mattress that I had. I had nothing else to do, and I was tugging on a piece of string that was on the mattress. I kept tugging at it, and I don't know why I was doing it, but I did. I thought, now that I have it, what am I going to do? So I decided to make a decet (?) of the Rosaries. I tied it in 10 knots, and I left enough on the lead of it to make a start. And that was my Rosary that they took away from me. But they couldn't take this one away from me. I survived that raid. After I made the Rosary, I was taken, by train, to the interrogation center in Germany. There were hundreds of people there. I was by myself. I wasn't with any other group or anything. I was still on a stretcher. They took me into Dulag Wust (??) and put me into solitary confinement right away.

(I: Can you tell the story about being on the train platform?

F: That comes later.)

Frank continues:

So they put me in solitary confinement in Dulag Wust. You break it down, and I thought "where am I going? I can't go no more." But that's what they did. It was a place that was about 4 feet wide and it had a bed in there. Of course, they took the bed out because I was on a stretcher. They put the bed to the side and put me on the floor in there. It was about 10 or 12 foot ceiling high and there was a window up at the top, I remember. I was in there, and they would push a bowl of porridge or mother's oats in for me to eat. They'd push it in with a stick or something. I had no utensils or anything. I was just thinking "well, how am I going to eat this? I can't pick it up!" So I just put my hand in and got some on my fingers and licked it and licked it as much as I could, to get something,

anyway. That's what I remember about that and that's the only food I was given there. When it came time for them to take me out, they took me out to another area, once again, on a stretcher. They put me down to the side of a German woflaster (??) sergeant. The rules were you had to be interrogated by equal rank, so they had me interviewed by a sergeant. He was at the desk, and if I was laying on his left looking up at him, I could look at him and he would talk to me from that position. He started asking me all kind of questions: what bomb group I was with and everything. After I started that business, I said "I'm not allowed to tell you anything." He said, "I know you're not allowed to tell me anything. We know everything about you." So he told me that we were the 457 bomb group and we got shot down over here and everything else. So he just made it easier for me, really. After that, I guess they made plans for what they were going to do with me next. I didn't go back into solitary. It wasn't shortly after that that they took me out. The next train that left was going to where I was going to be sent to. They put me on the train and put me across two seats in the back of the car and the stretcher was over two seats to the right of me where both cars were sitting beside me. My feet were headed toward the direction we were going. So I was going to be able to look out the window on my left. I had no idea where I was going. It was the most beautiful train ride I ever had in my life. I was going through German wooded forests, with green trees and pine trees and everything. It was very picturesque. It was November, so the snow was falling, the trees were beautiful. I was in another wonderland, away from anything that was bothering me, not knowing where I'm going. So, we stopped at a train station, and German Red Cross nurses would offer coffee up or some kind of cookie or pastry, and give it to me and the guards. It was a treat, that stop. I stopped twice on that trip, for taking on passengers to take care of us. It was a very enjoyable trip. I pulled into a small station, and I didn't know where I was. But that was going to be where I would spend the next three and a half months. And I pulled into the station at Obermassfield (?). As I was sitting there, laying on the platform, the snow was still coming down and I was taking it all in on my face. It was a real thrill. They put me on a stretcher and took me into this school, a former school for Hitler youth. It had turned into a hospital. They took me into the second floor of it and they gave me the top bunk. That's where I was going to spend my next few months, laying on my back. The rest of the story is surviving the monotony of it. There were no bombings-we were in a rural area. A very picturesque area of the country. We were fed decent. There was enough to sustain us. Some of the things we'd get I always mentioned in my book (?) they all would come around and have oshrearbit (?) And I thought they were saying rabbit! I always said, "Boy, that rabbit meat is real good." But here was a British meal, and rearbit(?) was cheese and some other things. It was very good, and filling! And I said, "Boy, I wish they had some oshrearbit for everybody!" But they'd give you four parsels, maybe a couple sardines, a boiled potato, maybe some kind of vegetable, if they had it. It was mostly tea, that I asked for. We had tin plates, and that was a real trip. You'd put your food on there, and it's hot, and you can't hold it! And there were tin cups. So you get your tea in a tin cup and it'll burn your lips! And when you're laying down, it's a tough job to eat! I had a couple orderees, and they'd get up on a stool and help to feed me once in a while. They were captured British, our orderees. That was a long period of time. There was no entertainment of any kind. The three books that they had to read were *How Green Was My Valley* and a couple of other books that were very popular at that time. You only could read a chapter at a time or two because you could

only have the book for an hour, and somebody else would get it. By the time it rotated, and you could get to the next chapter, it took a month to read the book. But that was the way. I should mention the recordings. That didn't come around until Christmas time. But before Christmas, the Battle of the Bulge intervened in December. There was so much hustle and bustle with that that so many people were coming in from the battle that were wounded. They had to find room for them. They were in indials(?) and they brought more beds in on all the floors and sent some of the better patients out to prison camps. It was a very trying time. Of course, rations got smaller because there were more people. And there was more attention the the more physically injured. The blind, the amputees, and everyone else like that. A very trying time. And witnessing suicides. If you wake up in the middle of the night and there's a lot of commotion and you're wondering what's going on, they put the lights on and you're looking over there, and you see a double amputee had hanged himself over his bed. They put the curtains around him and take him off. There were another few that were blind and were screaming and wailing saying "I'm not going home blind!" And they wanted to destroy themselves. That screaming was very disturbing. And then you'd realized how good and well-off you were. So you get strength because you know there's always someone worse-off that you are. I think that helped to sustain me, too. Thank you, Dear Lord, for taking care of me. I weathered my storm through that whole thing. Then, the doctor that I had, Major Sharman, he was an Australian doctor, was in charge of me. It came time for me to have skin grafts. They scraped the skin off my butt and puddled it in some kind of a saucer, and spread it over my wound. Then, they made a trough with a towel and they put that in and made a tent with that, so the sheet wouldn't be rubbing in my wound. They could lift it up and see how I was going. The interesting thing about that is that after that mixture was on my wound, it started to look like when your mother made chicken soup! She'd leave it on the stove to get cold, and it'd get a film on it. They did it four times for me. I don't know the time frame or how long they did it, but four times they did it. Slowly it started to knit and my leg wound started to shrink and get smaller. It was healing. I tried telling someone about these things. First, they used the maggots on you to kill the infection. I couldn't ever tell that story because people thought I was pulling there leg. They said "Maggots! Not in the United States Army!" But this wasn't the United States! This was Germany! And they didn't have any more supplies come in, American supplies. They had to resort to maggots.

I: Can you talk about that a little bit? What they did, and what you remember of that?

F: Well, when they puddled it in the container, a saucer was all it was, they had a scraper and the scraped my rear end, about 2 or 3 inches square. They put methialade on it and scraped enough of the epidermis skin and the puddle would make it a little thicker. Then, they poured it on my wound.

I: Can you talk about the maggots, though-they used maggots on you?

F: Those came before the striking my rear end. The maggots killed the infection. My leg was turning black. They put the maggots on there to clean the infection. Every day, the doctor would come over, look at it, and say "Them buggers, they're working!" Then I

could see, when he lifted the thing up, it was as white as snow, the pus. Then they knew it was time for them to go into the skin grafting. They cleaned it all down, there was red meat there. That's when they started the skin grafting. The maggots were definitely used: there's no doubt about it. I was able to verify that by a fellow before me. He wrote in his book about the maggots. He said there was only one other man in that place at the same time, and I said "That had to be me!" It wasn't till many years later that a doctor wrote in the Post-Gazette of this procedure, about using maggots for infections. I cut that sucker out and made copies of it and took it everywhere I went. I said "Anybody who don't believe me now, here's what they did for me." I included that in my book. I had quit telling the story! I said, "What's the sense in me trying to argue?" He said "I clammed up with it, I didn't have no proof! Everybody else in the army had sulfa powder!" But I said "They didn't have it, so we couldn't use it!" That was a story about the sulfa powder and the maggots.

I: After they did the skin graft, your leg healed?

F: Yeah. When my son and them sat on my lap, when I came home, I wouldn't let them sit on this lap. I said "You have to sit on this lap, over here." It was still tender for many long years. I didn't want them to sit on it. When I did come home, at the apex of my wound, there was still festering coming out after a year. The drainage was still coming out so I couldn't get discharged till they could get rid of the infection. The reason that it was still infected when I got to Donaldson's R (?) Hospital in Florida, they didn't find anything on the x-ray except the shrapnel. so, it couldn't be that. And then he put some kind of a coloring in it that would show if there was something else. They found out that parts of my pants were in there. Clothing was in there. Infantry guys would get treebursts and get hit by something and a piece of wood would get in there because it doesn't show on the x-ray. When they put the solution in, they then took the x-rays and found out that pieces of cloth were in there from my uniform. They got tweezers and they went in there and pulled as much of it out. They put in some kind of solution that was going to disintegrate them, and they flushed it out with that. It was a year after I'd come home that I went back to Donaldson's R (hospital) and sent me up to New York for operations, and they finally got it to close. My wound is closed now. I still have the shrapnel in me-over 100 pieces. But, everything else is okay. When I left Donaldson's R, it was a hotel. A famous hotel in Florida. It had turned into a hospital for wounded veterans coming back. I had the pleasure of meeting Joe DiMaggio down there on the beach. He was there getting the medical discharge to join the Yankees. We caught ball and we shot pool. He was a nice guy.

I: Do you remember Christmas, 1944?

F: Oh, yes. Christmas 1944 they had a midnight mass and I was taken down to the chapel, or the auditorium. They had the mass down there. They took as many of the things they could and they put us down in the front. I hadn't received communion all the time, but I did receive it at Christmastime. So, we had mass then and they brought us back up to our rooms. On Christmas day, they had canned turkey that was in the food parcel, so we had turkey and mashed potatoes, a nice Christmas meal. They even brought beer in. So they

gave us cups of beer, and we were celebrating with that. The interesting thing about the celebration for Christmas is they had a gift for everybody. I got a picture of Ebbets Field. A nice photograph. Somebody else got something else, and everybody got something. I said, "What am I going to do with a picture of Ebbets Field? I've never been there, I don't know where it is!" So, a guy started to exchange presents, so I said "Anybody want a picture of Ebbets Field?" Way down at the other end somebody said "Yeah, I'll take it!" I said "What do you have in exchange?" "I got a pipe!" I said, "I'll take the pipe!" So he came over and took the picture and I took the pipe. I had the pipe with me in prison camp! I had never smoked a pipe before, but whenever I had tobacco I tried to smoke it, so I could say "Oh, I got the pipe for Christmas." It was a pleasant day we had. They brought some music in and played some songs. Christmas Eve wasn't very good because of the barracks the Germans had. They were playing all the Christmas songs, like Silent Night and everything else. We were all "Shut that music off! All you're doing is making everybody crying!" It got you homesick! "Stop that music! Turn it off!" It was very traumatic then. We didn't mind the other songs that they played, but not the Christmas songs! After I had the skin grafts and everything else, the highlight of the whole thing was when I was able to sit up. They finally told me they were going to sit me up in bed. I never realized that when they sat me up, somebody was behind me, holding up my back, and my feet were going to be parallel to the floor. They were stretched out, stiffer than boards. I said "I can't bend them! They're done!" Then I found out what they were going to do. They brought little sacks, like you used to get salt in in different weights, and the program was to massage my legs and put these weights on there, and for me to try and lift them up and slowly get the life back in them. I don't know how long it took me to get my legs to where they were right angles with the floor. Eventually that did happen, and then they brought the crutches and got me down off the upper bunk, which was home for me for so long. Then I walked around the hospital with the crutches. It wasn't long after that when I was scheduled to go in January on a repat boat to come home. The Battle of the Bulge took care of that. All that were there got priority over me.

I: Can you explain what a repat boat was?

F: Wounded soldiers who were really bad would be sent back to the United States in exchange for German Soldiers who were going to be repatriated to Germany. The boat came and the other one went the other way. They had me picked to go on that but that was before the Bulge and everything else. Finally, they said no and I was taken down off the list.

I: How did you feel when you were taken off the list?

F: Oh, I was devastated. Devastated. Some of my friends were going on the boat. One of my good friends was in a cast all the way up to his neck and had one leg in a cast. He was going home because he got part of his foot shot off. He had a clubbed foot. When it was time for him to go, several of us that knew him wrote letters and put them in his cast, so that when he got home he could tell our parents that we were alive. I never heard from them, and they never heard from me. My family didn't know that I was alive until April the first of 1945. But they did know before that because of the letter that was brought

back to them. Legally, they didn't know, but because my friend told them that he saw me and that I was supposed to come home and didn't come home, but he told them that the war would be over soon. When we were liberated, then we get to the story of Musburgh (?)

I: Yes, can you talk about that?

F: After me being in the hospital, I went on the force march from Nornburgh to Musburgh, Germany (?). It was about 100 kilometers or so. They had an option to go by train or to walk. I was still in crutches, and I said, "Well, I'm going to walk. I'm not taking any chances on the train. It's going to be strafed and I'm not going to make it, so I'll take my chances on walking." As it would happen, it was the best thing that happened to me because it got me to get through to the crutches, as difficult as it was to go pick them up and lay them down. I'd had enough help. There were 10 minute breaks all the time and you'd lay down. On the walk they'd put us up in barns, and we'd get up in the hay house and maybe stay a day, day and a half. We'd take a break that way and catch up with the call. We did that about three times, where we stayed in barns. That was a pleasure to go in those barns!

I: How many prisoners were on this march?

F: Well, I think there were about 20,000 American POWs who left through Nornburgh(?). The capacity of the camp that we were going to, where we were liberated, there were over 100,000. When they were moving, they were moving prisoners from various camps, away from the front lines. They'd take them south to...I forget his last name, he was going to kill all of us anyways....Bongil(?) was. But colder heads (?) prevailed. So we ended up in Musburgh(?). Some of the fellows ended up in Czechoslovakia or some places like that that were already liberated.

I: Were you aware when you were a prisoner that Hilter might kill you all towards the end of the war? Was that something that came into your mind?

F: There were rumors out about it. Our men of confidence thought better of it to stay with the crowd, because he's not going to kill all of us if we're together. If you go by yourself and get caught, you were not responsible. So being in mass, being guarded by German guards, we felt safe with that situation. All the way during the march, I never thought about anything like that. I was hoping to get back to the thing, and hopefully we'd be liberated on the way.

I: What was Musburgh like?

F: Musburgh was overcrowded, naturally. When we were liberated, there was over 100,000 POWs in there. Food was terrible. When they weighed me, I was 119 lbs. We didn't have anything. There were no air raids around there. When we were liberated, we all knew it was coming sooner or later. We got word from prisoners that were coming in where the front was and everything else. Where Musburgh was was down near Bavaria,

near Munich. The Germans were trying to take Musburgh, and then go on to Munich and take that, and maybe take the seaport that would get us home. When we were there, our men of command, officers, and Patton's army, went to the German front line where they saw them, and capitulate(?) surrender. Otherwise, Patton's army was going to come in and take over Musburgh. The Germans did not give up, they said they were going to fight. So, they came back to us and warned us to "Stay where you are in the camp!." During the night before, we heard all the tanks on the hilltop, which might have been five kilometers away from us, that they were going to defend us against the Germans. The Germans did come in, but they never made it to the camp. They never made it because Patton and his troops came in first. An interesting thing happened that day. I have pictures I know because I was in the crowd right where Patton's tank was. We were all jubilant and kissing the ground and jumping up and down. It was a happy day. What General Patton's message to us was to stay where you're at, he'll have a field kitchen in here by dusk. And by that time he said "I'm going to feed you. We're going to get you clothed. And we're going to get you home. Stay where you're at. You're safer here than going around." That's what we did. He was true to his word: they came in with a field kitchen the next day. We were fed. After the next day, we stayed in the barracks, and the next night, they came in and said "Anybody, you, you, and you, go over into town." There were houses over there that they roused(?) the civilians out. Me and a friend of mine went over. We said, "Which house can we go to?" They took us into a house. We slept in a bed that night, that they roused the people out of. There was a dining room in there and they had troops that had given us some of their A rations and C rations. An interesting thing happened to me in there. In the bed, there was a crucifix by my bed, and my hunger for my religion, I guess, and I stole it out of that house. I still have it. I felt bad on my life about it, that I took it off somebody else. But I took comfort in the fact that I did have it, for me to comfort me then. It was only about a 16 inch crucifix. I have it still. It's in my sons room-he sees it all the time!

I: Could you talk about Anne a little bit? You were dating Anne, weren't you, before you went overseas? Could you talk about how you met her, and then did you keep in touch overseas? And what was it like to see her again when you got back?

F: I met her when I was sixteen. She was thirteen. I went to East Pittsburgh High School, and she went to Turtle Creek High School. I wandered off to Turtle Creek because they had dances down there and a little more activity and a bigger class. I went to the drugstores for Coke. Then I met her in a drugstore, having a Coke, I just knew of her. Then some of the other fellows that I knew and knew some girls, too. We started palling around together, having house parties, going out together. At that age, we were very innocent. I got to be friends with her. Some of my friends like to rollerskate. I didn't. I liked to dance, so we'd go to Turtle Creek. Up at the bank they had some dances, recording dances, and that. I went with Anne, and I'd had a friendly relationship with her. I dated some other girls, but it would always come back to her and I. When there were some other fellows going off to war, and it finally looked like me and her were getting off pretty good. After dating back and forth, when the time came for me to go to the service, I asked her if she could take me to the train station to see me leave. I said my goodbyes to my family at home, and I had Anne pick me up. She remembered that, and I did, too.

That sustained me, I guess. I felt like I had a good feeling for her. We didn't have any communication all the while that I was away. It sure warmed up when I came back for a 60 day furlough. We really got together for 60 days, and that was that.

I: One more question. Do you remember coming back to the United States on a ship? What was that like?

F: That was overcrowded. It took us 9 days to go. I was very fascinated with boats by that time. I said "If I never get on one again, I'll never go on a boat or ship again!" Getting up on the deck and seeing the sun and everything else. The goofy sailors that we had on the boat were shooting at icebergs for gun practice. We're down in the hole wondering "What in the hell is happening? Get me back out of here!" The boat was shaking and I thought "This is not for me!" So, I couldn't wait to get off that boat. It took us 9 days to come from England. Queen Mary did it (?) in 4 or 5 days and that was it! When they brought us into New York, they sent us up to Camp Shanks. That was near West Point. They were taking up all other Prisoners of War to one place there. They fed us and they clothed us and gave us \$300 if we needed extra money for train fare. A friend of mine lived in Philadelphia, so I said, "I'm going to go down with you!" So, we got a bus and went down to Philadelphia. I stayed with him overnight. Then I went to the train station, and there was no accommodations. It was two weeks, three weeks, four weeks, anything. There was no way to get any transportation. I decided that I was going to hitchhike home. I told him to get me down to the highway and lead me to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. I got on the road and just hitchhiked all the way home. I was happier than a pig eating a you-know-what! In fact, it was nice because people took care of me, they invited me into their homes, or I slept on their sun porch, they fed me, and they took me to the next place where I could get a ride again. I was living again! And on my own! That's how I got home. I hitchhiked all the way to the Westinghouse Bridge in East Pittsburgh.