Earl M. Morrow (EMM)
Samuel J. Lisica (SJL)
Jerome Silverman (JS)
Narrators

Matthew Rozell
Interviewer (I)

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I: Rangers served as members of the US Army Air Force?
JS: No, USAAC. United States Army Air Corps. They've got a monument in Nassau County [unclear] with the U.S. Army, and I told them to change it and they said they can't.
SJL: I want to go out to Colorado Springs for this coming reunion.
EMM: We got lucky. I found it. [Brings in photo album]
SJL: Who [unclear]?
EMM: I did that on the computer. [Hands copy of photo to **I**]

I: Is this the original, Earl?
EMM: Yes.
SJL: That's what we got in 1944.

I: You each got one?
SJL: Yes.
JS: Well I don't have it with me. Do you know what I did with this girl? I showed her a picture like that, and I said, "When you see parades, you see all these old geezers sitting in the car, old geezers marching with the flags, with the hats, all that stuff on. That's what you see; you pass the cemetery, you think all the old people, grandma and grandpa in the cemetery, and when I was in Cambridge at the American cemetery, all those graves have kids eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old and...
EMM: Everybody wrote their name on it.
JS: And then I showed her a picture of a reunion. They're all dressed up in business suits–you see all these old geezers, at the time about seventy-five years old, seventy years old, and I took this picture and put it next to that one, and I said, "Next time you see a parade with the old geezers–this guy, he was eighteen flying combat; this guy here was nineteen flying combat.
EMM: This guy was eighteen.
SJL: Yes, he just came out of high school. He was the waist gunner. He died the day we got [unclear].

EMM: These three were killed the day we went down [points to photo].
SJL: The three together.
EMM: This one retired in the eighties as a brigadier general.

I: Which one is you? [Looking at photo]
EMM: This is me, this is Sam, the bombardier, George is gone, Bill is gone–he was shot up really bad, but we got him out and he survived, and he died in about '78 or '79. He was playing golf and had a heart attack. And George Schaeffer, the one next to him, he passed away about two years ago. He was in the hospital for a long time. He had a whole lot of stuff. Cancer and blood problems and he had a whole lot of stuff.
JS: See these pictures, every crew has a picture like that, the Army did that. They did four in the front, generally but not always, the pilot, the co-pilot, the bombardier and the navigator, or vice versa. These would be the enlisted men here, the gunners, the engineers, the radio operators. See these are the enlisted men, and these are the officers.
EMM: [Unclear] these two switched off and they were both killed. He was qualified as an engineer also. He didn't go with us that day. This is the tail gunner.
SJL: We had ten men but nine flew, so every mission somebody was off. Did you have ten on your trips?
JS: Always. One guy sat down.
EMM: Our group–they always pulled one waist gunner and left him home.
JS: Never with us.
EMM: One crew member stayed home. We carried nine.
JS: Never with us. We always had ten. I never flew a mission with nine people. In fact, when I was leading, we had two or three navigators.
EMM: Well, they probably needed them with you.
JS: If you were leading a group, it was one thing, but if you were leading a division or a wing, that's still another one, because one was the lead navigator, one was a DR navigator, and one just stayed on radar.
EMM: See, when we got over there, we always left one guy home, because they pulled the gun out of the radio room. So, if you get under attack he goes back to the waist.
SJL: Both sides of the waists would be…
JS: We always had two waist gunners, always.
SJL: We had one.
JS: As a matter of fact, I was amazed one time at how many bullets they could shoot off, because if you went in the back of the ship, you could kill yourself [unclear].
EMM: See, that's why Ballenger wasn't with us the day we were shot down.
JS: Well, you've got to remember, at this point, I was the lead navigator and I didn't have any crew. The crew I flew with, I never knew any of these [unclear]…
EMM: These crews, they didn't pertain to them what happened to us.

JS: My crew long since went home. The co-pilot and I came back for a second tour, but he and I didn't fly it again because he was on a crew that flew together.

I: Jerome, you're from Long Island?
JS: Yes, you better call me Jerry because two people call me Jerome, my ex-wife and my mother. That's when I'm in trouble.

I: What is your date of birth?
JS: April 15, 1919.

I: So, today you're eighty-two.
EMM: He's the old man of the bunch.
JS: If I keep my mouth shut, I may make eighty-three.

I: You were a navigator, right?
EMM: He was a…
SJL: Group navigator.
JS: I was not a group navigator.
SJL: Squadron…
JS: And I wasn't a squadron navigator, not at that time.
EMM: What is your title then?
JS: Specialist-navigator. But I navigated as a lead navigator. As you got more experience, they put you more forward to lead the pack, because we always went in groups. So, there was a lead navigator and a lead bombardier.
EMM: They really didn't do anything; the navigator did nothing unless you had to lead the formation, and then we really put him to work.
JS: Except we had to find the target, and help the bombardier find the target.
EMM: All we had to do was follow the lead ship.
JS: Look at the pictures and see what the Germans would do. The river would be like this [makes a wavy line on the table] and the target would be here and many a time we had problems with clouds undercast because we flew 20-25,000 feet. There'd be a hole in the cloud, so they'd set up a whole city of dummies, and if you see a hole in the clouds and you see this, you think this is it, there's a bend in the river same as this. They'd duplicate it. There was a movie, Command Decision, with Walter Pidgeon, and I forget who, and it's exactly what happens to the navigator. They thought they hit the target, and they're all excited. And then the navigator says, "That's gross error. That's a dummy I hit." It's in the movie. I have a copy. If you give me your address, I'll make a copy of the movie and send it to you.

I: Sam, what's your date of birth?
SJL: May 23, 1921.

I: So, you're eighty this year.

EMM: Your birthday is the same as Jessie's.
SJL: Jessie's birthday is May 23rd?
EMM: Now the year, I can't tell you.
SJL: Why not, that's simple. Why, she doesn't want anybody to know? We've got to wring it out of her.
EMM: She doesn't care if you know what day her birthday is, she just doesn't want you to know when it happened.
SJL: She's an old chick.
JS: There's a gross error in the United States Government. My birthday's April 15. The country's birthday is July 4th. April 15th, they should send me the money, not the IRS. July 4th, you can send it to the IRS.

I: What was your job, Sam?
SJL: Navigator bomber.
EMM: He was trained either one.
SJL: No, just both of them at the same time.
EMM: As I say, you were trained for either one.
SJL: But, we didn't learn celestial navigation, we learned dead reckoning [unclear] all the other…

I: Earl, when's your birthday?
EMM: June 27, 1921.
SJL: 27th? The newspaper had it the 21st.
EMM: At least they got the year right, 1921.
JS: The fellow that came here Saturday, and he was taking notes and everything, so I was kidding him. I said, "It's like Hollywood, I don't care what you say about me, just spell my name right,' and he spelled it wrong. Spelled it with a "G" instead of a "J".

I: That's what I did, because I read it in the paper that way.
EMM: I saw that, and I said I've been doing it wrong all this time.
JS: May I make a suggestion? What happens with us if we're saying one thing, and we think of something else, we go off on a tangent and we can't come back to where we were, we can't remember. So, if we go off on tangents all you have to do is say…

I: When you went over to England, if I'm looking at the article correctly, who flew with Earl before you guys got shot down?
SJL: We were crewmen [points to **EMM**].

I: You guys are in this photograph. And you guys had seventeen missions before you were shot down?
SJL: He had seventeen [motions to **EMM**]. I had twenty-three.

EMM: There was a little period in there when I got grounded. I tore up two airplanes one morning.
SJL: They were going to shoot him.

I: Tore up?
SJL: Wrecked them. While we were taking off.
EMM: It's simple, I just caught the tail section of the airplane in front of me with my wingtip, because we came up–the runway is here, we came up this taxiway, there's a portable tower sitting here, and we get into our right turn behind the next airplane, and we had no brakes, period. Everything was gone. The tail wheel was turned to keep it turned to the right, but we didn't really want to tear up that tower there. And the airplane's in front of me, and the tail's gone, so at the last second, just to save everything we could, I had to gun the hell out of the two right engines, and swing it around, and my wingtip caught the tail of the one in front of me.
SJL: It took the rudder off.
EMM: But the problem was, the night before somebody came in and landed and took a building off its foundation, and the Colonel said "The next time there's an incident it'll be pilot error 100 percent." And it was me. I fall into those things.
JS: Any officer, any unit, was responsible no matter what, and the pilot is responsible. Now if the mechanic does something wrong–and the pilot, he's sleeping–and the mechanic was working at 2:00 in the morning, working on that airplane to get it ready, and something goes wrong, in the end result, in our commanding officer's opinion, he's the pilot, he's responsible. In other words, Harry Truman said, "The buck stops here." That's what happened. Unfortunately, he had something mechanically wrong, the Colonel didn't know from nothing, this guy's going to be pilot error. Otherwise, some General's going to say, "Colonel, what's going on in your group?" So, he's passing the buck.
EMM: The same thing on the airlines. If the co-pilot made a mistake, my fault for letting him make it. So, when you get up there, you take the guff.
JS: So, as I said that's a divergence.
EMM: So, we didn't go up with the same number of men each time.
JS: That's why you have a different number of men.
EMM: One of the other reasons is when I first got there, my first mission, I went out as a co-pilot with an experienced crew. And they didn't. And the next day I go out, and I got all my crew–except my co-pilot–I got an experienced co-pilot going with me. And then the third mission, the crew on your own.

I: And what was target the day you guys got shot down? It was November '44, right?
EMM: November 2, 1944. Merseburg, synthetic oil refinery.
JS: You could give him the printout on the mission that we got.

I: I have it right here.

EMM: You have the 457th bomb group, or do you have my description of it?

I: I have your description of it. I'm just reviewing it a little bit. You said you thought you had the best crew over there.
EMM: Yes. The best crew.
SJL: And I second it.

I: Is this the bombardier who had the amnesia after you were shot down?
EMM: Yes. This was on the forced march.
JS: To this day he has amnesia.
EMM: He was on the march, too. There were about 10,000 of us on that march.

I: How did you two meet up?
JS: Let me give you a little background. I came over before he did [points to **SJL**]. When the group came over, originally, we came as a group; as you lost people you got replacements. They came over as another crew; replacement crew. I had been there a while. I never set eyes on them.

I: Where you at the same base?
JS: Same base, same squadron, same everything. One crew got shot down, they put another crew in their beds.

I: Did you know them at all before?
JS: No, I never knew them. Anyway, I came home; I completed one tour. Came home on what they called rest and recuperation.

I: How many missions were in a tour?
JS: That was twenty-five–I could go home. I could fly five more and stay home, or I could fly five fewer and come back again. If I flew the thirty, if I chose to fly the thirty, I figured I could get killed on number twenty-six, number twenty-seven, twenty-eight etc. I figured you take what you got, you know, you take your winnings and get off the table. So, I went home. Then I came back to the group, and now I didn't come back with a crew, I came back as a lead navigator. I was already a lead crew navigator. They had crews that are trained to lead. They had another navigator that comes in so you've got two guys navigating, one guy's looking out the window, another guy doing the paperwork, and a third guy on radar to make it as good as you can possibly get it without the equipment you have today. I came back for a second tour. Each time I flew, I flew with different people. I didn't even know the guys I was on the plane with that day, but that's just the way it worked. You know, you'd fly with them. You've got specialists, you've got special bombardiers, the best bombardier in the group, that sort of thing, for that mission. What happened was, here we were in a group with thirty-six aircraft, and in our squadron, we had twelve and twelve and twelve. So, we were in the same unit, called the low box–twelve, twelve, twelve–the high box,

the lead box, and the low box. When the Germans came, they came from behind, and they took the low box, they took out, I think, seven, plus two more from our squadron.

I: Fighter planes?
JS: Yes. We got hit from behind. I never even saw them. At first, I heard them yelling. I heard the shooting, but everything's going on back there. I'm up at the front. This is going on in the tail. The Germans at this point–previously they used to come in and attack individually–but at this point in the war, they had plenty of airplanes, but they didn't have pilots. They didn't have gas to train them, number one; number two, they didn't have a safe place to train them because our fighters were ranging all over–so they had inexperienced pilots. So, they'd take a few good pilots and tell the rest of the guys, "String out and just stick with us," so they just hit us in waves, and the first I knew I saw little cotton balls go, which is 40-millimeter cannon exploding, which I hadn't seen before. Then an airplane hit ours, one of their fighters hit our wing. I didn't see it happen, but the whole airplane shook, and I said, "What happened?" Somebody hit our wing. The plane was on fire and then we bailed out. When I got on the ground–this is to answer your question–when I got on the ground, he [points to **EMM**] was having his own problems in his plane and they had bailed out. When I was on the ground, I got picked up by some civilian, not civilians, they were coming toward me. But there was one guy that was police and they said, "Get in the hands of the police or the military. Don't let the civilians get ahold of you, because they've got pitchforks and they were pitching things other than hay." I didn't see them luckily, but there were American flyers hanging by their necks on telephone poles and trees. Because of what we were. Well, when I got picked up, two German soldiers came around in a Volkswagen that's like a jeep, and he's sitting in the back of the thing and that's where I met him.

I: So, it's the same exact day?
JS: Yes. Then we were collected and put with other guys, and collected, and put with other guys, and then put on the plane, and each section is a whole story in itself, what happened to you, what happened there.

I: What happened when you were in the jeep?
JS: Well, in the jeep–that's the story that was in the paper. This one German, the guy riding shotgun, had a patch on his eye, a big guy, and he took my watch and he took my high school ring. He said he was going to keep it for me so that some other guy wouldn't come and steal it from me–that I would get it back after the war. I'm not going to argue with the guy. He goes over to him [points to **EMM**], and moves his jacket, and he's trying to get his pilot's wings. This big dumb jerk, he pushed him away. I said, "These guys got guns, for God's sakes, give him the damn wings before they kill us."
EMM: "He's not getting my wings."

JS: "Don't be so damn stubborn, give him the wings." He wouldn't give him the wings, and the guy backed off. But if this other fellow was in another frame of mind, you wouldn't be here, he wouldn't be here and I wouldn't be here, and Sam wouldn't be here. He could have just shot us, because nobody asked questions then. That's where I met him. Then we were collected and we went to a central point. They shipped you across the country to a place called Dulag Luft, which is an interrogation center. They keep you there for a few days, and you get interrogated, and depending on what happens, they send you to another place until they get enough guys together and they can find a freight train or a passenger train or something, and they send you off to one destination. That's how we all wound up in the camp. The camps were set up this way. If you were in the Army, if you were an infantryman, that was the Army, you were a prisoner of the Wehrmacht, the army. If you were in the Navy, you got picked up by the Navy, some way or another you were a prisoner of the navy, and we were Air Corps people so we were prisoners of the Luftwaffe. I think, no, I know, we were treated better than anybody else because the British had so many Luftwaffe pilots in their camps that Hermann Göring–who nobody liked and I loved because–he took care of us to make sure that the British took care of his boys. We didn't have a picnic, it wasn't exactly the Hilton and it wasn't Hogan's Heroes, but we were much better off than anybody else in Germany. We got the same rations that they got. We didn't really get that, but they didn't have anything to eat either, to tell you the truth. The German population–if you were a farmer you ate. If you lived in the city, you didn't get much either. And we got less. We had Red Cross busses come, and they kept saying, "No parcels this week. Your bombers bombed the train that had the parcels." Our bombers bombed the train that had the Red Cross parcels. It was amazing to listen to them. Our bombers hit three things, schools, hospitals and supply trains, and Red Cross parcels. That's all our bombers ever hit.
EMM: That's all we hit when we flew direct, I guess.
JS: Well anyway, the Red Cross parcels were supposed to supplement the rations that they gave us, which was potatoes, soup and lard or something. Everybody lost weight. I went from about one hundred and sixty-something to one hundred and twenty-nine. Everybody lost thirty, forty pounds. But we were still far better than the poor guys who wound up in Japan. Absolutely no question about it. When it comes to saying, "Gee, you were a prisoner-of-war, you had it tough," I have kind of a guilty conscience, because I know guys who were in Japan.

I: They were on the hell ships, the Japanese. Bad news.
SJ: There's a book you might be interested in, if you haven't heard about it. Unjust Enrichment. There's a lawsuit going on right now because these guys were forced to work for Japanese companies–slave labor–you should read that book, and it's documented, the last half of the book is nothing but documents–Japanese.

I: It seems everybody wants to forget about it now. What about the forced march, though? Why were you being moved?
SJL: Well, what's happening–the Russians were making their move and they were coming west.

I: Was this in the winter or the spring?
SJL: This was in January, last of January.

I: 1945, right?
SJL: Yes. And the Germans didn't want us to be liberated in any way, shape, or form, so they were moving us all, going west, or wherever they had a place for us.

I: Because they wanted you as bargaining chips?
JS: Well, that was the rumor. Prisoner-of-war camps are the greatest rumor factories in the world.

I: Sure. You don't have any information.
SJL: But we could get good information.
EMM: We had radio information.
SJL: The Germans could never find it.
JS: They'd ask you. When they'd go to movies, they'd ask you, "Are you taking your radio with you?"

I: Where did you find it?
SJL: I had one, you took it apart and put it together. Everybody had a piece.
EMM: You'd carry a little part.
JS: In our camp, it was in an accordion–I always heard that. A book got published. [unclear] west compound of Stalag Luft III, and in it they had the picture of the accordion, and I saw it jumping up and down like a maniac, and I said, "By God, I've heard about that thing and there it is, there's a picture of it." The fellows are sitting around, and the Germans are tearing everything apart, and he's sitting there playing Home on the Range. And the radio was inside the accordion that this guy's playing.
EMM: The BBC knew it, too, because they'd beam stuff into us.
SJL: We used to have a map on the wall. We had a big map the guys had drawn, our [unclear]map, and we knew where everybody was in the war, where the fronts were moving up, where the Russians were, where the Germans were. They used to come to our map to see what the hell what was going on. But the radio picked up from somebody outside like a newscast and there it was…
EMM: On that same map, they had our line where we knew it was, marked, and then we had their line which they were advertising it was marked, and they didn't agree at all.

JS: In many cases, they agreed, but the interesting part was we had interpreters to get the German news and, of course, we would get our own news from the BBC. And the Germans would say, "Our victorious troops strongly defended this particular town," and then the next day, "Our victorious and glorious and loyal Nazi troops, or whatever they called them, successfully beat down two platoons of American infantry in this town." Now we're back over here. The next day they beat the hell out of us over here, then they beat the hell out of us over here, then the next day over here. We're laughing at this thing–they never lost a battle, but they were slowly losing a war.
SJL: [unclear] They came in one day, and they said, "Everybody pack to move, we're going to move out." So, everybody started packing, and it started to snow in the afternoon–there were flurries and probably maybe an inch or so of snow on the ground. But later in the day the snow got heavier, and we had to go. So, when we left there, I guess the snow was about four inches deep when we went out.
JS: Middle of the night.
SJL: Everybody's got their stuff, everything they can carry, not thinking, "Hey, we've got to go here or there," and you can only take so much because you're not going to be carrying anything, you're going to be walking.

I: They didn't indicate how far.
EMM: No idea of where we were going or anything.
SJL: As we went along, we were back maybe six or eight buildings back from the front, and, as you went around, you could see where guys were dumping stuff along the side of the road. They took excess food–we had a little warehouse with canned food, and they were taking sugar, so we all carried sugar, because when you're walking you want energy–eat sugar. I forget how many cubes–I must have had two hundred cubes of sugar in my pocket. And that's what I ate as I walked along. They had me walked and walked, and, finally, it's getting cold and everybody's getting tired. We kept going, it's five, six, seven o'clock in the morning. It's getting colder. I know I had a scarf around my face that was just a ball of ice. Every now and then I had to reach up and break it, so I could get air to my face. My feet were frozen.

I: How many hours had you been gone?
JS: About three days.

I: When he's describing that part, how long?
SJL: Well that was during the same day.

I: Same day, ten hours later?
SJL: You never got warm, we just kept going and going, and we were cold. You couldn't even change socks if you wanted to. So, we had wet socks, cold weather, [unclear] as far as I'm concerned, that's what happened to me. And, finally we

marched until the next day. We marched almost twenty-some hours. We were coming up to some towns. Everybody now was falling over. Now, I did something I didn't know I did. We were in a group, and everybody had pledged to watch each other. I didn't know anything about ...anyhow all I knew, was I found myself off the side of the road, and I laid in the snow and I was so warm, but it was so goddamn cold, I couldn't hardly do anything. In the meantime, when I laid over, a couple of prisoners, one was a Captain and one was a Major, they'd seen me walk over and lay down, and they grabbed me and stood me up and shook me. They asked me a question, but I was delirious. I didn't know anything from anything. So, they picked me up and made me walk, and we got to this town and that's when he [points to **EMM**] came around–he was looking for me, he was hollering my name, and I was standing there and he came over to me, "Sam," and I knew and I said, "Oh, you're Earl. You're the best damn pilot." But when they questioned me, I didn't know my name or anything or where I lived–I was gone. Only thing I knew was, "You're Earl; you're the best damn pilot in the Air Force."

I: How many days had you been...
SJL: That was twenty-some hours of being frozen walking.
EMM: They were hollering his name. It wasn't me hollering his name. They were hollering his name trying to find somebody that knew him.

I: Who was hollering?
SJL: The two guys that picked me up.
EMM: When I heard that I got to him. I'd gone through the same procedure. I actually sat down, and one of these guys got to me and I said, "Hell, I've got to get away from this guy, one way or the other." So, I got up and moved again. About that time, they came down hollering, "Sam Lisica," so that woke me up and I got a hold of him. I was all right then, because when you see somebody worse than you are... I kept him moving.
SJL: When I started to get all mixed up, and I do remember this, I knew I was walking fast and there were about five or six or seven barracks–we went out in barracks and everybody stayed together–I walked through these guys and all of a sudden, I'm their leader. I'm in front of everybody and that's how they see me take off, and take to the side of the road. And that's how they[unclear]...

I: How many people would be on this march?
JS: From the camp–Stalag Luft III had a north compound and a south compound, an east and a west compound. We were in the west, this was the newest one. The north compound was the one that was all British, and that's the famous great escape, where they all went through the tunnel, and fifty of them were caught and murdered, and three guys made it–I think to Sweden. They made a movie out of that with Steve McQueen. I just read in the magazine that they are going to make another movie of the same compound we were in, but

Bruce Willis is going to be in it, which will be interesting to see, because nobody was in that place as old as Bruce Willis is right now. So, anyway, they took us out, and one of the compounds went directly from there all the way to a place called Moosburg. The rest of us went on the march we were on, with stops, took a week, a week and a half–I have no idea whatsoever, no recollection. We eventually marched for about three days. The next time we were going to stop, and the next time. It was bitter cold. Another ten kilometers, another two. They kept us in a church one night on marble floors, and I'm telling you, if you want to freeze to death, that's a good place. But some miracle happened, and they put us into a factory which was a pottery factory, and the floors and everything were warm, actually warm. In all the time we had been in Germany we were never so warm–we were always freezing to death. And they kept us there for three days, and I think that's what saved lot of guys that would have died of pneumonia or whatever. We got a chance to get our strength back. Then from there they marched us again a day or two. Then, they took us to a place called Spremberg, and they put us in box cars. We had fifty, sixty guys in a box car which was made for forty men or eight horses. So, we had fifty, fifty-five, sixty, depending, with one can and a little slit that you could look through, and everybody could not sit down at the same time. We were trapped in this thing for about three days.

I: Was it moving at the time?
SJL: They were taking us west.
JS: They were taking us down to Nuremberg. Then we wound up in a prison camp in Nuremberg.
SJL: That's when we all had dysentery.
JS: This took about–between the train ride, and the marching, and one thing and another, and the train sitting around waiting for the fighters to go away before they started moving again… Our train was strafed, but luckily for us, and unluckily for the guys at the other end, we didn't get hit up on our end but on the other end they were hit by B47s. The Germans did not take the trouble to put Red Cross or POWs on the trains, but they did do that on their troop trains.
SJL: Then we all got dysentery. They stopped one time–everybody had to go. They opened the door and everybody ran out and everybody sat by the railroad tracks with the…
JS: I've been waiting for years to hear somebody who saw the same thing. It's one of the funniest things I saw in war. They let only so many out of the train at the same time and we were on this track–the train was standing still, bright sunshiny day, German guards in the field with their guns and everything. The guys came out to relieve themselves, and you have about one hundred fifty guys sitting there with their pants down, all facing away from, mooning the guards. You saw all these rear ends. We were laughing. When the next crew came out… [Laughing]
SJL: The best part was, when we were down, two German [unclear] come walking and they looked and it didn't mean a thing to them. When you get

dysentery, you can knock a fly off at fifty paces because it's under pressure–you're all water and zoom! And you stink.
JS: You talked about the American's sense of humor–if it wasn't for our sense of humor–we always had names for people, something to say, you could always find a funny moment. I've told the story–there was an air raid and this[unclear] came at us and they were all turning and dropping bombs on Nuremberg, but the one didn't and it was coming at us, and I did see this happen, but it wasn't him. Some guy, some [unclear] grabbed ahold of the guard and he shook him and he said, "Wo is der Luftwaffe?"

I: And these are the Americans?
SJL: They turned to get away and they dropped bombs on us.
JS: I'll tell you one thing; this is documented. The 8th Air Force–I don't know about the others, I imagine the same thing–we were never turned back from a raid. Never ever were we turned back from a raid.

I: Why not?
JS: You were told to go, you went, you just did.
SJL: The only time we turned back was bad weather, really bad weather.
JS: Weather was the only thing. They'd have a recall for weather.
EMM: You couldn't see the ground unless you had the new radar, which they were just coming in with. There was no way you could hit your target.
JS: They didn't turn around–you still bombed [unclear], but what I'm trying to say is there was never such fierce opposition from flak or fighters where the air commander+
said, "We can't get through this, let's back up." In the infantry you can't[unclear], you say, "Okay, [unclear]back up and regroup." We didn't. We always went through, we lost fifty, sixty, seventy bombers, and each one carrying ten men at the end of 1943 in three raids that they had–if they had two more raids like that, we would have no Air Force, we would have been completely wiped out. So, they just stood down. Once we were in the air, unless the weather recalled us, we were never turned back, and they could put up so much flak we never went around it or hit another target. We went through the flak of that target. We never diverted.
EMM: It was always in the day.
[Talking over each other]
SJL: We thought they were crazy. They did it at night.
JS: [unclear] that book about the 8th Air Force?
EMM: You mean the stuff on the 457th?
JS: No. That stuff I brought with me from that book on Switzerland, Refuge from the Reich, where it describes–he said that the Air Force had the highest casualties of any branch of service. There were more guys–and I was stunned to read this in another book–that the 8th Air Force had more casualties than all of the Marines in all of the Marine landings in the Pacific. That really shook me up.

It's in another book and he said the same thing. I copied from a book. Because people will say, "You guys are heroes," and we said, "We're not heroes," but when I read this I decided I'm a damn hero.

I: My Dad's cousin–his name was Clarence McGuire. He was a waist gunner, and he was in the 8th Air Force. He was shot down July 29,1944, age twenty. That was it. [unclear] He was from Hudson Falls. There were so many guys…
SJL: Enemy action never turned us back. Weather did.

I: You guys must have lost a lot of friends. How did you deal with that?
JS: The way it was dealt with–in some cases, we were lucky because the first two, I stayed in [unclear]even though I started flying with other crews, I stayed in the same bed, the same guys, two crews in one [unclear] hut. The officers and the enlisted men, they were together, and these guys finished up and my guys finished up, and I went home after so many missions, for rest and recuperation, which we called return and regret. But anyway, we got through the thing. What happened when a crew went down, replacements came in. Word started getting around, "Don't get friendly with these guys, because it breaks your heart." So, nobody would talk to anybody.

I: It reminds me of Twelve O'clock High. Gary Cooper movie.
SJL: Remember that movie with Gary Cooper?
JS: It wasn't Gary Cooper. It was Gregory Peck. I can't remember your name, but I remember Gregory Peck.

I: Did you know any of the British troops or flyers?
SJL: We weren't up to their status. They didn't have anything to do with us.

I: They looked down at you?
SJL: Down their noses.

I: The British flyers, any contact with them or any conversations during the war?
JS: Well, I got a chance to fly, not a mission, but a practice, and I can't remember how it came about, and I think it was a Wellington–we were talking about it the other day–and [unclear] school was one of ours, sort of an exchange thing. I flew one of them and talked with them and we thought they were very–they had a whole different conception. They bombed at night. They weren't heavily armed like we were. They carried heavier bomb loads. I would never fly at night. That's dangerous as hell. They would never fly in the daytime. They said, "You'd get killed doing that." But I have great admiration for the RAF. They don't take a back seat to anybody. They had more guts when they were prisoners-of-war–the reason they could have an escape as they did. The English were taking the cream of the kids from the college, and putting them in the RAF. They were the crème de la crème. So, when they got there, they had guys that could

print, could forge, they could do this. They had engineers; they could build tunnels–they knew how to get air through it. They built the thing–you had hardly any fuel. When we got down to Moosburg, I saw them with this little thing they had, they made a little blower and the duct went down there, and he threw a few things in it, and they had a red-hot flame going. They had to have their damn tea. Prisoners-of-war, the British had their tea. I was watching with this little thing, and I said, "What's that?" They devised all kinds of things. If you see that movie again, to refresh your memory, these guys were all experts in their own fields. They knew how to forge documents, they knew how to do things with photography. They took uniforms and re-cut them and re-sewed them and made them into civilian clothes, and the fellow knew the train schedule, and bribed the daylights out of the guards. I could tell you another story about a POW in my chapter who could speak seven languages. He was in a camp–infantry or artillery–name was Alex Valeshka. About a year or two ago, the Russian Ambassador gave him a medal down in Washington. It was in the papers. Now, this guy was a prisoner in a camp that communicated with London. London dropped tons of cigarettes which we used for currency. The Germans got a lot, but we got a lot, they got a lot in the camp. Valeshka got all of them; he had an apartment in Munich in which he was hiding, because he could speak the language–how the hell he got in and out of this camp I have no idea, bribed–and he was harboring Russians in this apartment. A whole story on its own, a fantastic thing. How did we get radio parts? The cigarette companies sent tons and tons of cigarettes over. My family sent me so many cartons which I never got. You were supposed to get a package a month or something like twenty cartons of cigarettes. Well, in every fifth or every tenth, or every hundredth shipment, there was one pack, and one cigarette had a part for radio, and when it came, you gave it to whoever you were supposed to, and given enough of them, they'd get radios, they'd get cameras, get parts and they would stick things in. So, it was a very, very complicated thing, and if you want to get into a whole other area, get ahold of a book called A Man Called Intrepid. You will not be able to put it down. Unbelievable.

I: I know it. There's one sitting on my father's bookshelf at my father's house.
JS: Did you read it?

I: I haven't read it. I know the title. [unclear]
JS: A fantastic story. When they sent spies in, they checked out the area because the Germans would know that in this town here in Hartford, people didn't wear shoes like that. That's stuff you got in the Gap in New York City, so it would be out of place here. They nailed the guy. They nailed the spy. That's the [unclear]. They detained somebody, some Germans, they'd detain them, and something wrong with the plane, they'd get them into a restaurant and somebody'd [unclear] and put everything back and you wouldn't even know anything was touched. The plane was fixed, and in the meantime, the guy had a nice meal on Uncle Sam.

Read the book. Guaranteed one of the best books you'll ever read, if you are interested in it. I couldn't put the book down.

I: Did you guys get POW medals?
SJL: Yes.

I: Did you get them late?
SJL: Everything was late. We didn't get a presentation. They mailed them in a little cardboard box.

I: When did you get yours, Sam? Did you have to wait years?
SJL: No, I was [unclear] going to be issued, I went to the VA, and we had a man in charge of POWs, and he got everything for us–everything we had coming. He'd fill them up, and he'd deliver them, and they'd come to us. He just retired.
JS: What are you talking about?
SJL: Your POW medal. I got mine mailed to me in a little box.
JS: We had a–the Intrepid, the ship that is now a Museum in Manhattan, and a fellow by the name of Mike Colmonico who was in command of our chapter at that time. He was a wheeler-dealer-he knew somebody who knew somebody, so they networked their way into Chuck Scarborough, and Chuck Scarborough's father was a bomber pilot who was shot down over Yugoslavia and he was [unclear], but Chuck Scarborough always had a feeling towards airmen and POWs and such, and he had told the story on the air about his father, so Colmonico somehow got in touch with him, and they got in touch with the other chapters, Brooklyn and New York and maybe Mid-Hudson or whatever, and on the Intrepid we got a presentation, they had an Admiral and a General and we were in this big auditorium, and they called off our names one by one and we went up there and they handed [unclear].

I: When was that?
JS: I got the whole thing on tape because my radio operator was in from Kansas, and he came along, and he had a camcorder and he took pictures of the whole thing. Interesting, they invited President Bush, and he said he would come if he was available. They knew right away that was a standard answer. They invited Mario Cuomo, and he said he'd come, but he said he would need about ten minutes to talk, and they said, "No, this was for POWs, this is not a political opportunity, you're not going to be able to speak." So, he did not show up. They invited Mayor Koch, and they told him the same thing, "You can't speak", but that didn't stop Koch, because he went outside, and he stood on one of the upper decks that overlooks the lower deck, and he had a microphone and he had a crowd on the pier, and he made his speech anyway. Koch did. David Dinkins was standing behind him, and David Dinkins is such a nice man, a real gentleman; he didn't hog the limelight or anything. Just stood there, but he never got to speak.

EMM: I just got an invitation down to Albany so I went down there, and dressed up knowing I was going to get the POW medal, and they did it outside and it was pouring down rain, and that's about all I can remember.

I: Was Gerry Solomon there?
EMM: No, there was some military people there, and that was it. Sort of a reserve unit. and I think it was a Colonel that presented it to us, and he stood out in the rain with us, too.

I: Speaking of colonels, didn't you tell me that one time they dropped an officer, maybe it was a colonel, into your camp, to build up morale?
EMM: Yes, in our camp, the Colonel that was running the camp, what was his name? The old fellow? There was a general in there.
SJL: The Colonel from the big 24 group.
EMM: Yes.
JS: What are you talking about–the prisoner-of-war camp?
EMM: Yes
SJL: There was a general in there–Alkarie.
JS: The officer in charge–once you were behind the barbed wire, the Germans said, "You run your military organization; the officers will run things so that we don't have to argue with everyone. We tell the officer what we want." We had very strict rules, you couldn't escape if you felt like it. You had to go to an escape committee, because you might do something to screw up somebody else's. Alkarie was over the Americans, and the whole thing, but in our compound, the west compound, there was a Colonel, a fighter pilot, Jack Jenkins was his name. A Texan, and he was the officer-in-charge. A story I know about him, is they had us standing outside–when they had a roll call, they called it apel, once in the morning and once at night–they'd line everybody up [unclear] and then two Germans would go down and they're counting to see that each line is complete, then they count the lines–eins, zwei, drei, vier, fünf, sechs–then at the end they[unclear] and write this down and they add up this one and make sure everybody's there. That's a whole new bunch of stories, however…This one particular day, we're standing there and the count isn't right, we're standing there cold as hell, we're standing there two hours, we're standing there–something was said and the Colonel and the Hauptman come together and the next day we're standing there and there's a big argument, and the story as I got it was this: They told Colonel Jenkins they wanted a list of all the Jewish POWs. So, the next day we came out there, and there was this big argument and the Hauptman is raving and ranting. Jenkins says, "That's it." Well, after standing around, we found out what happened, the story filtered back. He said, "Give me the list of the names of the Jews." He said, "We're all Jews." "Ridiculous." He said, "Well, we all took the pledge last night." The pledge not to drink, like they had converted. Like everybody had converted. He would not give them a list of the Jews. There was a whole ho-ha about it. Rumor was that they wanted to take the Jews and hold

them as hostages up in the Alps, and the next rumor that went around, I guess maybe a month later, a whole pack of us, that's when they started to march us out. Story was they were going to take us as hostages to the Alps, and use us as bargaining chips. Another story that I've seen in print and I can get you a copy of it, this one German general, after the war, said that Hitler had said he wanted all the allied airmen–they were being coddled because of Göring, and we were, if you want to put it in perspective, compared to other people–and he said no, he wanted all of them shot, and Hitler said, "I want all airmen shot, right now." They didn't carry out his orders. So, we came this close. That was one of the stories about Jack Jenkins. He was a fighter pilot and he came from Texas. What made me proud–this was a guy from Texas and no German was pushing him around. Now, even if he didn't like blacks or he didn't like Jews or he didn't like Catholics or whatever his particular group he had animosity towards, no German was going to tell him what to do. He said we are Americans in this camp and we are all the same. There is a movie on Barth, that was the other prisoner-of-war camp for allied officers, in the North Sea, and Colonel [unclear] was a fighter, commander of a red-hot fighter group. The same thing happened up there. They asked him for a list of the Jews. He didn't say they were all Jews, but he said, "You're not getting it. If you're going to shoot them, you're going to shoot us all, because we are not going to tell you which ones to pick out." These are the things that make me damn proud to be an American.
EMM: I saw this Colonel just standing up to the German general and they were tearing the boards off the buildings down there in Nuremberg, and the General came in there and he said, "The next board torn off, we're just going to shoot him." And the Colonel just stuck his chest out, and said, "Anytime you want to start, you start with me."

I: Was this the same Colonel?
EMM: Yes.
JS: Was this Colonel Goode? In Nuremberg, was that his name?
EMM: I couldn't say. He was on the march with us, but they had him in the wagon because he couldn't walk, and he was screaming at them back there because the Germans wouldn't get the wagon upfront with his troops. As far as I [unclear] he's the same one that was [unclear].
JS: Was he the fellow that wrote a letter on the conditions in the camp?
EMM: Yes.
SJL: I have it at home, it was four pages.
EMM: He wrote a letter on the conditions, and slipped it to the Red Cross, and it went to Switzerland.

I: Why were you tearing boards off buildings?
SJL: For heat. That was our heat. There were no furnaces, there were no stoves. We burned everything that burned. We were freezing.

EMM: That same night, I heard this little conversation out there. You could hear the boards being torn off.
JS: This was in Nuremberg?
EMM: Yes
JS: Well, when I was in Sagan, we came in…
EMM: Sagan, we were using…
SJL: We took the boards off to make the tunnels.
EMM: We were even taking the [unclear] out of the beds. In your bed, you had three boards…

I: For escape?
SJL: Yes, that's how they made the tunnels.
JS: At least, that's where they got the wood.
EMM: The soil was sandy, see, so you had to shore up every inch you made.
SJL: Guys got straight down so many feet, they shored it up with the wood, then they'd start this way, and every time they moved, they shored it up. They made a gadget to carry the dirt back. They made a rope and they put wheels on it, and the guy had only the room to go through; he couldn't turn around. When he had to come out, he had to come out backwards.
EMM: At first, they'd bring the dirt out in their stockings. They had gardens see, so they mixed the dirt in with that. Then the Germans stopped the gardening business, so then a whole bunch would go out in the field and drop the dirt and have a skirmish out there and grind it all in.
JS: **[**unclear]the stocking, they had this little noose at the bottom, you've got a stocking full of [unclear], you'd walk out and then they'd pull the string, but the dirt's going a little bit[unclear]. They'd pull a little out.
SJL: They'd mix it up with the dirt there.
EMM: They claim that the field there was graded six inches by the British. Tunnel after tunnel after tunnel. The Germans would run a tank through, and all of a sudden, a piece would collapse and they learned they'd have to dig deep.
EMM: That happened when they took a loaded payload across it up at Sagan, and it was about three days later before anybody even went and inspected it.

I: Where was that?
EMM: Sagan, first camp we were in, up southeast of Berlin.

I: How do you spell it?
EMM: S-A-G-A-N.
JS: Sagan is Stalag Luft III. Stalag Luft III is the stalag or the prison, luft is air, III is the third one for airmen, and Sagan was the village.
EMM: The German soldiers weren't supposed to think for themselves. They drove across this tunnel and it caved in, and they just got another wagon and unloaded that one and moved it on out. Then the officers came in and spotted it, and by then–the story, of course, I'm hearing it from other guys in there because

I'm not privy to everything–but by then, our tracks were all covered up. We didn't know anything about tunnels.
JS: Let me tell you about the escape committee. Every prisoner-of-war is expected to try to escape at all times. The reason being–you tie up more German troops guarding you and staying away from the lines where they're needed. But if everybody tried to escape at once, you'd mess up another guy. So, if you wanted to get out, they would help you, but you had to come out with a plan to get over the fence. Once you got over the fence, then they could get you clothing, timetables, tickets, whatever you needed, maps, the whole bit. They could get you this stuff. You had to go to the escape committee. Let's say he wants to escape and he's got a plan. They'd say, "Okay, good. We'll try it on such and such a night," and they try to find out about the weather, and so on and so forth. But this is one way something was down. Two or three days before his plan to escape, somebody goes out at night and they clip some wires and they make some tracks. The Germans get up in the morning, and they see this, and they count, and one guy is missing. But he's not missing, I'm missing, I'm up in the attic somewhere. So, then they line everybody up and you pass the desk and they check your number and your picture, and they identify you. They say, "Silverman is missing. That's the guy we're looking for." I'm up in the attic. Three days later he goes out in a honey wagon, or he goes out with a potato wagon, and he goes through with a bunch of guys going to the infirmary or whatever, and he gets out. Now I come down from the attic, and I'm standing where I'm supposed to stand, it doesn't make any difference, and now they've gone through the lists again and the count is right. They don't know he's gone. They're still looking for me. So, until he goofs and gets caught on the outside, he's free. This is why they have an escape committee, just an example of how they did things.

I: They had to organize it.
JS: It was very well organized.
EMM: You did not try to escape on your own. It had to be approved by the committee.

I: Now how many men were on the committee, and was it officers?
SJL: Twelve officers.
JS: One guy was called Big X–I don't know who he was–he was number one. His assistant was called Little X. I think you'd find that in that same movie, The Great Escape, because what went on in that camp was only across the wire from us in the next camp. We had towers there, where they had guards. All Germans were called goons, so they called them goon boxes. There was a low wire about this high [motions about 4 feet high] called the warning wire. Step over the wire and you'd get shot. If you were playing ball, and the ball went over, you'd wave to the guard, point, and [motions as is if holding a rifle], if you picked up the ball and went back, it was okay. If you went the other way, they'd start shooting. Didn't happen. So, then there was a barbed wire fence, it was a big fence, then

there was another fence, and in between the two fences, German shepherds would be walking around back and forth in case anybody went through. So, they had the warning wire, and they had these two fences, and also between the fences were the goon boxes up there. They had German guards they called ferrets. The barracks were put on blocks so that they could see through underneath and you couldn't dig a tunnel, theoretically, and every so often–there were always people standing around saying, "Goon up." Now, that meant if you were doing anything, put it away, there was a German in the area. They might walk through the place, they might go under, they might hang around, they might listen, so consequently, with the American sense of humor–I didn't see this, but I heard about it. They had all the pails, every room–we had twelve in a room–had a pail of water. They just waited, and one day one of these ferrets would go underneath and start snooping around. They'd say, "Okay fellows, let's do it today." They all got out their scrubbing brushes, and at the command, "One two, three, scrub your floors, men," everybody dumped their bucket and this wet rat came out screaming bloody murder.
SJL: The water went right down between the boards.
[Laughs]
JS: "Oh, so sorry Hans, we didn't know."

I: So, where would the tunnel be?
JS: How they got there–don't ask me, you'll have to ask some of the other guys. But they had ways of getting tunnels. They would dummy up things, the trees…
SJL: The one I read about–they took the stove, remember…
JS: I could never figure out how they got the stove down to the place down below. They went through the stove probably to the space, then they had a pallet of some sort covering the tunnel which they would cover with dirt. That must have been some waste. They would go through the stove to get underneath the building, and lift this thing up and there'd be a tunnel.
EMM: At first the building sat on the ground, and everybody was digging. So, then they put them all up on stilts, so there's no way…
SJL: Ferrets or dogs could run underneath.
JS: And then in the washroom, there was concrete, so I think the one on The Great Escape–they went down through the–they had a manhole in there, in the bathroom, and they went down into that and then worked up from that.
JS: They had three tunnels, Tom, Dick and Harry. I remember that.

I: Were you liberated on the same day, all three of you?
JS: Well, we were in the same camp. Yes.
EMM: We didn't all get out on the same day.

I: Patton came through, right?
SJL: Came in on his tank with his pearl-handled 38's he had on there, he wore them.

I: Did you all see him?
SJL: I did.
EMM: I did.
[unclear]
JS: [unclear] told me there was supposed to be 100-120,000 people in this camp at the time. They had other nationalities. They had Russians, they had Greeks, they had Italians–I know they had a lot of Italians–they had Australians, they had British. The main gate was over here, and there was an avenue and there were buildings like this and then there was another gate, they kept some cooped up in there–the Canadians were in there–and there was a big one here, that we were in. I don't know what was down there; I wasn't there that long. By the time we got down there, it took another two weeks and we were out. The first thing we knew, the planes were coming over, and one of the great experiences I remember and I'm hoping these guys remember, two fighter planes, one with their contrails made a great big eight in the sky, and the other one made a nine, [unclear]. That's our boys. They were really shoving it to the Nazis right in their neighborhood in the sky. And they would come by like this [makes a motion from side to side] and we'd cheer, and the Germans would get upset. Anyway, we heard some small-arms fire one day. Now, I'm air crew, I don't know anything about small-arms. But when I see dirt hopping around, I figured something's up. So, we scooted. And there was a battle–you could hear the crackly crack, crackly crack, it kind of moved along. This is what I remember. And the next thing, people are looking out and suddenly somebody says, "Look down there," and we looked at the main gate, and the American flag was on it, and we went berserk, we went berserk. When we looked at the goon towers and there were no goons there; there were Americans up there. I don't know how they got there, I never saw them. I guess I was hiding from the bullets, making like an ostrich. And we saw the American flag. To this day, even now, I'm starting to well, when I see that. About three days later, we're in camp and Patton's coming in. By this time, you could go from one compound to another. These buildings that were here, I was on the roof, the peak of a building, and there were only about six or eight of us, and there were French on that side and Canadians on this side. There were two or three of us on this roof, and a couple of guys here and another guy, and that was about it. And here comes this flying wedge, and here's General Patton, with his chest, breaking the ice, because he's the ice breaker, coming with his [unclear] and I noticed his pearl-handled guns, so he's walking through [makes a saluting motion], and the British [makes saluting motion] …and we heard a French guy, "Mou, Général," and here's a guy in the barracks next to us, "Hey Georgie, where the hell have you been? What took you so long?" and he used an expletive which I'm not going to use on this thing. "But where the blink have you been?" The first guy he acknowledged was him. [Laughs] That's my memory of George Patton. You can say what you want about George Patton, he liberated me. That's my boy.

I: So, that was the beginning of May?
JS: April 29, 1945. The date that is etched in my memory.

I: You got a salute out of him, Earl?
EMM: These guys were more mobile than I was. I had this bad knee and I wasn't getting around too fast. But I was going to get around–I ducked around a building and I threw a salute at him and he returned it. I just happened to be there all by myself when he came around that building.
SJL: He was PO'd. He said, "You guys are all officers, and this is what they did to you?" We looked like hobos.
EMM: Patton didn't hang around long. He made his little speech and he was gone. Some of the guys hung around in there and he was talking to some of them.
SJL: They set up a field kitchen, and we hadn't had anything good to eat for months.
JS: Bread, it looked like angel food cake, it was so white.
SJL: But the best of it was when the Russian prisoners, they left camp, nobody told me, they left, they went out, they killed cows, they had them on their shoulders, bringing a piece of the cow, they were going to roast beef. Then they came back. They made the guards scared. They went to the railroad yard, and they broke into a boxcar, and they found condensed milk in gallon cans, and the Russians brought them to us. [unclear] Where I was, there must have been fifty guys in a tent. They brought us…
JS: You're talking about those big white tents.
SJL: Great big, like a circus tent.
JS: Far more than fifty guys.
SJL: So, we laid around, when it rained we were in water.
EMM: We had hay to lie on, clean hay, so it wasn't like back in Nuremberg.
SJL: They brought us the condensed milk and then the Army started delivering the bread. We looked at that bread and we were afraid [unclear] it looked so good–it looked like angel food cake, and everybody just looked at it and looked at it, and then we started eating it, and we put that condensed milk on it, and then they started making food and then we had good food.
JS: The story I heard about the Russians carving up the livestock, was that the farmer got a hold of some American officer, and he said, "Take some troops because you're killing off all the sheep." There were sheep involved at the time, and they just cut off a couple of steaks that they wanted, and discarded the rest of it, and then they moved along. "You know, we're going to need this food to feed you guys and us, our people." By the time he convinced this particular officer, the farmer came back, and said, "Forget it." His herd had been wiped out. We spoke with some Russians, guys that had broken German, and Russians that had broken German, and some Polish guys, you know, and had sort of a communication with them, and we were, at this point at an airport called

[unclear] which was a German fighter base, and we were waiting for C-47s to come and get us, so we hung around and exchanged some stories. And we were telling the Russians how we were getting out and we said, "How are you guys getting out?" He said, "We're walking home. We walked to [unclear]." That name sticks in my mind, and 1200 or 1400 miles sticks in my mind. And I and the other fellows, as a group, we said, "Well, aren't they coming to get you? Are you going to go by truck or flying?" "They do not recognize that we are prisoners-of-war. We were written off as dead. We were supposed to die; either go forward or die, you cannot go back." That's what they were up against. So, now that the war was over, Moscow didn't give a damn about them and if they wanted to go home, they were going to have to get out…

I: I heard some of them actually went to the gulag once they got home. Because they had been taken prisoner, Stalin threw them in Siberia once they got home. So, these Russian fellows, pretty good impression of them? I'm sure they were different.
SJL: How many generals did we have in the Russian village–I think it was about twelve. Russian generals? They walked around and looked like [unclear].
JS: In retrospect, and this is what I said to that girl that interviewed me for the book, I said, any person today or any kid today growing up should get on his hands and knees every night and thank God that he's born in the United States of America, because even today you could be born in Africa and you've got a fifty-fifty chance of getting to be twelve years old. Aids all over, you got one group murdering the other within their own country, killing each other and[unclear] this going on and on in Israel, Syria, Lebanon and stuff. You can't even go to school without being afraid your bus is going to be machine-gunned or blown up, and people that live in this country have no idea how lucky they are. In Mexico, they're having a terrible time; they're coming by droves, to come over here to work. They have problems with us because we don't want them for one reason or another. And this is Mexico. Same thing with Canadians–you should thank God, every day that you were born in this country. I don't think anyone knows it. There's a quote by George Santayana, and it's posted at the Air Force Museum, and I can't recite it verbatim, but it says, "Those who do not learn from history are condemned to re-live it," to live it again. And nobody knows. We spoke about this the other day. They want the Olympics in China. Well, the pros say, "Well, we'll get in there and we'll do good in there. They'll realize that they have to be more democratic; they can't be that way with their people." If you don't learn from history–in 1936, they had the Olympics in Berlin. Didn't that make Hitler a nice guy? Imagine what he could have been if they didn't have the Olympics–how bad he could have been? What's the matter with you? Everybody is worried about himself and nobody is worried about the United States. Nobody is worried about their country. They want their boat; they want their summer cottage; they want their retirement plan; they want theirs. Two of my boys have vans like he has [points to **SJL**]. He has a reason for the van because he's up on a farm and

he transports–his family is bigger. My kids just have two kids. We had a station wagon. We went to Canada, we went to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, went camping places. We had four kids. They have two kids, and they've got these monster things. And I said, "What do you need a 4x4?" and they said, "They go in snow," and I said, "But they don't stop in snow." Also, we have snowplows. You're not going across the fields, through the rocks like you see on TV, what do you have to worry about? The potholes on Sunrise Highway? But it's a thing we've got to have. Look at the automobile commercials. You ever see anything going twelve miles an hour? A Cadillac goes like a rocket–you see the smoke. Some guys–they buy these things, and say, "I have to drive like this," and they cut in and out.

I: I've seen the traffic on Sunrise Highway, so I know what you are talking about.
JS: In the meantime, this stuff is using up gas and oil. You know there's only so much juice in an orange. There is only so much oil. Where is the oil right now that is being used up? Arabia. They want to take our few yards of oil up here–some in the United States. When this is gone, who is going to have the oil–Russia, China, and India. So, boys, plan ahead.
SJL: We're not going to have to worry about it. We're not going to be here. Somebody else…
JS: What you get out of the prisoner-of-war experience–it's amazing. I haven't seen this guy [points at **SJL**] for fifty years, and politically, economically, and everything else, we're like twins. You could see any guy–that's why it broke my heart when John McCain dropped out because this guy's a POW, and when you're a POW you suddenly realize what's important and what's not important, that's one thing you find out. The most important thing is, we have to take care of this country first, and nobody seems to be giving a damn.

I: Any of you guys been back to Germany since the war?
SJL: Not me.
JS: They have tours if you want to go to the old prison camps. That's hot stuff. I get out of Sing Sing after fifteen years– do you think I'm going to go back and take a tour of the place?

I: So you have no desire to retrace those steps?
SJL: I wanted to go and take my wife, but she got sick, but I wanted to go just to let her see, so I can't do anything because she had a stroke. That shuts the door.

I: What do you think about the German people?
SJL: The ones that I knew were the civilians–the ones that were left behind, and we got to talk to them. I thought most of them were pretty nice people. Were you [looks at **EMM]** there that day? We were marching and we pulled up to this little farmhouse, and we went up there and we knocked on the door, and we asked them if we could wash our faces and shave? Me, I was a stickler to shave

every day, no matter where I was, I shaved. Was [unclear] with us? We knocked on the door. You talked sign language and whatever you think you knew in German until you'd strike a deal, and she said, "Okay, wasser, I'll give you wasser." Their stoves are big cast iron stoves, and on the side, they had water tanks, and whenever you were cooking over there, this water was hot all the time. So, the lid she picked up and she gave us a bucket of hot water, and she said, "Go out to the barn, and there's a wash basin and a mirror," and she gave us towels, even, and she had two little kids. So, we went out there. We got washed and came back and brought her the stuff back, and thanked her, and we came in, and there were four plates and she had fried bacon, we had fresh eggs, and she had just finished making rye bread in the oven, brown rye. That was the breakfast I had on that march, the four of us had. So anyhow, [unclear] I had some leftover sugar cubes in my pocket, and I had a couple of pieces of candy, and she had these little kids. Well, we were talking, and all of a sudden, we made sense to each other. She was saying she was a widow. Her husband was killed on the Eastern front, and she had these kids, and I think she had her mother living with her on this farm. I don't know how they worked it. But anyhow, we sat down and we gave her this or that, but she didn't want it. Anyhow, we got to leaving, we were in our twenties, she was probably about forty-some years old, and she came over and gave us a big hug and then said, "Good Luck."
I: Now is this after the war ended?
SJL: That was when we were prisoners and were marching down from Nuremburg down to Moosburg.

I: How could you do that, though, did the guards let you do that?
EMM: We actually were bribing the guards to stay with us. There were SS troops in the area, and a bunch of Americans walking without guards–you'd have problems. Along the same lines, I didn't get into the deal you got into, but I got into a store that a couple of ladies were running, and they let about fifteen or sixteen of us in there, and locked the door and pulled the shade, and the guards were outside beating on the door trying to get in, and she let us get what we wanted, and then she sneaked us out the back door. But see, this was at the end, and I actually saw three women converge on the Commandant of the camp–a big, old, fat major, he was at Sagan and then he was down at Nuremberg–and he was riding a bicycle on that march, and I saw three women, two from each side and one from the front [unclear] on his bicycle, and dumped him right out there in front of all of us. And then the civilians–all they wanted to know was, "When are the Americans going to get here?" See, the Russians were coming, too. All the civilians by then, on that march, they were with us, they wanted us there, they wanted the Americans there before the Russians got there.
JS: I told them this story yesterday. I was hoping that one of them would be one of the six of us. I did eventually, about ten years ago, meet one of the guys who was in this room, and he remembered everything as I did, because sometimes you think, "I'm not sure this happened or I heard it or what.". But this is what

happened. It was on my birthday. The night before, it was a Saturday, and they put us in a barn and made a big fuss about–they had Polish displaced workers, and they told these girls to fix our beds for us, they got hay and got a blanket, and they took care of it, and it was nice, but the next day he invited us into his kitchen. We came into the kitchen, a large kitchen, larger than this. They cooked over in that area, the family sat there, we sat over at a table for six over here. So, I had mixed emotions about this which I will tell you about at the end of this. They gave us pigs' knuckles which has got him all upset[points to **SJL**], big boiled potatoes and one thing or another, and after the meal he came over with a pad and said, "I would like you to write a note to the commanding officer of the unit that occupies this area," however he said it–this is not verbatim–but write this, "This will introduce Herr so and so, who is the bürgermeister, the mayor, of the village here, and he had the six of you there and he treated you well and gave you breakfast and took care of you and gave you good quarters, clean quarters in the barn, and kept you warm etc." It was April, April 15th was my birthday. It was a Sunday, he asked, "Is anybody Catholic, do you want to go to Church with the family?" They didn't go. I said, "I'm not signing anything like that." The reason I didn't want to sign is I remember when they were winning in 1940 or '41, and they said, "Our boys, our boys." I didn't see anybody who said that this was terrible. They were cheering. Now that they were losing, all of a sudden, they turned their faces around. So, I said "I'm not signing." One guy said, "Let me write it, I'll write it." I got annoyed with him when he wrote it. So, he writes it, and this is what he wrote. "To the commanding officer," just as this man said, and "Please take care of him and his family," and then he added one more paragraph. "Please do the undersigned a favor and take care of this guy." And he signed it.
SJL: Take care meant different than take care of your welfare.
JS: What does it mean to an American–take care?
SJL: Take care means, "Shoot him".
[Laughs]

I: [unclear]
JS: I've often wondered–I'd like to go back to find out whatever happened to him. **EMM:** That's one thing that really bothered me when I got back. On the march we had in January, the civilian crowd, they weren't with us at all. And then in April, boy between January and April, they were going this way and all of a sudden, they're going this way. Now why can't you just turn right around and go back the other way, which we gave them a chance and I think they would have in the next few years.
JS: When we got picked up, we were near a place called Eisleben, and they put us on a train and they took us to [unclear] and there was a railroad station. That's where we got the train to go back to Frankfurt, which was the interrogation center. They had a number of us, maybe, I'd say fifteen, twenty, thirty, something like that, and we were guarded by the Luftwaffe and we came into this railroad

station, and all these Germans were there, and the next thing you know, there was a mob of people screaming and shouting, and the Luftwaffe had their guns and they protected us. That's when we first got out.
EMM: They finally had to lock us in the buildings in a room down in the basement to keep us away from the civilians.
JS: Had it not been for that, we would have been lynched right there. Now these are the same guys, these are the same people that come April, when they could smell borscht on the Russian breaths on one side and [unclear] on the American breaths on the other, then all of a sudden, "What can we do?" Well, what would you do if you were in the same position? You'd do the same thing.
EMM: When we were shot down, the only reason I had a 45 strapped to me, was the MPs made sure you had one when you left. And they put some rifles in the back of the airplanes in case we crash-landed to protect yourself with, and at the end of this little discussion they had, when they told us how to use this stuff, they said, "Save a bullet for yourself." And I would never do that, but I mean, that's the way it was. The civilians were really going after the Air Force.
SJL: They did all the cutting of the American airmen when they were captured. Not the soldiers. The civilians did.
EMM: They said, "If you get shot down, you get under military control as soon as you possibly can."
JS: It seems to be worldwide, nobody seems to like the American airmen. The worst thing to be, is to be an airman and get caught by the Viet Cong, get caught by the Koreans, they put you [unclear] because we could really get out…

I: You're not going to [unclear] from the sky because…
SJL: They couldn't hide.

I: So, what about German people today, do you know any? Do you have any desire to know any?
JS: I can tell you. I have a story. [unclear] I used to be in the driving school business. When I first got in, I worked for some company–I took it as a temporary job–and I was teaching a woman by the name of Katie Gunther, a German woman, a nice woman. I just didn't get around to telling her I had bombed Germany. My job was to teach her how to drive. She was married to Max. Max was a salesman for a German company that makes the hardware for operating rooms–scissors, scalpels, whatever. In the course of discussions with him, it turned out he was a German fighter pilot. Then we started comparing notes, and probably we were flying the same day. We were flying every day, so he must have been flying when I was there, because he was flying in that period of time. He was in a 109. Now, this is the nicest guy in the world. We got along very well. They invited my wife and me to come over–we had dinner there. They wanted something done in the building, and our scoutmaster was a contractor, so I fixed it up with the scoutmaster to get the job. She was a chief housekeeper in a hospital in Hempstead, nearby, and whenever anybody was in the hospital that I

knew of, when I went in to see them, I went down to see Katie. Katie saw to it that they got a little extra this and that. Nicest people in the world. Here's a guy doing his job for his country. I'm a guy doing my job, and we're trying to kill each other. Thirty, forty years later, I don't see anything wrong with this guy. I'm not judging the German people or the German frame of mind. I am judging Max Gunther, individual. Now, I'm Jewish and this guy's Luftwaffe and he's fighting for the Nazis. He shouldn't have let his wife– "What? A Jew teach you to drive, no way." Never happened. I taught Arabs, by the way. I said to one–if they passed, they think you're the greatest instructor in the world. If they failed, you were a bum. So anyway, they're passing and I'm getting a lot of these Arab people. I'm getting them from Lebanon, I'm getting them from Syria, and I'm getting them from Israel itself, Palestinian Arabs. So, one day I asked one guy, he is name was Harvey. I said, "As you guys know, I'm Jewish. With all this that's going on in Palestine, how come you're using me?" He said, "That's Palestine, this is here. You're a good teacher, we want you." So, if you go on a person-to-person level… I've taught people in that area from all over. Everybody wants the same thing; they want a good job, they want a clean house, they want a roof that doesn't leak, they want their bellies full, they want their kids clean, behaved, they want to keep out of trouble, they want the kids educated, they want to enjoy Jones Beach just like everybody else, on a person-to-person basis. But when you get a rabble rouser that whips up the crowd, and I could mention a few of ours right now, and whenever they set up a camera, bingo, they're there. But we're not going to mention names–you know who I'm talking about. There are enough to go around.
EMM: I went to an Air Force meeting in [unclear]. That's where I met him [points to **JS**], at this meeting. It [unclear] I went out there and it was in the paper and I saw that there was going to be a German Luftwaffe pilot who was going to be the speaker. Well, I didn't want to go and I called…

I: Where was it, Earl?
EMM: Out here in Glens Falls. So, I called the wife, and this guy, I think he was the Director of Adirondack Community College, he was a Jewish gentleman, the head of this group that was getting together out there. His wife said, "Well, forget your problems, and come on out and have a good time. So, I went and I stood up there that night after he made his speech. Now, his speech kind of turned me off too, because he spent a whole lot of it explaining that he was not a combat pilot. He was flying–like he flew, at the end of the war, he was flying scientists and so on and so forth out of the Eastern Zone back to the Western Zone so we could get them. He backed himself up that he was a good guy. So, then I flat out asked him well, "Tell me this, when we were shot down and our guys were in the parachutes, why was the German Luftwaffe down there shooting our guys in the parachutes?" "It couldn't have happened," that was his attitude. "It couldn't have happened." I said, "Well it did happen, and I was down there and saw it." That kind of turned me off. I still go to the meetings, and he's there every time. As a matter of fact,

he was at the head, I think, of one of the big paper companies out there. He was the manager of it for years. He came over here and has been here since the war. All the guys that worked for him out there–I don't know if it's the one that's on strike, or which company it was, they all said he was a good man and so on and so forth, but since I got on him pretty heavy about those German fighters down there shooting our guys in the parachute, he kind of avoids me.
JS: Well I can prove to you that what he's saying is correct, because when I bailed out I could see two or three other parachutes, about three or four of us in a group, and I heard the chatter of machine guns. I got terrified, and I said, "My God, they're going to be coming around shooting at innocent parachutes." Now, if the story wasn't around, I never would have thought about that. It so happened that all this chatter from the machine guns was not them shooting parachutes, it was what they called the Lufbery Circle. It was developed in the first world war after a pilot by the name of Lufbery. Here's a 109, he's on the tail of a P-51, who's on the tail of a 109, who's on the tail of a P-51, and if you break that, you've got try to turn inside them, so that they can't get at you. They're trying to get inside to shoot you, so the circle gets tighter and tighter, and they were firing at each other, so I couldn't wait to get down from that cloud level and disappear in the clouds down here. But up above, I could hear the shooting, and when I came to and saw the planes, that's the first thing I thought, "They're shooting at the parachutes." And if I didn't think that, where did I get the thought from? From the stories that were around that they did do these things.
EMM: Both the guys with us that were shot through the leg down there were still in their parachutes, and I didn't see any American fighters down there either. Things were rather hectic.
JS: Another thing that came back to me yesterday that I hadn't thought about for a long time–by the time I got on the ground, we got picked up and we were put in a building which he remembered; it reminded me that's the first guy I've seen in years that was in that building. I could never find the guy, I've met a lot of POWs, I've never found a guy in the building, and he remembers it. I was one of two guys that wasn't wounded that was [unclear] everybody else was wounded in one way or another. Some guys were burned, they were just black with blood, black, [unclear].

I: It must have been terrible.
JS: Well, it wasn't good.

I: You want to talk about the first aid kits?
EMM: They snatched them so quick so we had nothing to take care of our wounds.
SJL: The German soldiers would get a knife and they would take the whole thing, the iodine. They'd take it for their troops, we had nothing for ours.

I: You said you were one of two guys that wasn't wounded?

SJL: Yes, he and I [looks at **JS**]. We went around; we looked for the packs [unclear]. I know I took up my shirt, took my undershirt because I always wore an undershirt, we cut that up and tried to use it for a bandage, and finally we got the Germans to bring us some stuff for wounds. But paper you dry your hands with, that's what their bandages were, they brought us some grease, put something on the guys that we could. One guy had his back–remember the one guy–he landed on the tallest building. He hid on a roof and the chute collapsed, so he fell about thirty-five feet onto the ground and he hurt his back and he couldn't move. Every time you tried to move him, he was in pain.
EMM: He's the one I carried across Frankfurt on my back. I don't know–he just got used to pain because he never uttered a cry or anything.
SJL: I was hurt. When I hit the ground, I ruined my left knee, it was about that big. It was all swollen up. I walked with a limp. I don't know if you were with me when I was carrying my parachute and they walked me from the field–oh, you weren't with me. Who the hell was with me? They walked me from the field, they made me pick up my chute and carry it and they took me to the bürgermeister's house.
EMM: First one I saw on the ground was [unclear], and he was the happiest guy on earth to see me.

I: From your group?
EMM: He was the tail gunner, and he was afraid that he had bailed out and the rest of us had gone back to England. When he saw me, he knew he had done the right thing.

I: He didn't know the plane blew?
EMM: Well, no. But he knew to get out, because he saw the other crew up forward, and he motioned for them to go, and one guy was standing there, he shook his head, he wasn't going.
SJL: He died. That's one of the ones that died in the plane.
EMM: And I still think that that was strictly a case of where–see these were two small guys [picks up a photo and points] –this guy was in the ball turret, he was standing there on the waist gun. These guys would switch off in the turret, and I think they had a deal between them– "If I'm in the turret, you don't leave until I'm out" –and Joe was standing there waiting for him to get out, and waited too long. The escape door was gone, and I think Lindquist must have gotten out, I think he must have gotten out and I think he was probably wounded, because on the ground when they came back, the Germans told us, "Comrade bleeding," but they wouldn't let us go to him.
JS: I remember now what I was going to say. If you back up, it goes to what he's talking about. When our plane was hit, to get to the point of the story, the pilot pushed the bailout button, and a bell or something rings, an alarm, and you were supposed to bail out, so I started to bail out and my feet were already hanging out, and I realized the plane was still flying straight and level. Everybody knew

many a time half the crew bailed out, and the rest of them somehow got back, so I figured this thing is still straight and level, so I came back into the plane and hooked up to the interphone. and I got an oxygen bar, and I called the pilot and I said, "What's wrong with airplane, we're still straight and level?" He said, "Well, we're on fire." And I said, "Where?" He said, "The wings." I crawled through the bomb bay and back, and I haven't crawled through a bomb bay since then, and I don't know how the hell I ever did it the first time, because you can't get through that bomb bay today. Maybe I'm a little bigger, I don't know. Well, anyway, I opened the door to the back and I see just flame, in the rear end of the airplane. From the radio room back, it was just solid flame. I closed the door, I came back, we're straight and level, and I bailed out. They tell me that the airplane blew up about a minute or two after the last parachute was seen. I heard the story later from chaps that got back. The part that I forgot was that we were in this big room, and this was three or four hours after we landed, and then I got the shakes and my nerves were such that… After that, it was perfectly normal, as normal as I'm sitting right now, as I am here now I was then. But about four hours later, it was uncontrollable. It must have been a delayed reaction, I guess, because I've heard this from other people.

I: Did all your crew make it out of that plane?
JS: Everybody got out of our airplane, but the tail gunner, whose lieutenant–in the lead plane the co-pilot flies in the back position, and he polices the [unclear] and he calls off whatever he sees. He's the eyes in the back of the pilot's head, the air commander's head, and he became the streamer. That means he bailed out, he popped his chute, his chute came up but it did not blossom–it just streamed, so he went down. His name was Ford. I don't know his first name, but his name was Ford.

I: He was on your plane?
JS: No, it's from the airplane I was in. You're talking different things–my airplane with my old crew. The second tour.
EMM: You saw this picture?
SJL: That's on the same day we got shot down.

I: That's from National Geographic, right? November 2nd. Is this it?
EMM: That's the day we were shot down. My wife says, "Just tell them that's you."
JS: Can you see any markings on those planes?
EMM: No, but the deal is, this one's got[unclear] you can see it dropping bombs, and we were already off the target.
SJL: There was somebody in that group getting smashed. But that's…
EMM: But that's what we were going through.

I: You had already dropped your bombs?

EMM: Yes, we had already dropped ours, and we were five minutes out this way when we got hit.

I: Do you have this magazine?
EMM: Yes, I have the magazine right here.
SJL: That's what it looks like when that happens. You become a ball; if you get out, you say, "Thank you Lord."
JS: What's your first name again?

I: My name's Matthew, Matt.
JS: Matt?

I: Yes. I'm going to need your addresses, too.
JS: If you give me your address, I can send you some stuff.

I: What's your address Jerry?
JS: ... East Meadow, NY 11554. That might speed it up by half an hour.

I: What's your phone number?
JS: .... If I don't screw things up, you won't get my fax machine–you'll get me or an answering machine and you could call up to twelve o'clock at night.

I: What's your address, Sam?
SJL: My address is ..., Coraopolis, PA 15108.

I: What's your phone number?
SJL: .... They keep saying we're running out of area codes.
JS: In spite of what Jessica said, it's not all doctors.
SJL: I was looking for something here and I didn't find your name on it. Finkelstein. We had a guy in my [unclear]class…

Walking around, talking to selves, mumbling conversation

I: Looks like National Geographic.
SJL: But, anyhow, that shows bases, cities where we went.

I: Is this your diary?
EMM: Yes.

I: Can I take it?
EMM: There's two pages to that.

I: Yes, okay. Is this what you used to help you write the narrative afterwards?

EMM: Well, that's just something I kept as I went along. After each mission I'd come home and write in there. But I don't think I was really aware of what we were going through back then when I read these a few years later.

I: How old were you–twenty-two?
EMM: Twenty-two; well twenty-three when we were shot down.

Silence and mumbling conversation and discussion about plans for the day and trips and housekeeping issues

JS: www.457thbombgroupassoc.org. That's what we looked up last night.

I: What did you do for an occupation when you came home for most of your career?
JS: I went in the family business for years, which was a big mistake because, naturally, it bellied up, and then I took a temporary job with a driving school, because I got a car that I could take home at night so my wife could then get a job. The youngest kid was about nine years old before she started working. And I was [unclear] after nine years I left and opened up my own. I retired about a year and a half ago.

I: A year and a half ago?
SJL: You worked almost to eighty.
JS: I was eighty, but I lived on Long Island, and we have the highest taxes in the world, so if you want to live there, you have to work there until you die.

General conversation about weekend plans and family