RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH LEONARD FEINBERG

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Leonard Feinberg on November 22, 1998, at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and …

Hilary Gould: … Hilary Gould.

KP: I guess I would like to begin by asking about your parents. They were both born in the United States.

Leonard Feinberg: Right.

KP: When did your family immigrate, how many generations back?

LF: My grandparents seem to have all come over somewhere in the vicinity of 1890, either before or just after. I really don't know. It's a shame. *Roots* [miniseries] hadn't been written in those days, so we didn't think about checking on their lives. I'd hear little stories about what it was like over in the old country, somewhere in Poland and Russia. They always said that the border was always changing, so sometimes they lived in Poland and sometimes they lived in Russia, so I don't know, but, fortunately, thank God, they came over. My father's parents were married when they came, because I believe a couple of his siblings were born there. My mother's parents married here after my grandfather got a divorce, but that's another whole story. That would make a book.

So, my mother was born in New York, and my father's family settled in Long Branch, New Jersey. I would love to find out someday why the whole family settled there. I understand Norman Mailer was also from Long Branch. I understand he was a relative, but that's as far as it goes. Fortunately, after my parents were married in Long Branch, they only stayed there for a year and moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey, which is where my mother grew up, thank God.

KP: Why do you say, "thank God"?

LF: Oh, to grow up in Long Branch? Long Branch is a resort town, and in the summertime, it's really jumping. There are people there and the houses have people in them, but if you go there in the wintertime, it's the most depressing place. Everything is closed up and cold. We used to take these trips constantly to go visit the relatives.

KP: In Long Branch.

LF: Yes. Kids, in those days, we never thought to say, "I don't want to go." You just went. Your parents are going, so you just went. There was no one there for me to--I have one cousin that's my age, but she's a real "galoop." The rest of them were either older than I or younger. So, I used to just go there, nothing to do, so I hated it. Growing up in Elizabeth was great. That was the best thing they could have done. It was a wonderful town to grow up in. The school system was excellent by far.

KP: What high school did you go to?

LF: Well, in Elizabeth, there's only one high school for boys and one high school for girls in those days. So, I went to Jefferson High School. Oh, there was a tech school, but that was very minor in Elizabeth. There was a very small Catholic [school], because the school system was so good that everybody went to the public schools. [Editor's Note: The high school for girls in Elizabeth was Battin High School.]

Hilary Gould: Were you treated any differently being Jewish in Elizabeth?

LF: No. I've mentioned many times that Elizabeth--I found out later-- [is] an unusual town in that respect, too. The best example I always gave, if there were ten percent blacks in the school, that was a lot. When I was a sophomore, the president of the senior class was black, and nobody thought anything. It was amazing.

KP: He was just the best qualified.

LF: Yes. I'm trying to think of any instances of anti-Semitism that we came across. I know my parents had a little bit of a problem when I was five years old when I moved into Roselle, which is right next to Elizabeth. They got some Ku Klux Klan letters right off the bat, because they were the only Jewish family in this neighborhood. After a year, they decided to leave. Well, the neighbors came and asked them not to. So, it was one of those things. Actually, I went into the Army and met fellows, particularly from Philadelphia, and they told me about the problems they had and things like they used to have to fight their way to school in the morning and stuff like that.

KP: I have interviewed people from Perth Amboy.

LF: That's where my wife was born, by the way.

KP: I have interviewed people and I have heard stories in which they had to fight their way to school.

LF: I don't know if you know who Fred Allen is, the comedian?

KP: Yes.

LF: Remember Fred Allen? He used to refer to Perth Amboy as the elephant's burial ground, so my wife always quotes it. No, really, I didn't see anything here at Rutgers, but I did see some things in the Army. I'll tell you about those later.

KP: I am curious, since we are on the subject of religion, how observant was your family growing up?

LF: How religious?

KP: Yes. How religious?

LF: We kept kosher, but not crazy. In other words, on the Sabbath, if you're really Orthodox, you don't carry money, you don't drive a car, you don't do anything. No, we didn't do any of that stuff.

HG: Did you celebrate the Sabbath every week?

LF: No.

HG: Did your family go to services?

LF: My mother didn't bother with that sort of stuff, like lighting the candles on Friday night. I didn't even know about that. I went to Hebrew school in order to prepare for my bar mitzvah. Hebrew schools that we had there, I got kicked out of the first one, but that's another long story. I ended up going to another one. All I learned was how to read Hebrew, unfortunately. We got very little in the way of culture or history or any of that. There was very little of any of that, because I see what some of the kids [learn] today that go to those schools. I can go to the synagogue, and everybody seems to know what page to be on and what to do and I just follow the leader.

The funny thing is I kept kosher. I was so kosher that when I was in the Penn Relays and that was in Philadelphia and it was [on] Passover and I wandered all over town looking for a restaurant to eat at, to get a Passover meal. Then, when I went into the Army, I just knew that I couldn't keep kosher. So, I just turned a switch because it was more important to me to adjust to this switch than to make a whole big thing out of food. When I came back from the service, I didn't turn the switch back. I tried to explain to my father because he seemed to make a thing out of it to some extent. He wasn't so super [religious].

KP: He was not super religious either.

LF: So, [not] super religious either. I said to him, "I don't want to make a fetish out of food," which reminds me that probably the course that was most instructive and really followed me for the rest of my life was a course that I took here. The professor's name was Heald, H-E-A-L-D, and it was called the "Rise of Western Civilizations." That course taught me so much about the world. If you start learning how religions just go [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes the sound "kaboom."], here it is, God said, "Here, you've got to follow this religion." How do religions develop?

Suddenly, you realize what these things really are about and how fetishes turn into laws of the religion and these things with the Catholics not eating fish on Friday, and that becomes such an important thing. With us, keeping kosher, they keep trying to push that they recognize that some of these other foods are not healthy. You can't tell somebody something is not healthy, but if you tell me that God won't like it if you eat that, that may get through to them, particularly five thousand years ago. So, in fact, my wife gave me the option when we got married if I wanted to keep a kosher home or not. I said, "No. How am I going to have bacon and eggs in the morning?"

KP: I am curious, growing up, how did your family feel about Zionism?

LF: I knew very little about it. In other words, I don't think there was much activity in that area, in Elizabeth anyway. In fact, the first time I heard about anything was when my great grandmother died, and, of course, her children had been supporting her for many, many years. I was there. We went to her apartment they had in New York, and they found all these receipts of all this money she was sending to Palestine. Here they're busy chipping in to pay for her, and she was sending all her money to Palestine. So, that was one of the first times I heard of people sending money to Palestine, getting involved in that. Don't forget, I grew up in the [Great] Depression to some extent. We weren't too concerned about finding money for someone else; you were trying to find money for yourself, not that we had any problems in our house, fortunately.

KP: To ask you a little bit about your parents, what did your father do for a living?

LF: Well, it was a family business that my grandmother started, my mother's mother. She was really the businesswoman. My mother's father was also into it. In fact, he built houses and things like that. He got into real estate, and they owned a lot of properties in Elizabeth and in Linden and a couple of areas like that and just rented them out. The funny thing is that the depression was very fortuitous for them, because the banks would call them up and say, "Hey, we've got this property. We don't want it. You can have it, just pay the interest on the mortgage," which in those days was like one percent. So, they picked up an awful lot of property during the depression. When things changed, then they started paying off their mortgages on these things. So, that's what they did; they were in real estate. For example, my father did most of the repairs, because you're not going to hire plumbers and things. That was a great thing for me when I was growing up, because I worked with my father every summer helping him. I loved that.

KP: It seems like you did more simple tasks, and then by the time you got to high school, you would really be working with him.

LF: I could do plumbing. I used to thread pipes, put pipes in. I'd do electrical work and carpentry. I loved doing that and to do it with my father. I've got to tell you a funny thing, because it's germane to [the] rest of the story. My father was the epitome of the worrywart, [a] worrywart for my safety, let's put it that way. When we were growing up, all the kids had bicycles. I couldn't have a bicycle, because I might get hurt. I finally got a bicycle by taking all the money I got from my bar mitzvah, which was a total of twenty-five dollars because that was during the depression. All my nifty relatives chipped in, and I went out and bought a bicycle. In fact, I even ran away from home just before my bar mitzvah.

HG: Why?

LF: Because I said, "I'm not going to come back unless there's a bicycle on the front lawn," but the mosquitoes got to me, so I came home. That's how I got a bicycle. Then, when it came time for me to drive--in those days, kids didn't buy cars; we had to depend on borrowing our father's car, particularly going out on dates, going out to see girls, which was the only thing you needed a car for in those days-- and he just wouldn't let me borrow the car. It was a thing, a constant source of aggravation and problems.

KP: He must have really worried about you in the Army because you could have gotten killed in the Army.

LF: That's the crazy thing. I taught them. We'll get to that part of the story, that they came around [when I was at] Rutgers with what was called the Enlisted Reserve. Well, let's not jump ahead.

KP: Yes.

LF: I'll get to that, but you're right, exactly right. Here, I was brought up that way and I was able to function under the worst conditions without any problems adjusting to them, even though I was brought up with constantly being [protected].

KP: Your father was protective.

LF: Overprotective. Oh, God, there has to be a new word for it.

HG: Was your mom also protective like that?

LF: No, she was much more [laid back]. For instance, she went with me to buy the bicycle, stuff like that. My mother was entirely different.

KP: Do you have any other brothers or sisters?

LF: I have a sister. She's nine years younger. I was like another parent to her.

KP: Rather than a sibling, yes. Did your mother work outside the home at all?

LF: Nope, never. If you want to just digress for a second, can you turn this off?

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: You mentioned before, we had a rather informal, off-the-record discussion, that you had a maid growing up.

LF: Right. She just did all the things in the house.

KP: She helped out around the house.

LF: Yeah, doing the wash, cleaning the house, whatever. She was there every day.

KP: Did your mother do any volunteer work? Did she join any organizations?

LF: Yes. There were some of these Jewish organizations. She did that, to some extent. My mother was a stoic, by the way, which also will come in the last part of the story. I never knew too much. It was nice. I always thought I had a great childhood.

KP: The way it sounds so far, it was a great one.

LF: There were some things missing in it, but, you know.

KP: You mentioned that growing up in Elizabeth, your parents moved from Long Branch and you were delighted.

LF: Yes.

KP: It sounds like Elizabeth was a very tolerant place.

LF: Tolerant means that you have a bad situation that you're tolerating. It was just a nice, let's say, liberal approach to recognizing everyone's right to [be themselves].

HG: Was there a synagogue in Elizabeth?

LF: Oh, yes. In fact, there were several. I forget how many Orthodox synagogues under one chief rabbi. In fact, he just died recently, well, in the last couple of years. Rabbi Teitz was known all over the country. He was quite a guy. He was there for my bar mitzvah, for my wedding, of course when my parents died. He was quite a guy. Even in Pennsylvania, people knew of him. [Editor's Note: Pinchas M. Teitz headed the Orthodox rabbinate in Elizabeth that at one point totaled five thousand people affiliated with five synagogues. Teitz died in 1995 at the age of eighty-seven.]

KP: What else made Elizabeth so great?

LF: For instance, I had a lot of close friends. As I said, the school system was way ahead of its time. We had special classes if you were good in math or chemistry or that kind of stuff. You had advanced courses that we took. When I got to Rutgers, I coasted the first year practically, because most of the things they had in class in my freshman year were things we already covered in high school.

HG: Did you always know you were going to go to college? Was that assumed?

LF: I've got news for you, in those days, if you were a Jewish boy, I never knew that Jewish fellows didn't go to college because I think almost everyone in Elizabeth [went]. It was almost like an unwritten law that you go to college. One of the things that I discovered, and many years later--I told you I had to commute, which was really miserable. I always felt that maybe they couldn't afford it to have me live here in the dorm-- it turns out that, no, my mother just didn't want me to be away from home. So, I commuted. In fact, I went out for football in my freshman year, and I was really doing great because that was one of my real loves. My mother gave me a choice. Don't forget, the only thing that was across the river in those days was the stadium. That's where you went to practice. Well, to get from here to the stadium, you had to take a bus, then come back, and then I'd get back on the train. I'd be getting up home [at] eight, nine o'clock at night, and [that is when] I first started doing my homework. So, my mother gave me a choice,

college or football. I should have picked football, but I picked college. That was the end of my football career.

In Elizabeth, there were a bunch of guys, in fact, there were five of us that grew up together, and we still see each other all the time, just nice friendships. What used to happen after school, there was this huge park not too far from where we all lived in that section of Elizabeth. It's a country park, Warinanco Park. We'd say, "Okay, we're going to meet up at Warinanco Park and we're going to play football, softball, baseball," whatever it was. A bunch of guys would show up, and we'd go "halfies," half the guys on one team, half on the other. If there were twenty guys, we had ten on the team. If there were ten, we had five on the team. If there were thirty guys, it would be fifteen on the team. It wasn't like this damn Little League and all this other stuff they have today; we just played for fun. It was really fun. We had such great times, before they invented all these other organized things for these kids, so they can't just go out and enjoy it, parents fighting with each other and all that nonsense. It was just a nice type of life.

KP: Did you play any high school or college sports?

LF: I was the star of the track team. I was the dash man, 100 [meter] and 220 [meter dash] guy. Even when I was a sophomore, I was the fastest guy in school. As a matter-of-fact, when I got to Rutgers, they held a race of the whole freshman class, and I won. I came in first.

HG: Oh, my.

LF: No, it was just one of those things. I was always good at that.

KP: You mentioned football. Did you play football in high school?

LF: I played football in junior high school. I got some kind of a crazy idea that in high school, football was too organized, more like a type of business than a sport. So, I was supposed to go out in my sophomore year, and I didn't. I was all set, and then I changed my mind. The coach fixed me up with everything. He knew about my running and stuff like that, so I was going to play in my junior year. I got hurt fooling around on the beach that summer. In fact, I was out of school until after Thanksgiving, so I kind of missed the whole season. So, my career kind of [stalled]. I love football, but, unfortunately, I never got the chance. Track was always my thing.

KP: One of the things that I would gather, in Elizabeth and in Newark, there were a lot of movie houses to go to. Did you go to the movies a great deal?

LF: That was the thing, every Saturday, we went to the movies. There was one right around the corner. See, there was a little shopping area about a block away from where I lived. Every Saturday, the guys went to that movie. When we got older, when we could go downtown, they had a couple of theaters that had vaudeville and things like that, but we would go every Saturday. I just was telling somebody the other day that there were so many things that happened in the war, and I'd look at these things and say, "Gee, just like in the movies." We were so movie-oriented in our growing up that there were so many times I'd wish I had a camera because this is something that would make a great scene in [a] movie or on the newsreel or something like that.

KP: You would think in those terms.

LF: Yes, [there were] so many things just like in the movies.

HG: When you said, "We used to go the movies," was that all-male groups going to the movies? Was it dating?

LF: Well, this was with the fellows in the neighborhood when I was growing up. We'd just walk around the corner, and we had two movies. I'm sure you've heard, [there was] a serial, a continuing serial, a cartoon, the news and coming attractions, in addition to the two movies. That's what we did every Saturday. It was great because I loved movies. I still do. Those were good movies. It wasn't gratuitous things that they put into the movies now. I'm not a prude, don't misunderstand, but you go to look at the quality of the movie and you see these things that have no rhyme or reason to them, but that's beside the point.

KP: Do you remember growing up and seeing any war movies that you remember? You were saying that you remember thinking this would make a great movie.

LF: Well, there was *All Quiet on the Western Front*, of course. That was the classic.

KP: Do you remember seeing that?

LF: Oh, yes. I wasn't that young. Don't forget, I'm seventy-five now. I was born in 1923, so in the '30s, I was old enough to remember. I'm trying to think of other war movies. There were several of them. You'd see movies with trenches and types of battles. It was funny, I ended up a couple of times near Reims and there was another area that was famous from World War I. I was in a hospital in Reims, and I was is another hospital, oh, damn, see, I can't remember names, but it was famous from World War I in France. There was all kinds of movies. I'm trying to think. There weren't too many from those days.

KP: What about travel? How much travel did you and your family do growing up?

LF: Back and forth to Long Branch.

KP: That was your main family trip.

LF: Or to New York to visit relatives. Everybody had relatives in New York. Then, every Sunday, every Sunday, we had to go for a ride. It wasn't Long Branch every week. My father used to like to go out and drive, try to get lost someplace, find someplace different. So, we went all over North Jersey.

KP: That would be the family ritual.

LF: God, did I hate it, especially since I used to get carsick every week. He used to have to stop. I used to have to get out and then get back in the car. That was every damn week. It's only in retrospect that I think how stupid I was. Why didn't I tell him I don't want to go? None of my

friends would go out with their family every damn Sunday, but that was the thing. Philadelphia, I guess, was the biggest trip. That was when I was into Penn Relays.

KP: You really had not been any further south than Philadelphia or further north than New York.

LF: No.

KP: You never took a family vacation to the Catskills.

LF: No, no, no. Vacations were always down the Jersey shore. We used to go to Bradley [Beach] or Belmar. It was great. That was also a lot of fun. There were a lot of kids my age.

KP: In season, you enjoyed the shore.

LF: Oh, yes. My friends would be down there, too, the guys I grew up with. In fact, that's how I got hurt that summer. One of my closest friends, who's still close, he was standing on my shoulders--we used to do a lot of that kind of stuff--and he slipped off and hit the top of my foot which became infected and ulcerated, the whole mess. We just had fun, met girls, walk the boardwalk every night. You can walk into Asbury Park from there. Asbury Park was great in those days. I've just been reading about what's been happening, another change in places. Unless I missed something along the line, I thought I had a great childhood. It wasn't until after that I realized how possessive my parents were, particularly my mother. She's very possessive. Who knew? If you don't know anything different, you think that's the norm.

KP: Yes.

LF: So, anyway, that's why I ended up at Rutgers, because I could take the train.

KP: I am curious, before coming to Rutgers, did you belong to any other organizations?

LF: I was a Boy Scout.

KP: What rank did you get?

LF: I guess first class. I think that's as far as I got. My biggest problem was to get any further, I never learned to swim, which must have something to do with my mother because she's always afraid of water.

KP: You still do not know how to swim.

LF: I can swim across the pool, but don't put me out in the middle of the lake someplace. I would probably have to.

HG: When you were at the beach with your friends in the summer, you never went in the ocean.

LF: Well, the ocean was so rough in those days, big waves and stuff. That was the main thing, play in the waves, and you did very little swimming in the ocean. My father was a great swimmer because he grew up in Long Branch and he used to go out and swim in the ocean. In fact, I took swimming in Rutgers. Every freshman, in those days, had to pass a swimming test, so I was able to do that.

HG: They had gym class, too.

LF: Yes. That was compulsory "Physical Education." There's another funny thing. I ended up, I don't mean to get ahead of the story, but when the war started, I started in September 1941 and Pearl Harbor Day was December 1941, so all of a sudden, everything was changing. Rutgers instituted an accelerated program where you could get more courses. I was taking twenty-five credits a semester. Can you imagine that?

HG: No.

LF: From eight in the morning until five at night and then onto the train with my books and bags and all that sort of nonsense. "Phys Ed" was on Friday morning. I think it was the only class I had [that day], so very often, I didn't make it. Well, when I got into the Army, at one point, they wanted a note from my college that I was in good standing. I suddenly realized I flunked "Phys Ed." So, I wrote to [the head of the department].

KP: Dean Metzger?

LF: No. You know about Dean Metzger?

KP: I have heard a lot about Dean Metzger.

LF: He was something else, the Reverend Dean Metzger. That was the thing that was compulsory, chapel. He always asked for blessings in Jesus' name for all of us, whether we believed or not. No, he was very religiously-oriented. I forget who it was in the Phys Ed Department that I wrote to and said, "Could you do something?" They sent a letter from Rutgers that I was in good standing. It didn't make any difference in the long run, but this was at one point. We'll get to that about things that happened when I was in the Army. Yes, we had to take "Phys Ed" and chapel at least once a week at noontime. [Editor's Note: Fraser Metzger served as the Dean of Men at Rutgers College from 1925 until 1944. Metzger also served as acting chaplain from 1931 to 1944 and as University Chaplain for a short time until he retired in 1945.]

HG: Did that make the difference in being Jewish?

LF: No, things like that never bothered me. I used to go and listen or not listen, as the case may be. He always used to give his little pep talk. [It was] just one of those obligations, but I wasn't sensitive about things like that, never have been.

HG: Were your friends a mix of Jewish and non-Jewish?

LF: You mean growing up or here?

HG: Both.

LF: Of course, here, my friends were whoever commuted with me on the train mainly. I never believed in fraternities. I always felt I didn't need them for my social life. I couldn't live here anyway. I used to make my own social life, going out and dating and stuff like that. That, to me, [as] a commuter, that would be the only thing a fraternity could offer was a place to go to a party or something like that, but I didn't need that. Growing up in Elizabeth, just to show you where I lived, there was Pennsylvania Dutch in this house. The next house was (Krumrein?). The next house was (Jackie Gallagher?), who was Irish. The next house was (Jimmy Van Arsdale?) of Dutch descent. Then, there was us. Then, the next house with Bobby (Baraban?) of German descent. We grew up [together]. It was funny when the election, when Al Smith was running, before your time--but that's right, you know history, so you've heard of Al Smith. [Editor's Note: Democrat Al Smith served as the governor of New York and ran for president in the election of 1928. Smith was defeated by Republican Herbert Hoover.]

KP: Oh, yes.

LF: He was Catholic. I started hearing all these things that, "Oh, you can't have a Catholic president." So, that's when I came up with the expression that, "You've got to feel sorry for your kids because they don't know who to hate." I didn't know they didn't like Catholics.

KP: You had lived next door Catholics.

LF: Everything. Nothing, ever. I forgot the (Tonguereins?), who were [of] Swedish descent. It just so happened we were around the same age.

KP: That was your circle of friends growing up.

LF: Then, when I got to high school, most of my close friends were all Jewish but just because we seemed to have so much in common, I guess. It wasn't that I purposely picked them. We lived near each other. We had the same interests. We still do, which is why we're still close friends after all these years.

KP: You mentioned that it was assumed you would go to college.

LF: Yes, I didn't know there was anything else.

KP: You mentioned that you enrolled in pre-med.

LF: It had nothing to do with my parents. They never tried to influence me in the direction [of a pre-med course of study]. I just thought that's what I would like to do. Then, when I got back from the war, there were six million pre-meds, all the pre-meds that started before, the pre-meds that didn't go to war, the pre-meds that were now graduating. There was some kind of number that they told us--I forgot how many pre-meds there were for each opening in med school. Of course, I did know that many of the med schools had quotas.

KP: When did you learn about the existence of quotas?

LF: That was something you always knew about.

KP: Even in terms of colleges, you knew that there were some colleges that had quotas.

LF: Yes. For instance, we always knew not to take engineering, because Jewish engineers never get hired, things like that. So, you'd just accept that, so, "I won't be an engineer." Yet one of my closest friends became an engineer. In fact, two of them did, and they didn't have any problems that I know of. When I was working on my master's, I knew they had an admissions committee and he tells me, point-blank, "The whole population of the United States doesn't have more than ten percent Jews, so therefore we can't have more than ten percent in our class." [He said it] just matter-of-fact, fact of life.

I remember a close friend of mine was from Hawaii of Japanese descent. [He was a] fellow graduate student. We were close. He and his wife and me and my wife used to do a lot of things together. He was also pre-med or had been a pre-med and was now working on his master's. He said he had a choice between him and a fellow from Puerto Rico. That's how they did it. That was their categories. So, they picked the fellow from Puerto Rico instead of the fellow from Hawaii, no bones made about it, probably still. Who knows what it's like today? I don't know. It may be. That was it. So, I went into bio-chemistry instead. Next question?

HG: I understand that you commuted and you had a lot of work to do in bio-chem, but did you participate in any on-campus activities?

LF: No.

HG: Did you go to any of the pep rallies or sports events or anything like that?

LF: Pep rallies? No. First of all, that would be in the evening.

HG: Okay.

LF: We did have some, I guess they call them, convocations at the gym that was here. I guess there's probably another gym someplace, but they used to hold convocations there. They'd bring a speaker in of some sort. I remember going to concerts there.

HG: Was there a lot of discussion?

LF: For example, Paul Robeson.

KP: You remember going to hear Paul Robeson perform.

LF: Yes, he performed here. An interesting thing to add to our conversation, I can't remember his name, he was a famous correspondent who was on the radio. In those days, there was radio, by the way. [He was] very well-known nationally. He had just came back from I think Southeast Asia. I also believe he was Jewish. I can't remember his name. He gave us all a talk

about the dangers of what's happening in the world. This was just after Pearl Harbor, I guess. I'm trying to remember. We used to say if there was a recruiting booth outside the gym, everybody would have gotten in line. I mean, he made such a powerful talk on the dangers our country was facing and the whole thing. Boy, it must be hard having seen, you guys have seen the Vietnam War, and, of course, that thing called the Gulf War, but there was a feeling in the country, a fervor, that you can't explain it. You can't even describe it practically. Unless you experience it, I don't know how anybody could get so worked up. We were ready, literally, at least I was--I know this sounds crazy, but--to go out and die for my country, not that I wanted to die.

KP: You saw that if you had to you would.

LF: In other words, that was just an option that you just accepted.

KP: It was interesting that you raised it that way. I was having dinner last night with some friends in New York, and they did not know very much about my project. We got into this discussion about *Saving Private Ryan*.

LF: I saw that.

KP: I was trying to explain to them why people would in fact get out of a boat when there was shooting. You were trained to do this, so you just do it. Officers will take out their pistols and make you do it. You were just accepting the fact that you were going to do this.

LF: We just did it. It was never the fear that anybody was in back of you with a gun making you do it. There were guys in front of you with a gun.

KP: But they had a hard time getting into that conception that people would do this for a number of reasons.

LF: I was with this National Guard outfit, and they were famous for their marching. That's the whole idea of this constant marching, because you learn to move as a group. It carries on.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

LF: When not too much was going on, we weren't chasing the Germans across France, things were so quiet that the order came down that they wanted the outfit to do some close order drill while we were hanging around. That got me. I didn't enter in, because I was a medic. I always had an excuse to do something else, but I couldn't believe that they decided to do that.

KP: They did not try to do some advanced training.

LF: Oh, no. Don't forget, word came from above--and God only knows where it originated--somebody got some bright idea someplace and somebody else will go with it.

KP: Just to back up a little bit, in terms of Rutgers, had you applied to other colleges, or was it only Rutgers?

LF: No, I didn't. I just assumed that I was going to go to Rutgers, and I got accepted [by] Rutgers. I always wondered what the hell would have happened if I didn't get accepted. I didn't apply anyplace else. Listen, from Elizabeth, there were a bunch of the guys and we all went to the train station. The Rutgers group was going in this direction and the NYU [New York University] group would go in the other direction. That's the way it was.

KP: I have interviewed a number of commuters and one of the things that commuters have said to me, and you have already alluded to it, is that you, in many ways, did feel left out of a lot of college life.

LF: Oh, sure, of course, particularly taking twenty-five credits a semester. That started after my freshman year. I was halfway through my junior year by the time I went into the Army, and that was only after two years. We didn't come here for the college life, really. It would have been nice, but I was always good at adjusting to whatever the situation was anyway. I hated it but adjusted to it.

KP: I am curious also in terms of Rutgers, how did you feel about ROTC, particularly before Pearl Harbor?

LF: It was dumb uniforms that they had us wear. I don't know if you ever saw the uniforms that ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] had in those days, blue lapels. It was sort of like an Army uniform, but it had blue lapels. It wasn't so bad if you were here, but, as a commuter, I had to get on the train wearing that dumb thing. No, I liked it. In fact, it turned out to be very helpful. There were several occasions during the war where the training that I had here [was] very helpful.

KP: Which instances?

LF: For instance, when I was put into the 35th [Infantry] Division. In order to get in more, I'm going to get ahead of the story. I was at Camp Kilmer [in Piscataway, New Jersey] after I finished all my training. I ended up in Camp Kilmer in the replacement depot. I don't know if you know about Kilmer. It was a staging area. A division would come there. They would get all set to go and, whoosh, over to Staten Island, onto a boat and away.

Well, there was the whole routine of--what did they refer to it as--the Table of Organization, I guess. The division had to have 15,643 people in it, not 15,642, but forty-three. They had to be right there. So, they had a replacement depot, and they just put people in. Now, they decided, evidently, I found out afterwards, that they needed more trained medics. I had been through basic training and in surgical tech school, so that was quite a few months of surgical training, quite a few months, from September through until March or April. So, we were really very well trained. I think it was seventeen weeks of basic training, and it must have been close to three months of surgical tech school.

Well, they didn't have in the Table of Organization room for medics, that many medics that they needed. When I say needed, there were only seven of us that they suddenly pulled out, and we didn't know each other. We looked at each other, and we realized that every one of us had

advanced training. In fact, one of the fellows [Sidney Sivitz] was a podiatrist in civilian life, what they called [a] chiropodist in those days. He was a doctor of chiropody, and he had been with a general hospital that was going through Kilmer. I don't remember what happened. He had to go into the hospital for some operation or something, so, of course, his outfit moved on. He was stuck in the replacement depot. Well, he gets put into the 134th Regiment. The seven of us were put into the 134th Regiment. They just made a Company A man out of him, which, at the time, my feeling was because he was Jewish, it probably had a lot to do with it. He should have been working at the aid station or at the regimental aid station, but, no, they made a medic out of him. That really bothered me. I was convinced it was because he was Jewish. Because he was married, he had a couple of kids, I used to worry about him all the time.

LG: Did he make it through?

LF: Yes, he just died a couple of years ago. We stayed in touch for many years. For me, low man on the totem pole, getting back to your original question, what happened was they made me a rifleman.

KP: You had been trained as a medic.

LF: Yes, but in order to get me into the Table of Organization, to get me onto the ship and get me over to England, they made me a rifleman. They give me a M-1 rifle. They took away my medical [equipment]--the medics had a certain type of belt--and they gave me bullets and the whole business. I ended up in this little, tiny seashore resort on the [southwestern] coast near Land's End, right at the very tip of England. We were put there when we got to England. I'm still a rifleman. I was attached to a headquarters company. So, you can imagine how many privates are in a headquarters company. Of course, I had guard duty. We had the typical [experiences], right out of a movie. There was this big, heavy, Irish first sergeant who seemed to be drunk more times than not. He would make up a new guard roster every other day in alphabetical order, and Feinberg was right near the top of that damn alphabetical order each day. So, I was standing guard duty day and night. It was funny. I'm down on the beach with a fifty-caliber machine-gun waiting in case any German planes came over. I used to wish that a German plane came over, something to do. I'm here in the middle of the night with a fifty-caliber machine-gun and nothing else to do.

HG: What happened if you fell asleep? Did that ever happen?

LF: Fell asleep, never.

HG: How could you keep yourself up?

LF: You'd only be on for two hours. You didn't stay all night. You'd be on two hours, and then somebody else would relieve you.

HG: Was there an urgent sense that something was going to happen?

LF: No, no. I remember we'd go for a hike. What happened with the outfit that was there before us, they had been pulled out for D-Day, and they would go on a march, a hike, march

around the area. It was very desolate around there. Some German planes came over. Nobody had any ammunition with them. They had guns but no ammunition. So, we had to have guns with ammunition in them. I knew how to put the ammunition into the gun. There's a clip, like that, you put into a M-1. Well, when the hike was over, we got back to the little hotel we were staying and, "Are any questions?" I said, "Yeah, could anybody tell me how to get the clip out of this thing?" Then, it was actually funny because they get into an argument about the best way to do it. So, I finally ended up back in my room practicing how to put the ammunition in.

LG: You got into this division because you had ROTC training.

LF: No, that had nothing to do with it. That had nothing to do with it. It was because of my basic [training] and surgical tech school. They didn't know anything about ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps]. It was helpful though. For instance, for practice, you had to take the rifle apart and put it back together again, things like that. We had some of that in ROTC.

LG: In other words, your training was as a medic and you were serving as a rifleman.

LF: At that point, yes. That was closer to my ROTC training. I wanted to be a medic, so I started complaining. Then, one day I keep [complaining], "When am I going to go back to being a medic?" Nobody did anything. Then, I see that there was a notice that somebody from the adjutant general's office with a thing if you had any complaints. I really put my name first on the list. Before he showed up, I was a medic. I was transferred to Penzance--you've heard of Penzance, like *The Pirates of Penzance*--with the aid station, so I finally became a medic again.

HG: What was that experience like? What was that like, being a medic there?

LF: Being a medic there was nothing.

KP: We will get to the medic.

LF: I didn't do anything there. We were just there sitting around waiting. This was when we were still in England before the invasion.

KP: I just want to back up a little.

LF: Sure.

KP: I just wanted to finish Rutgers and the whole home front before going on to the war.

LF: Yes. You were talking about what ROTC did for me. Let me tell you one other thing it did for me. I was a medic. I was with an infantry platoon, and there was one officer in particular who didn't know which end of the war was up. Do you know what happens when you're a National Guard outfit? You got [promoted], regardless of how you are, because these guys, they've been in this thing for years and years. Anyway, they spotted a Howitzer down in the valley. I had to show them how to read the coordinates on the map in order to call it back to the artillery. I knew. I had learned it at ROTC and how to get all of that stuff. So, that's what I used to do.

LG: Even though you were the medic.

LF: Oh, yes, I was always giving advice, but we'll get into that.

KP: Going back to Rutgers, I guess one question I had about Elizabeth and Rutgers, how much of world events did you know? You mentioned going to movies and seeing movie reels.

LF: Yes.

KP: Did you have a sense of what was going on? Did you think America was as close to war in 1940 and 1941 as we know it was?

LF: Well, I knew we were doing as much as we could to help England, Lend-Lease and things like that. We knew there was imminent danger. The one thing we didn't know--and I really didn't know about it--was the Holocaust. There was no way. We knew there were concentration camps, but we didn't know that they were primarily for Jews. We only heard them as being for political prisoners and things like that. [Editor's Note: Signed into law in March 1941, the Lend-Lease Act authorized the United States to sell, lean or lease military aid and equipment to foreign nations. It was through Lend-Lease that the U.S. supplied Great Britain before the U.S. entered World War II in December 1941.]

KP: It sounds like you did not have a good sense of the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

LF: Not just me. I'm not alone on that. Most of us didn't know. Our government seemed to know and cover it up, or there were things that could have been done. You know some of the stories, like the famous ship that they turned back and stuff like that. Obviously, there was some very overt anti-Semitism within our government, too. [It was] just a fact of life. [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg is referring to the *St. Louis*, a ship carrying German Jewish refugees, most of whom were denied entry first in Cuba and then in the United States in 1939.]

KP: I am curious that you remember distinctly the Al Smith presidential race in 1928. Were your parents Democrats or Republicans?

LF: No, I think I've always been a Democrat. They were never politically-oriented, but the Democrats seemed to be closer to our philosophies and ways of life and things like that.

KP: Do you remember any Bund activity in Elizabeth or elsewhere?

LF: Well, not in Elizabeth. There were Bunds in New Jersey. I used to read about it in the paper. They had meetings and marches and stuff. [Editor's Note: The German American Bund was a German-American pro-Nazi organization established in the United States in 1936.]

KP: You do not remember seeing any Bund rallies.

LF: No.

KP: There was not anyone in the neighborhood.

LF: I made up the expression one time that the Germans are invading us in "leaps and Bunds." [It is] left over from my childhood.

KP: You mentioned before we started the interview that you enjoyed a lot of your professors, even professors outside of your field.

LF: Well, Dr. Heald. I can't remember the others, like in art and music appreciation. Those were just great forces.

KP: You said there was a real passion amongst the professors.

LF: That was it. It wasn't just a job, but this was the same with my high school teachers. They were really there to teach and to be there for you. I don't know, this is what I was used to. When I hear about what things are like today of people in college, and so much of it is done in mass production and using [graduate students as professors], not that I have anything against graduate students because I was one. When I earned my Ph.D., I was at Penn State. We had jobs like lab instructors and things like that, but the professors did all the teaching. That's all I ever saw. So, there has to be a difference. I guess there aren't enough professors to go around or something, now with the advanced student body from fifteen hundred when I was here to, say, twenty thousand just on this campus.

HG: Ten thousand.

LF: Ten thousand or whatever.

HG: There is an enormous amount.

LF: Yes. Even Penn State, when I was there, was large compared to anything I'd been, but [nowhere] near what it is today.

KP: Although you were a commuter, do you remember any of the freshman hazing? Did you wear a dink?

LF: Let's see. We had to carry matches in case an upperclassman asked us for a light. There were certain places that we had to run across campus, I seem to recall. Did we have to wear those dumb, little hats? I can't remember that. It was all very, very innocent. No one got killed in any of the dorms from hazing from the fraternities or anything like that. No one got hurt. There was nothing vicious in those days that I knew of.

KP: How much of a shock was Pearl Harbor? Was it a shock? Were you expecting something like Pearl Harbor or an act of war from Japan?

LF: I wasn't expecting it any more than what the rest of the country seemed to be expecting, depending on which book you read, whether our government was expecting it or not. Now, in some of these exposes that [came] out, they really did know, but they wanted to use that as an

excuse to get into the war. That was one of the things I learned from Dr. Heald's course "Rise of Western Civilization." There's a whole pattern that you have to go through before you can have a war. The last thing is the incident, like in World War I, Sarajevo. They shot this guy, and that started a whole war. I'm trying to remember his rank. It wasn't a prince. [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg is referring to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, which set off a chain of events leading up to the outbreak of World War I.]

KP: Archduke Ferdinand.

LF: Archduke, that's right, and that was enough to start a whole war. It wasn't because of all the things that led up to it. We were ripe for the war. There was enough public sentiment, except for the isolationists, but [do] you know where they were? They were all in the Midwest. I can understand that because we were on the East Coast. As soon as this whole thing started, before you knew it, there were barrage balloons in and around Elizabeth and aircraft guns being put in charge, blackouts. I joined the [civil defense].

KP: Civil defense?

LF: Civil defense, yes.

KP: Did you become a block captain?

LF: Oh, no, no, no. I was only seventeen, eighteen. I was the runner. If there was a message and all communication was out and I had a message from my block captain to headquarters, I would take that.

KP: You mentioned Pearl Harbor and Professor Heald talking about inevitability of war, the war was not inevitable and the steps leading to war.

LF: The steps for any war that are necessary. Pearl Harbor was the one. We certainly were heading in that direction. So, that was it.

KP: You mentioned being a runner for civil defense.

LF: It was just a fun thing.

KP: You went to Long Branch a lot. I am curious, there was a lot of submarine activity off the Jersey shore. Do you ever remember seeing any freighters on fire?

LF: No. Don't forget, I didn't go that much after Pearl Harbor. Most of that went on after the Germans started sinking oil ships and tankers. When I got out to the Midwest, when I was sent out for basic training, it was in Illinois, and I could see why they were isolationists because you're like a thousand miles from the ocean from where anything is going on. They felt awful safe out there. The lights were on. You didn't have the blackouts. It was very interesting to see that and get that feeling that they had, which was why some of the Midwesterners were isolationists, I assume.

KP: I am curious. How did the war change Rutgers that you could see?

LF: Well, they immediately instituted that accelerated program, which is how I got into the service. It was a thing called the Enlisted Reserves. They came around, and we joined the Enlisted Reserves. A mover called up and you would go to officers' training school. That's what they said. So, believe it or not, I talked my parents into signing because I had to get their permission. I was about eighteen, I guess, when they came around, eighteen or nineteen, I forget. My birthday is in September, so it may have been the following summer. Whenever it was, I convinced them that this would be a good thing and they signed, believe it or not.

KP: Even though as you mentioned your father had been a worrywart.

LF: Yes. I did such a good job of convincing them that it was a good deal for me. Actually, as it turned out, I went in probably about six months before I would have gone if I had gone through the draft. I wanted to be in something; that was the thing. There was this need to join something. You had a choice of Army, Navy or Marines. I put down Marines.

KP: Really? Why did you choose the Marines?

LF: Because that's what I wanted to be, a Marine officer. I was called up to New York. There were quite a few of us, and they divided us into half. Half of us went in for written exams and half for physical exams. The first thing was the eye test, and I flunked the eye test. You had to have twenty-twenty to get killed in the Marines. I was about twenty-forty.

KP: That is not even that far off.

LF: No. Don't forget, my eyesight going to college deteriorated because of all the microscope work and things like that. When I got into the Army, I saw that I hardly needed my glasses because I wasn't doing any close work. The way it worked, there was this long hall with the eye chart at one end, a dark hall. You had to walk until you could read the damn thing. So, as I said, I walked right out of the Marines because I walked until I saw the damn thing. They said, "What are you going to do, Navy or Army?" I was prone to motion sickness, so I knew the Navy was not for me. I wanted ground under me, so that's how I ended up in the Army.

KP: I guess the Air Force would also be out, because you got carsick.

LF: You'll hear the story of my first air flight later.

KP: You also must have had a tough time going overseas in the boat.

LF: I was very lucky. The ocean was very calm. This was in May of '44.

KP: Most people have terrible memories of their boat trip.

LF: I told you that there were seven of us that they stuck into the 134th Regiment, and one of the fellows we never saw again because when we got to England, we carried him off. He got seasick so bad even under those conditions, we never saw him. They took him off and took him to a

hospital someplace, and we never saw him again. No, I really functioned pretty well, for some odd reason, but, as I said, it was so calm, thank God.

KP: One of the assignments Hilary and other people in the class have to do is read a semester's worth of the *Targum* or the Douglass paper during the 1930s and 1940s. One of the things we have seen complaints about it is it seems that students were not happy with the accelerated calendar, particularly science people.

LF: [Do] you mean with the accelerated program?

KP: The semester was shortened, and you were encouraged to take more courses, particularly adding the summer session. There was some grumbling about that, particularly among the science people.

LF: Oh, really?

KP: You do not remember that at all.

LF: I just remember that I never got any time off. I went through the freshman year, I went through the summer, went through the second year, and then I went off at the end of the second year anyway. So, that was the extent of it. I never heard anybody [complain]. There may have been, but they never included me in the conversation. Nobody asked me if I was happy or unhappy.

HG: What was your feeling about leaving Rutgers?

LF: I missed it terribly. Do you mean when I went off to the Army?

HG: Did you have any sort of resentment?

LF: Resentment, for what?

HG: Did it displease you that you had to interrupt your academic studies?

LF: No, I couldn't wait. I couldn't wait to get into something. Are you kidding?

KP: If I remember correctly, initially, when they signed people up for the Enlisted Reserves, there was a notion that you would be able to finish college and then you would be called up.

LF: Well, you want to hear a typical Army screw-up? They called us up, and there were a lot of guys from Rutgers. In fact, several friends were called up in July. I finally had really been called up because I had been called up once for the Marines and they threw me out. Then, I was accidentally called up soon after that by the Army. None of the other guys were called up.

So, my mother woke me up one morning and said, "Go into New York, into the headquarters there." I went and looked and, "Yes, we made a little mistake. Forget about it for now." I should have known right then. When they did call us up? It was July 13, 1943; that was when I

went to Fort Dix for active service. Several fellows from Rutgers [were there]. Then, they sent us to CCNY [City College of New York] in New York, which was a star unit. That's what they called it. I forget what it stood for. They gave us all kinds of tests. They claimed this was to see about us going into ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program]. So, we took the (Alpha series?) exam. It was almost like an IQ test that they had for enlisted men. They had a separate one for officers, of course. They had a whole battery of exams that we took. For some reason, I was always good at that type of exam, not other exams necessarily, but that type for some reason because I guess it's all logical-type stuff. Then, they called us in individually. This was after about two weeks at CCNY, which was great because we were living at CCNY and we'd go down to Times Square at night and stuff like that. By the way, that was around the time there were the riots. You may have heard about some race riots that occurred. CCNY was way uptown. It wasn't too far from that area in New York. We didn't actually experience it.

KP: You knew about the riots, but you were not actually into them.

LF: No, they were in Detroit around that same time. Yes, we'd go down to Times Square, and it was great. They called us in, and they said we were sent in by mistake because we had to have our basic training first. [They said], "What kind of basic training would you like?" I told--I was with a bunch of guys from Rutgers--and I said, "Let's go into tanks. That sounds like fun." [That] sounded great to me to get into a tank and drive. "No, we're all pre-meds. Why don't we go to medical basic?" So, I had to go to medical basic because the other guys were. That's how I ended up as a medic. [Editor's Note: In July 1943, riots erupted in Detroit, Michigan due to racial tensions in wartime industries.]

KP: In other words, you did not initially envision becoming a medic.

LF: No.

KP: In fact, you originally wanted to be a Marine officer.

LF: Yes, exactly.

KP: Then, if you had your way, you would have gone for tanks.

LF: Sure. So, that's how I come I ended up in the medics. They sent us out to Camp Grant, Illinois for seventeen weeks of basic training. It was really pretty good. Basic training was not a hard serve. It was very interesting, because we were almost all college students. Some fellows had finished their freshman year, and several of us had at least two-and-a-half years of college. So, we were a pretty sharp group. They didn't know how to handle us because most of the cadre, the sergeants, that were left over from the group that had trained before us [were from] Kentucky and Tennessee. They used to tell us that the average, not IQ, whatever they call the Army classification.

KP: The AGCT [Army General Classification Test], I think it is.

LF: The average was at least 120 in our group. It was eighty, I think, in the group that had been there before. These guys didn't know how to handle us. They just couldn't figure it out. First of

all, we did everything right. We never dropped out of marches. When they would have testing, we would always know all the answers to the tests.

KP: It sounds like you were not a bunch of arrogant college guys who were using this chance to goof off.

LF: Arrogant, never. We were [a] good, fun, funny group. These sergeants would come in and the corporals would come in in the morning and wake us up. All they knew was how to yell, "Wake up." There was this one guy who should have been a professional comedian. He used to curse at them in Yiddish. Of course, they had no idea what he was saying. He would essentially tell them to go to hell, "*Gai in drerd*," which means go to hell, stuff like that. It used to be really funny. In fact, we had the cooks in the dining room, and they were very, very good. The food was very good. I had no complaints about the food. They used to serve family style, bowls on the table and you had to help yourself. It wasn't like a cafeteria.

KP: You did not have a mess line.

LF: No, it was good. Nobody goofed off or did anything wrong. It was only ninety miles from Chicago, but they had a train that ran every weekend. You took the train Saturday morning to Chicago, stay overnight, and I enjoyed that, especially since I started going with a girl in Chicago. I used to see her almost every weekend, unless I had something else.

KP: How did you happen to meet her?

LF: When we first got to Chicago, I think even before we went out to Camp Grant, they dropped us off in Chicago and they had some beautiful service centers for people in the service. It was USO type of thing, I guess. [Editor's Note: Founded at the outset of World War II, the United Service Organizations (USO) is a non-profit organization that provides entertainment to American armed forces.] This one was down by the lake, and it was the beginning of September, I think. It was nice and warm. I went there and happened to start talking to this one girl. They were all volunteers. They had these little booths, where they served food and different things. I started talking to her. We felt very comfortable with each other. So, I used to see her every weekend. My mother was in favor of my marrying her.

The funny thing was that I thought she was not Jewish, which I couldn't have cared less. It wasn't until our first date when I came into Chicago and went out to a movie, of course, and she said there was a delicatessen, this was down in the loop, if you know Chicago, and she took me to this recommended delicatessen, Jewish delicatessen. I'm starting to think. To me, the name didn't mean anything. Looks, she certainly didn't look Jewish. So, afterwards, when we were walking along, I said, "By any chance, are you Jewish?" Not only was she Jewish, her mother didn't even speak English. So, they only spoke Yiddish in her house. She could, what we call, *daven*, go through the prayers.

I went once with her for Friday night services. I don't know how I got there on a Friday night--I must have been off for a holiday or something--and boy, I couldn't read this stuff like that. I got such a kick out of that. Then, my mother and sister came out to visit, and I introduced them. My mother was very much in favor of her. When I got married, she was still in favor of her rather

than Abbey, who I married. Some years ago, about twenty-some years ago, I got in touch with her. I was out in Chicago, and we all went out to dinner together. She still looked good.

KP: I assume your girlfriend in Chicago eventually did get married.

LF: Oh, yes, her husband came along. She came out East a couple of times and visited with my family. My mother loved her for whatever reason. She never liked any other girl. We digressed.

KP: People who have been to the Midwest for training have several times commented to me about what they term Midwestern hospitality.

LF: No question about it.

KP: The invitations to go to dinner.

LF: Well, Chicago is the main thing I've seen, although I did train also in Indiana, right outside of Indianapolis for my surgical tech school. I didn't see the same attitude there. In Chicago, people didn't seem to be able to do enough. All the trolleys and everything were free to servicemen. I remember one night we were trying to get to the train, and actually we missed our connections. Some people came along and asked if they could help--there was another fellow that I guess had fixed him up on a date--they drove us to the big train station in Chicago so we could get our train.

KP: With gas rationing, that is a big deal.

LF: That too. I didn't think of that. There was an attitude there that I always thought, "Gee, I wouldn't mind settling in Chicago someday." It was such a nice, friendly, friendly town. I always said it was like a great, big little town. So, you're right.

KP: What did they teach you in basic?

LF: Oh, God, everything, anything from how to lift a litter, to carry somebody on a litter. There was this Army thing called "by the numbers." I don't know if you've heard that expression. In other words, how do you lift a litter? "One, two, three," that sort of thing. I remember thinking, "God, how am I ever going to carry somebody in a litter?" They seemed so damn heavy when you're picking up somebody on a litter. It was amazing. In Normandy, in particular, which was where I was a litter-bearer, I got so strong, I could almost carry somebody continually. So, when the chips were down, it was a whole different ballgame. They taught us everything about bandaging, about different diseases in seventeen weeks.

KP: A lot of it was, in fact, how to be a medic at your base, so you were not just doing the marching and the Army routine.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

KP: This continues an interview with Leonard Feinberg on November 22nd, 1998 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

HG: … Hilary Gould.

KP: You were saying that they taught you bandaging and everything you needed to know to be a medic.

LF: Yes. They taught us bandaging and everything. Don't forget, it was seventeen weeks, and we had classes every day. We also did things like going out on night marches, and we had bivouac and we stayed out in pup tents out in the snow. This was in December where we went out for about a week, and we learned to live out there.

By the way, while we were out there, I was called out and put into a jeep or a truck, brought back to the camp. There were people there from the cryptography section of the Army, I guess because of all those tests that I had taken at CCNY. There was this whole, let's face it, a whole battalion of college fellows and I seemed to be the only one that they pulled out and they wanted to know if I wanted to go to cryptography school and I said no. I couldn't picture that. There's a whole war on and I'm going to go and sit in an office someplace doing cryptography for the rest of the war.

KP: You turned it down.

LF: I turned it down. It's hard to describe now, because I think, "Boy, I must have been nuts." I wanted to get into combat. That was my goal.

KP: This was a perfect way to do something patriotic. The Army wanted you to do this.

LF: Yes, but I couldn't see me sitting in an office the whole war. So, that was the first time I turned down a safer thing. I'll tell you about another one later. My mother always reminded me after the war that I always used to complain that the war would be over before I got into it.

KP: You would write home.

LF: Oh, no, no, no. Are you kidding? I never wrote anything. It's funny. Because of the anniversary of something recently, they were describing letters that wives or girlfriends or whatever got from these fellows and telling about the dangers they were in and stuff like that. I was dumbfounded. Who would do that? I never wrote to my parents about anything that was of that sort.

The prize was a fellow who trained with me. They were two fellows from around Elizabeth, and there was this one fellow from Plainfield and another from Elizabeth that went through training with me. Our parents, one set of parents, were friends to start with, and this other set of parents. This guy ended up in an artillery outfit, which compared to what we were was like being back in the States. The artillery is way back [in the rear]. My mother told me about the letters he wrote, "Just a minute, there's a shell going over. Oh, it missed me," stuff like that. I thought to myself, "What a jerk."

When I was going from England to France, I wrote to my parents and said, "I think we may be going on maneuvers, so I might not be able to write too often," you know, stuff like that. Then, I was in Normandy, and I'm busy writing to them. I used to write almost every day, and it was some casual letter. They wrote to me and said, "Why didn't you tell me you were in Normandy?" There was some kind of broadcast from our battalion headquarters in Saint-Lô, and it told about the First Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, which my parents recognized and so they told me where I was.

There's a classic story of a little adventure, that I had hiding in a farmhouse and the farmhouse caught on fire, the whole bit, with the Germans all over the place. Well, this one other girlfriend that I used to write to, she wrote to me and said, "You never mention to me about any interesting things." So, I thought, "I'll tell her this little story about what actually happened," but I said, "Whatever you do, don't tell my parents." The first thing she did was show the damn thing to my parents, and the next thing, I get a letter from my mother, "What were you doing that close to the Germans?" She was convinced I was nowhere near where this was going on. No, I never, ever would do that. Obviously, a lot of guys did.

KP: That is wonderful. You can, by all means, digress. One of the reasons we think oral history is important is because some of the things are written down, but there are very good reasons why a lot of what you did, particularly to your parents, was not written down.

LF: Oh, goodness, no. I'll get to the dramatic parts later. It gets very dramatic.

KP: After basic, you mentioned you were sent for further training.

LF: Yeah. A lot of the guys that I trained with, in fact most of them I guess, we all went on to the surgical tech school at Billings General Hospital, which was attached to Fort Benjamin Harrison, which was right outside of Indianapolis. We had great training there, because there was mostly M.D.s that gave us surgical tech training. We even worked in the hospital as part of our training. It was very good.

KP: What skills did you learn at the surgical tech school?

LF: In the operating room, I guess [we learned] to be helpful. [We learned] a lot about diseases and stuff, which was why I was so thankful I didn't go to the South Pacific.

KP: They told you about all the tropical diseases.

LF: They taught us about all the things. Besides the enemy, you had so many parasites and stuff there; that was horrendous. No, I preferred going to Europe.

HG: I know this is jumping ahead of it.

LF: That's okay.

HG: Did the skills you learned in the technician school help you when you returned to Rutgers and went on?

LF: No. Nobody got hurt, so I had nothing to do. If somebody got shot, I would have been okay, but that's about it. There weren't too many shells bursting or anything like that. No, not really, that was all emergency-type, medical-type work.

KP: It sounds pretty much like when you were in the field, this training was good.

LF: No question about it.

KP: It seems that Army training really ranged. Some people expressed a lot of satisfaction for it and other people said they were really mad they did not get better training. It seems you were in the category that did get good training.

LF: Oh, my goodness, we were really well trained, really over-trained for the type of work we were doing. I'll tell you one little funny story though. All through tech school, they kept hammering, "If you have a head wound, don't ever give morphine. If you have a stomach wound, don't give them sulfa." You have to drink a lot of water with sulfa, so you don't want too much water coming up. My first patient, he had both a head wound and a stomach wound, and I gave him sulfa and morphine. Under the circumstances--it was a very tense [situation]--this was the first guy in Normandy that I worked on. I never forgot that. It was really tense that first morning. Fortunately, he didn't have that bad a head wound or that bad a stomach wound, so he survived that day.

KP: Was it because of the heat of the moment?

LF: I wanted to treat him, my first patient. I overtreated it, but, anyway, that was it. No, the training was very good.

KP: You were a Rutgers student when Camp Kilmer was activated.

LF: I was watching that thing built from the train. I used to pass it every day. All of a sudden--there was this empty field--boom, this whole big camp sprung up while I was watching it. All of a sudden, there I am at Camp Kilmer. So, when I was in the replacement depot, I used to go home every night. Then, they let me have a car. I borrowed my grandfather's car. I kept it there and [would] go home every night.

KP: After your training in Indiana, they sent you then to Camp Kilmer, or did you go somewhere else first?

LF: No. From there, they sent us to another type of replacement thing at what's called Camp Reynolds, a miserable, tar-paper-shack type of place forty miles north of Pittsburgh, not too far from Youngstown, Ohio. We used to go there on pass to Youngstown. They told us at the time that it had another name [Camp Shenango], but it was such a miserable place that they changed the name because people went AWOL [absent without leave] when they heard they were going

to be sent there. That's one of the rumors that you hear about. I was just there for a while. From there, I was sent to Camp Kilmer.

KP: We just left off that they sent you to Camp Reynolds first, and then they had you sit and wait. Then, you were sent to Camp Kilmer. You seemed to have waited awhile, enough that you were going home.

LF: Oh, I went home every night from Kilmer.

KP: How long were you in Kilmer?

LF: Maybe a couple of weeks at the most.

KP: I gather that is a long time, because a lot of people were at Camp Kilmer for forty-eight hours and then they were shipped out.

LF: Probably they were with an outfit.

KP: Yes.

LF: Don't forget, I was there just waiting for an opening. Listen, they had a track meet. I won a three-day pass because the sergeant said that, "If anybody wins three events, he can get a pass," so I did. In fact, I used to give the close order drill because there was no one else there that knew how to do it. So, I used to take the whole bunch out and march them around the marching field they had there. It was fun with Camp Kilmer.

KP: You should try to drive around the former Camp Kilmer one day, since you knew Camp Kilmer fairly well or at least you spent some time there. Some of the buildings still survive.

LF: I understand they made some kind of training place for kids to go there.

KP: Part of it is part of the Job Corps, and part of it is Livingston Campus on Rutgers.

LF: Oh, really?

KP: I think one of the buildings that is still being used now by the Office of Television and Radio was the old Paymaster's Building, but we are not positive. We think the old officers' club survived. It has "O.C." written in brick, so it has to be the officers' club.

LF: I'll be darned.

KP: You mentioned something else that was helpful at Rutgers.

LF: I took two years of German, which I just got through by the skin of my teeth. I think I got all "Cs" or something, but you just had to pass because languages were never my big thing. I was able to talk and speak German and speak to German soldiers and things like that, when I was over there, with a little experience. I'll get back to those experiences later.

KP: I think it would be very helpful.

LF: See, I never spoke Yiddish, but I knew a lot of words because my parents and grandparents spoke Yiddish when they didn't want me to understand. They normally spoke English, but I picked up enough of that, plus the German. It turned out I could speak German when I had to. Anyway, back to where we were.

KP: When you were at Camp Kilmer, they eventually put you in the 35th Infantry Division.

LF: Well, one day, it must have been approximately May 11th, because I believe we got on the ship May 12th, they suddenly called seven of us out, seven medics, took away our "sun tans." We had "sun tans," which were the summer uniforms, and then there was the OD, olive drab, which was the winter uniform. That made me glad, because it meant we weren't going to the Pacific.

I had to make arrangements to get the car back to my family. There was no way I could get in touch with them. I could have probably snuck out, but I didn't want to. I didn't want to call. They'd know when they got the car. I got some fellow who lived near Elizabeth to drive the car back. I still remember that first night that they handed me the rifle.

First, I have to tell you, the seven of us were put in the truck and driving around the camp, and they all say, "Oh, well, it must be a hospital unit that they're going to put us into." The truck stops, backs up, and this guy with the cross rifles came out to greet us. [Editor's Note: A patch with crossed rifles denotes the infantry.] I just looked at these guys, and their jaws were dropping because they saw what that meant. That's how we ended up. Two of the fellows were put into the Second Battalion. Sid and I went to the First Battalion, and two others went to the Third Battalion because there were only six of us at that point. Oh, there was seven. I don't know where the seventh was put at that point. As I said, we never saw him after the ship.

They put me into a headquarters company with a rifle. The first night, not only did they give me a rifle, but a guy who went AWOL--they used his absence, even though he was an infantryman--that's whose place I took. Then, they handed me this rifle, which was filthy. They had been out shooting. The guys were really nice in this miserable, little barracks that I went to. I can still remember that first night. Here, I had been going home every night, and all of a sudden, here I am, I don't know a soul, I'm in this outfit and I've got a rifle to clean, no less. They were very nice, and they showed me how to clean it.

The next day, we got on the ship. I think I must have been the last guy on that ship, because they filled it. I was as far down in that ship and as far off to the side, and that's where I went. I used to say in the abandoned ship drill, I never got closer than three decks below the top. If we had been hit by a torpedo, it would have hit above me someplace. Actually, the guys were really nice and friendly. As I said, it [the 35th Infantry Division] was a Nebraska, [Kansas and Missouri National Guard] outfit.

KP: Were you the only New Yorker?

LF: I'm not a New Yorker.

KP: Well, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania.

LF: There may have been some others. Most of the ones in this headquarters company were Nebraska, originals. I remember when we got into combat, there were guys from other places.

KP: But, initially, were you the only one?

LF: I guess I was, yes. It's funny when we got there. I used to get so sick and tired of hearing the *Nebraska Fight Song*. We're in this little hotel that they stuck us in down on this little beach. "To me, there's no place like Nebraska," on and on and on, every day. They were pretty good. The trip over for me was great, because I didn't get sick. There was a little queasiness, but I managed to eat. We landed in Avonmouth, which is the end of the Avon River, right near Bristol, England. Then, we got into trains, and that was it, down into Cornwall County, which is the very, very tip. We passed by Plymouth, England, and that's the first sign of the war. There were just blocks and blocks and blocks, as far as we could see, that were leveled. It was just gone. They [the Luftwaffe] had evidently really bombed that city. That was the first evidence of anything of the war per se, but then we got to this nice, cute, little town, a seashore resort. It was interesting.

KP: You mentioned your unit was part of the headquarters.

LF: When they put me in there, which is why I ended up guarding them every day and night. [There was] lots of guard duty.

KP: How long were you in England for?

LF: We landed, I believe it was, May 26th, approximately. We left for France just before the Fourth of July, I think, somewhere around the Fourth of July. They put us on a cargo ship of some sort. They even had some bunks that they put us in, down in the hole, but there were only half as many bunks as people, so you took turns sleeping. A funny thing happened, it was my turn in the bunk. All of a sudden, there is this big, "Pooh," like steam coming out. I think we thought we hit a mine or something. Some of them started to panic, and some of them went up the steps that came up. I didn't move because it was my turn in the bunk, and I wasn't about to leave it. It turned out that a pipe broke. It was some kind of a steam pipe. That's all it was, but these guys panicked right away. Then, we got to Omaha Beach, which was good for a Nebraska outfit, of course. We climbed down these big rope mats, not mats.

KP: The nets.

LF: Yes, a big net down onto a big platform, and it must have been about twenty-feet wide and forty-feet long. It had two big outboard motors at one end. We got on to that, and we drove that up towards the beach. We got off and they had a little dock by that time, so we didn't have to jump into the water like [in the movie *Saving*] *Private Ryan*. [Editor's Note: It is likely that the amphibious vehicle being described above is the Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM).]

KP: In England, did you ever get any leaves? Did you ever get to go into town?

LF: Well, if there was a place to go. I remember going to St. Ives. There's a picturesque, little town. It looks like nothing happened in the last five hundred years. That was one nice place to visit. I remember one time when I finally got transferred over to the aid station, the captain took us on a hike. He took us to what supposedly might have been King Arthur's castle or something like that. There are some ruins there that they attribute to King Arthur.

One nice thing in Penzance, first of all, when I got put suddenly onto a ship, I didn't have any money because I used to go home every night. I'd have enough money for gas. You'd pull into a station, and the guy would give you black market gas. All of a sudden, I didn't have any money to do anything. So, Penzance is a seashore resort, as you may or may not know. I think they call it the "Riviera of England." I think that's what they called that. It's really nice. It has a nice boardwalk along the beach.

So, I was sitting there this one day, and this elderly man came along and sat down and started to talk to me. He invited me to his house to meet his wife. [They were] lovely, lovely people. They had some kids that were in the service. I used to go there in the evening and have tea, and they'd had friends over and [we would] talk about different things. It was really nice. They loaned me some money. I wrote to my family and said, "Please, quick, send me some money." So, somehow they cabled some money. When did it come? We were sort of locked down, because we were going to the Tour de France. [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg is referring to his unit being deployed to France.] I had to get special permission to get out to go see them to pay them back the money, which I was glad. So, they were really nice people.

KP: You actually got to know a couple from England.

LF: Yes.

KP: To go to someone's house more than once is really nice.

LF: Listen, there was one guy--most of what the guys were looking for was girls--there was one fellow who every night, she would come. When we were in Penzance, we were in a house. There was a little gate in the front, and it had a little, tiny yard in the front of the house. They were almost like row houses, essentially. She would come every night, and off they would go into the woods, a field or wherever the hell they went. That guy was losing weight. He was starting to look bad, every night. I remember commenting on the fact that when we were in Normandy, "Boy, he's starting to look better again." [laughter] I was more interested in, not that I have anything against it, but I was much more interested in knowing the people and stuff like that. That was a nice experience.

KP: Did you ever get a chance to go into the pubs at all?

LF: No. First of all, I wasn't a drinker, to start with, particularly for beer and things like that. I wasn't that close with anybody. I was new in the outfit.

KP: It seems like your outfit was pretty accepting. You were fairly warmly welcomed for a replacement, because I have often gotten the impression that replacements were really shunned.

LF: Oh, no, no, nothing at all like that. They were all very friendly, all very nice, nice bunch of guys.

KP: You mentioned during the break that war, if you can survive it, you can learn a lot about yourself.

LF: Yes.

KP: It is very dangerous but also very exhilarating.

LF: Oh, boy. The fact that there's danger involved is what makes it an adventure, if you survive.

KP: If you survive. You also said that in landing in Omaha Beach in Normandy, before you even got to Saint-Lô for your first major operation, guys were starting to crack up.

LF: No, no. Our objective was Saint-Lô, but July 15th of '44 was our first battle. We were on the line, and this was like, "Go." This was it. Our mission to take a certain hill up ahead.

KP: Hill 122?

LF: Exactly.

KP: I am just getting the order of battle; I am not that good.

LF: I'm impressed. All I knew was we were supposed to take Hill 122 because it was overlooking Saint-Lô or something. I don't think the Germans particularly wanted us to. It was a bit of a problem. So, we started the morning of July 15th. This business of everything's like in the movies, I remember we dug in. I was back at the aid station because as a litter-bearer, I had to wait until somebody needed me. I heard machine-gun fire. I thought to myself that machine gun is actually being fired at somebody. It wasn't like when were in training, and you took the infiltration course. [Editor's Note: During Operation Cobra, General Omar Bradley's First U.S. Army aimed to punch through German defenses in and around Saint-Lô, while American and Canadian forces attacked Germans forces in Caen. Breaking out of the Normandy beachhead and the Cotentin Peninsula enabled Allied forces to advance to the interior of France.]

KP: Where they shoot over your head.

LF: Yes. You're crawling along and you knew what a machine gun sounded like, but I could hear actual machine guns being fired. I thought to myself, "Wow, it really is being done."

KP: To kill someone.

LF: Well, trying to. Those first couple of days, the first actual combat, whatever combat is, particularly, don't forget Normandy was somewhat different because of the hedgerows. Every

little field was surrounded with a hedgerow, and every hedgerow was like a little, tiny fort because, don't forget, we're going that way and they're behind that thing. You have to somehow go out in the open, in [and] around to get across there. I remember just before we started fighting, they took a bazooka and tried to blow a hole in a hedgerow, and we tried whatever we had, nothing. Those things were really solid, but they were also really good for us because we would dig in at the base of the hedgerow so we had that type of--what's the word I want?

KP: Protection?

LF: Yes, thank you.

KP: It's a shield from fire.

LF: We would dig in at the base of them.

KP: That is interesting. A lot of people have written about the obvious problems of attacking through the hedgerows.

LF: Then, it worked both ways.

KP: They do not often emphasize for attackers, you do have a place that helps you when you dig in. I never thought about that. That is good.

LF: Sometimes, if we could find some wood or something, we'd also put that against the hedgerow and put the dirt back on top of that. Almost everything was during the day. There was not that much fighting at night. They were smart enough not to bother at night, and we didn't. So, you could sleep. Usually, it was two men; we would share digging a hole.

KP: I am curious, you mentioned earlier that there were a lot of battle fatigue cases.

LF: Boy, were there.

KP: You did not know them well, but were you surprised at who cracked and who did not?

LF: Okay, I'll tell you about that. There are two prize stories, one in particular. There was a fellow--and I won't use his last name--who was from South Chicago, a real toughie from South Chicago. He was a medic. He carried brass knuckles in his aid kit. That was tough. I don't know who the heck he was going to punch with it, but he had brass knuckles in his aid kit. Within a day or so, I was already put in charge of a litter squad. I got to be pretty good at that.

So, we had to go up towards the line. Not only were there hedgerows, but for communication for traveling between them, the farmers had to come with their horse and wagon to get to these fields, these guys called them sunken draws [road or lane]. I don't know if that's a Midwestern expression or where it comes from, but it was a space between, like a tiny road. It was maybe ten-feet wide, twelve-feet wide, with hedgerows on either side. We would go down that, because that's how you could move quickly. We had telephones in those days. We didn't have all the radios right off the bat. So, communication was by telephone, and we had to run wires. That

caused a lot of problems, because the Germans knew where the sunken draw was. They knew that that was a means of communication, and that's where most of the artillery hit.

So, I have a litter squad; I think there were four other guys and me. So, we start out. There was a mound of dirt for some reason in the sunken draw. So, they had given me a couple of replacements from the regimental medics, so I hardly knew these guys. Right off the bat, a guy falls and he hurt his knee and he can't go on. [I said], "Okay, you go back." Then, I continue on. Then, there's the one with the.

KP: Brass knuckles.

LF: Meanwhile, the artillery starts coming in. We're laying there in the sunken draw; there's not much you can do. All of a sudden, he jumps up and starts screaming, "They're going to kill us all. They're going to kill us all." I said, "Go back." Name not given. What's the difference? He's not going to hear this. Believe me, he did not go to Rutgers. He was from Chicago. It was (Novak?). I said, "Go back, (Novak?)." He really cracked up. He was this real toughie.

KP: Did he ever come back to you?

LF: What would happen is that they didn't have the luxury of sending--I mean, how far could you send anybody back? It was beach. They set up a special hospital back there at the beach, I understand, for the ones that did come back. They kept them all in this one thing. To a great extent, they were looking to see if they were doing it purposely. That's why that famous incident with [General George S.] Patton where supposedly he slapped that guy, I was on his [Patton's] side because when you're in those situations where you're dependent on everybody else and somebody decides he's not going to join in, you get a little disturbed with them. It was an easy way out for a lot of people. Guys could make believe they were cracking up.

KP: Did you ever think that was the case, that guys were just faking it?

LF: I had no way of knowing though. All I know is that we had to drag them back. There were so many of these guys that would crack up on the line, and we had to get them back. It was sort of funny how it would manifest itself. One guy would crack up, and he would be out of his head. Another one would become almost catatonic. You'd sit him down, he'd sit. Stand him up, he'd stand. You'd have to carry him back. They had all different levels of their reaction to cracking up.

HG: Did you ever freeze at all or not know what to do or panic?

LF: Yes, but that was just my period of adjustment. That first day, the first time I went out to litter up [in the] sunken draw and I bumped into Sid Sivitz, the fellow that I told you about, the podiatrist and they made him a company aidman, and Sid was yelling, "The heck with the litters. We need aidmen up there." That's how come I started working on one of the wounded. While I was working on him, maybe thirty feet behind me in the sunken draw, a shell hits and I see a guy go like this and fall. That was the first time I thought, "Just like in the movies," you know, in the movies they always did that.

KP: They always blessed themselves.

LF: Well, this poor guy that I gave the morphine to, I said, "Come on, I'll take you back to the aid station." When I got back to the aid station, I noticed my hands were shaking a little bit. So, I asked the captain, who was a fantastic guy, he was a M.D. and I think he had four years of ROTC. He was really sharp and a terrific guy. He said, "Just take one of these." They have these little blue pills. It was (Nenyutol?), which was like a sedative. I cried. That relieved the tension. I just got it out of my system. I maybe laid down for a half hour. I got up. I continued the rest of the day until two or three o'clock at night, because you just had so much to do, and no problems.

I didn't have another problem until the third day. I was taking a little squad up this thing, and the artillery came in and it was brutal. I said, "I think we'd better go back for a while." So, we started to go back, and who do I bump into, our captain. I said, "We just can't get through." He said, "Show me." I said, "Okay." He and I start up [the] sunken draw, and artillery comes in. I'm laying here, and he's laying here. I said, "Now, do you believe me?" So, he sees the Germans had dug holes. There's this German hole there right in the sunken draw with a cover over it. The fortunate part was the opening was facing in their direction. He said, "Wait there, and see if any wounded come by." So, I got in there. The way it was is that there's this hedgerow. There was a hole dug through the hedgerow and there was another one of these, we called them, slit trenches, just on the other side of the hedgerow with this little tunnel in between. Remember the tiger and the lady, do you know the story? In the old Roman Colosseum or wherever it was, they had to choose a door. One, there was a tiger behind it, and behind the other, there was a lady behind it. All I could think of was the tiger or the lady. Which hole to stay in? The artillery is coming in all the way around the place, and if it hit the hole it is goodbye me because the damn opening is facing toward them.

KP: Do you think they could have pre-positioned their artillery to hit?

LF: Oh, no, no. They were just firing. Some of them were landing in the fields on either side. So, I'm in this hole. I crawl around to this side, and then I crawled back to this side. I must have been there about an hour, hour and a half. So, I think to myself, "Crazy." So, finally a guy comes sort of limping down the road. I was so glad to see him, I said, "Come on, I'll take you back to the aid station." I got back to the aid station, and I knew just what to do. I took one of those little blue pills, had a little cry, laid down for a half an hour, and that was it for the rest of the war. I never had a problem again, but it was an adjustment that I was able to make.

KP: I am curious, you mentioned taking this tablet and crying.

LF: Well, the crying is a great way of relieving the tension.

KP: How often would men cry?

LF: I don't remember seeing any. If they did it, they did it privately. I just know from me.

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE ----------

LF: It was a difficult thing for me, I guess that's the way to put it. All I thought about was how it would affect my family if something happened. In other words, I didn't worry about me, but I worried about them. When I would get a letter from my mother and she would say, "Take care of yourself for your mother," or something like that, that would always break me up. They had no idea what the hell I was doing, and very often, I didn't know what the hell I was doing. Very often, the guys that were running the show didn't seem to know what they were doing. I found out when I read one of those [books about the] U.S. Army and World War II. I'll tell you about that later when we get to Saint-Lô.

KP: One of the things I want to ask in general is people that served with National Guard divisions have often commented that they differ from regular divisions. National Guard divisions did have camaraderie, but the downside of that was that people knew each other in civilian life and that interfered with discipline. There were also a high number of political appointees that became officers, and they were not very good officers in combat.

LF: Well, listen, we had a battalion commander that I thought was very inadequate. He seemed to have no concern other than his own aggrandizement. I know that this captain in our aid station, and he was [a] M.D., he was going to headquarters all the time to give them advice on what the hell to do. No one had a feeling that this was any great leader or knew what the hell he was doing. The word would come down you'd have to go here, so no matter what, he would have the battalion doing this, whether they were ready or not or whether it made sense. Don't forget, I was at the low level, so I didn't get too much of the high-level things. I got to know more when I was an aidman than when I was with a company with the officers. There were a lot of very, very brave guys in this outfit. It really amazed me to see how brave people could be under those circumstances. Not everyone cracked up. There were some people you practically had to give them a kick to get them moving, but, no, some of them were really good. By the way, I meant to tell you, do you remember I said there were two stories?

KP: Oh, yes.

LF: There was a little fellow named (Ferguson?), who we always figured would be the last guy, if things got tough, that would be the last of (Ferguson?). He always seemed to be off in another world almost. I remember he wrote to the president because he thought something wasn't right, like reveille or something. Little (Ferguson?), he was a medic. He just kept plugging along, like nothing was going on. I understand that he was killed when he was a prisoner of war by not responding quickly enough to some German soldier, and the soldier hit him with his rifle and killed him.

KP: On the line, he was just great.

LF: Yes, he just kept going. [He was] the last guy you expected to. (Novak?) was the opposite. Anyway, getting to the next question about the quality of the officers, I don't know. I really think in the whole overseeing of the war, I don't think our division was considered one of the great divisions, from things I've read since and things like that, but [we did] what needed to be done. I saw some real acts of bravery and things like that.

KP: Several broad questions, although you could go in chronological order, but is there a most vivid memory of combat that you have from being an aidman? Is there anything that sticks in your mind?

LF: You mean one little incident or just in general?

KP: Just in general.

LF: To me, there was a great sense of satisfaction because I was there not to kill somebody, but I was there for them and when somebody got hit, I was able to help them. So, there was a whole different attitude that I had. As a matter-of-fact, the first company, after I graduated from being a litter-bearer to an aidman, I went out with A Company. We used to kid, there was A Company on the left and A Company on the right and A Company spearheading. There was just a great tremendous *esprit de corps*. He was the acting company commander. There was something about him that if he went off a cliff, I would follow him off a cliff. He was that kind of a leader.

KP: This company that you served as a aidman, this acting company commander, was he a native?

LF: He was a longshoreman in New York.

KP: He was not one of the National Guard.

LF: No, but what happened was this captain got wounded in Normandy, and so they made [Constant] Connie Kjems the company commandeer.

KP: Had he been with the unit before?

LF: I don't know, but he must have been with them in the States, sure.

KP: He was not a replacement coming in.

LF: No, this outfit, they went in early. They were known as the "Hollywood Commandos." I don't know if you saw that in any of your books. They were also called the "Yoo-Hoo Battalion" or the "Yoo-Hoo Regiment" or something. What happened was when they were out guarding the West Coast around Hollywood and they were marching down some roads past the golf course, there were some girls playing and they all starting yoo-hooing to the girls. It just so happened that the general was playing golf at the same time. He disciplined the whole bunch of them and made them do all kinds of things. It was all in the newspapers, the "Yoo-Hoo [Regiment]" and the "Hollywood Commandos" and all that. These guys lived it up. Then, they went on maneuvers around Tennessee or Kentucky. They'd been together for a long time. I don't know when Connie Kjems joined them. [Editor's Note: In mid-December 1941, the 134th Infantry Regiment was sent to training near Los Angeles, California and thereafter was nicknamed the "Hollywood Commandos."]

KP: He was a known quantity for them.

LF: Yes. They made him the company commandeer, acting company commandeer. When this other joker came back from the hospital, they made him company commandeer again, and the battalion colonel came down to address us because he knew the morale really was like this [makes a hand gesture indicating low morale] because of the fact that they had sort of demoted him [Kjems] back to exec officer. He and I had a very close relationship. We did a lot of things together, like when we took a town, we'd go out drinking together and stuff like that. I can tell you some more stories.

KP: Even though he was an officer and you were enlisted.

LF: Oh, yes, I was the medic. For instance, I remember it was one of the first days that I was out as an aidman and it was in a little farmhouse and I guess we settled in the barn. So, I suggested that we'd better put guards out on the perimeters, and he did. Even though I was the medic, he evidently had a lot of confidence in me. Unfortunately, he [Kjems] got killed on the same shell that I got hit on. He was right next to me. That was probably the worst night of my life, at that time.

KP: How far into the war?

LF: This was in September. Do you know the city of Nancy?

KP: Yes.

LF: We had taken Nancy, and after that, we had to cross a canal or something. That was the first time I saw the so-called assault boats. All of a sudden, we knew we had to cross this canal. They'd bring us around near the canal, and there was this big dirt embankment between us and the canal. They had these assault boats all leaning against this embankment. It was one of those deals, one o'clock, jumping off, and we go "Oomph." The goddamn things won't move. They were heavy. We couldn't get the assault boats up over this thing. So, the engineers quickly came, and between all of us, we got the damn assault boat over this thing. I figured the water is right there. No, the water is maybe forty feet down. You had to push these damn things down, dump them into the river. Of course, the front of the boat went down into the water momentarily, and then, of course, the oars or paddles all slid down to the front of the boat. So, we jumped into the boat, and there were all the paddles there. The guys are back here, and I'm busy handing out paddles to everybody. We paddled across this canal and get to the other side, and I jumped into the water to hold the damn thing against the embankment there so the guys could get out because this thing started to float away again. That was my first experience with an assault boat.

Then, there was a little, tiny town on the other side of the canal, a crescent-shaped town with this one little street. He was the platoon sergeant for the platoon I was attached to, a fellow named Phil Blair, who had been in research for Campbell's out in Salt Lake City. We became good friends. I remember he had a couple of daughters, and one of them was named Nancy. I was helping him wrap up some packages to send back to his kids. So, we got over there, and he was on one side of the street and I was on the other. You know how you see in the movies that you go up through the town, some on this side and some on that side. I was on this side, and he was on that side. There were some Germans behind the bush with a machine gun, and they opened

up and he got killed. That really hit me hard. It was just a couple of days later that I got wounded because there were only a couple more towns, but that's another story.

These are the things that happened, and it wasn't all fun. It wasn't all just excitement. There were lots of really sad things. I got to the point that I didn't want to be too friendly with anyone, because it seemed that everyone I was friendly with was getting killed. There is a lot of that, personal [relationships]. I remember in Saint-Lô a shell hit right in the aid station and blew off a couple of guys' legs, but one of them was one of our medics. The guys who normally worked in the aid station--there are some that are in the aid station and the patients are brought back and they work on them--they always seemed very calm, but they almost cracked up because it was our own guys. That was the difference. If you were working on someone, an unknown someone that you don't know, it's one thing, but, suddenly, when it's a personal thing, it made it very tough.

KP: Does that make it hard for you as a medic on the line? You know a lot of these guys very well.

LF: It's like you never forget the ones that you know. In fact, I was standing between two people I was very close with [when a shell hit]. One was Connie Kjems, the company commandeer, and the other was Art Dobis, who was from California. He happened to be Jewish. We were together a lot. I knew all about him and his wife and everything. I was standing between the two of them when the shell hit. We were up on top of a little mountain. I got here hit, but they got hit in worse places. I didn't get that badly hurt, comparatively speaking, but that's the bad part. This was a crazy thing, but the guys didn't want to go take this hill because it was late in the afternoon and we had just taken some other little towns. This is just outside of Nancy. The colonel said they had to go take it. I was there while they were busy arguing with him over the radio and trying to talk him out of going up there. We weren't prepared. If you go up there, you've got to get settled, you've got to get dug in, particularly if you're trying to hold the top of a damn mountain. No sooner did we get up there but the Germans counterattacked. They said they were SS. I don't know where that came from, because they came like a bunch of screaming meemies. That's another story. You were saying.

KP: Maybe we should go back to Saint-Lô.

LF: Okay. I did. I did go back twenty-five years ago.

KP: Your unit was part of this large operation to take Saint-Lô.

LF: That was a big communication center. It was very, very important, obviously, for getting through Normandy.

KP: It is noted for that tremendous air assault.

LF: That was three days after we took the town. That was July 25th. I watched that. I was back up on the hill, we pulled back, and I was back up on this hill overlooking Saint-Lô. All of a sudden, these planes started coming over. We didn't get any advance warning. They kept coming over. I think there were three thousand. The funny thing that happened was that we

didn't know there was such a thing as radar. All of a sudden, all these long strips of aluminum foil or the things that they use at Christmastime, but long ones, this stuff is floating down, and we think, "Is this some kind of incendiary thing that the Germans are sending up?" We tried burning them. We couldn't figure out what the hell these things were, because they were all coming down where we were. We did see a couple of planes get hit and get knocked down. That was all day long; they kept coming. I remember that day. [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg is describing Allied radar countermeasures. During bombing raids, Allied bombers dropped bundles of strips of metalized paper, which flooded German radar with false returns.]

By the way, in this book, which was fantastically put together, *Breakout and Pursuit*, as you're at the bottom of the line, you go where you're told to go. So, you're at that level. Well, I read in there how the general from my division spoke to the general from the--I'm not sure if it was the Fourth Division or the 28th--anyway, one of the other divisions, "What are you doing today?" The other [general] said, "We're going to go to Saint-Lô." Well, our general, they think in terms of glory, "Well, then, we will, too." The other general gets in touch with the corps general, complaining about our general and this whole thing. I'm thinking to myself, "These are the guys that are telling me where to go and when to go." It was phenomenal to read this. If we only knew what was going to go on, we'd tell them, "The hell with it, we're not going," or something like that.

The guy that put that one book together I'm trying to remember his name, Blumenson, he did a fantastic job because he had all of the German--everybody wrote everything down--it's absolutely amazing, all these communiqués, every damn thing. He coordinates the whole thing, almost collates what they were saying and what we were saying, what they were thinking and what we were thinking. It's amazing. [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg is referring to Martin Blumenson's book *Breakout and Pursuit: United States Army in World War II*, published in 1993.]

KP: You spent a lot of time since trying to figure out what happened to you and your unit.

LF: Well, I was just curious to read about it and learn about it.

KP: I am curious about the differences from when you were actually going through it versus what you now know.

LF: What a difference.

KP: In Saint-Lô, you knew, in a sense, what was going on with this air assault and that this was a big break.

LF: I saw that, yes. I remember when we went into Saint-Lô, I remember that very vividly because we brought our aid station up and put it in what had been a little winery of some sort. This was just outside of the town, right on the edge of the town. You come around the hill, the road goes up, and this was right alongside the road where it went up and there was a cemetery up there. In fact, the first night I dug into that cemetery, that's where my mother and father wrote to me and said, "We know where you are because this guy is broadcasting from the cemetery." The

battalion headquarters were down in one of these mausoleums in the cemetery. That's where they were staying, and this guy was broadcasting from there. I dug in in between the graves.

KP: That must have been a very eerie experience.

HG: Yes.

LF: No, that's where we were, so that's where I dug in. I told you the shell hit the aid station. Anyway, I had to take my litter squad up to where there was somebody hit in Saint-Lô. That was when I first went into the town. The street near the cemetery, the street went towards the big square in the middle of town. There was this church on our left. The damn Germans were over on some hills on the other side, and there were just four of us medics. They see us, and they start firing with an eighty-eight [mm artillery]. There are all these bomb holes, bomb craters. So, you hide in one, and you figure, "We could get in this one." Which bomb crater? You know how the churches--what are they naves or something--there's a column and a space and a column and you lean up against that and try to make yourself two microns thick. They actually fired upon us.

Finally, I said, "Come on guys," and we started to run across the square, the big, town square. There was a huge hole in the middle of it with something like tunnels down below that I noticed when I ran by. It was just a wall. That was all that was left of this building, but I noticed a stairway going down. I said, "I'll go check." So, I climbed down. There was a nice cellar down there, so I called the guys down. This is one of those little sidelights. I was trying to break the tension a little bit with these guys, and I look around and say, "Boy, this would make a great nightclub." It was like talking to the wall. These guys are all tense that they couldn't enjoy the situation.

Then, we finally got to the other side. There was a statue. I still remember it. There's a statue of a guy on a horse or something. In one of the books I have, they show a picture of it. That's where the guy was. I put a splint on him, and we took him back. I ended up in a hospital right near Saint-Lô later on, after I got wounded. I went back, and I found a piece of the splint still there. I went back to where our aid station had been and buried the foot. It was still there in the shoe. I buried it.

KP: No one had taken care of it.

LF: No. The town, I remember thinking to myself, you couldn't tell where the houses had been and where the streets were because it was so completely bombed. One night, this was before that, this was in the middle of the night, we got a call that somebody was wounded somewhere up ahead. The captain asked if I would take my litter squad. This was from Saint-Lô, but through some of these little outskirts, in and across some fields and apple orchards and stuff, and we found the guy, started to bring him back, and the Germans came over to bomb Saint-Lô. So, there we were laying in this apple field outside, and they dropped flares and started bombing. After that was over, we got to the aid station, and the captain apologized. He said, "I hate to ask you, but you're the only one who could find his way." I've always had a knack of being able to find my way. So, that's why he used to call on me for crazy things like that.

In fact, I got the first promotion in the aid station. If you think there weren't a lot of complaints from the Nebraska contingent, because he knew that he could depend on me. I did what needed to be done. I've always been proud of that. If I ever stayed around long enough, I would have gotten some more promotions. Unfortunately, I was never around long enough. For instance, after we passed on from Saint-Lô to, I think the town's name was, Vire, there was another town just past Saint-Lô.

KP: Was there the Vire River?

LF: The Vire River was there, right.

KP: There was a German counterattack in Emilie.

LF: All we knew was that there was a little town called Emilie that we were supposed to take, and they took more damn crossroads until they got the right one. I think there were some that were just crossroads with houses and they had names, but that was almost a joke about taking this little town of Emilie because we couldn't figure out which Emilie. They kept taking these little towns.

What happened was we got to this next town. It was a real town. They moved the aid station. They went around the town, just marched around the town. The town was essentially off limits, because it hadn't been secured yet. We got to the other side. The captain asked if I would go back and bring up the jeep and all the supplies, so I said, "Sure." Sure enough, I went back through the town, and I came across some Frenchman who was still there and asked him how to get to the railroad station because I remembered seeing a little railroad station where we had started from to go around the town. That's where we had left everything. So, he took me. I couldn't figure out what the hell he was saying. All I know was *gare* was a French word for railroad station. So, [I said], "*La Gare*?" Well, he starts telling me, but that didn't mean anything to me because I couldn't understand what he was saying. He says come on, and he takes me there.

Then, we get in the jeep, and we drive right through the town. Somehow, I found my way through, because the town, many of the streets were all bombed out. Somehow, I found my way back, got to the aid station, brought it up. In fact, the fellow that was with me when I got hit that night, the fellow that got killed, he told me he was listening on the radio and he heard the battalion commander, the colonel, yelling, "Bring up my jeep." They said, "We can't get through the town. It's not safe." He said, "The medics just brought theirs up." So, he remembered that incident. Those are little, side things, little, extra things you did that you remember that weren't exactly fun things but different. So, that was just past Saint-Lô.

From there we went down to, I'm sure you must have read about the so-called Mortain-Falaise Gap. Well, we were by the Mortain end. Our whole battalion is marching up this bright, sunny day in August, by now, I believe. Marching up this road, the captain asked me to take my litter squad and get at the end of the column just in case somebody got hit at that end, because the aid station pushed on ahead.

What happened was we just about got to a [farmhouse]. This was the dramatic story. This is the one I wrote to the girl about. We were just shy of the crossroad, and it was hot. How does the thing move? You go ten feet, and you stop. You go twenty feet, and you stop. We were laying in the shade next to a hedgerow maybe twenty feet from the intersection, when all of a sudden you hear gunfire. We look around, and we couldn't figure out where it was coming from. One of the fellows had a radio with them. We had radios by then. It was a big radio, like a pack, and he had it on his back with a big [antenna]. I sort of noticed that the [antenna] got shot off over his head. So, we didn't know what was happening, but I said, "Come on, guys." Just off the road, there was a farmhouse. [I said], "We'll go there, and we'll wait until this blows over." So, I take them back into this farmhouse and meet the farmer and his wife, and [I am] talking to them. All of a sudden, everybody runs by, everybody that was on this side of the crossroad. Suddenly, someone says, "What's in this farmhouse?" He shows us that there's an attic upstairs.

We go and hide in the attic. By that time, we had one guy that was wounded. He was with us, because he was shot through the face. He was okay, and we bandaged him up a little bit. He was mobile. So, we go up into the attic, and we're waiting up there. We can hear all this gunfire around us. What happened was that the way the farmhouse was built, let's say the walls were up about this high and stone. What it is is just one room where he lives, a stairway, and on the other side of the stairway is the barn. Above the barn is the hay. Above where he lives is this little attic. He had pillows hanging there. They were firing, and it was a thatched roof. So, the bullets are coming through the thatched roof, because we stayed below the level of the stone, and hitting these pillows, and there are feathers flying all over the place. So, I figured I'd better get by the doorway just in case they come in and start shooting. Then, [I] say, "Who's there?" I figured at least let them know we were medics. So, I'm waiting in that doorway, and a guy named (Mullens?), who was about as ineffective as you can get, (Mullens?) figured out that if I was in that doorway, that must be the safe place. I explained to (Mullens?) that if he didn't get the hell out of my way, he wouldn't have to worry about the Germans, I would take care of him.

Anyway, there I am sitting in this doorway, looking down the steps waiting for them to come in, when all of a sudden I look over to my right, and the hay is starting to burn. Those are incendiary bullets that are mixed in with regular bullets in that machine gun. The damn hay is on fire. This is the honest truth. I said to the guys, "Don't look now but the hay is on fire. I'll go down and see what's happening, what the situation is." So, I go down, and I look outside. I don't see anything, but I get the farmer and I tell him what's happening. So, then, I crawl up the steps. [I said], "Okay, guys, come on." By that time, the smoke is so thick I can't even see up the steps. Like in the movies, you take your handkerchief, and you tie it over your nose. I'm busy tying the handkerchief over my nose, and I hear this breaking of glass. There was a window up there. Did you ever go to the circus where they have this little house that catches on fire and the clowns come flying out? You never saw that. The Ringling Brothers had that all the time when I was a kid. There would always be this little house, and all these clowns would come flying out of the house. Well, that's what I thought of when I saw these guys come out of the window.

What happened was that I waited, because I heard yelling and I thought it was the Germans. It turned out that it was the farmer yelling at his cows to come out of the barn. The smoke, by this time, is coming down. There was this big yard in front of the farmhouse, because it faced that way down towards the stream at the end of the yard, and so there's smoke and the cows and us running in between. We must have made [it] fifty yards before they started firing at us. We

could hear them shooting. Believe me, those bullets couldn't catch us, we were moving. We got down to the end, turned right, and ran along that stream until we went back to where the fellows who had been.

Actually, what happened was that the Germans had broken through and cut off the whole battalion except for maybe seventy of us that were on the other side of this intersection, so they re-formed back there and we became their medics. Then, there were some other funny, little things, like we didn't have any supplies. So, there was still the car pool back there that had all the jeeps and stuff. We go to the car pool and say, "Quick, we need a jeep. We have to go get some supplies from regimental." [He said], "We [need] an order from the lieutenant, from an officer." I said, "You crazy guy. We're the only thing between you and the Germans." They finally let us have a jeep, but we had to take their driver, I swear to you, typical. The rule was you couldn't have a jeep unless you had an order from an officer. We must have gone five miles before we ever came across anything. There was nothing back there, no troops, no nothing. The Germans knew. They could have gone right to the sea. We finally got some supplies [and] went back.

Then, this is not really part of this whole story, but I watched something back there. When we got back and we were holding just that little area, there was a German T.D., which is tank destroyer, that was around here. Here's the intersection, and they came across like this.

KP: You were at the "T."

LF: For instance, there was hedgerow here and here. This is where we were and the farmhouse was over here, so we just pulled back there. Our battalion was heading in that direction. They had a tank destroyer right there, and they hit one of our tanks, which burned. That was over here. The other tankers were really mad. By that time, we were back here, and I'm standing here, just standing in the road watching this. They took one tank and found a little road that went through the woods like this. They got the other tank to start firing [and] make a lot of noise. This other tank took off. All of a sudden, it went "kaboom," and we saw parts of that thing going way up into the air. That was beautiful. It was a real maneuver.

KP: Like you are supposed to.

LF: Yeah. It was very dramatic to just stand there and watch this. It was quite a thing. So, finally, the Second Cavalry [Armored Divison] or one of them came through and broke through to our battalion, so we could join up with them. We were not that far from Mortain, the city of Mortain.

KP: Your division had a role in rescuing the trapped 30th Infantry Division.

LF: The so-called "Lost Battalion." I always thought it was our battalion they were talking about, because they were cut off, but, no, our outfit wasn't involved in going into Mortain. I read about that later. I read about how the whole German Seventh Army was caught between Mortain and Falaise Gap. That was quite a well-done maneuver on our part. [Editor's Note: On August 7, 1944, German military forces counterattacked in the Mortain-Avranches area, isolating the Second Battalion, 120th Infantry of the 30th Infantry Division. The First Battalion, 320th

Infantry and the 737th Tank Battalion attacked and defeated German forces, relieving the "Lost Battalion" in the meantime. In August 1944, American, Canadian and Polish forces overwhelmingly defeated the German Seventh Army in the Falaise Gap, which paved the way for the Allied advance to Paris.]

Then started the fun part, because after that, as I remember, the next thing was we were supposed to take Le Mans. I always thought I would never see another French town standing, because everything that we passed [was destroyed]. As a matter-of-fact, the civilians that we encountered along the way were not friendly at all. Their places had been unfortunately bombed or strafed or whatever because it was part of the fighting. They didn't appreciate that, particularly since the Germans were very good to them.

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO----------

KP: This continues an interview on November 22, 1998 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and ...

HG: … Hilary Gould.

KP: Before we continue, I would like to make sure Hilary gets a chance.

LF: Oh, Hilary, please.

HG: Do you want to finish that thought?

KP: Please, finish the thought.

LF: Well, actually, what happened was that was the beginning of the big push across France, where the Germans were retreating faster than we could almost catch up to them.

KP: Was that a real shift in the war for you?

LF: Oh, if the whole war was like that, we'd never have peace, because we came not as conquerors but as liberators.

KP: Whereas before the French had resented you?

LF: Yeah, in Normandy, they resented us. Once we got out of that area, actually, I'm not so sure that Mortain is Normandy or Brittany. [Editor's Note: Mortain is in the Normandy region of France.]

KP: I would have to look at a map.

LF: Yeah, I'm not sure. For instance, we were supposed to take Le Mans, and, of course, by that time, they got us into trucks in order to move ahead. We came driving into Le Mans, and somebody else had already taken it. I couldn't believe that I'm seeing a town, and there are people sitting at sidewalk cafes drinking. Here's a whole city, and it's still standing.

Then, it was just a matter of time until we got to the eastern part of France that all of a sudden, it started in again. Of course, we did run into the problem, which I'm sure you're aware of, that they couldn't keep the gasoline flowing quickly enough. So, we got bogged down [somewhere] down the way, past the Paris area. We took towns like Montargis, Villeneuve-sur-Conie, Joigny, that's J-O-I-G-N-Y, just took them. The guys were capturing Germans like crazy. I remember sitting up on a hill and watching a whole company of Germans come out like this [with their hands raised in surrender] from a barn. It must have been a mile away that I could see it coming towards whoever was down there. This is the truth.

We needed money. French francs were the thing. We were getting paid a very poor exchange rate. I think we were paying two dollars for a hundred francs, which was probably around twenty cents. If we needed money, we'd go off in the woods, capture some Germans, take their francs, leave them there. Their francs were as good as anybody else's. That went on.

It wasn't until we got close to Nancy--now, this is a crazy story. We were supposed to take a fort. This fort was from the 1800s. The French had built it to protect them from the Germans in those days. This was near the Moselle Valley. The top of the fort was actually flush with the top of the mountain. It was all dug in with walls. It must have been eight, ten feet thick of stone. It was quite a fort. Well, we come up there with one lousy company and a little tiny tank, not a Sherman tank. I don't know if you could look anyplace to see if there's a thing called the M-10 [tank destroyer]. It was a little, tiny tank that only had a little seventy-five-millimeter gun, if it was that big. Maybe it was fifty-seven-millimeter gun on that. I don't know if it was left over from World War I. I don't know where they found it. To go up this thing, they sent this up with us. We get there, and there was this moat around the fort and a little footbridge. We just crossed the footbridge and go in and take the fort. The Germans had left. Not too long after we took this fort, they decided that they made a mistake. They decided to attack. [Editor's Note: The M-10 "Wolverine" was an American tank destroyer armed with a seventy-six-point-two-mm M-7 gun and later a seventy-six-mm M-1 gun.]

KP: While you were in the fort.

LF: We're in the fort. They're outside.

KP: They just let you have the fort. They had just left it.

LF: Yeah, we couldn't figure it out. This fort overlooked this huge □ it was a tremendous asset because we had more artillery observers that immediately came up and moved into the fort with us. We only had one lousy company of infantry, but all these artillery spotters [came up]. So, when the Germans counterattacked, they all called in [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes a "Pssst" sound.], "Hey." So, we had artillery landing all around the place.

In fact, the word came back to me that there was a German out there who was wounded and yelling for help. I said, "Okay, I'll go out." I started toward that part of the fort where this little, tiny footbridge was, and, all of a sudden, shells hit. There was a street that ran through the center of the fort. It was almost like two stories down from the top, but it was open. They lobbed in probably Howitzers that they must have used. They landed right in there. They had it zeroed in,

obviously. Suddenly, here I am with about ten or twelve wounded that I had to take care of in a hurry, because I was the only medic there for some reason. I forgot about whoever it was outside. He had a low priority.

Captain Kjems--no, he was only a lieutenant, he never made captain--we get the word from up where the little footbridge was across the moat that there were some Germans with a white flag out there, they wanted to talk, so he said, "Come on." He takes me with him. We go out there to talk to them, "You [are] surrounded. We want you to surrender." We said no. Then, we said, "Are you the commandant, officer?" "Oh, no." "I'm only talking to the commandant." "Oh, okay." It was sort of funny. I said, "I heard some yelling." There was like a dirt parapet further out. I said, "What are you yelling?" "I'm telling you not to shoot." They were behind this dirt with a machine gun. Meanwhile, I said to him, casual-talk like, "How do you guys like the war?" that sort of thing. He shows me his shoes, and they're worn away and he's got a piece of cardboard in there.

KP: This is the German.

LF: Yes, one of the Germans. So, I said, "You really should give up because you'll be treated well as a prisoner of war." Believe it or not, he did surrender later. I'm not kidding. Anyway, they go back. We go back to the little fort, and we wait. Sure enough, they come back, and we go out. "The commandant has been wounded." We had to carry him up here. We go back. Later on, they tell us once again that the commandant died, and they had to send back someplace and get a new commandant. This went on, and it was crazy.

KP: There was an attack and you decided to have a cease fire□

LF: Yes. Then, they go back, and the shooting starts again.

KP: Because your lieutenant wanted to talk to the commandant.

LF: He said [that] he's not going to talk to just anybody about this. The thing I remember is that he said, "We're going to fight to the last man." I'm thinking, "I wonder who that's going to be."

HG: On your side, the highest rank was a lieutenant.

LF: Well, I think there were some captains there from the artillery in this fort. So, I said to one of these Germans, "Why the hell did you get out of the fort? How come you left the fort?" He said, "We didn't have any anti-tank guns." I said, "What the hell?" "No, we didn't have any anti-tank guns." We came up with that little tank, and they got out. I said, "It doesn't fly." It's always been the big mystery of why.

Now, I did go back there in 1973. I went with the family to show them where I'd been. Actually, I needed it, to go back. I wanted to go back to places I had been, starting in Normandy, Saint-Lô. [It was] unbelievable. It was all re-built. What I didn't know was down in those tunnels were Roman ruins. The Romans had been there evidently at one time. There were all these tunnels down there, whatever they were for. I guess maybe for their water system or something. I went back to that fort, too. It was now a French Army training place. They

wouldn't let me in. I had less trouble getting in the first time. I finally got a hold of the commandant there and talked to him. They finally let us go in, but we had to take his guide to show us around. I did notice, because I had never been around behind this fort, but on the French side, there wasn't the moat back there. Maybe they thought we were going to come in from that end with the tank, but we didn't even know it existed.

KP: It was just one tank.

LF: Oh, a little, tiny tank. Now, you know [how] things that stay in your mind. As we were starting up, it was a bright, sunny day in early September, and we were going up a road up to where the fort was. I remember looking, and there was a whole pine forest there. There was a dead German laying there with the sun shining on him, just one dead German, but you still remember. Don't forget, we saw so many. [He was] just all by himself in that pine forest with the sun shining on him. It was very strange.

KP: While the siege was going on, they had all these truces, and you were talking with the Germans. I gather that this was from professional soldiers, and it is not as strange as it sounds. When you were not having these little truces, however, you were trying to kill each other.

LF: Yeah, yes, yes.

KP: You were chatting with him how the war is going and he was showing you his boots.

LF: That's right.

KP: You were asking questions like, "Why did you leave the fort in the first place?" He was giving you an honest answer on the surface, "Well, we thought you had tanks."

LF: Yes.

KP: Did it seem strange at the time to have these conversations?

LF: No, no.

HG: How did you feel towards the Germans in general?

LF: Truthfully, I figured these poor guys are in the same situation as us poor guys. In other words, they're the frontline for their army and we're the frontline for our army, and how can I get mad at them? First of all, I personally didn't know about the Holocaust, not that these guys were the ones that did it, but I think my attitude towards the Germans in general might have been a little different.

HG: Did that change after you were a prisoner of war?

LF: No, on the contrary. Some of those guys really had me, had us, at a disadvantage. Being Jewish didn't exactly put me number one of their hit parade, but I had very few instances where that made any differences. A lot of them were very, very considerate and helpful.

HG: What was your daily routine while you were a POW? What did they make you do?

LF: Well, first of all, here we go to another thing.

KP: Let us wait for your prisoner-of-war stories.

LF: Yes, I'm only in September, and that was in January.

KP: I am curious about the fort.

LF: Eventually, we had to leave the fort. That was difficult, because there's nothing like having something like your uniform between you and artillery and whatever. So, that was very difficult. I remember the first place we went was like some barracks or something, French Army barracks of some sort, and we held that.

Then, from there, we were pulled out, and they made up what they called a combat team. It was us and there were some tanks, a tank battalion, and some engineers and everything. The object was to take Nancy, which was a big city. We got into trucks. I remember I was in the first truck in line. We went flying down this road that led into Nancy. As we got into Nancy, the trucks pulled around to both sides to sort of surround the town. We went flying right into the town. I just have very strong memories of it--people had metal shutters on their windows--seeing people opening their shutters and seeing the looks on their face. They suddenly realized that we Americans were there. We went flying into that town. Fortunately, the Germans had practically left.

The only crazy thing that happened was our truck, we got down into the industrial part of town, and, by the way, these trucks were all driven by the black soldiers. That's about all they would let them [do]. The blacks were in the so-called Red Ball Express, if you've heard of that, that was used to bring supplies and everything across France. Then, they would bring in trucks, the so-called two-and-a-half-ton truck. That was the only place that we saw any black soldiers. They weren't given the privilege of dying for their country, shall we say. [Editor's Note: On June 6, 1944, Allied forces invaded the Normandy region of German-occupied France. On August 25, Paris was liberated. Between August 25 and September 6, 1944, truck convoys of the Red Ball Express shuttled 90,000 tons of fuel and food from St.-Lo to Chartres to supply forward Allied units as they pursued the Germans across the River Seine. Red ball is railroad slang for fast freight. Subsequent supply operations also went by the name Red Ball Express.]

We got down into the industrial section, and, all of a sudden, we hear that a machine gun opens up. With all the buildings there, the sound is echoing off all of the buildings, and nobody could figure out where it's coming from. Meanwhile, it took us about two milliseconds to get out of the truck. "Kaboom." It took another two milliseconds for that truck to turn around and get the hell out. Finally, somebody spotted it. There was some crazy German. There was a big smokestack with some type of filter. It wasn't just a plain smokestack. It had this big metal thing up top. That's where the jerk was firing down on us. So, we brought a tank up, and the tank brings his gun up and, "Kaboom," took off the top of the smokestack. We didn't have any

more machine-gun fire, whoever it [was]. They did things like that, some of these Germans. Really, it was suicidal.

KP: You thought it was clearly suicidal. It was not called for.

LF: How much could he accomplish first of all firing from way up there, and why? I don't know. It was just a crazy thing.

KP: Yet other Germans were more than content to throw up their hands.

LF: Oh, yes, oh, yes. The funniest one you reminded me of was back in Normandy. They had put Poles into their army, and I don't know how anxious they were to be there because they weren't such friendly guys either, especially to the Jews as you know. I remember there were a lot of them, several of them, decided to give up. See, what happened in Normandy, you never got to see the enemy. There was fighting, fighting, fighting, shooting, shooting, shooting, artillery, mortars, whatever, but you never got to see anybody. So, when these guys got up, like this [with hands held up in surrender], to give up, some of the guys opened up. All I know was that this one I was working on, boy, was he bitching until they shot him through the hand. He threw his hands up and got shot through the hand. He's telling them that he's trying to give up, and they shot him. Boy, he was really complaining.

There was something, I didn't see it, but some of the guys told me that--the only place that I heard this happened and this is from our guys--they would capture some Germans. If you're on the frontline and you have some prisoners, you have to go back through the area where the artillery hits. The artillery is mostly behind the lines. That's where the artillery is really aimed at, not the frontline necessarily, but back on the lines of communication. That means if you want to take some prisoners back, you have to go through that area. That's what was so tough about being a litter-bearer; we had to constantly go back and forth through that and that was really pretty difficult. So, they would just go back a little ways and eliminate the prisoners because they didn't want to [risk it]. Why should they risk their life to go back there? So, it did happen.

KP: You never witnessed it personally.

LF: No. That's okay. When I got captured, this was right after the Malmedy massacre, this German is telling me how we massacred some German prisoners in some other town nearby. I just told him it was propaganda and that was the end of the conversation, but I'm sure it did happen because these guys told me and they had no reason to [lie]. [Editor's Note: During the Battle of the Bulge, Germans massacred seventy-two American soldiers near the town of Malmedy in Belgium.]

KP: This was during the war itself.

LF: This was in Normandy, I'm talking about.

KP: This is not something after.

LF: Oh, no. It's killed or be killed, I guess. You've got to play by different rules sometimes.

KP: A recent work has been done on medics, German and American medics, and one question I have in general is how well respected was your helmet with a red cross on it? You mentioned one case when they zeroed in on you. They deliberately, clearly zeroed in on you.

LF: They might not have been able to see our helmets. What happened was, it was after Saint-Lô, this one day, a hot, bright sunny day, I took a litter squad up because there was somebody wounded. The line was a whole line of hedgerows that they were behind. I walked upright because it was only this high, the hedgerows, and I could be seen with my red cross [on] my armbands and helmet. By the way, I still have that helmet. That was very near and dear to me. So, I got the guy and left.

Well, there was another call, and I took another litter squad up. We were walking along the same place. We were sort of in line. I was first, and there were two fellows behind me carrying a litter and a fourth one. A shot rang out. It's very, very strange. I had no idea, but it felt like a tiny piece of dust hit my face. That's the only way I can describe it. It didn't hurt or anything. It was so funny that this little thing hit my face, and someone yelled, "Pat's been hit." He was right behind me. I went back to him, and he was dead. They shot him right through the heart. That's when I lost it. I tried to grab a BAR [Browning automatic rifle] from one of the guys that was there. I was going to go after that son of a bitch. Fortunately, they held me back. All kidding aside, I screamed at him in German. I called him everything under the sun. That was murder. That was murder. That was one of the few times that it was ever deliberate.

KP: Clear and deliberate.

LF: Oh, yes. Otherwise, I was very often up in front of the lines, between the lines and stuff like that. I just operated like that on the basis that they weren't going to [shoot at me].

KP: You were in very vulnerable positions.

LF: I was out there completely exposed. If they wanted to, they could have. No, they respected it in general, but there were always exceptions to every damn thing. That one really--maybe he felt guilty--see, I didn't think I needed to take cover because I'd been there. I saw it was safe the first time we were up there.

KP: How often would you care for the German wounded?

LF: Anytime it was necessary. I'll tell you two stories about that. One, remember I told you we did that river cross thing, and that's when Phil [Blair] was killed. Anyway, we were in this crescent-shaped, little street with houses, and some dumb Germans decided to come across. Here's the crescent, I was down here, and this is where the guys were behind the bush when they hit Phil. We set up machine guns here and machine guns there. Some Germans came. There must have been a half a dozen of them and just came [down the street].

KP: Marching down.

LF: They opened up on them. Sure enough, we could hear the moans coming, so I went out. I remember the expression, you know how they say "piled up like cordwood." They were almost piled up like cordwood. I sort of rummaged through to see if anyone was alive enough. There were two of them. One of them was pretty badly hit. We had just made this river [crossing]. We had no litters, no litters or anything. So, I went back here, and there was a shed. I found some canvas or burlap, I guess it was, and a couple of boards, and I made a makeshift litter. I got another guy to go with me. So, we put this guy up on the litter. Meanwhile, the rest of the guys are back here behind some dirt. They had a small artillery piece. I told them knock it off, literally. I told them, "Be quiet, stop already." So, they did. They weren't firing at us; they were firing over at the other part of town. So, I started to carry this guy. The damn boards break, and he falls on the ground. So, I lift him up, and I tell him in my best German, "Maybe you'd better walk." He says, "Better [we] run." I always love that line, "Better we run." I got him into the town and sent him back.

One of the other things that happened in that town, these little things you don't forget. It's funny, I can't remember where I was yesterday, but I can tell you what happened there. They were going back and forth in these little boats, and there was a fellow who I also was very friendly with back when we had taken this one little town. There was nothing going on, and we met some kids. We went to the boat, and we were rowing in the river. That's how quiet things were. There were some kids fishing, and we invited them into the boat. They went with us. Sure enough, they came the next day and said the family wants us to come to dinner. We said fine. So, they came for us that night, and we walked down [to] this little French town with the little old [houses], not mud houses, but [made of stone]. All of a sudden, there's this long, big walled-in area, and we went through this gate. There's this mansion, and that's Mommy and Daddy. They had this mansion with all kinds of servants. We had a different wine for every course. Of course, someone else in town later told us they collaborated with the Germans, obviously, because they were allowed to keep their stuff. It was quite an experience. They had a piano there that was all inlaid in ivory. I never saw anything like it. They had a thing like a cabinet. They were using it for displaying special things, and they said that was Marie Antoinette's carriage that they carried her in, not bad.

KP: It sounds even stranger, because you were on the line.

LF: This time we were holding this town. Nothing was happening.

KP: But still.

LF: Our mission was to protect the right flank of the Army in case any Germans came up from the south, which tells another funny story. We took Montargis, which was a fairly large-sized town. [There was] nothing much going on. I remember they told us there were some Germans hiding in the cemetery. They use these little mausoleums all over the cemetery, and we had to check every one of them to see if anybody was hiding in them. All of a sudden, the word came that there were tanks coming from the south. So, we get all ready for the tanks, and who is it? [It is] the so-called--this was the only time I ever saw them--the famous [FFI], French Forces of the Interior, but they called them [FFI]. They came barreling into town.

In fact, I got out in the road and started directing traffic, because this tank battalion turned out to be trucks and cars and anything that moved. This whole column is coming flying into the town in typical French driving technique. I swear to you, one of the cars must have been this long and this high. Have you seen them in the movies? Anyway, the front of the column somewhere in the town stops, and then you hear, "Bang, crash, bang, crash." None of them, I don't think, had brakes. I got scared as hell, because there was a truck and there were guys sitting in the back of the truck with their legs hanging down. I had visions of the car behind them taking their feet off, but fortunately it didn't happen. It scared the hell out of me. That was the [FFI]. They were a big help once we took the town.

KP: I know Hilary wants to get to the prisoner-of-war experience, but before we get there, I would like to ask you a little bit about the wounded. You spent some time in the hospital.

LF: [I have] another crazy story, another crazy story. I got wounded, and, as I told you, it was an actual nightmare, not because of getting wounded, although you do get a little shaken up. This was at night, in the dark, and the Germans had counterattacked on top of this mountain, a big hill, I guess you'd call it. We called it a hill; I guess they called it a mountain. Anyway, it was just mass confusion up there. For instance, I remember the guys, like this is the mountain and this is the crest and we just had this part. The guys were in a line here. I heard that they needed some hand grenades, so I gathered up a bunch of hand grenades. There's a little road that ran along here. Believe it or not, I crawled up that road, and they were firing. It was just like on one of these infiltration courses, where you go and they're firing above your head and the tracers. That's exactly how it was. I brought up a dozen hand grenades, and I went back.

I still have pictures at home. I left [my] family back at the hotel in Nancy [when we came to visit in 1973], and I came over to see this again. We were standing there, and there was a mortar shell that hit. A piece went through my helmet, along the top of my head. A piece hit me in the back. Another piece went across my arm here. In the dark, [I was] trying to work on everybody. It was very difficult.

KP: You were wounded, but you were trying to work on the people around you.

LF: Oh, sure, oh, of course. What happened was that the colonel decided that we--he wasn't up there making this decision, he was back there someplace--he decided we should leave the mountain. For instance, I was down at this point, and one of our tank destroyers was down there. There were a couple of guys sitting there, who had been wounded, and I had worked on them. In fact, one of them wrote back afterwards that I had saved his life. It was one of the officers. Our artillery was supposedly trying to fire right above here. One battery was hitting below us. I remember the artillery driver who was there was screaming over his radio to, "Cease fire. Cease fire." They still kept firing below us. I wasn't the only medic. The whole battalion was up there. There were a lot of wounded that were placed up here.

I was down here when the order was given to retreat. The guys in the tank destroyer offered me a ride down. What I didn't realize was they left all the wounded up there, which was something that really bothered me, to this day even. You think about the things you did right, but mostly you think about the things you did wrong, even running around in the dark trying to bandage people up. It was so dark [that] you couldn't see what you were doing.

KP: You did not have a flashlight. You cannot use lights.

LF: As I said, it was probably the worst night.

KP: What do you think happened to the wounded left behind? Do you think they were cared for by the medics?

LF: I don't know. I don't know. They may have been killed, for all I know. They opened up with artillery and everything else. Then, I got back to the aid station, and they kept saying, "You have to go back to the hospital." I kept saying I didn't want to. I really didn't feel I was that badly wounded, but they insisted on it.

That started a saga. First of all, you end up in an evacuation hospital. There happened to be some Jewish doctors there, and they took a look at me and said, "Well, we'll give you a rest." They did what they called debridement, where they cut out the area where you've been wounded, so you'll heal up. From the evac hospital, they took me to a convalescent hospital near Saint-Mihiel. Saint-Mihiel was famous in World War I. That was a convalescent hospital. It was just tents. You stayed there until you heal.

While I was there, so it shouldn't be a total loss, I thought, "Well, gee, I lost my eyeglasses back in Normandy." My eyesight had gotten a lot better, since I hadn't been doing microscope work or reading or anything. I did want a pair of glasses.

When the planes came over, even though it wasn't that often, the German planes twice [bombed our position]. I never told you that back in Normandy, they came over at night. One lousy plane drops one lousy bomb. The funny thing was they dropped a set of flares, and all you could see was like a used-car lot. You see a bunch of lights, and they seemed to be just hanging there. They didn't seem to be coming down; they were just hanging there. Oh, wasn't that neat? So, we said, "We'd better go back to our holes," which we just left. So, we went back to our holes. In fact, did I make it back? I tripped, or (Louie?) tripped, the guy I dug in with. Anyway, they drop one lousy bomb, and you could hear it from the time it leaves the plane. They were very smart. They had this terrible whistle that they put on their bomb. I was under our own bombs, too, and they don't make [that sound]. It's getting so loud.

KP: The whistle of the bomb.

LF: Yeah, as it's coming down. (Louie?) and I were in the hole together. I'm sorry; somebody else tripped and didn't quite make it. We were both shaking. It's a wonder we didn't kill each other from the shaking, because you know this is it. Then, boom, the thing hit right in the same field and the dirt came flying over, but there's instant relief. It's happened and it's finished, and you feel no aftereffect.

----------END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE----------

LF: What happened was, I think it was a couple days later, we moved up in our holes. The goddamned guy comes up again, drops one lousy bomb, once again, the noise. This time it hits

just [on] the other side of the hedgerow. The dirt and everything kept flying over. Then, once it stopped, fine, we come out of the hole. There's this one guy. He comes out, and he's clawing the ground, clawing the ground, looking up. He cracked. He didn't recuperate as soon as it hit. The funny thing is he's from Trenton. I never looked him up, because I know that he would be so embarrassed if I did, but he was the only one that cracked up from that. Believe me, that was very traumatic, those two bombs. That's why I wanted to know, when somebody's plane came over, whose side they were on.

[When I was at the convalescent hospital], they said, "When you're marked 'ready for duty,' just come down." They had an ear, eyes and throat clinic at this convalescent hospital, "Just come down and let us know and we'll take care of it." So, sure enough, they marked me ready for duty. I think it was like three weeks. They said, "Okay, you'll get called out." Sure enough, one day they called out my name.

I get into an ambulance, and here are these guys that are really banged up. I said, "Where are we going?" They said, "To the air evac hospital." I figured, "Oh, they're going to drop them off and take me to some nearby general hospital where they're making glasses." We get to the air evac hospital, and they said, "Everybody out." I said, "Whoa, I'm just going for a pair of glasses." "That's okay." Every time, you'd get into one of these places like an air evac hospital, you'd have this medical jacket you carry with you that has all the medical information. Of course, on the outside, it says, "Wounded; shrapnel wound on the left scapular," or something like that. They're writing it down, and I'm saying, "No, I'm just here for glasses." "That's okay." Anyway, they couldn't get any planes into this thing. I think I would have been up in England if they had finished up the runway because this was an old German air corps field.

Well, now I'm on the east side of France. They didn't get any planes in, and I guess I must have been there a week. I got on a hospital train to Paris. Boy, they put us on some buses, go driving through Paris, staring, looking. That was exciting. [We] get into this hospital, and I think I was there two or three days before the doctor finally came to me. Meanwhile, I'm going through recreational therapy, where you make stuff out of leather and things. He examines me, and there was another guy too also going for glasses. I said, "I'm only here for a pair of glasses." He said, "Well, we could do it, but this hospital is being used for [an] evac hospital because there are so many wounded coming through, so we can't keep you here to do it here." Onto another hospital train all the way back to Normandy, not too far from Saint-Lô. I end up in a general hospital.

KP: For a pair of glasses.

LF: I'm still going for a pair of glasses. Would you believe that story if I wrote it to you?

KP: Oh, yes.

LF: Would you if you were my parents?

KP: No, not at the time of World War II.

LF: I swear to you. I wrote to them, and I found out afterwards that they used to take every letter I wrote and analyzed every word to find out what really happened to me because they knew

I wouldn't tell them. [Would I] go to tell them I was going for a pair of glasses? I had to come up with a better story than that.

HG: Yeah.

LF: I should have told them I was wounded. They would have understood that. Finally, finally, I was called to the eye clinic. I was examined for a pair of glasses, and as I was leaving, the major said to me, "Okay, we'll have them in a couple of days." I just casually said, "No rush."

So, meanwhile, there were several Jewish medics there, and they treated me like a king because in this hospital they were constantly being warned, pardon the expression, but this is an Army thing, "If you fuck up, we're going to make a company aidman out of you." Well, here I was, a real company aidman who hadn't done anything, but, anyway, they treated me royally.

A lot of Jewish guys, I went to Friday night services, and they gave me the wine to drink and stuff like that. In fact, the optician was a guy that I got to be friendly with, that made the glasses, and I see I'm still there, one week, two weeks. So, I said to him, "Hey, how come I'm still here? I've got my glasses." He said, "Remember when you were walking out and the major said he'll have them for you and you said no rush?" When I left, he said, "That's the first honest guy that's come through here. Everybody is trying to buck for some reason, to stay back there, and not go back." I casually said, "No rush." So, he said, "We'll keep him here awhile."

KP: People were basically keeping you, so you would have a chance to rest.

LF: Whatever, just to be nice to me. I got wounded September 19th. By the way, it was Rosh Hashanah [Jewish New Year] that year. Do you know what Rosh Hashanah is, our big holiday? I didn't even know it until I got to the hospital.

KP: You were aware.

LF: No, it wasn't on my calendar.

KP: Did you ever see chaplains when you were on the line?

LF: The battalion had a chaplain, a Protestant chaplain. I even went to services the day before we went into combat. I figured, "What can I lose?" [laughter] Let me tell you what happened. At first, I dug a hole because they told us to dig in with the aid station. I came back, and who's sitting in my hole, the chaplain, scared as hell. I'm consoling him. I swear to you. I swear to you. I'm trying to cheer him up. He was scared as hell. Sure enough, I think it was the next day, the shell hit and I think a piece came through the hedge and I don't know how it was but it hit him somewhat in the head, not too bad evidently. Boom, he went away. I didn't tell you this story, yeah, about bringing the jeep up from the little town of Tours. When I went to where the railroad station was and our stuff was, the chaplain was there with his jeep. I said, "Do you want to follow us?" He said, "No, I just thought of something I have to do back in headquarters," and off he took. I never saw him again.

There was a Catholic chaplain from one of the other battalions. It was terrific. I was very impressed with him. He was very brave. He was good, but those are the only chaplains. I guess at the hospital, they must have had one. I did go to Yom Kippur services in the hospital. That was it.

HG: Was he a rabbi?

LF: If he was a chaplain, he would have had to have been, a Jewish chaplain.

HG: Okay.

KP: Sometimes even Protestant or Catholic chaplains would do the service.

LF: Sure. For instance, for the guys who wanted to keep kosher, which was almost impossible, they became chaplain's assistants. So, even under the worst of conditions, they were always with the chaplain. They had their jeep and were able to do their own cooking. That's how they managed. I wasn't about to become a chaplain's assistant.

Anyway, as I said, I got hit September 19th. I didn't get back to my outfit until December 5th or 6th, believe it or not. The funny thing was I kept writing after I got wounded, when I was in the hospital. I kept writing to my family without mentioning anything. I didn't want them to know I was wounded. Then, after I was in the hospital awhile, I found out that they sent these damn telegrams. It really confused them. They sent them a telegram that, "We regret to inform you that So-and-So was wounded September 19th," and they were getting letters from me the 20th, 21st, 22nd. Anyway, they got in touch with every old girlfriend that I had to see if I wrote something different to them that I hadn't told them. They couldn't believe, who could believe, that I was doing all of this for a pair of glasses. They probably saved my life, because there were some pretty rough times that the guys went through. I got back to the outfit. They were around Sarreguemines in the Saar region.

KP: Although you rejoined the division when it would see a lot of heavy combat because of the Battle of the Bulge, it was not exactly a picnic when you got back. They saw a lot of heavy fighting in December.

LF: Oh, yes. We were down on the southern part of the line. Do you want to hear a romantic story?

KP: Oh, yes, go ahead.

LF: We took Sarreguemines. Then, we went on from there, and we went to the Blies River. I think the Blies River is the official border between Alsace-Lorraine and Germany. That river is very swift, which they didn't realize. The battalion tried to make a river crossing. This was right after I got back. In fact, I became a litter-bearer again when I got back. There weren't any openings at the moment at my old job. We took this little town of Freuenberg. Freuenberg was on this side of the river; Habkirchen was on the other side of the river. They went to cross the river, and some of the boats got swept downstream, turned over. A lot of guys drowned. Some

of the guys made it across, and they were stuck in Habkirchen. They held part of it. [Editor's Note: The Blies River is a tributary of the Saar River.]

Then, they had some wounded over there. I had my litter squad down in this house, right on the edge of the river, down in the cellar, of course. We lived in cellars at all times. There were some civilians down there. I didn't pay too much attention at first. So, I went upstairs. Of course, the roof had been blown off at this point. I found a mattress up there. I dragged it down, brought it down into the cellar. There were some engineers there trying to put in a bridge. The Germans were constantly blowing out the bridge. They didn't want them to put in a bridge, naturally. I had my litter squad there. As I dragged this mattress down--I missed one point--there was this pretty, young girl there. These guys are all trying to talk to her and everything. She spoke German and French and a little English. She was very, very pretty. So, they would call me over to translate for them. I translated something into German to explain to her. Then, my eyes started to clear. I said, "I'm going to translate for myself." So, when I went up and brought the mattress down and they said this is their place, she points to the place--the guys had given them a lot of clearance--where the family was staying down in the cellar. They had some mattresses down there. It was her mother and father and aunt, I think, that were down there. She points to a spot next to their place. So, I didn't think too much about that either. I put my mattress down, and, in fact, I asked one of the guys if he wanted to share it.

Well, that night, after it got dark and we were trying to sleep, all of a sudden, there she is right next to me in the dark. It was really very not like you kids today, believe me. This was just [like] in a movie, it would be contrived.

KP: You would think it was phony.

LF: It was real. I'll tell you, I fell madly in love with her. Let me tell you, their cow was outside someplace, and they were worried that the cow was going to get killed. I couldn't care less. [laughter] I went out. I got the cow and brought him to safety.

Of course, I did make a river crossing. I got a boat and went downstream. We crossed over, and I went over into the town. I went to where our guys were, because they were holding part of the town. I ran into Lieutenant (Scott?). Now, I don't know if I told you about him. He was an officer who was just very ineffective, like when we were up in that fort. Once again, I found the German headquarters there, got a mattress, and took it down to the tunnel that we were holding. So, he decided he was going to share the mattress with me, which was fine. Well, the Germans did sort of counterattack in this fort with these tunnels all over the place. There were tunnels down to where they evidently left their ammunition and powder and stuff, because, at one time, there had obviously had been a huge gun because there was a huge, open turret where a gun must have been. The sound, the machine guns were firing [somewhere], and, "Brrrrr," right through these things.

So, I'd wake them up. I said, "Don't look now, (Scottie?), but I think they're attacking." He gets up and he says, "I don't know what's the matter. I'm shaking." I said, "Because you're scared," but that was Lieutenant (Scott?). He's the same guy that when I told when Phil Blair, after we went into this crescent town, he was killed, he was running the platoon, (Scott?), and (Scottie?) was no place. I just walked back down the middle of that street after I realized that Phil was

killed, even though the guy with the machine gun was here. Don't ask me why, but I just didn't care. I just walked right back down the street. I bump into (Scottie?). He's running between these two houses. "Oh, there were rabbits." I don't know what the hell he was chasing. I told him that Phil Blair was killed. Boy, he went into shock. The first question is, "Who should I make the platoon leader?" He says, "What about So-and-So?" I said, "No, he can't take it." Boy, was I right. He cracked up that same day, [laughter] this guy that he was going to recommend.

Anyway, who do I bump into in this town? Almost every officer got hit that night that I got wounded, back in September. When I came there, there he [Scott] is, and he greeted me like a long-lost cousin or uncle or whatever. God, was he glad to see me. He started to tell me all his problems and how he went to the hospital. Somehow, he went to the hospital, even though he didn't get wounded. Everybody else went, so I guess he figured he would go. He said he watched an operation, and he just hasn't been able to handle it since. Of all the guys that didn't get wounded. Nothing happened to him, and he's still going. This is December.

Meanwhile, they gave me maps showing where they were exactly and where the Germans were, which I put under my shirt and took back to the battalion headquarters because a medic's not supposed to do it. In fact, it was the next day that we went over there, and we had this German medic that we had captured and he was working with us. At the end of the day, he goes back. We had no way of stopping him, but he worked with us as a prisoner and then he went back to his own guys. That was one time when I came across. This one German [was] wounded, and he was hit down in his private areas, so to speak. I figured, "Well, you can wait because our own guys come first." Anyway, I thought, "You'd be better off dead." By the time I got back to him, he had died. Lots of times I took care of Germans, as long as our guys got first priority.

KP: You took care of the Americans, but after that, you would treat Germans.

LF: Yeah. One of the things that happened in the same town, in Habkirchen, there was a fellow who was wounded. We had him on the litter, and we were in the hallway of a house and just about to go out the front door. I was on the back of the litter, and there was this Chinese kid on the front of this litter. Something made me say, "Stop, wait. I want to just check." No sooner did we just put the litter down, a shell hit. There was the doorway of the house, and then there was a little, tiny stoop, very small with one step down. A shell hit right by that front step. Well, the concussion in that hallway was tremendous. For three days, I couldn't hear. I had terrible ringing in my ear. I just got my hearing aids from the VA [Veterans Affairs hospital] recently, because I had trouble ever since with hearing, but I just kind of ignored it until it got so much worse. That's when I lost my hearing for three days. For instance, the engineers finally got a bridge in, but nobody wanted to [cross it].

KP: Go across.

LR: I was commuting, because I had to get back to Gretel. Even though we're on this side of the river, I'd go back every chance I got.

KP: This girlfriend?

LF: Yes. For three days. I'm telling you, it was so beautiful, no other way to describe it. I think I cried when I left. Now, when we went back in '73, I made sure to go to this little town, found the house, and it had all been redone. Nobody was home, but the man across the street, I asked him because this was August and you know the French in August [go on vacation]. He told me that she was married [and] she was a professor at a college somewhere nearby and that they were on vacation. So, I left a note telling her how much I remembered, and that was it. In the movie, they would throw something like that in, just to give it something, but, no, it really happened. I could have married her right then. That's how I felt, but [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes a sniffling noise as if he is pretending to cry] that's the end of that story.

KP: You were captured shortly after.

LF: Well, let's see. That was the beginning of December. Then, we continued, after we crossed the Blies River. Oh, a real brilliant piece of Army maneuvering or whatever you want to call it [was] we got to this point where we're on the slope of a hill, which is all wooded, and there was a little road that ran along the top of the slope and you couldn't see down into the valley. The whole battalion dug in along this road. I was with C Company that time. There was A Company, B Company, C Company. They bring up some anti-tank guns, and they stick them out, I guess they must have had them facing this way. Of course, the Germans came with tanks from that way. Here we are, we get up, and we hear all this shooting. Oh, before that, by the way, here we are digging in and cutting down wood to make fires to cook food, and the guys were really [acting] like we're on a picnic.

All of a sudden, there must have been four or five Germans come stumbling in, not realizing we were there. The guys started shooting, and they ran away. I remember one of the guys decided to get down alongside of the road. He sees somebody walking towards him, and they're both walking towards each other, like greeting each other. All of sudden, when they got close enough, this guy was German and this guy wasn't. So, they both went running.

KP: They basically passed each other almost.

LF: No, no. One guy ran back in the direction that he was coming from and this guy came back to us, but it was crazy. So, anyway, first, A Company comes running by us. "What's going on, guys?" Nobody says anything. They just run by. B Company comes running by. Then, there's us, C Company. It was obvious that the Germans are coming. Of course, as I said, the anti-tank guns were facing the wrong way. They couldn't do anything. I waited to be the last guy that left, because after what happened on top of that mountain, I wasn't about to let anyone [be] left behind. Then, we retreated back to the nearest town.

At that point, where there's normally--it's easy to remember this one--there are normally about forty-five in a platoon. There were thirteen of us. The reason I know that is my mother sent me a fruitcake, and I was able to make thirteen slices out [laughter] of that one little fruitcake. I didn't even like fruitcake, but I know she must have read to send fruitcake because people used to do those things whether you liked it or not.

It's like I once asked them, and I was serious, I said, "I think there's such a thing as a foxhole pillow." What it was was a little pillow that you could blow up. It was about this big. When

you're trying to sleep on the ground, wearing your helmet, I thought it'd be nice to have something like that. They thought I was kidding. They tried to find one, and everybody thought it was a joke. It was after the war that I came across some.

Anyway, that's when we pulled back, and then they pulled us out because the Bulge had started because that was December 12th or 16th, I don't remember, the Bulge. [Editor's Note: On December 16, 1944, Germany launched a surprise offensive in the Ardennes Forest of Belgium with the goal of reaching the port city of Antwerp and splitting Allied forces in northwestern Europe. The battle became known as the Battle of the Bulge for the salient or bulge that the German advance created in the American lines. Fighting in the Ardennes lasted until January 25. The 35th Infantry Division traveled to Metz on December 20-21, 1944.]

KP: The Order of Battle has you pulling back to Metz for rehabilitation.

LF: Oh, it does tell you we went to Metz. Well, we got to Metz, and they brought us out to some old French barracks with some cement floors and stuff to stay. Well, us old veterans, we ain't going to stay there. So, we went into Metz and got hotel rooms. [laughter] This was over Christmastime. So, we got rooms in the hotel. We ate at the dining room there like men.

In fact, it was funny. First, you see one of the majors come in, looking around the room. There were two girls sitting at a table, so he comes over. [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes the sound of someone talking, "Ba, ba, ba, ba."] Nope, they want no part of him. He goes away. No, first, there was a captain, then the major. So, then, when the colonel came in, they asked, "Have you seen Major So-and-So?" We said, "Oh, yeah, he was talking to those girls, but they said no." He came in--once again, out of [a] movie--wearing a cape, carrying a big gold-headed staff, coming in like the conquering Napoleon or something. He really thought he was accomplishing something.

Well, anyway, one morning, we get up, and we look out the window. We see all these trucks going by with our guys. We never went back to that barracks place out there to see what was going on. So, we went down and asked somebody, "What's happening?" "Oh, we're pulling out." So, what we did was there was the cook's truck, we got on top of it, on the canvas top, and that's how we went from Metz to Luxembourg because that was the last truck.

KP: It must have been very cold.

LF: Oh, yes, but at least it was going. We dressed pretty well. We learned to dress. I wore, besides the long underwear, I had two pairs of socks, two pairs of wool pants. I'm not sure if I had two shirts, but I had the long underwear shirt, then the wool shirt, and then a sweater and a mackinaw [wool coat]. So, we were pretty well [dressed]. What they call now the layered look, we invented it. [laughter] That kept us warm. That's how we went up to Luxembourg. We stopped in Luxembourg, and then from there, we went to get the 101st [Airborne Division] out of Bastogne. We went to the little town of Marvie, which is just outside of Bastogne. Did they even mention little Marvie?

KP: No, they do not mention Marvie.

LF: Okay. There was no fighting to get in there. Part of the 101st was dug in, in this town. Bastogne was over the field, not too far away. So, we held this little town of Marvie. I remember we were there New Year's Eve, and I purposely walked outside to see if something different was going to happen at midnight, nothing, nothing spectacular. There wasn't any special bombardment, any special anything.

One little funny thing [happened] in Marvie. There was one guy who read in *Stars and Stripes* that people were getting trench foot, guys were getting trench foot from the ice and the snow and the wet and the cold. He figured this was his way out; he's going to get trench foot. First, before that, we were in these little houses. He would be like this with his hand out the window, [laughter] hoping to get wounded a little bit, or his foot out the window. Nothing. Then, I see him, he's got a bucket of ice water, and he's soaking his foot in the ice water. Nothing happened. Then, what happened was he suddenly realized that his shoes were worn out, so he wanted another pair of shoes. He took like a size twelve or thirteen. They didn't have any, so they had to send him back because they didn't have shoes for him. It was like the next day or so that we went into that attack and got captured. I don't know if you want to hear the dramatic story of how I joined the German Army.

HG: How you joined the Germany Army?

KP: Yes.

LF: Okay, we're up to that part. It was January 5th, and we were going to attack. It's all snow and trees and bushes and that kind of stuff, fields. So, we have three companies in a line attacking. We were C Company in the middle. A Company and B Company were on the other side. Well, there was an objective to go a certain distance and stop. They stopped. They stopped. Our wonderful Captain (Denny?), who I wouldn't let lead me to the men's room, let alone company, he only went a thousand yards past our objective.

All of a sudden, some Germans opened up. You tried to get behind something, because they're shooting. Suddenly, we realized they're shooting from behind us. We bypassed some Germans who had a twenty-caliber gun, which was also used for anti-aircraft. See, we bypassed what we thought was an abandoned tank. That was where they were. That gun may have been on that tank, because they were firing at us from behind, wounded several guys, killed one. Of all the guys, somebody that everyone constantly worried about, he was from down in the bayous and I think he had five kids, six kids, something like that, and he got killed. Boy, you want to see the morale go down.

So, we retreated forward into another patch of woods, put all the wounded in one place. It's funny, at that point, I was digging in, and my watch strap broke, so I put my watch in my pocket, which is why I still own it. [It is] not this one. I still have those pair of glasses by the way. So, they decided, in their brilliance, they're going to leave the wounded there with the other medics, and then I went with the rest of the company and we retreated forward. We just went, and we're continuing through woods along the trail.

I was in the middle of the column. In case somebody got hit at either end, I was the only one, and the typical thing [that was said was], "Medic needed in rear. Pass it up." That's how the

messages went. Well, I got this message, so I fall back to the rear. I get back to the last guy, and I said, "Where?" "Back there." The other thing they kept sending up was, "The Germans are right behind us. The Germans are right behind us. Pass it up." I get back to the end of the column, "Where are the guys that are hit?" "Back there." So, I start back through the snow and woods, and I come across these two guys. One of them was hit right along here and was bleeding like anything. So, I'm trying to bandage him up, and he don't want to stop. I couldn't stop him long enough. He wanted to get going. So, I managed to get a bandage on him. He took off. I said, "Wait a minute, they said guys." "Oh, back there."

So, I have to go further back, and there I found this guy laying there. I figured, "Holy Christ, now, what do I do?" So, I checked what happened. He got hit in the back. Evidently, it must have been a piece of shrapnel that just hit, but it was almost like getting hit with a hammer. In other words, it didn't penetrate. It just hit him really hard. So, I said, "Come on." I got under his arm, and I dragged him. We caught up to the thing. I never found out who was back there, where the Germans really were.

We continue on our saga, on our trip and get to some woods and decide to stay there. We dig in in this patch of woods, and we sit there the whole day. Meanwhile, this is on the side of a hill. Down in the valley, which we couldn't see, the Germans had some of these--it's like a multiple rocket type thing. They were firing it towards our lines over our heads. These things were being fired. They didn't know we were there, believe it or not. Nobody followed us. We just sat there. Well, we spent the day there.

Then, the brilliant plan [was] we're going to march out, column of twos. So, I remember there was a fellow called Carl Sahli, who was the platoon guide. The platoon guide is the last guy in the platoon, who makes sure that everybody goes. As the medic, he and I-- also stayed at the back of the platoon--so we got to be pretty good friends. It's funny, when he first started, I always thought it was a little anti-Semitism, because once when they were on maneuvers or something, they had a medic named Goldberg and they called him "Goldie." So, therefore as Feinberg, shouldn't I be called Goldie, too? We're all Jewish. [laughter] Anyway, he was the kind of guy we thought would dig in together. I guess he'd been a steelworker or something. [He was] from Youngstown, [Ohio]. He was a Slav. Carl Sahli, S-A-H-L-I. He'd say, "Stand back." [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes the sound, "Barumph."] He was like a steam shovel. He was strong and big. I bumped into him in the dark, as we were about to start this maneuver, and I said, "Carl, when I get back, I'm turning in my badge. I'm not going to go out with this fucked-up outfit again." He's pleading with me. He took it seriously, "No, you don't want to do that."

Well, we started to march back. Do you have a piece of paper? This requires a piece of paper. These are woods, these are woods, there's a little road that goes [this way].

KP: You walked down the center of the road.

LF: Wait. [laughter] There's an open field here, uphill, and over here, I would say about two hundred yards, there were bushes and stuff at the top. It just sloped up. Well, we came down like this, and start through this.

KP: You walked through an open field and then down through the middle of a road.

LF: Right down the middle of this road in the dark, of course. It was in the middle of the night. The brilliant orders were, "Nobody fires until they get word from me," from the officers. Now, stop and think a second. While we were in Metz, they brought in replacements from the United States. I don't know where they got them all. They just brought in a bunch of new guys who had no experience, no nothing. So, we went from thirteen up to forty-five, so you can imagine how many veterans we had with us. They were told you don't fire until you hear from them. Anyway, somebody opened up with a machine gun--or they yelled out something and nobody answered--so he opens up with a machine gun and mows down the first part of this column. I was in the middle of the column. Well, I was right near the edge of the woods here. There were culverts on either side. I got down into this culvert.

----------END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO----------

KP: This continues an interview with Leonard Feinberg on November 22, 1998 with Kurt Piehler and ...

HG: … Hilary Gould.

KP: You were saying a machine gun opened up.

LF: Yes, a machine gun opened up and mowed down I don't know how many guys, right here. Some ran in this direction. Some ran in this direction. There I am, in here. What do we do now? At one point, a German started coming towards us yelling, "Hands up. Hands up" [with a German accent]. So, there was one guy here who was one of the old timers. He took a hand grenade and tossed it in that direction, and we didn't hear from, "Hands up." Meanwhile, here we are. What do we do now? The rest of the column was out here some place, "Where are they?" I figured I would--this is all woods--I'm going to crawl through these woods and see if I can find somebody. We crawled through the woods, and it was like a dark pit. I crawl up to the edge of this pit, and I'm listening and I hear German being spoken. [I thought], "Whoops." So, back I go. Then, I'm thinking to myself, "Wait a minute, we have a couple German prisoners. Maybe that's who I heard talking." I go back, crawl back, peak in the pit, and there's a face, looks at me. All I heard was, it sounded like SS. I figured, "Uh oh." Whoever that was zoomed that way, and I zoomed this way, back to here. Then, I figured, "Now what?"

All of a sudden, there are these German soldiers with white capes and everything crawling up through the snow. I'm saying, "Come on guys, shoot, look." "No way, we're waiting for orders from the lieutenant." I said, "What lieutenant? What? Who? There's nobody here." I said, "Come on." "Uh uh." They were afraid to get them mad. I yelled out, "Halt or we'll shoot." They stopped for a while, but then they started coming again. Then, I figured, "Well, I'm not going to stay here." I didn't know what was here. I knew what was here. That left here.

I set the Olympic record for the uphill, two-hundred-yard dash in the snow with galoshes on. I flew. Somebody started shooting at me. I could hear them, but I depend on them not being such hot shots anyway. It was pretty hard. I got all the way up here. Now, the fellow who threw the grenade said he would come with me. I got up here, waited, and he didn't show up. I took off by

myself, "Where the hell do I go?" I had no idea where our lines were. See, when I was back with A Company, which was back before I was wounded, I always knew everything that was going on. We use to discuss it, where we were heading, what the situation was. With this jerky Captain (Denny?), there was no information, nothing.

[TAPE PAUSED]

LF: I did read a division newspaper one time that he was doing something, so he survived.

KP: He survived, Captain (Denny?).

LF: Carl Sahli didn't. He was killed that night, the one I just told you about. Well, first of all, I threw my mackinaw away. I also threw away the cans of tuna fish that my mother had sent. I got rid of everything, because I wanted to travel light. I started across fields, through woods, just trying to figure out where the hell to go.

It was funny, I saw up ahead. What they have so much in Belgium is that they planted so the trees are in rectangles and stuff like that. It's not just around here, wherever the tree happens to grow. The fields were cleared. I came across this field and I see these holes. Believe it or not, I crawled up and peaked in the hole to see if there was anybody in them, and I suddenly recognize [that] I'm back to where we had spent the day, where we dug in, those were our holes. I had gotten back to that.

Then, I continued on. [In] this one field, there was a raised knoll where I could look in all directions. I figured I'll watch and see where the artillery is hitting and can see where the guns are firing, and I'll head in that direction because I had no idea [where I was]. Little did I know that this was a pocket on a pocket, so that I was actually going in the wrong direction. In other words, if our lines were here, I was heading towards our lines all the way on the other side of this pocket. I stayed up there, lying there in the snow and watching and trying to figure out where the hell to go. I saw some footprints in the snow. I even went out and made footprints to see which direction these footprints came from, because if you ever walk through the snow, you'll notice your heel hits and then your foot goes down, I discovered. So, [I thought], "Ah ha." These footprints were going the other way, so maybe they were retreating. "Okay, I'll go that way."

This was all big, open fields, and then I got to an area like this, all trees, all trees, bushes here and then trees, trees, trees. I'm coming from along here, coming from my knoll over here, across this big open field, and I start down along here. I see some guys walking over here. I immediately duck into the bushes here. I figure I'm going to wait and see what language is being spoken because I really didn't know where I was. Hopefully, it was going to be English.

I'm lying here, minding my own business all by myself, and [there was] a mortar barrage. One of our mortar barrages comes in all around me. One piece hits me on the back of my leg, and I figured, "To hell with it, I'm not going to stay here." I figured, "I'm not going to go this way. I'll go this way." I crossed, maybe it was fifty, sixty feet across. I don't even know. I got halfway across, and this German yells out something. Now, this may sound funny or whatever. When I left these guys here to run, I heard them all, they threw their guns away and they're yelling,

"Comrade." That was sort of a common thing. The Germans would yell comrade when they gave up, and these guys are yelling comrade because they're giving up. I couldn't yell comrade. Isn't that crazy?

KP: You could not say it.

LF: I couldn't say it.

KP: Because?

LF: They weren't my comrades. [laughter]

KP: Yes.

LF: It was just one of those things.

KP: Yes.

LF: Of course, a hell of a place to stand on ceremony, but anyway. [laughter] In my best German, I said, "*Ich habe meine hande hoch*." [Editor's Note: This means, "I have my hands held high." Mr. Feinberg makes the sound of a machine gun firing.] One of these--they call them--grease guns, machine pistols that they carried--it must be something like the Uzi that we have today--he fires the damn thing. There I am, standing there. More insistent, I yell at him, "*Ich habe meine hande hoch*." [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes the sound of a machine gun firing.] Then, in a streak of genius, I remembered the German word for medic. So, I said, "*Ich bin ein sani*." [Editor's Note: In this context, *sani* is an abbreviation for *sanitater*, meaning a health care worker.] "Oh, sani, kommen Sie hier." [Editor's Note: This means, "Oh, *sani*, come here."] That son of a bitch is sitting there with a machine gun and all this stuff. He takes me. I started telling him immediately [that] we didn't keep the German medics and he shouldn't capture me and all this business, talking deaf ears. He takes me around here. Over here is one machine-gun nest, another machine-gun nest. This was their secondary line of defense. Evidently, this is the direction I should've gone. I was on this end.

KP: The salient.

LF: This bulge really.

KP: Yes.

LF: This was a bulge on a bulge. In other words, there was a bulge that went this way, and this was a bulge that went that way. I was going in the wrong direction.

KP: You had no way of knowing that.

LF: Of course.

KP: Of course not, yes.

LF: My damn road map wasn't working. Then, he brings me over here and [there are] a couple other Germans there. They bring in a couple GIs that they captured someplace. It was funny. He said, "Do you know what time it is?" or something to that effect. I don't know if his English was good. These other guys, they go like this to see what time it is. [laughter] "Oh, thank you very much," and they take their watches.

KP: Did they search people?

LF: Not at that point. I got searched lots of times, but my watch was in my pocket.

KP: They did not take it.

LF: They asked me the time, [I] don't have it. [I said], "Sorry, don't have a watch." It was funny, they started taking us across some fields into this next little town. I think it was (Putilange) or something like that was the town. They take me down to a cellar where the German doctor was. After all, I'm a medic, where else, they take me to the German aid station. We have a nice conversation until he starts telling me that Jews started the war and that kind of cute stuff.

KP: I am curious, did your dog tags have your religion?

LF: It had "H" on it. [Editor's Note: During World War II, the dog tag of an American service person indicated one of three religions, "H" for Judaism (Hebrew), "P" for Protestant, or "C" for Catholic.]

KP: They had "H" on it.

LF: Sure.

KP: You were not concerned that it had "H" on it before.

LF: Never, no. This is the honest truth, because I'll tell you some other stories later. I never would give them the satisfaction of denying. I just wouldn't do that. Anyway, he was very nice. The one thing I remember though, we got in this cellar and a German officer comes in and they did the, "Sieg Heil" [Nazi salute]. It was the first time I saw somebody really doing that for real. I'm looking and [I think], "Here we are, in the movies again."

Anyway, they took me to another cellar, and there I was on a pile of potatoes that were down in the cellar. That's where I was sitting. There were a couple other GIs down there. So, I'm busy--I took everything out of my pockets, anything that had any identification of my family or anything and I hid them under the potatoes. I got all my letters and everything like that, because I would carry them with me. As I got letters, I'd stick them in my pocket.

In fact, just a little aside, when I got wounded that first time and I got to a hospital, of course, at that point, I had been working on a bunch of guys and I had blood all over my shirts and stuff, so they gave me a new uniform. My sister was in sixth grade at the time, and she sent me a copy of

the sixth grade newspaper or magazine that they had made. I had that folded up in my pocket, and I took it out of my pocket. A piece of shrapnel fell out. That evidently must have stopped it.

KP: That sixth grade paper.

LF: That sixth grade magazine. I'm sitting down there, and this is also where they were handing out these big bandoliers of machine-gun ammunition in these long strips, I guess the kind that really went into the tank type of things. These guys would come in and put several of them around their neck and go out. Then, this guy comes in--and I told you there were other GIs there--but always me that they pick on. He comes over to me, "What division are you from?" I figured, "Oh, this guy doesn't know too much English." I started in very fast, almost double talk, "All right, you're a nice guy, I'd like to help and all that, but I'm sorry. I can only give name, rank and serial number and next of kin." He looks at me, turns around, and walks out, disgusted because he couldn't understand one word I said.

Then, that night, they had a GI truck that they were loading us into. This truck also was full of kitchen, their mess equipment, big pots and all that stuff, and that was in the front of the truck. Then, we got on to the truck, I forget, maybe a half a dozen of us, including one guy who was wounded, and off we take. What we were doing was driving right up the middle of this bulge, and this truck was making all kinds of noise, because not only is this kitchen equipment banging--and of course the truck was making noise--and our artillery is somewhere off to our right firing and landing all over the place. These guys are acting like they don't even notice it. I swear to you, if I didn't get ulcers that night, because here we are standing in the back of this truck, it was all open, and the goddamn artillery is hitting here and here and our artillery was pretty fierce. It may not have been as noisy and all that kind of stuff like the German propaganda type, but it was fierce.

Then what happens we come across, there was a truck stuck going the other way, so they have to stop and help him and pushing and all that. Somehow, we continued on and left this area, and pretty soon it became daylight. I was wondering what we were standing on because it was soft underneath. Believe it or not, the whole bottom of the truck was lined with dead Germans. That's what we were standing on, on this little journey.

Well, they got to a place where there was a little tavern alongside the road, and they decided to leave us there with the wounded. Oh, it was another medic and I, that we would stay there with this wounded guy, and there was a German MP [military police] because this was a main road. God, was it filled with trucks and troops and everything going by. That's when I said that the German secret weapon was the tow rope, because they had so many problems. Each truck that would come by would be towing three other things behind it. How the hell they managed that whole bulge and that whole attack with what they had, it's amazing.

KP: You could tell that equipment-wise they had shortages.

LF: Yes, they were suffering, of course. We had trucks for everything and tanks for everything. That didn't stop them. For instance, when we would move up, you'd have a whole company moving up or a whole battalion would move up. Here, you'd see ten guys walk by, and pretty soon, another dozen guys would come walking by, all heading in the same direction. Whether they were all from the same outfit, who knew.

They put us in there, and they told the MP to stop an ambulance when it came by. Sure enough, an ambulance did come by with a couple real jokers in it. They put us into the ambulance with the wounded guy, and they're now trying to find their way to--I'm trying to remember the name of the town--but they didn't know how to get there. I think we went through the Siegfried Line a couple times, because they were trying to find their way, with those big dragon's teeth and all that. We went through that a couple times, stopped at some farm I guess to visit some girl or something. There was a tank parked under the trees nearby. They went in there for a while. [Editor's Note: The Siegfried Line was a series of defensive fortifications built by Germany along its borders with the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France.]

They finally got us to a hospital. It was a German Army hospital. It was probably a hospital beforehand that they had taken over and left us off. It turned out that in the attic, it was a big open attic, there were about 150 GIs. This was being used was would be called a *Zusammenlager* [assembly point or transit camp], in other words, guys captured here, guys captured there, bring them all to a central point, about 150. Meanwhile, they asked me if I would mind working in their operating room. I said, "Sure." For a week, I worked with some really sharp German doctors. I was really impressed with them.

KP: That is a unique role to have as a prisoner. In a sense, you were being treated as just part of the staff. You are a prisoner, but you were working with someone.

LF: Yes, that's right, right. They knew there's no place to escape to around there.

KP: Yes, yes.

LF: Because in those hills and snow and mountains and stuff. I remember one place I was at, a guy did escape and he came back. He just couldn't get any place. It was just impossible.

HG: Was anybody else treated well by the Germans?

LF: [What]?

HG: The rest of the American troops, were they also treated well by the Germans?

LF: As a matter of fact, there was one of the GIs that got appendicitis, everything stopped, and they used real sterile technique because they didn't have much. The bandages were paper. They had paper bandages that they used. When somebody needed a transfusion, they took one of their technicians and laid him down here, and they just pumped it right through into the guy who needed it.

KP: It is interesting too because you had been trained as a surgeon's aid, a surgeon's tech.

LF: Yes.

KP: It seems like you were not using your full training until you were captured, until you were in the operating room.

LF: Well, yes, I was pretty damned good at first aid.

KP: Yes.

LF: If you want to call it first aid, but this is first aid like not cuts and bruises.

KP: Yes.

LF: Broken legs, missing legs, kinds of sucking wounds, name it, but you're right, yes.

KP: Here you were actually doing one of the things you had been trained to do.

LF: Well, they said the whole objective was to get really good medics trained in an infantry outfit, as opposed to somebody that didn't know too much. Yes, I guess I was there a week. My reward used to be that they gave me oatmeal with raisins in it, but, listen, they didn't have that much either. They were just trying to be nice, because from then on eating was not exactly a great thing. I lost forty pounds in three months to give you an idea of how well I ate.

I was there for a week. Then, they took us out of there and moved us--I guess we must have marched to the next stop--another *Zusammenlager* [assembly point or transit camp], but it was an old factory in a town called Gerolstein. Now, can you imagine a name like that? That's like something out of a Frankenstein movie. Gerolstein up in the mountains there, it was horrible. It was a factory. It had been a factory, I guess, and [there were] two floors. The medics they kept separately because they needed us because there were so many guys with dysentery and wounded. It was terrible, and we had nothing to work with. Every morning, everybody had to get out of the place and line up outside while they picked work details. They were moving parts of barracks up into the mountains and these guys had to carry these pieces of barrack up into the mountains.

Fortunately, the medics, they didn't [have to work], except one morning, I think maybe, for ethnic reasons, they decided I should help with something. They put me to work because there was a railroad yard there. It was constantly getting bombed. They wanted us to repair the railroad tracks, lay new track, believe it or not. Well, I decided it was too cold. I said to the guard, "I've got to start a fire, so that we can warm up." It was okay with him, and I made a fire. Every guy was taking turns coming to the fire. Then, the big overseer of the railroad yard, who hated us naturally, came along and put out the fire because he was really mad at us. I said, "Then I am certainly not going to work." [laughter] I just stood where the fire had been because the ground was still warm. I still kind of froze a toe, which hurt for about a year or so, and then it went away. It really did hurt after that. There was a sergeant there that when you came, an American sergeant named Eisenhower of all things.

KP: That is a name you would not forget. [laughter]

LF: Yes. What he would do, when you got there, he'd say, "Does anyone have any rings or watches to trade for bread?" He was obviously sharing it with the Germans, but that bastard. The way that the rationing of the bread was--and this was any place I was at--it was always how many men to a loaf of bread. For instance, in the great place I was at, it was five men to a loaf of bread. This was at least six men to a loaf of bread, and I think he was getting the extra breads to work with, to use for barter.

There was a German doctor there, but we had to carry anybody who was sick or whatever to him, and if there was an air raid, anywhere in the area, if you could hear any air raid or bombing or planes, he immediately ceased office hours. I swear to you I would go down and argue and fight with him because I said, "We need something. These guys have dysentery. We need some kind of medicine." He finally did. They didn't have much anyway.

Another funny story, the water there was completely polluted. I was fortunate because being a medic, I carried a lot of halazone tablets, which are water purification tablets, to make sure that everybody had some. I had a lot of them when I was captured. I would only use those if I drank any water to kill anything, but not everybody had them. Many guys were getting dysentery from the water around there.

About a year ago, I'm walking through an ACME market. I don't know if they have ACME around here. I see a display with bottled water, and I did a double take, from Gerolstein. I have a bottle. I bought a bottle to keep. [laughter] I couldn't believe the water from Gerolstein [was being sold as drinking water].

KP: You remembered it as polluted.

LF: [laughter] Of course.

KP: Did you get any Red Cross packages?

LF: Much later. Not there. Well, first, these were *Zusammenlagers* [assembly point or transit camp]. Don't forget, these weren't real prison camps.

KP: Real camps.

LF: From there, from Gerolstein, they took us by train. They put us in a train. Now, I had to sneak out of there. I wanted to get back because I wanted to get registered so that my family would know. In fact, it ended up the whole time I was there, where I was just missing in action, and you can imagine what that did to them.

HG: How long was it that they were not sure where you were?

LF: From January until April, until they got the first word from me.

KP: They must have been very worried.

LF: That's putting it mildly.

KP: Yes.

LF: I don't know if my mother ever really [got over it]. It had an effect on her, I'm sure. My father was ready to join something, like the Merchant Marine or anything, so he could go over there and look. Of course, my mother got so damned mad at them, some of her friends from her card playing and stuff like that, "Oh, you'd be better off if they found his body already." Then, of course, the other theory was that I was out hiding with some girl, knowing me. [laughter] No, it was hell on them, and all I wanted to do was get back so I could get registered.

What happened was, at Gerolstein, they wouldn't let the medics go or not all of them. They kept them all. For some reason, there was a shipment going out, and this one guy didn't want to go. I have no idea why. I didn't care. What I did was I took my red cross helmet and put it under my coat, took off my arm bands, took his name and left with that shipment to go to the next place. That was nifty.

HG: I have a little time, please continue.

LF: Anyway, they put us on; there were three cars, fifty men to a car. These are the small German or European boxcars, and they could only move at night because they'd take the engine away during the day because that was a great target. This one day, we were stuck in the middle of no place. Our planes were over every day. No matter where I was, the planes were over[head], once we got out of the Bulge area, [where], of course, there was that problem because of the weather getting planes through and stuff like that. Every day, they were over, observation planes, like the P-51s would come over. The [P]-47s were the ones that usually did the work. They would come and strafe. Sure enough, they got us out of the boxcar. We went up onto the road, and these planes came out and started strafing. We stood our ground and waved to them, and they got the idea and stopped. [Editor's Note: The North American P-51 Mustang was a long-range fighter aircraft. It was used in service from 1942 to 1968. The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt was a fighter aircraft in service from 1942 to 1953.]

They decided that they were going to just march the guys on instead of trying to wait for the train to go. There was one or two GIs that died, and their bodies were there. They tied them on the outside of the boxcar, and it was very cold of course. There was this one guard, he wanted us--I think there [was] another medic and I, I guess--he wanted us to stay and they were going to bring a cart from the nearby town. The rest of the guys went on, and we waited. They brought a horse and wagon-type thing. We put the bodies on, went into the town, and then we started to head in the same direction as the other guys were. What he did was every farmhouse we passed, he'd go in and tell the farmers--usually the wives were there--that we were captured while treating German wounded, and he'd get some food. We'd go in, sit down, they'd give us some food. We went from farmhouse to farmhouse.

KP: You were getting fed.

LF: Yes.

KP: Which is very nice to do really.

LF: Very nice. He was a riot. What happened was it came nightfall, the other guys had continued on. I found out that they went all the way through, got to Flamersheim, which is where they were headed, which is a little town, stayed overnight and then moved on. We took two days to get there. By the time we get there, these guys were gone, and they kept us there. I was in Flamersheim for five weeks in a beer hall in this little town on the Cologne Plain.

KP: You say you were in a beer hall.

LF: Well, it had been a beer hall, but now there just straw and 150 of us or so there and they were using us for work details. What happened was when we came down out of the mountains

that are on the German-Belgian border, down onto the Cologne Plain, boy, the weather was so different. It wasn't as cold. My throat almost closed up. I had a terrible sore throat or even worse than that, and I still have my thermometer with me. When we got to Flamersheim, they would come in, try to get guys to go out on these work details, and nobody wanted to go. They would come in and yell and do everything, even shot off guns, putting holes in the roof. Naturally, they'd come to me, for obvious reasons. I was always number one on their hit parade, and I had shown that I'm running a fever. That worked for a while.

One day, there was one guard who was a real bastard. He spoke perfect English. He had gone to school in England some point along the way, and he was really rotten, of all the guards. He took my thermometer away and forced me out to go to work. That was the best thing he could've done for me. Turned out, what were we doing, they took us into this next town--it was a railroad siding--unloading boxcars. Well, I'm reading the boxes, and it's food, canned sardines and cheeses and all this stuff. In the dark, I am going into these boxes and taking stuff out and giving stuff to the other guys, and I figure, "This working is great." Don't forget, it's pitch dark, because everything had to be done at night because of the blackout. Before you know it, there were about maybe four or five other guys, we form a corporation that whoever goes out to work will bring stuff back and share it because we figured we can't all go to work. There I am, every morning volunteering. Beforehand, they couldn't get anybody to go to work. All of a sudden, there I am, first in line, going out to work.

Pretty soon, the word got out. Guys started lining up. Everybody wanted to go to work. The guards loved it because they didn't have to force anybody to go. [laughter] Everybody's volunteering to go to work. I got to be so good at stealing from the Germans that some guy got mad at me and said I couldn't have been honest in civilian life. I did all kinds of crazy [things]. It depended on where we were working. They'd take us to different little towns around and stuff.

What happened one time, they took us to this town where we worked in a dairy. Well, the other guys were working, and what was the job at the dairy? There was a big saw there, and they were cutting up wood. Then, the wood was taken to the bakery and baked, and somehow they used it in the German cars. I'm not sure how that worked, but that's what they did.

How many guys can be cutting up wood? So, I started wandering around, looking over the dairy. There's nobody in there. I found where they had the milk, so I helped myself. I went down into the basement. I found out where they had the, it was like, pot cheese. That looked great, so I took that. I found some paper, wrapped it up, put it under my shirt.

It was funny, there were some Poles that were working there, like indentured servants. They had a place up in the attic of the dairy. That's where they lived, like they took us up there to see it. They had it decorated nicely and everything. When the guys were working outside, all of a sudden, a window opened, and a whole big can of milk was pushed out the window for everyone to share. That was a good deal. Everybody shared the milk.

On another visit to the same town, this time we're working at the bakery, where they were baking not only bread but the wood. They had some ashes, whatever it was, a whole wheelbarrow full, and they assigned these other two fellows and I to just take it over and dump it in a bomb crater. As we left the bakery, I said, "I know where there's some bomb craters down by the dairy," which was all the way at the other end of town. We had a wheelbarrow and we just went down

there. I let these two guys go dump it. It was a railroad station there. I went into the dairy, found a bottle, filled it with milk, made a package of cheese and put it under, this potted cheese, and gave stuff to these guys and went back to the bakery.

Well, we're waiting around. Everything was finished, and the guards don't come to take us back. There was a little central area where the truck dropped us off and was to pick us up again. It was like a little courtyard. There must've been a dozen of us. I said, "Come on, guys, we'll go back to that place. We don't need the guard." We go walking back through the town, to this thing.

Well, the big [commander] sees this, gets a hold of our guard, and something they were very good at was chewing out. This guy must've been chewed all the way because they let us go all by ourselves, just marched right through the town. By the time our guard gets to us, he is really in fine fettle. Of course, who is he yelling at? Me. Because being Jewish, I was a good one that, every damned thing, they always loved to do that. Well, he starts yelling at me, and I'm saying to him in English, of course, "That's no way to talk to anybody" and all that sort of stuff and very calmly. One of the other guys says, "You'd better cut it out because he is mad." He was turning red. He goes over--I think my coat was nearby--he checks my coat, and there's a bottle of milk. He could've been the first German in orbit. Oh, did he get mad. He really screamed at me. Anyway, guess what my punishment was the next day, he decided. I wasn't allowed to go to work. [laughter] I swear to God, that was my punishment. I wasn't allowed to go to work.

There I was hanging around the beer hall during the day with nothing to do. At this point, I hadn't shaved in six or seven weeks. I looked like something out of the Bible. I decided this would be a good opportunity; I shaved. I took off my arm bands. I took off my red cross helmet. There's a helmet and a helmet liner, so I took the helmet part off, put it where my straw was where I live. The next day, I'm in line, and off I go to work.

There was one elderly guard who was, we got to be friends. We used to walk along, like if we walking to the next town, we'd walk along and talk. He was very grandfatherly. I'm walking along, and I said, "What's the matter? Don't you know me?" He absolutely didn't recognize me, of course. They never bothered me again, and that's how I continued stealing food.

[TAPE PAUSED]

LF: We have a great relationship.

KP: You do not really tell your wife.

LF: Not about this, no.

KP: Yes.

LF: In fact, I even hesitate, because, at one point, she thought I was telling these stories too much when we were out with friends. That's funny, for many, many years, I never [talked about the war].

KP: You did not talk about the war.

LF: Nothing psychological. I didn't. Just in later years, when you suddenly realize that that's the big adventure of your life.

KP: I have interviewed several prisoners of war, and many of them had much harsher experiences than you. I specifically asked them what happened to Jewish POWs, and they said they were often treated very harshly.

LF: Well, there were instances, and one thing that I know about, but I didn't get to that one yet. It didn't involve me but something that I was told. See, there was another fellow at Flamersheim.

----------END OF TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE----------

KP: You were saying there was an incident with a German Jew.

LF: At this place, the beer hall. He was so afraid that they would learn that he would never let them know that he understood German or could speak German or anything.

KP: Because he was a refugee.

LF: Yes, well, he had grown up in Germany. I don't know how old he was when he left.

KP: When he left, but nonetheless.

LF: He was a German Jew, and so he was concerned. It's just one of those things, I'd never give them the satisfaction. One time, just to be rotten, there was one guard, he gets a knife and he says, in German, but I guess I said I could speak German in those days, he's going to cut off the Jew's nose, but I just stood there. He would've been happy if I had cringed, if I had jumped back, if anything. I didn't move. He was one of the few. The others, some of them were so considerate.

KP: Yes, the one guard gave you food.

LF: There was one guard. He came after we got there, and he looked right out of the movies, the Prussian with the scar, the whole bit. Naturally, I've got to give him a hard time, and the way we'd do that, no matter what he would say, "*Nicht verstehe*." I didn't understand no matter what. If he said, "Come here." "Don't understand." Well, he got so damn angry at me that he took a swing at me one day when we were standing in line, ready to go. He hit my helmet, hurt his hand. [laughter] Somehow, when we're walking along, I guess I started talking to him, and he started telling me all his problems. He had been on the Russian Front, his nerves were shot, that when he got mad at us or did anything like that or yelled at us, he'd go back to his room and really brood about it.

KP: I am struck because the guards were nice to you. They know you are Jewish.

LF: I guess I would never give them the satisfaction.

KP: Yes.

LF: I was treated as an American, that's all.

KP: Yes.

LF: As I said, there were these couple little instances.

KP: Yes.

LF: But I saw as things like that from my own troops.

KP: Yes.

LF: With this guy, we formed a little corporation. That other corporation I told you about.

KP: Yes.

LF: After about three or four days, when I found out that I was going to work every day and bringing the stuff back to share with them, I dissolved that corporation because these guys weren't going out to work and I was. With him, for instance, this one time, in particular, it was a couple-day affair where they took us to this town and we stayed in a cellar during the day and then we worked at night.

What we were doing, first of all, we were down in the cellar and there were some Russian prisoners nearby doing some loading or unloading. At first, they didn't know who we were, but then they found out that we were Americans. During the day, all of a sudden, one of them comes to the cellar where we were and they were wearing these big coats. He opens his coat. He's got this big cheese that he brought us and we cut it up into pieces and shared it. Now, each of us got a piece of cheese, which I put in my pocket.

Then, that night we worked at a schoolhouse, and this schoolhouse was just a warehouse for them in this little town. What we were doing was emptying the stuff out of the warehouse and putting it into a truck. Well, I've got a deal with our guard. He and I stood on the landing--they're bringing stuff down from the second floor--we stood on this first landing in between the first and second floor. I devised a way to get into their boxes to just take enough out without it looking like it had been disturbed. There was no way that they would know that stuff was missing from the box, a little bit at a time. As each guy came by, we would take some stuff out. The guard was happy as long as he got his share, and everybody got their share. We [were] handing it out, and that went on all night.

Then, what happened, there always has to be somebody who's greedy. There were two guys that took one or two boxes, I forget. They had to go around. It was a schoolhouse. They went around to the back of the school and took all the stuff out of a box, one or two boxes. Well, these meticulous Germans, when we got all finished, the guy in charge starts screaming, "There's a box missing." "Box, box, we don't know." Well, these two guys that went around the school, got the box, and they bring it and they hand it to him. Well, it's empty. Here's this empty box. Then, he really screamed. Here we are, we're all standing outside the school in the dark, because it's nighttime. These guys are all throwing the stuff out of their pockets onto the ground, because they figure they're going to get searched and they don't want to be found with all this stuff. I didn't throw a thing away.

I told you I was wearing two pairs of wool pants. What I had done earlier was I had the inner pair tucked into my combat boots.

[TAPE PAUSED]

LF: The inner pants were in the combat boot, but the outer one I had rolled. You wouldn't know that the inner one was there. I dropped everything down into the inner pair of pants, so it was all down in there. So, I kept everything. What did they do instead of searching us? They sent us back to the cellar with our guard to search us. When we get back there, he said, "I'll just tell them that you ate all the stuff, and that's it." Now, these guys are mad, because they threw all their stuff away and I didn't. They wanted me to share my stuff with them. Needless to say, I didn't. We had a nice type of relationship like that. When we finally from, Flamersheim, I'll make this fast.

KP: Yes.

LF: From Flamersheim, they took us to the next place, which was actually a small prison camp near Cologne. We went sixty kilometers in one day. We walked from Flamersheim.

KP: Oh, you walked it.

LF: Walked.

[TAPE PAUSED]

KP: Sixty kilometers.

LF: Forty miles essentially in that one day.

KP: You were not in top physical shape.

LF: Well, I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that I was in fantastic shape beforehand because I'd been very athletic and with the Army, even in basic training, we had this one lieutenant in particular who liked to keep doing exercises, try to wear us down and he never could. We used to keep up with him. He finally died an alcoholic, I found out, years later. It was a shame. My daughter went to college in Vermont, and I somehow accidentally came across someone who was related to him back in Levittown. They told me where he was, and I found out that he was an alcoholic. It's a shame.

Anyway, and this was like a regular, small, little camp. By the way, all of us were always infested with lice. It was something you just learned to live with. The Germans were too. They'd be sitting and picking lice off each other. [It was] another thing you get used to.

KP: Did you have lice before being a prisoner?

LF: No, never. [laughter]

KP: Yes.

LF: I never saw one before.

KP: Yes.

LF: Oh, no, this was something [new].

KP: Whereas for the Germans, this was part of it.

LF: I guess they were so used to it because the guards had it. I don't know where.

KP: Yes.

LF: One little thing I forgot to tell you, in Gerolstein, there must have been some V-2 rockets [that were] launched from [there], because we used to hear this roar at night like something like now you see pictures and you hear rockets going up. That's what it sounded like, but we never found out what that was. It was nearby in those Eifel Mountains. Otherwise, in this one, we used to, when they'd be walking us to work and we'd see these, the little V, the little ones, the original, what were the V-1s, the first ones. [Editor's Note: The Eifel Mountains are located in western Germany near the border of Luxembourg and Belgium. The German V-1 was a flying bomb, nicknamed the buzz bomb or doodlebug, launched from ground launchers or from the air and aimed mainly at London. In September 1944, the Germans launched the first V-2 bombardment rocket from the Netherlands, which crashed in northwest London, killing three and injuring seventeen. Later, the Germans targeted Antwerp and Liege with V-2 rockets. ("V-weapons," *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, pgs. 978-979)]

KP: Yes.

LF: They had just a little stovepipe on top. We'd see those going in the direction of our [forces], heading west. The guards used to joke about it, the Luftwaffe, they'd say, because those things would go [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes the sound of, "Poo, poo, poo."] as they went along. [Editor's Note: The Luftwaffe refers to German air forces.]

Anyway, we got to this next camp, which was outside of Cologne, and we're there for a little while. That was the first place I saw anything from Red Cross. What it was, they didn't have enough for each guy, but they would take all the things that they got and put [it] together. I don't know if told you what the diet was in every place I was at.

KP: The official diet.

LF: The official diet. Remember I said five men to a loaf of bread.

KP: Yes.

LF: Then, there would be a can, like I carried a tin can with me, and most of the guys did. That was my ...

KP: Your plate.

LF: My soup plate because you got soup. The soup was mainly, lots of times, it was just flour and water. Maybe there would be a couple potatoes that accidentally got into it. The expression was whether the soup had solids. That was a common expression, if the soup had solids. Now, first, they took all these things and they made really, for us, it was like fantastic soup at this place.

KP: At Cologne.

LF: And the piece of bread, but that's what we got per day. It was one of these things. One place I was at, they also gave you another container, where you'd fill up your container with sort of an *ersatz* coffee. [Editor's Note: *Ersatz* means an artificial or inferior substitute.]

KP: I am told that it tasted terrible, that *ersatz* coffee.

LF: Well, it didn't taste like coffee, but I wasn't much of a coffee drinker beforehand.

KP: It tasted fine then.

LF: Yes. That was like a real prison camp of sorts but not to get registered. I don't even know what it was all about. I remember on that forty-mile walk, we actually got on to the autobahn [expressway] that was near Cologne. Of course, it was empty, but I remember reading about the autobahns, and here was this highway with nothing on it except us walking along to get to this place.

Now, the next thing was, from there, they put us on a train again, and the object of it was to get us, I guess, to Limburg because there was a big prison camp in Limburg, like Limburger cheese. They gave you [laughter] your travelling ration. It was a piece of bologna, a piece of bread, and that was it. Well, it turned out that we were on those boxcars for twelve days, locked in those boxcars. That was a journey. The chief guard was so concerned. We were stuck. What happened was they [took] the engine away during the day and but didn't come back. At one point--it was really amazing--they took us into a mountain that was dug out on the inside. It was unbelievable. It was almost like it was a whole railroad yard inside a mountain at one point along the way. [We spent] twelve days in boxcars.

As if that wasn't bad enough--I'm trying to remember which train ride it was on because I was on several--I guess it was on this one that we got to a railroad yard, and there we were sitting in this railroad yard. It was an overcast day, and we figured, "Oh, good, the planes won't be able to see to bomb us." We didn't know about radar. We heard this whole armada. You hear not just one plane, but you could hear all these planes coming over. I think they passed over once, and then we hear them again. They started to bomb the railroad yard, and, here we are, it just three boxcars and we're locked in these three boxcars. For a moment, I started to panic because we were locked in, and someone in a nice, soothing voice said, "There's nothing we can do about it. Forget it, just calm down." And I did. I'm still embarrassed that I lost it there for the moment. Well, they hit everything in that damned railroad yard except us. For instance, with the Germans, one lousy bomb, and it's enough to drive you crazy. Here they are dropping all these bombs, and all it sounds like is a big waterfall.

KP: Even being under the direct bombs.

LF: Yes. All you could hear is more of a swish. They had put those whistles on their bombs. Well, they finally gave up, and they took us out of the boxcars to march us away. I counted thirteen engines either on their sides, on their nose. There were buildings burning around the area. So, they hit just about everything but us. They marched us on. They marched us to another railroad station, and we waited there. Then, a train came along, and they took us to Limburg.

Meanwhile, interesting, there was an SS troop right on the other end of the waiting area for the train. Our guards were so goddamned scared of them. The funny thing was one of the guards we had traded something with him, and he hadn't come through. I started asking for the stuff, and he got [scared]. Oh, brother, you had to see it. [laughter] Really, they were completely intimidated, completely. [Editor's Note: Founded as Adolf Hitler's personal bodyguard force, the Schutzstaffel, or SS, became a large paramilitary force during World War II involved in security, intelligence and military operations. After the war, the Nuremberg trials deemed the SS a criminal organization for its role in wartime atrocities and the Holocaust.]

KP: By the SS.

LF: Of course. People wonder why the civilians didn't rebel.

KP: Do more.

LF: Do something. You can't. If somebody controls the army and controls it the way they controlled it, because don't forget, for what it's worth, Hitler brought them up to a point that they hadn't been in forty, fifty years. After World War I, they were a mess, and they continued on. Then, he brought them out of that, and so he had the guys on his side that he needed and the SS were vicious. As I say, if you could see the way those guards were shaking.

KP: It seems like you have reflected a lot about this, and one of the questions, both practically but also even ideologically, was why didn't the Germans do more?

LF: You can't, you can't.

KP: Sometimes for students and even historians do not have a sense that totalitarian societies are tough, even if you want to do good things.

LF: Near the end of the story, I'll tell you some more about that. Anyway, we finally got to Limburg. Limburg was a real big camp, and finally, finally there was supposedly some sort of Red Cross. I think they were supposed to be Swiss or something. I don't know. They had American GIs working as clerks, prisoners. I'm signing in. They get to the religion. I said, "Hebrew," or whatever ethnic word I used in those days. [When someone asks], "Are you Jewish? Are you Hebrew?" I don't even know anymore which to use. They said, "No," they don't register anyone as Jewish any longer. It turns out that around Christmastime there was a bombing somewhere in their vicinity, and there were some unexploded bombs. You heard about it.

KP: I have heard about this, that Jews were sent out.

LF: What I was told [was] they went through the records, picked out about twenty Jews, and made a bomb disposal squad out of them. Therefore, they would never register anybody as Jewish any longer, and they were very open about it. Whether the Germans knew it or not or cared or not, I don't know, but that's what I was told.

KP: I have heard that from several sources.

LF: That's interesting.

KP: Someone I interviewed who was captured around the time of the Bulge.

LF: Yes.

KP: A little bit earlier, in this early part of December, he remembers that very distinctly that the Jews were singled out.

LF: He was probably in the 106th Division or the one that we refer to as the "Hungry and Sick Division." [Editor's Note: After Germany launched the Ardennes Offensive on December 16, 1944, German forces encircled and captured several regiments of the 106th Infantry Division.]

KP: As he put it, he never fired his gun. He went back to the aid station, because he had some trench foot, and as he was walking back he learned that his unit surrendered.

LF: Yes. I felt sorry for those guys, because there was one of the fellows I went to school with was in the 106th and he got captured right off the bat. Obviously, this had a terrible psychological effect on him. When I came back from overseas and I was in the hospital in Staten Island, it turned out he was there. He was a former prisoner of war recuperating. I went to see [him]. He had always been a little kooky. He wasn't one of my close friends, but he was a part of the gang from high school. We went all through school together. I figured I'll go visit him. I found out what ward he was in. I walk in, and I said, "Hi, Billy. Good to see you," or, "How are you?" [He said], "I'll match you story for story," and he starts in. I figured, "Yes, Billy." Obviously, that really, really bothered him that he got there and he's so ashamed of what happened. Listen, being a prisoner of war was not the highlight of my career, believe me, but at least I tried. I didn't give up easily. All the time I spent in combat, whatever it was, that doesn't mean anything, but if you mention that you were a prisoner of war, oh, that rings a bell and then that's the only thing that people remember or think about or ask about.

KP: Really?

LF: Yes, because they can understand that better.

KP: Yes.

LF: Yes.

KP: I am also not surprised at that.

LF: Yes, because with combat, what do you say, how do you start, where do you explain the strange phenomenon known as combat, but, a prisoner of war, that they understand. Anyway, I

got to Limburg, and that was nothing spectacular there. It was just a prison camp, and it looked more like--if you see pictures of concentration camps--these places were just like that, the same type of wooden shelves for sleeping and these long barracks and the barbed wire every place.

Then, they decided [to take us further into Germany], because the Rhine had been crossed, and those crazy Germans, no matter how bad things were, they were still using their trains to carry Jews to the concentration camps, to the ovens, when they could have been used to carry supplies. Here, they put us on a train. I think it was twenty-five cars; I'm not sure. Yes, I think there were twelve hundred of us, or fifty men to a car. They're trying to take us further back into Germany.

Well, as I said, during the day, they take the engines away. There we were, a line of unmarked twenty-five cars sitting on a railroad line with a big, open field on one side, on a nice, sunny day. There was a spur that came off another track coming off. On that side, the side across from the open field, it dropped down, and there was a stream there. What they were doing is letting guys out one car at a time to go down to wash up in the stream.

There was also, on that spur, which was maybe two hundred yards from where we were, [a small ammunition train]. It just so happened that I was in one of the first of the cars, and the car I was in must have been a cattle car because there were spaces like this between the boards and the upper half so that we could look out. We could watch what was going on because otherwise, locked in the boxcars, you couldn't see out. We're watching, and, all of a sudden, one of our P-51s came along. There was a train there, a short train, all camouflaged with trees on it and everything and all painted and everything, except the goddamned engine. The smoke was going up about a half a mile. It was a clear day, so the smoke went straight up. It wasn't hard for this P-51 to notice this thing. He just lays around up there until the P-47s came. He called in, and they started in on that train. They came right over us and fired into that train. It was an ammunition train. It was like all the Fourth of Julys you could ever imagine. That thing was blowing up. In fact, I watched as this plane came over. He fired at the thing, and it went boom. It blew his plane straight up. The concussion from that explosion. That was very interesting.

Then, they see these twenty-five boxcars. They decided to start their work on that. They came and fired, and they hit the car--it wasn't the one next to mine--I think it was two cars from the one I was in. It turned out to be the officer's car. They fired into that. Well, somebody came running up--because there were fellows out there--and opened the car, unlocked our door, and, boy, did you ever see fifty guys come out of a boxcar in two milliseconds? The railroad track was up on a--what's that called--a mound. It was built up.

KP: Yes, sort of a mound.

LF: Right. For instance, when I was down there and looking up, I was looking under the car at the plane coming in. I could see the flames from his guns firing as he came in. Then, I got an inspiration. Just before we had left Limburg, they handed out toilet paper. It was in these Red Cross packages. I said to another guy, "Come on, quick." We ran out into the field, took the toilet paper and made a "PW," and the planes stopped. I've always been proud of that. Nobody else knows about it, I think at this point, except my wife.

Then, at that point, they start opening all the cars and somebody, in their brilliance, had these guys get out in the field and make a big "PW." They lined up in a big "PW." Now, here my

mother didn't know that I was a prisoner or if I was a prisoner or anything. When I got home, she had saved a newspaper article that said, "Human PW Saves Train." I couldn't believe it.

KP: You have a picture of this "PW."

LF: No, there's no picture. No, no, it was just a newspaper article.

KP: Yes, it was a newspaper clipping.

LF: It was just a newspaper article that said, "Human PW Saves Train." I ran back to start working on the guys that got hit.

KP: How many were hit?

LF: I think twelve were killed. We had nothing to work with. I was trying to help. I was trying to force--I figured some of them are going to go into shock--I was trying to force fluids onto them, whatever I could do to stop bleeding and things like that, but that was awful. Then--we're getting near the end of the story--they decided they're going to have to march us back. They were determined to take us back.

KP: Back to the train or to Limburg?

LF: No, just further into Germany, wherever the hell we're supposed to go.

KP: Wherever you were supposed to go, they were just going to keep you there.

LF: That's right. Well, we marched, and we got to this town, Braunfels. It's up in the mountains. It was actually a resort town, spa-type thing, with a castle on top of the [hill]; the town was like this. They got us there, and there was a big fenced-in area, so they put us all in there for the day. I'm watching to see what's going on. There was a doctor in town that if anybody was sick they would take them to the doctor.

I noticed that right across from the gate was a little alley running between two houses. There were a couple other guys that I knew, and I said, "Do you want to come with me?" They said, "Yes." When [there was] nothing happening, the guard was out in the road, they had a couple guards out in the road, I just wandered out. He says, "Where you going?" I said, "Oh, we're going to the doctor." "Oh, okay." He turns around [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes a zipping sound to illustrate people running as fast as possible.] and went down the little alleyway and to the edge of the town. These guys wanted to stay in the town for some reason. I said, "I don't want to stay in the town." I let them go their way, and I just wandered off. There was some fields there, just away from the town, and I'm wandering along. I bump into some German nurses. They're like, "Who are you?" I says, "Oh, I'm looking for a place to sleep." They said, "Oh, come, there are hospitals down at the other end of town," I can come there, and I'm thinking to myself, "Oh, sure." Then, they said to me, "Hollander." My accent was not perfect German. I said, "Oh, *ja*.] They thought I was Dutch, and that's the way it went.

I'm wandering around. It's getting dark. I'm passing by, it was like a little cliff type thing and there's a hole, like a cave. I figured, "Well, I'm going in there. I've got to find a place to hide and to sleep." [It was] pitch black. I come into this thing. I'm bumping into stuff, and I have no

idea what the hell I was bumping into. Someplace I picked up a bedroll from somebody who had thrown it away. Some of the guys had some stuff. I just put it down on the ground, laid down and went to sleep for a short while.

All of a sudden, I'm awakened. Do you remember in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* where the dwarves are all working with their lanterns coming in. I'm looking, and here are all these people walking in with lanterns. That's what went through my mind, "It looks like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*." [laughter] It turned out that this was their air raid shelter for this little town. It was a cave, and I guess it had been a quarry or something. There are all these benches and beach chairs. I didn't know what I was banging into. "Oh, who are you?" I said, "Oh, I was with the prisoners that were going through the town today, but I was too sick to go on." "Oh, okay." They made some space for me to lay down. One of them went home and got some coffee. Another one went and got me a sandwich. [Editor's Note: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is a 1937 animated film by Walt Disney.]

I guess it was the next day, a lot of them went back to their houses, and there was this one young girl who was there with this very, I mean, the guy looked like a hundred years old. In fact, she had brought him in a wheelbarrow to get him there. When no one was looking, she'd say to me, "This one's a bad Nazi, and this one is okay." She would tell me who to be careful of.

KP: Among the civilians.

LF: Among the civilians, yes. So, I figured, "Well, how about that?" We talked during the day, and I guess the next day. It was cold and damp in that damned cave. In fact, I think it was the next day I'm standing outside to get some sunlight. A couple German soldiers go walking by in the road, and they do a double take. They see me, and then they continue on. See, if you make believe you're supposed to be where you're at, that was an old [piece of advice]. We had gotten some lectures when we were in England. There was a little group that would come around to give talks, and they'd say that if you were trying to escape always make believe you're supposed to be where you are and what you're doing.

KP: It seems to have worked.

LF: Yes, they just ignored me and continued. They didn't want to get involved. People don't want to get [involved. It is] too much trouble. Anyway, it was very funny. There was a woman there who had lived in Elizabeth at one point. [laughter] Meanwhile, I'm talking to them and asking them how the hell to get away, which direction to go. One of them told me how I could go up through the mountains to get away. Another one calls me aside and says, "Don't go that way because there are all machine-gun nests along there." I figured, "Maybe I better quit while I'm ahead. At least I'm here. Nobody's bothering me." As I said, it was so cold and damp. I said to (Gabi?), I said, by the way, the first girl, remember?

KP: Yes.

LF: Her name was (Gabi?).

KP: (Gabi?).

LF: Her name was (Gabi?), (Gabi Yon?), but this was Gretel (Schleifer?). I said, "I'm going to come to your house tonight." She gave me directions. When it got dark, I found the house, but then, these damned German houses, the cellar is at ground level. There's the cellar, then the first floor, then the second floor. She told me she lived on the second floor. I climb up one floor, knock on the door. Well, if you knock on the door in Germany, at night, you hear a frightened voice saying, "Who is there?" I said, "Gretel?" "Oh, she's upstairs." Well, I thought that was pretty funny [that] I went to the wrong door. They got so scared. They said the one downstairs is a bad Nazi.

Now, one of the things that happened was that I had come down with a real bad case of diarrhea that developed, and so in the middle of the night, they gave me a little room with a bed. I decided, "I'm going to sneak out," because [there was an] outhouse. So, I go sneaking down. I'm being really quiet. I don't want to wake anybody, go out to the outhouse. I come back. I'm just about to get into bed and in troops the daughter, the son--they had a young son--and the father, shaking like a leaf. They came, saw that I wasn't there, they thought the Gestapo [German secret police] had come. It turns out that this father, they had a whole underground group in this town that were anti-Nazis.

KP: These were German anti-Nazis.

LF: Yes, oh, definitely.

KP: You were very lucky.

LF: That's right.

KP: Not only do you get a bunch of apathetic villagers who know the war is over.

LF: Right.

KP: But you manage to stumble upon people who are really out to help you.

LF: Right.

KP: They really wanted to help you.

LF: They told me how they listened to the British broadcasting, wrote this stuff down and distributed it. The father--he was an artist--the father he was put in [a] concentration camp as a political prisoner. That's why I couldn't figure out who he was. She had this album. She's showing me pictures of her father, and here's this fifty-year-old man. I'm trying to figure out, "Now, who's this?" My German wasn't that good.

KP: Yes.

LF: Well, I figured out that that's what happened, from being in the concentration camp, he [had] pure white hair, just all scrunched over. He looked like a ninety-year-old man, at least ninety, and that's what happened. The mother died from all the heartache I guess. For instance, at one point, there was some British fliers [airmen] that were shot down somewhere around there, and they made them keep this British flier locked in a room in their place. Of course, they

gave him a key, and they did all this. I think they must have given him one of her pictures, and, of course, he gets searched and they find the picture or something. Her brother and she went through hell, interrogating them and interrogating them and interrogating. They had been through hell. The brother was about sixteen, and he--I noticed when I met them--he had all these mufflers around his neck and everything. It turns out that the doctor who was all part of their group said that he was too sick because they wanted to put him into the *Volkssturm*. I'm sure you've heard of the *Volkssturm*. [Editor's Note: The *Volkssturm* was the national militia set up by Nazi Germany in 1944. It conscripted males aged sixteen to sixty years old.]

KP: Yes.

LF: For instance, some of our guards were from the *Volkssturm*. They were old and they put them in, but they wanted to take him into the *Volkssturm*. He had this thing, and they didn't take him. The interesting thing [was] it was only a matter of a couple of days until the town was taken by the Fourth Infantry Division, and that day the mufflers came off. I thought that was so dramatic. They were very concerned afterwards. I got letters from them because doesn't our government know what the hell they're doing, letting the same Nazis that ran things beforehand, putting them in charge again. This is what happened.

KP: What town was it?

LF: This was called Braunfels.

KP: Braunfels.

LF: The funny thing is in Texas, there are people evidently from Braunfels who settled in Texas, and you've heard of New Braunfels, Texas by some chance.

KP: It sounds very familiar.

LF: Well, see, it did register with me, New Braunfels, because recently I heard something that happened in New Braunfels.

KP: Yes.

LF: This was Braunfels.

----------END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE FOUR----------

KP: This continues an interview with Leonard Feinberg on November 22, 1998 with Kurt Piehler at Rutgers University. You were saying the town was finally liberated.

LF: The town was taken, and I turned myself into the medics because I was between malnutrition and this diarrhea and stuff. I guess I got to a hospital, some kind of a medical thing, and I wanted to send a telegram or something to my family. It turned out that there was, wherever I got to, you could send cablegrams, but you were restricted to three sentences. They had, "Pick a sentence." I couldn't say what I wanted to say. Well, it just so happened that this was the beginning of April and my father's birthday is April 10th and my mother is April 11th. The cablegram said, "Happy birthday. I'm well and fit and will write details." Those were the

best thing I could come up with. The cablegram came on my father's birthday. They didn't believe it, because they thought I had arranged it ahead of time. They had the cable company checking and all that, and it wasn't until they got my first letter that they knew.

My mother and father both sent me letters immediately, V-Mail, and I found those, because, see, they came back. They couldn't find me going from one hospital to another. If you want to see something dramatic, I'll show them to you one day because they're very touching. [Editor's Note: V-Mail, or Victory Mail, was a system used by the American military to decrease the amount of space and weight of paper letters that had to be shipped overseas. Letters were copied on microfilm and then later reprinted on the receiving end.] Then, I damned near didn't make it. I got to an American hospital, and you just relaxed. Beforehand, I didn't let myself.

KP: You never said you relaxed.

LF: Well, not relax, but what I mean is I didn't let myself get sick no matter what happened. Even with that sore throat.

KP: Yes.

LF: It got better. When I was in the American hospital, not only did I have severe malnutrition, [but I also had] this acute diarrhea, really everything I ate, was trying to eat. I came down with hepatitis and something that they didn't diagnose, but, in my studies afterwards, I came across something that fit the symptoms exactly as relapsing fever. I started running a fever of like 105 [degrees Fahrenheit] for a whole week. They didn't know what to do, and then it went away. Then, it came back, and then it went away. This is what relapsing fever does. It was all those things at one time, but I was determined to survive. [Editor's Note: Relapsing fever is an acute epidemic disease caused by a spirochete transmitted from lice bites.]

That's it. From then on, it was just in the hospital and getting home. My poor family, they didn't know what to expect because they flew me home. First of all, we're talking about motion sickness. My first flight, they flew me from Germany to France on a C-47. I was so excited, because I was going up in an airplane for the first time. "Boy, this is great," I'm looking out the window and everything. All of a sudden, the damned diarrhea hit me. Well, I had to go find a [bathroom]. Back in the tail of this C-47 is this little thing about this big around. [Do you] remember the old cigarette urns? [Editor's Note: The Douglas C-47 Skytrain is a propeller transport aircraft.]

KP: Oh, yes.

LF: That's what exactly what it was like.

KP: Just an urn.

LF: You had to push down, and it opened up. Well, the tail of the C-47 goes like this. I started getting so sick. Turn that thing off, please.

[TAPE PAUSED]

LF: They called me in to some board that they had, and they said, "Do you have any objections to flying home?" I said, "Well, if you have a big enough bucket, I'll give it a try," because this was just a little, short trip. I was fine because it was a C-54, which were the four-engine jobs, flew higher, smoother. I got home. I was put into a hospital right on Staten Island, and when my parents came to see me, they didn't know what to expect because they knew I didn't tell them anything. They expected maybe a leg was gone, an arm was gone. [Editor's Note: The Douglas C-54 Skymaster was a propeller transport aircraft.]

KP: You had not told them.

LF: I had all the parts, what was left of them.

KP: Yes.

LF: I was a little thin, but, fortunately, there's been no real aftereffects.

KP: Except for your hearing.

LF: Except for this hearing thing. Who knows? I just read in the paper the other day that there's a genetic problem with Jews from Eastern Europe background with hearing problems. It could be that, but they gave me a free [hearing aid].

KP: Free hearing aids.

LF: See, having been wounded in action, with the VA [Veterans Affairs], I never went to the VA until recently, because I decided that they owe me a hearing aid. I figured I might as well sign up. I get there, and I see that being wounded in action only puts you in a different category, service-connected injury, disability. Then, there's another category for former prisoners of war, but then it turns out that you had to be a prisoner ninety days to be entitled to some other benefits. I said, "If I had known, I wouldn't have escaped," [laughter] because I think it was almost ninety days, but I'm not sure. I have to see what they think it was. I have no idea what they have in their record, but I'm going to check on that. Anyway, that's my saga. If there are any questions, I'd be happy to try.

KP: I was wondering one question.

LF: Sure.

KP: Coming out of your prisoner of war experience, when did you first have a sense of the Holocaust, the full nature of Nazi atrocities?

LF: I guess after I got home. After I got home, that's when they started liberating the concentration camps. The war was over May 10th.

KP: May 8th officially.

LF: Something like that.

KP: Yes.

LF: I was in the hospital in Reims, and I remember--I'll tell you a funny story about that--the French started going around, shooting off guns and stuff to celebrate. I got between the windows because you figure these damn French are going to [laughter] shoot all over the place.

I've got to tell you a very funny story, which I think is indicative of some people's psyche or something. They put us into a ward of all ex-prisoners in this hospital. We're all pretty quiet; nobody talked about [it]. We just would sit here recuperating. Nobody talked much, except this one guy. For some reason, he would go on and on, every day about, "Oh, when you're in combat you can tell this and you could tell the kind of gun," all this bologna. One day, just for kicks, I said, "By the way, what division were you with?" He said, "35th." I said, "Oh, gee, I was in the 35th. What regiment?" "134th." "Gee, I was in the 134th." "What battalion?" "First battalion." "What company?" "C Company." I said, "C Company? I don't remember you." He was in that batch of new recruits that they shoved into our outfit at Christmastime. [laughter] All we did was go up to where the 101st was, went into this first dumb attack that was screwed up, and that was it. Of all the guys in the world to be telling this story and turning out that it was the exact same company I was with, he never said another word. I always picture him sitting around bars after the war telling about what it was like. Isn't that funny? He would go on, day after day, with all these [stories], the big veteran, that's funny.

KP: This is a question I have wrestled with a lot in terms of the Germans.

LF: Yes.

KP: On the one hand, the Holocaust is going on, while you are being held as prisoners.

LF: Yes.

KP: You see the full range of German behavior. You had Germans that clearly fit the stereotype, and then you had the other extreme.

LF: Yes.

KP: You had people really working against the Nazi regime.

LF: That's right, exactly.

KP: Not just passively, they were actively.

LF: As much as they could.

KP: Yes.

LF: It's just impossible. It's impossible.

KP: Historians have a full range of opinions.

LF: Hitler's willing.

KP: Yes, willing executioner.

LF: Executioners, is it?

KP: Yes, that the Germans, as a people, are completely bad.

LF: Do you want to know something funny? When I was back in the hospital, after being a prisoner of war, there were German prisoners working there. They had prisoners helping in the hospital. One day, I'm talking to one of them. I didn't tell him about anything, other than, "How's everything." He starts telling me how terrible they're treated and how the food isn't good and on and on and on. I waited until he finished, and then I explained to him that I had just been a guest of his army and he ain't seen bad. [laughter] Some of them, obviously, some of the American guards from, I talked to a lot of these guys, were really vicious. They really treated them in a horrible way, without having any clue about the Holocaust or anything like that. It was just this is human nature. You're going to have guys that are put in a position where they suddenly have some power over you, and they can vent any of their feelings or not even feelings. They're rotten people to start with. You're not going to change them. Who were the guards? They were either guys that had had enough on the line that they took them off. Some of them, I guess, were just nobodies that they put them there.

Now, something that they did do, for instance, when we were in Flamersheim, one day the little two-engine attack bombers, the A-26s I think they were, would come over and bomb around the area. [Editor's Note: The Douglas A-26 Invader was a two-engine light bomber.] I'm trying to think of the name of this one town nearby, because it was just a flat plain, the Cologne Plain. They used to say you can't escape because you could see for two days in every direction, and it's true. It's just flat. We were way outside of this town, and we watched the planes come in. We could see the bombs leaving the plane. We could see everything coming up as the bombs went, and we just stood and watched it like it was a show going on.

One day, they were bombing, and we watched a couple of the planes get hit. Boy, is that lousy to see, and you count the parachutes. Well, they brought them into this little place--we were up in the beer hall--there was one room downstairs that they kept these guys locked in. They kept them away from us. We couldn't get to them. Some of them were badly burned, and they wouldn't give them anything. There were some inspectors coming from the German army, and, all of a sudden, these guys got busy treating these guys and doing things for their burns before the inspectors got there. They weren't all [bad]. There were the rotten ones and there were the [good ones].

KP: It seems like you almost had the full range of experiences as a prisoner. It just strikes me.

LF: Yes, well, it's crazy.

KP: Yes.

LF: Because it wasn't [that] I just went to a prison camp and I stayed in a prison camp and then that was it.

KP: The fact that you ran into anti-Nazis, the odds of that are so slim, such active anti-Nazis for that matter.

LF: Maybe I was dumb trusting. I've always been very naïve about trusting people, and I've been really stuck a few times since.

KP: Yes.

LF: No, I picked the right people. To see the fear that they lived under, that was awful, and not just them. As I told you, the girl downstairs must have gotten scared as hell when somebody came knocking on her door at night, because you just never knew.

KP: You mentioned that the war had really made you learn a lot about yourself.

LF: Sure.

KP: How do you think the war changed you? Let us just say you had gone through Rutgers, and the war had not come. Do you ever think back?

LF: The funny thing is when I got back I essentially just turned a switch.

KP: That the war was over.

LF: In other words, it did not affect me per se, and I became a civilian immediately. In fact, I never much talked about it, because to whom, to what. As I said, it's only later in life that I seem to be ruminating about this and thinking back on my great adventure, and very often I think about things that happened and how I was able to handle these things. That's why very often, in the business that I'm in, there are so many traumas and problems and crap, and they always say, "How can you handle it? How can you take all this?" I say, "Well, I've seen worse."

KP: Yes, you are not pulling their leg.

LF: If I can survive that, then all this other, that was a matter of life and death. That was always, death was really that close, if the guy aiming the artillery piece, for instance, turned it one little notch further, but you can't go through life completely like that. As my wife would say and not about this, but sometimes I always say, "It could be worse," or, "Somebody else had it worse." You can't go through life doing that. It's not that simple.

KP: I have done enough of these interviews that I sort of realize my life is pretty good, even at my worst. When I say, "It could be worse," because I have interviewed these people who have done this, and my wife says, "Don't be ridiculous."

LF: Well, but, see, to me, I'm thankful for having had the ultimate adventure at least. Remember I told you I turned down the offer to become a cryptographer. Can you imagine what I would have missed if I had become a cryptographer?

One time, the captain wanted to bring me back to work in the aid station, which was relatively [in the rear]--the aid station is back--to be one of the techs working in the aid station as opposed to a litter-bearer or a company aidman, and I turned it down because I said, "These guys depend on me." Sometimes, they'd even try to butter up to you because they wanted to be sure that if something happened to them, you would [care for them].

Now, interesting thing that I found as a medic, like newly going out with a company--I'm sure it was because I was Jewish--I had to prove myself. They didn't know what would happen if things got tough and things got rough. Would I be there to help them? On a couple occasions, where I was in a couple different companies because I was with one beforehand and then one afterwards, a different company, and I noticed [that] I had to prove myself and then almost it would be like a little ceremony when things got tough and there I was doing more than they expected. They had some preconceived notions because if you were Jewish you would be frightened and run away or something. I remember Phil Blair one day gave me a German flashlight that had a little generator in it, that you pumped it and it made the thing work. I always thought that that was sort of like a present showing that I have passed the test or something.

One other thing, and I've talked about Connie Kjems because we did a lot of crazy things, like when he turned down to be exec [executive] officer and there wasn't any fighting because we ran out of gas and we were stuck on this farm. He said he has to go to division headquarters. He said, "Don't you have to go back there for some supplies?" I said, "Yes." We took a jeep with one of our drivers and drove to the city of Troyes, T-R-O-Y-E-S. It's a big city. I never hear about it, but it was a big city. We went in there. There were department stores and everything, and the division headquarters was there. By the time we got there, we had to come back the next day, and we spent two days there drinking, chasing girls, doing all kinds of crazy things. The jeep driver got so drunk. We met some French people, and we put him in their house and left him there. I became the jeep driver, crazy things like that, he and I.

The first time that I really saw him [was] the first day I was out as a company aidman, and the first thing that happened, I didn't know where to stand, like in a movie, a play. You have to be shown where to go. I was told I had to stay with the platoon guide. I follow the platoon guide wherever he went. We're going across this little field with the hedgerows around, and, all of a sudden, I feel [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes the sound, "Whoop."] I didn't know what it was. I felt it rather than heard it, and I looked down and there are little tiny plows going along the ground. I suddenly realized that that was a mortar shell that had hit behind me. [Editor's Note: Mr. Feinberg makes the sound, "Ca chunk."] I jump over the nearest hedgerow. He, meanwhile, knows this thing hit behind him, and he jumped over another hedgerow because it was like a corner. He couldn't believe when I walked around the corner to where he was because he was sure that I had gotten it because it hit behind him and I was behind him. I'm standing there, and, all of a sudden, my pants were wet. I look, "Oh." It wasn't blood. I figure, "I'll take my canteen out and see what the heck's going on." I go to pull it out. It won't come out. What happened? I had to take it out with the cup, a piece of shrapnel embedded right through the cup and was inside the canteen, but it almost welded them together. I would've had a real pain in my butt if it hadn't been [there].

Then, we were supposed to go attack up a hill, all full of trees, but the Germans didn't want us to do that, so they had machine guns and mortars and they're busy doing this and we're pinned down. All of a sudden--now, this is really when I really saw him for the first time--he comes walking along, big grin on his face, and he just says, "Ain't this a crock of shit?" I could've kissed him. It was just so beautiful. There were times when I found that if you could put some humor to calm people down, like I told you, telling him that this would make a great nightclub, stuff like that, little things just to break the tension. Well, he did that. What a fantastic guy, and, as I said, he had been a longshoreman in New York.

KP: I think this interview will help preserve his memory.

LF: I've never forgotten him.

KP: Yes.

LF: I've never forgotten a lot of these guys. Art Dobis [was] the other guy that was next to me.

KP: I am curious, although I am reluctant to bring the interview to a close, but I should probably get you home as well as myself.

LF: Especially since my wife is sick.

KP: Yes, I know.

LF: Not that I can do much.

KP: I want to go on the record that I hope you will write your memoirs.

LF: Yes.

KP: I want to try to find you a publisher, maybe Tennessee Press.

LF: My son used to work for the *Commercial Appeal* [newspaper] in Memphis.

KP: Oh, really?

LF: Do you know the *Commercial Appeal* by any chance?

KP: No.

LF: Oh, you don't know that area.

KP: No.

LF: I think the *Commercial* may go into some of the other [cities].

KP: Yes, probably, Knoxville is way off on the other side of the state.

LF: Yes.

KP: You mentioned that parts of the war looked like movies. I am curious about movies after 1945. Are there any movies that you think accurately depict aspects of your experiences?

LF: I remember going to the first war movie called *A Walk in the Sun*, and that was supposed to be a classic. I thought to myself, "I wonder which war that was from," because they're all walking along and talking and you never hear any artillery. You never hear anything. I figured that this doesn't look like the war I was in. [Editor's Note: *A Walk in the Sun* is a 1945 film about American soldiers in Italy during World War II.]

The one that surprised me was *Battleground*. Now, *Battleground* was up near Bastogne. The scenery, I was amazed, because it was exactly as I remembered it. They had to--because it's a movie--have a lot of interplay between the guys and arguments between them and all kinds of stuff like that, to make it a movie, just like *Saving Private Ryan*. It was a movie, and they had to put these things in. The two things that I wondered about. A, where were the hedgerows? I didn't see any hedgerows. B, artillery didn't make the noise that artillery makes. When a shell is coming in, it's almost like it's cutting through the air. You can hear it. They didn't have any of that, but, other than that, obviously, the invasion part of it was amazingly well done. [Editor's Note: *Battleground* is a 1949 film that depicts the experiences of soldiers during the siege of Bastogne in the Battle of the Bulge. *Saving Private Ryan* is a 1998 film directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Tom Hanks. The film opens with soldiers landing on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France on June 6, 1944, D-Day.]

KP: Since you mentioned *Saving Private Ryan*, I think *Saving Private Ryan* is really two movies. There are the first twenty minutes and then the rest.

LF: Right.

KP: Most of the movie is pretty much in the war genre. It is very good, but it is very much in the war genre.

LF: Right.

KP: I was absolutely stunned when I saw the first twenty minutes because so much of it was so accurate. I have never seen combat. How accurate was it?

LF: I don't know. It didn't look like anything I was [involved].

KP: Yes.

LF: But that doesn't mean anything, because there probably are no two things that were the same. One time, two companies were coming from two different directions and start fighting with each other because they didn't realize that we were both American companies, and they had that happen. I was once, this was right out of Sarreguemines, it was my turn to listen in on the radio--we had radios then--and I hear this one company calling back and saying, "Our own artillery is coming in on us. Our artillery is coming in on us." They tried to stop the artillery, and it didn't seem to happen. Then, the next thing they said was, "The company commander has been killed," and somebody, matter-of-factly, said, "Put So-and-So in charge." Just listening to that, any kind of crazy thing that happened.

I remember, just outside of Sarreguemines, I went to cross a river, and they had us down in a winery that made effervescent red wine. I forget which kind it was. They had this poor little French guy guarding it. Well, we had more guns than he did, so all of us crossed the river carrying bottles of this wine. I understand they were going to take some guys back and court-martial them for doing it. There was, first of all, a tremendous esprit de corps in that first company. It was amazing. I found myself, see, I had never been a rah-rah boy, "I'd die for dear, old Rutgers."

KP: Yes, yes.

LF: I had school spirit, but I wasn't that caught up in it. I was so surprised at myself getting so caught up in this company and ready to, as I said.

KP: Yes.

LF: Off the cliff, I'd go right off with him, and that's a whole different thing. It's funny, we almost started feeling as supermen. We started to strut because here we were, these combat veterans and we're liberating all of these towns. We even started wearing, at one point, kerchiefs around our neck, and the word came down from division headquarters or someplace, corps headquarters, not allowing that because there were German infiltrators that were using that as a signal to know each other, so we had to stop that. [laughter] It was really, really funny that you get sort of into a spirit there.

The biggest disappointment I think I had when I got back to the United States, and here the war was still on [with] Japan. I went to New York. You would think that there was no war on, and everybody's having a good time. Something dawned on me. Here I was, ready to die for my country. I know it sounds crazy, in retrospect, but that's how we knew that. We were ready to do it.

KP: It was not theoretical for you because you saw people get killed.

LF: Lots.

KP: Yes.

LF: The thing was that you knew that there was a constant possibility and you still wound up doing what needed to be done. Then, I thought to myself, after I came back, "Do you think General Motors would build any tanks if they didn't get paid for it? Do you think Chrysler would build any jeeps if they didn't get paid for it?" Boy, am I a sucker. I got caught up in the propaganda. Of course, there was no question that those guys on the other team were really out to try to take on the whole world, and they were doing a pretty good job of it. I'll tell you, the damn German soldiers were really, really good. They did things, lots of times crazy things, but they gave their all and they were good at it. They were pretty well trained.

KP: I have done a full range of interviews of people that were on the home front, people who were never in the military, people too young, people who had seen very little combat, a lot of combat, all the different services. Out of the full range of experiences, what strikes me is people's reactions particularly to combat. For example, I interviewed a career general. He started out as a young second lieutenant, and he talks about combat very detached. He is a professional.

LF: Yes.

KP: I just did an interview, in fact, this week, where the interviewee has never talked to anybody about his experiences. He was a Marine captain, and at one point he just started breaking out in tears. I felt terrible.

LF: I've caught myself a couple times.

KP: Yes.

LF: Really.

KP: I often tell students that I am reluctant to do that to people because I am not a psychologist. The first time somebody started crying in an interview, I was devastated.

LF: Sure.

KP: The person was telling jokes the entire way. When we get to this one point in the interview, he starts crying, and I am like, "What have I done? It has been fifty-five years." I was struck that he still has not processed it fully. He was really traumatized. You are very professional, and you have come to terms with it. Has that always been the case?

LF: Of me?

KP: Yes.

LF: There was never a doubt in my mind that it was just a matter of time, after I became a prisoner of war. I saw guys, this is true, I saw a guy die because he gave up fighting, to carry on. After all, we were busy starving to death and getting pushed around, twelve days on a train without food, stuff like that, or with minimal [food]. You just decided that you want to just keep going, but this guy didn't and I saw him die.

I'll tell you another interesting thing. I almost called the damn congressman when they were busy grilling the tobacco people. "Oh, tobacco is not an addictive substance." This is absolutely true because I saw it myself. I told you what little bread we got per day. There were guys that would trade that little piece of bread with the guards if they could get a little piece of cigarette. Can you picture that? I made up my mind that I'd never let anything rule me like that. When I decided to stop smoking, I stopped, period. That was thirty-some years ago. I was in research in those days and doing some work on smoking, and I came to the conclusion that it can't be doing me any good. I decided to stop, but I stopped like that. As tough as it was, I was determined that I was not going to let it [rule me], that I was master of myself.

KP: Were you smoking during the war?

LF: I started smoking July 15, 1944, our first day of combat.

KP: Because they gave you cigarettes.

LF: Well, no, they always gave us cigarettes.

KP: Yes.

LF: The point was that there I was laying in a hole with nothing to do. You're not constantly out running back and forth.

KP: Yes.

LF: A lot of times, you're just there. So, I needed something. I figured, "Well, I'll take up smoking," and I did. It really filled a need and it was great. I always thought, "I wish there was something like smoking but without the harmful effects." That was the day I started smoking.

Then, I was, of course, a prisoner, in fact, when I got to that first hospital after I was captured, I still had cigarettes with me. There were guys, GIs, wandering around there having cigarettes, and I gave them away to these guys. This one guard, that's all he could think about was he needed cigarettes and chocolate. He would do anything for cigarettes and chocolate. Some of the stuff that we were moving that time, there were two kinds of chocolate that they had, the chocolate bars for the Wehrmacht [German armed forces], which was the plain guys, and then they had the special stuff for the *Panzer* and *Flieger*, the tankers and the air corps. They had this really nice, solid bar. The other thing was almost like a mounds bar, an *ersatz* mounds bar.

One time, we were unloading some boxes or something, and it was apricot brandy. One of the guys got so drunk that we had to practically carry him back. [laughter] It's just crazy, crazy things, bizarre things sometimes. I certainly didn't hit on every one of them.

KP: We did not even get to your post-war career. You currently still work though.

LF: Yes.

KP: What is your position?

LF: I'm a laboratory director.

KP: At which company?

LF: We have a lab in Levittown, Princeton Biomedical Lab.

KP: Oh, okay.

LF: In fact, we used to pick up around New Brunswick, some of the doctors here.

KP: Yes.

LF: All over the place. Now, we're having some problems, of all things, with Medicare. This is what I've said, here I was, ready to die for my country, and now the goddamn Medicare, part of my country is trying to kill me. Don't get me started on it.

KP: Well, I want to thank you very much.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

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