

Transcript:

Wallace Carden

A01

69min

Interviewer: Generally, what I want to do is I want to talk a little bit briefly about pre-war, excuse me, about pre-camp, a little about your role, kind of like name, rank, and serial number, so to speak.

Wallace Carden: And what I did.

Interviewer: Right. What you did, and then we'll go into a little bit about what you might have known before, about what you were going to do, a little about how old you were, things like that, some basic information.

Wallace Carden: OK.

Interviewer: You can tell me. You're from what town?

Wallace Carden: I was from Briceville, B-R-I-C-E-V-I-L-L-E, Tennessee, TN.

Interviewer: Is that west, east Tennessee?

Wallace Carden: That's near Oakridge.

Interviewer: Oh, OK. So you're not far from home now.

Wallace Carden: About nine miles, it wasn't all about 15 miles.

Interviewer: OK. You joined the military or you were drafted?

Wallace Carden: Joined in May, I mean, March 9, 1943.

Interviewer: OK.

Wallace Carden: And was sent to Fort Seal, Oklahoma as a trainee to learn basic training, and the basic training was on telephone systems, switchboards, combat because I was going to be in the field artillery. And that lasted 13 weeks. After that, I went to...I was sent back to another place which was Camp Pickett, Virginia, and I was there six months. And then from Camp Pickett, Virginia, I went to...overseas, and that was...I can give you dates -- I've got dates down here and stuff. Anyway, we had all kinds of different training. We had amphibious training, we had mountain climbing, and went to West Virginia for mountain climbing. We had...let's see, after that, we went to Boston, and we were shipped overseas. And we were on a ship and, of course, they were having a storm in Atlantic, and they were having us get out on deck, take exercise, and of course, when you...the boat was a big...a large ship, but it was pitching like 50 feet up, 50 feet down, something like that, because the waves were so high. And at that time, they said, "You know, you got to do this." So we were out there, and we were going like this and going back. And they said, "Well, we've got good news and we've got bad news. The good news is that the storm is going to be over. The bad news is it's not going to be over until we get to where our destination." And--

Interviewer: At that time, what did you know your destination to be?

Wallace Carden: We didn't know. We knew somewhere in Europe, but we didn't know where.

Interviewer: Did you know what you were headed to do?

Wallace Carden: We knew we were going to be in the war whenever they already decided, is that what you mean?

Interviewer: Did you know that you were actually going to liberate anybody?

Wallace Carden: Well, we didn't know what we were going to do. We were going to try – let's put it that way.

Interviewer: What did you know at that time about the plight of the Jewish people in?

Wallace Carden: Well, we had read quite a bit about them about how they were slaughtering them, how they were killing them, and using all these different forms to kill them with, and...

Interviewer: Did you believe that?

Wallace Carden: Oh, yeah. I believe anything they said.

Interviewer: We had some accounts that people felt that it was absolutely impossible--

Wallace Carden: Oh, no.

Interviewer: --that they thought it was completely absurd.

Wallace Carden: No.

Interviewer: But you believed it? You knew--

Wallace Carden: Oh, yeah. I knew they--

Interviewer: You were how old at that time?

Wallace Carden: I was...I think I was 19 when I went in, 20 when I was in combat, I guess. When prison camp, I was 20 years old.

Interviewer: So you were on the Atlantic?

Wallace Carden: Yeah, we were on Atlantic. Then we're on it seven days, and it was up and down. Everybody was seasick just about. And the mess hall got really muddy, I mean, not muddy, coffee everywhere, all over the place. Slide, slip, and people could hardly stand up. And I think I ate about two apples the whole seven days. Most everybody was sick, I mean real sick. So when we got over there, we landed at Portsmouth. And then we were put on a train, and we went to a small town in Wales called Velindre. V-E-L-I-N-D-R-E. This town we were in barracks, and we had another six months training there. And we went mountain climbing and all kinds of stuff. And every time it rained, of course, we went on about a nine-mile hike. So we pulled our raincoat pockets full of water and things like that. It really did. And after that, we went to England and the town called Cheltenham, and we were there about three months. And we did some maneuvers and all that kind of stuff and mock combat against other divisions and things like that. And then we went over to France, and France that was...we went over there in July, and we didn't go on D-Day, but we were supposed to be reserves. So they were at Saint-Lô when we got over there July 27, that's when we got to France. And we landed on the Omaha Beach where most of our soldiers had landed before on D-Day. Then our first combat was just outside of Saint-Lô. And it was...they had one thing happening there. They said that the airplanes were coming over and they were bombing, and they were told to bomb the smoke. So smoke's supposed to have been going west, instead it started going east. So they started bombing east, and they tore up about one division, bombing them. Anyway, that was one of the things they lost. We were...what I did in combat, I guess you want to know that, is that I laid wire for telephones and I operated switchboards and sometimes three or four miles of wire. And then if we couldn't catch up with the enemy, then we would have to stop and go as far as we could then start laying the wire again until we can catch up with them. It was fairly fast going to France. Our division was one to liberate quite a few towns, connect...

Interviewer: I'm sorry. One second. I'm trying to figure what that is.

Wallace Carden: Coffee pot.

Interviewer: I thought if I can hear it, you can hear it.

Wallace Carden: Let's see now. Oh, yeah, they said it was grumbling and all this kind of stuff. We liberated Paris. And they had this big parade. I had some pictures, you know, that shows the parade. And it shows one vehicle just behind us. They had pictures of that vehicle. They missed ours. Anyway, I've got that at home in case you're interested in it, but I don't think I've got it with me.

Interviewer: Had you talk to any civilians at this time about what was going on?

Wallace Carden: Yeah. We talked to quite a few civilians. There was one civilian, you know, he said that the Germans were out in a certain place, and then we had sent somebody out there to get them. They had mined a lot of areas. And as they had mined these areas, the people would get out there and maybe they get stepped on one of them themselves. And there was one Catholic priest that was...said he was going to show them where the mines were, so he walked out probably I'd say 200 yards, and bang, he was gone. He stepped on one of these, didn't know that it was there.

Interviewer: And you were there for that?

Wallace Carden: Yeah. And later on, we were going so fast that we couldn't lay wire fast enough. We did five or six miles and then all of a sudden they said stop, we're going to move on. And we got to Paris, and of course, we liberated Paris, 28th Infantry Division did, and if you've seen any of those pictures of the liberation of Paris, it is mostly the 28th Infantry Division. And they said...they had the free French army, the free French. They gave them two weeks off to stay in Paris, and they told us, "You guys got to go on, you're in combat, you go to go on. You can't stop." So we were...my friend and I, Pete Finley, Philadelphia, we were laying wire on the outside – the outskirts, going out of town, and several French people, girls and boys, came down there singing the German national anthem. And I told him, I was up on a pole, and I said, "You better get your carbine out, you might need it."

Interviewer: So, how are you feeling at this point?

Wallace Carden: Well, I was feeling pretty good. We were doing OK. So we liberated a lot more towns. We liberated the capital of Luxembourg. We liberated Brussels, Belgium. And there was a big list of places we got. I was going to bring a book, but I forgot to bring it.

Interviewer: Well, that's OK.

Wallace Carden: Yeah. Anyway...whenever we left Paris, we liberated all these others. Eventually, we got up to what they called the Hurtgen Forest.

Interviewer: Say that again.

Wallace Carden: The Hurtgen, H-U-R-T-G-E-N.

Interviewer: Hurtgen Forest.

Wallace Carden: Hurtgen Forest.

Interviewer: OK.

Wallace Carden: And they were just feeding one division in and they were getting shot at and feed another division in, and they get shot at. So as they sent us out there, and I was operating the switchboard, and one of the forward observers who was a lieutenant who's wanting to...who said, "The Germans were coming in that forest over there on the other side." And he wanted to fire the entire corps of artillery on this group. We said, "There's probably 3000 to 4000 of them. So when he said...when he was ready, he would tell them. So they're coming in with flashlights here in the nighttime. They didn't need flashlights. Germans aren't supposed, they're supposed to be able to see in the dark. We knew that, flashlights. So we let...he called and said, "OK. Let them go ahead. We are the firing corps." So we did. It lasted about 20, 30 minutes. He said, "I think we got most of them." And that was the end of that. But then they started dropping mortars in on my area right there where I was sitting. I was in a hole operating the switchboard. And there was about five guys standing outside in front of me talking. And so on one of those shells wounded five or six of them, after I got a little dirt on my face, but that is all. And so I called up the captain, and I told him what was going on. I said, "We have six wounded up here. What should we do about it?" He said, "Well, bring them all out." So we brought them all out, and we left, and went somewhere else, back to the base. After that, they took our division out supposedly and put another division in. They cut them all to pieces too. They lost about half of the division. While they were doing that, then they said, "We're putting you guys on a rest area." And the rest area happened to be 25 miles long on Belgian and German border, in Luxembourg border and all that. Well, that was fine for a while. And along about in December, we started seeing all these Germans in over there, and I said, "Alright, it's OK. Don't worry about it." At this time, I was up in what we called the pillbox where you...it's a large concrete. Where you keep your...if you have switchboards or whatever...

Interviewer: Tell me what town you're in right now?

Wallace Carden: We were in the town of...at that particular time, I'd say we were in town near...called Ouren, O-U-R-E-N . It's the nearest town. It was a very small town.

Interviewer: In what...in Germany?

Wallace Carden: It was in Luxembourg.

Interviewer: Luxembourg?

Wallace Carden: Hmm-hmm. OK. Then we were in that town and we went up on a hill near the top where they had this fortress, or this pillbox, had been captured and we were going to stay there. So there were six of us in that. We were supposed to take communications and the lines and stuff back and forth. And we were doing that, and then they came up and then said, "OK. I'm taking three of you guys out and leave you three up here." So they left me up there with the other three...other two. And so December 16 which it was about 6 o'clock in the morning, they were coming along. Germans were starting going down a row right beside where we were. So we called the lieutenant and I asked him where the captain was. Captain always told me what to do. And lieutenant always said, "Well, you'll be all right. Just stay where you are." At this time he said...I told him...I said, "We're being invaded up here." And he said, "Well, it's OK. Don't worry about it. Nothing happened." And I said, "What do you mean nothing happened." He said, "Well, there's nothing back here. You stay up there where you are." And I said, "No. I tell you what. I'm saying you got to know about it in about 30 minutes. What's up there?" And he said, "Well, there's the tiger tanks and there's panzer tanks. There's infantry. And there's probably...just still coming in streams." And "Well, OK. You stay up there and..."

Interviewer: Not worried about it.

Wallace Carden: Not really worried about it, and I said...

Interviewer: Let me interrupt you really quick. At this time, you're with how many soldiers?

Wallace Carden: There's only two more of us, three of us.

Interviewer: There is a total of three of you?

Wallace Carden: Yeah.

Interviewer: In this area?

Wallace Carden: They took the others out and left us up there for communications.

Interviewer: You were being surrounded by...

Wallace Carden: Well, they were going down the road beside us. And we were in the pillbox here, we'll say, and the road went down this way, and they were like hundred yards away going down the road, so we didn't know when that they would come over and blow up the pillbox. I mean, that's normally what you do, but they weren't meeting any resistance, so they weren't worried about our pillbox. What they were going to do is go down until they met some resistance and then they would take care of that, but the lieutenant wasn't interested, so we stayed up there until the night of the 17th.

Interviewer: In the pillbox?

Wallace Carden: In the pillbox, yeah, and they were still coming by us.

Interviewer: Had they not seen you?

Wallace Carden: No. We were in the pillbox. And we didn't know when they're going to blow it up or anything like that.

Interviewer: You were surprised by knowing that they hadn't already?

Wallace Carden: Yeah. Anyway, we decided then, my friend and I, well, us three, we decided we have to go somewhere. No matter where it was we'd have to get out of that place.

Interviewer: Right.

Wallace Carden: Because...OK, we started out, and we met a colonel up there, and he said, "Well, I'm the only one here." And we said, "What should we do?" He said, "I'm not in charge. What I say do is every man for himself, take care of yourself." So we went on down, back down, that way toward the town, and when we got down there, we had a jeep, and the guy was going to get something to take somewhere else. Well, when he did, there was three Germans stepped out with guns. They had machine guns and rifles, and they told us, "Halt", that kind of stuff. So we knew we'd already messed up. We got in the wrong place. So they put us in a house and kept us until 9 o'clock that morning, I mean, not morning, night, at night.

Interviewer: And this is in what month? Are we in December?

Wallace Carden: We're December 17 right now.

Interviewer: OK. 1944?

Wallace Carden: 1944. So they said...when we got...we stayed there to about 9 o'clock, and they said that they were supposed to bomb that place at 9 o'clock. Well, they decided they'd move us out, and we moved back over the hills, the same where we came from past the pillbox, all that kind of stuff. And we got down to the next town, I guess, it was. Of course, there were Germans coming over with tanks and everything. They were trying to run over us with the tank and we'd run up in a bank or something like that to get away from them. And so when we got down there...about 2 o'clock in the morning, they found a lime pit where there's lime, and they said, "You guys are going to sleep here." They made us sleep the in lime pit, and we slept about two hours, I guess. And, of course, we had lime all over us.

Interviewer: Lime?

Wallace Carden: Lime, uh-huh.

Interviewer: And you slept in that?

Wallace Carden: Yeah. Well, they made us. And there was no other choice. We had one other choice.

Interviewer: Right.

Wallace Carden: So, anyway, they--

Interviewer: Did you have any idea what was happening at that time? I mean, you were aware you were a POW?

Wallace Carden: Yeah. We knew that we didn't have much chance and that kind of stuff. So we went on down to a railroad station. So to make a long story short, they put us in one of these cattle cars what we called 40 and 8's. There were 40 men or 8 horses, it was what the French called them, and they put us on the train. And then we were on this train several days, but we weren't going anywhere. We were just kind of going a little bit at a time, and the Americans would come over and bomb us or French or something, not French, but British. And they thought that it was legal because it was behind the lines. It is legal behind the lines and all that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: Did you know what was happening right now?

Wallace Carden: We knew what was happening because they bombed the car right up above us, and I think they said later that they killed 8 and wounded 43 in that car. And the German guards out there got mad, and they came down through there and they were shooting their rifles into the cars. They hit one fellow in the neck somewhere here, and he died, he was standing up, and he died about 15 minutes later, I guess.

Interviewer: That was in the car you in?

Wallace Carden: He was in the car I was in. Of course, he stayed in there nearly a week because like I said we got on there about...on the train, about December 18, and we didn't get 35, 45 miles to...on account of bombings and different things like that.

Interviewer: What about food and water?

Wallace Carden: We didn't get any food and water. Some people said they did, but they didn't give any in our car and no bathrooms or anything for that matter. Of course, there's not much left after a few days. So I just--

Interviewer: What was going to your mind now? You're obviously suffering from fatigue, cold...

Wallace Carden: Yeah. Well--

Interviewer: Dehydration--

Wallace Carden: There's not much of a way you can get out of it right now, but you may be able to get out of it later.

Interviewer: Is that...how was your mental state of survival at that time?

Wallace Carden: I've always figured out I was going to survive unless somebody kill me.

Interviewer: So there wasn't a point where you said, "This is it. I'm checking out"?

Wallace Carden: No, uh-uh, no. A lot of people did check out, but not me.

Interviewer: What do you attribute that to though? Seven days without food and water in those conditions, how do you attribute your sense of survival?

Wallace Carden: Well, you figured you'll get to eat sometime if you live long enough. And that...anyway, we're going with the rest of the story and a little bit more. After we got to this certain station, we were sent to Bad Orb, that was a prison camp. We were put in that Bad Orb prison camp and, OK, we were put in a barracks, and we didn't get much to eat there either. I mean, it was...supposedly we got soup in our helmet, because they'd taken everything practically...they take our...they left our helmets, but they took our mess kits.

They took everything that we had so you had to eat out of your helmet. And if you had a little book or something, you might be able to keep it, but they took all the money and all this kind of stuff. Anyway, we stayed there for a while.

Interviewer: You were issued one meal a day?

Wallace Carden: We got...for our so-called breakfast was some stuff they called...it's black coffee but it was ear salts and it was kind of weak, and you got a little bit of that but not much, and that was your breakfast. In your lunch, you normally didn't get anything. And for what they called...we'd called supper or evening meal, we got six men on a loaf of bread, and the bread was about this long, so something like that, about six men. Since our knives had been taken away, I think one or two might have borrowed one from somebody else who wasn't in the same group we were, and they cut the bread, and of course, the one that cut the bread got the nice choice, and that's the way it operated. And we stayed there about several months.

Interviewer: Living on one piece of bread and half a cup of coffee a day.

Wallace Carden: Yeah. And there were some so-called soup that they gave us at lunchtime, but it was a little bit of soup, and it was mostly water and a few cabbage and turnips and stuff like that and that was about all that was in that. And one day...they would send us out sometimes in the snow where it's real cold, to go out in there, had to pick up wood in the forest, and we'd bring it back for them, for the Germans themselves. And we got to have a little fire in a little tiny stove about one hour a day in the afternoon for a month or so and that's about it. The next area after we...before we left, there was three different things happen. One was that you looked outside, and there was about 27 deer...27 deer that we saw, and they were going along, and they were hopping along real fast, and we said that's what freedom is.

Interviewer: Take your time.

Wallace Carden: After that, excuse me, after that, another day, the Germans, on Sunday morning, the kitchen didn't have a fire in it, so they made all of us get out, standing in the snow for something like three hours, and they said that some person who had been working with them who had been on what we called the kitchen police or KP had killed or tried to kill one of them, and he was cut on the arm, and it's supposedly bleeding. So what they would do, they were going to make us pull up our sleeves up to right about here and we stood there while they inspected everybody in the tent which was about two to three hours. And then they went all through all the barracks and they finally located the guy who had the...he had a cut arm. So they took him out. He never did come back. I supposed they took him out and shot him somewhere. He never did come

back, but that was the thing there. So then shortly after that they said that they were going to take a bunch of people and send them to another camp, and this is where we were supposed to go to Berga. We didn't know where it was or anything, and they didn't tell you anything. So what we did, they lined up everybody that they thought...they said that they thought...if they were Jewish, they had told them not to tell them if they were Jewish. The Americans said don't tell them. So, we were standing behind them, and of course, they couldn't. Anyway, they looked at the dog tags and stuff like that. With your dog tags, if you had an H on it, it's Hebrew. If you have a P on it, it's Protestant. Of course, I was a Protestant, so I had a P on mine. But he was sending them this way and this way. And when he got to me, he looked at my dog tags and he saw what it was and he put my name down, and he asked me if I was in the Infantry, and I said, "Yes." And that was all that was said. So he didn't like what I said for some reason or other, so he screwed up my name. I think I showed you my name there and where he screwed it up so I would not be identified. Anyway, his name is Luke Hack, H-A-C-K, and eventually then they set me up to get on the train again. Of course, we were going on another train, then there was a number of 350 - 51 or something like that, it's how many people were in these 40 and 8 cars. We got about 60 in each car, something like five or six cars. And, of course, we were locked in, of course, and we stayed in there another five or six days until we got to the next camp, and that was the Bergen, and Bergen had a camp there where they killed a lot of people, a lot of Jewish people. They were...we would see, when we passed there that some of them were hanging, leave them hanging maybe four or five days. And when we got there, they decided some of us would go to work in the tunnels. There were 17 tunnels they were digging, and these tunnels were supposedly what we have been told would be to put missiles in, that they were going to fire at Belgium, and of course, there were 17 of those tunnels, and my friend and I, he was from Pittsburgh, and we were put in the first tunnel again, and people started working and the guy, he started beating the devil out of everybody, kicking them, just hitting them with shovels and all that kind of stuff. And I told my friend, "We've got to get out of here in some way. We just can't stay here." And he said, "OK." So we go sneak out and we go to number two, and the same thing going on there and in three and four, and we just kept going until we got to the last one which is 17, and we said, "Well, there's nowhere else for us to go. We have to stay here. Whatever happens happens." And he said, "Yeah, that's true." Anyway, these people, they were civilians, and they had been forced to work there, too, and one of them was from Aachen which was in Germany. And they asked me one day, they said, "Have you ever been to Aachen?" And I said, "Sure. I was up there in the battle." He said to the other man, "He's the one blew up your house." And that guy said, "Well, war is war." And he knew somebody blew it up, but he didn't know who blew it up. Anyway, he told me, said, "Now, when this guy with the brown suit comes in here, don't you talk to me. I don't want to know your name; you don't want to know my name because this could be used against us. They could kill us right now with a pistol or whatever he decides to do with these GI, [unintelligible]." So he said, "Just remember, if they come in here or he comes in here, I'll probably kick you or I'll hit with you something or throw a rock at you." But there was three guys working. Anyway, he never had to do that because we didn't tell him our name or he didn't tell--

Interviewer: Now, you're where now?

Wallace Carden: I'm in Berga--

Interviewer: You were in Berga, in the tunnel.

Wallace Carden: Right.

Interviewer: Seventeenth tunnel.

Wallace Carden: Right. And we're digging in the tunnel there for them to put some armament in, and they were like missiles that they were going to fire over Belgium.

Interviewer: And what month are we in?

Wallace Carden: We're in February right now.

Interviewer: So you've been in the camp now for two months, approximately two months?

Wallace Carden: All the camps.

Interviewer: All the camps combined.

Wallace Carden: And the train.

Interviewer: Right.

Wallace Carden: OK.

Interviewer: How's your health at this point?

Wallace Carden: Well, I was getting weak. I was losing weight, that kind of stuff. But we just had to do what we had to do.

Interviewer: This is 1945.

Wallace Carden: Right.

Interviewer: The Third Reich is completely crumbled.

Wallace Carden: Yeah. But that made these people madder.

Interviewer: The one...the experience that the people feel around this time...so the only people that are really hanging on now as far as who...in allegiance to Hitler and into the Third Reich would be the most fanatical and the most crazed Nazis of all.

Wallace Carden: You see...this was run by the Gestapo and the SS, the [Shelby 5 0:39:04], that's what it was.

Interviewer: Say that again?

Wallace Carden: Shelby 5.

Interviewer: Shelby 5?

Wallace Carden: Uh-huh, was in SS control.

Interviewer: Right.

Wallace Carden: And this was the concentration camp that we were in, Berga.

Interviewer: Right.

Wallace Carden: It belonged to that group.

Interviewer: So at this point, you hadn't heard about Americans coming?

Wallace Carden: Well, we knew that Americans were coming because this one man, he listened to his radio at home, and he came and he'd tell us. They're so-and-so and so-and-so. I mean, he was...we weren't supposed to know anything about this because he'd get killed himself if he'd give us any information. He was asking what we had to eat with, and we told him we didn't have anything because they had taken everything away. And he said, "What do you have?" We told him this stuff in the morning, and at lunchtime they sent us to work, and at night we got the sixth of a local bread, and that was it. OK, he said, "Well, do you have any spoons or knife to cut the bread?" And we said, "No, we don't have stuff but somebody else has one, and we borrow it and stuff like that." And he said, "Well, what I'm going to do, tomorrow I'm going to bring a small knife, a very small knife. That's what we're going to do." It's this one here, that one there. And he said, "A spoon, I'll bring a spoon." So he did, and he said, "What I want you to do is go out there and stand in the dark. There's nobody there, and I'll come out, put this in your hand behind, and then you could put it in your pocket."

Interviewer: Why do you suppose he was doing that?

Wallace Carden: Because this guy that was in charge would shot him if he knew he was talking to us or...

Interviewer: No. I mean, why do you suppose he was talking to you? Why do you suppose he was helping?

Wallace Carden: Well, he felt sorry for people. He was in the war, too, and he wasn't being paid much at all either, but he said that he didn't get much to eat himself. He didn't bring us any food or anything, but he said he would bring us a spoon and a knife.

Interviewer: So at this point, how close are you to liberation?

Wallace Carden: OK. That was in February, and we were liberated in April 23rd.

Interviewer: So you were in camp for six months by the time you were liberated?

Wallace Carden: Well, from December until--

Interviewer: April.

Wallace Carden: 127 days.

Interviewer: 127 days.

Wallace Carden: Yeah. That's about three...a little over three months. You see, we were captured in the 17th of December then January, February, March and April, April 23rd. One day, they brought a bunch of people, new people, and--

Interviewer: New people being Americans or...?

Wallace Carden: No, no. These were displaced persons. OK. One of them talked to me when I brought my cart out with these other guys. We brought this cart out and dumped it in the river. That's what you did with your [unintelligible], dumped it in the river. This fellow who was sitting there, he was a displaced person, and he looked real badly. He said to me, I talked to him, and he said, "I can speak seven different languages."

Interviewer: It's OK. You want me to put this on the table for you?

Wallace Carden: No. It's OK. He said, "I came from Warsaw. We walked all the way. So there was 2000 of us, and there's only 200 now. They shot most of them." It's the last time I saw him. The next thing, what some

of us did, if we find a hammer or something like that, we had to cross this part of this river, this bridge, and they dropped tools in there and stuff like that. And I tried to...but that maybe I guess it made it harder on us than it did them probably, that kind of thing. Anyway, we worked in there for...until February something. I've got the [unintelligible 0:44:39] number of what the—here...

Interviewer: OK.

Wallace Carden: Here, right now. I can give him and take a look for them. Anyway, we'll go on a little further. They decided then they were going to close the camp, and they were going to try to kill everybody. Everybody was going to be killed. And the ones that were unable to move or to walk, they were going to kill them, and some of them they get to put on that little old cart, and they dumped 8 or 10 people on top of each other on a cart. Well, they probably killed them, and they put them on top of somebody else and that kind of stuff. Anyway, so we would walk maybe 15 miles a day and did have to stop maybe every few minutes because most of the guards were real old. They were like 70 years old, and they couldn't walk very far either, so they'd stop, and the political prisoners, they were shooting them alongside the road, and I did see a lot of them. As they walked along, they threw off this coat or jacket they had, that they had a musket or something, they'd throw it down, and they'd throw out everything they could to walk a little further, and after we've seen, I'd say at least 500, just a little [unintelligible 0:46:18] where they shot them, kill them, shot them at the back of the head. And they told us they're going to do that to us soon as we fell down. So we said, "We'll see." We would stop in a barn or somewhere like that, didn't let us stay in the barn or the side of the road, and they would maybe give us a little bit of soup or something like that if there was a farmer there. One time near the end, we got to a potato barn, and they told us, "Now, you've got to go out and help them pick these potatoes up but if you eat one we're going to shoot you." Well, and you turn your back, and...you couldn't watch everybody at the same time, so we're picking them up, we ate a few of them. And we went to this town of Greiz, G-R-E-I-Z, it's the first town we went through. And we got there and to the potato field and then we had some potatoes. Of course, when we were in Greiz, G-R-E-I-Z--

Interviewer: Is that G as in goat or T as in Tom?

Wallace Carden: G..

Interviewer: G?

Wallace Carden: As in goat.

Interviewer: OK.

Wallace Carden: R-E-I-S.

Interviewer: OK. And this is a town?

Wallace Carden: Yeah. Anyway, a girl was going to get me a loaf of bread, and she's going to hand it to me, by the time I was got hit in the back with a rifle butt. She ran back in the house crying. He's cursing m, going on. So when we walked a little bit further, there was some older gentlemen and ladies sitting up on the third floor balcony, and they've been watching all this parade for days going down through there and, of course, they were sitting up there crying. OK. And we went on and on until we got to one place. This was going 15 miles a day or something like that. Try to clear my throat up.

Interviewer: It's OK. I can get you a little more water. Sir.

Wallace Carden: OK. After that, we came to another farmer's house, and this farmer said...to the sergeant who was in charge, he said, "I would like for you to take your people and go on. The war is over. I will feed this people. I have enough barns." And he said, "No, I'm going to kill every one of them." So, he wouldn't let us stay there, but the man said he would take care of us, and he was a German. OK. And we went on to the next place and stopped to be...of course, and losing more people all the time.

Interviewer: You know where you headed?

Wallace Carden: Headed east, south...northeast. We were down...Berga was down in the southeastern part, and we were headed like northeast going up.

Interviewer: Were the Nazis telling you anything?

Wallace Carden: No. They didn't know anything.

Interviewer: You were just walking.

Wallace Carden: Yeah. They knew that it was going to be over for them pretty soon. We could hear firing like canons and things and artillery, and we knew it wouldn't be too many days, but--

Interviewer: How many of you left roughly around the same time?

Wallace Carden: How many were left?

Interviewer: How many were you when you first started to walk?

Wallace Carden: Oh, that was the entire camp.

Interviewer: The entire camp, so would you be able to...

Wallace Carden: Oh, we had 350 of Americans and soldiers, but several of them had already died, and they buried them in various places, but we probably had maybe 300 or so left, I guess.

Interviewer: How many...how long had you been walking at this point? How many days would you say?

Wallace Carden: Well, right now, I can say I've got it written down.

Interviewer: OK.

Wallace Carden: But I can tell you later.

Interviewer: Sure.

Wallace Carden: OK, OK. About how many days, but when we always got to where we ended up, we stayed in a barn. OK. We stayed in a barn. This would be their last night. And they...we could hear the firing canon, machine guns, and all these kind of stuff.

Interviewer: What do you think was...what that was?

Wallace Carden: Americans coming. And so we were in this barn, and the German sergeant said he was going to do something to us. He's going to kill us if the Americans came. Anyway, he decided it might be better to save his own skin, so he sneaked out, he and all his buddies, so we woke up in the morning, there was nobody there, no Germans. All of us were Americans, so when I looked out, I saw half-track coming down the road and tanks, so this is a little different than what they showed in that movie supposedly. They say it was a green grassy field and that kind of stuff. But what I went through...I was the first one at the door, and I went down through a ploughed field and I fell down about three times before I even got to half-track, got on the half track, and they took me and gave me something to eat and took me along with them.

Interviewer: These were the American soldiers?

Wallace Carden: Yeah. And I left all the rest of them. I don't know what happened to them. I didn't see them anymore for ages. So they said they'd give me a rifle, said "We're going to let you kill all these Germans now." And I said, "We can't find them, they're gone." They said, "Oh, we'll find them." And they took me on mostly to Czechoslovakia. It was about probably 30 miles or something like that. And after a while, a lieutenant called with them, "Look, man, what in the hell is that?" They said, "Oh, he's a GI." He said, "He doesn't look like a GI." And they said, "Well, he is. He just got out of that camp." He said, "What are you going to do with him." And he said, "Well, we're going to take him out and let him shoot these Germans." And he said, "No, you're not. He's got to go back to the hospitals." He said, "I'm taking you to the hospital." So he did. He took me back to First Aid station, and the girl there, they came in, and she said, "I got to take some blood," and doing this and she poked around, "Well, if I've got it in." She poked around twice, she ran out crying, says, "I can't get any blood." So they sent another man in there, and he was...he did OK. He didn't get too scared. And I probably weighed...they said I weighed less than 80 pounds. That's what they said there, and I weighed less than 80, and I did weigh 195 when I got in the combat. And so after that, while I was in there in this little thing, First Aid station, there was one sergeant over there in his bed, in his bunk, and he'd been given some poison whiskey by a German woman, and he was up on all fours hopping around in his bed. He'd hop this in and hop down, turn and come back. He's in real much pain. And he finally died, of course. I asked them, "What happened to this fellow?" And they said, "Well, he drank the wrong whiskey, so it killed him."

Interviewer: What's going through your head now?

Wallace Carden: Well, I was just--

Interviewer: You've been rescued.

Wallace Carden: I'm just glad to be there and want to know what the next step was, so the next time they're to, they put me on a plane, and...

Interviewer: Let me interrupt you briefly, were you married at this time?

Wallace Carden: Oh, no.

Interviewer: No, OK. So you weren't married. You had your parents.

Wallace Carden: Right.

Interviewer: You were concerned about, letting them you were OK. I'm sure.

Wallace Carden: Right.

Interviewer: Did they let you contact them from there?

Wallace Carden: No.

Interviewer: No.

Wallace Carden: No. Not there. It's not like today, you know, when they say--

Interviewer: Sure.

Wallace Carden: --somebody calls home and all this stuff--

Interviewer: It's on the news. Yeah.

Wallace Carden: Here I am.

Interviewer: Right.

Wallace Carden: Anyway...

Interviewer: How were the American soldiers treating you?

Wallace Carden: American soldiers, well, they were treating me fine. I mean, they just more or less...not much they could do.

Interviewer: Did you feel taken care of and supported or...?

Wallace Carden: Oh, yeah. I probably looked like John Walker, Sr.

Interviewer: Sure.

Wallace Carden: --whenever they...that's why the lieutenant wondered who the heck I was.

Interviewer: What that was, right. So they sent you back to America, to the States?

Wallace Carden: No. They put me on the plane, and they sent me to a hospital, and they said...

Interviewer: You know what hospital? What were you in?

Wallace Carden: This one was like a First Aid station.

Interviewer: Like a MASH unit?

Wallace Carden: Like a MASH unit.

Interviewer: Right.

Wallace Carden: OK. And they kept me there a few days, and then they said, "OK. We're going to send you to Reims, France, to a hospital there." I was the only one left. I mean, I didn't know where everybody else was, but I thought I was doing OK. Anyway, they sent me to this hospital in Reims, France, and there was a nice hospital. And there was a nurse in there from Memphis, Tennessee, and I was the only POW that was there, so she told me, said, "Now, what I want you to do is eat food and that eat as much as you want, and you go down there six times a day in the mess hall and get you something to eat." So I'd go down there, and they got tired of it down there actually, said, "Now, we're not going to give him any more food. He doesn't need it." And she said, "Yes, he does, and he's going to get it." And so she said, "You go on down there and get your food." Anyway, they weighed me. I've weighed...I mean, first week I gained 13 pounds, second week 12 pounds, third week 11 pounds, and I think I've weighed, after several weeks, I've weighed like 154, and the doctors said, "I'm ready to send you home now, Bud." And I said, "What do you mean send me home. I didn't look like this when I left home."

Interviewer: I got 40 more pounds to go.

Wallace Carden: Yeah. He said, "OK. I'll let you stay a little longer. I'll let you stay two more weeks, and then you go on to Paris." That's the only way home. You get off in Paris, and then you go on back home. So I was happy be--

Interviewer: How long was your recovery time?

Wallace Carden: They kept me in there six weeks.

Interviewer: So tell me you're from Bryson.

Wallace Carden: Briceville.

Interviewer: Briceville. OK. And you came back to Tennessee?

Wallace Carden: Yes.

Interviewer: From France?

Wallace Carden: From France, yeah, came back home.

Interviewer: And you were here, and you met Mrs. Carden when?

Wallace Carden: Oh, we've been known each other since the seventh grade.

Interviewer: Oh, you'd already know each other. You just weren't married yet.

Mrs. Carden: He didn't even think of it.

Interviewer: So you were married. How soon after you came home?

Wallace Carden: 1947.

Interviewer: Right after you came home almost.

Wallace Carden: I got two years after...I came home in September '45. We were married in March of 1947. Then we had two children. Karen was first, and she was born in 1952. And Fred was second, he was born in 1954.

Interviewer: Tell me something. The experience that you've gone through, I know you could speak about hate and racism. It's not necessarily your experience being non-Jewish. Tell me what do you pull from there? What do you come from that entire experience? What do you leave with that?

Wallace Carden: They can do any group that way, not just the Jewish group.

Interviewer: OK.

Wallace Carden: I myself...I like Jew itself. I've been with them. I know what they are. I'm not anti-Jewish at all. But the Germans were. It's just kind of the same difference over there in Iraq now. One faction is after another faction. And Iran is the same way and most of those places over there. I don't believe they're like anybody, do you?

Interviewer: What do you leave with the experience? You came to Tennessee. How did the Tennesseans treat you when you came back?

Wallace Carden: Well, I lived there.

Interviewer: Sure.

Wallace Carden: But they didn't believe me. They asked me where I had been. I told them. "Ah, you just made that up." One woman said, "You probably haven't even been overseas."

Interviewer: How does that feel?

Wallace Carden: "Thank you. That's all I want to tell you." Anyway, and then another guy, he said practically the same thing. He said, "I don't believe any of that stuff, what you said. 'I just told you. I was there in the war.'" He didn't believe it. I said, "OK. That's about all you're going to hear from me anyway." Then you go out to get a job at Oakridge, right close to Oakridge. I go to Oakridge and I had to go about three or four times. They were hiring most everybody then, 1945; they just made the atomic bomb and dropped it. And Oakridge was a big producer of uranium and stuff like that. So they said they were hiring, so I went over there. And they said, "Well, come back in another week or so" and so and so. After about three or four weeks, they said, "Well, we'll put you on down here." There was a law back then that if you hired a GI or ex-GI, you had to let him work a year before you could terminate him unless it was for something, for cause. Well, I worked in about six months, and they told me I was going to work on a track where we put liquid nitrogen in it and all these kind of stuff, and they called me and said, "Come up to personnel." So they sent me to personnel where they want me to appear for. So the man said, "We want to know if you want to be in the guard force." I said, "No. I've had all the guard force I need up in Europe." And that he said, "Well, you refused to go to the guard force." And I said, "I don't refuse. I just said I have a job down in...that I'm working on now." And he said, "Hope you're not either or you're fired." I said, "I'll go talk to your supervisor." And I went in and said, "Mr. White, I wish you'd straighten this guy out out here. Said he thinks he's going to terminate me. There's a law that says you can't terminate anybody unless it's for a just cause." And he said, "He didn't know what he's doing. You go back down and go to work." And so I went back down and went to work. Didn't hear anything for a year then they terminated me. "He's out of here." I went over to AEC, that's Atomic Energy Commission, and at that time, they were taking all the property and all that, and surplus property and writing it up, and [unintelligible 1:05:48] property and supply clerk, and they were hiring them by the dozen. So I went in and talk to the man, and he said he wasn't hiring. I go out and sit in the office and three other guys come in, and they come back out, and I said, "What they tell you in there?" They said, "We got a job." And I said, "What would you do?" And they said, "Property and supply clerk." I told the man, I said, "I'll be back tomorrow." And he said, "OK." And I went back, and he said, "I'm not hiring anybody." And the same thing happened, he hired these others. I said to him, "Just what is your problem anyway?" "Oh, I don't have a problem." "Just because ex-GI is what your problem, isn't it?" He said, "No, I don't have any problem." "What I'm going to do," you had to get a pass to get in there. He said, "I'm going to keep you from getting a pass." I said, "Fine. I'm just going to go ahead and talk to your supervisor right now, and I'll see who goes where." He brought this old man out. I was going to and he said, "OK. I'll just put you to work. That's what I'll do." I said, "That's what I came here over for, wasn't it" So he put me to work.

Interviewer: So let me ask you something, and then I promise to let you go.

Wallace Carden: Oh, that's OK. I know I'm boring you.

Interviewer: If you were speaking...no, no, you've been wonderful. If you were speaking to older children, young adults...

Wallace Carden: Like 13, 14 years old?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Wallace Carden: I've done that.

Interviewer: What would you tell them?

Wallace Carden: Tell them what I told you.

Interviewer: What would you tell them about your experience if you had to sum it up, rather than the technical aspects of it? What would tell them about the state of humanity then and when you came home?

Wallace Carden: The state of humanity is about the same, I think, ever since Adam and Eve, really. I think it's getting worse because everybody wants to be a terrorist now, it seems like, don't they. And harm someone else, don't matter who it is, they want to harm someone else, don't care who it is.

Interviewer: How do you feel about your freedom?

Wallace Carden: Well, I think it's great.

Interviewer: Do you feel differently about it than say I would or someone has been taken away from them for six months?

Wallace Carden: Well, I wouldn't want to volunteer to go back again, but if I young, I might need to.

Interviewer: How do you deal with the memories?

Wallace Carden: Well, I deal with them real well like everybody else that has a problem. People don't want to hear about it. They say it's all a bunch of lies.

Interviewer: They still say that to you?

Wallace Carden: Yeah. And I shouldn't say this but one close member of the family won't even watch the Berga.

Interviewer: I'm sorry.

Wallace Carden: I won't identify.

Mrs. Carden: I was going to say, "Who is it?"

Interviewer: You have a wonderful supportive family, it looks so far. I mean, it was wonderful. You have been such a pleasure, Mr. Carden. It's been a wonderful experience talking to you.

Wallace Carden: Well, I'm sorry that I broke down there a few times.

Interviewer: Don't be sorry.

Wallace Carden: It's the first time I've done that.

Interviewer: It's all right. Don't be sorry. You were wonderful. You were really wonderful.