

Ray Lemons: My ex-brother-in-law was in the Navy and he couldn't swim. I thought they made them all learn to swim.

Jim Baynham: You'd think, wouldn't you.

Ray Lemons: Yeah, you'd think.

Jim Baynham: That's a fancy lookin' machine you've got there.

Ray Lemons: I've never seen one like that.

Aaron Elson: It's new. I hope it works. I've only used it once before. I interviewed, with my old tape recorder, which I left in the car, I was going to use for a backup, but I interviewed one of the fighter pilots, Bill Beyer, who shot down five planes that day...

Ray Lemons: Wow.

Aaron Elson: And I hit the play button instead of the record button.

Jim Baynham: Oh my.

Aaron Elson: So all I have is what I can remember.

Ray Lemons: Gosh, that's too bad.

Jim Baynham: Well, it probably doesn't work with this Texas accent.

Aaron Elson: I brought you ... this is a set of the interviews that I've done with Kassel people. They're all on CD, no video.

Jim Baynham: Thank you very much ... wow ... that's wonderful.

Aaron Elson: If you have a CD player ...

Jim Baynham: I do.

Aaron Elson: George Collar and Bill Dewey.

Jim Baynham: That's a lot of time on there, isn't it?

Aaron Elson: Each is about ten hours long.

Jim Baynham: Goodness gracious.

Aaron Elson: Each of the interviews runs, sometimes an hour, two hours.

Ray Lemons: That's the edited version, you're talking about.

Aaron Elson: These are edited, yeah. Sometimes, I've done with some of the tankers from my father's tank battalion, I'm editing one now that we filled up six 90-minute cassettes. He was in World War II and Korea.

Jim Baynham: And what will you bring it down to when you edit it?

Aaron Elson: I don't know. Whatever it comes to. I once transcribed -- I used to, when I started doing this, I took typing in junior high school, in seventh grade ...

Ray Lemons: I remember that.

Aaron Elson: And when I started interviewing veterans, I would transcribe them. I used to work for a newspaper, and one of my first jobs was as a clerk. The sportswriters would phone their stories in, I'd put them on a reel to reel tape recorder and type them up. Twenty stories a night sometimes. From eight to five in the morning. So anyhow, I'd type up the transcripts of the interviews. I don't have time to do it now, but, I once said, well, this one interview I did, was 101 pages of single space, with this fellow here (Dale Albee), he was a lieutenant in the tank battalion. But he went back, he was a sergeant in the horse cavalry before the war, 11 months on the front lines. I thought I would whittle it down some, so I took a highlighter, and I thought I'll only highlight the important paragraphs. Every page two or three paragraphs were highlighted.

The stories, like with that fellow, it's like with you, growing up in the Great Depression, what they would do for entertainment, you know, tipping over outhouses, so one day the farmer decided he'd get some revenge and he moved the outhouse, and so they went to tip it over ... things like that. If I just said to him, "What happened in the Battle of the Bulge?" it wouldn't, I mean it would take up a lot less tape, but the tape costs, you know, at the time a tape cost like a dollar for a 90-minute cassette or \$1.50. It's not like video, I don't have to edit it for television. These are a good, the CD is a good medium, and a lot of people listen while they drive.

Jim Baynham: It's easier to do that in a car. It doesn't seem like you've got distractions. It's probably dangerous.

Ray Lemons: Well not as dangerous as talking on the cell phone.

Jim Baynham: No, that's really bad. Texting.

Ray Lemons: That's a no-no to me.

Aaron Elson: And then some people, I sell these at like plastic modeling conventions, where they show dioramas and things, and people buy them and listen while they paint their models, do things like that. It sort of fits into the audiobook ... except they're not audiobooks in the traditional sense, there's no 1-2-3-4, you could shuffle them and listen in any order, pretty much. But we didn't come here to talk about me! Once I start yakking ... I wanted to, you know, get your story. First of all, we should introduce ourselves. Jim Baynham?

Jim Baynham: Right.

Aaron Elson: B-A-Y-N-H-A-M?

Jim Baynham: Yes.

Ray Lemons: And I'm Ray Lemons. R-A-Y L-E-M-O-N-S.

Aaron Elson: Did you both grow up in Dallas?

Jim Baynham: No, Ray did I guess, but I grew up in Texarkana.

Aaron Elson: Oh, Ray said your father was a newspaper publisher?

Jim Baynham: No ... well, yeah, he was a publisher for a while. He was an advertising manager over in, a guy by the name of C.E. Palmer had a bunch of papers around Arkansas and Texas, and he was our advertising manager in Texarkana, the Texarkana Gazette, and they had an afternoon paper there. Yeah, and he published one, I think I was in the service, Hearst started a little tabloid paper in town and Pop was the publisher. It lasted a year or two and folded, I think.

Aaron Elson: So he worked actually for Hearst?

Jim Baynham: Yes.

Aaron Elson: Did he ever meet ...

Jim Baynham: I doubt it. It was too small of an operation to warrant much attention, I think.

Aaron Elson: Now does your family go way back in Texarkana? Where are your roots from?

Jim Baynham: I was born in Little Rock, but I didn't live there for a few weeks before they moved. And I grew up in Texarkana. It was during the Depression, at that time Pop had an insurance agency and it went broke. Early Thirties. And we moved to a little town near Hope, Arkansas, where my grandparents had a place, and we stayed there two years during the Depression, till Pop got another job, and we moved back to Texarkana.

Aaron Elson: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Jim Baynham: I have one brother who died about ten years ago, and a sister still alive, yeah.

Aaron Elson: I drove past Hope coming down.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, you come through there on the freeway.

Aaron Elson: Is that where Clinton is from?

Jim Baynham: That's right. And I lived about 15 miles from there. In fact, Pop started a newspaper there called the Hempstead County News. And I remember I delivered it in Blevins, Blevins is where we lived, it's probably a thousand people lived there.

Aaron Elson: Did you deliver it on a bicycle?

Jim Baynham: No, I didn't have a bike. We didn't have much of anything. In Blevins, you probably didn't need a bike, there wasn't anything paved.

Aaron Elson: How were newspapers printed back then?

Jim Baynham: I have no idea. I remember, when I was 16, I worked at a Safeway on Saturdays in Texarkana, and Pop got me a job as an apprentice in the stereotyping room in the pressroom of the Texarkana Gazette. I got to pour lead on the things, but mostly I just took a rag and walked all the way around the press and got the grease oozing out. One day I just got sick of it and I went up to the foreman and told him I was through. And he said, "You're through?" (laughter). Because you never got through, there was grease always. Sure enough I was through, he fired me that night (laughter). But I was really glad.

Aaron Elson: Now, how about your education?

Jim Baynham: I had a year of college. I was 17 when I graduated from high school, when the war broke out. So I, six months, I was six months 17 (17 and a half), and then, so, I'm trying to figure a timeline. It was '41, I was 17 in '41, so, six months later, when I was 18, I came over to Dallas and took the test for the aviation cadets in the Army Air Corps.

Ray Lemons: The 64 exam.

Jim Baynham: Was it? I can't remember. And I passed it, and signed up, and went home and quit my Safeway job because I was going off to war, and I got a letter that said it's going to be six months before I was called up so I had to go back and beg the manager back for my job. (laughter). So I went in in June of '42.

Aaron Elson: Do you remember what you were doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Jim Baynham: Yeah, I was in my bedroom. I don't know what I was doing but I remember, I had, one of my aunts had given me a little bitty radio and I was listening to it, and it came over. I remember very well being in that room at that time, hearing that broadcast.

Aaron Elson: So did you hear the actual, the first "Day of Infamy" ...

Jim Baynham: I must have. And you know, everybody wanted to join up.

Aaron Elson: Did you know where Pearl Harbor was at the time?

Jim Baynham: Uh-huh. We took geography back in those days. I don't think they do anymore.

Ray Lemons: World history. We took World History too, back in those days.

Aaron Elson: I've interviewed some veterans who had no idea where Pearl Harbor was. That's why I ask.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, I liked geography.

Ray Lemons: I did too. I liked world history too.

Jim Baynham: They always drew maps and it just kind of put in your head where things were when you did that.

Aaron Elson: Why the aviation cadets?

Jim Baynham: To stay out of the army (laughter). And tanks.

Ray Lemons: You weren't in the ROTC?

Jim Baynham: No. Never went into ROTC.

Ray Lemons: I was.

Jim Baynham: In high school?

Ray Lemons: Yeah, I was a captain and had a company command.

Jim Baynham: I was a captain in the Texarkana, Texas, high school band. (laughter). We marched.

Ray Lemons: I marched every Friday morning with that big saber and that brown belt, all that stuff.

Jim Baynham: No, it just sounded like a better place to be.

Ray Lemons: You're right. Up there, they didn't have no foxholes or digging those trenches every night.

Jim Baynham: Right.

Ray Lemons: That's what I always said too.

Jim Baynham: Exactly.

Aaron Elson: Had you heard stories about air ...

Jim Baynham: You know, I hadn't. I built model airplanes when I was a kid, out of balsa and tissue paper, but I don't remember having any drive to be a, learning how to fly. The first time I went up I was probably 15 or 16 in one of those old Ford tri-motors that came to town and gave rides for 50 cents, and we flew around Texarkana, and that's the first and only time I had gone up before I went in the service.

Aaron Elson: Was that exciting?

Jim Baynham: Yeah, it was, you know, what I remember most about it is how little everything looked on the ground. That was really striking. The memory of that is pretty strong, but that's about all I remember.

Aaron Elson: Now, tell me about training. How did that progress?

Jim Baynham: Well, we went in, we went to San Antonio, what they call, Lackland was the place, preflight was ... we didn't there at first, we went in, I guess it was sort of a basic training, sort of, before you went to one side of the base. I'm not sure how long we were there, maybe eight weeks or so, before we went to preflight across the road, a different location. And we were there, and it was ground school, and PE, and hazing for nine weeks, and then, so after we got through that we went to primary flight training out in west Texas. Each stage was different, we went to Coleman, Texas, was where we had single engine, open cockpit plane primary training for nine weeks, and about half the guys got washed out during that time.

Aaron Elson: Let me back up a little bit. What was the hazing like?

Jim Baynham: It was scary for a kid from the country, little town, but it wasn't physically frightening, it was just emotionally disturbing (laughs) I guess.

Aaron Elson: Would they like tip over your food tray or things like that?

Jim Baynham: Oh, no, no no. They'd just get in your face and holler at you a lot, make you do stupid things.

Ray Lemons: Toothbrush the lobby?

Jim Baynham: Yeah, almost anything that was dumb.

Ray Lemons: They did it to us in Miami Beach.

Aaron Elson: Toothbrush the lobby?

Ray Lemons: That's right. One KP duty I got was taking a toothbrush and cleaning the tile in the whole lobby of the hotel that I was living in. And I can say the other part of it was, drop a quarter on the bed and if that sucker didn't bounce high enough you've got to do that bed over, it's not tight enough.

Jim Baynham: I still use military corners when I make a bed. (laughter)

Ray Lemons: I learned that too.

Jim Baynham: But it shaped us up, and got us where we moved fast enough to make all our appointments. And I guess that's what it was intended to do.

Ray Lemons: I never called it hazing, but I guess that's what it was.

Jim Baynham: Yeah. Well, what happened in preflight, we had, I think we were there nine weeks, and the first half of it we were underclassmen and were hazed, and the last nine weeks we were the upperclassmen, and it was interesting to see the guys who really loved to do the hazing, as they got there. They relished picking on underclassmen. And others of us would rather just be left alone and do our job, and let somebody else take care of that crap. But it was okay, it was a growing up experience, which all of that was, the whole five years, I guess. Six years. If you lived through it, you grew up some.

Ray Lemons: You were at Coleman, that was your first...

Jim Baynham: Yes. PT-19s, blue and yellow, low wing. And I had an instructor that was really a bastard. He was tough, but he never lost a student, in all that washout. He had been there five or six classes, and every one of his students had graduated, and the one that I was in. We always thought we were going to be washed out every day, because he was fierce. But he was good I guess.

Aaron Elson: Did you have any near-washouts?

Jim Baynham: I didn't there. I had an elimination ride in basic training in Waco, and I got through primary without anything like that. But you came close to it. Almost all the instructors were civilians in primary, but there were a few young lieutenants who did the washout exams who rode with you in primary, but in basic all the instructors were military, and the instructor I had, I just wasn't doing well, and so he cleared me in with a washout ride, with a guy, and he got me up and he said, you know, we had to do spins and things like that, and finally he said, "You're just too gentle with that stick. Start being aggressive. Every time you move it, move it hard." And you know, that one little sentence got me past, and got me back in training and went ahead. Because I was, I just wasn't aggressive enough when I'd pull out of a spin or whatever, I wouldn't move it fast enough so it was sloppy. But he cured me, and after that we went on to advanced, on the other side of Waco, to twin engine. It was interesting, all the guys, when we graduated from twin engine training, all the guys who really wanted to be fighter pilots put down their, we got to put down on our, what we would prefer when we graduated, all the guys who put down single engine training after graduation went to be co-pilots, and all of us who put down twin engine got to go to, most of us got to go to four engine transition school. I went to Fort Worth for B-24s, and learned how to fly them and then after nine weeks of that, went out where we met Ray and all the guys out in Salt Lake City.

Aaron Elson: Who was your crew? What were they like?

Jim Baynham: They were all a good bunch of guys. They were, I don't think anybody on there was a problem except for Fields when he'd go off hunting girls (laughs).

Ray Lemons: Shack-ups. (laughs)

Jim Baynham: Yeah. And we all kind of admired him (laughs). In awe of him, you know.

Ray Lemons: Well, I think he drank a little more than ...

Jim Baynham: Yeah, well I know one time he did and got sick on the flight line.

Ray Lemons: We barely got him on the plane.

Jim Baynham ... and sick, you know, and he didn't do a thing that whole training session and we got called into the director of training's office, he and I did, because he hadn't fulfilled whatever his duties were. And he made up some reason and I backed him up whatever it was, something blew up in the radio, he got past it.

Aaron Elson: Was he the radio operator?

Jim Baynham: Yes. But they were a good bunch of guys.

Aaron Elson: Who were the other members of the crew?

Jim Baynham: Ray, and Howard Boldt who just died this last year, and, by the way, I finally had coffee with him.

Ray Lemons: Oh you did?

Jim Baynham: He kept blanking out. And we finally got together one morning. He's got a young, he's got a distant cousin I think, who never knew him, but who's seriously interested in history, and he's trying to get everything he can about Howard, he's joined the Kassel Mission thing. He'd like to go to Germany and he may, but he's got a trip to the Orient, he's got a son and daughter-in-law in China teaching English I think, that he's going to see in August, so I doubt he'll be on the ... but Howard and Charlie Bosquet, he was Rhode Island Canadian-French and they spoke French in his home so he could speak French, and when he felt French, he called himself Bos-kay (laughter). And got rather haughty (more laughter).

Aaron Elson: He was the co-pilot?

Jim Baynham: Yeah. And he was a frustrated fighter pilot. He was really mad that he wound up being a co-pilot on that boxcar (laughter).

Ray Lemons: I can believe that.

Jim Baynham: I don't know if I ever told you or not, I think I may have, when we were in Colorado Springs, we were flying a cross-country type mission and we landed at Sweetwater, Texas, and there were P-51s landing at the same time we were, taxiing beside us, and Charlie was going on, he said, "Now there's a plane. It takes a man to fly one of those." (laughter). And when we parked, this plane pulled up beside us, and this woman ferry pilot got out of it (laughter).

Ray Lemons: No, I hadn't heard that story.

Jim Baynham: But he never got over being mad at being a co-pilot. And Johnny Koval, he was from Kentucky, a single mother raised him, he was the navigator, and he was one of them that was killed when we hit the ground ... uh ... murdered.

Aaron Elson: Yes?

Jim Baynham: Three of them were. And Scala, from New Jersey, Elizabeth, was the bombardier, he was killed, shot. Bird was from Texas, Olen was from Sunset, Texas, and he was so quiet you never knew about him, he was really introverted.

Ray Lemons: He was a great guy, but he was just ...

Jim Baynham: All within himself. I was looking at a picture the other day of the crew that was in Colorado Springs, there was four of you, I think, you and Knox and Howard and Bird, and all of you were laughing at something except Bird, he was just as solemn as ...

Aaron Elson: Was Bird killed on the mission?

Jim Baynham: Yeah. He was killed. I don't know how. He motioned for Ray to jump, and whether he jumped and got killed or went down with the plane we don't know.

Ray Lemons: We've never known the answer to that.

Jim Baynham: But he's buried, they found his body and buried him ...

Ray Lemons: Over in Germany ...

Jim Baynham: I got a thing from the Kassel Mission today that, this Kevin Boldt had written and asked them if they knew where the guys who died were buried, and they sent him a roster, they sent me one of all the burial sites of everybody in the group.

Ray Lemons: The only one I ever heard was Bird, and the reason I knew that was because Helbig, the guy that was with me in the interview, he finally found the church and the record of Bird, and then later on they transferred his body back to the States is what I ...

Jim Baynham: He's buried in Belgium it says on the ...

Ray Lemons: Okay, I thought he was back in the States.

Jim Baynham: What's the guy in Minnesota's name, the Kassel Mission guy, Duane ...

Aaron Elson: Geisler.

Jim Baynham: He sent me that. He's been working on it about a year and a half, and he's (Bird) buried in a military cemetery in Belgium. And he doesn't have a burial place for Scala, the bombardier. Koval and Fields are buried in France, I believe it is.

Ray Lemons: I've often wondered if the families ever really knew any of the details.

Jim Baynham: I don't know.

Aaron Elson: Probably not. These things didn't come out for decades.

Jim Baynham: Unless they had somebody in their family researching hard.

Ray Lemons: But they don't tell you anything, it's hard to get.

Jim Baynham: And then we got, the one more was Johnny Knox, who was the tail gunner. And he spent his time in the hospital.

Ray Lemons: He and Boldt were both in the same hospital in Obermasfeld, and both of them were even in the same room and for a while side by side and the tail gunner didn't know he was with the other one. Yet they're both in body casts. Both had body casts. And Knox the tail gunner...

Jim Baynham: He had some emotional problems.

Ray Lemons: He finally got straightened out, but even after he got home ...

Jim Baynham: His wife wrote me, I was still in the service but they were trying to dig to the bottom of his problem and so she asked me to write a ... I did, two or three pages of just handwritten. And she said it helped the doctors, because it gave them some road map, they eventually brought him out of it but it was a hard battle.

Aaron Elson: Now, this is the crew, you were together from formation, which mission was Kassel?

Jim Baynham: Eleventh for me, and tenth for you.

Ray Lemons: Eighth for me.

Jim Baynham: Eighth?

Ray Lemons: Eighth.

Jim Baynham: Oh, because you all were rotating in and out.

Ray Lemons: Yeah, I told him about that being rotated, we rotated.

Jim Baynham: One of those, he sent me a list of all the crews and there too, also of the whole group, one of those groups had a ball turret gunner listed, why would that be? Because they took our ball turrets out.

Ray Lemons: They were gone in June of '44. I didn't know that.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, and Lord of course wasn't flying that day. He was the one that rotated out. He was from Baltimore I think.

Ray Lemons: Baltimore, Maryland.

Aaron Elson: Lord was his name?

Jim Baynham: Lord.

Ray Lemons: He's the one I told you married a British girl, after he finished all his missions over there, in March of 45.

Jim Baynham: Did he stay over for a while?

Ray Lemons: He stayed, well, he married the gal and brought her back to the States, and we finally found him after, all the digging I had to do then.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, I remember, you were telling me about it. He didn't want to be found.

Ray Lemons: He didn't want to be found, but he was in Tampa, Florida, and we happened to be going to Florida and I made an effort to call the police department to get the phone number of his house, and they won't do that, you know. I gave them a big story and I finally was able to get his phone number, and so I then found out what the street was, where it was, and I told Jean when we got off the plane in Tampa I said, "We're going straight to his house. I'm gonna knock on the door, I'm not going to tell him a word, and I hope he's there." And sure enough he was.

Aaron Elson: Did he feel guilty for missing the mission?

Ray Lemons: Oh, no no no. He just thought, "How could I be here and you guys had all that problem and I wasn't there." I think I told you he wasn't on the Dessau mission also.

Jim Baynham: He was just living right (laughter).

Ray Lemons: He wasn't on the first mission, when I flew as bombardier, remember that?

Jim Baynham: No, I didn't remember that. Were we already out of ball turrets then?

Ray Lemons: Yeah, we were out of ball turrets. I flew as Scala my first mission. You said, "You're the bombardier."

I said, "The bombardier? What do you mean I'm the bombardier?"

"Well, you toggle here."

I said, "Yeah, I know how to punch the button. (laughter). Just watch the lead plane." That's when I got hit, don't you remember? They couldn't get me out of the turret.

Jim Baynham: Yeah.

Aaron Elson: What happened?

Ray Lemons: We got hit, a direct hit of flak on the (unintelligible) that stuff and it just went to pieces, it blew that turret just like this, the doors came open and I was hanging out.

Aaron Elson: At twenty thousand feet?

Ray Lemons: Yeah, it was on the bomb run.

Jim Baynham: I always figured that that chaff got wet somehow and froze at that high altitude and didn't disperse when they dumped it, and it was just a frozen ball, it had to be.

Ray Lemons: It must have hit pretty good.

Aaron Elson: So you were hanging out of the plane?

Ray Lemons: Well, I was standing in the turret, but the turret was, you know, I was like this, and the doors were flapping back here, and I couldn't get the, I couldn't manually, nothing was working, so, Koval was the only one, the navigator got me back in the plane somehow, manually.

Jim Baynham: If he hadn't been down there you'd be in big trouble.

Ray Lemons: He's the only guy up there.

Jim Baynham: Oh my.

Ray Lemons: Crazy days.

Jim Baynham: I'll tell you what, all military and war is nothing but just one mistake after the other. Whoever happens to make the fewest wins.

Ray Lemons: Kind of like what I told one of my friends, we were watching the game, the Super Bowl, and we had a funeral that same day, and we came back from the funeral and were watching that, and I told one of the cousins, I said, "The one that makes the mistake today, you mark my words, the one that makes the first big mistake, they will win lose the game." I said, "I have no idea who that may be, but it'd either be, Brees is gonna throw a pass for an interception or Peyton will throw a pass and interception and that's going to wind up ..." and so he called me and he said, "You're right."

Jim Baynham: That was a good game.

Ray Lemons: It was. I didn't mean to deviate.

Aaron Elson: Oh no, that's okay. Now, tell me about the Dessau mission.

Jim Baynham: It wasn't anything eventful until this plane up above us got hit by a direct hit of flak and dove into the one in front of us, and when it did, well we went right into the fireball. We had damage, serious damage, to that plane. The left wing had a big hole in it. The canopy over our heads and the flight deck was crushed in, and the fuselage on the right side was crushed. The bomb bay door was messed up.

Ray Lemons: Yeah, it wouldn't close.

Jim Baynham: We had bombs. We still had our bombs.

Ray Lemons: We still had the bombs.

Jim Baynham: And they broke loose, some of them did. It damaged the hydraulic lines and all kinds of stuff. So it was a pretty fierce day. And then, all the guys, Ray said in the back that they thought we were going down so they grabbed their escape shoes ...

Ray Lemons: Wired around the neck ...

Jim Baynham: And headed for the hatch but the centrifugal force coming out of it, then they couldn't move (laughs).

Aaron Elson: That's something I never heard before, escape shoes?

Jim Baynham: Well, your old GI shoes. All we had was those felt things to try and keep our feet warm, so we carried regular shoes with us so if we hid we'd have a chance to do some walking.

Ray Lemons: The ones we actually got were black high-top, British made, you were supposed to wire them to your harness so that if something happened you got your shoes, because like you said you had those little booties on and the insert, and I never did wire mine on.

Jim Baynham: I don't even remember having mine. I'm sure I did.

Ray Lemons: I never even put my harness right. I had a brand new harness on the Dessau mission, and the leg straps were so loose they were just like chchch... and when that chute would have opened I know what it would have done...

Jim Baynham: It would cut you right in two. You'd be cut to pieces.

Aaron Elson: Really?

Ray Lemons: Oh yeah. You had that harness just perfectly fit, but if you didn't you just ...

Jim Baynham: You hit it like that ... Because when that chute opens it's a tremendous jolt. It certainly is a shocker.

Ray Lemons: The only thing that I could add to what he just said was that there were supposedly three planes that went down, which there were three planes that went down, that was noticeable to the rest of the formation. In fact Dewey was on that mission, and I think he wrote up a story about that later on, but we were the third plane, which, I think, what did you say we pulled out at, what did you say?

Jim Baynham: Ten or twelve thousand.

Ray Lemons: I said ten thousand feet.

Jim Baynham: It kind of, when it happened, of course we started trying to turn and it blew us on over, so we went straight down, and it took a long time just trying to pull back out. But we finally did, and went home by ourselves and nobody got us, we were, it's amazing somebody didn't knock us off.

Ray Lemons: That's right. And beside, like I think I mentioned to you, that Lord, the one he just mentioned earlier, was waiting, and we weren't there. And they already said there's three planes went down, so he was sure it was us.

Jim Baynham: He went through two crashes (laughter). No wonder he drank.

Aaron Elson: Did a third plane go down on that mission, or just the two?

Jim Baynham: The two went down, and they reported us as down. We never caught the formation. We went home alone.

Aaron Elson: That must have been pretty harrowing.

Ray Lemons: It was a long ways in.

Jim Baynham: It was dangerous.

Ray Lemons: Yes it was.

Jim Baynham: Because we were ...

Ray Lemons: Three and a half hours away, wasn't it?

Jim Baynham: Just a sitting duck if a fighter ...

Ray Lemons: Fighter caught us ...

Jim Baynham: Had seen us, they'd have come after us, because that's what they did is pick off the easy ones because they didn't have all the gas they needed. But we got back, and I don't think that ship ever flew again, it was like warped 20 degrees out of, the fuselage was.

Ray Lemons: I imagine it was junked, I never did know for sure.

Jim Baynham: But it got us home, that's the main thing.

Aaron Elson: Your original plane, did it have a name?

Jim Baynham: I had one I'd like to have, but we never did have an original plane. You know, there were a thousand, 1,200 ships flying, and the romance of having your own name was sold in the movies, but it didn't happen. You flew whatever was running is what happened, and every day we'd come back with flak holes and stuff in the ship so they'd be fixing a lot of them and the ones that got fixed would fly.

Ray Lemons: How many names do you remember that we flew?

Jim Baynham: You know, I remember Weeping Willie and King Kong, that's the only two I remember.

Ray Lemons: We flew Win With Paige, remember that one?

Jim Baynham: I don't remember that.

Ray Lemons: Willow Run.

Jim Baynham: I remember Willow Run.

Ray Lemons: King Kong, the one you just named.

Jim Baynham: Weeping Willie.

Ray Lemons: I don't remember Weeping Willie.

Jim Baynham: You may have been off that day.

Ray Lemons: I might have been off.

Aaron Elson: You said you would like to have given a name. Did you have a name in mind?

Jim Baynham: I had a, I'd drawn a little thing, I think my sister's still got the little deal, it's just a little cartoon drawing of a whistling privy ... of an outhouse with wings, because whenever these things came over you when we were coming in, they'd just whistle like a, like a banshee.

Ray Lemons: I remember that name. I didn't know it was your name, because I don't know how we got the Whistling Privy, I remember that, but we never got it.

Jim Baynham: No.

Ray Lemons: We never got a ship.

Aaron Elson: It would have been ...

Jim Baynham: Yeah. An outhouse with wings. That's about what it was (laughter). The B-17 guys called it an accident going somewhere to happen. (laughter).

Aaron Elson: Now, the Kassel was your 11th mission?

Jim Baynham: Yes.

Aaron Elson: Walk me through that, from briefing ... was there anything at all unusual about the briefing?

Jim Baynham: Not that I remember. We never did get an easy mission. During that time the group was flying a lot of Calais buzz bomb missions and you just were up a couple of hours and you were home, you know, you just flew to the edge of France and back, and they just racked up mission after mission, it was great, but we never got one of them.

Ray Lemons: We never got one of them.

Jim Baynham: Every mission we got was deep in Germany, and so, this was another one of those. I can always remember the guy at the front of the room saying, "Well, today, boys, we're going to, we're gonna bomb so and so," and I always thought, "We ain't gonna do nothing, you're going back home and go to bed." (laughter) And he did, too. But, no, I don't remember anything at all, about it, that was any different than any other, until we got to the target area and got hit. And we didn't know we were, I didn't know we were out there by ourselves, until people started telling us.

Aaron Elson: Did you know you were off course?

Jim Baynham: No, we were leading the group, so everything that was happening happened behind us. So, we just kept on traveling along.

Ray Lemons: There were 300 in that formation that day and we were the lead group, we were leading the 389th, the 453rd, I can't remember the others that followed us but there was 300 planes, including us. Out of our 39 takeoffs we only had 35 that got there.

Aaron Elson: But you were the first group of the 300?

Jim Baynham: So the second group caught the mistake and turned, and we were just ...

Ray Lemons: Kept on going ...

Aaron Elson: Were there any radio exchanges?

Jim Baynham: Not that I heard. I can't remember what the radio system was, was it Charlie that was on ... I was on the intercom and he was on radio? I think it may have been that way. I didn't hear any, I don't remember hearing any warning before the first attack. And all of a sudden you guys started hollering that we were being hit.

Ray Lemons: We were on fire, I would say ...

Jim Baynham: From the first round ...

Ray Lemons: I would say we were one of the first planes hit.

Jim Baynham: Because we got the smoke out of the cockpit, and then some more started coming in. Our generators were on fire , and so we opened the windows and blew the smoke out, but then, I remember we had one front pass, that's the only time I really saw all the planes, because they were coming at us and the light was blinking as they were shooting, but most of them came from the back.

Ray Lemons: I think we were hit below. I always remember, the best I remember they were coming up just like this, just right under the belly, and they were either shooting on the right wing side or the left wing side, and of course the tail gunner was just right in the middle of all of that, so ...

Jim Baynham: We didn't have those ball turrets...

Ray Lemons: No, no balls.

Jim Baynham: They came underneath us with 30-millimeter cannons I guess, or 20 ...

Ray Lemons: Twenty and thirty both ...

Jim Baynham: And just lobbed them into us. Broke up the formation with those. The first plane I saw was the, we were leading the, what, the low element?

Ray Lemons: We were the high right. Not the high high right but the high right.

Jim Baynham: Okay. And the lead element, the right wing ship just erupted in flames, every crack in it you could see burning, and just tailed off like that, and that was the first real one I saw go down, that was really in trouble. You guys could see more than I could.

Ray Lemons: Yeah, we could see back there. Of course, it was happening so fast you just didn't have time to observe anything except, you know, you could see stuff, the sky was full of stuff that was going everywhere you looked.

Jim Baynham: But after you guys jumped, that cockpit looked real empty, the flight deck (nervous laughter). It's lonesome looking. And I looked down and hadn't, didn't have my leg things hooked up, so I had to hook my chute up, and then I thought, "Maybe I can get 'em to quit shooting at us, I'll lower the landing gear." I figured maybe they'll ...

Ray Lemons: Leave you alone ...

Jim Baynham: Maybe they'll figure they don't need to do anything else (laughter). And a 109 came up on my left wing, right next to it like he was flying close formation, and I looked out and saw him right before I got out of the seat. I'd like to know who that guy was.

Aaron Elson: Did you see his face?

Jim Baynham: No, everyone ... he had a mask on, I'm sure I don't remember much about it. All of it's just fleeting images really, there's not any continuity. But when you jump out at 23,5 and pull the ripcord you're right in the middle of it all. That's not a good thing to do.

Ray Lemons: I can tell you one thing, an ME-109 was no further, the wingtip wasn't as far as that plant from me, and he, I thought he was either dumping my chute ...

Jim Baynham: I'm surprised it didn't ...

Ray Lemons: Or he would knock me down or run through me or something, and I could see his face, he's looking at me and I'm looking at him.

Jim Baynham: I'm surprised your chute held up.

Ray Lemons: I am too. Oh, it did do this, man, it did a lot of that, that's the reason I (unintelligible)

Aaron Elson: Was it like a pendulum?

Ray Lemons: Yeah, swinging around, you know.

Jim Baynham: That's prop wash.

Ray Lemons: But I was at 23,000 something.

Jim Baynham: Long time getting down.

Ray Lemons: Oh yeah, and I passed out of course, because I'd been out of oxygen probably a minute or so before I got out of the plane, at least a minute and a half.

Jim Baynham: I didn't open mine, I bailed out about 12,000 ...

Ray Lemons: That's about right.

Jim Baynham: And then I ...

Ray Lemons: Went through the clouds ...

Jim Baynham: I didn't open until a couple thousand ... they'd always told us that if you were free falling that when the ground started getting larger it's time to open your chute and that's what I did, I figured I was about 2,000 feet.

Ray Lemons: All I remember about that, when I saw the clouds finally coming, I'd already come to and I must have been a thousand or so feet above the clouds, and we were solid cloud that day.

Jim Baynham: Yes.

Ray Lemons: When I came through, then I started like you say seeing the ground, man I know where I am, I saw woods, and trees, I don't want to do that, you've got to guide now.

Jim Baynham: I tried that, because there was one of those high power lines that I was drifting to, so I pulled the cord, the slip, and then, and got myself swinging right before I hit ...

Ray Lemons: You got your butt ...

Jim Baynham: I hit my butt, and then my head, it kind of knocked me out for a few seconds. And then, because when I got my sense back I was getting dragged along with the wind.

Ray Lemons: They get you right away?

Jim Baynham: Oh yeah, potato farmers were sitting right there with pitchforks. Well, they said those old guys were still bragging about capturing a young American terrorflieger (Ray laughs).

Ray Lemons: Do you know where you really landed to this day?

Jim Baynham: I don't. I know that, I know somebody knows a little village I went into...

Ray Lemons: You don't remember the name of it?

Jim Baynham: No.

Ray Lemons: I never did know either.

Jim Baynham: And, there was this other kid that went in, I don't know who he was, don't remember, I've got a sheet somewhere that has his name on it, I can't remember, I think he was a navigator maybe. Two of us wound up there.

Ray Lemons: Together?

Jim Baynham: Yes. And it was one of those scenes just like everybody ran into, it was violent, because of one guy that was really leading the cheering section.

Aaron Elson: How did they express the violence?

Jim Baynham: Red face and shouting in German, you know, and shaking fists and all that. But there was a woman who spoke English, and I'm assuming, and somewhere or another I thought I knew that she was an English teacher. That may or may not be true, but she spoke English and she calmed everybody down.

Ray Lemons: The word I always remember hearing the Germans, and like you say, they were red in the face and yelling and screaming, they'd say "Chicago gangsters," they could say that. And "terrorflieger, terrorflieger, terrorflieger, terrorflieger," you know, and you just worried walking through the crowd what they were gonna do to you, whether they're gonna come after you or whatever.

Jim Baynham: Well, they had, the press had cartoons, you know, of us diving, machine gunning children on the schoolyard, things like that, and add that to the fact that, I think they told me that day that this guy had had his family killed in a bombing raid, and put all that together and it's ... but we just, I was there for a little bit and then they walked us to, I think for a mile or two to some little village where there was, I guess it was kind of a little city hall with a one room jail in it. There wound up being several of us before the night came, and when night came they took us, walked us somewhere to a station where a train was stopped, and we got on it. And then we went into Eschwege, which was an air force base fairly close by, and we almost got lynched on the platform there. Our guards went inside the station to contact the base, I guess, and the crowd was a big crowd, and they all got violent, and there were probably eight or ten of us, and I think we were not far from being lynched, and the guards finally came back out and they calmed everybody down.

We spent the night in that air base, and then we went to Oberursel was our next stop, to an interrogation center outside of Frankfurt. I remember coming into that Frankfurt station they're talking about on this tour, and a big old barrel like you see in Casablanca or somewhere with the trains steaming. Some guard must have spoken English because he told one of the guys in our group that the night before they had lynched some flyers from some of the steel girders. And then we walked the streets of Frankfurt probably for a mile or two going to a place, and it was just brick rubble everywhere, a lot of buildings standing. It was a spooky place.

Aaron Elson: Do you remember any of the other people who were in that group?

Jim Baynham: No. My mind, the details, is blank. The first guy I saw that I knew after I got, two days later to Wetzlar, the temporary camp, was Ray, and he was on the other side of the fence in another compound, we just happened to spot each other, and his face was about this big, it looked like he'd been beat up. It was swollen badly.

Aaron Elson: You were beat up?

Ray Lemons: By the burgomeister of that town got me with a pistol.

Aaron Elson: He pistol whipped you?

Ray Lemons: M-hm. It was a mess. He was just irate with, there was about a dozen, or 13 or 14 of us in this little group and I happened to be in the front row, and these two young Wehrmacht soldiers had brought us to this town, and he stopped us, and he was vehement in his anger and whatever, you know, he was up there just swinging at everybody on the front row and

I was in the front row. I bolted out of that line and that that was a mistake, I should have stayed, and that's when he pulled that pistol, I thought he was gonna shoot me, and he started bopping me with that pistol, in the face. So the two young soldiers finally realized that they had to get control of that group and they started yelling "Raus," and he walked off and left us. Luckily for us, I think.

Aaron Elson: What was your interrogation like?

Jim Baynham: It was scary, but looking back on it, it was nothing ...

Ray Lemons: Like the movies.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, it was nothing like Guantanamo I think. We had, we were put in a cell, and you know, they had suggested us reading a couple books that somebody had written, English guys that had been in prison camps, and it was good, because everything that I'd read was where I was, so it was familiar, and that did help. It was probably a six foot wide room and twelve feet long, and no window, and a little eye thing on the door, and one bunk, just a flat piece of wood bunk, and I was there for two days I guess. And, so I went in there and stayed all night there. The next day, nobody, then they slid something to eat, a piece of bread or something in the door, for breakfast, under the door. But just not knowing what was gonna happen next was the worst part of that. And then they took me out and took me to a room and two guys interrogated me. They told me they were gonna shoot me, that I was a spy, you know, the normal crap you hear I guess.

Aaron Elson: Now you say that, but what did you think then?

Jim Baynham: It was really unnerving. And it was, I knew it wasn't true, but it was still unnerving. It was seriously unnerving. So, that probably went on an hour and it happened twice, and then the second morning, I was taken out and taken over to a headquarters like building, and taken into a big office, and a captain, old guy, grey headed, was behind the desk, and I sat down across the desk from him. He was patronizing, congenial, and pulled out a big book, twice as big as that, out of a rollout, and it was our group. He knew the name of the weather man, blah blah blah. He even knew that I grew up in Texarkana, Texas. That was surprising, it really did, that they, you know, knew so much. That was probably not worth anything but it was impressive, the details that they had. And that's all that was, was to impress me I guess. It didn't turn into anything.

Ray Lemons: They all had them, it's like you said, they told me who my mother was, and they knew I had a kid.

Jim Baynham: Yeah. Isn't that something?

Ray Lemons: That, I'm almost, my mouth kind of opened, my baby was six months old or something like that at that time.

Jim Baynham: It's information that's out there, but to go through the trouble of getting it ...

Ray Lemons: How did they get it?

Jim Baynham: ... is really surprising. But anyway, I've got to believe that they knew they were wasting their time on a first lieutenant, he didn't know anything, if they got a major or a colonel in there, well they might be able to learn something.

Ray Lemons: They did the same thing with an enlisted man. An enlisted man doesn't know shit about what's going on, probably only knew he was going on a mission somewhere, didn't even know the name of it. And the guy, I remember the one that got me and he was, like Jim says, they play all this beautiful stuff, what I remember, he was talking about reading a book, I remember the film, they showed you a movie, I don't know whether you saw it ...

Jim Baynham: I remember it.

Ray Lemons: I saw this movie, and I remember that movie just like that. (snaps his fingers). I'm sitting there in this movie now. This guy's doing what the movie's saying. So a lot of this lessons of the game we're going through here. But finally the guy says, "I can tell you where you're from." And he told me, "You're from Texas." I said, "The way I talk, is that what you're saying?" He said, "Yeah, that's one thing." And he finally said, "But you know what? I lived in the United States until '39."

I said, "Where?"

He said, "Buffalo, New York." He said, "By the way, would you like a Lucky?" Lucky Strike. I didn't smoke. I didn't want one anyway. And he goes on, and he finally says, "We'd like to ask you what were you doing there? What did you guys do this morning? What were you all preparing for?"

"My name is John Ray. Name rank and serial number. Same old stuff. I did that fifteen or twenty times. He finally said, "Well, I guess we'll have to do what we have to do with you. The Gestapo will be here for you tomorrow morning. I'm gonna put you in the cell and they'll be there tomorrow and they'll get you then." It was a bunch of crap. They threw me in a cell all right, and the cell was about from there to there, there was another guy in there already, and I didn't know whether he was a plant or what, I said he must be a German to myself ...

Jim Baynham: Yeah ...

Ray Lemons: So I didn't even know my name. (laughs). Of course I was there for two days. Like you say I think it, I guess it was part of their procedure.

Jim Baynham: It seemed like they wasted a lot of time.

Ray Lemons: But the book did impress me. When this guy reached up there and got it and said, "Well let's see..."

Aaron Elson: Did he know your family also, he knew you were from Texarkana ... were you married at that point?

Jim Baynham: I was, but he didn't bring that up.

Ray Lemons: He didn't bring my wife's name, but my mother's name, he didn't bring my wife's name, but he knew I had a baby.

Jim Baynham: And he knew my granddad's name was Freiburger.

Ray Lemons: Is that right?

Jim Baynham: Because he commented on I was one of them almost.

Ray Lemons: Well the thing that got me, though, was he says, "I know what crew you were on. You're on the Johnson crew."

I said, "Is that right?" I wasn't on the Johnson crew. I never did say anything. I never did say that. I don't know, we had a Johnson of course, but I wasn't on Johnson's crew.

Jim Baynham: Maybe some of his guys had mingled in with your group. Anyway, it was a time to be young and a kid would live through it. (laughs)

Aaron Elson: They sent you to Stalag Luft 1?

Jim Baynham: Yes. After about three or four days at Wetzlar, the temporary camp ...

Ray Lemons: That's about how long we were there. When did you get to your camp? Do you remember?

Jim Baynham: No I don't. I don't remember the date.

Ray Lemons: We were shot down on the 27th. I got to Moosburg on the 5th of October.

Jim Baynham: How long were you en route? Do you remember? I think it took us two days on a train.

Ray Lemons: Two days, or maybe two or three days on a train, two days I think on the train. We got bombed in Berlin, we stopped for some reason.

Jim Baynham: We stopped several times, and the guards would take off and go in the woods, get off the train, because fighters were strafing the yards.

Ray Lemons: Air raids, the sirens were going off, they'd leave us.

Aaron Elson: Were you in a regular train or a boxcar?

Jim Baynham: It was not a boxcar but it wasn't a regular, I'm not sure what it was.

Ray Lemons: We were on what they call a 40 and 8 when we went up to the prison camp. It was a regular train because I had ...

Jim Baynham: Were there bunks in it?

Ray Lemons: It seemed like we just sat on sort of side seats or something, kind of sideways.

Jim Baynham: I've just completely blacked out, I can't remember what the interior of those cars were ...

Ray Lemons: I just remember the guys were two guards guarding us, and I don't remember how many of us there were, it was probably four, five or six, and these two soldiers were all there were, they were young guys too, 16, 17 years old. They stayed with us all the way until we got to, up to the Baltic.

Jim Baynham: What town were you near?

Ray Lemons: Uhh, the closest town, big town, would have been Stetin I imagine.

Jim Baynham: So you were East.

Ray Lemons: Almost in old Poland, you know where old Poland is?

Jim Baynham: East Prussia?

Ray Lemons: Yeah, East Prussia. We were probably about five or ten miles from the Baltic.

Jim Baynham: Were you near Peenemunde, the rocket center?

Ray Lemons: No, we weren't near that. We weren't very close to it, I know where it is.

Jim Baynham: I think we were twenty or thirty miles west of Peenemunde, we were right on the Baltic.

Ray Lemons: You were all the way up, you were over here and I was kind of over here. We were almost in, when you start going up toward Latvia, we were kind of in that bend.

Aaron Elson: Now this was the end of September, beginning of October you arrived at the camp. What can you remember about the holidays, Christmas, New Year's. Thanksgiving you would have been in the camp too.

Jim Baynham: I can't remember anything about Thanksgiving.

Ray Lemons: I don't either.

Jim Baynham: At Christmas, I wrote a story about it and sold it to Reminisce magazine, and the, we got some, we hadn't had any Red Cross parcels in two or three months. We had Red Cross parcels for October and probably half of November when I got there, and then they quit getting them, and so we started getting really hungry. But we got an English Red Cross parcel at Christmas, and it had tea and plum pudding, things like that in it, so we had a real feast. And we shared it all, we had a great meal.

Ray Lemons: Did you save any of it, your own people tell you to save any of it?

Jim Baynham: I'm sure we, we didn't waste any of it.

Ray Lemons: I mean like for down the road. I remember they came and told us the same thing except they said, try to not eat, because they gave us, first time we ever had a parcel ever, but you got one parcel, it was for two guys for a whole week, more, about ten days, and they spread that out, of course we knew they got the cigarettes and whatever they wanted out of there and what you got was what they didn't want. And the cans would be opened, like a can of salmon, if you got one you knew it had been open for two days, and you kind of sweated, you and this guy were going to eat that whole ...

Jim Baynham: You're gonna eat it anyway.

Ray Lemons: That's what they did but on Christmas they gave us one parcel per two guys, and it was a brand new American Red Cross, with everything. I kept that list, I wrote that all down, every item in there, including, I never did find the crossword puzzle, though, that had the maps in it.

Jim Baynham: I didn't see that in it. Was that supposed to be in there?

Ray Lemons: Some of them had it. You just had to know where they were.

Jim Baynham: Really.

Ray Lemons: Yes.

Jim Baynham: I'll be darned.

Ray Lemons: They had some maps in there. They had a map and they had another little deal they put in there with a compass, and how they did that, the British were the ones that gave them the tricks to do, that's when the Americans did this.

Jim Baynham: I'll be darned.

Ray Lemons: I never saw one, but I know they had them.

Jim Baynham: I guess that's the reason they opened them.

Ray Lemons: I guess that's right. They might have figured we had something in every can, "Oh, we've got to see what you've got contraband in there. You've got a knife in there" or something.

Jim Baynham: But the good thing about Christmas, other than that, was that Bastogne, the breakthrough came, and that was great because we were really not feeling great about that.

Ray Lemons: That's exactly what the Germans did, on the morning when they gave us that parcel, they walked in the room, and all this ... and they said, "You guys know what's going on, don't you? You're gonna be here now forever, so you're gonna rebuild this place stick by stick and brick by brick, because the Battle of the Bulge over there, you guys are being wiped out, we're wiping you out," and we said, "Yes, we know that." We knew it, but we didn't know it was as bad as they were making it, but we also knew that the tide was beginning to turn. We said, "Yeah, okay, okay."

Aaron Elson: Did they call it the Battle of the Bulge?

Ray Lemons: Oh no, they just said, "We're wiping you out."

Jim Baynham: We had a clandestine radio in the camp, with the BBC, and one guy took it down, and then he'd go from barracks to barracks. And then of course we got German radio and the trader, the guy that we called our trader, could speak German, he had that. So he got the German news also. So he probably knew pretty much what was going on.

Ray Lemons: Yeah, we did too, but we always thought that we were missing the good news and bad news, and sometimes we got some bad news, too.

Jim Baynham: Oh, yeah, that was a real letdown when that Bulge happened. We did think we were going to be there a long time, because up until then it looked like the war would be over fairly soon.

Ray Lemons: The thing that I remember the most about, just like me, when I first got there, the first day I got there, the first thing the guys who'd been there a long time said, "Bring us up to date. What's going on?"

I said, "Well, we'll all be home by Christmas." This was October. "We're gonna be home by Christmas." I was an optimist, you know. Of course later on my thoughts changed.

Jim Baynham: You know, it's hard to figure out how it wouldn't be over by Christmas. The Germans were just getting bombed all over, and why they didn't give up, who knows? Hitler I

guess is the reason they didn't. But they should have. They were in dire straits, all over. The civilians were in tough shape.

Ray Lemons: Of course when you knew that the Russians were coming, we could hear the artillery in January ...

Jim Baynham: Oh yes.

Ray Lemons: ... Getting closer every day.

Jim Baynham: And they marched you all out, didn't they?

Ray Lemons: They marched us out. They started doing, they did 2,500 at a time, and I was among the first ones that went out, luckily for me I think ...

Jim Baynham: Did you get out before the bad, bad weather?

Ray Lemons: We got out and they took us on the march, and they finally put us on a train and we went south. The rest of them all got out and marched all the way to where you wound up.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, we got some in our camp in February, and they were frostbitten, dogbit, they were bayonet wounds even, some of them.

Ray Lemons: That's right.

Jim Baynham: They were in bad shape. And they were going to march us out too. They had us get ready, about the middle of April, and said they were going to send us west, but then we never did leave. And we were trying to build something to hold our stuff, but we didn't, nobody had anything that was going to hold up, and, so, finally the Russians came in that area and liberated us. They didn't have much mechanized, most of it was horse and wagon, but they had a tank, and they ran it around the camp and tore the fence down. And our senior American officer put our own guys in the towers around the perimeter trying to keep us in, but we didn't stay in. And they said, we had a Luftwaffe field about a mile away, they said they were going to come in and fly us out. And after a week of that, another kid and I, from Brooklyn, Pat Murphy, we decided we'd leave. And we snuck out of camp one night and went back to the English lines which were about sixty miles probably, walked part of the way and then we talked some Russians out of some bicycles that they had taken away from Germans in a little town, and rode the rest of the way.

Aaron Elson: You talked them out of the bicycles?

Jim Baynham: Yeah, we did, and it was amazing. We couldn't talk Russian and they couldn't speak anything but Russian. Pat knew a little French, he'd been in a seminary in New York

somewhere and he learned French. Of course he knew Latin but that wasn't any help to anybody. And I knew a little bit of Spanish. But we did get the bicycles, and we rode the rest of the way.

Aaron Elson: So you didn't wait for the planes to come in?

Jim Baynham: No. They told us that we were gonna get court-martialed if we left, but that never happened.

Ray Lemons: Who was your camp leader?

Jim Baynham: Zemke. I've got his book, and I was thinking a while ago, he had pictures of those Red Cross parcels and stuff like that. But we just decided, and by doing that, we got back, we walked and rode bikes, got to Wetzlar, spent the night, the English were there, they gave us a hotel room, and the next morning, several of us wound up being together then, probably a dozen, and they put us on a GI truck and took us down to Hildesheim, which is about half a day's drive, and we got there, and they gave us a bunk, barracks, and said it'd be several days, there were C-47s flying people out, that they were flying repatriating Frenchmen in that area back to France. And they were just one after another, a solid stream of planes. Pat and I sat down and talked about, let's go out to the airfield, so we went out to the airfield and talked to some pilots, and asked the pilots if they'd let us fly on the flight deck, and we wound up in Nancy, France. That was on VE Day when we got there.

Aaron Elson: So the war wasn't even over when you ...

Jim Baynham: No, it was still, it was over that, the day we flew from Hildesheim to Nancy was VE Day.

Aaron Elson: So you weren't worried about running into German troops or anything when you were doing that?

Jim Baynham: No, running into Russian troops, the Germans, the Russians had met the English, and every German we saw was dead until, along the road there were Germans everywhere.

Aaron Elson: Really?

Jim Baynham: Yes. And, but until you got to the American lines, which was Schweren, which is about 25 miles south of where the English were, and there were, they said, according to the radio, Germans in fields around Schweren who came in to surrender, it was just black with Germans. So they had all headed west. Our guards at the camp headed west the day before the Russians got there. They knew they'd get killed.

They put us on 40-and-8 cars in Nancy and took us south to a little town called Epinal, there was an American hospital there near, towards Switzerland, and so they said, "We'll check you out here and you'll stay here for a while and then go north." So we ate, they had a meal and we ate, and then we went back down to the train station and jumped on a hospital train going north.

Ray Lemons: So you never did go to Lucky Strike, then, did you?

Jim Baynham: That's where we headed. That's where the train went, and that's where they finally got us under control because we couldn't get on a ship until ...

Ray Lemons: That's where I wound up too, finally.

Jim Baynham: And that's where the, the first time the folks had got word that I was back under American control was from a wire from Camp Lucky Strike.

Aaron Elson: How about your family, did you get word to them?

Jim Baynham: When I hit Lucky Strike.

Aaron Elson: Not until then?

Jim Baynham: Yeah. The government notified them. ... It's a wonder we weren't killed. The Russians, they were fearsome men, and we were yelling "Amerikanski tovarisch," and trying to make sure they knew who we were.

Ray Lemons: The Germans were more afraid of the Russians than anything.

Jim Baynham: Oh yeah, and they were right to be. They just wouldn't take prisoners.

Ray Lemons: This guy I was referring to a while ago from Brooklyn, what he said to me, one of the things he said to me, he said, "You guys don't know what you're doing. You're doing this wrong. You shouldn't be fighting us. You should be helping us with the Russians." That guy said this.

Jim Baynham: It could have been. If it hadn't been for Hitler's greediness.

Aaron Elson: Which guy was this?

Ray Lemons: The interrogator, the guy who said he was in Brooklyn.

Jim Baynham: The last night before we got to the American lines we stopped in Bad Dobrin, a little town, and just past Bad Dobrin was where the Russians and the English had met, they had about a mile or two between them, they'd set up control points on the road, and we stayed there that night, and some French workers, slave laborers, had taken over a little hotel in town, and so we stayed there. They gave us a bed. And the next morning we went down the road and the Russians turned us back, they wouldn't let us through. And I thought, one thing, real, I remember

it at the time, every field artillery piece that I saw, there were a lot of them, were all pointed toward the English, and I thought, "Man, this is not good!" (laughter). And then they wouldn't let us through. So we went back in the town and went another route and went out through some woods, and finally got across the English lines. Amazing.

Ray Lemons: Did they fly you home or did you get on a ship?

Jim Baynham: No, I got on a ship. At Le Havre. We landed in Boston.

Ray Lemons: I landed at Norfolk, Virginia.

Jim Baynham: They sent us out to Camp Myles Standish. I don't think it was long, just to get on a train, I think we rode the trains three or four days to San Antonio.

Ray Lemons: I think I went to San Antonio, Fort Sam, was that Fort Sam?

Jim Baynham: Yes.

Ray Lemons: I remember that.

Jim Baynham: You know, I remember, it was really traumatic about that, as I got to Fort Sam, I was going, we're home, and facing everybody at home was something I really dreaded. I don't know, I'm not sure what all my reasoning was, it was just an event that I'd rather be by myself. I don't know what was going on. But I wasn't happy. I wasn't eager to catch the next train to Texarkana. I'd just as soon wait a day.

Ray Lemons: Well you probably didn't know about what happened to everybody ...

Jim Baynham: Oh, I had no idea.

Ray Lemons: You didn't have a clue.

Jim Baynham: I got a call after I got home from Miss Koval, and she just read me the riot act because she didn't know what happened to her boy and how come I was alive, it was a fierce confrontation.

Aaron Elson: What did you tell her?

Jim Baynham: I don't have any idea.

Ray Lemons: Well, see, I lived in Texas and Boldt was from Texas and Bird was from Texas, and Jim was from Texas, so we had a pretty good bunch of Texas guys. So I got back and I found out that Bird was dead, see I had no idea because I just knew he bailed out after I did, because he and I had ...

Jim Baynham: You were right there.

Ray Lemons: Yeah, trying to figure out who was going to go first. I put on the chute on him and mine too, and got the hatch open, and Knox, finally I got Knox out first, but he (Bird) wouldn't go, he went "You go." So I thought well, he'll go behind me, and I went and bailed out, so he's got to follow me. And when I found out he was dead ...

Jim Baynham: So many things could have happened. He could have frozen.

Ray Lemons: He could have stayed with the plane.

Jim Baynham: He could have got hit by flak.

Ray Lemons: That's right.

Jim Baynham: Because Boldt got hit as he left the ship. So they were still coming in.

Ray Lemons: Well, I was dealing with the same thing he (Baynham) did. I went to, when I got home I was trying to find out what happened and I found out Olin (Bird) was killed, and so I told my wife, I said, "Well, I've got to go to Sunset, Texas, and see them." And, you know, trying to figure out what I want to say when I get there. It's close to Wichita Falls. And so I walked through that, out in the country a little farm, I got there and knocked on the door and introduced myself, I said I was on the plane with your son, I just wanted to come by. And a woman and a man both were standing in the door, and she says, "I've just got one question: Why are you here and my son's not here?" And I didn't know what to say. It just kind of floored me. I don't remember what I said now, but they never invited me to come in. And I finally said, "Well, I just wanted to come by and tell you that he and I were both in the plane trying to get away at the last minute. I don't really know what happened to him after that." And so I just left. I never heard a word ever from them. And I'm sure they never could understand what happened to him. I think he was an only child.

Jim Baynham: I can't remember.

Ray Lemons: But he was the oldest man on the crew, too.

Aaron Elson: Oh yes?

Jim Baynham: Was he? I thought Boldt was. Bird was?

Ray Lemons: Bird was the oldest. I was next and Boldt was next.

Jim Baynham: Oh, he wasn't even, he was third.

Ray Lemons: I was twenty ... let's see, what was I, I was 24, and he was about 25 or 26 at that time.

Jim Baynham: I was 20 I guess.

Aaron Elson: Just 20?

Jim Baynham: I was 19 when we first ...

Ray Lemons: One of these days he might tell you what I asked him when I first met him (laughter).

Jim Baynham: I know if I'd have been y'all I'd have turned around and gone home. (laughter)

Aaron Elson: What did you ask him?

Ray Lemons: Well, I walked up to him and looked at him, he was a good looking guy, a big, tall guy, and I said, "How old are you?" (laughter). He said, I think you told me you were 19.

Jim Baynham: I was 19.

Ray Lemons: I said, "And I'm trusting me to you?" I think I said that. (laughter)

Jim Baynham: Rightfully so. (laughter). That's a, when you look at your own 19-year-old kids, you know, good grief.

Ray Lemons: Well you know thinking I'm old, too, I'm 21, 22 then.

Jim Baynham: When I think about all those, a thousand ships going into Germany and every one of them's got a junior pilot on it.

Ray Lemons: That still amazes me, that's the one thing that I tell people, I say, "If nothing else, if you can just imagine what happens in the morning on a cloudy day, hazy, and 2,000 planes whirling around trying to find each other to get lined up to go over across the Channel, and why we don't get killed every day is beyond me.

Jim Baynham: Well, you didn't get the full force of that one day when we met one head on coming through a hole in the clouds. We go up 2,000 feet and make a 180, and that's the way we climb, and every little airfield had its own little 180 going, and we broke out, in the middle of the clouds we broke out a hole, at the same time we did here was a ship coming the other way out of it, and he was doing this 180 backwards, and we dove under him, or we'd have hit him.

Ray Lemons: Wow.

Jim Baynham: And every day you'd see...

Ray Lemons: I know, you'd see that.

Jim Baynham: You'd see them go down. There'd be some black smoke somewhere.

Aaron Elson: That was in England when you were making formation?

Jim Baynham: Yes. When we forming up. Those fields weren't, they were right next to each other.

Ray Lemons: They were all on top of each other.

Jim Baynham: We hadn't any instrument training to speak of.

Ray Lemons: Well, I don't think we had all the instruments today, I mean then that they have today. I don't remember that particular thing you mentioned, maybe I was (in the) back ...

Jim Baynham: You may not have been there that day.

Ray Lemons: His first mission he went somewhere else, he didn't fly with us.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, they flew the pilots out as co-pilot on the first mission, I went to Brunswick that day. We went back three or four days later.

Ray Lemons: Yeah, we did. That was our first mission. At least my first mission.

Jim Baynham: I remember being on that, and the flak was so heavy on that first mission I was sitting there and my legs were shaking, and I was so tense, I couldn't stop 'em.

Aaron Elson: Was that a fear reaction?

Jim Baynham: Yeah, I'm sure it was, nervousness at the very least, and the pilot, I don't know who it was, said "Watch that oil gauge," because if you got flak in your engine and your oil pressure dropped you had to get the prop feathered pretty fast or the wind would shake it (and it would break) into pieces. So the next day when we went, Charlie was sitting there, Charlie was a nervous wreck, he was just absolutely, of course he was nervous anyway, but he was in bad shape, and I used the same thing on him. I just kept chewing his butt out because he wasn't watching the oil. (laughter)

Ray Lemons: He's the one I told you about, Bosquet, I told you about the trucking missions, he'd never heard of trucking missions ...

Jim Baynham: Oh yeah, when we took the gasoline ...

Ray Lemons: I was telling you about the day he got so loaded you know, don't you let that sucker do nothing, he wanted to have his hand out the window waving at everybody.

Jim Baynham: He said, "Let me take it off."

Ray Lemons: Take off! I said, "Don't let him touch the controls."

Jim Baynham: "Let me fly and then waggle my wings." (laughter). And the navigator, Johnny was, he was tight too. Going back over the English Channel it was dangerous if you didn't give them the right signals, and we were shooting flares, and we had to be on the right path, and Johnny would stick his head up in this plexiglas thing they shot the stars with up in the nose, he'd stick his head up there, he said, "You see that point up there?"

And I said, "Yeah."

He said, "Head for it." (laughter)

Aaron Elson: Now this was, because I didn't get it on tape, describe the trucking mission, when you dropped gasoline, or you landed with gasoline?

Jim Baynham: We took two or three hundred cans ... five gallon cans...

Ray Lemons: We filled up the complete bomb bay with five gallon gasoline cans ...

Jim Baynham: Yeah, it was on the flight deck, it was everywhere ...

Ray Lemons: Everywhere we could stick 'em, yeah.

Jim Baynham: And when we were taxiing to take off we were out of balance. The tail skid was bouncing like this ...

Ray Lemons: Yeah, it was, that's true.

Jim Baynham: And it was a short runway down at the south end, so we'd sit on the end of the runway and rev the engines up as high as we could go and let the brakes off to get a little immediate speed. We got off the ground, and went down there and started to come in for a landing. Frenchmen were all over the field, they'd just been liberated a week or two before, and here they came across the runway on bicycles, so we had to go around again to keep from running over them.

Ray Lemons: The cans were moving all over the plane too.

Jim Baynham: It was a dangerous thing to do, but I guess they had to have the gas, Patton was running out ...

Ray Lemons: They were sitting there waiting for you ...

Jim Baynham: Where were we, was it at Chartres?

Ray Lemons: We were at, between Metz and Nancy, and I don't remember but the pads were, I don't think those pads were long enough really to take off hardly, do you remember?

Jim Baynham: Yeah.

Ray Lemons: They were just temporary pads they put down.

Jim Baynham: We were lucky we got rid of the load.

Ray Lemons: That's right. After we landed we were okay.

Jim Baynham: And of course the Frenchmen were, they just swarmed us, they were all over.

Ray Lemons: Wanting to see the plane, get inside and see what's going on.

Jim Baynham: And you all were giving them all the C-rations we had. And they were giving Charlie wine. And I guess everybody was drinking the wine.

Ray Lemons: I don't think I drank a drop.

Jim Baynham: Charlie and Johnny did.

Ray Lemons: I know they did. Was Fields with us that day?

Jim Baynham: Huh?

Ray Lemons: Did Fields go with us that day?

Jim Baynham: I don't remember him going. It was a skeleton crew.

Ray Lemons: I think it was just Charlie, and me and Boldt.

Jim Baynham: That's about all, wasn't it?

Ray Lemons: There might have been another one, I don't know.

Jim Baynham: Just a few of us.

Ray Lemons: I think four or five of us.

Jim Baynham: We got back home that night, and we had to go again the next day, and got back to the base, and Charlie was bombed, but he went to sleep and I couldn't wake him up the next morning, and he was ...

Ray Lemons: Out of it.

Jim Baynham: Out of it, so we just left without him. Boldt was in his seat, I think.

Ray Lemons: I don't remember that.

Jim Baynham: And Charlie was mad, because he didn't go back to his French friends.

Ray Lemons: One more time, yeah.

Jim Baynham: But I couldn't get him awake.

Ray Lemons: I remember him having that white scarf that day too.

Jim Baynham: He was hot.

Ray Lemons: He was red hot. He had that white scarf, you know, and he was feeling no pain. I heard him telling, "I'm the pilot and boy you just watch me when I take this thing off," and I thought, "God, I hope Baynham doesn't let him touch the controls." (laughter)

Jim Baynham: He was a case ...

Aaron Elson: Did he survive the Kassel Mission?

Jim Baynham: He did. He and I were in the same room in prison camp in Stalag Luft 1. We wound up at the same time, which is unique, so we were in rooms of 20 in our barracks and he and I were both in the same room. He died early, didn't he?

Ray Lemons: In '56? Fifty-something, wasn't it? Fifty-six or something like that? Did you ever know what happened to him?

Jim Baynham: It seemed like I heard a heart attack. He came home, and the gal that he'd pined over all the time we were gone jilted him, and had married or something, anyway she'd taken up with somebody else, and Charlie's ego was pretty big, and I guess it just killed him. He found him a girl and married her. They married on Queen for a Day, you remember that old program, the radio program?

Aaron Elson: Yes.

Ray Lemons: I didn't know that.

Jim Baynham: Went to New York and married on Queen for a Day. And then he didn't live very long.

Ray Lemons: I remember he was from Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

Jim Baynham: Right.

Ray Lemons: That was his hometown, Woonsocket. I don't know where that is, but Rhode Island.

Jim Baynham: It can't be very far from anything.

Ray Lemons: I will say one thing for the crew, as far as I'm concerned, I don't think we could have had a better crew, even in spite of, when he's talking about Fields, he was a good guy, except ...

Jim Baynham: Oh yeah ...

Ray Lemons: He was a great, he was on the ball with that radio too.

Jim Baynham: You know, everything worked ...

Ray Lemons: But the only thing he could do, he could dance, he could dance anybody and, to the end of the war, if he could, he liked to dance, every night he'd slip out, when he wasn't supposed to, and go dancing.

Jim Baynham: And all the rest of us just dreamed about pinup girls (laughter) and admired Fields.

Aaron Elson: Did he have like one girlfriend?

Jim Baynham: Oh no, I don't think so. I think he had as many as he wanted.

Ray Lemons: I could tell you a story but I won't. (laughter)

Aaron Elson: Oh, tell it!

Ray Lemons: Oh no, I'd better not. He had a nice wife ...

Aaron Elson: Oh, he was married?

Ray Lemons: Oh yeah.

Jim Baynham: He was from California, wasn't he?

Ray Lemons: California. Fresno, wasn't it? Close to Fresno. But he liked women.

Jim Baynham: He just kind of had a rascally charm about him.

Ray Lemons: Yeah, he did, he was very smooth, too. Little bitty guy, he wasn't very big.

Jim Baynham: Short, kind of reddish hair.

Ray Lemons: Black, yeah. But he had him a girl in every town he went to. He sent his wife home because he, maybe you know the story, maybe I shouldn't tell it.

Jim Baynham: I don't know it, but I'm not surprised.

Ray Lemons: Well, he sent his wife home. He found a girl in a dance hall one night, and we were still in Colorado Springs at that time. And so he said, (lowering voice) "I met this girl, man, is she a knocker, and I talked her out of quitting her job and staying here, and I'm gonna live with her off the base."

I said, "But your wife is here."

He said, "I'm gonna send her home, I'll tell her we're shipping out." So he sent her home. And he went off base with that girl. She was still there when we left.

Jim Baynham: His wife?

Ray Lemons: No, the girl he talked into not quitting her job. And if I'm not badly mistaken she was knocked up.

Jim Baynham: Wow.

Ray Lemons: His wife, if she ever knew that I've just often wondered.

Jim Baynham: Well, she probably knew what he did. But whether or not she knew that detail...

Ray Lemons: Well, he was the kind of guy that would gamble too. He had more money ... and I was his banker. He trusted me to keep his money but not give him too much to lose. He had a thousand ... he came up to me with a thousand dollars. "A thousand dollars!"

"Yes, I want to send two thousand dollars home."

I said, "Okay." I said, "Here's the two thousand. Go ship it home, or whatever you do with the rest of it, there it was. But he said "I want to keep some of it."

Jim Baynham: You kept his inventory.

Ray Lemons: And I'll bet you he sent his wife at least, I'll bet you eight or ten thousand dollars home. I've probably never told you that story.

Jim Baynham: No, I didn't know that.

Aaron Elson: When you were in the prison camp, and you too, were you able to piece together what happened on the mission, did you talk to other people?

Jim Baynham: I think Charlie and I were the only ones that I knew in that camp. There may have been more, but the camp was separated into several compounds and I never ran into anybody else. Only what little bit that we saw out of our window and we heard on the radio.

Ray Lemons: I don't know that I ever knew anybody that was on the Kassel mission in my camp, either, any of my camps.

Aaron Elson: Was it your camp where they had the Heydekrug Run? You were not on that, though.

Ray Lemons: I got there right after that happened.

Jim Baynham: You did what?

Ray Lemons: The Heydekrug, where they ran them off from up near Latvia, and the Germans put them on a march and on a ship and dumped them, and then they bayoneted them with dogs, making them run, getting to this base.

Jim Baynham: That's kind of the same shape those guys were in that came into ours in February.

Ray Lemons: This probably happened in September if I remember the date right. The guy that I've got you lined up tomorrow in case this other guy doesn't go, he was on that. But he's the one I think I told you got shot down in the Baltic Sea. They lost 14 planes that day.

Jim Baynham: If he'd just got a little farther to Sweden ...

Ray Lemons: The guy couldn't swim far enough. They were blown up, the plane blew up, and he got out, he was the only survivor, and he and another guy from another plane in that same, the 492nd they were in, the other guy, I don't know if it was a friend of his, was a pilot,

and he was the only survivor. And they both landed in the Baltic, both burned real badly, and both were saved by the German patrol boats that picked them up.

Jim Baynham: They must have picked them up fast, because that was coooold.

Ray Lemons: But they both survived.

Aaron Elson: Do you remember a guard at Stalag Luft I, his nickname was Henry the Butcher?

Jim Baynham: No, it sounds familiar but I don't ...

Aaron Elson: He had been a butcher in Milwaukee or Chicago.

Jim Baynham: I know several of them had been in the States, and I remember hearing that story about a guy that had been a butcher but I don't think I ever ran into him. When those guys headed off to surrender the day before the Russians got there, the interpreters were the ones who usually came from the States, and one of the guys in our building we called our trader because he could speak German and he's the one that traded whatever he could get, and one of the guys came by and told him that we're leaving and he said "We'll be back in the States before you are." (laughter)

Ray Lemons: He said that?

Jim Baynham: Right. (laughter)

Ray Lemons: Well you probably heard about the one from our camp called Big Stoop, have you ever heard that name, Big Stoop?

Aaron Elson: Yes, and who was the little one, there was like a big one and a little one?

Ray Lemons: The little one I can't remember his name, I just called him Ferret. I don't remember what his real name was, but Stoop I do remember, he's the one that, first one that I saw, he's the one that interrogated, well, made me pull my clothes off and you know all the kind of stuff they went through when you got there.

Aaron Elson: What did he do?

Ray Lemons: When we got there, the first camp, Big Stoop was the guy, and he would kick you or he'd push you ...

Jim Baynham: Just a bully...

Ray Lemons: Knee you. He was about 6 foot 3 or 4 and probably weighed about 220 pounds, a big guy. But they tell me that they got him when we, on the march.

Jim Baynham: Somebody did.

Ray Lemons: Somebody did. I said somebody probably would if they ever had a chance. They said somebody got him.

Aaron Elson: Early on the march?

Ray Lemons: Later on after the march got started. He was just a, I guess he was probably like a feldwebel, a staff sergeant or something like that, I don't know what he was, maybe a tech sergeant.

Aaron Elson: Now you came home ... what about after the war?

Jim Baynham: I came home and had a 60-day leave for R and R, and I was supposed to report to the Fountainebleau hotel in Miami for ten days and then be reassigned, and so my wife and I left, we bought a new car and we were driving, we'll drive down there and take several days to get there.

Aaron Elson: Now wait a second ...

Jim Baynham: From Texarkana.

Aaron Elson: I always love this question. Whenever I hear an old car ...

Jim Baynham: It was a 1940 Packard ... 110.

Ray Lemons: You got a late model car.

Jim Baynham: And about every 500 miles the connecting rod bearings would burn out. (laughter). And it cost twenty dollars to get 'em put back in. (laughter). Oh, lord.

Ray Lemons: You had a Packard?

Jim Baynham: I did.

Ray Lemons: Wow!

Jim Baynham: I bought it off a used car lot in Texarkana. And you know what blows my mind is, I went down and bought that car and took it home and showed it to my wife, I didn't give her a vote (laughter). She would kill me ten years later. But I just got home, so I got away with a lot of crap, I guess (laughter).

Aaron Elson: Okay, so you went to ...

Jim Baynham: We were on our way, and we stopped in Shreveport to see some relatives of mine, and my folks called, they had got a call from wherever, a military call, that said there weren't any places to stay, they'd run out of room in Miami, to take 30 more days and then go to San Antonio. So we did that. Went to San Antonio for reassignment, was there, I don't know, maybe for three weeks waiting for a place to go, and Project R, which was prisoners from

Europe, were supposed to get choice of stations, so they told me in San Antonio, they said "Well, you've got your choice, you can either go to Albany, Georgia, or Douglas, Arizona." So I went to Albany, Georgia. It was a B-25 training school for Mexican, French and American pilots. So I got over there and I was checking in, and the guy says, "Anything special you'd like to do?" And I said, "I'd like to work in operations." He said, "Let me make a call," and he did, and the guy needed a guy and so I went to work as an assistant operations officer, and was there about six months, and I wound up being over the auxiliary fields in Georgia, and had a little AT-6 I flew around in, it was a neat job. So we lived there, we had a house in town, lived there for six months and then all of a sudden they said "We're closing this place down," so a few days later they gave me orders to send me to Dayton, Ohio, to Wright-Patterson, and so I drove up there. I got up there and nobody knew why I was there, so they said, I was there two or three days just trying to check in, so finally they said, "You're Project R. Would you like to go any special place?" And I said, "Yeah, Oklahoma City." Frances was pregnant by then and it was pretty close to Texarkana, so that's where I went. And I was there for a year maybe before I got out, working operations there at Tinker Field, in air traffic control and as operations pilot. We were mainly flying old graveyard ships out of all of the fields they were closing up and we'd take them to dumps that they were taken to. We'd take a C-47 planeload of pilots to a little base and we'd get those old ships and we'd fly them somewhere. It was nice.

I was going to stay in, but like October, we got back from a trip to Ogden I think, taking some old planes out there, and there were 120 pilots on the base and 110 of us when we got back had letters in our mailboxes that said, "Due to budgetary limitations by an act of Congress you will shortly be released from active duty," and two weeks later we were all on the street.

Ray Lemons: You were in Ogden then?

Jim Baynham: No, I just flew graveyard ships out there, they had a storage place. So I stayed in Oklahoma City, we stayed there for eight years. Went to work for the Continental Baking Company. Over 20 years with Wonder Bread.

Ray Lemons: You went to work for them?

Jim Baynham: Yes, and then they transferred me down here to Dallas. I worked there 17 years, and I've got eight kids, and as they started getting a little older there wasn't enough money in the food business, so I started looking for a job and wound up going to work for a ceramic tile

manufacturer over in Fort Worth, and that, the company changed hands four or five times but I stayed there and actually wound up in California, a reorganization, the last, before I retired.

Aaron Elson: You were 19 and already married?

Jim Baynham: We got married the day I graduated from cadets and got my wings.

Ray Lemons: Ask him where he lived when we were in Colorado Springs.

Jim Baynham: My dad said, "You got your wings and got 'em clipped the very same day." (laughter). Yeah, we lived in a neat place in Colorado Springs, Buffalo Lodge.

Ray Lemons: Buffalo Lodge. He and I lived side by side in the same little ...

Jim Baynham: It was a little room and a kitchenette and a bathroom.

Ray Lemons: But we had the best deal in the world.

Jim Baynham: It was a wonderful time. I've often wondered why in the world we didn't move back out there.

Ray Lemons: I wanted to after the war, I went back up there and told the company I wasn't even going to work, I wanted to go to Colorado and see if I could get a job up there but could they reserve it for me in case I didn't, and they said, "We'll give you 30 days" or something "to make up your mind." So I went to Colorado Springs and went looking for jobs and they said, "You know what we do up here?"

I said, "No, what do you do?"

They said, "Well this is a vacation town. We don't need anybody." So I said, "Man, I'd better go back to Dallas."

Jim Baynham: That's right, and you know vacation towns are just awful, they're not a good place to work, unless you own something.

Aaron Elson: What is your connection to Harpers Ferry (looking at a display on the wall).

Jim Baynham: Oh, my wife and I, after we retired, we volunteered in the national parks for five or six years and two or three of them were at Harpers Ferry. We loved it up there. That's the reason we've got it all over the wall. We'd go maybe three months at a time, and we lived in the Harper House. This is an artist's depiction. In the middle of it, there was a three-bedroom, three stories, and we had that, they gave it to us, and it was wonderful. It was great, we'd work four days and be off three, so we'd go to Washington, Gettysburg or New York, whatever.

Aaron Elson: What kind of work would you do?

Jim Baynham: As rangers? We worked the information desk. I developed a ranger walk. They had an old ruins of a water tower, 30, 40 plants, different things, mills, on an island right there by it, and I developed a ranger tour, about a mile and a half or two mile tour on that island just going through the ruins and everything. I did that a lot. It was a great place. There's so much history there, from the Civil War, and John Brown and everything.

(small portion of tape skipped)

Aaron Elson: And with eight kids, you probably have a couple of grandchildren?

Jim Baynham: (laughing) Yes. Joanne, we're a second marriage, my first wife died after 40 years, she had cancer, in California. And then, when I came back here, Joanne had known my folks, my mother, for a long, long time, and she had been divorced for ten or twelve years. We got together and we got married, and we were married 19 years almost when she died. But she had four kids, so we had 12 together. So there's 20 some odd grandkids and I think there's five great-grandkids.

Ray Lemons: His wife lived in the same lodge we lived in, we were there from January at least till June, when we left, and we both had, back and forth off the base every day. I've got pictures still of that place it's still there exactly like it was. We took pictures the last time we were up there and my kids were up there last year and they took pictures, and it still looks the same.

Jim Baynham: Isn't that amazing?

Ray Lemons: It is amazing, that's sixty some, it's in the Garden of the Gods, do you know where the Garden of the Gods is?

Aaron Elson: No.

Ray Lemons: Well, it's right up the hill, and it's all this beautiful stuff, they call the Garden of the Gods.

Jim Baynham: It's just on the west edge of Colorado Springs. We used to ride horses up to the Garden of the Gods. Yeah, I've got, four of my boys are going with me on the trip to Germany in September.

Ray Lemons: You know what Jean is trying to talk me into doing?

Jim Baynham: What?

Ray Lemons: Mark and Rod have never been over there, see my other two went, and she says, "Hey, you just ought to spend some more money and go one more time, and take the other two."

Jim Baynham: If they can.

Ray Lemons: If they can. They're both working for a living, you know how it is."

Jim Baynham: Tim's the only one ... I lost one, one son died of a heart attack, Tim, the youngest, lives in Austin. He can't go. He graduated from UCLA and his college buddies still get together once a year and do something some weekend. Now this year UCLA's playing Texas in Austin that weekend, so they've already got that lined up, so he's screwed. He says if he left they'd all come and take his house over (laughter).

Ray Lemons: What are you, you're all set up regardless, though, if the trip should fall through you're still gonna go, right?

Jim Baynham: I don't see any reason not to.

Ray Lemons: I don't either. You'd regret it if you didn't take the chance.

Jim Baynham: I think what I'm gonna do, I've got enough points to go first class, so I've got my airline thing but I had to take it two days early and then I had to come out of Berlin one day late. I think what I'll do is rent a car when I get there and drive to Bad Hersfeld, stay that night, and see what's his name ...

Aaron Elson: Walter ...

Ray Lemons: Walter and Guenther both?

Jim Baynham: I have to see Guenther first because Walter won't talk (English).

Ray Lemons: He can't talk (English)

Jim Baynham: And then I'll drive back in the next morning, Don's coming in Monday early, I'll pick him up and then go back, and then drive back and turn the car in Saturday morning there in Frankfurt.

Ray Lemons: It's only about 60 or 80 miles. You'll like Bad Hersfeld, it's a nice town.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, I'll bet it's really nice. You know I spent a lot of time overseas. We imported a lot of ceramic tile from Italy and Germany but I never did go to those sites except I went to Oberursel once when it was still up. They say it's torn down now.

Aaron Elson (pointing to a picture): Is that you on the bottom there?

Jim Baynham: Oh yeah, my daughter just finished that, that's a pastel. She just brought it over about a week or so ago.

Ray Lemons: I was just looking at it awhile ago, I thought that was you.

Jim Baynham: She used some old pictures like when I was a kid.

Ray Lemons: I thought you were a major.

Jim Baynham: Didn't make it.

Ray Lemons: I thought you made major. You just were a captain, okay.

Jim Baynham: You know, you told me I ought to file for disability. Well, Pat, New Orleans lawyer, and he was at a meeting and ran into one of these guys that works the VA that does disability and he said "Your dad should do that." And Pat said, "Well, he just never has," and so the guy sent me the forms, even researched the old number that I filed in the Fifties for a back injury that they immediately turned down, they didn't even look at ...

Ray Lemons: Oh, they always do that.

Jim Baynham: And it said in there that if you don't protest it in 30 days it's done. So he sent me that and I filled it out, and I wrote some notes on it and I sent it to Waco, and the guy from Waco called me and he said, I'm gonna line you up with a doctor up at the VA for an appointment, to go ahead and see him, so I've got that, I'm going up there next Wednesday for orthopedic and the following Wednesday for whatever else. I don't know whether to take a cane and hobble in.

Ray Lemons: Well I think that depends on who you get ahold of. I've been through it twice or three times, and finally I think I got the right one who finally got mine through. The frostbite thing, you know, is one of the things they look for. I don't know whether you marched much in the cold, but we were exposed to it quite a bit.

Jim Baynham: You know, I didn't, but I still remember my toes dying when I was flying that eight hour mission, no heat. But my toes are dead now. I can't feel a thing.

Ray Lemons: Well I sure would let them know that.

Jim Baynham: My hearing, but my biggest thing, probably, if I get anything, I had esophageal cancer three years ago and that's coming from digestive problems, and that's a presumptive for them, if you were in prison camp awhile, they automatically approve that without any whatever. Anyway, my kids say, "Well, if they would just approve that back injury and make it retroactive, we could all be rich. (laughter).

Ray Lemons: Oh, yeah, if you get that retroactive, whoo! But the fact that you're a POW too, don't let them not get all that in there.

Aaron Elson: In New Jersey the POWs almost all get 100 percent disability.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, I don't think I'll make that. If I get ten I'll be lucky probably.

Ray Lemons: Oh, I bet you'll get more than that.

Jim Baynham: What's your percentage?

Ray Lemons: I'm now finally 100 percent.

Jim Baynham: Wow, that's great!

Aaron Elson: And they've been pushing for POWs to apply for it.

Ray Lemons: I've had neuropathy problems too, and feet problems. You haven't had a heart attack or anything like that?

Jim Baynham: I haven't had any heart problems. I've got a little bit thickening of the aorta but it's not anything serious. I've got a spot on my lung they've been watching for two years.

Ray Lemons: They'll X-ray you too, I think.

Jim Baynham: I just did a CAT scan three or four weeks ago, and it's not growing.

Aaron Elson: Did you smoke during the war?

Jim Baynham: Oh yes. I smoked till I was 40 and I quit. But I smoked three packs a day.

Ray Lemons: Wow, you smoked a lot.

Jim Baynham: Yeah. I'd light one up, have one in this hand and lay one down so I could light another one. You know, I told a guy, in Waco, I said, "You know, I had," I said, "I had PTSD before they knew it was happening." I had nightmares and night sweats and welts all over my body for probably ten years. But you didn't go see a shrink, that was just not acceptable.

Ray Lemons: Who did you see in Waco or talk to in Waco?

Jim Baynham: Jerry Reyes I think, a Spanish name. I didn't see him, I just talked to him on the phone. I think it's Reyes. He's a nice guy.

Ray Lemons: The one I think I told you to try to get hold of Ginger Rein(?), you never did get ahold of her? She's the POW coordinator out of Waco, and now she's even been kicked up to a bigger job. I think if you could just get ahold of her sometime to listen to you a little bit she might ...

Jim Baynham: Maybe he took her place. He called me ...

Ray Lemons: There's a Spanish guy that's taken her place.

Jim Baynham: I bet that's who it is.

Ray Lemons: Young guy?

Jim Baynham: I couldn't tell, he wasn't old. He was interested and informative.

Aaron Elson: What were the nightmares like?

Jim Baynham: You know, I can't remember. I just had night sweats, it was not a good time. I still, the lingering stuff that goes on, I told the doctor at the VA one time, I said I just outlived this, for the most part, but my clicking this bottle and stuff like that is all the residual ...

Aaron Elson: What about movies? Do you have any favorite air movies?

Jim Baynham: No. I've always enjoyed them whatever. I think one of the best ones that I ever saw, on TV, was that Band of Brothers.

Ray Lemons: I watched one that I've seen once or twice before but I couldn't get away from it the night before last. The Great Escape.

Jim Baynham: I saw that ...

Ray Lemons: With what's his name ...

Aaron Elson: Steve McQueen.

Ray Lemons: And that's a long movie. Of course, all of that's, some of that's Hollywood stuff, but some of it was ...

Jim Baynham: It's based on reality. And all the little details, the stuff in prison camp always rings a bell.

(small bit of tape skipped)

Jim Baynham: Nobody ever got out of Stalag Luft 1. They had escape attempts, and they had had one the summer I got there in October, but everybody got caught, and a couple of feeble ones, a guy or two, that were caught when I was there.

Ray Lemons: You couldn't get out of the one I was in either because they were off the ground this high, and they had visibility all the way through, and the way they were laid out, they had guards all around, you couldn't, no way, the warning wire, if you chased a ball on the warning wire and you acted like you might try anything, you weren't about to do that.

Jim Baynham: You know, somehow or other, they were putting up barbed wire, for the warning wire, and they left a big pole with a lot of barbed wire rolled around it. One of the guys got over there and picked it up and brought it in, I don't know how it happened without it getting

him in trouble, you know, getting shot. And we took that stuff in our room and got two pieces of wood, and stripped those barbs off of it, pulled them this way, and made wire for our beds.

Ray Lemons: You're kidding!

Jim Baynham: We had wire underneath us rather than boards.

Ray Lemons: I hadn't heard that one. The only problem I remember getting into, we got into trouble in Nuremburg, it was so cold, and there was nothing to heat, no means for anything to put in the stove, so we built the latrine and ripped the boards off of the latrine, and finally one of them just completely disappeared. And they finally put an order, unless the ten guys who did this come and admit what they did, we're gonna shoot ten of you.

Jim Baynham: Wow.

Ray Lemons: They put that order out, you know. No one knew who really got the boards. I think I probably got one myself. And of course they never did anything about it. Nobody admitted it, anyway.

Jim Baynham: But it was a worrisome moment.

Aaron Elson: Were you able to shave and keep regular hygiene?

Ray Lemons: Oh, we did a pretty good job.

Jim Baynham: We got a shower once a week.

Ray Lemons: I don't think it was that often, but we had, we got a change of underwear and a change of shorts, and a pair of socks. The way we did it, I don't know how they did it at most of the camps, but the Red Cross would send stuff in, and it would come into the, what the Germans didn't decide to keep, then they gave to the central point, and then you had four guys, we had four compounds, and they'd take, each compound had a man, your man, and he'd go meet with the other three, and then they'd get ten overcoats, and they'd draw cards to see who gets this one or that one, and they'd come in, and if your barracks needed something, needed a coat or something, it took me until about November to get a blanket and an overcoat. Of course lucky for me I got it in time for the, you know, march. But it took me almost until ...

Aaron Elson: How did you sleep without a blanket in like November ...

Jim Baynham: All your clothes.

Ray Lemons: Slept with everything you had on.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, we did too.

Ray Lemons: Pulled your shoes off. When I got there I had nothing but what I had on, which was OD stuff, and I had my uniform, OD uniform, and they had taken, they even took my, I had a baby boot around my neck for my kid, and they finally gave that back to me. I've got my file out of the, when we were liberated I went and got my file out of the file cabinet.

Jim Baynham: Oh, did you really?

Ray Lemons: I've got my original file, the picture they made of me.

Jim Baynham: Well, that was a great experience, it really was. It was a messy thing when it happened, but to look back on, it was a good experience.

Ray Lemons: You know, someone asked me the other night, they said, "Well, what did you do?" I said, "One, I came home, I went for R and R, and they sent me to California, Santa Monica Beach, put me up in the fanciest hotel in Del Mar and gave me a little two room cottage with a bedroom and a sitting room and a living room, and then I had a free walk across the street, Santa Monica Boulevard, onto the beach, and I thought, "Well, man, this is something, 30 days of this," I thought, "Well, I'll go over there and learn how to surfboard." I thought, "Man, that's something for me."

I get out there one day, and find out it's the roughest day I could have ever picked and I went way out there and got ready and boy, here come that big wave, that board went up and phshoom, right into there. And I was out there, holding my head. And I thought I was dead.

Jim Baynham: You could have been.

Ray Lemons: I could have been. Barbara was with me and had seen it, and she yelled for some guy to help, and he went out and pulled me in, and they took me to the hospital, I had a ruptured spleen.

Jim Baynham: Wow.

Ray Lemons: So I spent, in Santa Ana, at the hospital I guess for two weeks.

Jim Baynham: Good grief.

Ray Lemons: And I thought, well, now, what am I doing here?

Jim Baynham: There's your R and R.

Ray Lemons: R and R, and I said, now what's next? And they said well, you're gonna get your new orders cut pretty soon. And of course what happened, Nagasaki and so forth, took care of that, so I'm going home, I'm not gonna go over and train in B-29s. (laughter)

Aaron Elson: How did you hear about that, about Hiroshima?

Jim Baynham: I don't remember how I heard Hiroshima. I remember VJ Day being announced. I was in a liquor store in Texarkana. I was still on that 90-day leave.

Ray Lemons: I was trying to think where I was. I guess I was in California at that time.

Jim Baynham: And that was really a great relief, because I figured, you know, we'd be over there.

Ray Lemons: See that's what I figured, we'd be back over there sometime soon.

Aaron Elson: But were there any like rumors, did anybody say anything about a big bomb or a secret weapon?

Jim Baynham: I never heard any, no.

Ray Lemons: No, I never did hear anything about ...

Jim Baynham: Jet aircraft were kind of the foreboding fear going around that I remember, because there was a jet from that Luftwaffe base near Barth, they'd fly one of those experimental jets over us once in a while, and it was spooky looking. No flaps, no props.

Ray Lemons: The 262s used to fly over Moosburg all the time. They must have had a base down there real close. You'd see three or four of them, that was the most you'd see. I never saw one in combat except at a long distance once. The 163s were around earlier.

Jim Baynham: Was it a jet led some ships through or Spitfires, wasn't there some ships through the group behind us one day at Hanover maybe? I'm not sure. Shot down some ships, just made one pass ...

Ray Lemons: That's right, it just made one pass.

Jim Baynham: Was that a jet or a Spitfire?

Ray Lemons: I thought it was a jet, but I might be wrong. I think it was a 163 if I remember right, but I don't really know for sure.

Aaron Elson: Why would they have a Spitfire? That was a British plane.

Jim Baynham: They had some planes intact. These guys, with their guns, if any of our fighters pointed their nose at us, they were ...

Ray Lemons: A 51 better not point its nose at us.

Jim Baynham: Because they had some of them, and occasionally one would show up.

Ray Lemons: They probably had B-24s too, B-17s.

Aaron Elson: I saw a picture in an album for sale on eBay the other day, and it was a picture of a B-17 with German markings. I don't know what they got for it, but it said "very rare picture."

Ray Lemons: I imagine if there was a trick that you could dream of they probably thought of it. They were pretty ingenious I would say. The reason they lost the war I can tell you.

Aaron Elson: What's the reason?

Jim Baynham: Fuel. The bombing just screwed up their ...

Ray Lemons: We ruined everything they had.

Jim Baynham: Anything that wasn't underground or in a tunnel ...

Ray Lemons: Unless it was two miles under, we had already found it. Of course, two miles down you couldn't do much with it anyway. All the factories they had underground we probably never even knew existed.

Jim Baynham: You read about them now.

Ray Lemons: And I guess the beauty part about the jets that they had, they couldn't stay up very long. Fifteen minutes was probably about all a 262 could fly.

Aaron Elson: Am I forgetting anything?

Jim Baynham: I don't know, I'm sure I did.

Ray Lemons: Oh, I'm sure I am too. I was going to tell something a while ago on Jim, I forget what it was now. Oh, he said he had a Packard. I had a '39 Dodge.

Jim Baynham: I finally traded that Packard in on a '40 Pontiac convertible.

Ray Lemons: Wow! Oh, would that be a collector's item today. Well, you know what, when I got back, like I said, we had that R and R in California, I had that '39 Dodge, and those tires were as slick as that. (laughter)

Jim Baynham: You couldn't get any new ones.

Ray Lemons: That's right. And I said, we'll drive it to California and I only had one spare and it's as slick as that too. But you know I made it and never had a flat on those tires.

Jim Baynham: What time of the year was it?

Ray Lemons: Oh, that was, let's see, well, we got out, it had to have been summer. Hot weather. It was about June or July, it was July. The desert was a hundred and something, going across it.

Jim Baynham: We came over here when we were home and you were home, and didn't we go to Galveston?

Ray Lemons: We did.

Jim Baynham: I remember we rode the White Lightning or whatever their version of it was.

Aaron Elson: Was that a train?

Jim Baynham: No, it was a roller coaster. We stayed at the Blue Top Inn down on Gaston, where Gaston and Grand intersect, the tourist court used to be there in '50, '46.

Ray Lemons: Oh yeah, yeah, okay.

Jim Baynham: I think that's where Don was conceived (laughter). No air conditioning.

Ray Lemons: I remember where Rob was conceived, that was on a three-day pass. And her best girlfriend came in right in the middle of all of this, and I finally told my son one day, I said, "I can tell you exactly the moment you were born, when Lois Fisher walked in the door almost." (laughter). I was on a three day pass from Sheppard Field. That's my kid now, he's only 67.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, Don will be 63 this year.

Ray Lemons: Well, you saw a picture of him there, the tallest one, that was him.

Aaron Elson: Yes.

Ray Lemons: He lives in Arizona.

Jim Baynham: What's he doing out there?

Ray Lemons: Well, he was in the tile business.

Jim Baynham: Is he really?

Ray Lemons: He was. He's out of a job now.

Jim Baynham: Oh man.

Ray Lemons: He worked for Facings of America out of Phoenix.

Jim Baynham: Is that foreign owned?

Ray Lemons: No, but he used to go over to Italy ...

Jim Baynham: Bologna?

Ray Lemons: To look at tile that they were getting on special orders.

Jim Baynham: All the tile industry is within about 50 miles of Modena and Bologna. Bologna is where the world tile goes every October. It's the big show.

Ray Lemons: Well, I've got two kids out of a job right now, I don't know what they're gonna do for a living.

Jim Baynham: Boy this housing market, I've thought about that business a lot, because when it tanks like it's done there's just no way out of it, there's nowhere to go with your product. We made brick and ceramic tile and imported a lot.

Ray Lemons: Where did you make all of that? In California?

Jim Baynham: The Fort Worth plant made tile, and we had a plant out in Garden Grove, California, and we had a brick plant up in Lincoln, Nebraska, and a brick plant in Elsinore, down south of Corona, and a roof tile plant there in Corona, and a clay sewer pipe plant in Corona. It was good business except during housing downturns.

Ray Lemons: Downturns, I don't know what's good for anything anymore. Petroleum is certainly not a good business anymore.

Jim Baynham: I've got a grandson that ... grandson in law ... that's in (?) which is a real expensive oil industry publication, and worked in Houston for years and is over in South America. Now he's been in Canada for a few months establishing a presence up there I guess in Calgary, and his family is probably going to move up there this summer.

Ray Lemons: Canada's still got pretty oil, gas operations.

Jim Baynham: Yeah, they're developing a new gooey bunch of stuff, from what I've read there's a mammoth amount of stuff, it's just hard to get.

Ray Lemons: A lot of heavy crude.

Jim Baynham: They say it's like tar.

Ray Lemons: Yeah, it's like about six gravity or even less, it's like syrup really, more like peanut butter, you might say.

Jim Baynham: They say there's a lot of it.

Ray Lemons: It's expensive too.

Jim Baynham: It's amazing all the stuff they're doing these days. My lawyer son in New Orleans, he's strictly maritime law and he defends oil companies and drillers and all that from personal injury suits, he lives well, there's a lot that goes on down there.

Ray Lemons: Oh, I'm sure, offshore stuff. My middle son is a geoscientist, geologist, and he's been laid off too. His company consolidated and moved back to Houston, and he used to live in Houston, he worked for Exxon, Marathon ... he couldn't live in Houston because of his breathing problems, so he went to Arkansas, it's been perfect for him for eight years. The company he's with folded up there and said "You've got to go to Houston or else you're out."

Jim Baynham: Our kids have been through a strange employment lifetime, you know, the age they've been in because it's all changed from when we were, what we expected to be with somebody a long time. One of my kids is a CPA with Trammel-Crowe, he's 62, will be this year, and he's counting up, five or six years ago he was telling me "I've had ten jobs since I got out of college, and only one of them did I quit." The rest of them folded up, merged or something happened.

- - - -