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# Leonard E. Herzmark oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, August 3, 2008

Leonard E. Herzmark (Interviewee)

Michael Hirsh (Interviewer)

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[Transcriber's note: The Interviewee's personal information has been removed, at the request of the Interviewer. This omission is indicated with ellipses.]

**Michael Hirsh:** Give me your full name and spell it for me, please?

**Leonard E. Herzmark:** First is L-e-o-n-a-r-d.

MH: Okay.

LH: Middle initial E as in Echo. Last name is Herzmark; I'll spell it: H-e-r-z as in Zulu-m-a-r-k as in Kilo.

MH: And your date of birth, sir?

LH: (coughs) Excuse me. 6-29-1924 [June 29, 1924].

MH: 6-29-24. Where were you growing up before you went in the Army?

LH: Kansas City, Missouri.

MH: And what were you doing before you went in the service?

LH: I was a college student. I'd just completed my sophomore year in college.

MH: At what school?

LH: (inaudible) College in Kansas City.

MH: And were you drafted?

LH: No, I enlisted in December of forty-two [1942]. And I went to active service in forty-three [1943], June.

MH: Okay. Where'd they send you?

LH: First place was Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, which is an induction center. I was assumed to be good material for a laboratory since I was studying chemical engineering, so they sent me over to the medical corps, which was in Camp Barkley, Texas, just outside of Abilene.

MH: And how'd you end up in a unit that was going into combat?

LH: Well, we didn't go into combat; I want to be clear on that. I was a medic, okay. I took medical basic training, because I said, they wanted me as a laboratory technician. And then they—when I had enlisted, I was planning on going into what they call the Army Specialized Training Program. Are you familiar with that?

MH: Yes, I've talked to a lot of guys who—

LH: Yeah, okay. Well, I was sent to the University of Delaware to study mechanical engineering.

MH: You were supposed to be a medic, but they sent you to—

LH: Well, you know. Originally, when I enlisted in the Army, they told me they got this college program and you'll get to go to college. You know, the Navy and the Marines had 'em, too.

MH: Right.

LH: I think in the Marines they let the guys go and graduate, and the guys in the Army all got sent into the infantry.

MH: I hear it was really a matter of timing—

LH: Exactly.

MH: They suddenly realized that they needed fewer engineers and more riflemen.

LH: You got it, man. But luckily, they—when they went and—when we left the University of Delaware after one term, they looked at our records when we got out and said—the camp where we ended up, which was in Colorado—and they looked at our records and said, “Oh, he’s a medic, and we’ll make him a company aide man.”

MH: Was that good news or bad news for you?

LH: (laughs) It was the worst you could get. You’d go out with a combat company and, you know, you’re wearing a red cross on your helmet, which is a good target.

MH: Yeah. Were you issued .45s for that, or not?

LH: No, we were not armed.

MH: Not armed at all.

LH: Medics are not supposed to be armed. And that meant you can’t shoot a medic, because they haven’t got a gun.

MH: Right. Did everybody sign up for those rules, on both sides?

LH: Well, I think that was probably a rule that was promulgated by one of the Geneva Conventions, but nobody paid any attention to that. But anyhow, when I got to the infantry, they made me a company aide man, and then they pulled me out and sent me to what they call a medical battalion. It was, again, another level of medical treatment. And then, I guess, they decided they were going to form another hospital down in Mississippi, and they scoured the world for very qualified personnel and they found me. (laughs) So, they sent me down to Mississippi, where Milt Silva and another 255 enlisted men were sent.<sup>1</sup> And we got trained—I took basic training so many times I can't count 'em.

MH: (laughs)

LH: That's what the Army does, you know. They've got a routine, and they gotta follow routine no matter what.

MH: Right. So that was the 120<sup>th</sup> Evac [Evacuation Hospital]?

LH: Yeah. That was it. And the routine—they changed the routine slightly while we were at the university, in that they said you were going to OCS [Officer Candidate School], but they changed that. So, we ended up in the medics in Mississippi, and we trained there. I guess it was around May or June, until—yeah, the beginning of December when we went to—

MH: This is December of forty-four [1944]?

LH: Forty-four [1944], yeah.

MH: So, at that point, did you have a medical specialty?

LH: Yes, I was a—well, I was listed as a laboratory technician. Then the officer in charge came to me and said, “You know what, I've got some guys who had given up their stripes to go to the ASTP.” Because they—if you weren't advanced ASTP, you didn't have to

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<sup>1</sup> Milton Silva was also interviewed for the Concentration Camp Liberators Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is C65-00127.

give up your stripes, you got a stripe. If you were in the beginning, why, you had to start from ground zero, or buck private. Well, I had two years of college and I passed the entry examination to get into the advanced program, so I became a private first class.

MH: There you go, man.

LH: Really moved up there.

MH: And that got you an extra how many dollars a month?

LH: Let's see. I think the base pay for private was fifty dollars, and a corporal was sixty-six dollars. That's what we made in the States. And we got some kind of overseas payment, not that you needed much, you know.

Anyhow, this officer came to me and said, "You know, I can't give you stripes if you go into the lab, because two of the guys had both been sergeants and they gave up their stripes, so I feel that would only be fair for you. You can't get 'em back. Would you like to change your occupational specialty to surgical technician or medical technician?" I said, "Sure, what's the difference? I've been trained for all that stuff." They train you for the whole thing—so I became a medical or surgical technician.

So, I went over—a medic—(inaudible) I was what they called a T5, corporal. And we went to Europe. I think we first went to Wales. I guess Milt has told you.

MH: He's told me much of this, yes. When did you first meet Milt?

LH: I'm sorry?

MH: When did you meet Milt?

LH: In the 120<sup>th</sup>.

MH: In the 120<sup>th</sup>?

LH: Yeah. We ended up there from different divisions, and so on. And then going out, as I said, scouring the whole Army for good guys, and they found us.

MH: Did you become friendly with him right away?

LH: Oh, no. You know, there were 200 guys in the outfit, and you get to know them a little bit at a time. I really didn't know him. I knew who he was and we used to talk, but we were friendly. He was from a different part of the country, although that didn't make any difference. I guess our interests—number one, I was an engineering student, so when I went to ASTP to study engineering, it was just a continuation. I think he was a—you know, I don't know what he was planning on doing, but his family was in the undertaking business, so he'd been working in that business.

MH: Right. I was just going to ask you if you recalled—you know, whether you knew anything about concentration camps, death camps, anything like that.

LH: Oh, no, we didn't know anything in advance. We were sitting in a—we were bivouacked in a field in a racetrack at Frankfurt am Main, yeah, and they came to us and said, "You're going to a concentration camp." What's that? "Well, it's a prisoner camp." And what do we know? We get into the truck and we drive. He drove, I rode.

MH: Right. Do you remember that ride?

LH: Not specifically. We were in the country. All of our friends—not all of our friends but (inaudible)—I remember, specifically, I remember driving through towns that had been bombed to hell, were on fire, and so on and so forth, and a couple of things I remember but mostly—

MH: Are you on a cordless phone?

LH: No.

MH: No, okay.

LH: I can hear a ticking in there?

MH: Yeah, we hear a—there's a clicking that comes in every so often.

LH: Yeah, I have—an organization for the deaf—I'm not deaf, but I do use a hearing aid—gave me a phone, and I guess I should go back and tell 'em there's a problem with it. Because I hear the ticking at this end, and it's the only phone I can—hold on, I'll change phones.

MH: Okay, thank you.

LH: Are you there?

MH: Yes, that's much better.

LH: Okay, I'm going to hang up this other one.

MH: Okay.

LH: This room only has three phones and two—the others are internet phones.

MH: Oh, okay.

LH: So, you know, I'm limited as to my communications ability here.

MH: I see. So, they tell you you're going to a concentration camp. How do you react to just getting that kind of an assignment?

LH: Well, just didn't know what it was. Oh, I remember a German woman came up to us, and how she found out about it, I don't know. She was in the—you know, she lived in the town. She came up and told us that her son was in a prison camp and she wanted to—asked us if that's where we were going. And if we could, you know, communicate with him. I said, in my best brand of German, that I couldn't really, didn't know where we were going, and we had no way of identifying people and so on. I understood it was some kind of a prison camp. We didn't know it was a concentration camp. And we hadn't even heard about concentration camps; at least, I hadn't.

MH: When's the first time you heard the word Buchenwald?

LH: When we got there.

MH: Just when you got there.

LH: Yeah. We drove through the city of Weimar, because Buchenwald is a distance from here to—well, anyhow, maybe ten miles outside of town. We have an Air Force base here that everybody knows about, and it's like the distance from my house to—

MH: What, Davis-Monthan?

LH: Yeah, Davis-Monthan. It's about the distance from my house to Davis-Monthan.

MH: Okay, so you're driving toward the camp, and what Milt told me is that you could smell it first.

LH: Well, that may have been. But I think my olfactory sensibilities had been damaged years before by working in the chemistry laboratory. I haven't been able to smell anything for years. That's why my wife says, "Take a bath every day, you don't have a problem."

MH: I see. So you're driving toward the camp, what's the first thing you see?

LH: Well, the first, and this is interesting—well, actually, we didn't go to the camp the first night. We set up our tents and that sort of stuff when we got there in the late afternoon, and then we went to the camp in the morning. As we drove up the road, I saw a lot of stuff hanging from trees. Having come from Mississippi, we had what's called Spanish moss that used to hang from the trees. It looked to me as though it was kind of like mistletoe, you know? But I thought that was Spanish moss. My eyesight wasn't the best, either, because I wear glasses. But as we got closer, I saw those were soldiers, German soldiers, hanging from the trees.

MH: German soldiers hanging from the trees?

LH: Hanging from the trees. The inmates—when the American troops, the armored and the infantry and so on, purged the camp of Germans, number one, [they] blew up their power plant. You know, they wanted to do the scorched earth policy or something. A lot of them threw down their guns and took off. Well, since the electrified fence was no longer electrified, the inmates climbed through the fence. This was either two or three actual fences side by side—or one inside the other, I should say, with barbed wire and with electric charge on it. You know, I don't know if you've ever stuck your hand on an electrified fence—

MH: No.

LH: But it keeps the—we have them on the farms, and it keeps the animals from messing around the fence, and certainly kept the people from getting on the fence, because it would electrocute them as soon as they hit the fence. So, the charge off the fence and they found out about it, I guess, in a hurry, and they blew up the power plant and water treatment plant and whatever else they had there. And so, they took out after the Germans, and we captured a lot of them and hung 'em right there on site.

MH: So, clearly, the prisoners in this camp, or at least some of them, were in decent physical shape.

LH: Well, all degrees. They were all degrees.

MH: Okay. How close did you get before you realized these are German soldiers hanging up there?

LH: Well, maybe—I don't know, thirty feet, forty feet, you know. Whatever I could see.

MH: So, this was essentially like a lynching.

LH: Exactly: a mass lynching, for which you cannot blame anyone. The Germans had asked for it. But, you know, when you think about what went on, you understand that the people who, when they got the opportunity, they—what was I saying?

MH: Do you recall the conversation you had with Milt at that point?

LH: No, because he was driving and we were riding in the back of the truck. And I don't even know if I was even in Milt's truck. You know, we had several trucks—quite a number of trucks, matter of fact; you could transport that entire—I think you could. They called it semi-mobile, so maybe that means—I'm not sure what it meant, but I think maybe it would take two trips to transport the whole lot. We had a lot of trucks and so on, so I really didn't know who was driving that. That was not an attention-getter at that point.

MH: So, there was no conversation with anybody in the truck about what you're seeing?

LH: There was lots of conversation between fellows that were in the truck. But the drivers usually had an assistant driver with them. They both occupied the cab, and we were in the back end.

MH: Were these trucks covered? Were they deuce-and-a-halves?

LH: I'm sorry, say again.

MH: Were these, what, two and a half-ton trucks?

LH: Yeah.

MH: So they were covered?

LH: Uh-huh.

MH: So, you couldn't really see out the side—you could see out the back.

LH: You know, I can't remember, but it was wintertime. It was cold weather, so I guess it was—I guess they were covered at the time.

MH: So, tell me what happens next. I mean, I'll just let you tell the story and I'll interrupt as—

LH: We drove. Whether we dismounted from the truck just outside the camp or we drove in the camp—I don't think we drove in the camp. But we just dismounted and went to the gate. As I walked through the gate, I remember seeing a gallows with three bodies hanging from it. The ropes were not German soldiers, [they were] inmates who had been hung.

MH: And this strikes you—?

LH: This struck me as, “This ain't no place I wanna be.” But anyhow, they said, “Now, you guys, you want to go down to those barracks over there.” There were brick buildings for the barracks of the guards and so on. They said, “Get 'em cleaned out and get the clothing and the bedding and everything that's in there out, and we'll take care of hauling it off. And you get the rooms ready, 'cause we're going to set up cots,” because we had loads and loads of cots, “and you're going to start getting patients pretty soon.”

MH: Who's telling you this?

LH: I guess our commanding officer.

MH: How many—I know you don't know exact numbers, but how many cots do you carry in an evac hospital?

LH: I really was not aware of it. But we were supposedly capable of handling—I think it was 200 patients.

MH: Did the nurses go with you at this point, or not?

LH: The nurses were separated from us. Interesting enough—I mean, you know, this is no place for nurses. Interestingly enough, the last few years the nurses reported—you know, told their stories and so on. They had heard so much about this, they thought that they were in the camp, 'cause several of the nurses told about what they saw in the camps, and they really didn't see it because they were sent to another evacuation hospital. Where? I don't have the slightest idea, but they heard so much about the camps that they imagined, after the years—it'd been a long time. And I've heard from three of the nurses, to my knowledge (inaudible) who are still alive. They rode with us, you know. They had graduated nursing school, they were commissioned officers, and the majority—they were

all about the same age. I had my twenty-first birthday on the ship coming home, so, you know, we were kids.

MH: Right.

LH: So, anyhow, the nurses were sent to the—I don't know the number of the hospital, but they were sent to another evac hospital. We went up there by ourselves, so we were the nurses or whatever it—because we were trained. I mean, obviously, we weren't trained as a nurse, but we were trained pretty close to that, all of the tasks that nurses could perform.

MH: In some of the stuff I've read about Buchenwald, it said that, just the day before the Americans got there, that 5,000 SS soldiers had left the camp and just left a few of their people in the towers.

LH: I guess that's basically what it amounted to. Because when we got there, there were a few German soldiers, but they were dangling, as I mentioned. But there were a number of them, because I remember—at least at (inaudible), we were there for a very long time. I don't—a week or two weeks. In fact, they moved us down, because we were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army; that was [George S.] Patton. Patton—each one, the Army was assigned a territory to take. And Patton took his, and then he said, "Well, go help the other guys." So, we were way out of what was supposed to be our territory. After a relatively short period of time, we were pulled out and sent down to Bavaria, sent down by Dachau.

MH: Right. But, so they have you cleaning up these barracks.

LH: Yeah.

MH: And how soon did you begin to get patients?

LH: Oh, we got 'em the same day. You know, we cleaned up the barracks in the morning, and I guess we got patients in the afternoon. I don't recall exactly the times but that's basically what it was. And the first thing we started doing [was] to feed these guys on intravenous glucose and saline, because they couldn't eat. You know, they had no ability to digest food. A couple of them had been given candy and they died from it. They wanted to eat it, you know, because it was food. But this—you know, I didn't see that happen, but I was told that.

Anyhow, we just gave them intravenous injections—oh, not injections, but intravenous feedings. And that's when I learned how to really put an IV in a rolling vein, because later on when I was back in the States, I had a patient, a nurse who was bleeding, and they couldn't give her an IV because her veins would roll all over the place. They called and I said, "Oh, I can do that." They looked at me and said, "Whaddya mean? You're an enlisted man, you can't do that." And I said, "You know where we were?" and I told them, and they said, "Yeah, try it." And I stuck it in; it made hamburger from her arm, but you know, you put the needle in (inaudible).

So, we fed these guys on the glucose and saline solution. I don't remember if we alternated or how it worked, but some got some and some got the other, and maybe, you know, both of 'em.

MH: What did the patients look like?

LH: They looked like skin and bones. I mean, they were just a skeleton wrapped in skin. There was no—

MH: Were they able to communicate with you?

LH: I'm sorry, say again?

MH: Were they able to communicate with you?

LH: Yeah, 'cause I had learned enough German. I know some Yiddish; my parents used to use it. My father and mother were born in the United States—

MH: But they spoke Yiddish so that you couldn't understand what they were saying—

LH: My father was not born in the United States. My father was born in the Oklahoma Territory. My mother was born—no, that's right, my mother wasn't born in the United States. She was born in Washington, D.C.; that's a political problem. But anyhow, they were both raised in this country. And their parents had come from Europe, so they knew Yiddish. Not that they conversed in it regularly, but when they didn't want the kids to understand, they used it.

MH: You grew up in the same family I grew up in.

LH: My mother was raised in Denver, and my father was raised in Oklahoma.

MH: So, you were able to communicate with these people?

LH: Yeah. Where are you from?

MH: Chicago, originally. So, what—do you recall any of the conversations?

LH: You know, what I tried to do is ask them who they were and where they were from. There wasn't much else to converse about at the time.

MH: Do you remember any of the answers?

LH: Well, they—I remember getting in two brothers one time; one of 'em was definitely Italian, and I couldn't speak Italian. But I used to interrogate them when they first came in. You know, "Where you from?" And I could understand a few words. One was Italian, and the next guy came in and he looked exactly like, like he might be his brother, you know. So I said "*Italiano?*" And he said "*Eh, ja Polski Żyd.*" You know what that means?

MH: Say it again?

LH: "*Ja Polski Żyd.*"

MH: A Polish Jew.

LH: Yeah. And I remember some were from Hungary, and some were there because they, you know, had opposed Hitler, or on a political basis.

MH: Right.

LH: And many—most of them were there because they were Jews. But there were an awful lot of people from all over Europe. I dunno what the percentage of Jews were, but maybe more than 50 percent. But there were many other non-Jews there, and they were, as I say, in political opposition for some crimes. I don't know what the crimes were. You know, their interpretation of a crime might be totally different from mine. So, anyhow, they were there for a wide variety of offenses against the Germans, whatever it might have been. They could have been trying to kill the Germans, you know. Whatever.

MH: Did you see any kids there?

LH: I'm sorry, say again?

MH: Did you see any children there?

LH: We had—I myself didn't see any kids, but they brought—I think there were two young boys. One was about fourteen, the other maybe ten. Their parents had been killed. They told us the story of seeing their parents put along the side of a mass grave and shot down. And one of the little boys, as a matter of fact, was shot, and he seemed dead, and got back out of the grave. The GIs picked him up and brought him along because, you know, he had nothing. He didn't—young kid, about fourteen. And he didn't know where he was or what he was doing, so the GIs taught him to curse. They taught him all the curse words they could think of, among other things, you know. So, when he talked to the nurses, he thought he was being polite. It was pretty funny at the time. (both laugh) It was pretty funny at the time.

MH: (laughs) But this is a little boy you saw in the camp?

LH: Yes. They took him along; they took him from the camp down to Cham, which was a city in Bavaria where we settled at, outside Dachau. And, you know, apparently—afterwards, he was—it was—don't know how it was done, but as the patients recovered, they took them to a distribution center or camp where, if they wanted to, they were returned home. Others went to displaced persons camp, and so on.

MH: To go back to Buchenwald, did you have any time to walk around the camp itself?

LH: You know, I really didn't. I'd heard there were a lot of different facilities there. I understand there was a camera repair facility, and I got a camera from it. But it was only half a camera, so I couldn't use it. But I brought it home.

MH: What was it, a Leica?

LH: No, it was called a Contessa-Nettel, I remember that very well. (inaudible) got lucky; he was in (inaudible). He got a Leica and he got the plant manager to grind him a full set of lens, and the whole thing got stolen. He was investigating an air crash—he was a pilot. He was investigating an air crash and left his camera at his desk, and he came back in and it was gone.

MH: Oh, nice. So, you didn't have a chance to walk around inside the camp?

LH: No, I really didn't walk around the camp. I mainly—you know, my job was to attend to those people, and that's what I did. And when I got a job to do, I just do it.

MH: How long were you there doing that job?

LH: Well, hold on a second. I've got an official copy of the history. The officer that wrote the history sent me a copy of it, because he came to Tucson. We had a reunion in Tucson and he came, and I told him that I didn't have any history, and he mailed it to me. He mailed me a copy of it, I should say. Headquarters 120<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital Semi-mobile APO 403, U.S. Army, and it's dated 10 June 1945. So, that would have been—well, we were in Tannenberg area at that time, and he talks about the training and every movement we made.

Camp Shelby—I'm just leafing through this. We left Göllheim and arrived in Frankfurt; that's moving toward—from Frankfurt to Ettersburg, which is just outside of Buchenwald. Ettersburg was like—there was a little castle there as I recall, owned by the Duke of Ettersburg, and the place was called Schloss Ettersburg. Let's see, 15 April, and arrived the same day. Okay, as we depart—left Frankfurt and got to Ettersburg the same day, so it was not an overnight trip.

Okay now, let's see here. (laughs) It says no fly problem exists. It says we were moved from camps—you know, there were a lot of flies out in this city. Venereal disease control—you know, I'm just glancing through to find things and so on. And he's got all kinds of stuff. Somewhere I marked that date so I can look through—here we are. It says the advance party went from—no, that's a little earlier. 4 April, we moved to Frankfurt, and then—I wonder the date of going from Frankfurt to Buchenwald, didn't I? You got that down?

MH: Right. Buchenwald was liberated on April 12, maybe the eleventh.

LH: This says that the following day we started movement to Ettersburg—okay, that was on April 14. We got there on the fourteenth? Now I'm looking for—it says there—a note here about how long we were there before we moved. On 21 April, we (inaudible); 25 April, the movement from the camp. We left on the twenty-fifth of April, so we were there roughly ten days.

MH: How many patients do you think you personally took care of in that time?

LH: I personally probably took care of—oh, I don't know, twenty-five or thirty, maybe more. It's a long time ago.

MH: Of course it is.

LH: I can't remember what I had for breakfast. (laughs)

MH: What is working in an environment like that to you?

LH: You know, I was just so intent on working, taking care of the poor guys, that I really didn't think about anything else. I'm in total—the total picture. I walked around the immediate area, and even when we first started moving toward the barracks, and we got off the trucks and moving toward the barracks, I saw these wagons loaded with cords of wood. As I say, my eyesight wasn't very good. And, as I got closer, those cords of wood turned into bodies: people stacked up maybe five or six high on a flatbed truck. You know, what can you—it's horrible. How can people do this to other people? What is going on here? We had come to the realization by that time as to what it was, 'cause after we unloaded the trucks, we got to Ettersburg, and there was a lot of discussion. We knew what we were going into, but you can't prepare for something like that. It was horrible.

MH: Do you get any help dealing with it?

LH: Psychological?

MH: Yes.

LH: No. The only person that we had with us who might have tried was a Baptist minister, who was our chaplain, and he didn't approach me or anybody I knew to, you know, deal with that. I don't think—he used to bring his bottle of grape juice to our Friday night services.

MH: Did you have Friday night services?

LH: Yeah.

MH: In the camp?

LH: Oh, I don't think so. In the camp, no, but while we were in the field we'd have a Friday night service. We even had—in the field, we'd celebrate Passover. He used terrible—French wine.

MH: Where were you for Passover?

LH: Oh, I'm not sure. I'm really not sure, except that we were in the field in France somewhere. It wasn't too far inside of France. When I say too far, we were on the cliffs of the German border, because our first stop in France—we traveled all across France. We stopped right in Alsace and stayed there for a few days, and then moved out into the field. We stayed in what had been a military school, swapped back and forth between the Germans and the French in the 1500s.

MH: Any idea how many Jews there were in the 120<sup>th</sup>?

LH: Oh, I guess maybe there were fifteen.

MH: Fifteen?

LH: Yeah.

MH: Was there any discussion amongst the Jewish guys in the unit?

LH: Oh, yeah.

MH: About what was—they were seeing?

LH: Yeah, of course. That, you know, it happened to everybody, so that you couldn't seek—you couldn't point out the Jews at that time. We didn't know what else had gone down with the murders of thousands of people all over Germany, France—you know, all of Europe. We weren't aware of that. All we knew was that there were fifteen of us. And, once you learned about it, you get more information and so on. But the Jewish fellows were doing whatever their jobs were to be—

MH: Right. What's it do to you to work in that environment?

LH: I'm sorry, say again?

MH: What does it do to you, if anything, to work in that environment?

LH: It hardens you, I tell you, because I know my father passed away while I was in Germany. And when I got home, I guess I didn't react the way my mother had expected me, and she said something about my being callous. I said, "Well, you know, I saw so much death"—not to say that anything can compare to the loss of your father, but he was killed in an accident. So, that was a shock to her, of course, you know, the whole family. And to me, when I got a letter from my sister while we were just outside—in a little town outside of Dachau. The chaplain came rushing over the next day, he got a notice. I told him I'd already received the information. He said, "You're not supposed to get that information first. I was supposed to receive it." I said, "Well, the communications system doesn't work exactly what it's intended."

So, anyhow, I was pretty callous—and I still am, when I hear of somebody passing away. I lost my sister-in-law in December and I lost my brother-in-law in January. My sister-in-law passed away from cancer, and my brother-in-law was in his mid-nineties, so, he just passed away of old age. You know, it wasn't—I guess I was callous. I wasn't mourning and carrying on.

MH: And so, that's something that happened to you in the war, and it's still with you in that respect.

LH: Yeah, it continues (inaudible). When you see that sort of thing, you're repulsed by it, but it certainly changes your outlook.

MH: Were you a religious person?

LH: No.

MH: So, seeing what you saw didn't change—

LH: Didn't change my religious outlook. I was bar mitzvahed and I was confirmed, and that was the end of my—mainly the end of my religion. Oh, we were married by a rabbi, and my three children—I have three sons, and they were all bar mitzvahed and so on. But after that—I guess the last of them were bar mitzvahed; the twins were bar mitzvahed. Well, you know, I just you know, I don't believe in religion anymore.

MH: Do you think seeing what you saw at Buchenwald had any impact on that?

LH: I would imagine so. You know, you think, if there were a deity, how could said deity allow this to happen? We are God's children. Would you let that happen to your children?

MH: No. Which is why I don't understand how Elie Wiesel could come out of Buchenwald and still believe in God.

LH: Yeah, I can't either. I read his book. What was it, *Night*?

MH: Yes.

LH: I can't understand it. I think Milton told you he'd met with Elie.

MH: Yes. You said that you'd been in the Dachau area; were you also at the camp?

LH: No, we didn't go into the camp; they brought the prisoners to us. They had a group of French ambulance drivers who were attached to us and got into that little town outside of Dachau. The thing that they'd do is they'd drive up and down the roads, 'cause by this time—I can't say how soon we got there after it was captured. I knew about Buchenwald, but I didn't know about Dachau.

Anyhow, a lot of these guys had escaped, and they were just walking on the highway. They didn't know where they were going, most of 'em didn't. They were semi-delirious and who knows what condition. So, they'd pick them up and bring 'em to us. We'd treat 'em, exactly in the same conditions as in Buchenwald; we'd start treating them—you know, the liquids. And then they were with us long enough and we were with them long enough to where they got to—many of them were released as healthy men again. Meanwhile, we had the Germans in town providing food for them. After they could begin to take solid food, they gave 'em—they prepared various foods for 'em.

MH: Were the Germans doing this willingly?

LH: Well, I guess they felt that they had to. I can't image they'd have volunteered for it. But I know we had some kids from the Hitler Youth who lived in another town nearby, and they came over and helped us, and they volunteered, because I know one girl in particular told me she went back to town and they berated her for being a Yankee lover—you know, I don't know what the terms were—cooperated with the American army and so on and so forth. So, we fixed up a room for her in the guesthouse that we were using as the infirmary.

MH: So, you didn't—at the point that it's over, it's not over.

LH: Oh, no. Unfortunately, this is like we're experiencing in Iraq.

MH: Right. Was there a point at which you got a sense of satisfaction seeing the fact that you could make people whole again?

LH: Oh, yeah. Sure, that was a great thing. The one thing particularly—I had a patient who had—his hands were paralyzed for whatever reason. While we were working, the inspector came through from Army headquarters somewhere, a medical inspector, just wanted to look at what we were doing—you know, visited with some of the patients and so on. After he left, this one patient who had the paralyzed hands told me, he said, “Did the doctor give you any recommendation for my paralysis?” And I knew that this guy

wasn't really paralyzed; you could tell, you know? So, I said yes. And I'd probably be shot for this today, but I got a syringe of saline, sterile saline solution, and I gave him an injection, an intramuscular injection—

MH: In his hands?

LH: His arm. In the back between the shoulder and elbow, the muscle there. And the next day, he was folding blankets. I cured him. You know, call it a placebo.

MH: Whatever works. Did he say something to you?

LH: What?

MH: Did he say something to you?

LH: Oh, yeah, he was very pleased with what I had given him.

MH: Yeah. So, the paralysis was psychological?

LH: Yes.

MH: Huh. How long did you stay in the Dachau area, more or less?

LH: Let's look here and see. April 25, we went to—well, we dinked around between—after we left Buchenwald, we stopped in two or three places in the field. We probably got to—um, what's that little town outside of Dachau? (inaudible) I don't show. 25 April—

MH: Dachau wasn't liberated till the twenty-ninth.

LH: Twenty-ninth of April?

MH: Yes.

LH: Okay. Well, we were in the field. We moved in the field, we left from Buchenwald—the date we left from Buchenwald [was] the twenty-fifth of April. From the twenty-fifth until whenever Dachau was liberated, we were in the field, because we were in a couple of different spots. I remember going through Stuttgart—I don't remember if that was going up or going back—and I remember it was burning like hell, you know? And I think that's where the German car people are.

MH: The what?

LH: The German automobile people, the ones that bought Chrysler—

MH: The Mercedes people?

LH: Daimler.

MH: Daimler Benz.

LH: Daimler Benz. Yeah, that's it. And so, let me see. Oh, here he says on the twenty-ninth of April, we started moving to Cham. Cham was a little town outside of Dachau.

MH: How does he spell Cham?

LH: C-h-a-m.

MH: Okay. And that's where you set up.

LH: Yeah. As of May 1, 1945, the unit and 900—"As of 1 May, the unit and 994 patients quartered in five buildings." I guess that's when we did it.

MH: Nine hundred patients?

LH: Nine hundred forty-four patients.

MH: At Cham.

LH: At Cham, yeah.

MH: Was your rank still T5?

LH: I'm still a T5. Until we left Germany, I was a T5. He doesn't have—he doesn't report the day I got busted. (laughs)

MH: You got busted? What did you do to get busted?

LH: Nobody ever told me. That was a funny thing. I was walking from the house—we had a bunch of what they call guesthouses. They were two and three story buildings, they had a lot of rooms; we used them for our hospital. I was walking from my ward in the guesthouse back to my barracks, which was upstairs, over a German apothecary, and one of the guys says, "Hey, Herzmark, what happened?" I said, "Whaddya mean?" He says, "Didn't you see the bulletin board?" I said "No." He said, "Go take a look."

On the bulletin board was an announcement that says 2B Private Technician Fourth Grade, it was First Sergeant So-and-so. And Technician Fifth Grade, underneath Herzmark, "Reduced in rank to private." Why? Nobody—the first sergeant (inaudible) — the company commander never talked to us, you know? And when we got back to the States, I went to the colonel and I said, "You know, after we had—" We got a thirty-day furlough; they bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, so it was all over. But uh I went back and asked for my stripes back and the colonel said, "Did you learn your lesson?" I said, "You bet I did, sir." Nobody ever told me what my lesson was.

MH: (laughs) Maybe it was the wrong guy?

LH: Yeah, maybe it was somebody else, not me. But that cost me, let me see, three months' salary or two months' salary. You know, it's a big lump between being a private and being a technician—

MH: And they took you all the way down to private, not even to PFC?

LH: No, I was reduced in rank to a private.

MH: It must have been a terrible thing you did.

LH: They put me on KP [kitchen patrol].

MH: Oh. So when did you finally get back to the States?

LH: We returned to the United States—let me see if it says that here. Uh, I don't think it says here, but it says, "On June 2, unit was relieved by the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Officer." And then he goes into a lot about training and so on. So I'm not sure, but I remember I was on a train on July 4.

MH: When did they let you out of the Army?

LH: Well, I didn't get out of the Army until January. In January.

MH: And then what do you do?

LH: Then what did I do?

MH: Yes.

LH: Well, as I told you, my father had died. So, my job was to go work in the business, because I had worked there from the time I was a kid, having to stand on a box a foot high to reach the printing press. He had a business where he did some commercial printing and printed a lot of his product, which was shipping supplies. You've probably never seen a cloth bag that can ship parts in, have you?

MH: A cloth bag?

LH: Yeah, yeah. You don't see any more of that—envelopes and—

MH: Right. I know what you're talking about, though. They had little strings that close 'em up?

LH: Yeah, that's right. He used to make pictures that they had on—some had a mailing tag on it, and envelopes, and you put on a bag and tie on a piece of machinery; extra nuts and bolts and rivets. And he had a patent on a filter for coffee—big coffee urns? I don't know if you know what an urn is.

MH: Yes.

LH: Okay. He had a patent on a filter; he'd gotten a patent in 1933, I think it was. I've got a copy of the patent, just dug it up recently. I got—this patent is mine; I was looking for another one, but (inaudible).

MH: So you stayed in that business?

LH: I stayed in that business for a short period of time. I kept it going, but it didn't really interest me; it wasn't the sort of thing that excited me. So, I started another business, manufacturing packaging materials: polyethylene and cellophane, bags and wraps and so on. I did that for twenty-two years.

MH: When did you get married?

LH: Nineteen forty-nine.

MH: And children?

LH: Three sons, one of whom is fifty-five—no, wait a minute, he's fifty-six and he'll be fifty-seven in November. And he was a television producer, television and movies.

MH: Where?

LH: Hollywood, where else?

MH: What did he do? What's his name?

LH: Michael.

MH: Michael Herzmark?

LH: Uh-huh.

MH: What did—?

LH: What did he do?

MH: Yeah.

LH: Well, in the movies he worked as a—you know, who knows what. But he made—I know he made videos for the movie, and some of the movies he actually showed videos. And other movies—you know how when you rent a DVD, you get a second, where the cast talks about the—

MH: “The making of.”

LH: He does the videos of that sort, or did that, videos of that stuff.

MH: I did that, too.

LH: Yeah?

MH: Yes, I was in Los Angeles for nineteen years. So, I produced documentaries and network specials and—

LH: Well, did you work for anybody in specific? I mean—

MH: Well, I moved from Chicago to Los Angeles to work on *After MASH* at 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox.

LH: Okay. Well, he did—he was not employed by the—but he worked for Disney. I know he went down to South America and made a movie—I can't think—*Moon Over Parador*.

MH: I know the movie.

LH: He did the videos in that one. And then he did one with the black lady with the strange hair.

MH: Whoopi Goldberg?

LH: Yeah, Whoopi Goldberg. And he did one with Richard—

MH: Dreyfuss?

LH: What?

MH: Dreyfuss?

LH: Yeah, he did about three of 'em with Richard Dreyfuss and Bette Midler.

MH: When you—

LH: *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*, he did that one.

MH: When you were in business, what city were you in?

LH: Kansas City.

MH: You moved back to Kansas City.

LH: Both on the Missouri side and the Kansas side.

MH: Do you have a photo of yourself from World War II times?

LH: Oh, yeah, there's one sittin' round here somewhere.

MH: Could I ask you, at your leisure, to find it, and if you could send it to me, I'll scan it and send it back to you?

LH: How about if I send it to you on the Internet?

MH: That'd be good, if you can scan it at—

LH: I've got it in my computer.

MH: What's your e-mail address?

LH: Okay, are you ready to copy?

MH: I'm all set.

LH: ...

MH: Okay. I'll send you my information by e-mail.

LH: That'd be fine, and then I'll reply with the photograph if you want me to.

MH: Okay. And if you have a current photograph, that'd be great, too.

LH: I've got one that's a couple or three years old.

MH: Okay. And the publisher has asked if you could scan it at 300 dpi. I don't know if you're able to do that?

LH: I think my scanner is a little better than that.

MH: Okay. 300 dpi at 200 percent. But I'll put that in the email.

LH: Okay.

MH: Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me about this.

LH: I appreciate your interest and wish you well, and wonder how come you left Hollywood?

MH: Oh, because it got to the point where I could no longer pitch ideas to twenty-six year old network executives who knew everything.

LH: (laughs) Yeah, that was exactly it, at twenty-six years old. Yeah, Michael said he had that problem, but he got into—he was still doing work for Disney when they closed up. But he went into putting old movies on DVDs and he said one day, it's like somebody just turned off the spigot. He said, "The hell with this," just closed up the place. I guess you could say he's retired; he's not making any money. (laughs)

MH: Well, I just decided it was time to write my way out of TV, and so this will be my sixth book.

LH: How old are you?

MH: I'm sixty-five.

LH: Okay, so you're a little bit older than Michael.

MH: But you get to a point where it's time to do something different.

LH: Well, that's what I did. I went from making plastic bags to being a clinical engineer. I went back to school and studied biomedical engineering and got into that field and did that for a number of years.

MH: Okay. All right. Well, I think you very much for your time, and I'll send you an e-mail a little bit later.

LH: Okay, that's great.

MH: Okay, take care.

LH: You too.

MH: Bye-bye.

***End of interview***