

March 2008

## Art L. Marx oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, March 18, 2008

Arthur L. Marx (Interviewee)

Michael Hirsh (Interviewer)

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### Scholar Commons Citation

Marx, Arthur L. (Interviewee) and Hirsh, Michael (Interviewer), "Art L. Marx oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, March 18, 2008" (2008). *Digital Collection - Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center Oral Histories*. Paper 98.  
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Oral History Program  
Florida Studies Center  
University of South Florida, Tampa Library

Digital Object Identifier: C65-00087  
Interviewee: Art L. Marx (AM)  
Interviewer: Michael Hirsh (MH)  
Interview date: March 18, 2008  
Interview location: Conducted by telephone  
Transcribed by: Kathy Kirkland  
Transcription date: February 2, 2009  
Audit Edit by: Michelle Joy  
Audit Edit date: June 9, 2010  
Final Edit by: Mary Beth Isaacson, MLS  
Final Edit date: June 14, 2010

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

**Art Marx:** That would've been, I think, in April. We were on a hillside overlooking the airstrip; there was a forest just to the left of us, and they had forced workers in there building airplanes.

**Michael Hirsh:** Could I turn on a tape recorder?

AM: Yeah, I don't care.

MH: Okay.

AM: Won't hurt, will it?

MH: No, I don't think so.

AM: (laughs)

MH: If you've lived this long, a tape recorder's not gonna hurt you. (laughs)

AM: (laughs)

MH: Give me your full name and spell it for me.

AM: Yeah, it's Arthur, A-r-t-h-u-r, middle initial is L. My friends all called me "Harpo," because my last name is Marx, M-a-r-x.

MH: And your address is?

AM: I have to stop and think about it. ...

MH: And your phone is.... And what's your date of birth?

AM: September 8, 1924.

MH: You're one of the kids.

AM: Yeah. Well, Duane is a few months younger than I am, because he enlisted in the Army, I think, right out of high school—he was from up in the Dakotas. And me, I went to college for a year and got a deferment to finish my freshman year, and then I got drafted, and I was still eighteen.

MH: What year'd you go in the Army?

AM: Nineteen forty-three.

MH: Forty-three [1943]?

AM: Yeah.

MH: That's the year I was born.

AM: Is it really?

MH: Yes, sir. I'm gonna be sixty-five this year. (inaudible) Which makes me the kid.

AM: What I was going to tell you is, we were moving along near this airstrip, and there was a bunch of prisoners that had been liberated, and they were—now, when we would capture German soldiers, they would walk—it sounds crazy, but they would walk along the road heading to whichever way our people told them to go, and they had their hands clasped on top of their heads, walking along, and nobody was guarding them in particular. But everybody's keeping an eye on them. So, here's these newly freed prisoners, and one guy saw somebody there—one of our new prisoners—saw him going along. And this guy had been probably especially mean to him, so he grabbed (coughs)—I got a frog in my throat. He grabbed a stick or something and tripped the guy and started hitting him with it. And another guy came and took the stick away from him because he was bigger and he could hit harder. And they started, between the two of them, they kicked and beat this guy, and he died right on the spot. They killed him, and nobody lifted a hand, including myself, to stop them. (laughs)

MH: Were the prisoners wearing those striped uniforms?

AM: Well, some of them did, and some of them had just rags and stuff, but mostly they had those striped uniforms, yeah.

MH: What kind of physical shape were they in?

AM: They were pretty slim, pretty skinny. I actually saw some of them at Mauthausen, but it was after, you know, a couple days later.

MH: So, you did get up to Mauthausen?

AM: Yeah, but I didn't get much of a look. But you saw some of these newly liberated prisoners every day. We'd be riding along in our vehicle, which they didn't go very fast. It was a twenty-three-ton—it was a self-propelled howitzer, is what it was, so it was open on the top, and it had a howitzer and a machine gun. So, we're going slow, and eating while we're going, because we just kept moving most of the time. And these newly liberated people would be coming up, begging for food, and you'd look at them, and,

God, you couldn't eat without giving them some of it. So, there was a lot of that going on.

MH: You said they were building airplanes in the woods?

AM: Yeah. Actually, this one day—we were only there a couple days—they would roll them out and, you know, not the prisoners but the Germans, would roll them down, and there was an airfield about maybe 400 yards ahead of us at the bottom of the hill. And they could—you know, they were doing outdoor assembly, and 'course I understand they were doing underground assembly in caves and stuff in some places. But anyhow, this one day, a couple of planes took off from that airfield, and they were flying out on whatever their mission was, and in the afternoon, a couple of them came back and tried to land. And the U.S. Army had anti-aircraft guns ringing the field by this time, so these guys were touching down, and then they tried to take off when they saw all us—you know, the American armament. They tried to take off, and kind of got shot before they even got their wheels off the ground. They got shot while they were taxiing. It was pretty exciting.

MH: I imagine. Did you see in the closing months of the war, other prisoners or other camps?

AM: Not much. This was actually the last couple days when we found Mauthausen. So, good luck with your book.

MH: Thank you very much.

AM: Have you written some of these things before?

MH: I've written—this will be my sixth book—

*End of interview.*