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Milton R. Silva oral history interview by Michael Hirsh, July 18, 2008

Milton R. Silva (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: One moment, while I turn the recorder on.

Milton Silva: Let me shut the TV off.

MH: Okay.

MS: Okay.

MH: You're still on ...?

Milton Silva: Yeah.

MH: Okay. So, for the benefit of the transcriber, you're Milton R. Silva, S-i-l-v-a, retired judge. You live at ... and you were with the 120th Evac Hospital that ended up at Buchenwald. What's your date of birth?

MS: June 16, 1923.

MH: That's our anniversary—not 1923, but June 16.

MS: Oh! (laughs) Your marriage anniversary?

MH: Pardon?

MS: Your marriage anniversary?

MH: My marriage anniversary, yes. We just celebrated forty years.

MS: Wow!

MH: Where did you grow up?

MS: I grew up in Fall River, Massachusetts.

MH: All right. What were you doing before you went in the Army?

MS: Well, let's see. Actually, I grew up in the funeral business. I'm a third-generation funeral director. My grandfather established this business in 1890, and then my dad took it over about 1934. I just—you know, as a kid I just grew up with dead bodies. And just before the war, I had enlisted—I had enrolled at Providence College, and when World War II broke out, I was looking for a way to evade the draft. So, I quit Providence College and enrolled in the Boston School of Anatomy and Embalming with the hope that, as an embalmer, I would be deferred. Well, it didn't work, and I got drafted anyway. But when you get into the service, they have a Form 20; are you familiar with that?

MH: No.

MS: Okay. Well, anyway, it's sort of a concise history of what you've done in your life, and it has holes all around the four sides of the form. It's a cardboard form—not really cardboard, but heavy paper. Each hole has a number on it. So, if you had some medical background, then you had a number assigned to it, and that hole would be punctured. And if you are able to type, then it was punctured. If you could take shorthand, it was

punctured. If you could speak a language, it was punctured. So, they had all these various codes on a Form 20. Well, I had taken typing in high school; I'd taken French in high school; I'd taken stenography in high school, shorthand. And all of these things were on Form 20.

Well, I got drafted and ended up in the 8th Armored Division down in Camp Polk, Louisiana. I was probably the second guy in line. I walked in, and a big first sergeant was sitting there at a typewriter, pecking at the keys. He finished the person in front of me, and then I came up, and I saw he was struggling, and I said, "Sir, I can type if you'd like me to sit down and do that." So, he had me sit down, I filled out the form, typed it. He said, "Kid, go back and get a bunk and come back here. You're the company clerk."

MH: "You're the clerk, the company clerk." Yes.

MS: "My name is Sergeant Kaberski, and you don't call me 'sir.' You only call officers 'sir.' You got that right?" I said, "Yes, sir." (laughs)

MH: (laughs) Nice move.

MS: Yeah. So, anyway, that's where I took my basic training. Well, when you take your basic training in an armored division, it's mobile. Everybody has to be able to drive a vehicle. So, not only—what I do, I take basic training in how to shoot weapons and so forth, but we also had to learn how to drive. So, I got qualified on a two-and-a-half ton truck. I had a license for a two-and-a-half ton truck.

Well, one day we're out on a bivouac, and a Jeep drove up. A fellow's yelling my name. "Silva, Silva!" I said, "Right here." He said, "Major Kilgore wants to see you." Well, I didn't know who Major Kilgore was, and I said, "What for?" He says, "I don't know; my job is to bring you in." So, I went in. Kilgore had run my Form 20; and how they do that is if the code is 450, they run a rod through all the forms to lift the rod up, and whatever drops out is a 450. So, they were looking for people who were able to take shorthand and type, and I was the only guy that dropped out.

Well, they were doing what they called the Section 8 Evaluation: people who were just not able to cope with Army life and would be a detriment to the service if they remained in. They were conducting these hearings, and I was taking the shorthand as to what was being said and then typing up the records for them to evaluate the next day. This went on for about three weeks, which was pretty good duty, because all my friends were out bivouacking and getting bit by mosquitoes and so forth.

But anyway, right after that, they established what's called the Army Specialized Training Program for people like myself and Warren Priest, who had been in college and got taken out.¹ I went up to Arkansas State Teachers College for a star unit, where we were all tested. From there, I got sent to Princeton and spent about nine months in Princeton. Well, at the time, they were drafting married men with kids, and a big hue and cry went up about all these kids in college, and you're taking married men with children. So, they dissolved the program, and I ended up in the 104th Infantry Division.

MH: In the 104th?

MS: Yeah; the Timberwolves, they're called. Terry Allen was the commanding general. I ended up in the medical battalion out there, because of my Form 20 saying that I was a student from the Boston School of Anatomy and Embalming. So, I was with the 104th for maybe about six weeks, then they decided to establish the 120th Evac Hospital, and they were looking for people. My name dropped out, again because of Boston School of Anatomy, and I got sent down to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where the 120th was being organized.

Well, the minute I got there, they looked at my form. I had a driver's license for a two-and-a-half ton truck. It was sort of like a MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] unit; it was the forerunner of MASH. It was a mobile unit, and we had trucks, and they were looking for truck drivers. I ended up in the motor pool.

MH: What was your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] at that point?

MS: Uh—

MH: I mean, were you still clerk typist?

MS: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think so. Yeah. But when they—you know, when I got out there and they found out that I had a license, then the motor pool is where I went. People came in, and we were instructing them in how to maintain vehicles, how to drive vehicles and so forth. We had Jeeps, three-quarter ton trucks, and two-and-a-half ton trucks. Well, I spent most of my time in Shelby as a truck driver. We went overseas and got our vehicles, and ended up on the mainland sometime in March of forty-five [1945]. We

¹ Warren Priest was also interviewed for the Concentration Camp Liberators Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is C65-00109.

were at one of those staging areas; I don't know if it was Camp Lucky Strike or one of them. But in any event, from there we ended up in Rambervillers, which was a little town south of Nancy.

Well, they started to bombard the Siegfried Line, the Saarbrücken region. Where we were billeted in Rambervillers was a former military academy, and we were all up on the roof of the building, watching the bombing of Saarbrücken. And the funny thing is that that particular day, I had found a woman who was willing to wash my laundry. I was walking through the town and saw the laundry in her back yard, so I knocked on the door, and speaking French, I said, "Madame, *je desire une femme*—" and the minute I said I desired a woman, she sort of put her hand on her head and said, "*Oui, monsieur?*" (laughs) I couldn't remember the word for "washerwoman," which was *laveuse*, but anyway, she agreed to do my laundry. Well, the next day we shipped out, and I waved goodbye to my laundry in her backyard. (laughs)

MH: Oh, jeez.

MS: But anyway, we were playing catch-up with General [George S.] Patton. He would move into an area, and then we would be moved up to where he was supposed to be; no sooner had we set up our equipment and tents and so forth, where he had moved on; we'd knock them down. We just chased him all over until we got to Frankfurt. By that time, everything was sort of quieted down. The Germans were on the way out, and it was sort of a rest and recreation area at the time. We had set up in the center of a racetrack in the middle of Frankfurt. In fact, one of the guys had found a motorcycle. He got it running, and they were running around the track with the motorcycle, and everyone was having a good time.

Well, we got word that FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] had died, and about two days later, all hell broke loose. We were told to pack up, but not to load any vehicles. Up to this time, we had—what we would do is operate in tandem. We would take the people up who were supply and maintenance, the guys that put up the tents and so forth; we would take them up and then we'd come back for personnel, and while we were coming back for personnel, they'd be setting up the equipment, so by the time we got there with most of the people, the nurses and the doctors and so forth, the hospital would be operational. But in this particular instance, they said, "Don't load any vehicles."

Well, about six in the morning, a group of quartermaster trucks showed up, a black group; all of the drivers were black. We loaded all the vehicles, because it was a one-trip deal. We weren't coming back for anything. Everybody was moving out. Well, Herbie James was riding with me in my truck, and we drove all day, all night, and at night we were driving in blackout conditions. You could hear some small arms fire. And as we

approached our—and we didn't know where we were going. We thought we were going—that Patton had started a big offensive and he'd met a lot of resistance from the Germans, and there were gonna be a lot of casualties, and that's what we were going into.

As we approached our destination, we started to get this odor, and Herbie said to me, "Milt, there's something that smells around here." I said, "Herbie, there's somebody dead around here." Having grown up in the funeral business, the smell of death was not unfamiliar to me. I thought that we had probably run by some bodies that had been left by the side of the road and had decomposed, and that's what we were smelling. But, you know, the smell just got stronger as we got to wherever we were going. And, lo and behold, with the light of day, we arrived at our destination, which was Buchenwald concentration camp.

MH: At this point, had anybody in the army told you, officially or unofficially, about concentration camps?

MS: No.

MH: Nothing?

MS: No, I had no idea that they even existed. And it was just—you know, I grew up in the funeral business, but it just never prepared me for what we ran into that day. Bodies all over the place, bodies stacked like card-wood—cordwood, bodies still in the ovens, bodies still on hooks like meat in a plant that provided food.

MH: Let me take you back for a minute. Talk to me about what's the first thing you saw as you come to the camp. You're driving the deuce-and-a-half?

MS: No. When we got to the camp, we walked up. We had set up base sort of at the bottom of the hill in the little town of Thuringia.² I think that's what the name was; something like that, anyway. We set up there and then we just walked up, everybody walked up, and the first thing I saw was the entrance to the camp. We got beyond the entrance into the doors, and we saw these people walking around, almost naked and looking like living skeletons. And we just—it was sort of an eerie sight. It was—people were whimpering.

² Thuringia is the German state where Buchenwald was located. The 120th Evac's base was located in the town of Ettersburg, a suburb of Weimar, the closest major city to the camp.

MH: How were you dealing with it?

MS: I was just utterly—I just couldn't believe what I was seeing. "This is not so," you know. "Who the hell would treat people like this?" I remember wandering off into an area where a bunch of inmates were surrounding an individual, and they were pelting him and beating the hell out of him: he was one of the guards. And I remember standing there yelling, "Kill the son of a bitch!" and I was so upset about that that I just walked off. Each of us had a day assigned when we would fix the flat tires, and when I got back down—because I didn't want to stay there anymore, I just didn't want anything to do with what was going up there. I went down and started to fix tires. I remember fixing eighteen flats and beating the hell out of the tires with a sledgehammer and feeling pretty good about it.

MH: The man that the inmates were beating was still in uniform, or he was one of the kapos?

MS: He was one of the guards at Buchenwald.

MH: He was a German guard? In uniform?

MS: Yeah. Well, he didn't have much of a uniform, because they had ripped his clothes, and he was bloodied.

MH: Oh. I'm just—I mean, Buchenwald was liberated on April 11, 'cause Roosevelt died on the 12th, or April 13th in Europe, and you were there a couple days later. I'm just surprised that there would be—

MS: They evidently caught this guy, who was pawning himself off as an inmate.

MH: As a prisoner. Yeah. Okay.

MS: Yeah. So, he didn't appear to have a uniform on; he was just—

MH: When did you walk through the camp where you saw the people on hooks and that sort of thing?

MS: The first day we got there, which would have been—I think we got there on the 14th.

MH: On the 14th. So, again, if you can do it, take me through the camp again. You saw the prisoners doing that.

MS: Yeah. Well, I walked in, and there was a body on a stretcher; and then, just outside of the crematory, there were bodies stacked up like cordwood, bodies going into the incinerator. I remember peeking in and seeing the incinerator doors open with remains of bodies that had started to be incinerated. And then just below that, there were these hooks, with bodies that were hung on them.

MH: You mean on a lower floor?

MS: Underneath, sort of. It was sort of like they were—sort of went down into a lower level where hooks were on the wall. A meatpacking plant, where they go ahead and hook up the carcasses on the hooks and moved them along. And you could see on the walls where they would be scratching and kicking, trying to prevent themselves from being strangled by the wires that were put around their neck. The word went out from upper echelon not to change anything, 'cause I was upset that they hadn't buried these bodies. But the word came down to leave everything this way; they wanted to record this to make sure no one would ever forget that it actually happened, and they wanted to bring the brass in to see it. And the commanding general, I remember, had everybody from the town walk through.

MH: What was that like?

MS: That was weird. You know, people were looking at it like they'd never seen it before, and probably they never had. I think they knew what was going on, but they just didn't want to get involved. And I can recall Margaret Bourke-White; she was there from *Time* magazine, and there's a picture of her taking a picture of these people from the town, walking around. I remember standing behind her, so that when I see that picture, I can place myself in the area behind her when she was doing this. And who was the British guy, Anthony Eden?

MH: The politician?

MS: From Great Britain.

MH: Right.

MS: Yeah. He visited the camp. And the senator from Maine, she visited the camp at the time.

MH: The woman?

MS: Right.

MH: What was it, [Margaret Chase] Smith? I'm trying to remember her name.

MS: I don't remember.

MH: How long were you at the camp?

MS: Let's see, we were there probably no more than two weeks.

MH: Which, given the experience of most of the men I've interviewed, is an eternity.

MS: Right. But the doctors in our outfit were all surgeons, and they—I can recall the first night that we were there, they spent the time transferring all the really sick people from the camp to the SS hospital across the road from the camp. We were putting them on two-and-a-half ton trucks on stretchers, and driving them over and taking them off—taking them off the truck on the stretchers, and the stretchers that had gone earlier would be piled back on the trucks, and then they'd come back. Meanwhile, there'd be another group of people already on stretchers that would be put back into the trucks. And the two-and-a-half ton trucks would have chairs, these seats that folded down.

MH: Right, the benches along both sides.

MS: Right. So, what happened is you put them on the benches and slid them in, and then we'd put a couple underneath the bodies that were on the benches. So, maybe twelve or fifteen people were transported at a time, and they would go on stretchers and we'd get

empty stretchers back. And this went on all night. There were—there must have been in excess of 2,000 very, very sick people.

MH: How large was the SS hospital?

MS: Oh, I really don't know. I never had occasion to really get into the hospital. I just transported them. Warren might know, because he was a surgical tech.

MH: Were you there when the AFS ambulances arrived? The American Field Service guys were driving ambulances, Dodge trucks.

MS: No.

MH: Oh, no, that was a different camp. I'm sorry. Forget what I just said.

MS: No, I don't remember that at all.

MH: That was the wrong camp; that's Bergen-Belsen. I'm getting my camps mixed up. Did you have occasion to talk to any of the inmates?

MS: Not, you know—actually, they looked so bad that we really didn't—if you gave them anything, they wanted to respond by hugging you, and I was just afraid to get a disease from them. And I ran into Elie Wiesel one day, and I said to Elie—

MH: Where, at the camp or as an adult?

MS: No, no. He was the principal speaker at U Mass Dartmouth, and I was invited. I went over and talked to him and told him that I was with the 120th Evac Hospital, and he put his arms around me and said, "Thank you." And then I said, "Let me hug you," and I hugged him. I felt redemption, because I wouldn't let these other guys hug me in the old days.

MH: I was going to ask you if you felt guilty about not letting them hug you. But your experience is no different than hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of GIs who—I

mean, American soldiers are compassionate. They had—some hugged people, and some were terrified to, and felt bad about it.

MS: Of course, since we were truck drivers, we were always on the move. I didn't spend the whole two weeks at Buchenwald, because they liberated Nordhausen and they needed an evac hospital there, so we were sent out to move another evac hospital in. By the time we got there—I don't know if you've ever seen this picture of an area that looked like a football field with bodies head to toe, laid out?

MH: No.

MS: Well, that was Nordhausen, and that's the way it was when we got there. They were getting ready to bury them. They buried them at Nordhausen, but they wouldn't do it at Buchenwald.

MH: This was the main camp at Nordhausen, or Dora?

MS: Nordhausen was a satellite camp to Buchenwald.

MH: And then—go ahead.

MS: It's where they were building the—

MH: The V-2 [missile].

MS: Right, right.

MH: I've interviewed a number of people, and they talked to me about the Nordhausen prison, a brick building behind a brick wall, and they also talk about the Dora-Mittelbau camps, where they had the slaves who were building the V-2s. Do you remember which one you were at?

MS: Well, the one that they—it was Nordhausen.

MH: Okay. Did it have a brick wall or a wire fence? If you can remember.

MS: I can't remember. All I can remember is the bodies laid out head to toe on this football field, what looked like a football field.

MH: And those bodies, they were going to bury them there, or they were laid out to move them?

MS: They were laid out to bury. They had them laid out, and they were taking numbers off them. The engineers had dug graves, and they were moving the bodies into the graves. And of course, we had just moved the hospital in, and we weren't staying there very long, but that's all I remember about the short time there. Later on, when we got to—I'm not sure what location, but we were used to move another evac hospital into Mauthausen, down in Passau, down in Austria.³

MH: Did you see that camp, too?

MS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that was a camp that had a quarry, and they used to throw them off the top.

MH: What did you see at Mauthausen?

MS: Well, actually, at that particular—people. There were just loads of people that were leaving when we got there, and I didn't get to see much of the camp. In fact, I know more about Passau after the war than I did at the time that we were there.

MH: How do you spell that city that you're saying?

MS: P-a-s-s-a-u.

MH: Okay.

MS: It was near Linz, because I can recall we had decided—after we'd moved them down, we decided to take another route back, and we went down into Linz. Patton's

³ Passau is actually in Germany, on the border between Germany and Austria.

army was stalled there, because they had run out of gas. Then we drove north from Linz up into Czechoslovakia. And as we drove north, we drove right through the Germany army. They had surrendered, they had put all their arms up, they had thrown their arms off into the field; they were all stacked up in piles. We drove north and decided to camp overnight.

During the night, we heard a lot of movement of people marching and so forth, and when we woke up in the morning, in daylight, it was the Russian army. There were about eighteen of us, and we had fifteen trucks. They were walking, we were riding, and I think they looked at the trucks as an opportunity to go back home, because for all intents and purposes, the war was over. But we had a guy in the outfit who didn't speak very good English, but he could surely speak Slavic, and he spoke with the Russians and convinced them that we were on a special mission for General Patton. They thought Patton was a nut and they wanted nothing to do with him, and they let us go. And then we—yeah, we were already in Cham, Bavaria at the time. Yeah.

MH: When you were at Buchenwald, did they bring the nurses from the 120th in or did they send them someplace else?

MS: They sent them someplace else, yeah.

MH: And they never did bring them in.

MS: Not to Buchenwald, no

MH: I know there were nurses at Dachau, and there were nurses at Mauthausen-Gusen.

MS: Yeah. While we were at Buchenwald, we had occasion to find a German supply depot, and we broke into it, put a winch through the door—it was chained—and pulled the doors off the building. There were a lot of clothes in there, including some rabbit fur jackets; we brought those back and gave them to our nurses. In fact, I brought back a German motorcycle outfit, which I sold a couple years ago to someone coming to buy up German stuff. But surprisingly, all these years, it wasn't moth-eaten; it was still in good shape.

MH: How long did you stay in Europe when the war ended?

MS: We were back home in July.

MH: And discharged?

MS: No, no. We came back home in July, and we were at Camp Polk, Louisiana; we were scheduled to go to the Pacific, and we were given a furlough. I was back home, and I was at the railroad station when I looked at the *Boston Herald*, and there was a picture of this big cloud. It was a picture of the atomic bomb. They had dropped it on Japan, and I was at the railroad station going back to Camp Polk, Louisiana. This was in early August.

I went back, and then, at that particular point, we were no longer going to the Pacific: the war was over. Everybody got assigned points, and I got transferred to a replacement depot which handled the discharges of people. When I went in, there was a sergeant there who looked through the Form 20s and found out that I was a clerk typist, and he said to me, "You're my replacement. I'm outta here." He said, "The first thing you do is to promote yourself to staff sergeant. This lieutenant will sign anything you put in front of him."

MH: (laughs) Now it's beginning to sound like *M*A*S*H*.

MS: (laughs) That's what I did. And by the time I had my points, which was in February of forty-six [1946], I got someone else to take my place. I got discharged in late February, just in time to re-enroll in Providence College. They gave me a semester's credit for my work at Princeton. I graduated from PC in May and enrolled at BU Law School in May, and went to BU Law School days and embalming school nights.

MH: I'm sure there's a lot of jokes that can be done about that combination.

MS: Right. (laughs) I also got married, and then my wife got pregnant, and you know, just trying to survive on \$21 a month. So, I quit law school, went out embalming bodies for three or four years: trade embalming, they called it. And one day I woke up and said, "I'm not going to do this the rest of my life." I went back to law school, went to Suffolk and saw Dean Frank Simpson, had a long chat with him, and he said to me, "What makes you think you're motivated to become a lawyer?" So, I told him what I was doing, and he said, "I think you might just make it." (laughs) So, he enrolled me at the school, and I got by the bar in 1952.

MH: And then practiced where?

MS: I practiced in Fall River, got involved in politics, was a police commissioner for the City of Fall River for eight years, and I served in the legislature for four years. Made a friend out of Frank Sargent, who later became our governor, and when a vacancy occurred in Fall River, he appointed me.

MH: So, you were a judge of what court?

MS: Fall River District Court.

MH: How long were you a judge?

MS: Twenty years.

MH: And retired when?

MS: Retired, let's see, 1991.

MH: So I don't have to figure it out, how old are you now?

MS: Eighty-five.

MH: Eighty-five, yeah.

MS: Just turned eighty-five a month ago.

MH: When—I can (mumbling)—when did you tell her wife about what you'd seen in the war?

MS: I don't ever recall really telling her.

MH: Do you have children?

MS: I have children.

MH: Did you tell them?

MS: Yeah, but in bits and pieces. In fact, they have learned more about it as a result of my speaking at various synagogues in the area. Most recently, about three years ago, I spoke at the synagogue over in Providence, Rhode Island; it got a lot of publicity and the place was packed. My kids showed up, and they brought a TV camera and recorded it. I think they probably got more out of it that night than they ever had in all the years that—it just wasn't a subject that I wanted to talk about.

MH: Can you put your finger on how those experiences you had at the camps affected you in later life?

MS: Well, I think it made me more tolerant. I can't stand anybody making disparaging remarks about Jewish people. It just turns me off. Don't tell me a joke about Jews; I don't want to hear it.

MH: Do you remember when that happened and you shut somebody down?

MS: Well, I think probably—I took a trip to Portugal one year, and we stayed at a hotel in Estoril. I took my kids with me, and they were up in the room with my wife, and I went down to the bar. I got to talking with the bartender, and he was pretty knowledgeable of Portuguese history. And he started to talk about the Inquisition, and he said to me, "What's your name?" I said, "Silva." He said, "Your family's one of those that switched." And I said, "Well, my mother's family was Benivedes." He said, "They were Jewish, and they switched."

And I can remember my grandfather, my maternal grandfather, who we lived with when my folks were first married up until the time he died. Well, let's see, I was nine years old when he died. He was my best friend. But I can remember him every morning, at nine o'clock in the morning, he locked himself in his room, he pulled the drawer out on the bureau. He had a shawl, and he prayed for an hour. I think that was as a result of his Jewish roots when he was a young lad. And I think that, you know, it was—that bartender in Lisbon is the guy that really put me into a situation where, hey, you know, I don't want to hear about these things.

MH: Back in the States, did it—I mean, it's hard to avoid. Especially in the fifties [1950s], I'm sure, it's hard to avoid anti-Semitic humor.

MS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, but I just—I didn't make it a point. I just turned off, you know, wouldn't give them the benefit of a laugh. If I was able to get away or walk away without insulting anybody, I did it.

MH: Are you a religious person?

MS: Well, I think that now that I'm getting close to Judgment Day, yeah, I've become religious. (laughs)

MH: Just-in-case religion.

MS: Yeah, right.

MH: But seeing what you saw in Germany didn't affect, or did it affect, any belief you have in God?

MS: No, no. No. You know, our God is a loving god. This was a result of a madman who just didn't believe in God.

MH: You mentioned Elie Wiesel. I'm Jewish, and I'm amazed that somebody can come out of the experience he came out of and still believe in God. I just—that I find incredibly hard to fathom.

MS: Well, I think that he really believes that he's alive because God helped him while he was at Buchenwald.

MH: But the fact that he doesn't question why God let him be put in Buchenwald or why God let a Buchenwald be built is the part that I have trouble with.

MS: Well, you know, if you believe that he's a loving guy and that there are bad people on this earth, the bad people are controlled by the devil.

MH: Have you—did you ever go back to visit any of these places?

MS: No, no. No, I didn't want to be there in the first place, and I have no desire to ever go back. What's his name—Ken Levine did a documentary on our group several years ago, and he wanted to finish it off by taking some of us to Buchenwald, and he'd pay all the way and so forth. But I just refused to go.

MH: I can understand that.

MS: I have trouble just looking at the gates of Buchenwald on TV, and it just is very upsetting to me.

MH: Do you have a picture of yourself from your wartime days?

MS: Yeah. Well, have you seen our website?

MH: Um—

MS: "Buchenwald and Beyond"?

MH: Yes.

MS: Well, I'm in there as one of the—there's a picture of me in there.

MH: Okay. But do you have a good copy of the original?

MS: Somewhere, yeah.

MH: What I'd like to do is if I can get a good picture of you from there, if you could send it to me and then I'll scan it and return it to you? And I'd also like to get a current-day picture of you.

MS: Let's see. Let me give you my e-mail, and you send me all of the stuff you want me to do on e-mail and then—my granddaughter is very versatile—

MH: Oh, okay.

MS: —so I'll have her scan the pictures in and shoot them back to you.

MH: Terrific. Okay, your e-mail is?

MS: ...

MH: My brother-in-law is a criminal defense attorney in Chicago, and his license plate is ...

MS: (laughs) Well, you know, when I first got appointed, it was in the aftermath of the criminal law revolution of the sixties [1960s] and the early seventies [1970s]. All of these decisions had filtered down about *Miranda* [*v. Arizona*] and *Escobedo* [*v. Illinois*] and so forth. It was my job to go ahead and put these to use. So, I ended up with the nickname of "Not Guilty Milty."

MH: (laughs)

MS: The police started that rumor.

MH: I see. (laughs)

MS: So, now it's my turn to get even. (laughs)

MH: (laughs) Okay. I'll send you an e-mail that's sort of specific about how she should scan it for me.

MS: Okay.

MH: All right. Anything else that comes to mind?

MS: No.

MH: I can tell it's still an emotional subject to even think about.

MS: It never goes away.

MH: Right.

MS: Never goes away. In fact, every year, we have a reunion. Last year, I hosted everybody up here in Massachusetts, and this year they're going out to Oakland, California. But the ranks have dwindled considerably: there are probably maybe ten or twelve that are going, and most of them are just one family. You might want to talk with Len Herzmark, because Len's son has done some television.⁴ In fact, [at] one reunion we had down in San Diego, he did a documentary; he interviewed a lot of the guys.

MH: What's the man's name?

MS: Len Herzmark, H-e-r-z-m-a-r-k. When you send me the e-mail, ask me for Len's e-mail, and I'll get that back to you.

MH: Okay. All right, I will send you the e-mail shortly, then.

MS: Okay.

MH: Thank you very, very much. I know—I mean, I can tell that asking you these questions and sort of compelling you to think about it is difficult. I appreciate your taking the time.

⁴ Leonard Herzmark was also interviewed for the Concentration Camp Liberators Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is C65-00058.

MS: Well, Warren Priest has done a lot of work. He is the guy that has sort of prompted me to get involved and to tell the story, but for the longest time, I just didn't want to do it.

MH: Did he tell you I was going to call?

MS: No.

MH: Oh, okay.

MS: No, I haven't heard from him; in fact, I talked with Warren maybe six months ago.

MH: I spoke with him on June 6.

MS: He wasn't feeling well; he was complaining it's time. He's got difficulty walking. But when you talked to him, was he feeling better?

MH: Um, he seemed—

MS: Did he talk about himself?

MH: He didn't talk about himself in that respect.

MS: Oh.

MH: But I thank you again very much. I'll send you the e-mail.

MS: Okay, Michael.

MH: All right. Take care of yourself, sir.

MS: Bye-bye.

MH: Bye-bye.

End of interview