United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Edward J. Gardner

August 28, 2012

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PREFACE

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

Transcribed by Cindy Nicolls, National Court Reporters Association.

EDWARD J. GARDNER

August 28, 2012

Question: This is an interview for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Leah Wilson, and I'm interviewing Mr. Edward J. Gardner. The date is August 28th, 2012. This interview is being conducted over the phone. Mr. Gardner, where were you born and what was your name at birth?

Answer: I was born in Natrona, PA: And my name was, at date of birth, was Edward J. Ogrodowczyk.

Q: Can you spell that for me, please?

A: O-G-R-O-D-O-W-C-Z-Y-K.

Q: And what year were you born?

A: 1927.

Q: And how old are you today?

A: Today, I am 85 years old.

Q: Where were your parents born?

A: In Poland.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

A: Well, not much because my, my dad died when I was a young boy. And I hardly ever, hardly remember him at all. And my mother, she come from Poland here, you know, through New York. That's all I, that's all I can remember.

Q: And what language did they speak to you at home?

A: Polish.

Q: Where did you grow up? And can you tell me a little bit about how you grew up?

A: Oh, I grew up in a little town, Natrona, PA: And I went to school there till, till I finished eighth grade. And after that, I went to the Har-Brack High School. And then, from the high school, I was drafted into the Army. And I had, I had a dull life, you know, just we played around. And I went, when the war ended, you know, I was excited. I wanted to join. And I did go to try to join the Navy. And I was turned away because I was colorblind. And that's about it.

Q: What's your first memory from when you were growing up? What's the first thing that you remember?

A: Oh, my first memory when I was growing up, oh boy, that was a -- it sticks out in my mind that I was on a, on the boat. It was dark. And there was a steamboat coming down the river. And we always liked, as kids, go on the end of it, this steamboat. And here, I was pushed over. And I must have been about maybe five, six years old. I don't know. And they couldn't find me. And finally, the waves of the steamboat, I guess here I was underneath the boat bopping up. And the steam waves, the boat from the steamboat pulled me out from that boat underneath the boat. And they found me because I was up, and my hand was waving in the air like saying good-bye. And that's how I was found.

Q: Can you tell me what your first memory was when war broke out? What what's the first thing you remember about World War II?

A: World War II, I remember, oh, I was out playing in the alley with my buddies. And we heard the, you know, we heard from the newspapers, there was come by, "Extra, Extra," they had. It was right after that, and then it was saying about the war, we broke out, we were at war. And I must have been, I don't know, 13 years old. And that's it.

Q: What do you remember about being drafted?

A: Well, when I was drafted, I assumed that I would not go into the service because I was turned down from the, from the Navy from being colorblind. And when I went, when I went to the draft board, I know the people thought I was too young to be there. I mean, I had a couple guys saying, "This is people going into the Army." They couldn't believe that I was there is going in because I was so young looking. And skinny and small. And I did go through the, for my physical. And I passed it, to my surprise. And then, when I was drafted, I went to Camp Gordon. I had 16 weeks of basic training. Oh, the next, when I was drafted, the May, I think the next day, Germany surrendered. Okay. And then, when I was in my basic training, I was on my last couple weeks of training, when Japan

surrendered. And then, we thought we were all going to go home. But instead they, they shipped us to New York. And we shipped out to go overseas to, to France. And we were out at sea maybe two, three days. And all at once, there was a big hump, a big thump. And here, I thought our boat stopped just to have Mass on the deck. That's because they announced we're going to have Mass on the deck. And here it was, here we hit a little boat. It was one of our little boats out there. And I remember them picking up some survivors, and keep the survivors away from us. They were mostly, you know, not living. They were dead. And then, we came back to New York. And we stayed in New York another 30 days doing nothing until we got another ship. And I shipped over, and I landed in Le Havre, France. And I remember that because we have to stay in, in Le Havre, we stayed in little tents for about seven days till they put us on the, in boxcars. They called them forty-and-eights. And we were on that boxcar for, I think it was seven nights and seven days. We stayed in that boxcar until we got to Nuremberg, Germany. And that's how I got to Germany.

Q: And what year was that?

A: Oh, what year? It was 1945. I was drafted May the 7th, I think, 1945.

Q: And how old were you?

A: 18.

Q: Was that your first trip to Europe?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: What were your first impressions? What were your thoughts?

A: My first impression, oh, it was in Le Havre, France. And I couldn't believe I heard, "Boom, boom." And said, "I thought the war was over." And here, they were, like, demolishing you know, out in buildings because they were not secure. And to me, when we were docking, and we had French people, little boys begging for cigarettes and candy. That's what got me the most, how they were begging for cigarettes and candy.

Q: And what was your first impression of Germany when you got there?

A: Oh, well, I went through Germany, like I told you, seven days and seven nights. And then, we, we didn't see anything, you know. We just kept going. And we, we ate just our rations, our K-rations that we were, you know, that we had. And one day in Germany, they stopped for a hot meal. And I would not give it up. I would not give up my space in the boxcar, you know, so I missed the meal. And it was, like, in the middle of the night. And so, what I seen of Germany was just, you know, just the land. Nothing around it. Then, my first impression when I got to Nuremberg, wow, I couldn't believe it. I don't think there was a house standing in Nuremberg. And every house was down to the

ground. And, you know, and it was a little shocking. And then, when they put us in these SS Kasernes, I remember, and they had no mattresses. And that's, we slept in our sleeping bags we were issued. And, I don't know, we didn't have those bags long until we did get mattresses. And we were, like, a high priority because we were going to be at the Nuremberg trials, you know. So, we got mattresses sooner than most other GIs, I guess. And our windows were fixed. And that's my impression of Nuremberg, the first time I got to Germany.

Q: Do you remember about what date it was that you got to Nuremberg?

A: The day I got to Nuremberg, geez, well, I -- it was May the 7th, I was drafted, and I don't know. I spent 30 days waiting for a ship. And then, when I got to Nuremberg, it was, I don't know, it had to be about maybe a month or two after I was drafted. No. After I, I landed in Nuremberg. But I don't know what time I got there. Is that what you asked me?

Q: Yes. Yeah.

A: Yeah, I got to Nuremberg, well, I know it was in November. It was cold, you know. But I don't know the exact date right now.

Q: Did you interact much with the German population when you got there, or did you go straight to the site of the trial?

A: Oh, no. We were in, situated in our Kaserne, and we stayed there for, like, 30 days. And we had orientations until what we were going to do at the, at the prison, you know. And because they told us we were going to be prison cells in the cell.And we were going to guard walls. And we were going to secure doors. Entrances to the, in the prison. But not at the Palace of Justice. And -- what? Oh, what did you want to know?

Q: If you interacted at all with --

A: No. With the Germans, no. We didn't speak to them at all. You know, because, you know, the only time I would speak to German was when I would be, they would, like, take our clothes and wash them for us, you know. We had, like, one woman, she would been coming around, you know, to do our laundry. And that's the only one I would speak to. And --

Q: And did you speak any German?

A: No. None at all. None at all. And then, like I say, right near where our SS Kaserne was, it was close to, to the, where Hitler used to parade his field. And I think they called it Soldiers Field. And I spent a lot of time there while I was awaiting to get, you know, you know, to get, to get our jobs in, at the prison. And I think I learned how to drive a Jeep there. That's what I was doing. And then, after we got orientation, I think my first

time I went to the prison, it was very eerie. And, and we worked, we had to be there for 24 hours. We would guard, we would guard them, we would be on guard for two hours and off four. And I will never forget my first one I had was, oh, I think it was Sauckel, Sauckel. My first prisoner I ever guarded was Sauckel. And I remember going on maybe, like, I think it was 2 o'clock in the morning, and I relieved my man. And I looked in there, and he was sleeping. And, you know, I was nervous. I was 18 years old. And we were told, we were there, they can't escape. But we were there just to keep them alive, you know, to, you know, so they can go through a trial. And I would look in there and watch him. And he wouldn't be moving. He was sleeping soundly. And I didn't hear anything. And I thought he was gone, you know, and I'm scared. And all at once, I'd see him move or breathe, and I would feel so relieved. That was my first experience with that, with a prisoner.

Q: I want to go back for just a moment. You talked a little bit about how you were briefed and trained before you, before you actually started to guard.

A: Yeah.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit more about your job and your position was explained to you?

A: Well, all I can remember is we were, like, we were had, like, squads. And I would go in my squad. And we would have a guy come up there, and he would just tell us, you know, what we're doing. And who these people were. And, you know, to me, 18 years old, I didn't know what, who they were at all. I didn't, didn't faze me at all. And, and that's all they said. Our main job was to just to keep them alive. You know, and that's about it. And then, they told us that we're going to be on different, you're going to be on a cell guard for maybe, like I say two hours, and I'll be off four. And then, they put you, they say maybe we would go get an entrance of some kind to guard. And they would be off another four. And then, maybe you get on a wall. They just kept changing around 24 hours. And we did that just every, every day. We went to, we went to the prison. And then, we'd be off 24 hours, and we'd go back on 24 hours. That's all. That's was my routine.

Q: Did you know anything at that point at age 18 about what had gone on Europe in genocide, about these mens' role in -

A: No, I didn't know anything like that. I had no ideA: But as I stayed there, you know, I'd hear a lot of people talking. And I realize that we had, who we were guarding. And I guarded, we had 20, 20 prisoners we guarded. And they were in the cell all by, all by themselves. And the ones, they would take them out, I think it was one day for one hour out to have, for their exercises in the exercise yard. And you would just follow your prisoner out to the yard. And you had to keep your eye on your prisoner. And all of us

guards, 20 of us, I guess, was just all around surrounding him, just watching your own prisoner. And they were good. They knew what they had to do. We didn't have to do anything, you know. And it was very routine. That's it.

Q: Can you tell me what the prison itself at Nuremberg was like? What it looked like? How many prisoners were there total, what the cells looked like?

A: Oh, what the prison looked like? Well, we'd go in, and we slept in the, in the cell. You know, for the 24 hours we were there, and it was just like a regular prison. I mean, it wasn't very nice. They had wooden doors with a little hole in it. You know, and that's where we used to put our light when they went to sleep, on the prisoner. We had, we watched them for 24 hours. But the prison was just like a regular prison. It had three stories, three tiers, you know. And on the first tiers were all the 22 prisoners we had. And that's it. And then, like in the, then, well, just imagine the prison like a, like a wheel. The prisoners had one, one block. And we had another block of a spoke-like. And we, and that was for us. Then, they had another spoke, it was just for the witnesses. I think there were like, you know, their wives and somebody in there. And, but they were allowed to walk in and out of their cells up to 10 o'clock in the morning. And then, in one other spoke was the military police, you know. And, and the wall was a round wall. And we'd have to walk that wall. We'd get that sometimes, to walk the wall. And so, you know, just like a regular prison. But it was, you know, not very nice looking. It was old.

Q: So, did I understand you correctly, when you were guarding, when you were on your shift for those 24 hours when you were guarding a particular prisoner, were you in the cell with them?

A: No. We were outside the door. And like I said, we had a hole in the door in a, a little hole. And that's where we would put our light, you know, we had a portable light there beside the door. And we would shine it on them at, when they went to sleep. And the door was not locked. It was just latched because they told us in case you see them doing anything, we'd have to go in quickly. And that's just the way it was. And we were only allowed to, oh, I think we were only allowed to, people that entered that cell would be a, it was a doctor. But he was a prisoner. But he was a, I don't know, he was a, I guess they trusted him, trust a doctor. And he was allowed in there. And barbers, get their hair cut. And one other guy was there. Oh, he was our commander. Andrews, I think his name was. He was the head of the, the guards and that.

Q: And were you allowed to interact with the prisoners at all, or you were strictly guarding from the outside?

A: Well, I did not interact with them because, you know, most of them just would not speak to you. You know, and I, and they told us not to speak to them. But I seen a lot of guards do speak to them. And the only prisoner that I spoke and had a conversation with

was Albert Speer. And that's because they came to me, and I was guarding him. And they asked me to take him to Room 55. And he was going to see his lawyer. And all I had to do is sit between them and watch that they didn't pass any sharp things to each other, like, a pencil or something sharp, you know. And his lawyer was a little late, so I got to talk to him a little bit. And he, to me, sounded like a real, you know, gentleman, good guy. And he was, I think he was Hitler's architect. And then, he was a pleasant guy. And then, I remember then maybe a couple weeks later, I was on the, I had the duty of walking in with the barber to, for them to get their hair cuts or whatever they wanted. When I walked in Speer's cell this one time, he still remembered me. I remember him fixing his bunk, so I could have a good seat. But as far as, and I talked to maybe, you know, like, if, if they were in -- they had a commode in there. If they were in there, stayed in there too long, well, then I would have to go in and see what was going on because they had one guy commit suicide doing, on the commode. And that was while I was, when I just got there during the time I was on orientation. And the 26th Infantry was still guarding him. And then, and I think his name was Ley or something like that. And after that, that's when we were told to watch them when they go into the commode. And that's the time, I think, they put a, one guard on each cell. And that's how it was.

Q: Can you tell me what you talked about with, with Albert Speer?

A: Well, I didn't say much to him, but he was telling me, like, he only got -- I don't think they hung him. He got, like, 20 years or something. And he said like, you know, he knew that, that, you know, he did wrong now and all that. And he was, like, you know, and he felt sorry. As the other ones would not even, you know, mention to do that. And, and then when, then he asked me, you know, how long I had been there, and I told him, you know. Stuff like there. And then, his lawyer came, and they spoke German. And I didn't know what they were speaking about. And after that, I just took him back to his cell. Oh, I, interaction with the prisoner? I had one, Herman, Herman Goering, I, I was on his cell when he had to go take his shower. You know, they got one shower or two showers a week or something like that. And I was on his cell, and I took him down. And that was downstairs in the basement. I took him down. And, and I had to go into the place where he was going to take his shower. And only, I only had a blackjack on me. No weapon. And he complained about something to me, and I didn't what he was complaining about. So, I called the sergeant of the guard. And here, he was complaining about the door being open because the draft was getting him. And here, the sergeant of the guard, you know, told him the door had to be open because we had another soldier there walking up and down the corridor with a weapon. So, and that door had to be open. So, finally, he asked for another towel, and he got it. And he, instead of taking a shower, he took a bath. And that's the only reaction I had with him. But I was on his cell a lot, you know. And he just set there. And they just read. They're looking through papers, and that was about all. Some of them, before when they get up in the morning, Julius Streicher, I think, he was

across from the, Goering. I had him one time, and he would get up, they were supposed to get up, I think, 7:30. And he would get up maybe a little earlier, 7, and he did exercises in his cell. And what I couldn't believe what he did, they didn't have any running water in the cell. So, he flushed his toilet a few times, and he took the water and like put it over his shoulders and that to cool off. And then he would get, ask for his clothes. We had their clothes in another cell away from them. And we would bring their clothes in for him to get dressed, and he was ready for, for court. That's about it. That's all I can, and I know I was in a lot of other cells and that. And I walked the walls. That was, I didn't like walking that wall. It was night, you know, and on the wall, we had a, a weapon. It was an automatic weapon. And, and we had, and then, we used to guard the doorways. You're coming into the cellblock, or you're going out, we had to check them with their IDs. And we had to see them around. We had to know them. And we also, then later on, we would out to, passwords like, like New York, and he would say Yogi Berra. And that was the one for the day. And every day it was different. When we went through a doorway. And that's and what else I had to do there. Oh, there was a witness wing. It was on the third floor. And there was only one guard there. One guard. And the witnesses were allowed to walk in and out of their cells, you know, and mingle. But at 10 o'clock, they had to be in their cells, you know, time to sleep. And I'll never forget this. My job was, I was there on a New Year's Eve. It must have been '45, 1945 New Year's Eve. And the, there was women, she was in charge, like, a lieutenant, and here she said she was going to leave early because she's going to a party. And, you know, once they get in their cells, they'll be okay. And here, throughout our, throughout the, you know, our ranks and throughout the prison, there was a story about one of these women, they wore, she wore riding clothes. And what she would do, and I don't know if I should tell you this. This was what, the word was out that she would strip, and you'd give her a candy bar or something. You know, and then she would report the time, you know, the day, and the soldier was, would be disciplined. But when I got there, so I was nervous of her. I didn't know who she was or what. And then, I had one girl. And I guess it was her. She kept coming into the office and wanted to see the lieutenant. And I told her the lieutenant is going to be gone. You know, she come in a couple times. And I finally had to tell her that she had to stay in her cell. And that's the last I seen of her. And that's, that's about it. And everything else was routine. Oh, we had another post. Oh, I remember now. It was at the courtroom, you know, inside the courtroom when it was empty. They just had one guard in there. And all he had to do is make sure nobody got in there. And I just really had to just walk around in there for two hours. And that's all I did. I was just amazed at the, you know, how small it was because all those people were in it. And you know, I looked at there, and I seen this one machine there. It was a stenotype machine. I remember I was really fascinated with that machine. And then, when I got home, and I got discharged, I went to school for that, for the same machine to study the, you know, and I knew how to operate that. But I never used it. Maybe for a couple weeks, and that's all. That's about it.

Q: Did you ever get to observe a day in the courtroom itself?

A: Once. And I would, and the reason I wouldn't do it again is because it was too hard. And I had to go through a lot of paperwork even though I was a guard. They put you through a lot to get, to get a seat in the courtroom. You know, and when I was there, they were talking about Admiral Doenitz, you know, what he, what he has done. And it was really, I was amazed the way it was. I had a headset on. And if you would turn it to one, number one, he might, you would think he was speaking English. You turn it to number two, then he was talk, speaking Russian. You know, it was really funny to me. To listen to that trial that way. But that, yeah, I did go one time in the courtroom. And the other time I was in there was just when I had, that was one of our posts. But it was empty. But to, you know, just to go there as a spectator, I did go once.

Q: Can you tell me specifically what they were talking about that day that you --

A: That day, I remember it was about the sea, Admiral Doenitz. Was that Admiral Doenitz? Yeah, I think it was him. Yeah, kind of was a commander. Yeah, Admiral Doenitz, and he was the one on the stand that day. And I can't remember what they were speaking about. But, you know, I was just so amazed, you know, because I kept playing with those dials. But, but it was just like a courtroom as usual. They were asking him questions, and he would answer, you know. And that's all I can remember about that date.

Q: Do you remember anything specific about his testimony or no?

A: About what?

Q: Anything specific about his testimony or no?

A: No. I have no idea what he spoke about that day. That's been so long. And I was just amazed how it was. And like I say, I was playing mostly with those dials.

Q: Did you ever overhear or understand any conversations that the prisoners had amongst themselves?

A: Well, the prisoners were, only time they were together was when they went out for their exercise. We had an exercise yard, they call it. And at first, we took all 20 of them out together. And whatever guard, and our, the guards just stood around the exercise yard and watching your prisoner. And as the court, as the court was going on, you know, the proceedings were going on, we noticed that we were just given so many prisoners go out, not all together. Like, maybe 18 or 15, you know. And that was because, I think they were, somebody said they were, you know, talking about the other prisoners. They were against them. And they became enemies. So they wouldn't take, send them out together. And I just remember how it started at the beginning with all 20 was out. Then, there was like 17. Then, it would, I can remember one time, we only had maybe ten of them out

there. But, and they said that's because in the courtroom, they were blaming each other. So, that's all I know about that.

Q: Did you notice anything about their behavior, either when they were in their cell or outside?

A: Oh, well, yeah. Well, Goering, he was very, he was always just a nice guy, you know. He slept and read. And Hess was in the next cell to him. And to me, Hess looked like he was a crazy guy. I mean, he just didn't speak. And he had this, and all I know about him, he had his window really open, and the draft would hit you right in the face when you come to his cell. And I never took care of his cell. It was dirty. And, like I say, most of them, like, you know, and they just didn't do anything. They played cards. They had a little table, a card table there. Not a table, a weak table there. They didn't have cards per se. They had homemade cards they would make. And they would play games with that, play a game with that. But they were always separated. They never were together. So, and like I say, I never spoke to them because I just followed orders. I was afraid, you know, I was 18 years old. But I seen some guys speaking to them, you know. But I did not. And it's, and it was all the same, you know -- oh, I told you about the guy that took, he did the exercises. They would give his clothes for court. And then, every time he went to court, he always asked the guard for some chewing gum. No matter who was, who was, who, who was his guard that day. And, yeah, and like I say, they just, they just read. They didn't do anything. That's it.

Q: You've said a couple of times that you were, you were afraid at certain points. Was that because it was a new situation, or were you afraid of the actual process of guarding them?

A: Well, you know, after you're there, and I heard who they were and all that stuff, then mostly my afraid was I didn't want my prisoner to die on me. Because that was so stuck in our heads. That's what I was afraid of mostly. When I had him for those two hours, I just wanted him to be alive when I left. And that's the only thing I was afraid of. But really, after that, they were like nothing. You know, it was all just routine. And like I said, sometimes you would get into the cellblock maybe for one prisoner. And the rest of the time, you were on the wall, walking the wall. Or you were out guarding a doorway. So, you know, they changed us around a lot. For not to get, I guess it was because they didn't want you to get too familiar with a prisoner. And that's what I heard they said.

Q: And had a, a suicide of a prisoner happened not too long before you got there? Was that part of the, the fear of making sure that, that one of them didn't die on you?

A: Yeah, that, that was my fear. You know, I didn't want none of them to die. Or, you know, commit suicide while I was there. You know, because we, all that we were told, "They're there to be hung." That's all. To, you know, once the verdicts are out. And I was

there from the beginning of the trial, the trial. Till the end of the trial.And then, after, when the verdicts came out, I wasn't there. And then, when it was the hanging, I was on my way home. So, I missed that.

Q: So, some of the prisoners that you had guarded were being hung as you were leaving?

A: Who?

Q: Some of the prisoners who you had previously guarded were being executed as you were leaving? As you were coming back to the United States?

A: Oh, there was, geez, who, the people that were executed, I think they had -- oh, God. It's so hard to remember, 12? And the ones that got the death sentences, I remember was Frick, I can remember. Goering. And Goering committed suicide a day, the night before his hanging. And I always said, I was, I was on the ship coming home, and I said, "I'm glad I wasn't there. And Alfred Jodl, he was a really weird guy. He died. He was hung Kaltenbrunner was died, he was hung. And like, Hess, he got life. I think he, he was the longest living prisoner. And Ross, Rosenberg. My first prisoner I guarded was Sauckel. He got the death sentence. And there was some people that a got acquitted, like, Schacht. I remember him being acquitted. You know, it's, it's hard for me to remember now. It's so many years ago.

Q: Can you tell me at what point you started to realize who these people were, and what they had done? You mentioned that before you came to Nuremberg, you really didn't have a good sense of what had gone on in Europe during the war?

A: Right.

Q: Was there a moment that you remember that perception changed?

A: Yeah. It changed on me when I started hearing stories about how who the people we were guarding, you know. The guys were talking, and then I just realized, "Oh, my God, I got some, you know, high, high officials here I'm guarding." So, you know, that put me on alert more and made me a better guard. But that's it.

Q: Did you have any family in Europe at that time, at that time during the war?

A: No, I didn't have anybody. Well, my mother's sister was there in Poland, you know, but that wasn't too familiar with her because I, because we did, I remember us sending packages and maybe once every six months or so. That's about it.

Q: And did she remain in Poland throughout the war?

A: Pardon?

Q: Did she remain in Poland –

A: Yes.

Q: -- throughout the war?

A: Yes.

Q: And what did she do after the war?

A: What did I do?

Q: What did your mother's sister, did she remain in Poland the rest of her life, or did she --

A: My mother's sister, yeah, she left her, she stayed there the rest of her life. Once my mother died, we lost contact with her at all, you know.

Q: Can you tell me about your last day as a prison guard at Nuremberg? Is there anything in particular you remember?

A: Oh, my last day, geez. Oh, God. Oh, let me see now, because I know we were happy we were getting off because there was only two infantry divisions that guarded them, I think. Because when I got there we guarded, it was the 26th Infantry we relieved. And I was in the 18th Infantry. And then, when we got the word we were going to be leaving, we were all so happy you know, just getting out of there. And then, the 26th, and then, the 26 Infantry relieved us again. They relieved us to go home. And my, my last day there, oh God, I remember being on a doorway, you know, and I was guarding a door. And I just was so happy, you know, that I'm leaving. And I know I left a lot of guys through, or I didn't ask them their pass, you know, the word for the day was. But no, I was just happy to get out of there. That's all. Just something new, you know. Then, I went to Amberg, Germany.

Q: And what did you do there?

A: In Amberg, I became a squad leader. And then, they needed a company clerk. And my sergeant asked me if I'd be a company clerk, you know, to help them out. I said sure. But when I was, I was anxious to get my sergeant stripes, you know. And I wanted to move up. And I knew as a company clerk that I was a corporal, and that was all I'm going to stay. But then, the sergeant said no, he was going to put me in for a sergeant because I'm only acting as a clerk. And my real job is a squad leader. But then, this was after the war. And then, when he put me in for sergeant, I was denied. And that was because we had a lot of people coming in, you know, coming back from the, you know, the war. You know, and there were a lot, a lot of sergeants. So, they didn't give anybody anymore, you know, promotions. So, I come home as a company clerk, my last job, and as a corporal.

Q: And how long were you in Amberg, Germany?

A: In Amberg? Oh, geez, I don't know. I wasn't there too long. I was maybe there, oh, maybe a few months. And I, well, what we did there, we, it was weird because that's when the war was over. And the people, the soldiers that were married were allowed to bring their wives over. And what we did, we had to go guard a home, one of the Germans' home, and somebody would mark the, the contents of the house. Excuse me. Give my water a sip. They would mark the contents, like, the chair, they would have underneath it, would have a mark, and that wasn't allowed to leave that building, you know. The only people, stuff that wasn't marked was allowed to leave. And that was what I did in Amberg. Until, until I got my discharge. Then, I went to, I think -- I didn't get discharged there. I went to Copen, no. I forget where I, I come -- I come in Le Havre, and I went out someplace else. I can't remember.

Q: And who lived in those houses that you were guarding? Or were you guarding the houses themselves in Amberg?

A: We were just guarding, they were, they were empty. And I guess some kind of Germans lived there. And they were saving those houses for the wives that are coming over. Officers mostly.

Q: And at that point, when you were in Amberg, do you remember anything about interacting with the local population or any survivors, or was it really just you and your company?

A: Well, no. I relaxed. I, I remember going swimming there, and I was really, you know, it was in the summer. I went swimming. And I talked to a girl. That's about it. And, well, and then, we had like a house club. We had a beer only. There were some Germans there. But that was, like I said, I was shy. I was 18. And I just stayed away from them mostly. I had interactions once. I was in a bomb shelter. I was selling cigarettes, the carton of cigarettes. I didn't smoke. And I remember we got $50.00 a carton. And it was from some kind of, I think it was some Polish people coming through there. And we were dealing with the, I was dealing with this one Polish guy in a, and here somebody come into the bomb shelter, had a light, a flashlight. And I got scared. I thought, "Uh-oh," and here it was my buddy. And I got my, I got $50.00 a carton for cigarettes. And that lasted me because then I saved my pay. And he paid me in marks just like the same marks that we got paid from the Army. But I didn't, I didn't interact too much with Germans. But I remember, like, in our club there, we had a house, and I remember dancing with the Germans. You know, but that was like too young for that. I don't know.

Q: What do you remember about when you came home to the United States?

A: When I came home to the United States? Well--

Q: What did you do?

A: Well, when I came into the United States, the, I got home, and I went to work. I worked for a PPG Company, Industries. And I started to work. And I stayed there for 40 years. And I retired from there.

Q: And what was your profession?

A: Pardon?

Q: What was your profession? What was your job?

A: Oh, I was on the shipping, shipping department, you know. And sometimes, I would be a foreman. When my foreman would take vacation, I would take his place. And that's about it.

Q: So, looking back, what stands out the most during your time as a guard at Nuremberg? Is there any experience or --

A: Well, yes, you know, because when I was, you know, in Natrona, I lived. And then, I moved to Carlisle. And in Carlisle, they got a War College here. And, a lot of my friends were retired colonels, you know, like I was a member of the Knights of Columbus. And that's where I met all these officers. And, you know, we'd talk about, you know, about the war, and you know, Army. And I told them where I was. And they thought that was really big history, you know, that I, you know, I should stop by. I never did. I just, you know, forgot about it. I said, "Naw, I'm not going to do anything." Until, and, until, and there is a Dickinson College here. And I used to go swimming there and use the gym. And I got to know the girl at the desk there. And I told her my story. And I think she knew somebody at the Holocaust Museum. I forget her --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Her first name is Bonnie Way, or something like that?

A: Yeah, Bonnie, she's the one that worked at the college. And she called somebody at the Holocaust and give them my name. And then, I got a call from her. And that was, like, oh, maybe a year or two ago because she wanted me to come down there and record my story. And I fell off the roof, and I was laid up. Like, when I learned how to walk again and all. And I just forgot about it then. And then, it came up again. And I guess this is when I got in touch with you.

Q: So, it's been, it's only been fairly recently that you've really thought of your story as something that's historically significant that you, that you should tell someone about?

A: Well, yeah. Well, a lot of people in Carlisle, these Army guys, you know, they thought I should, you know. And because in all the time I lived in Natrona, I don't know how many years, 20 years, you know, after the war probably, and I just forgot about it. I didn't do anything. Until I came here. And like I said, I met a lot of Army people here. They got

this War College, and they go there and retire from there. And they stayed here, and, and we became friends.

Q: And what do you, what do you remember the most? What's your strongest memory from when you were a guard at Nuremberg? What sticks out the most?

A: What sticks out the most when I was a guard at Nuremberg? Well, I would say the time I took Albert Speer to Room 55. That would be the thing. Because I got my biggest scare when I was walking behind him because, like I say, I was only 5-6, 145 pounds or something. And while I was taking him to his room, he turned around. His, like I got so scared, I froze. And he just turned around and kept on walking. And like I told you, once he got in a room, his lawyer wasn't there, and I started talking. We started talking. And I thought he was pretty nice.

Q: What did you talk about?

A: Well, he talked mostly about his, you know, his, his life in Germany, which he thinks, he knows he did wrong. And, you know, stuff like that. And he did not, he did not -- he wasn't hung. I think he got only ten years or 20 years. So, he wasn't, he was pretty nice.

Q: And he spoke in English?

A: Yes, he did. Yeah, that's another thing why, because, you know, a lot of them wouldn't speak English, just German. And I would, you know, we wouldn't talk to them. But I was surprised. He did it. He, and I spoke to Schacht. He was another guy spoke really good English. But I think he was acquitted. He was a financier for Hitler. And he was acquitted. And he spoke English pretty good.

Q: Are there any other specific prisoners who you remembered that you –

A: Other prisoners?

Q: -- that you would like to tell us about?

A: Stand out? Oh, God, they all did the same thing. They all went to bed. Well, and like I said, Jodl, that exercise thing he used to do in his cell. That stood out to me. And, no, I, just, and like I said, it was all routine. We would go to guard there for 24 hours, and 24 hours we would be back at the SS Kaserne.

Q: Is there anything else about your, your either your experience at Nuremberg or looking, looking back now when you started to realize it was important? Is there anything else you would like to tell me about, either specifically what you did at the prison or about how you sort of think about it now?

A: Well, when I talked about the prison, I just remember when I used to walk the wall, it was cold. Very cold. And, you know, we had these overcoats in the Army. And you

would never wear them. But I used to wear that on that wall. And I remember we had to go, you know, we had our post from one post to another post walking. And I think we had three, three men on the wall guarding. And I was always a little frightened when it was dark because I was always thinking somebody from the outside is going to crawl up there, you know, and grab me, you know. Like I say, I was young. And, and the guarding the cells, you know, it was just all routine. We'd come in there, do our two hours, off four, maybe go someplace else. And then, you come back to the cell. But what, you know, while you're guarding them, they're either doing some kind of paperwork or sitting or sleeping, you know. It was nothing to talk about really. And that's about it.

Q: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to tell us?

A: That you haven't asked me about? Oh, God, let's see, well, I -- we had guys, you know, like, I was a cell guard. And we had a couple guys from our place, it was a couple guards in our place that had the job in courtroom, you know, stood behind the prisoners. And they had the white helmets on, you know, and the white belts. Whereas we had, you know, just the green helmet on and the, and the dark belt. And I just looked up to them, that's all. I thought they, they had a neat job. And they looked good. And while I was in Amberg, I remember that I had, got R&R, seven days off, like, a vacation. And I went to Berchtesgaden. And up in the, and I thought that was something, you know, on that trolley up in, up in the mountains there, and you're up above the clouds. I thought that it was so pretty. You know, and I couldn't believe it. And then, we had tours that, I think it was Hitler's, some kind of cave I was in in Berchtesgaden. And where Hitler lived, you know, we went around there as a, just as a tour. And that's it. I can't remember. My job was very routine.

Q: Have you been back to Germany since that time?

A: No. I would love to go back, but it's so expensive now. I would love to go back and just to see the prison, you know. And my wife and I were talking about, it was a cruise. And this cruise was going to stop in Germany, Nuremberg. And we inquired about it, and they told us that you could go into the courtroom. There's a, they had people take you through the courtroom. But through the prison, it was locked. They would not let you go through there. And that's, that was my big thing. I wanted to go in and see the prison, you know, and the places where I was. The places where I stood. But they said that was, they did not give, you know, tours in the prison except only in the courthouse.

Q: Why did you want to go back to the prison specifically? Why did you want to go back?

A: I just, why did I want to go back there?

Q: Yeah. Why, why did you want to revisit the prison?

A: I just want to back and relive the life I lived when I was there because after, now, I know it was such a historic thing I did. And, you know, it's just nice to go back and see it. See what it's like now. It's different, you know, probably.

Q: Mr. Gardner, is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

A: No, I cannot think of anything else.

Q: I want to thank you very much for your time. And on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, thank you very much for your testimony. I will now stop the recording.

A: Okay.

Conclusion of Interview