

Interview with Richard Lockhart

VR2-A-L-2012-008.01

Interview # 1: March 12, 2012

Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

- DePue: When you were in these train cars, and I'm sure there's no seat.
- Lockhart: Boxcar, a small one too, they're small in Europe, if you've ever seen those.
- DePue: So you're either standing all the time or sitting on the floor.
- Lockhart: Yeah.
- DePue: Did you feel like okay, now we're a big target for the American Air Force?
- Lockhart: And we became that. We were bombed by the American Air Force.
- DePue: While you were on the train?
- Lockhart: While we were on the train. Believe me that's scary. You hear those bombs, it sounds like they're coming at you for maybe ten minutes before they hit. Some boxcars were hit. Fortunately, the boxcar I was in was not hit, but of course all it means that the line is broken, the railroad line is broken, so you sat for hours and hours and hours, maybe a day or two, until they fixed the tracks.
- DePue: So you're just on the train itself?
- Lockhart: What's the question?
- DePue: You were still on the trains, though?
- Lockhart: Oh yeah. They didn't let us out of the boxcars, no.
- DePue: How about when you needed to relieve yourself?
- Lockhart: There was a hole in the bottom. I don't know if it was made by somebody else, but there was a hold in the bottom of the boxcar that was used.
- DePue: This is a pretty grim situation.
- Lockhart: Yeah, right. Welcome to Germany.

DePue: How many in this boxcar do you think?

Lockhart: I would say there was between sixty and seventy. They're made for forty people basically.

DePue: A forty and eight?

Lockhart: Forty and eight, yeah. Kind of the standard European boxcar that the poor Jews were put on, to take to Auschwitz. There's one of those in the Holocaust Museum in Washington that looks like exactly the one that I was packed into.

DePue: So now it's late December, there's seventy people on this boxcar. No food and no water?

Lockhart: No food and no water.

DePue: How many days then, before you actually got to a camp?

Lockhart: We got to Bad Orb on the 26th of December.

DePue: One day after Christmas.

Lockhart: Yes, one day after Christmas.

DePue: Did anybody know, keep track of what day it was?

Lockhart: Yes. Oh, I think so. Nobody had an appointment though or had plans, shall we say, to be elsewhere.

DePue: Was Christmas Day an especially tough day then?

Lockhart: Well, I'm sure it was, but all the days were tough, you might say. It wasn't any different than any other day. I can remember pitiful, trying to sing Christmas carols in the boxcar.

DePue: You did try to do that?

Lockhart: Yeah, mm-hmm. Trying to keep their spirits up.

DePue: Was there somebody who kind of took the lead, or these are all enlisted men?

Lockhart: No, not necessarily. They were all enlisted men, yeah, but there were some corporals and sergeants. There weren't any officers on these boxcars but there were sergeants and corporals who kind of maintained order, you might say.

DePue: They were able to maintain some discipline?

Lockhart: Yeah, yeah, because they had to be timed, whether you would be standing or sitting, so they couldn't all sit at the same time.

DePue: So somebody actually was in charge of that.

Lockhart: Yes.

DePue: Do you remember the Christmas carols that were being sung?

Lockhart: No.

DePue: How enthusiastic was the singing?

Lockhart: Not very, I'm sure.

DePue: I'm sorry to pry so much.

Lockhart: Not very. And the bombing, the aerial bombing was definitely scary, because you cannot hide, you cannot do anything I suppose but pray. Like I say, some cars were hit, I know that for a fact, but the one I was in was obviously not hit.

DePue: As far as you know, were there some American casualties then, to these air attacks?

Lockhart: I'm sure, there had to be.