

## Interview with Ernest Thorp

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Excerpt from Interview # 2: December 23, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: What do you think about the German fishermen that saved you?

Thorp: That was interesting. He talked to us and everything. We offered him some money—I had some little silver coin, and Danner had some monies—for picking us up, and all he would take was one little silver coin, English coin, and a stick of chewing gum. And I've told kids that I talked to after that this life is worth one stick of chewing gum, because that's what the German fisherman took to save my life. He hid it just as soon as he got it. He said, "I can't get caught with this; I'm going to get shot." But he said, "You're in good positions as you'll be treated okay in prison camp, so you can relax and enjoy yourself, and the war is over for you. I was an English prisoner in World War I. The English treated me all right; I'll treat you all right." Saved my life. So I tell the kids, too, remember the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you. Because all he had to do was leave me in that water another ten minutes and I'd have been dead, because I was ready to give up. I could not keep treading water and keep my head above water, and with all my clothes on, even though I got rid of my shoes, it was dragging me down. Yeah. Yeah, that was a traumatic memory.

And another thing I didn't put in the book either. When they pulled me on the boat, I was prostrate. I just laid there on the deck. One of the men had a big, long knife, sharp as a razor. He come at me, and I thought, Well, he's going to stick it into me. And he slit that Mae West off of me just like hot butter. But I thought he was going to kill me, and I couldn't resist. I would have just taken it, because I was pooped.