

# Ray Carrow

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*Lieutenant Ray Carrow's plane was shot down on the Kassel Mission, and he became a prisoner of war.*

**Aaron Elson:** Where did you grow up?

**Ray Carrow:** I was born in Brooklyn.

**Aaron Elson:** Really?

**Ray Carrow:** Yes, really. You're a Brooklynite also?

**Aaron Elson:** No, Manhattan. The Upper West Side.

**Ray Carrow:** Okay. Do you know where Carroll Street is in Brooklyn?

**Aaron Elson:** Yes.

**Ray Carrow:** That's where the Orthodox Jews and the blacks are having a lot of difficulties. That's where I came from. But it was a different neighborhood. I went to Boys High School, and from there I went to the University of Wisconsin. I graduated from the university in 1940. Originally my intent was to study engineering, but I was told by some engineers that what I ought to do first is to get a liberal education, and then go into engineering. Because you can be a genius engineer but you don't know how to talk to anybody. So that's exactly what I did. And during that period I took as many courses in the type of things I would study in engineering like physics, chemistry, mechanical drawing and the like, so that I had additional credits toward an engineering degree. When I graduated I went back to school again, NYU this time, in the engineering department. And that's where Uncle Sam got involved with me and I got involved with him.

I knew my number would be up eventually, so I volunteered for aviation cadet training. I passed everything except the physical, and the reason why I failed was because I indicated on the form that I suffered from hay fever. That disqualified me. I was very, very disappointed naturally. So I kept thinking about it and thinking

about it and I said, "What the hell, why would I be disqualified for hay fever? For goodness sakes, it's not a contagious disease. I sneeze a little bit. So what?" And it only lasts for a certain length of time. So I wrote a letter to General Arthur, Hap Arthur, no, what was his name? Hap Arnold. I wrote a letter and I addressed it to Hap Arnold and I waited and waited, and in the meantime I was inducted. I was inducted at Camp Upton on Long Island, and from there I went to Keesler Field in Mississippi where I did basic training. In Upton I asked them to put me in the Air Force so that if I ever got the waiver that I was expecting I would be right there, instead of moving around from parachutes or tanks or something like that. And they did. They put me into the Air Force and I did my basic training in Biloxi. Then at another point they had meetings with the men and they asked them what they would like to do, would they like to be in tanks and so on. I was considering going to photography school or radio school, and then a couple of officers came to me and they said, "We've got an offer you can't refuse." And the offer was that I would study cryptography. And I did. I studied cryptography, and what the offer was, that when I graduated I would be shipped over to Scotland; I would be shipped over as a sergeant right off the bat. And I would be out of harm's way, no less.

I finished the course and I was waiting for my orders, and then all of a sudden my waiver came through. I had to take the medical examination all over again. As far as the physical examination was concerned, I was in better shape than I was at any time in my life. And it so happened that this occurred between the middle of August and the end of September which was the worst part of the hay fever season. My eyes were tearing. My nose was running. I was sneezing to beat the band. But I had the waiver. So I passed, and I went to Nashville, Tennessee, which was a staging center where by testing the men they would determine who was going to be a pilot and who's going to be - well, if you flunked out being a pilot you had a choice of being a navigator or a bombardier. I passed.

We stayed there for about three months, because it was in the middle of the winter. Right next to the camp was a train marshaling yard where they made up all the boxcars into different trains. There must have been about 15 different tracks. They were making all these tracks full of cars. The train would come in, they would unhook one boxcar and let it roll down into the proper line. All day and all night, and all the smoke from the coal burning engines. I came down with pneumonitis, and everybody else came down with something else. Then there was a camp-wide measles epidemic, so that delayed us some more. Eventually it all cleared up and I was shipped off to Montgomery, Alabama, for pre-flight training.

I was there for a two-month training period. The first month we were the underdogs and the upperclassmen were the second-month people, just like at West Point. We got hazed and all that kind of stuff.

**Aaron Elson:** What would they do to haze you?

**Ray Carrow:** Well, it wasn't much. You had to repeat certain things in order. When I was in the university I had to learn the Greek alphabet which I still know. That kind of stuff.

We did a lot of calisthenics there in the two months. Boy, my legs were really strong because we used to jog for miles and miles, in addition to all the other things that we'd do, pushups. And we had classes there of different types, particularly of Morse code. I don't remember my Morse code any more, but I was pretty good at it. And it didn't take very long before I knew everything backwards and forwards.

After that two months was up I went to primary training. That was in Lafayette, Louisiana. The plane I flew was a Fairchild PT-19; it's a single-wing, in-line engine. Most of the other people flew the biplane with the rotary engine.

I had an instructor whose name was Bill Antrim. He came from Antrim in Ireland. And he was a toughie, but fair. Very good. I liked him. And I think he knew that I was pretty good. I soloed a lot earlier than the other guys did, and I went through all the training. Strangely enough, in primary training we did more acrobatics than in later training. Everything. I did shondelles, loops, snap rolls, slow rolls. Spins.

**Aaron Elson:** What's a shondelle?

**Ray Carrow:** You make a loop, and at the top of the loop you're upside down and you turn around rightside up. And then there are pylon eights and figure eights and what have you.

**Aaron Elson:** Did you at this point have a preference or know whether you were going to be a bomber pilot or a fighter pilot?

**Ray Carrow:** I had no idea. Naturally I was hoping that I would be a fighter pilot. The problem with me is that I've been a loner all my life, and I've never made waves. Particularly at that time I didn't make a lot of waves in a lot of places because I was a Jew boy, and at that time Jews were hated moreso than ever before or now

because they blamed us for the war. So I kept quiet in the background. So I would never approach my instructor to say, "Look, do something about getting me into the fighter corps instead of the bombers." I just waited my turn and I took what they gave me.

The next place was the advanced training and it was at this point that I realized I was going into bomber training eventually because these were twin-engine planes. There was the AT-9 and the AT-10. The AT-10 was a boxcar. The AT-9 was a sleek-looking two-engine plane. One month we trained in one and the other month we trained in the other. Again, we did cross-country training and landing and takeoff and what have you.

All right. We went to advanced training in Columbus, Mississippi, and we were training in the twin-engine planes.

We did a lot of cross-country work, a lot of landings and takeoffs and night flying.

Finally I graduated, and that's where I got my commission.

**Aaron Elson:** With all this training, did you see any accidents?

**Ray Carrow:** Not amongst the fellows I was training with. At one point we had a cross-country object to do and just as I reached the air base where I was supposed to land I was told to hold it for a while. There was a P-39 taking off and he turned around to the left and went right down. I saw the whole thing. Obviously he didn't warm up his engine, because he got into the plane, got on the runway and took off right away, and it stalled on him and that was it.

All right. I finished advanced training and I got my commission, and I went to Maxwell Field, Alabama. This phase was called transition training. This is where I learned how to fly a B-24. The particular ones that we flew were stripped down, they had no guns, no bombs, the whole idea was to learn how to fly the damn thing. And we did a lot of flying, a little blind flying; you would put certain glasses on and black out the windshield so you couldn't see where you were going. You had to fly according to the instruments, because that's what you would be doing necessarily if you flew at night, too.

We did a lot of landings, a lot of takeoffs, a lot of cross-country runs. I later learned that the instructor that I had in transition training had started to think about

recommending me to a different school to become an instructor in B-24s. There was one incident where we did a cross-country hop to South Dakota where there were a bunch of high-flying officers up there hunting, so we brought some supplies. When we got there, my instructor wanted me to land the plane. And he pointed out to the other guys, he said, "Did you see that landing?" So I got to the point where I thought I was pretty good, but maybe that's when it went to my head although I didn't feel that.

**Aaron Elson:** Did you ever think you would see this much of the country?

**Ray Carrow:** Oh, I saw one hell of a lot of the country, because at that time we went by train, from Camp Upton down to Biloxi, Mississippi by train. From Biloxi to Lafayette, Louisiana. From Lafayette to Greenwood, Mississippi, to Columbus, Mississippi, to Montgomery, Alabama. From Montgomery to Salt Lake City where we spent some time. From Salt Lake City to Boise, Idaho. Lots and lots of traveling, on trains. Here I was training to be a pilot, I always went by train.

Before going to Boise we stopped off at Salt Lake City. It was in the dead of winter. And we were having a good time there while we were waiting for our orders. There was a bunch of us officers, we'd go out to the nightclubs, we went to the movies. I remember one thing in particular about a movie we went to, I'd never seen anything like it before and I've never seen anything like it since, although people have told me that there are some like that now: When you went into your seat, you did not see the head of the person in front of you. The chair was high enough to hide his head but low enough so that you had a clear view of the screen. It was like you were alone in the movie.

When I got to Boise, the people I came in with were assigned a crew and they were shipped out and then another bunch of people came in and they were shipped out, and then another bunch came in and they were shipped out, and in the meantime I was having a great time. I met some wonderful people in town. The base was great. They had a couple of movie houses, what, ten cents to see the movie at that point? All the latest movies. And the dining hall was open 24 hours a day. You could have lunch, dinner, breakfast at any time.

**Aaron Elson:** What were some of the movies you saw?

**Ray Carrow:** Oh, God, I don't remember. Whatever was showing in 1943. As a matter of fact, when I was a prisoner of war, I read a lot of books. I made a list of

all the books, and when I looked at it recently, I couldn't imagine how many books I read when I was out there. But this time I did write down the names of all the books. But I remember only one, and that was "Anna and the King of Siam," which they later made into a movie. But it was an autobiography, she was a real person, and what she did was a real thing, so it's a true story. I wasn't into autobiographies at that time, but I started to read it because there was nothing else to do and the more I got into it the more interesting it became and I read the whole thing. And of course when the movie came out I knew what was going on.

All right, so I'm in Boise and nothing is happening to me. Finally I started getting ants in my pants. I thought, I can't stay here forever, what's going on? What a stupid ass I was, I should have stayed there. What happened was, in the file where they kept all these things, mine was in the back and it slipped down and was out of sight. So they started searching and they found the file. The next thing I knew there was a crew up there waiting for me. We trained. We had gunnery training in the air, on the ground, and of course again, I'm giving myself a lot of pats on the shoulder, but I won a number of medals for rifle and pistol.

**Aaron Elson:** What was your first impression of your crew?

**Ray Carrow:** I didn't know a single one of them. I assumed that each one was trained to do what he was supposed to do. Except that it turned out when it came to gunnery, the gunners were stinko altogether. I did a hell of a lot better than they did. I didn't have any pre-training in gunnery. And later on when I was shot down something else happened. I can't prove it, but I know when a gun is fired you feel it, and you hear it, and at the time that the Germans were firing at us I didn't hear or feel anything in the back of the plane. I called back and said, "What's going on? Aren't you shooting at these guys?" Or words to that effect. I didn't get an answer. And I later assumed that they'd jumped out before anything happened. Before something happened; they may have seen a plane on fire. But I didn't hear any gunfire from the rear of the plane.

Okay, so, finally we finished. We took a train from Boise to Topeka, Kansas. Topeka was a place where they manufactured one of the B-24s. It wasn't a Ford plant, it was a Boeing, I believe. They assigned a brand-new plane to me and I had to take it up and put it through its paces, and I went up with my engineer. By the way, this guy was pretty good, the engineer.

**Aaron Elson:** His name was?

**Ray Carrow:** Lou Tocca. By the way, I was assigned a co-pilot, his last name was Simone, and he was a hot pilot. He did not want to be in a B-24 or a four-engine bomber. He wanted to be a fighter pilot. And so he didn't do anything. He didn't work. He didn't try to learn anything. I tried to get rid of him but while I was in the States nobody paid any attention, and it wasn't until I got overseas and I went on several missions with him, and there were times when I had to give him the responsibility of flying it, and we flew in formation. When he was flying we would finally end up drifting back. I would have to take over and come back again. Finally, I made a complaint and they took him off the plane, and they gave me another co-pilot, Kay's brother [Lt. Newell Brainard]. He was okay. A nice guy.

What do you think they did to Simone?

They put him on a lead plane.

**Aaron Elson:** Really?

**Ray Carrow:** Not to fly. He was just there, that's all. On a lead plane, usually the pilot flew, and generally one of the officers, a high-ranking officer would sit in the co-pilot's seat. But for training purposes and what have you, this kid was put in as a co-pilot in the lead plane. Unbelievable. Screw up and you get ahead.

All right, I'm in Topeka. Just before we were leaving we had a gathering, some of the guys' wives came up. We had a big dinner in a big restaurant, and that was the last meeting with our relatives. I had no one coming up. I had broken up with my girlfriend just before going to the service.

**Aaron Elson:** She was from Brooklyn?

**Ray Carrow:** No, she was from Manhattan. West End Avenue. Strangely I remember the number of the house, I remember her telephone number. Telephone numbers that I used to have I don't remember. 360 West End. This was one girl I really fell for.

**Aaron Elson:** How had you met her?

**Ray Carrow:** In school. Unfortunately it was not returned. Not the way I wanted it to be.

So I had no one. I was there with all the rest of the guys and some of their wives; not everybody had a wife or a girlfriend up there, so I wasn't alone. I was alone, but not the only one alone.

And then we were shipped out. We stopped overnight at Bangor, Maine. And from there we went to Goose Bay, Labrador. This was in April; it's pretty damn cold up there in April. We were supposed to fly from Goose Bay to Reykjavik in Iceland, and the place was socked in constantly, and they couldn't wait any longer for it to open up so they can land planes. It was only a stopover, actually. So they finally said, "You're going to go across the whole way," which is what we did. We went across the Atlantic. I landed in Ireland. And that was the last I ever saw of that plane.

There was one thing that occurred that may be of interest. When we got to Ireland it, too, was socked in, and they had us going around in circles and getting us in one at a time in the order in which we got there. When I looked at my gas gauges, there was almost none left, and I didn't like the idea of flying around like that. For one thing, I couldn't see. I didn't know where the other planes were.

There was a big lake near this area, and sometimes when it's cloudy all around on the land, over the water it's clear, and sometimes the reverse happens. In this case it was clear over the lake. So I went right down underneath the clouds and I came into visual flight.

They screamed bloody murder at me, too. I ignored them. I wanted to get down because to lose a plane and ten guys, that's stupid. So I landed, and that was the last I saw of the brand-new plane and we remained in Ireland one hell of a long time, learning how to identify planes. Always calisthenics, don't forget, they never stop. We learned what to do if we were shot down and became prisoners of war. If we were shot down, we were trained to escape. Also, how to parachute if you were going to have to jump out of the plane. Jump, count ten, pull the ripcord. That's how we learned how to parachute.

Eventually they finished with us there and we were shipped down to England. We took some Army trucks. In Ireland we were on the west coast. We took some Army trucks and went to the east coast. From there we got onto a boat and went across the Irish Sea to Scotland. Well, that trip across the Irish Sea, everybody got sick. I

found a place in the center of the boat so that I had the least amount of rocking but I got sick, too, it didn't matter.

We got to Scotland. Eventually we got on a train and we went down toward England, and that was on June 6<sup>th</sup>. George Collar was on the same train that I was on.

When we got close to our destination, they told us that D-Day had already started. But instead of going to our assigned air base, we went right back to Ireland.

**Aaron Elson:** How come?

**Ray Carrow:** Don't ask me. They weren't ready for us for some reason. They shipped us right back to Ireland, and we went through the same garbage all over again for a couple of weeks.

**Aaron Elson:** Did you go by boat?

**Ray Carrow:** No, this time we flew. We went back to Ireland, went through the same business all over again. Then finally they shipped us back, again by plane, to our particular bases in England. I was in the 445<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group and I was assigned to the 700<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron.

Jimmy Stewart was not there at the time. He was there before my time. But we all learned that Jimmy Stewart was one of the officers, not of my squadron, but he was in one of the other squadrons.

The first thing we did was to practice formation flying, once or twice. The next thing we did was to do some so-called milk runs to the coast of France, where we bombed the V-bombs launching pads. And then things got a little hotter. We started going to regular targets in Germany.

Most of my targets were pretty deeply into Germany. I never got to Berlin, though. We were assigned to Berlin at one time, but we never made it. What happened was, not only was our group assigned but other groups, the entire division - we were in the Second Division, and there was another division behind us. There was one plane after another, and I can tell you why I know that because when I got to the point where we were supposed to cross Denmark instead of crossing Denmark there was a cloud cover that went up to maybe 50,000 feet. You couldn't go

through it, not with formation flying. So the lead plane had to turn around. And as we were coming back we saw the others going forward because they couldn't turn around and get all tangled up, so for miles and miles and miles I saw planes go to Denmark, and we were coming back. We had to dump our bombs in the sea and then land back at the base. But it was a kind of a relief, I didn't want to go to Berlin. Although I went to Munich and the area of Munich many times and they were just as bad.

On my 13<sup>th</sup> mission, I was assigned to go to a target near Munich, and on the way down we were flying in formation, and again the clouds started getting higher and higher. I was at an assigned elevation of 29,000 feet. The plane I was flying was an old one, and it didn't have the power anymore like the newer ones did; some of the newer ones were able to go up to 30,000, 31,000 feet and fly in the clear, but I couldn't. As far as I could go was 29,000 feet, and in some of the breaks of the clouds I saw planes going right in front of me. There were other groups in the area and they, too, were getting confused with the cloud cover and not being able to see, and they all started spreading out. They didn't want to bump into each other.

That's what happened to me, too. I started spreading out. And finally I got to the point where I said, "The hell with this, I'm going to get out of here." So I went down, and the next thing I knew, I didn't know what was happening at the time but later I figured out that I rolled over twice. I came out beneath the clouds. I had visual sight and I straightened out and headed for home.

What happened as I later learned - one of the mechanics came to my hut and he had a couple of pieces of shrapnel that had gotten in under the plane, into the instrument panel, and knocked out my instruments. I didn't know it. The compass was okay, that's how I got home, because it knew what direction to go.

The name of the plane I was in at that time was called the Blasted Event.

**Aaron Elson:** Was this the plane that Newell Brainard wrote home that he made two loop de loops?

**Ray Carrow:** Yes.

**Aaron Elson:** And his local paper wrote it up.

**Ray Carrow:** Everybody's local paper carried this story. Mine was carried in the Flushing paper. Whatever town the other guys came from, that was the paper it was told in. And of course it was told from the point of view of that individual. I've got mine in Flushing.

**Aaron Elson:** But you really made two loops?

**Ray Carrow:** It was a roll, actually. It couldn't be a loop. Impossible. It was a slow roll. As we made the roll, the bombs were still in the plane. They were on the racks. And when we turned over, some of them fell down off the racks, right through the bomb bay doors, tearing them open. And my bombardier and the nose gunner went back on the catwalk to release those bombs that had not come off, because it could very well have happened that they were armed. So they did go back and there's nothing below them except this little catwalk and they had to get rid of the other bombs, which they did. And we flew back. I landed at the base in England. Another thing that happened was that we had what was called chaff, little strips of aluminum paper, and they were packed tightly in boxes. The boxes broke open - I didn't see this, but the guys told me the entire inside of the plane was loaded with this chaff, they had to swim their way through it. Also, according to the article you read, the radios were floating in the air and they were floating in the air because it was like what they do now, the way they train for zero gravity, the plane takes a steep dive like - I never tried this, but when you do that you're in zero gravity, so at one point the same thing happened there.

That was my 13<sup>th</sup> mission, believe it or not.

Then I flew eight missions more. And it was on the eighth mission that things happened. I'm pretty sure you know the story. Everybody has a story, correct? Except for the stupid ass who led us into this thing in the first place and unfortunately, he got killed.

Our mission was to Kassel. Our squadron was to lead the group, and one of the higher ranking officers flew in the lead plane. As we approached the target, the lead plane veered off to the left, and everybody, everybody saw it in every other plane. We were supposed to keep radio silence but some of us didn't. I was one of those who didn't. I said, "We're going the wrong way!"

And they said, "Just stay in line," or words to that effect. We could do nothing but to take the order.

We dropped the bombs on this other town and we were making a turn to the right to get back to where we came from, and that was when we got hit.

If we had stayed with the main group of planes, they were being protected by our fighters, but we were off all alone, like sitting ducks. Eventually our fighters did come and they shot down some of the Germans, but by that time the damage had been done.

**Aaron Elson:** What was the first indication you had that something was amiss?

**Ray Carrow:** The plane next to me, to my right, was on fire. And then I felt my plane being hit. Then I saw parachutes all around the place, and then I knew that something serious was happening.

After a while, we lost one engine, and then we lost another engine and then it reached the point where I couldn't control the plane anymore. I looked back to the flight deck and I saw that the bomb bay was a raging inferno. Apparently some gas had leaked in, the fumes were there, it was hit by a shell of some kind, and it exploded and caught on fire.

Now, in some of the stories that you'll read it says that my co-pilot touched me on the arm to tell me that there was a fire. How could anybody know that? He was killed when he went down, so he couldn't have told the story. I was the one who touched him on his arm and I pointed to the fire. He immediately got up and he left, and I never saw him again. And I assumed that he didn't make it. It was a pretty scary situation. I had on a flak vest. I had on a Mae West. I had on a parachute; the pilots had to use a seat parachute.

**Aaron Elson:** I never heard of a seat parachute.

**Ray Carrow:** The parachute fit into the bucket of the seat. The other guys had chest parachutes. But this was a seat parachute, so I had only the straps. I had a pair of shoes tied onto one strap because I was wearing these fur-lined flight boots. As it is, I lost one of them on the way down, so it's a good thing I had my shoes.

So with all of this bulky stuff, and the tenseness of the moment, I couldn't open the seat belt, and that's what saved me. Because by the time I finally opened the seat belt, the plane had split in half, with the fire in the other half, and when I got out

of my seat, we were going down and I started climbing up toward the hole. I got to the edge and jumped.

I didn't know where I was, how high up or how low down. I counted one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, and I pulled the ripcord. It's a good thing, too, because, I don't know, I had luck with me that day in a sense. When I pulled the cord I was in a cloud layer, so I couldn't see anything. I came out under the cloud layer and there was the ground right there. Just a couple of hundred yards below me. So that meant I had fallen pretty nearly all the way, and it's a good thing the chute came open at that time because I would have been squashed.

I landed inside a fenced-in labor camp. There was an old Wehrmacht soldier with his rifle pointed at me, and the one word that came out of his mouth was, "Jude?"

Well, of course I wasn't going to tell him I was a Jew. I never wore my dogtags when I went on a combat mission, because that's a giveaway. And with my name, they could take me for anything as far as my looks are concerned, I got away with murder. Unfortunately, Newell didn't, but not because he was a Jew or not a Jew, what happened to him - do you know the story of what happened to him?

**Aaron Elson:** Yes. [Lieutenant Newell Brainard, Carrow's co-pilot, was murdered on the ground by labor camp guards].

**Ray Carrow:** If you are a recipient of a bomb from the air on your house and some of your family were killed, and you captured one of the guys who did it, you're gonna kill him. That's what happened to him.

I didn't know that, though, until many years later when I met Kay [Kay Brainard Hutchins, Newell's sister], and she told me.

When I landed in the camp, the first thing I did was, I was sitting on the ground and I took off the boot, and I put on the shoes. And finally the soldier told me to get up, and I started walking to one of the buildings there. On the way I saw a body. The body was face down. And I wanted to go over to see who it was, if I knew him, and I started walking over and the soldier told me to go away. But what I did see was that the back of this guy's head was blown away. Completely blown away. I never did find out who it was. For a while I thought it was my engineer but I couldn't prove it.

As a result of this incident, the back of my head was burned. It burned off the hair, burned off the eyelashes, it burned off the eyebrows.

**Aaron Elson:** You had gone through the fire?

**Ray Carrow:** I didn't go through the fire but that damn thing was hot enough to singe my hair and my skin.

**Aaron Elson:** So you had all these burns and singes, and then you were being guarded by the Wehrmacht soldier.

**Ray Carrow:** He was an elderly man. If I had gotten to a real Nazi, that would have been the end. All right, so I was guarded. I did not get any treatment for the burns.

A day later, they took me to Hersfeld, to the jail. God, what a stinking hole that was. When I got there, I was just about near the first one, because this camp was right outside of Hersfeld. By the way, the camp was a labor camp. They had prisoners of war there, mostly civilian prisoners of war that were working the fields.

During the night, more and more crewmen that they captured were brought into the jail and we were pretty well stuffed in there for a while. The next day they put us on to a truck and we went through a great part of the country to a big Nazi base, with solid buildings, not tents or quonset huts. We were interrogated there. I don't remember whether they gave us anything to eat. They didn't take care of my burns. Just interrogated us and of course tried to scare the hell out of us, too.

**Aaron Elson:** In what way?

**Ray Carrow:** Well, "You're a spy," and "We're going to eliminate you," and stuff like that. In my case, because I didn't have any identification - the only thing I had was the jumpsuit with the name Carrow on it. No insignia. No rank. No dogtags. So I was a spy.

But I was with a whole bunch of other guys and I think that by that time they had recovered the log from my plane because when I got to the main interrogation place in Munich, they knew everything. They knew how many hours I had flown, and they knew what time I took off. They knew the crew members' names and everything.

Then we were shipped out again and this time we went by train to Munich, to a place called Dulag Luft. It was a huge, menacing looking building. This is where they sent captured prisoners for interrogation. And first, what they do is put you in a cell all by yourself and let you stew there for a couple of days. As far as food is concerned, I got what they called Schwarzbrot. It's a black bread made out of sawdust, with a little layer of jelly on it. Did somebody else tell you this?

**Aaron Elson:** I've heard it described as like sawdust.

**Ray Carrow:** The bread. They didn't tell you about the jelly, though, did they? That's what it tasted like, too.

After a while, though, they called me into this officer's office, and he started interrogating me, asking me how many bombers there were on the field and how many men there were, and all kinds of things which I had no knowledge of anyway. I was just a grunt as far as the hierarchy there was concerned. Nobody told me what was going on, so I couldn't answer any questions. Name, rank and serial number, that's all.

Then he tried to tempt me by saying that he knew where I graduated in the States. Columbus, Mississippi. And he even knew - well, he knew my serial number of course, because it was on the log book, and that's what I gave him, too. But apparently what happened is when the numbers were assigned, they were assigned in blocks to specific air bases where these people like myself graduated, and my number was in that particular block that was associated with the Columbus airfield. So he tried to impress me by telling me that's where I graduated from. Of course, they had spies in this country too at the time, getting all these types of information.

Finally he was through with me and I went back to the cell and in a couple of days we were shipped out, and we were shipped out to the first place that was run by the Red Cross, just outside of Munich, again I don't remember the name of the place.

This time I got my treatment for the burns. I got a new set of clothes to wear. I got my first meal in almost a week. And I got cleaned up and showered. And eventually we were shipped out, by train. Not boxcars, these were regular passenger trains. But we were jammed in like sardines, and I remember in the compartment they had the luggage rack. That's where I slept, in the luggage rack.

On the way we went through the Black Forest and there was an awful lot of air activity there. The American fighters would come swooping down; the train we were on was marked as a Red Cross train so they left us alone, but the German guards didn't trust anybody, and when the planes came along the train would stop and the guards would run out into the woods on both sides. When the planes left they would come back in again. Of course we didn't do anything because we couldn't go very far. We were pretty weak at that time, too.

We made many stops along the way and when we got to Berlin we made a long stopover there and then finally we were shipped up to Barth, Germany.

Barth is on the North Sea. Do you know where Peenemunde is? It's to the northwest of Peenemunde. Of course, being so close to Peenemunde, we saw some jets occasionally there. Because that's where they made them. So we got to Barth, I was assigned to North Compound 2. North Compound 3 was just about opening. At that time there were about 5,000 prisoners of war there.

Did any of the Jewish fellows tell you that the Germans, by name, picked out everybody they thought was Jewish and segregated them.

**Aaron Elson:** Yes.

**Ray Carrow:** Well, they didn't know me, so I didn't get segregated. And as I understand it, eventually they were going to assassinate the Jews, but it never did happen.

We had an underground newspaper there. The Germans could never find the source of information from which these newspapers were made. They never found the newspaper either. We surreptitiously passed it around.

**Aaron Elson:** How was it printed?

**Ray Carrow:** I have no idea. I know they had a radio. Of course they bribed some of the guards. They got some parts and information. What happened, though, was that we were constantly being searched. We would be outside, they would search the barracks inside out, into the attic, everywhere, underneath, above. They never could find the printing facility or the radio.

Strangely, we used to get Red Cross packages, and in those Red Cross packages there were some foods that were packaged in tins, and the tins had sodder on them. The Germans confiscated these tins whenever they could. They were absolutely certain that we were going to build an airplane and fly out of there.

**Aaron Elson:** What were the guards like in the camp?

**Ray Carrow:** Morons. Just ordinary people, with a little power. You know, they would tell you to do things. You had to do it. Food. We relied mostly on Red Cross parcels, but we didn't always get what we were supposed to get. As the Red Cross parcels came in from Switzerland and went to Berlin, the trains would be stopped in the yards there and people would come in and steal them. That's what we learned later, anyway. And sometimes they did get through and so we were able to get some nourishment. For the most part they fed us rutabagas and some potatoes and on a couple of occasions they killed a horse and they had some horsemeat although I wouldn't eat it.

When I went in there I weighed about 175 or 180 pounds. When I finally got out I was 120. Just like the people in the concentration camps.

We were liberated by the Russians. They came in and captured Peenemunde and all the area around there, and since we were too far up north it was not necessary for them to send any soldiers up there, they bypassed us. But they did send a contingent, one of the high-ranking officers, he gave a big speech about how friendly we were and how glad he was to greet us and so on.

And I understand that they insisted on taking the prisoners of war back to safety by way of Russia, to go down to Odessa. It's one hell of a long trip down to Odessa, and from there they would ship us out to wherever we had to go. But our forces prevailed upon them to allow planes to come in. There was an airfield near the prisoner of war camp. The only problem was that this airfield was mined, and amongst the 8,000 prisoners that we now had there were those who were qualified to demine mines. And that's what they did, they went over to the airport, they found the mines, they took them out, and then a whole bunch of B-17s came in. We were packed like sardines into the 17s and flew back to France. And we were put up in camps named after the cigarette companies, Lucky Strike, Philip Morris, Camel and so on. I was in Camp Philip Morris. The idea there was to get us back to health again. We couldn't eat because our stomachs had shrunk so much. What

they did was that they had stations all over the place where they had egg nog, and we were encouraged to drink as much as we could, a sip at a time, and eventually to build up our capacity for food. The next step was that we started getting chicken a la king. And eventually we were able to eat more solid food. And from there we finally were shipped out from Le Havre.

We got on board a ship. It was brand-new; never been used before except for when it came overseas. Again we were packed in like sardines, but it was a beautiful ship. The staterooms were new. The food was good. And we started going home.

On the way, the ship had a problem. The rudder got stuck and we started making a big circle, but they eventually got it straightened out and we started going again. I remember the name of the ship, the Admiral Sheer. We landed in Boston. And from Boston I got on the phone and called my folks and told them I was there, I was okay, and I'd be able to see them shortly.

From there we went to Camp Dix in New Jersey. And from Camp Dix I was discharged, not out of the Army, I was discharged from the base, and then I went home. And I stayed home for a while until I received orders to go to Atlantic City. In Atlantic City I received my discharge papers, and then I went home. Of course, I'd done some other personal things in between. In the meantime I'd gotten married, and if you want to know the story of how that happened, that's a long story, too.