

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Veterans

Personal Experience

O. H. 1160

STEPHEN SEVACHKOK

Interviewed

by

John Demetra

on

November 9, 1988

STEVE SEVACHKO

Steve Sevachko was born in East Youngstown (now known as Campbell) in 1915. Growing up in the Depression with strong Slovak family upbringing has left Mr. Sevachko with a real sense of family orientation. He served in the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's before going to Europe with the Army in 1943. After returning home from the war, Mr. Sevachko became employed by the Store Engineering Company where he worked until retirement in 1978. He was also instrumental in the planning and construction of Saint Mary's Assumption center on Belle Vista Avenue. Steve and his wife Rose, have six children.

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INTERVIEWEE: STEPHEN SEVACHKO

INTERVIEWER: John Demetra

SUBJECT: Depression, CCC, basic training, combat

DATE: November 9, 1988

D: This is an interview with Stephen Sevachko for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on World War II Veterans, by John Demetra, on November 9, 1988, at 8:30 p.m.

Mr. Sevachko, what can you tell me about growing up in the Depression?

S: Well, I can tell you about the 1930's. There were five of us at home. My dad was laid off.

D: Where did he work at?

S: He worked at Republic Steel. He didn't work for five years. Mother went to work. She used to do housework two or three days a weeks. They paid her \$2 a day and car fare, which was \$2.20 a day. She worked three days a week. Dad was a carpenter by trade too. In Europe he used to be a builder. He worked with his father. His father was like the village craftsman. He did work for people if they wanted a table made or a bench. My dad learned the trade from him.

D: Do you remember reading about the stock market crash?

S: Oh, yes.

D: Is that when your father got laid off, shortly after that?

S: Shortly after that, yes. He got laid off after that and he didn't work five years. He looked for work all over. I was only about fifteen years old then.

We raised rabbits. I raised rabbits. I used to go and pick clover for the rabbits, where the Lincoln Knolls Plaza is now. I used to bring the clover home. I would dry it out in the field. I used to raise jackrabbits, Belgian hares. I had some pink-eyed rabbits. I remember one time I killed one. It was just ready to be cooked. It weighed thirteen pounds dressed. I'm telling you it was big, man. You used to grab it by the rear legs and hit it across the neck, you know. We raised chickens then too.

During the Depression, (the city), every Thursday the government had surplus meat. It was political too, if you know what I mean John. They used to make soup and you can go to a certain market, on a Thursday they would give you a piece of beef. Mother would either make a stew from it or a soup. You had the soup kitchens too. Like everything else John, the party that ran that, the people that ran that, just hired their immediate family or friends. When they gave out the soup they took the best meat home. They used to add water to the soup to give it to the people. I remember one time my mother said she went down there for the soup. It was almost a riot there, you know, among the workers and the people. We had like a fresh air camp, down on Wilson Avenue. They had a sub station there where they used to give out milk. \$.02 a gallon it cost you. So, instead of them mixing the milk up so you get some of the cream too, the workers that worked there, they took the cream off the top. We got one percent milk. People sure were ruthless. Politics, John! That was a pretty good place to go. Every Wednesday we went down there. The kids used to go down there. They used to show movies out there, during the Depression.

D: On Wilson Avenue?

S: On Wilson Avenue in Old Haseltine. It used to be near the Wilkoff Steel company. Fitzsimons too, Fitzsimons was there. People worked. They had a lot of stores in town there. There was a big A & P store there and Kroger store. I was just telling my wife the other day. We bought some coffee, A & P coffee, a three pound bag. I don't know what it cost, \$6 or almost \$7. I said, "You know, I remember buying this coffee, this three pound bag, for \$.69, or the most was \$.79." Oh yes! I remember one time they had a special on coffee. 8:00 coffee, I think it was \$.23 or \$.29 a pound.

My mother was born here, John. She was born in Youngstown Brierhill, In Youngstown (this area was known as

Monkey's Nest). My grandmother had fifteen children. When my mother was six years old her grandmother took her to Europe to stay with her mother, my mother's grandmother. She stayed there for, I think, ten years. Grandchildren would stay with the grandparents in Europe to help them out. When she was sixteen years old she came back to America. My parents they got married in 1912 because my sister was born in 1913.

D: So, you are grown up. You mentioned earlier you went through the tenth grade at Memorial High School.

S: Yes.

D: Why no further?

S: I said I left school because I went to the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corp) camp.

D: Was that your own choice?

S: Yes. Well, no. See my dad didn't work. It was during the Depression in 1933. I was seventeen years old then. They called it Civilian Conservation Corp. They gave you \$30 a month. They sent \$25 home to your parent and you lived on \$5 a month.

D: \$5 a month?

S: Yes. That is what I did. I lived on \$5 a month. I used to repair, I sewed, I repaired pants. I did some cooking as the second cook in the CCC camp. I learned to barber when I was at home. I was sixteen years old. I knew how to barber. My dad had a barber shop in the basement. We used to charge \$.25. Sometimes you couldn't get the \$.25, people didn't have \$.25. I didn't have my tools then when I was in the CCC camp. I used to borrow another guy's tools. He would cut mine and I would cut his. Then I did a lot of sewing for the guy. The pants were ripped or something like that. I pressed there pants out sometimes. I would get an old blanket which was torn and I asked the supply sergeant could I have the blanket. "Yes, you can have it." The khaki pants were to narrow. You know what I mean John? At that time they started with bell bottom. I would rip them up in the inseam, maybe about to the knee and I would cut that blanket into a pyramid. Like a cone. I would make them wider. Then I would soak them. I would soak them in water, these pants. We had Army cots, steel Army cots from World War I yet, I think. I picked the mattress up, I put a piece of cardboard down there first, and I put some newspaper there. Then I laid the pants down for the guys. The paper absorbs the water. I would lay the mattress on top of this. That is the way we pressed pants, see. I

would give it too them. I did it for \$.15.

D: That is how you press pants?

S: Yes, and cigarettes were \$.05 a pack then.

D: Did you smoke?

S: I smoked then, yes. We used to go to town. We would get done with our chores on a Friday. We used to cut trees and make roads. I used to climb those trees like a monkey. Man we used to bet on cutting down a tree. How fast you could cut it down and fall it and exactly which way it would fall. We got good at this after a while.

D: Were you trained for that?

S: They taught us to cut trees. You could pick it up yourself. We would build roads, you know. Cut out the shrubs and the bulldozer would come. Make the road openings. Well, sometimes the forest was too dense. You had to trim it out. Some of the guys, they took out crews. Some would cut the tree down, then you plant what they call reforestation. We would go to town. We would get done working on a Friday, about noon. Then you could go wherever you want. I was stationed up near Redding, California. The closest town there was Redding. We used to go there on a weekend. One time, John, I came to town; it must have been about 110 in the shade. Oh my God, was it hot! Here I see people come in carrying topcoats. What the hell is wrong with these people, it is a 110. Some people were frying the eggs on the sidewalk. That was the first time I ever saw fry eggs on the sidewalk. So hot! I stopped one of the fellows there. I said, "Tell me, maybe I'm not too bright, but it is so hot here and you still carry topcoats." He said, "You wait until about 10:00 tonight when you are going home, back to camp. You are going to freeze to death you know." We had these army trucks with the canvas on top. Each side of the truck had these benches that you fold. We were in town that night. Then about 10:00 it was already down to forty degrees. We went in that truck. I just had a light jacket. It was about a fifty mile ride on that truck back to camp. I thought I would freeze to death. It was on a Saturday that we went to Eureka, California. I always remember that road. It was like the side road. They had a festival up there. I don't know if it was Spanish or Mexican or what. They were Spanish people. There was music playing and the people were dancing in the street. They blocked off the street. They gave out fruit. Free, there was no charge. We took the fruit and had a hell of a good time. Then they have what they call the . . . Like

tacos you know. Free of charge, you know. It is their way of showing appreciation. We had a hell of a good time that day. We came home in the back of the truck and I froze my rear off.

D: Was it organized like along battalions and companies?

S: In companies. Each company there were so many men. I don't know exactly how many men were in that company. At that time, the blacks were separated from the whites. They had these leaders. The leader made \$45 a month. \$30 went home, and he had \$15. He was getting \$15. The assistant leader got \$40 a month, he kept \$10 and \$25 went home. Big deal you know. All that big money!

D: Did you enjoy being in that CCC?

S: Yes. You sign up for six months first. Then I wrote home, "if there was any work." My sister wrote me a letter and said, "most people are not working." You know what I signed up for? Another six months. So, I spent over a year there. I went there in May of 1933 and I came back in August of 1934. In fact, they sent me a letter. I had a younger brother than me. He died from a ruptured appendix in 1934. You never saw two brothers so close like me and my brother Dan.

D: Okay, so you came back from the camps then in 1934.

S: Yes, I came back in 1934.

D: Then what did you do?

S: I was doing odds and ends jobs. Like I said I knew the building trade pretty much then. I worked with my dad. He used to put garages up. Just think, we put up one garage. It was twenty-four by twenty-four, when they still had those roll-a-way doors. For \$320, material and labor. It was fantastic. Yes, I mean it. Well, they were building houses then for \$1,500. You could have bought a house here, during the Depression, in 1934. My dad bought one in Campbell on Palmer Avenue, \$3,200.

D: Nice house?

S: Yes, it wasn't bad. It was a two bedroom house, and a full basement, and a pretty big yard. People lost them during the Depression. The banks took them over. They foreclosed on them. Then in 1935 my dad got a job at the subsidiary of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company called the Youngstown Medal Products Company. That was in 1935 that I got a job. My dad got me a job there. I was working on the press as a helper there. It was

just a new place, they made parts for cars; running boards. Running boards for Chevy's, Nash's, Taroplane--which was called the Hudson Taroplane at that time. We would stamp out the running boards there, the piece of metal would look like a peg board. They had an assembly line there with a spot welder, who would weld the channel on, which would fasten to the car. They would load them on the truck, and they shipped them to Akron to put the rubber on them.

I worked there for four or five years, up until 1939. I got in trouble with the union. The union came in . . . What was it, 1937? The big steel strike. They were shooting all over. Especially at stop and fifteen at Republic Steel. I wasn't doing so bad. I was just a helper. They were paying \$.47 an hour as a helper and \$.55 an hour as an operator. Then you got piece work on that. So, I was making about \$6 a day, \$6.50 a day. I was paying \$2 a month for the union dues. Then the union came in and they were going to start a rotation plan. So, they took me off the press and put me on another job setting dyes. That paid only \$.55 an hour. I told the shop steward, "Wait a minute! Hold it! I'm paying \$2 for my dues and I'm taking a wage cut." Down to \$4.50 a day. Then they told me, "Well, you are going to work your way up." I'm already up, if you know what I mean. So, I left there and I went to U.S. Steel here on Steel Street. I scarfed and I chipped. I scarfed there. I didn't know how to loaf. My kind of people gave me hell. If you lived on the west side they said, "Steve, take it easy. You did enough work for two days." I told one guy, "It's only 11:00 in the morning." I left U.S. Steel; They wanted scarfing instructors at the Copperweld Steel Company in Champion, Ohio. It was a new mill. I was the fifth oldest man in the department there.

- D: What did you do when you scarfed and you chipped?
- S: You take impurities out of the steel. When steel is rolled into bars, like a 4 X 4 or 2 X 2 bar, there is a seam in there sometimes. If you don't take out that crack . . . Take the impurities out when it comes down, when you don't see that line anymore . . . Then when it is rolled out it is a good piece of flat stock steel, like a sheet. I was scarfing high tungsten steel, the armor used for making shells. That had to be perfect. It was hard stuff to scarf. I didn't stay there too long. I was already looking for another job because they were just starting out over there. I'm young, I'm married, and I want to make more money. I had one kid. I had one boy. I used to ride with a fellow from Youngstown to Copperweld. Well, his car broke down and I had a lot of trouble with this fellow. He wanted to buy another car. He said, "Steve, I want you to

meet me downtown at Hendersons," I don't know if you ever heard of them. They used to be a car dealer there on Boardman Street. They used to sell Chevy trucks and Chevy cars. He said, "I want you to come down here." I said, "Okay, I'll meet you down there." The salesman came into the office, he said, "Mr. Sevachko here is a paper I want you to sign." I read the paper. That means if he doesn't pay, I'm stuck with the payment. I wouldn't sign for my father. That is what I told him. I didn't mean it. So then no more friends. Then I started riding the bus. You know where the bus arcade used to be downtown?

D: Yes.

S: There used to be the greyhound terminal there. I used to take the greyhound terminal and ride it to Warren. Then from Warren a fellow used to pick me up there and take me to Champion. That worked alright for awhile but then it was just no good. Then I heard they were hiring scarfers up at Brierhill Sheet and Tube, so I went there. That is where I was scarfing bloon. They did a lot of shell steel there. They paid \$.85 an hour a tonnage. Well, sometimes I made \$13 to \$14 a day. That was big money at that time. On a Saturday I made sometimes time and a half, or double time and a half. I would make between \$45 to \$55 a day but it didn't last long. I was one of the highest tonnage scarfer on my turn. We had turns. They used to call me "Hungry." I mean it John, sometimes I would scarf, I wouldn't even eat. Man, I would just scarf like mad. It wasn't bad steel but, sometimes you had to peel the whole bloon. You didn't stop the torch when you are on a torch scarf. Just flip the torch and come back again. The bloons were about 10" X 9", and 20" long. There were ten bloons in one bed and ten bloons in the other bed. While the crane was turning over the bloons with the magnet on one bed we scarfed on the other one. I was drafted into the Army from there.

D: The war was declared and you were drafted from there?

S: I worked there not quite a year, I worked up at Brierhill. Then I was called out in September, I was drafted then.

D: 1942?

S: 1942, yes. I told them, I said, "Wait a minute here." I went down to the draft board, "I have got one kid, one is on the way." Alright, they gave me a four month deferment or something like that. You know I didn't mind going. I hate to say it because like I said I came out of the Depression, I just started to make a living, I'm trying to make a life for myself; me and my

wife and my child. I had nothing to do with the damn war. Then the second group from where I left at Brierrhill, they were all deferred when I came back. When I came back I found out. The second time they were drafted they were deferred. Steel was a priority at that time. They needed the scarfers but I was already in "Timbuktu."

D: So your four month deferment put you into the Army when? In 1942?

S: No, I didn't go until March, March of 1943. There simply wasn't another notice again. I don't know whether it was March 13th or something like that.

D: What was it like getting inducted into the service?

S: Like I said I knew the ropes because when I came to the induction center it was the same thing as when I came to the CCC camp; same rigmarole. They had a sergeant up there . . . You had to clean the camp up. They gave you a stake with a nail at the end to pick the paper up. The detail sergeant came up to the staff sergeant, he said, "I'm looking for guys that know how to drive a Diamond T Truck." The one guy said, "Well, I drove a Dodge and I drove a GM truck." I saw that stuff pulled before in the CCC camp. I told the guy, I told him, "You know what kind of truck that is? It is a wheelbarrow." They had them marked on there, "Diamond T Truck." They had all kinds of gimmicks going there. Well, like I said you would get your share of KP duty.

D: Where did you go to basic training at?

S: North Camp Polk, Louisiana.

D: What do you remember about that? What do you remember about basic training?

S: Oh good, yes. I was there for awhile. See, 8th Armored Division originally came from Fort Knox, Kentucky, Camp Campell. When I came there to North Camp Polk they already had all the NCOs, John. They brought them back from Fort Knox. It was just a new camp, mud all over the place. They built that place out there and in the back of the camp it was like a dense forest. The colonel came there, the battalion colonel, he said, "I want you to clear the forest." He had three companies out there, 357, 358, 359. Three companies make a battalion. I was in 357. So, we were all out there on the road looking towards the forest. The colonel said, I think we will have a ball field there in three months." Ball field he said, take all those trees and stumps, take them out. They guys said, "Oh brother." You know who would lug out all those stumps of trees?

The guys that went A. I seen a kid dig a hole 6 X 6, six foot deep. Then the colonel came around, he would light a cigarette with a match and he would throw the match. "Now bury it." This one kid he must have dug six holes. When I was at camp three of the guys told me one time, "Steve, you must like the Army." I said, "No, I don't. I probably hate it more than you do. I wasn't in the Army but I had this kind of training for one year in the CCC camp." This colonel, he came to our barracks one time. They were clean, the barracks, because we wanted to go out on a pass. So, we cleaned Friday night and then early morning Saturday they had inspection. I told those guys they didn't know how to make their beds. I had horse pins. You know what a horse pin is? The blanket they used when they used to cover the horses, the pins were about six inches long. Well, I learned that in the CCC camp. You flop the mattress over and you pull out the blanket and put the horse pin there and you can throw a quarter on it, it is going to bounce. You move all the bunks and you clean around there, even the pot bellied stove. You move that and clean all the dirt around there. When this colonel came to our barracks we were the only barracks that wasn't gigged. You know what the word gig is? Penalized. He moved that stove over and he said, he told the sergeant, "Somebody knows all the tricks in the Army." I knew them.

When I came to Camp Polk, I brought my barber tools from home. The captain wanted to know if there was any barbers here. So, I was the company barber. One day I cut sixty-five heads of hair just with a hand clipper. I built up the muscles in my hand. I could take the cap off a bottle and just squeeze it and bend it. I bet with guys that I could bend ten caps in a row. I used to cut the captain's hair, I cut the lieutenant's hair, I cut all the guys hair. They want to give a me a job cutting hair in the PX. The captain said, "I don't want you to charge more than \$.35 for the hair cuts." PX was charging \$.25. The guys who had dates that night would give me \$1 or \$.50. I used to send money home to my wife. I would lend guys money when they went home on leave. What the hell did you get, \$21 a month when I got into the service job. That is all we got, \$21. Then, we had, we used to go to what they call bivouac You camp at night. I don't know if you ever remember the name, the General Van Fleet, the Camp Polk Commander.

D: I've heard of it.

S: They came up one time with stars on the jeep. "Is Private Sevachko here?" "Yes, he is over here." "General wants to see him." They took me in the jeep, they wanted a hair cut. I cut General Van Fleet hair.

D: This is all in boot camp at North Polk?

S: North Camp Polk in the basic training boot camp. Then from there we were being shipped out as a replacement. We didn't know where in the hell we were going. They took out so many guys from there. I couldn't get any rating because they had all the NCOs all filled and that just burned me up. I went to the colonel, the battalion colonel. I told the captain, I said, "Captain Smith, I'm a builder. I would like to be transferred if it is feasible with the engineers. Build bridges, stuff like that." So, he sent me to see the colonel, battalion colonel, and he hated draftees. Oh my God did he hate draftees because he was an old timer. I went to see him. Do you know what he told me? He said, "Private, I want you to listen good. God damn it, I mean listen good! Are you up there in that rifle company?" I said, "Yes." "I got guys in my rifle company that have got two years of college and they are just a private like you. Now get your God damn ass out of here and get back in that line." I told him I was married, I needed more money, so I could get a rating. Then we were transferred. We went from there, we went to Fort Meade.

D: Where was that at?

S: Maryland. We were being divided up. They were separating so many GIs. There were so many GIs that were going to different ports, that we went to the port of embarkation; Camp Myles Standish in Boston, Massachusetts. Oh my God the men they had down there. They used to serve 5,000 meals, each meal. So, one day they wanted a cook. They picked me out. We were frying pork chops. They had stoves from here to Timbuktu. Just go down the line and keep turning them over and a guy on the toaster making toast. He would sit on a chair and keep putting bread on his revolving toaster when it was toasted, it would automatically go into a box. He would play with it like if he was playing cards, like a deck of cards. What a place that was!

D: How long were you there?

S: I was there a week.

D: That was your port of embarkation?

S: Camp Myles Standish yes. I left there about May 15, or about May 18 from Camp Myles Standish.

D: 1944

S: Correct, in May it was. I arrived in Glasgow, Scotland

May 23rd.

- D: What did you do while you were in Glasgow?
- S: That is where you got all your stuff. See, what you did when you came there . . . All of us were issued uniforms, GI clothes; a cap and a coat and everything. We left them there then they gave us different kinds of clothes to put on. They said those were the ones the GIs were going to use on the ones coming back. I don't know what kind of set up that was but that is the way we understood it.
- D: Was it the same type of clothing?
- S: Yes, on the way coming back from Europe. Probably give to the ones that were wounded. You never know.
- D: What can you tell me about getting on a ship and all that?
- S: Getting on a ship I know it was about 2:00 a.m. We got done with supper, we ate, then we talked around and we talked together. Then the sergeant came, "Alright, let's go." We got our clothes and everything, whatever we had, our gear. They said, "Alright," so we all lined up. It was real dark outside. We were going to board the ship. You couldn't see your hand in front it was so damn dark. We boarded under a canopy. The public was not allowed to see the sixty-one boarding ship. So much under security. All I know we start walking and we were going on board ship.
- D: You are fully loaded right? You got your pack and all that?
- S: I don't know if I had a rifle then or not. Gee, I don't know that John, whether they give us the rifle then or not. I think we were on the ship ten days.
- D: What kind of ship was it?
- S: They build . . . What did they call these ships in war?
- D: Liberty ships?
- S: No, it was bigger than that Liberty ship.
- D: Victory ship?
- S: Could have been bigger . . . All I know, I was on the bottom sleeping in those hammocks. You know where the stern is. A Lieutenant came down and he said, "One thing, if a torpedo comes you are going to be the first ones to go. You will be the lucky ones."

D: So you are way down in the bottom of this ship?

S: You couldn't go any lower because then you would be in the water. Slept in those hammocks.

D: What regiment or division were you attached to right now?

S: Now, when I was discharged?

D: On board the ship.

S: On board the ship I was still with the 8th Armored Division. Then they said they took us off of that division and we were going over seas as a replacement.

D: You were just going to fit in where ever they needed you.

S: That is right, yes. That is it, went over as a replacement. Then not until I landed, when I boarded what they called barges. You have seen those landing barges they showed in "The Longest Day." Did you see that movie John?

D: Yes.

S: Well, I was on one of those and that thing dropped down and you walked in the water, you walked on land. You had all your gear, and your rifle and everything. That is the way we landed on the Omaha Beach.

D: So you weren't in one of those when you went across the Atlantic though right?

S: No, we crossed the Atlantic on a troop ship to Glasgow. From Glasgow a train took us to Manchester. We stayed there a few days and then went to South Hampton where we boarded a barge to cross the English Channel. That was where I was supposed to make D-Day invasion but then they changed the order and I had to go eight days later. The aftermath of D-Day was evident. Bodies were still laying all over. You have to watch the German snipers, we lost two men. We landed and were going up a hill in Saint Mary Iglise. Then from there we marched down to our destination point.

D: Going back to that boat though, how long did it take you to go across the Atlantic?

S: I think ten days.

D: Was it a smooth sailing, a smooth crossing?

S: No, I thought the third day we weren't going to make it. I have heard of waves on the Atlantic ocean. These must have been ten, twelve, fifteen feet high, those waves. They were just like you had swallowed up the ship, all the water came on the ship. I thought it would never make it. I don't know how many ships were in the convoy. I don't know how many ships were up there. They used to sail apart from each other. They spotted a couple of submarines; they shot the torpedoes out but they missed us. All the ships in our convey made it safely across. On the ship to pass time we shot crap and we played cards. One time on that ship a G.I. was going around with money as big as your fist, he was looking for games. He had about \$4,000 or \$5,000. He won on the ship.

D: Did you play?

S: I shot some crap, yes, but not that much. I never gambled. I used to play mostly when I was younger. I played some cards. I always said to myself, "Why should I give my money away? I worked too hard for it." All I'm trying to do is win that other guy's money and he probably worked just as hard for his money as I did for mine. Isn't that what it is? You try and get it from the other guy.

D: Okay, so you landed at Glasgow, Scotland.

S: Glasgow, Scotland.

D: What was that like, do you remember?

S: I didn't stay there too long. I think the most we stayed there was two days. Then from there we boarded a train and we went to Manchester in England.

D: Was Manchester nice?

S: It always looked like it was going to rain. No matter what you hung out it never dried. I don't know what they see about England, but that wasn't my kind of country. When we landed in Manchester at the railroad station there was a lot of these English and Aussie soldiers and all in those shorts. Some wore those skirts, you know how they do. They used to say, "Oh man, you got your panties on too?" The GIs used to holler at them. "How come they shrunk?" "Well, we washed them in GI soap and they shrunk." The GIs used to tell the English that there will always be an England as long as there is a United States. I believe that too. As far as our orders went, you didn't hear a lot. A lot of that stuff was on the QT, you just picked up hearsay mostly.

D: Camouflage paint for your face?

S: Yes, then it rained. Our orders were suddenly changed and we didn't make the invasion on D-Day. Like I said I didn't land on the Omaha Beach until eight days later.

D: How did you go over? On that boat with the big ramp?

S: Oh yes. On what they called those landing barges. They came down like a tailgate on the truck.

D: When you landed there did you see those portable harbors they had brought across?

S: What do you mean?

D: I understand that as part of the invasion forces they had a couple of piers or harbors that they just towed across the channel and set up over Normandy. They were like floating piers. Do you recall seeing anything like that?

S: See I don't remember, probably would but I don't recall.

D: It was pretty crowded there though?

S: Well, the Germans had these stakes up, iron baracades like, so you couldn't land. They were mined and everything. Then when you marched up . . . That is where we were attached to the 90th Infantry Division. The first thing the colonel took all of us up there. "Alright," he said, "this is where all your training is put to use. We are not going to tell you how to dig fox holes, we are not going to tell you to clean your rifle, from here on in you are on your own if you want to survive. There is only going to be two kinds of GIs on this beach, on this land, in France and in Germany. The ones that are dead and the ones that are going to die." That is what he said. That is when he separated us. "You are going to go in Company C or Company A, headquarters Company." Then he wanted to know who could speak French or Russian. I said, "That is what I understand, a lot of Russian, I speak the Slavic language. "Oh good," he said, "come over here." So he put me there and he put me the 357th Headquarters Company. I was on guard that night. That is when I almost got it in the knee by a sniper. I remember that one night when they shelled. I was in that fox hole. God damn it! I was in that hole for about a day and a half. They were just sending that barrage in. They were just sending it in.

D: The Germans?

S: Oh yes. I used to know . . . I'm jumping the gun here now. We used to know when they were going to attack. If they would start to shell I used to know when the artillery . . . The one sergeant told me, he said, "Steve watch, at 2:30 right on the money the artillery is going to send a barrage over." God damn it, it was right on the money. Then they shelled for two, three hours and at 5:30, just as soon as it broke daylight, then we started going with rifles and just shooting any Goddamn place; rapid fire. Then as I was walking so far there was a kid coming back, he was running back from the front line, he was from Alliance. I talked to him, I said, "What are you doing?" "I'm not going back there Goddamn it. I'll never go back, it is a butcher shop out there." I didn't know the guy, I said, "If you don't go back, you could be court martialled, you could be shot." "I don't give a damn." He ran away from the line company. I always say, all my life I said, if I'm going to die, I'm going to die for a reason. You know what they used? They had these hedgerows which we never were told about when we were in basic training, not one time--which pissed me off--we didn't have any hedgerow training at all. No hedgerow training at all. Let me give you a diagram. Every so often there was a hedgerow. What the Germans did, they dug into the hedgerows, they made a pocket in there, and on top of the hedgerows they put a machine gun which just shot the tracer bullets. Further down the hedgerows they put a machine gun in there with live ammunition. We lost a lot of men like that. What pissed us off, they would say, "Of all the training that we had, we did not know that they had hedgerows in France like that." That wasn't fair John, we lost a lot of men.

D: You spent your time shooting the one up on top and the one down here is getting you?

S: That is right. They kept shooting with the tracers on top. You could see them flying, you could also see them flying here in between but in between those tracers there was live ammunition. We lost a lot of men like that.

D: You had no training as far . . .

S: Hedgerow training. No, we didn't have any. No hedgerow training. We had the normal combat training when I was in Camp Polk; machine guns, the carbine... Do you know what a carbine is?

D: No.

S: Just a small rifle and I had the machine gun. We trained on water-cooled and air-cooled machine gun.

Then they came out after with what they used to call the grease gun. Did you hear of those?

D: I have heard about those.

S: Yes, it is like a machine gun. The fire--oh I don't know--600 rounds a minute or something like that.

D: And your officers had no hedgerow training in it either?

S: I don't think they did because we lost a lot of officers. I remember one time I was in a foxhole during Saint Geroges. We had one GI up there, I don't know where he was from. It missed him twice. It always hit it on his foxhole there, where ever you hit him. I think the fourth one got him. We used to say, "Everybody's number is on it. Everybody's name is on one of them." Every bullet, every shell, they are numbered; your number, my number, his number. Then we were marching up somewhere. We left Saint Juares Georges and we were marching on foot. Oh my God I couldn't eat for awhile. They gave us these k rations, you have heard of them?

D: Yes.

S: That is a crackerjack box. I couldn't eat and then for about two days I couldn't eat at all. There is no worse smell than a dead human being. No worse smell. I remember I was walking up one hill, I got the rifle, I got it strapped over my shoulder, I am walking up. Here I am looking up on a mound and there is a machine, a German machine gun nest, with their eyes blown out of their heads. They were killed by concussion. We used to say, which we got accustomed to after a while, was to listen to the artillery. When you hear it, you used to hear that poof, they said the ones that you don't hear get you.

D: I have heard that.

S: The one you don't hear are going to get you, yes.

D: Did you ever come across or have to fight up against the Germans when they were using those .88 guns?

S: Damn right! I had one . . . After when I was in Germany already, after when I became a scout....

D: Yes.

S: I remember I was still in headquarters company there. I was a scout. I used to go on scout mission when I was at headquarters company. Then they said, "Steve,

we are going to give you another job." "Oh boy." They gave me a .30 caliber machine gun and I had a liaison officer and a driver. I would sit in the back of the jeep. Always the machine gun was cocked. They would wake you up at any time in the night; 1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00 in the morning and you would go down to Division Headquarters. From there we would drive to Headquarters Battalion and Company with the new orders. I did that for about three months. All we had, just those tiny lights on the jeep. You never had your bright lights on because they didn't like to be seen. We had a metal brace on the jeep front bumper that would cut wire. The Germans would spread wire across the road if you know what I mean. So, we used to put these on and then snap the wire. A lot of guys got their throats slit.

D: Was it a blade?

S: Oh yes, like a heavy duty bar but when you were going in the jeep with that force it would break it. I always knew when they were going to start the artillery and when the infantry was going to advance; the tanks and the infantry. They picked me out of my outfit, the headquarters company. The major said, "Get Steve over here and tell him he is going to work with the liaison officer now." We were coming into a place where there were a lot of different nationalities living. They had some Russian prisoners down there which we released. You know what I mean when the GIs took over the town. So, I went to interrogate some of them. I didn't understand everything but the major things I understood. I asked them how long they had been there and how many Germans over here they killed. I would give this information to the liaison officer for the major. That thing driving at night, oh my God it is pitch black, you don't see a God damn thing. You don't know who is going to hit you on the head, creep up from the woods or anywhere. Sometimes you die a thousand deaths. Like in your mind, you are not in your right mind. Getting back after . . . We were already in Germany when we crossed the Rhine. We were on the hillside like in a little shack, farmer's shack. Right behind that shack, they kept hogs. There were no hogs in there but they had a retaining wall made from stone. One of the German .88 rounds hit that wall and I just fell into that hog shit. It was either that or I would have never been here today.

D: Could you hear the .88?

S: Oh hell yes! They fired enough point blank. They fired them point blank at the GIs.

D: Do you mean aiming at individual soldiers?

S: Darn right, they just let it go.

D: Could you see an .88 shell?

S: No, it is hard to see it but we knew. There was a certain noise about it if you know what I mean. Like when the Germans used to shoot over from Germany what they called the screaming meemies. Then they would blow up in England. We used to see them fly above us. Oh my God you could see a lot of them. Then they would have a German send up a reconnaissance plane at night to see where the GIs were. You weren't allowed to fire at them because you would give away your position. They used to call them "Bed check Charlie."

D: Make sure you were in your hole?

S: Yes. We came to a town, Mayenne, France. I don't know how many Germans were coming down that road that time but we were in those houses up there. They were just firing those .50 caliber . . . I don't know what caliber they had but man they were shooting them just like hell. Mayenne, France. How would you spell that? M-A-Y-E-N-N-E. Mayenne, France. Let me tell you about this. We came to Rhine, France. Boy did I get hell down there from the officer. They had a lot of these wine cellars or champaign cellars. You would go down about thirty or forty steps. You walk down almost like this and they had these big what they call--not vats--but burrows like. They kept aging them and wine which was already in bottles ready to be sold to stores or places like that. The guys would get all plastered down there. Then they would get these mattress sacks and they filled those mattress sacks and they were carrying them up the steps. They broke every Goddamn one before they got upstairs. Can you imagine glass banging against stone steps? Oh my God. The captain said, "What the hell you doing?" He gave us hell. "You don't know whether there were Germans down there or not. You don't know." Then I got some wine.

Let me tell you about the Maginot Line. You have heard of the Maginot Line didn't you?

D: Yes.

S: They weren't to bright them French, you know that? Can only traverse so much. So the Germans went around. I don't know how long they built that, but John, I don't know how many steps I walked down. Well, they had these elevator shafts too but we didn't ride those. I think I counted 152 steps. It was that deep down. Like a city down there.

D: Really?

S: Railroad cars there and everything; officer quarters.

D: When did you see the Maginot Line?

S: When?

D: Yes, when.

S: When I was in France. When we kept advancing.

D: Did the Germans occupy the Maginot Line or did the guns just face the one direction?

S: After when they took France they occupied the Maginot Line.

D: Yes. Alright, when you were going across France though . . .

S: The Germans were out of there already. All you saw on top was a couple of mounds where you walk down. You could even see that was Maginot Line but you saw them in different places, these mounds like. There were openings in them, from which you walked out. They had quarters down there and everything.

D: A lot of guys got "Dear John" letters?

S: Oh yes, That was bad John. The men didn't want to be there. Another thing John I was going on a jeep. It rained that night, and my God did it rain. We were going up, we were advancing and I was stuck there with the liaison. We came to a place and we hit a mine.

D: The jeep you were in hit a mine?

S: Damn right, it blew the tire off. It could have got us all. That was in the town of Brest? Ever hear of that town Brest, France?

D: Yes. It is a coastal town, they had a big ship yard there.

S: Yes, or was it in Verdun? I don't remember now. The engineers couldn't keep up to clear the mine field, "You, you, you grab that thing and look for it."

D: A mine detector?

S: A mine detector. You die a thousand death. See, what the Germans were doing after a while, they had one on the bottom and one on top. The one on top was a dummy so when you picked it up the other one got you. I couldn't wait for that time to be over. I was lucky, I

didn't find any. Then you wonder why a guy goes berserk. It doesn't take much John, you could crack up. I have seen guys crack up.

D: I can see that would happen.

S: Two weeks before the war was over I was down by the Saar. I was with the liaison officer and a driver in the jeep. It was really two weeks or week before the war was over. They shelled that road, turned our jeep over, and it landed over a bank. Lucky it didn't land on me. My back got all scratched up. There was a doctor, Major Brown in our camp. He got my name and all that and he wanted to put me in for a purple heart. He wanted it. I turned down a purple heart. No, I didn't take it. They took me to the hospital. I don't know to this day why they didn't take my nap sack. I had a German lugger in there, a P38, two mousers. One was a pearl handled mouser. I never found it. They sent me home . . . about a month after I was home they sent me all my barber things, but no guns. I was sent home from the hospital and did not return to my outfit.

D: When was that? That was a week or so before the war ended.

S: That is right.

D: April of 1945?

S: Yes.

D: When you were over there . . .

S: Wait awhile. I didn't tell you about the Battle of the Bulge. I never had a pass John. I had about thirty bars of chocolate candy bars and about thirty cartons of cigarettes I had because I didn't smoke. I lost my taste for smoking. So, I said, when I go to Paris I'm going to sell it. I figured I had about \$900 or \$1000 in there. When I come home I want to buy a new Chevette. But no in the Battle of the Bulge you should have seen our GI tanks on the road all blown up.

D: Where were you at when that broke?

S: In Belgium. Luxembourg or Belgium.

D: Do you remember the name of the town?

S: No, I don't.

D: At this time what Army were you with, the 90th?

S: I was with the 3rd Army Division. I was with the 90th.

D: 90th Infantry Division?

S: Yes.

D: From what I read the 90th was right at the very front of that.

S: Oh yes. That is the Texas-Oklahoma division.

D: I guess before the Battle of the Bulge there was about one or two months of relative inactivity. Then, the Germans attacked.

S: Oh yes. They put dynamite into the hydrants of our tanks. They blew them up so you couldn't use them.

D: The Germans did?

S: Oh yes. They shafted the tank. It is like a hydrant to muffle the sound a little bit.

D: Off of the big guns.?

S: Yes. So, Germans used to put explosives in them. They blew these up and cracked them open. You couldn't fire it. You know when I was in the States yet, at Camp Polk, they took all the full division. They were going to show a demonstration of a tank. What happens if you are in the tank and you get hit. In one tank they put three hogs and they fired at it with another tank. They blew it open. All you saw when they dug it up was chopped up meat. Can you imagine showing that to a tank driver and a guy that worked in the tank? We also had to dig a fox hole. Then they had that Sherman tank go over that hole and you were in there. You made sure you dug that hole right. When I was in basic training you put on your good clothes; khaki clothes. They had like a swamp dug, a ditch gully like that. You go over there and you crawled. On these mounds they had machine guns. They were firing live ammunition across there. Then I believe, it wasn't for my company, maybe from 358, some guy got up and it just riddled him up. He wanted to die. You go, you crawl with the rifle.

D: When you were over in Europe did you ever hear any radio propaganda?

S: Oh yes.

D: It was Germans?

S: Oh hell yes.

D: What was it like? They tried to make you homesick.

S: Yes. They told you about your wife. Did you miss your wife? Don't you wish you could shack up with your wife tonight? You're so disgusted with the Army you don't want to hear that bullshit. You are so damn tired that you don't care if school keeps or not.

D: Did you ever run across any negro troops when you were over in France?

S: No, they had all the good ratings; staff sergeant. Most of them were in the quarter master corp. You got all the food you wanted and all of that supplies. I didn't see one black guy in combat. Not one. Before we entered the German land they took all the Jewish guys out. They figured if they would be caught by the Germans they would be tortured. John, war is evil. You don't know the answers and I don't know the answers. What were we talking about?

D: Battle of the Bulge. What was the weather like then? What do you remember about it?

S: It was cold like.

D: Fog?

S: Fog. I don't know if there was any snow or not. They blew up our truck, I know that. I lost everything I had.

D: While you were in the truck?

S: No, I was not in the truck. They told us, "Leave everything in there, and get the hell out of here." I never had a pass. That was the first pass I was going to have since I was in the service.

D: Did you ever run across any civilians over in France?

S: Yes.

D: How did they treat you?

S: Not too bad. Lafayette said when he was in Washington's Army, "Never trust a Frenchman." That is what he said.

D: Oh yes?

S: Oh yes. They were two faced people. They carried two flags in their homes, the American flag and the German flag. They said that one woman was flirting with the GIs from a window in one of those towns. She is for the Americans and stuff like that. Then they found two flags there; an American flag and a German flag. They

got these French girls, the Germans, and they slept with them in their tanks. I'll tell you one thing John, a lot of French businessmen didn't like it when the American troops took over France.

D: Why is that?

S: They were making money from the Germans. They were selling them food and wine. When we came to France they said the German's could get free wine or free champagne. I talked to one GI who told me, "Steve, when I was in Paris I came to a bar after we took over the town. I wanted champagne and the guy wanted to charge me for the champagne. I told him, I called him everything but his right name. I broke the bottle and I was going to cut his face open with the damn thing." He said, "You give the Germans all the wine and champagne free. Now, when we took over the town you want to charge us for it." All business. You didn't know in those towns who was a German because they used to dress in old beat up French clothes looking like a tramp. We lost a lot of men like that, by snippers.

D: Really?

S: Yes.

D: Did you come across any German prisoners of war?

S: Oh yes. I was on guard for awhile. When we came into a town we had to guard the prisoners that were behind the town. This German soldier behind the wire, he was calling me. I was going to shoot the son of a bitch. It is a funny thing, he doesn't know you and you don't know him. You are fighting with somebody which you don't even know. I had a first sergeant, he was from New Mexico. He like to kill. We came in one embankment in mid-afternoon and there was a German up in the tree. I said, "Sergeant, he doesn't even have a gun." "See God damn it, the only good German is a dead one." He shot him down. He got mad at me because I was bringing in a German prisoner. A kid about eighteen, nineteen years old without a gun, he shot him. After awhile it preys on your mind and you just want to kill.

D: Did you see any of the concentration camps over in Germany?

S: I came to one where they were burning the Jews in the oven. They had a rack made of metal on which they put three bodies in and shoved them in these furnaces. First they gassed them. The thing which I didn't like what the Germans did, they didn't let them die in dignity. They stripped them nude. They also said the Germans got these young Polish girls and before they

put them in the gas chamber they raped them. They wanted to be called the "Master Race." A lot of those SS troops had Jewish blood in them because the Germans married Jewish women and the Jewish men married German girls. This had been going on for generations. I heard a story one time about the SS troops when they found out that either their mother or their father was Jewish. They would kill them. They killed their own parents. Their mind was so disturbed or bogged in with all that jazz.

D: Okay, you mentioned earlier about the black market. What can you tell me about that?

S: Not too much. A lot of that stuff I just heard. the fellows that were stationed in the quarter master corp, behind the lines were selling a lot of stuff to the French on the black market, and in England too.

D: Okay, did you ever see anybody using drugs there?

S: No.

D: No marijuana?

S: No.

D: Okay, did you ever see any of the top commanders like Eisenhower or Montgomery or Patton?

S: Patton yes.

D: You saw Patton?

S: We came to town and we had to drive him up somewhere. I was with the liaison officer there. We had to lead the way and they followed behind us. We took him to division headquarters a mile or two. That was about all. He was a tall guy. One GI said he heard Patton say, "Any man that is afraid to die for his country isn't fit to live."

D: Where were you on V-Day?

S: V-Day?

D: Yes. Do you remember where you were when you heard the news that the war in Europe was over?

S: I was in the hospital in Vittles, France when they put on all the lights on the trucks and the jeeps and were blowing horns, firing the rifles.

D: The war in Europe ended in like the middle or end of April 1945. You were just wounded though weren't you, a

week or two before that?

S: I wasn't wounded I was just thrown out of a jeep. They shelled on the road and blew the road up which made a hole. They missed and it turned the jeep over. All I know, I was on the autobahn when the war was over. That was like our turnpike. You have probably heard of the autobahn didn't you?

D: Yes.

S: I went to the hospital after that I think. They flew me over to Vittel, France. V-I-T-T-E-L. It was like a nice hotel converted to a hospital. I met a pilot there. He was burned in a plane. It is like some of these monster movies you see. That is how that guy looked; no hair, no ears, they were all burnt. I used to shoot pool with him and all he could see was just a little bit out of the side. He had been scarred for life like that. We got to be pretty good friends. I had trouble with my back, it jarred my back. Then I was shipped from there to the 153rd General Hospital in Cherbourg, France. They used to put some GIs... like in the jail behind bars, with one inch bars. Their minds cracked. It could happen. I said to myself, "If I had stayed maybe another week more with the job I had being a scout I would have went wacky." You don't know who you see. You don't see a God damn thing. You trail in the jeep for three months like that. It can drive you out of your mind.

D: I bet it could.

S: You can crack up. It doesn't take much to crack up. We had some Army officers that were doctors in the Army when I was in Camp Polk, "There is nothing wrong with you, it is all in your head." So, he told one guy, "what the hell am I doing here, all I'm making here is \$700 a month." Being a doctor, he could have been making more civilian life. The GI didn't want to be there for \$28 a month either; Right?

D: That is right.

S: Some of our men made it hard for our boys. I mean it.

D: How was that?

S: I mean like these doctors. They said, "There is nothing wrong with you, it is all in your head."

D: So how did you get back from Europe to the States?

S: When I was in the hospital there was a lieutenant colonel. He was going to be stationed around there. I

don't know in Germany or where. I got to talking to him and he asked me is I spoke Slovak. I said, "Yes. I speak the Slovak language. I understand Russian," because I used to interrogate some of the Slovak people, like the Russian's not too far from where my people came from. They were prisoners or something, I don't know the way it was. He said, "How about staying here with me Stephen, in Germany?" I said, "Hell no, I want to go home." I had 109 points. I don't know how many you needed to get out. They were leaving them out on a point system. I had more than enough and they said there was nothing wrong with my back. I wanted to be discharged with a medical discharge from Camp Atterbury... I started to say about the lieutenant colonel. He wanted me to stay. He said, "Steve, I'll give you good rating; either master sergeant, or warrant officer, or first lieutenant, whatever." I said, "Sir, I'm going to tell you something. All these months I have been here all I made was a PVC. I wanted to go with the engineers where I probably could have made either a buck or a staff sergeant but I never had a chance. Who in the hell wants to go stay in there now? I have a wife and two kids at home."

D: Were you able to write back and forth to your wife?

S: Yes.

D: And she was able to write to you?

S: Oh yes. We had those VE letters that you write and you fold it over and you glue it. I don't think my wife has got some yet. No, see I came from... I boarded ship from France.

D: Where at?

S: It was in France. I came over on a hospital ship, "The Mariposa." It was a luxury liner but they had it all covered up with tarp on the inside so you don't damage up the decoration, the paneling, and all of that. I landed in New York. I boarded a train there went to Connecticut.

D: How long did it take you to go across to Atlantic?

S: Ten days, possibly ten days.

D: Was that a smooth trip?

S: It wasn't bad coming back John. Not as bad as when I was going over. I thought that ship was going to sink.

D: Do you remember what you thought when you saw the Statue of Liberty?

S: Oh yes, it was nice. It was just good to get home. When I came to Conneticut I went to a hospital. We went to eat breakfast. They had the civilians working in the hospital. "You mean I'm in the Army and I can have my eggs the way I want them? (laughter) Or bacon or sausage. They did treat us good when we came back. I don't know how long I stayed there. From there I boarded a train for Camp Atterburry, in Indianapolis. That was were I was discharged from.

A lot of times I think about the black people. When I worked in a mill up at Brierhill a black minister worked on my turn. He was a real nice fellow. He said, "Steve, the black men will never get along in this world. First he had got to learn this." I said, "What is that?" "To admit he is black. I'm not ashamed of skin," he said, "that is the way the good Lord made me. I am going to be that way. Some of my congregation, I know deep down they are mad they were born black." It seemed like even in this day you talk to some of them, you hear them on the television, "White man owes me that." Ever hear that saying about them? Like my dad used to say when he worked in a mill... Well, even after when the unions came in, my dad used to say, "If the union did anybody any good it was for a lot of blacks too. Not just the whites." They used to say, "I ain't going to do that, that is a whites job." You know what I mean, a white man's job. They had the back up. I don't know.

D: You were mustered out in Indianapolis?

S: Camp Atterbury.

D: Did they give you a bus tickect or did you take a train back to town?

S: I took a train back to town.

D: What was that like?

S: Well, that is when I got the discharge papers.

D: Were you glad to be getting out or were you thinking about making the Army a career?

S: Oh no! Good Lord no! Well, I got out with a medical discharge too. I didn't want to leave Camp Atterburry without a Certificate of Disability for Discharge because I had trouble with my back. They said, "There is nothing wrong with your back Steve." When I was out I still was going to a local doctor, and getting heat treatments on my back, for two years. Now, I am on zero disability. I don't get a thing. They gave me twenty

percent disability on my back. What the hell, I will get \$52 a month for about a year. I can't raise a family on no \$52 a month. Then they had the mustering out pay. The state of Ohio gave me. Then they had that 52-20 Club. You draw unemployment for fifty-two weeks, \$20 a week. How the hell am I going to raise a family on that? A lot of guys didn't go to work until the whole year was up. I didn't draw one dime of it.

D: Was your job waiting for you when you came back?

S: I had a job, yes.

D: What was that, Sheet and Tube?

S: Yes. I conditioned steel. I couldn't scarf.

D: Because of your back?

S: That is right.... I said, "I can't scarf, I have trouble with my back. I'll have to get another job." He said, "I'll give you an inspector's job Steve." But the union said no. I wasn't next in line for that job. This guy told me, the superintendent or the mill said he was going to give me an inspector's job. It didn't pay as much as a scarfing job. Well, I never intended to stay in scarfing I was going to go back into the building trades. I told that guy down at the union hall, "If I ever work again in a mill, I'll never belong to CIO." You are looking at a guy that doesn't need the union. You better look good," and I never belonged to the CIO. I left the mill, and went into the building trades. I worked for some contractors outside; building commercial buildings. Then in 1946 I went to work for Store Engineering Company.

D: How do you think the war changed you?

S: The only way it changed me... It was a war which we didn't prepare for, we knew it was coming but we did not prepare for it. When they bombed Pearl Harbor we were unprepared. All of those years I figure we never needed the Depression; the unemployment. We could have been preparing for the war. Like now, people are complaining about what we spend too much for defense I don't care how much we spend. We need it because we are living in a world today like Khomeini, Gaddafi. I'm not worried about the Russians. I have more faith in the Russians than in all these nations. You know yourself John, we are in better relations now with the Russians than we have ever been. People do more traveling to Russia. I was in town, in one of the stores and there were two women talking. One said, "Oh, did you get back from Europe?" "Yes," she said, "I came back from Russia." She said, "Where did you go?" "Well, I went to

Moscow, I went to Lenigrad and another town. I've never been treated so nice." I never had a pass. When we lived here already I told the kids-- "Your mother and I are going to take a vacation." "Where are you going?" "We are going to Bermuda first." So, we spent a week in Bermuda. I think the following year or the year after that I said, "We are going on vacation." "Where are you going?" "We are going to Europe," I said, "I lost my chance when I was in Europe." So, we went to six countries. We went to Czechoslovakia. We went to the town where my dad was born and my mother went there. About fifty miles away from there we went to my wife's town. My mother was born here, I told you that didn't I?

D: Yes.

S: Then from there we went to Prague and stayed in a hotel. The hotel was made from a ship like, it was nice. All paneling inside, it was a real nice job. They had good beer in Prague. We talked to some merchants. Yes, they were merchants; they sold crystal and all that. My wife bought some of that crystal. They were asking us when did we come from here to come to America. I said, "No, we were born in America. We weren't born here." My wife and I spoke the language good. Then from there we went to Vienna. I liked Vienna. We went to Paris. It was just as filthy there as it has ever been. They throw the garbage on the street, dogs all over the place. We went to Rome and to Venice. We saw the Vatican in Rome. I'll always remember, I went to buy an American paper--my wife went to the drugstore to get something. The prostitute came up to me and said, "Americano want to have a good time tonight?" I said, "What a minute, let me ask my wife." From there I believe we went to Vienna. I know we went to six countries; we also went to Madrid. Vienna I liked. You went to these concerts at night; beautiful music and dancing. Real nice, I really enjoyed myself. From there I think we went to Madrid, Spain. I like it there. It is a clean town, nice people too. Too bad we didn't know how to speak Spanish. The waiters in the restaurant, know how to talk English or they understand. You could communicate with them. That is where I bought some swords, and had them shipped here.

D: Any lessons to be learned about the war?

S: A lot of our American people, complain about the money we spend for defense. To me defense means you got the upper hand. It is like they are talking about the gun laws we have and taking away the guns from the people. I have always said this and I'll say it until the day that I die; guns don't kill people, people kill people. Am I right or wrong?

D: You are right.

S: No, I don't believe in that. I have a German rifle at home that I took from a dead German and I never fired it once. I don't even know what size shell it takes. I don't. I always say, peace is only through strength. They can go on thinking I don't want to be caught in another Vietnam or Korean War. I don't want to see my children, or your future children, or my grandchildren go to war. People say well they are spending all that money; give it to the Contra Aid for defense. Those people have to defend themselves. We are living in a world of madness. That is what I call it; like Khomeini, Gaddafi, Castro. They don't know what it is to live as a human... Just look at some of these pictures, they are always bombing Jerusalem. The Gaddafi people and the Khomeini people, for them it is a luxury to die I guess. They are waiting for Allah right?

D: Yes.

S: Well, you don't want that for your future children John or brothers or sisters. We were put on this earth for a reason. That is what I always say. I was put here for a reason. I got married, I wanted to raise a family, bring them up right. Try to give them a decent education. This country doesn't owe me a damn thing. People always say, well let the government do this or that. I raised six children. Ninety percent or ninety-five percent earned their money for schooling. They got a little loan. John, we had the world in the palm of our hand. I always say these guys, that are complaining ought to get Reagan out of office and all of that. I said, one you are working. These guys that worked up at Steel Door, got laid off. I know some guys who haven't worked for twelve years. I say, "Joe, while you are bitching and whining, do something." "Well, I can't live on \$3.35 an hour." I said, "Well, get two jobs." I came out of the service, my wife was living on 780 Garland Avenue on the East side. We had two bedrooms there. I used to send my wife money which I made barbering. She saved that money and when I came back we bought a used car. Before I was drafted we lived across the street from her mother's place. We had a two bedroom apartment. That is where I was drafted from. Then, my wife went to live with her parents for a year or two. Then she wanted to be by herself, so she found a home on Garland Avenue, on the East side. She still had brothers and sisters living at home with her parents. She didn't feel it was right. She wanted to be on her own. I sent her money.

END OF INTERVIEW