

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War 1939-1945 - American

Personal Experience

O H 1007

ALBERT WASKO

Interviewed

by

Steven Ard

on

April 11, 1980

ALBERT RICHARD WASKO

Albert Richard Wasko of Hubbard, Ohio, was born on July 26, 1924, in Farrell, Pennsylvania, the son of Frank and Anna Wasko. He spent his childhood in Farrell and graduated from Farrell High School. When he was eighteen, he was drafted into the United States Army and served from April 23, 1943, to January 13, 1946. In the Army, Wasko was trained as an ordnance armorer. Sent to Europe, he was part of the ordnance liaison for the Ninth Army and supplied light replacement parts for disabled vehicles.

Today, Wasko is a member of St. Patrick's Parish in Hubbard, the local V F W, and the Knights of Columbus. He has been employed at GATX since 1957. He and his wife Patricia were married April 21, 1949. They have three children: Terrace Ann, Charlene, and Mark.

A: This is an interview with Albert Wasko for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on World War II Veterans, by Steven Ard, on April 11, 1980, at 6058 Richards, Hubbard, Ohio, at approximately 3 30 p m.

Before we get into your World War II experience, do you just want to kind of give me a little background in terms of where you were born, where you spent your childhood, what your childhood was like?

W: I was born in Farrell in July of 1924 and spent my childhood in Farrell, Pennsylvania, until I was eighteen. I was drafted into the United States Army in April of 1943.

A: What did you think about the war at that time, because it was going on already? Did you have any ideas of what was happening? Did you want to go?

W: Being as young as we were, we were just about ready to go anyhow. So we just could not wait until we graduated, and we all took off. About eighty of us from the senior class took off in one day. We were drafted at the same time.

A: What high school did you go to?

W: Farrell High School.

A: When you went in, where did you do your training at?

W: I went to Aberdeen, Maryland at the ordnance school. I took my basic and I took my advanced individual training at Aberdeen also.

A: What was your advance in?

W: I was advanced in armor, ordnance armory.

A: Did you stay in armor during the duration of the war?

W: I stayed as armory the duration of the war, right.

A: What did your dad think about this? Was he in the war?

W: My dad, no. He was not in the war, too old to be drafted.

A: About how old was he at that time?

- W. Oh, I would have to figure that one out
- A When you first went overseas, where did you go?
- W We first landed at the Omaha Beachhead in France. We spent about two weeks there waiting for our equipment to catch up with us. The equipment arrived, oh, I would say, about four weeks later. We were at Cambrai, France when we got our equipment and headed for the Ninth Army in Saint Lo ready for the big push.
- A What equipment, exactly, were you waiting for?
- W We were waiting for our trucks and vehicles to come over from the States
- A Is this mostly like transport stuff?
- W No, I was in the ordnance and we supported the infantry, the 98th Infantry Division, the Ninth Army
- A What exactly did you do in ordnance?
- W My job during the time while we were overseas was a liaison. The sergeant and I would go up to the front lines and check with the front line troops if they needed any parts for their deadline vehicles. We would come back and pick up the parts so they could make the move, keep pushing up front of the forge. That was our job, the liaison
- A What rank did you hold?
- W I was a corporal
- A Did you know exactly what it was the Ninth Army would be doing?
- W Not really, no
- A Were there rumors of exactly what was going on at that time?
- W No, not at all. The only thing that we would outsmart from day to day is the push. You would go to one area, like on a Tuesday, be there tomorrow, and then they are down. They had already pushed ahead. We were in the northern part of Germany along with the British and Canadian Army, but the Ninth Army was up in that area, to the northern part of Germany
- A Did you supply them ordnance as well?

W. No, we only supplied the United States Army

A What did you learn from them?

W Well, really we were so close to them, it was just like being neighbors or something We did not have too much to do with those people

A There was no socializing?

W No socializing We really did not have time for socializing

A Up in the northern part of Germany there, you had mentioned that this would have been during the time of the Battle of Ardennes

W Right, the Battle of the Bulge

A Okay, what was that forest like, do you remember?

W The Battle of the Bulge did happen in the winter-time I am trying to remember correctly Yes, shortly before Christmas We were behind the lines right near Aachen at the time, and then we got word that the push was on, that they started to retreat or come down with the Battle of the Bulge They were dropping paratroopers in our area When we heard of this, we started to retreat, very little, we went down about thirty miles and then they us to give the big push Then went up about four, that is all All the armies came in through together and that took care of the Battle of the Bulge, that ruined them

A. You were checking with the front lines, keeping them supplied.

W. Right

A did you run into any difficulty? Was it hard to get through?

W Yes.

A Was there a chain? Did you ever feel that you were close to the enemy? The idea was to cut off Eisenhower's supply lines

W Right

A Did you feel pressured by this?

W Well, yes, a couple of times we were tied down Let us see, there was about

three days in a row, we just could not make any moves because the Germans were pretty well dug in. What we did, we just stayed dug in on this side here, on the American side. About three days we were tied up, could not make any move at all. So we stayed there. This was in the winter, middle of January or February, so there was not too much action. Of course, we had mud to contend with and snow.

A: How did you overcome the mud and snow? Did you ever get stuck? Did you have to be dug out?

W: Oh, we had problems in getting stuck. We always managed to come back out of it.

A: What did you do to get out of it?

W: Well, we had tank retriever and so forth. They would give us a push and bring us out of there.

A: Exactly what is a tank retriever?

W: It is on a tank haul or tank chassis and it has got a great big boom that sticks out.

A: Kind of like a wrecker?

W: Yes, it is on a tank chassis.

A: How come those things did not get stuck?

W: They are too heavy and too big. They do not get stuck unless you really get it buried in.

A: The Germans had mined part of that forest, did they not?

W: Right.

A: Did you run into trouble with those mines?

W: No.

A: No? That had all been cleared by the time you moved in?

W: Right.

- A Also at this time, the Germans tried to slip some German, English-speaking spies in, did they not?
- W Yes, we had problems with those, too It just happened this one particular night that we were with an engineering outfit, combat engineering outfit For two days we were pinned down with them The guards out, they picked up two of these Germans and they brought them in for interrogation, and that is what happened. They were two German soldiers, English-speaking soldiers
- A How would they actually know that they were Germans? What tripped these soldiers up?
- W Well, I did not get to know how, but they were captured, though The word got around about it and that was the time that they were picked up There were two hundred of them
- A Were any more picked up?
- W Just two, to my knowledge, that is all
- A Did you suspect, when you met another American soldier that you did not know? Were you kind of on the lookout? Were you nervous about this?
- W Yes We were kind of leery as to who we were going to pick up. Yes, we did run into problems like that
- A What did you do to kin of identify that this really was an American?
- W Well, when word got around and as soon as they picked them up, you go and they would tell us, "Okay, if you are going to go out and challenge somebody, now you make sure that you are going to challenge them " Then you ask them questions Something like "Who played in the World Series last year?" Or whatever, something of that sort
- A Common knowledge?
- W Right, common knowledge That was the only way you could detect them
- A Who played in the World Series that year, do you remember?
- W No, no I could not remember It has been too long ago (Laughter)
- A The German Panther division did break through there for a time in December

Do you remember that? They broke through on about a seventy mile front

W What they were doing, they were heading for Liege, that was their mission and that was there target, right there, Liege and another town in Belgium, just cannot recall it at the time Their objective was to get to Liege, in that area, but they never did make it

A How come?

W. Well, as soon as they started infiltrating, the Americans just pulled right around I think Eisenhower just brought the divisions up there I think it was the First Army, Seventh Army, Ninth Army, when they gave that big push

A: Do you remember Patton's soldiers, any of his Army? Do you remember his coming to the rescue here of Bastogne?

W. Bastogne, they were further south than we were

A You were more north

W Right, north He was further south He took the southern route up through there

A Did you hear about that?

W. We heard about him, we had nothing--it was too in between the Ninth

A Once we had finally held there in the Ardennes Forest, did you bring your movement down into the Rhine?

W No, we just kept pushing right through and then we went up in through Aachen and then across the Roer river, kept pushing right up through there, up through Monchengladbach, all the way up to Magdeburg, that was the northern part of Germany That is the only town that I can remember

A What were you going there? What was the purpose, do you know? What were you trying to accomplish there?

W To get to the Elbe River

A To the Elbe Then at the Elbe, what were you going to do?

W At the Elbe River, the Russians were on the other side of the Elbe River and they stopped us and then shortly after that, the war ended, I guess We were not up

there too long, maybe about a week. Hannover, I remember being up in Hannover.

A: With the Russians, could you see them on the other side?

W: Yes.

A: Did you ever have any contact with them?

W: No, not really, no. The commanding officer did.

A: But our forces and their forces actually never came in contact?

W: No.

A: It was almost kind of like with the British or the Canadians.

W: Right. That is just like you looking across the road there, seeing that, and that was the end of it. We went to the river and they stopped us right there.

A: Do you know why they stopped you right there?

W: No, I really do not know.

A: They never said anything?

W: No.

A: Did you hear stories or anything about the Russians and what they were doing or things like that?

W: Well, after we got back, yes. After we pulled back after the war was over and came back, then we did hear stories. Whether they were the truth or not, I really do not know. But it did work out to be that way.

A: What kind of stories did you hear?

W: While we were doing all the pushing and then the Russians, they probably thought that they were going to go for keeping the territory, I suppose. Then, when they came down to Berlin, they would say, "We will take what we went through and you take what you went through." That is the way I would think it turned out to be. As a matter of fact, it did turn out to be that way, when they split Germany up.

A But this was kind of the rumor at the time?

W Right

A You have hear about this?

W Right

A Did you think that you might go on to Berlin? You knew that the Russians were going on there, did you think you were going to go on?

W Yes, we thought we would go on We laid there for about three or four days and then they started to move the troops back and then we figured, well, that must be the end of the line there

A Did you want to go to Berlin?

W No, not really, at the time.

A But you knew the Russians were going on, but it is okay for them, we will stay behind

W Right

A did you know that Eisenhower had made the decision early, very early, in that campaign no to go?

W Yes, I heard that later on

A But you did not know that at the time?

W No, I did not know it at the time

A When did you hear that?

W Well, it was just right around, just before we got stopped up there and then we got word that this was the end of the road, right here We would not go across As a matter of fact, they were even still fighting the war on the other side of the Elbe while we were just waiting

A Did you think it was all that important to go to Berlin?

W At the time, I really did not think, no. I thought, "Why should we go into Berlin?"

It might be today, yes, because maybe we should have gone straight through

A Maybe The war pretty much ended there on the Elbe for yourself You did not really see anymore of it after that point?

W No

A After you had secured this area and were leaving, what did you do then?

W They sent us back into Belgium for about three months, rather than bringing the equipment back home, they were liquidating the equipment, sending some to Norway and splitting it up to different countries over there, rather than sending all the equipment back One of our jobs was to stay back and repair the vehicles, make sure that they were ready for shipment, so they were half decent before they turn them over to countries

A. Where were you in April of 1945, do you recall? That was when Franklin Roosevelt died

W I was at Brussels, Belgium We were already on our way back

A. When you heard that news, how did you feel?

W Well, it must have been about a day later, the day after he died The chaplain called the whole battalion We had a formation, and that was when they gave us the word that the President had died Of course, it was a shock to us, being our commander-in-chief, so we felt pretty bad about it.

A. What were some of the reactions of the men?

W. Well, I really cannot recall.

A. Did you know how he died?

W. No, not at the time

A How were you mustered out, and when were you mustered out?

W I came back home January 13, 1946 I was discharged on the thirteenth

A. How did they determine when you were going to be sent back?

W Well, that is when we were on a point system

A The point, what is that?

W The point system They allowed so many points for every day that you were overseas I cannot recall, I think that is the only thing it was based on, your overseas time

A Were you among the first?

w. No

A so you were some of the last?

W I was one of the last. As I can remember, I only had about fifty-six points They allowed you five points for each battle I really cannot recall whether it was for each month It had to be for each month One point for each month, something like that I will have to dig that out, on the point system

A. Who was waiting to greet you when you got back home?

W. Oh, my mother was I was single at the time I only had been home one time since I left. I came home and spent three days and that was the extent of my furlough. I left when I was eighteen, and I did not get home until I was twenty-one. They were glad to see me come back

A A little bit more serious question did you lose some of your friends that you had gone through training with?

W. Yes, I lost three of them, they were killed There were two of them killed during the Battle of the Bulge and one was killed up in Germany

A Did you know how they were killed? What were the circumstances?

W No, I did not

A Just that these were three friends that did not make it back. Were these high school friends?

W High school When we came out of the Mercer County Draft Board, they put us all in one unit Well, it seemed like that way anyhow Let us see, there was one, the combat engineer wanted to get up there with the First Army There were thirty-six of them, which I met while I was over there, during the Battle of the Bulge, so we had like an old home week there. There was a total of about eighteen in my unit from home, pretty close.

A Regressing back just a little bit, this would still be about 1945 the bridge at Remagen, now that was still part of the campaign But that would have been down south from you

W The Rhine

A Up along the Rhine Did you hear about that particular battle? Did you have information on that? Did some of your unit go down there?

W No I was up in that area, but this was after the war. We were doing a little liaison up and down through that area, making tracks back and forth I remember that one particular area It was not during wartime

A. It was after the war?

W. Pretty well, settled in

A: How much of Europe did you get to see after? Did you get to do a little sight-seeing around after it was all over?

W Brussels, Belgium was the most I have seen Just hit-and-miss in England, France a little bit, and then right through the German line

A So, Brussels was actually the most sight-seeing that you did?

W Right.

A What did you find Brussels like? What did you find the people there like? How did they treat you?

W The people there were real friendly As a matter of fact, the war did not even hurt them at all The city seemed to be bustling It was just like one of these cities right back at home here, really beautiful

A In other words, there was not much war bombing or physical damage?

W On the outskirts, yes, but inside the city itself, Brussels, well, you would never even think that the war went through there. Of course, it did not, it went through the outskirts

A What was out in the outskirts? I mean, was there something there that the enemy wanted to hold that that area received it and not the city itself?

W. I would think the Germans were coming down to make a push toward France, hit Belgium That is probably the only reason for that.

A It was just a route?

W That is all it was And a really beautiful city

A That country-side that was hit by the actual war itself, can you kind of describe the land, what it looked like to you?

W The beachheads, what I can remember about the beachhead, it is nothing but a great big bank I can remember walking up and as we were going up there, we would hit the beachhead and just walk up That is all I can remember, just walking a great big hill and nothing but level, just like a plain. Of course, it came down around the seaboard there, down in around the ports, harbor, like Cherbourg, I did not get to see Cherbourg. This was after they made the assaults, D-Day plus a hundred and twenty, or something like that, when we went through there

A Was there anything left standing in that area?

W No, nothing

A Were there buildings there?

W Well, actually there were only pillboxes at the time, where the Germans had dug in because they had been there so long they were pretty well prepared for it

A Did you take a look at any of those pill boxes?

W Yes

A Can you describe them for me?

W Well, sure I would say they were at least, maybe some of them were two foot deep or wide, and just made of concrete. All they had to do was just add a little parapet You could see right out from where they were at height and you could look right into the ocean there, into the channel

A. Were they damaged a lot by our shelling? I mean, could you see the effects of our shells on them?

W Oh, yes. But most of them were buried underground They were pretty well dug

in

A But, actually, the pill box then was not badly damaged at all

W I would say no Of course, I remember seeing the CP line up through Aachen, where they made that one big break through there We just went through that after they went in and we followed them up through that break at Aachen through the CP line. That was really something Made out of concrete pillars and they were staggered I remember that

A Was the line still in pretty good tact?

W The line was still in pretty good tact, right

A The shelling again did not bother it at all

W Did not even phase that at all Only thing, just one area, maybe a mile long, which brought the vehicles in and that was it, the rest of it they left in tact That was up in our area, up in Aachen

A Let us go back a little bit to the battle in the Ardennes Forest. Did it seem that we had more divisions in there than the Germans did, or did we seem to be out-manned? Do you have any impressions of this?

W I would think the only thing that slowed us down was the weather

A What was it like?

W I know it was snowy and cold I think that is the only thing that would have held us back, the weather The fighting just seemed to be at a low at that particular time, and then all of a sudden, all hell broke loose That is it.

A How would you compare their weather with Pennsylvania's weather-- that you were brought up in?

W It would be about the same

A So at least you were used to it It was not any worse?

W Right, it was not any worse We had to contend with a lot of mud in the fall, spring was mud The winter, it would be about the same climate as we had in Pennsylvania, I would say so

A. Let me ask this, had you heard of any of the names that the Germans had for these battles up around Ardennes?

W No, I do not recall any

A Who was your immediate superior over there? Who did you report to? Were you under a lieutenant?

W I was under a captain Captain Baker from Cleveland, Ohio

A. Let me clarify that just a little bit now Captain Baker, did he have the whole transport command in that area? Was he responsible?

W He had the company commander Also, we had our battalion The battalion was located about thirty miles behind us They were in the rear He was commanded by a lieutenant colonel. They always stayed in the rear They were thirty, forty miles behind us We were just getting on by because of the type of maintenance that we had, we had the heavy automotive maintenance and we never carried anything heavy Just light vehicle maintenance is what we pulled ourselves

A How long were things down? I mean, would they be down a day and you could have them back in service?

W It would take that long, but sometimes we would be on our way back, we probably get pinned down and it might take us a little longer The same time, too, we would go up the next morning and they would be gone, too They would pick up everything and take off. We just have to bring the vehicles back to our shop and take them back to our shop and take them back up and try to locate them

A What was the longest time you were ever pinned down by the enemy?

W Four days

A Do you remember where that was at?

W No, I do not

A What did you do for those four days?

W. I have it in my diary, I know I have got that one, location and all Well, what we did, we just stayed in this one building We were in this concrete abutment for

four days and just kept a watch out; you could see the enemy was out looking in the fox holes. They were dug in just as well as we were

A What were they shooting at you with?

W Well, they just had their individual weapons at the time The artillery was going way over us because we were that close You could see them taking pot shots at you, but their artillery was going way over us

A What finally drove them out of there so that you got free?

W Well, when our tanks came up they started putting bombardment on then, they started pushing them That is the only time we got out, when the tanks came up The fighting would stop and would go a little bit and stop a little more and go for a little bit more I mean, it went too fast, until we got on the other side of the Rhine and the big push was on A couple of days, maybe they go on about forty miles, did not meet anything, no resistance at all, whatsoever up there, up in that area They were just about done. The Germans, they knew they were done anyhow

A So they were just falling back?

W Just falling back Just before the war ended, they would go ten or twelve miles without even seeing anybody, no resistance whatsoever

A Did we capture anybody in your area? Did we take any prisoners?

W We only captured one.

A Only one? How did we get him?

W Out on guard duty one night, I think what he was doing, he was just lying back and he probably let the Germans go up frontwards He probably was a deflector, I think that is what he was

A How old was he?

W He was about eighteen years old I think that was what he was doing, staying back Then they caught him and they took him back up. I have seen them haul prisoners out there I really did not know what they were going to do with all the prisoners

A Hauled them out where?

W Brought them back and put them in POW camps in back of us. Oh, they had loads of them. That is how fast they were picking them. That is how fast they were picking them up. Well, of course the Germans did not have too much equipment at the time. Way up and after they passed the Rhine up in through that area, there was nothing up there, no equipment whatsoever up there.

A Nothing?

W Nothing.

A. Did you ever get any enemy equipment?

W No. I have seen it, but we never picked it up.

A. You mean it was left behind?

W It was not our job to pick this up.

A Who did pick it up?

W Well, they probably had quartermasters or some other guys pick it up.

A Were there any parts that could be used from their equipment to ours?

W No, theirs were a,, obsolete at the time, nothing too good.

A What do you mean by obsolete?

W: Like they had horse-drawn caisson and ours were self-propelled. We had self-propelled tow jobs. They even towed theirs with horses at the time.

A How much horse-drawn war equipment did you see there?

W I saw small cannons. they were all horse-drawn, small cannons. Of course, they had that panther, that one tank. I did not see too many battles with that tank, though. They say that they had a panther division up in that area, but I did not see too many of those.

A. They had the coissons, they had the small cannon, which were drawn by horse. Can you think of any other equipment?

W Nothing that big, that I have seen.

A Most of it was relatively small?

W Most of it was small

A Did you collect any souvenirs over there?

W No.

A You came back with absolutely nothing?

W Right I wanted to get back, that was it There were scavengers, yes With every unit there was a scavenger He would pick everything he saw

A What did he do with that stuff?

W I really do not know I would not know what he did with it Just being a young kid like that, just get me home or something, get me out

A Did they have any rules about things you could bring back with you or pick or what you could or could not do in a particular area?

W There was a regulation that came down, but I think this was later on. At the time, though, I think they were interested in the money end of it, the black market. So I think they left equipment if you wanted to send equipment, or souvenirs back, I guess you could, but then they worried, concerned about the money If you sold any of the equipment, to them equipment over there, I would think so, yes, because they put a damper on that. You could only send your monthly wages, that was it. A lot of those guy get wrapped up in that black market after the war was over, they would send a couple thousand, four or five thousand dollars, home, but then you could not send any more than what you made for the month Like I say, equipment, souvenirs and stuff like that, they had, I do not think they bothered with that

A Did any of your mail ever get censored on the way home?

W Yes All of it was censored

A What kind of things were taken out of it?

W Well, I did not know it at the time, but my sister would show me, this is marked off where I would sneak in a town where I went through, or was going to, or was going through; that was the one thing they were interested about, location Mostly locations that the troops were in, where we were anyhow Of course, it all

depended on the censor himself anyhow, because sometimes he would censor it and sometimes he would not. He would vary.

A. So it was nothing really consistent?

W. I would not say so, no. Like she showed me here, why did they scratch this, but would not scratch that? It just depends how he felt, the censor. It was our officers that did that with censoring. So it was just the way they felt.

A. Did anybody ever have camera equipment over there? Did anybody, the soldiers, take pictures, anything like that, of the areas they were in?

W. Yes. I have taken some pictures too.

A. While you were there?

W. While I was there, right.

A. Just offhand, can I take a look at them, do you have them readily available?

W. Let me see.

A. Can you describe some of the pictures to me? What did you take?

W. Well, it was mostly like bombed out buildings and that sort of stuff; some of the areas we lived in. What we did, we lived in buildings that maybe were old Army barracks. Then when the Germans left, we just came in and took them over. That way we stayed in buildings rather than to be outdoors all of the time. That was one of the advantages of being in Europe than being out in the South Pacific, where you have nothing but woods, fields, islands. Being in Europe like that, one day we would just pull in the building, and stayed in the building, the next day we would go into another building, sort of like house to house.

A. When you took the pictures, who developed them?

W. Well, there was one area that we would send them into. I cannot recall the name, but it was Army sponsored. The Signal Corps, something like that. They do the developing, photography and developing.

A. Were there any restrictions on what you could or could not take pictures of?

W. No, not then.

- A. There was before, though?
- W Not that I know of. But I mean as far as a picture, a picture was a picture, so where else could that picture go? We could not do anything with the picture. We could not send it back because our mail was being censored so they would just scratch it or tear it up. We just kept it and brought them home ourselves.
- A. In other words, you kept them and then transported them home yourself after you were sent back.
- W Right.
- A But it was one of the Army branches who actually did the developing for you and that was perfectly all right?
- W Right. It was up to them. That is not whether it is legal or not. If they thought they developed something they thought we were not suppose to have, they probably destroyed it.
- A. Did you get all your pictures back that you remember taking?
- W Yes, but they were not exciting anyhow.
- A Well, you never know. What kind of camera did you use?
- W I had one of those German-type box cameras.
- A And who provided the film?
- W We bought our film through the PX [Post Exchange]. All black and white, no color in those days.
- A Did you ever try to send any of those pictures home?
- W No.
- A. Everybody kind of understood that if you wanted to get them back, you to keep them?
- W Keep an album, keep them to yourself. Being a young kid like that, I was not too hip about anything at the time.
- A. Just trying to survive and get out.

W Yes, get out. But there were other trips like that, everything they picked up they kept, souvenirs, pictures of this, pictures of that. I do not know why, but I never really got interested in that.

A Did you have any real close calls?

W A couple of them, yes.

A Can you recall those?

W This one time we were going up toward the front, we were just strafed. Another time, right at the Battle of the Bulge--that was a bad one--walking guard duty that afternoon. Three Germans came down through the airplane. Three planes came down and they just circled our unit and then they spotted us and they started to fire. That was about the closest we ever got to them.

A Did you fire back at them?

W Yes, we fired back at them.

A Did you hit them?

W No, no, we had fifty caliber machine guns out there. We could not hit them. They were too fast for us.

A How far away were they when our planes picked up?

W When the Germans were circling our area, they were about a mile. They made three sweeps around us and then they took off. We could see our planes coming from the other direction and then they circled right around back of us. The Americans--our planes--were right behind. They got one of them, that I know. That was it. Then they took off, went out of sight.

A. Did the pilot parachute out, the German pilot?

W No, he just came down.

A He just came down with the plane?

W He was only about a mile away. You could see him smoking as he came down.

A Any other, not necessarily that close, but any other?

- W None, nothing else They stayed pretty well behind, kept their nose clean There were a lot of guys, unfortunately, who never made it back.
- A Did you actually work on these vehicles yourself? In the maintenance or just transport?
- W Right
- A. Okay, so you did not actually have to repair them?
- W. No, I did not do any of the work I did mostly the paperwork That was the only thing I did
- A. How much paperwork would be involved in something like that? How many forms, what kind of forms did you have to fill out?
- W. Work orders, you had to make work orders out We would go up and get these vehicles if they were dead lined, up at the line, and then we would come back and say, maybe he needs a carburetor, trouble shooting The sergeant did a little trouble shooting We would come back, pick up the particular part, give it to them. They had their own mechanics, put them in, away they went
- A How many actual pieces of paper did you have to fill out, just to pick up that one carburetor?
- W Well, the Army, the government, goes on paperwork He has got to get a copy, I have got to get a copy I would say at least twelve copies, just for that one carburetor
- A. Exactly who got all twelve of these copies?
- W The way we kept it in our unit, I kept a copy, some went to the battalion of our headquarters, just to account for one carburetor They wanted to know what happened to it
- A. Did you have to keep an overall inventory list? You had to demonstrate exactly where every single piece of equipment that you picked up went to?
- W Right
- A What happened if you could not do that?
- W. Nobody ever crossed us

A Oh, nobody ever checked

W Nobody ever cross checked But if they did, I knew where it was at At the same time, we had a clerk back at our unit and he had his own office and he kept a running total of it So they would never bother us There was just the two of us out of this one unit that were on this liaison, and we just worked it everyday, day in and day out

A Did you ever get tired of filling out those forms and just write them any old way?

W No

A You only did them accurately?

W You always have to do it right It would have to be right, otherwise they would bounce back

A Did you ever get any forms back?

W No

A They accepted everything you turned in?

W Right.

A Okay, you just worked with small pieces of equipment You did not have to handle any axles or anything like that, just little engine parts?

W Right

A Did anybody put a value on the total amount of parts that you transported?

W Now they might have, but I never went to check it that close

A Did anybody ever need a part quickly that you could not sign a form for? You gave them a part and then filled out the paperwork afterwards?

W We have done that too, because we carried a lot of spare parts out with us, little things like points, plugs and so forth, rather than make a run back

A Did they know you had those parts?

W I would think so, yes

A For speed sake They realized it was a good idea to have them, and they just let you, but you were not supposed to?

W We were not supposed to. So we just gave it to them, let them go on their way We would rather have them going, rather than holding the vehicles back It takes two or three days, and you cannot hold a war up. Like I say, we just dealt with the small pieces of equipment

A Can you think of anything in general you would like to add?

W No, I am going to have to dig my diary out and I am going to see I will probably know more about it then because of it being, like I say, thirty-five years ago

A Yes, that is a long time Thank you

End of Interview