

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Veterans Project

Army Experiences

O H 1154

PAUL GOTJEN

Interviewed

by

John Demetra

on

November 29, 1988

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

WORLD WAR II VETERANS PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE Paul Gotjen
INTERVIEWER John Demetra
SUBJECT World War II Veterans
DATE November 29, 1988

D. This is John Demetra interviewing Paul Gotjen for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program It's November 29, 1988

D Paul what can you tell me about how it was growing up in the Depression? Do you remember food lines and things like that?

G Not really I was born and raised in the country

D Whereabouts?

G About four miles from here In Wayne Township Pennsylvania in Orange County My father always worked We didn't have a lot, but we had more than most of our neighbors If we got a toy we all had to share that toy When I got a bicycle, which was mine, I made everybody pay for it I had the cash in my hand I was going to buy it This was typical of that time

D Where did your dad work?

G My dad worked at US Steel He was a General Foreman of the And through the Depression he had four kids in college, two at a time

D That was pretty unusual wasn't it?

G Oh yeah He never accumulated much money because he spent it all on his kids I can remember my father in the early days When he saw a bum on the street and they came up and asked him for a dime, he would take them and buy them a loaf of bread and a pound of salami or bologna or something He said there wasn't enough money for a drink but he'd hand them the money He said "that man was honest enough to say he wanted the money

for a drink, he needed the money for a drink ” Although he never drank or smoked I heard my father say one swear word in his life, that’s all In someplace, one time Somebody did something in front of him there and he said “damn ” That’s the only swear word I ever heard out of my father’s mouth My father never swore The family didn’t suffer Dad never made it easy for us When I was your age I walked even though there were street cars Two miles, three miles, four miles what have you I used to go four miles home from high school at eleven o’clock and then about four miles around the paper route to make about a buck and a half a week And my brother who was older than me did it a year before I did We never wanted for something to do Today, they always talk about something for the kids to do I can never remember when I was a kid wanting something to do

D No?

G No, never There was always something to do Of course there were chores to do around the house Weed the garden, cut the grass, what have you We didn’t have all the horse power we have today, but we always had a wood shed to build something Then there were rubber guns for the neighbor kids and . and sling shots and what have you We made our toys If the bicycle broke down I’d have to figure out how to fix it When the wagon broke down when I was seven, eight years old I had to figure, dad will never pick it so I’ll fix it

D You figured that? He would tell you that?

G Oh yeah When we were in high school, my dad was a shark about and the teacher would give us the toughest problems They knew dad would come up with the answers My brothers knew all about , he enjoyed the reputation But he’d biff up and you’d have to patch it up

D Want to make sure you’d learn?

G Yeah

D Did you have a car in high school?

G No, nobody Well, I wouldn’t say nobody There was one girl who had a car, her dad was a dealer And there were probably, out of the roughly three-hundred other kids who graduated with me, there might have been two or three kids who had cars They didn’t have them all the time they didn’t have access to them

D When did you graduate from school?

G Nineteen forty I was only sixteen when I graduated

D Why was that?

G Well I started when I was five, and then, in the second grade, they just put me through

second and third

D Huh! Was that because your scores were high?

G Yeah Well I was wiggling through a one room country school There were eight credits I It was a one room country school, forty kids on average with one teacher I didn't know one kid that came out of that school that didn't know how to do simple arithmetic and read and write, plainly

D. Everyone learned?

G Everybody learned

D No dropouts?

G There was one retarded kid that only went through the fourth grade, but he was the only one that I knew that didn't finish the eight grades

D So how was it that you missed the third grade?

G The teacher thought I was bright enough that I could skip it I would never let a kid do it, because at the time I was graduating from high school, the kids were eighteen and nineteen Some of them they didn't start school until they were seven, eight years old They weren't dumb, they just didn't get started soon enough

D Since 1940 when you graduated from high school, what was your first job out of high school?

G Service station I worked nine hours a day, six days a week, for twelve dollars a week I worked from eleven at night until eight in the morning I started there the week after I got out of high school

D Was that a good job at the time?

G It seemed to be I figured it out at around twenty-two cents an hour If you went to work in the A&P stores, I think they payed like J C Penney around twenty-five cents an hour I started in the mill when I was eighteen, February 20th, 1942 For eighty hours of work I used to bring home about sixty-five dollars I think it was seventy-two cents an hour

D You worked at a gas station until you got that job?

G Yeah

D What mill was that?

G That was US Steel

D Where at?

G National Tube, Ellwood City I went into the service, came back, worked there and left there at the end of June 49' Then I went into business for myself for the service station That's where that big Exxon Station is. There used to be a Quaker State Station there I operated that for about two and a half years

D You got the job in the mill in 1942?

G Yeah, well I was 18 on January 3rd and February 28th I started work

D What did you think when the Japanese bomb hit Pearl Harbor?

G Probably because of the fact that I was very much in love at the time, cause I got married in May of 42', it didn't really bother me as much as it might have I'm sure I thought it was terrible, but I wasn't excessively upset about it

D Do you remember where you were when you heard the news?

G I was probably at home because it was a Sunday morning I don't remember specifically I think it happened at 7 PM in Honolulu, but our time is quite a bit different Actually it might have happened Saturday night or Saturday evening here

D I think the news broke around noon on Sunday or something?

G Yeah, that's what I'm thinking the news broke around noon Sunday here, but that actually would have been around Saturday night sometime there, but we didn't know until Sunday noon

D How did you come to get in the service?

G I was drafted Unbeknownst to me US Steel had gotten me a deferment, I think two deferments Nobody told me, asked me or anything I was called up and went in for a physical, probably in April

D Of forty-two?

G No, it would have been forty-four I wasn't even eighteen when they bombed Pearl Harbor So I wasn't eligible for the draft at the time I wasn't eligible until January Then in May I was married and the following July, a year and three months later, my first daughter was born. Somewhere in there the US Steel had applied for and got me at least two deferments, maybe even three I don't know they never said The only reason I know they did is because I got in a fight in the mill and the superintendent told me

“that’s a hell of a way for a guy to act that’s on deferment ” That’s the only time that I knew that they had even applied for and gotten deferments for me As the war went on and they needed more people I think they began admitting those under 26 years of age They had to be direly needed before they could enforce a deferment Maybe a doctor, or some specialist could get a deferment to those under 26 That’s when I was picked up I went in and took a physical and I’d broken an ear drum so the first time I went in they told me I would get limited duty in the navy on the count of my broken ear drum But then I wasn’t called Then I had to go back in for another physical so I did, because they were more desperate for men I just found out my last physical at Conrail that the other ear was scarred too and I never knew that How it ever happened I don’t know, but nobody had ever told me that before

D Being that you were married and had a child, you wouldn’t have thought of enlisting?

G At one point I tried to be in the merchant marines and I made a trip into Pittsburgh I suspect this was before my daughter was born I’m sure it was They told me at the time that unless you have x amount of money and I forget what the figure was, that you wouldn’t be able to support your family back home It was a fair amount of money to me at that time because you’d get nothing, and your wife would have nothing to live on for about six months So I decided that I wasn’t going to count on that So I sat back and waited I didn’t know why I wasn’t getting called

D What happened that you finally did get called? They raised it to ?

G Basically I was under 26 and that’s when they said anybody under 26 could go

D What time was this?

G This would have been, probably in June of 44’ or July

D Ok, after the . ?

G Yeah

D What happened when you got your notice?

G I went to Pittsburgh and took a physical Then from there I went straight to (Cumberland Gap?) it’s in (Dodgerson?)

D By train?

G By train We unloaded there and were there for about four days

D Doing what?

G Oh mostly shots I spent one day on KP duty there I was I washed dishes for about 5000 people that day I was going as fast as I could go We went in for breakfast at 5 o'clock We ate breakfast, were done by like 5 30 and started to feed the people by I'd say no later than 6 o'clock Then dishes started to roll in It was a continuous thing Cleaning tables off, setting up, and working through You didn't get done with breakfast dishes until about eleven o'clock and then you'd have lunch Before you'd get done they'd already be starting to feed the lunch hour You didn't even have time to smoke a cigarette Then the lunch dishes were brought Then you ate, going without a light until 4 30- 5 00 Then they'd page you, give you your mail, then back to the kitchen again until 9 00-10 00 that night going as fast as you could go We did that between lunch and evening we had about fifteen I mean going like this I washed every stainless steel tray, every bowl Silverware they had a machine for but everything else I personally washed

D Were you being disciplined or?

G No I don't know how they come up with this We didn't pick, draw straws or pin the tail on the monkey or anything like that

D So you spent four days there getting shots?

G Yeah, most of them were getting shots

D Did they issue uniforms, things like that?

G Yeah, we got our uniforms issued They didn't even tell us where we were going They put us on a train and we wound up in the cape of Miami, Florida I can't remember for sure if they told us where we were going

D Whereabouts in Florida is that?

G It's in Northern Florida It's not the pan handle, it's about 55 miles from Jacksonville Seems to me it was 70 miles from St Augustine, if I remember my mileages right It was about six miles from the town of Stark Florida We went through there a few years back I'd say it's probably now 20-25 thousand But at that time it was a mining town, like a little wild west town This was only about six, eight miles from .

D Did you have ?

G Yeah

D What'd you do there?

G We went through all our basic training Firing rifles, machine guns, 30 caliber machine guns, 60 millimeter , grounding automatic rifles You learned how to tear them apart and put them back together again in the dark You knew every piece of those guns

D Physical training?

G Not that much outside of a lot of hiking. There wasn't really that much physical training to it. But you didn't walk, you were running, with a pack on your back. You got enough physical exercise.

D How long were you there?

G Thirteen weeks. It was initially a seventeen week program but we never finished it. They gave us thirteen weeks and we were out of there.

D Because you were needed overseas?

G Yeah.

D Where did you go after you left there?

G We left there and went to Fort Lee Maryland. We came home first. I was home about three days. Then I left for Fort Lee Maryland.

D Did you come home on a train?

G Yeah we came home on a train. We were in Massachusetts then. Then we went back. I don't remember how I went back to Fort Lee. It might have been a bus or a train. Probably by train, train's a little bit better. Then we were issued our overseas clothing. Then we went up to a little town outside of New York City, it was an old CCC camp. Camp Sus?

D Shanks?

G Camp Shanks? It was an old CCC camp that's where we went. I remember they issued our rifles, no ammunition and bayonets. I'd say that's probably about all we got there. We were only there overnight.

D Was all your equipment brand new?

G Oh yeah.

D Your uniforms and everything?

G Yeah. We were issued all new uniforms, new rifles all . . . and we had to clean that all off. I suspect we cleaned it off there. I don't know what we used, kerosine or what but we cleaned the . . . off over there. Then I suspect we might have been there one day. Then we went down and we loaded the boats in New York.

D New York City?

G New York City It was the largest American liner afloat There were 11,000 of us

D What was the name of that ship?

G I'm trying to think whether the original name was America or whether that's what it was rechristened because they changed the name I don't know if it was commissioned USS America It's operated by the coast guard They can have 5 guns on them and stuff like that But that was either the previous name or what it was rechristened I can't remember

D You said you had 11,000 guys on that ship?

G 11,000 GI's

D What unit are you attached to at this time?

G You weren't attached to any unit

D Oh You're just?

G (You're just the whole mess?)

D Replacements like?

G Replacements yeah We went across the North Atlantic and this ship was out on the sidelines We had no escorts and we could only do around 31, 32 knots At that time seven years ago you'd only do 18, 19 knots It was beautiful weather most days You could be out in long sleeved shirts anytime on deck and you wouldn't need a coat on This was the first year we were in the Gulf of Mexico

D This was January?

G Yeah, this was mid-winter It's amazing how warm the Gulf stream is moving across there You were never cold

D What was it like on board the ship?

G When you have that many people, the bunks were about this far apart

D About a foot?

G About a foot apart All it was was a piece of pipe It always broke the canvas It was about this wide The guy who was in above, he sunk down some If you got in on your back you couldn't turn over If you got in on your stomach you couldn't turn over There wasn't

enough room and you couldn't sleep on your side. There just wasn't enough room. If you'd crawl through on your stomach you'd crawl out on your stomach. If you'd lean on your back you'd crawl out on your back.

D How high were these?

G Probably about eight, ten feet high. You know, all there was was this many, and there was only this much room in between. You had a hard time when you wanted to pass in between them.

D Was it possible to get any kind of sleep in them?

G Oh yeah. A lot of the guys were out on the deck so you didn't have anything else to do and we were only four days going across. I learned that people who were on guard duty wore their OD's. Everybody else was supposed to be in their fatigues. So I learned that even though I wasn't on guard duty that if I wore OD's I could slip down in the kitchen in the middle of the night and have a decent cup of coffee. Stuff like that during the day wasn't fit to drink. They only fed twice a day. Start in the morning and they wouldn't eat until almost noon and that'd be the breakfast. Then they'd start at lunchtime to begin feeding the evening people. You'd get only two meals a day.

D You didn't have any jobs assigned to you?

G No. I wouldn't of known because they had their own cooks and everything. There might have been a hundred, two hundred people who were assigned to guard duty. I never went to guard duty and I never even asked any of them what to do. There were an x number who were assigned to guard duty but other than that nobody else did anything. They played cards or pinochle, poker, rolled dice or whatever.

D So after four days you landed in Liverpool?

G Yeah.

D What was Liverpool like?

G I Don't really know. We landed, and set out for Furfur overnight. I was still out at sea for about twenty-four hours before I got to get off the boat and get on the train. We went straight south of England, then on LCI's and landed in

D No rest or anything?

G No.

D What's an LCI?

G Landing Craft Infantry These were boats that were designed to carry a company of men They weren't typical of what you think of landing craft They weren't just a shell These LCI 's that we were on were more like a boat There was a hole and you had bunks underneath

D the same kind?

G They were designed to hold the full complement of the company and there were two-hundred-twenty men There were steps that would drop down on the side, to get off when they got in close to shore

D You took those right from England to France?

G Yeah

D A large group of these boats?

G Oh yeah I don't know how many days it took them to get the eleven thousand men across there I don't figure very many They probably got them across there in a couple of days There were a lot of boats I don't know that they all went on the same thing, that's what we went on

D Was the Channel calm then?

G We were down in the hold where the beds were We weren't out on the deck when that boat moved off You're only talking 50, 60 miles depending on how they went So we were only five or six hours from

D So you landed in Maharb Land?

G Right in Maharb When we landed in Maharb it was sort of cold rainy day but it was probably 35-40 degrees We went inland as we walked We stayed overnight in a tent It wasn't that bad We walked down the next day to get on the train's boxcars This is the most I ever physically suffered in the service We thought we were lucky, cause apparently many of these boxcars weren't all steel Many of the wooden cars the floors were busted out, the roof was busted out here and there Thought boy we're lucky we got a nice solid steel car but it became a human icebox As we started inland it turned cold After you've driven in trains a few hours believe me your kidneys and bladder can't hold urine and anytime someone wanted to piss out the door we would have to take an ax and chop the ice off the doors so they could at least get the door open We had our long johns, wooly uniform, overcoats, blankets pulled over us, and little boxes of canned heat, and I can remember three or four of us sitting there trying to get heat out of there I was never so cold in my life

D Canned heat are thermos containers?

G Yeah I was never so miserable in my life Not just your fingers and ears, just totally chilled clear through

D Did you have gloves and scarves?

G Oh yeah I don't know what the temperature would've been in there with all the breath You get thirty, forty guys in there with all their breath, it was freezing the walls! There was ice this thick all over the walls Everybody was numb I suspect we were in it for about eighteen hours

We had K rations to eat, but no hot food, but then that never stopped us from eating I suspect if we'd have been in there another six, eight hours we would have froze to death It was just that unmercifully cold

D Welcome to France huh?

G Yeah The guys who were in the wooden car they were fine They enjoyed the time going up

D Where did the train go?

G We landed in a little town in Nancy I guess we were there all day Then they came and picked us up We knew where we were going with that outfit There were thirteen of us that joined the Company L, third battalion, 379th regiment, 95th division

D Infantry?

G Yes I'll always remember our company commander He walked around and asked "How long have you been in the service? How much training have you had?" When he was done he said "I'm going to tell you fellows something You haven't had much training These fellows have been here, they've been fighting, and they know what war is like They know what works and what doesn't work because of what they do You follow them That's the best advice I can give you if you want to get home safe and sound " We were there probably about a week

D You were at Nancy for the whole week?

G No this was in Germany We were only in Nancy for a couple of hours

D Germany?

G Yeah, in a truck, it was six by six

D That'd be pretty cold too

G Not really You had a canvas over you The only time I was really cold was in that box car When we left we were there in .It was quiet a lot of the time

D Whereabouts is that?

G It's Southern Germany

D So you arrived by truck to

G Yes We were only there about a week and it was basically pretty quiet There was shelling back and forth but, other than that no hand to hand combat We had guard duty and we had outposts We had to pull guard duty at night for twenty-four hours Somebody did it They put them on for four hours at a stretch

D This was still January of 45'?

G Yes We left there and went to Belgium We split up Some stayed in an old farm house, and some in a little barn When we got up the next morning from sleeping in the hay mound there were little bugs crawling all over us So they packed us up, all of us that had stayed in that barn and took us to get a bath and some clean clothes There were a couple truck loads of us altogether We were only there one day They attached us to the British Second Army They were supposed to make a big _____ and the British dropped out They shelled almost indiscriminately for hour after hour We were probably there about eight or nine days We lost a couple of guys going in Some German civilians had thrown some white phosphorus grenades and we lost three guys

D What would that do burn you?

G Once it hits you it just keeps on burning That was where we had to fall in and our outfit came In the middle of the night I stayed up and wrote a letter to my wife I was attached to company headquarters at this time Our captain had to censor our letters but he was very good about it and I trusted him You could write back home and tell them where you were and he would sign it and stamp it censored

D Are the hand grenades _____ ?

G I never saw one of them go off! We used to find them all over the place. They were about this big I don't really know what's in one They had a little black ring like where they were put together They were black and metal but they weren't cast like our hand grenades were You've seen our hand grenades haven't you?

D Yes

G Well these looked just like cheap steel Never did anything with the _____ I saw hundreds of them but I never saw one go off If I did see one go off I didn't know what it was

D So you replaced the British then they jumped on?

G When we pulled out of there we stayed with a Belgium woman, Jean Peters Moores and her husband on the outskirts of the town of Emull. Emull was the town where the Belgians had their Magino Line but I never saw their airforce.

D Abon Emull?

G Fort Abon Emull. We stayed there for about eight or nine days.

D Did you seize the fort?

G No. We never saw the fort. It was muddy, probably February. There wasn't any snow on the ground at that time. We sat and played cards. The Moores had a little meat shop in their house. There were about twelve of us. This house was all tile floors. In this town you never saw a wooden house, frame houses is all that you saw. The first floor was laid with tile or stone and second floor was laid with wood. Anyway Jean got up real early four or five in the morning or stayed up all night and scrubbed those floors everyday. Twelve GI's can track in a lot of mud.

D Do you remember hearing any radio propaganda?

G No we never heard any Joe on the radio.

D Axis Sally or axis whatever?

G No, never heard them. We never had that much radio period outside our own frontline radios which were CB's so to speak. One time we were out stretching telephone lines because we had platoons in two different towns. We used the public telephone lines that were still out wherever we could. I was up on the pole and they had it hooked back into headquarters and I listened to Churchill announce that the war in Europe was over. That's the only radio broadcast I think I heard.

D Ok so you spent eight or nine days with the Belgian family then?

G From there we rode about two days and nights in trunks. They were amassing a force to jump off to go to the _____ and were the first outfit on the ride. They had infantry and armored division, twenty division lines at the bridge.

D This is the bridge at?

G Adolph Hitler's bridge north of _____. We had fire coming both ways. So we pulled back and they sent I Company down to clear off on the right of the bridge and we went over and cleared off the some beyond that. At midnight we crossed under the bridge and went up through the end of town and that's when we ran into the second fire troop division. We lost a

lot of people before we got that cleaned out. At five o'clock in the morning they brought the bridge up.

D The Germans?

G Yes. So we went on and cleared the rest of the town. We were probably there for another week. A lot of them were jumping into clean clothes. They had discharges cleared up and everything.

D They were trying to get out or infiltrate?

G Just trying to get out and not be taken prisoner. When we left we were exhausted. I had a flask that was this big around. We put whiskey in that. I don't know how many cases of whiskey we drank. I had two cases that I personally gave up. I knew a kid from Philadelphia who gambled and was one of the luckiest gamblers I ever knew. We'd get paid, then he'd go back on break and gamble until he figured his luck ran out. Then he would ship his money home and keep fifty bucks. That's all he'd keep. I never saw him send home less. When we landed in Boston coming back, I think the radiogram hit the ship before he even hit the port but they didn't tell him. They just took him off the boat. He didn't know what had transpired all he knew was that his wife was hurt. After we had our furlough, we went back and found out that his wife had been out with somebody else and wrecked the car. The guy she was with was killed, she was in critical condition, the car was totaled, and all the money he sent home was gone. That was one kid. The other kid came from Ohio. The guy wrote faithfully to his wife every night. When he went home however, his wife wasn't there. So he called his mother and her mother and she wasn't there! So he went down to the VFW and there was his wife sitting in a booth with somebody else and she was pregnant. When he came back to Canton he was twenty-nine years old and his hair was grayer than mine.

D Did you ever see any Negro troupes over there?

G To the best of my knowledge any Negroes that were in combat were in their own units at that time. The only Negroes that I ever saw were quarter masters driving trucks and they did a fantastic job. I don't know how they drove them things cat's eyes. Down strange roads, dirt roads and we had to abandon them along the roads at times. How they did the job they did I'll never know. They had to have had owl eyes to be able to see to drive. Did you ever see cat's eyes on an army truck?

D Is it a little slit?

G Yeah. The headlights on those things are only this big around. They had big head lights but they didn't use them. The other lights were like little parking lights.

D Did you ever see any famous generals like Eisenhower or Patton?

G Patton

D You saw Patton?

G He the only general I ever saw General Patton was a lot of man as far as I'm concerned He was criticized unjustly Patton would say here's the objective, we're going to take it and lose five hundred men Other general's would say well let's try this instead and it wouldn't work so they'd keep trying until they tried Patton's way and they'd up losing eight hundred to a thousand men in the process I had a lot of admiration for General Patton He'd always come down and talk to the battalion commander and then talk to the troops

D What did you think of the German soldiers and their weapons?

G The eighty-eight German rifle was the most versatile gun of any artillery piece direct or indirect fire that anyone had ever built They were uncanny at that time I had a pair of range finder glasses they must have weighed 30-35 pounds. They were the most fantastic glassed I ever saw. When you'd look into them at a 45 degree angle a shield light would come on I bet if you went up on the hill where the radio tower is you could almost identify someone walking on the other side of Ellwood City I got hold of them when we captured five of the eighty-eight guns right outside the town of Uno I had trouble carrying it because I was carrying a 48 pound radio, my rifle, ammunitions and rations and we were going sixteen, eighteen hours a day At one point I stopped to rest and set the glasses on a tank Somehow we got separated and the glasses disappeared

D All eighty-eights had a pair of them?

G. The five guns that we captured only had one pair They mounted right on the gun It must have been the only one because it was the only one that I got unless they took them off or something

D How about the bazooka? Did you ever fire one or uncover any kind of dud?

G No we never had any kind of dud on a bazooka Our bazooka's were good but they wouldn't go through a tiger tank This was one of the problems we ran into We'd run into tiger tanks and call in for tank support and they'd tell us all I got is 75 millimeters I can't knock a tiger tank so I 'm not coming We had tank destroyers with 90's and we had 90 millimeter guns and they'd say we don't have enough armor to go up against a German tank We were setting up their foot soldiers with machine guns and bazookas

D They were afraid of the tiger tanks?

G Oh yeah they were deadly

D How about our tanks? Could they be of use to the soldiers?

G Well we had 76er's and TD's with 90millimeters but they didn't have much armor on them

We were coming into the town of Uno and the German's had pulled railroad cars onto the tracks so we couldn't get across. So we called for tanks and the battalion commander tried to tell our captain to take the men across. They had all kinds of machine guns and everything else. Captain Lewis said "I'll tell you what. It would be suicide to try to take the men across in daylight. If you want to take them across you come down and take them across." Our battalion commander Lieutenant Cody out of respect for our company commander didn't question his judgement. He said, "ok, I'll give you some tanks but I'd be calling in air support." Finally at night we got the tanks and shoved the cars out of the way. The tank commander had had a brother killed over there. He said "tell you what captain, you just keep your men behind me. I'll level everything we come to and if I run out of ammo I know where to get some more." Maybe that was the tank I laid the glasses on.

D Did you ever run across very many tiger tanks?

G I never saw as many many tiger tanks as I did in North Africa. I would say a total of about thirty-five or forty. Some of them were replacements that they were using for artillery. I can remember one time that I ran into a tiger tank. I could see it a thousand yards away. I was up against a house and it came around the house and fired at a German tank. Then the driver took out every bit of that house as a precaution.

D Ok so where are you at now?

G We were in Africa maybe five or six days. After we came back we all got drunk, then we took off on foot. We went through a bunch of little towns. The big town we went through was Dorkman. On the outskirts of Dorkman we came upon this farmhouse. There was a young girl fourteen, fifteen years old, Russian slave labor and her younger brother about ten or eleven. When we told them they were free she called for her brother and pulled out a bayonet from her slax. She told him go out to the barn yard and get a duck. When he brought it back she held it up, chopped off it's head with the bayonet and threw it in a gunny sack. Then she told him go get a chicken and she through it live into the sack and they took off. Who knows how far they were from their home. Two maybe three thousand miles! Lord only knows what happened to them.

D You were in Germany then right?

G Yes

D Were you always on foot?

G Always. We lived on K rations. No washing your face or hands, no brushing your teeth! We went into a farmhouse one time and there were some eggs. We stayed about a half and hour and I had a cup of coffee and some eggs. We came into a little town maybe around six in the morning and some Germans were having a party! A big sergeant in the German Army came out and went up against Captain Lewis. Captain Lewis only weighed a hundred and thirty-six pounds but he knew every trick in the book. This German, Captain McCarty, grabbed his

(Captain Lewis's) gun and he (Captain Lewis) let him have it! I don't know how he did it but he flipped him down on the ground and he was about 6'2" probably two hundred and thirty pounds!

I captured a major that night I gave his pistol to our first lieutenant

D Was it a good pistol?

G I was a dress pistol It wasn't a little one it was a fancy one We got him in the house while he was sleeping It's a dressed bayonet I kept it It's silver with a brown handle It had a grey etched in plate with a swastika German dress bayonets are chrome and ordinary bayonets were carbon steel Today I'd say you could sell them for seventy-five or eighty-five dollars. Anyway, at dawn around six or seven o'clock we came in along the river into the town of Schwerty The night before was the last combat we saw After that the only thing we saw were captured prisoners streaming across the bridge About twelve hundred a day! You probably hear a lot of people criticizing the Red Cross. Well I don't know what happened to all their outfits but in our division every time we went back on our break there were weekly Red Cross rations All the cigarettes we needed, toothpaste, candy bars, shaving cream, schick razors, really big boxes! Twenty by twelve by sixteen inches deep Today I support the Red Cross

D That's good Do remember where you were on VE Day?

G Yeah I was up on a pole I listened to Churchill's speech

D Oh that was VE Day?

G Yeah. VE Day May 11th They had to have had a radio back at the CP because they had a phone hooked to it and the switchboard and I sat up on the pole and listened to it I can't remember between what two villages? What it Cosfeld? Cosfeld was a town that had a railroad center Although we saw no combat there the place had really been bombed out The people told us that there were five hundred people still buried in the rubble that they had never found I remember going through the town of Muenster You could look as far as the eye could see and all you saw was a wall here and a wall there It was kind of eerie

D What do you remember about coming home?

G You mean when I got home?

D No, about the trip

G We came back on a much smaller ship It wasn't even that full Colonel Honeycut came down and told us "if anybody tries to take your war souvenirs from you, you come see me Nobody can take any of this away from you" Before that, after the war was over, we used to ride around the countryside We had a German fire truck, that was our vehicle It was like a rescue squad truck really We'd ride around and stop at farmhouses and ask do you have

any eggs? We would eat our free meals in their kitchen. Everyday we'd sit down and eat up to twelve fried eggs! So when I came home I weighed about two hundred and fifteen pounds. And you know the first thing my wife said to me? "My God you're fat!" She told me she was glad to see me and glad I was home but boy was I fat! It still makes me giggle. I put it all on in little over a month.