

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Veterans

Personal Experience

O. H. 1156

HARRY E. JOYCE

Interviewed

by

John M. Demetra

on

December 1, 1988

HARRY E. JOYCE

Harry Joyce is a second generation railroader. His father was a yard conductor for the Erie Railroad. Harry joined the Erie railroad against his father's wishes in 1940. Since then he has served in a variety of positions from New York City to Chicago. In Chicago Mr. Joyce was the division Superintendent. His railroad career was interrupted by a tour of duty in the Army from 1941 to 1945 in which he saw a lot of combat in the European Theatre.

Mr. Joyce and his wife, Alice, have three children and now live in Boardman.

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INTERVIEWEE: HARRY E. JOYCE
INTERVIEWER: John M. Demetra
SUBJECT: Alcan highway, combat experience, France,
Germany
DATE: December 1, 1988

D: This is an interview with Harry Joyce for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on World War II, by John Demetra, December 1, 1988.

What can you tell me about growing up in the Depression? Do you remember any soup lines or hardships you may have encountered?

J: No, I do not remember any soup lines. I knew there were some. I never saw them. I know that during the Depression, my dad was a conductor on the Erie Railroad, and he was down to one maybe two days a week.

D: A road conductor?

J: No, he was a yard conductor. I do know of several of my neighbors when I was a kid who lost their homes due to the fact that they were not working. The big thing I remember about the Depression was the WPA. They re built South Avenue from Indianola Avenue North down to Dewey Avenue. They made it four lanes, and it was all brick. I think it is still intact. I think it is the only road around here that was built probably and still not too many repairs have been done to it. I know in 1937 my dad was still working a couple days a week. That is prior to the steel strike. That was my last year in high school, and I was working for the A & P as a vacation meat manager. I was making \$37 a week, which is hard to believe for a snotty nosed kid. I was bringing home more money than my father was making.

D: You were working during high school?

J: Oh, yes. I started out by sweeping out the A & P store up at South and Lucious. I was in there one Saturday when Ernie the butcher was busy and they hollered over for me to help by waiting on customers. Not by doing any meat cutting or anything like that, but just over the counter work. I'll never forget that this lady asked for a chicken and it had to be cleaned. I took it back to the meat block, and I told Ernie "This lady wants this chicken." He said, "Now is the time you are going to learn to clean a chicken." I'll never forget that. I damn near died, but I did get it done. Eventually he taught me to cut meat, sides of beef, let alone cleaning poultry. Finally I was a counter man. One summer the meat manger, the supervisor of A&P, asked me if I would care to work summers as vacation manager at various stores. The first place he sent me was to East Palestine. I worked there for vacation man for one week. I went from there to Leetonia to Lisbon to East Liverpool to Canfield and whatnot. That was the end of my meat cutting days until my daughter hired me at present.

D: So, you graduated high school in 1937?

J: 1937.

D: What did you do when you graduated?

J: Well, do you recall a Haber's furniture store in Youngstown? Well, prior to that Lawrence Haber's brother Frank and Marty had a grocery store on Rush Boulevard, between Lucious and Arbondale. They came to me, Lawrence did, when I was at the A&P and asked me if I would care to come with them because the A&P was making a lot of changes then. So, I went with them as a meat cutter for awhile until 1940. I asked my dad to get me a job at the railroad. He said he didn't want me there under no circumstances. So, my dad and mom went on vacation, and I went down and hired out on the railroad while he was gone. when he came back and found out where I was, he damn near killed me. That is just a manner of conversation. That was my days on the railroad from 1940. I hired out as a breakman.

D: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor being bombed?

J: I sure do. I was in the Army and I was at Fort Linenwood Missouri. I went in the Army for \$21 a day once a month.

D: So, you were in the Army prior to that?

J: I was in the Army prior. I was drafted prior to Pearl Harbor. I remember that very well.

D: Were you surprised to get drafted?

J: No, I knew I was going to be drafted because as you know the war was on in Europe. Well, I should explain further. I can't say honestly that I knew I was going to be drafted. I expected to be with the way the situation was in Europe with the uprising of Hitler and so on. The war started and the next thing I knew after I started, we were through with basics about that time.

D: Where did you go to basic training?

J: Fort Lininwood, Missouri.

D: Okay.

J: Within a weeks time, we were patrolling the beaches in California on the Monterey Penninsula.

D: How did you get out there? By train?

J: Train is right. We took a train to. . .I can't even think of the camp at the present time.

D: You were patrolling the beaches of Monterey California?

J: And the Monterey Bay area. It had been reported that enemy, by that Japanese, submarines and whatnot had been sighted which all later turned out to be a farce. I'll never forget we would go out early in the morning. When I say early we would be out there at 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning. We would have overcoats on and everything else on, and by 10:00 it would be one hundred degrees, and we would still have to keep the overcoats on. Incidentally, we were patrolling the beaches with broomsticks because we didn't have any weapons if you can believe that or not. We had broomsticks, we did not have weapons. I didn't have a weapon. None of us had weapons. I'll never forget that as long as I live.

D: You patrolled on foot?

J: On foot, oh yes. On the beaches. I can't remember the name of that camp, but I know it so well. Fort Ord, California was the camp.

D: So, how long were you patrolling the beaches?

J: Well, we took extensive training after a while, engineering training. I should say I was in an engineer outfit. Next thing I know we were alerted and loaded into troop trains, and we went North up into Canada,

Calgary, up into Edmonton to a place called Dawson Creek. That was the end of the railroad, and the end of civilization, I thought. Then, we were taken by truck over through the wilderness so to speak to Dawson Creek, and we were then notified that we were right in the middle of what is to be know as the Alaskan highway or the Alkan highway. I spent eighteen months up in that area. We worked on that highway. I had a bulldozer crew. After we completed the highway. . .After it was open I should say, we then ended up a transportation company until we were relieved by a transportation company. We hauled fuel, all kinds of supplies from Dawson Creek up into White Horse and eventually to Yucon which ended up in the ports to be shipped to the far West, the far East and various other points.

D: When the highway was completed, was it a paved road?

J: No, it was not a paved road. There were all kind of gravel pits up there. We made miles and miles of corduroy road. Now, what is corduroy? That country up there is two-thirds muscage, and corduroy is nothing but timber cut and laid end over end or side by side from one end of the road to the other. Then, you filled tons and tons of dirt and then gravel over it. Eventually, believe it or not, you could travel on it as fast as your vehicles could go except when you had your snow up there, which was a good bit of it. I read a newspaper at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning when I was standing outside. At that time of year I think there is only two hours of darkness if my memory is right. In due time we were brought back to the States to Camp White, Oregon.

D: By train?

J: By train. We came back over the highway which was a more pleasant trip this time back into Edmonton in Alberto Province. That way we came back in comfort, very nice trains. We ended up in Camp White, Oregon.

D: When you stayed at Dawson Creek, were you staying in tents?

J: Tents, we never had anything but a tent. We moved every other day. Set up camps. We had these perimetal tents that had a center stove in it. We had designated crews to furnish us with firewood. To set up the camp they would have to dig the slip holes for your bathrooms so to speak. Then, we had hunting parties. We had no fresh meat at all. In the summer we would have fishing parties, and you didn't fish with a hook. You would get bark off a tree, a quarter pound of TNT, get up stream from the falls, float it down, let it go off, and naturally all your fish would come to the surface.

They would be stunned, and we had nets to catch them downstream. That was never legalized, but time was the issue. We didn't have time to go out and fish with a line. I had a platoon at that time.

D: You were a sergeant?

J: I was a staff sergeant. My job was to. . .We followed the surveyors. The surveyors worked ahead of us. Our job was to make the clearances. At that time we didn't have cabs on the diesels that are on the dozers. We had a lot of accidents with the hidden trees, and having them break off from the top and come down and injuring quite a few. It happened that way. Finally, I think we were one of the first, not me, to put. . .I guess you would call them makeshift cabs on to prevent any injuries from falling timber and all that. Your timber up there, I told you it had musteg. What it is is a continuous growth of the Earth. You could walk along a path. . .Let's put it this way, I could drive a truck over it in one direction and keep going, but the second truck that would be following me would submerge in the ground. That is the way it was, and that is why we had to make these clear away roads. It was interesting, you know, it was beautiful.

A little thing for humor. . .We had a little cub bear. Its mother was killed. We adopted this little bear, Teddy. That is a good name for a teddy bear. That is what it was, and that is what we named it, Teddy. He survived through us making a makeshift bottle, like a baby bottle today. We fed him with the bottle and he grew and he grew and he grew. We used to wrestle with him, fight with him. . .We would go out on our projects and he would go right along. He would climb right up in the truck with us when we went out, ride on the bulldozer, ride in the cab until he got too big and then he would follow us on foot. Wherever we went, Teddy went. It came time for us to come back to the states. We were relieved by a trucking company or a transportation company because like I said earlier, we were engineers. Here we were with Teddy, and we knew we had to. . .We brought him back to the railhead with us and we couldn't release him due to the fact that he couldn't survive. He was used to us taking care of him. We used to love to watch him climb trees. So, when we came back to the states. . .We brought him back.

D: On the train?

J: We smuggled him back is what we did, oh yes. This was strictly a troop train, there were no civilians on it. When we got back to the states, we turned him over to the Portland Zoo in Portland, Oregon. That is the last

we saw Teddy. I have pictures somewhere around here, but God knows where.

D: Were the insects bad up there?

J: Oh, mosquitoes. We had the mosquito bars, we would call them. We had them over our helmets. Us fellows up in the lead broke timber and stuff and broke the right away, we weren't bothered in the daytime. We in turn would stir up the mosquitoes and stuff when we turned up the Earth. You didn't dare go to sleep at night without a mosquito net over your bed. Every bed had its own mosquito net, every individual had its own mosquito net. On a bright sunny day you weren't bothered too much, but they were there because there is so much swamp area. I understand that that is not so now. I have talked to people who have made a trip up to Fairbanks over the Alaskan highway in the last couple years. The highway is still not a paved highway.

D: No?

J: It is gravel. Fine gravel, that is what I understand of it. That's what they tell me. The temperatures get down to fifty below zero. It was fifty-four degrees below zero, but it was interesting. We were up there a total of eighteen months.

D: So, you came back in luxury in this train?

J: Luxury is right. We had fresh milk, fresh meat, and fresh eggs. It was really a treat. So, we came back to Camp White, Oregon. We lost in our tour up there about one-third of our original group through injuries and whatnot. Then, we had extensive training. . . No, that is wrong. We got leave. We all got to go home for awhile. That was in 1943 because I came home and got married, and my wife and I went back out to Camp White. I thought that I had seen my overseas duty in its completion. That was considered overseas up there. We lived in Eugene, Oregon. We got an apartment there, of course, I didn't get into town every night. Then, I went into extensive training. We thought we were going to go to the Pacific. The next thing you know, we were alerted. I had to call the wife and tell her to pack up and head home. She was from Youngstown like I am. I think maybe our trains passed each other as we were coming East because we came from Camp White, Oregon to Camp Shanks in New York State.

D: All across the country.

J: All the way across. Towards the end of our training period, we realized the fact that we couldn't be going to the Pacific. For one reason, the clothing we were

issued, and secondly, the training we were going through. By that, cliff climbing and stuff like that with ropes, anchors, et cetera.

D: Were you still with an engineering outfit?

J: Yes, we were a combat engineering outfit. Before we were construction, but now we were combat engineers. When we got to Camp Shanks in New York, we lost our identity for awhile. We were called the Third Ranger Brigade. Then eventually we got support of embarkation or I should say deportation. Eventually we were alerted, all leave canceled. I shouldn't say leave, I should say pass. Next thing you know we were loaded up and on the high seas for Europe.

D: What kind of ship were you on?

J: It was a Liberty ship. No, that is not right. There were Liberty ships. . . We were on the U.S.S. West Point. I can tell you one thing. I was so far below deck, I was below the portholes. That is way down there. It wasn't bad. I know we were in a large convoy. I never saw so many ships at one time in my life.

D: About what time was this? What year? What month?

J: This was in 1943. It was in the Fall, and we landed in Scotland in a place called. . . I can't think of the name of the place right now, but it was in the Glasgow Bay. When we debarked, Loch Lomond valley, we could see it from where we were at. We unloaded, and we went into the city of Glasgow where we, in turn, were loaded into trains. I wasn't at the time, but a lot of them were. At that time I was a 1st Sergeant, and I was designated to pick up the stragglers. By that, no matter where you go with troops, there are always those who want to get lost. They are in a strange area, a new country, and they want to experiment. So, myself and two other persons along with the local authorities, we rounded up our lost buddies, and then in turn boarded the train and went to Coventry, England, outside of Coventry, England. The night we arrived in Coventry was the night that Coventry was blitzed by the Buz Bombs. All public gathering houses, theaters, and churches were destroyed. Human beings killed, slaughtered. We were alerted and taken into Coventry to assist with the recoveries of bodies, to help with whatever we could. In due time we went into France.

D: How long were you in Coventry?

J: A couple or three months.

D: End of the winter then of 1943.

J: Let's see. I gave you the wrong date there. We got over there, I told you, a month before. We were in Coventry, that area, at Christmas time. I know that. We were there through January, February, and March. We didn't go to France, we went to Dover where we trained. When they say the "white cliffs of Dover," I don't know about them being white, but they are cliffs. We trained climbing these cliffs. That is when our identity was changed to the Third Ranger Brigade. In the middle of June we went to France.

D: After D-Day.

J: We were not in D-Day. We were programed to be H plus D. In other word, go in before the element of surprise. That is what we trained for. We were to go in there and get the gun mounts at Omaha where we did go into. Omaha would be Easy Red which was our target. The gun mounts were all electrically operated. If you can get the source of power cut, the gun can not be moved. The can be fired, but they can't be moved. That was our early objective and that is why we trained the way we did, but thank God we didn't have to do it. We went in about ten days after the element of surprise and D-Day. Our target was the same. By target, the beach head was Omaha, and Easy Red was our target. We went in landing crafts, LCI's. It was really something.

D: So, you landed in France on D-Day?

J: No, no. Ten days after D-Day. We didn't go on D-Day. Somehow or other orders were messed up in our favor, but they weren't very far inland when we got there. That is for sure.

D: What was Easy Red? What kind of a target is that?

J: Well, that was a section of the beach that was ours to land on. We went over on Liberty ships, unloaded from Liberty ships down into LCI's coming down the nets. You have seen those, I am sure.

D: What did those look like?

J: Equipment destroyed. We didn't spend too much time on the beach. . .At that time we were back to the 35th Combat Engineers Battalion, working with infantry divisions. That is when we started going through the hedge row country in France. Then, we were detoured or held up and various things.

D: Were you prepared for the hedge rows? Had you trained to deal with the hedge rows?

J: Hedge rows. . .In Europe there is very little lumber and they don't use fences as we do with wire and such. A hedge row is about three foot in height and it is all brick, stones. A lot of brush. That is their fences. That is what we called hedge rows. A man in my outfit, after we were having so much trouble. . .Incidentally, we were one of the two, and I don't know the name of the other outfit at this time, engineer outfits that had our own tanks. We had a man in our outfit that designed a plow and put it on the front of a tank. When that was done. . .We had several casualties before this was ever done. Then we could get through the hedge rows. Instead of going over them, you go through them. When you went over them, naturally, you're a guinea pig. Our outfit turned over personnel three complete times. A month after we entered France I was given a battle field commission. I made a Second Lieutenant. The only way I knew I was a Second Lieutenant. . .We had a lot of casualties. I had no officers in my company. I was a ranking Non-com. I sent a man back to our Battalion headquarters to beg to Colonel Symble to please send an officer to our company. The runner came back in 24 hours and said, "The officer is here. the Colonel told me to tell you that." Eventually within a week or so we were pulled back and an outfit went by us so we could reorganize and group. That is when Colonel Symble came up and said, "Harry, I want you to sign something." I said, "What am I signing?" He showed it to me and it was a discharge. I was discharged as an enlisted man. I said, "That is all I need. I'm leaving." Actually I wasn't going anywhere. I had to be discharged, then I was commissioned officially then.

D: So, your engineering outfit was fighting as a line company?

J: Oh, yes. We were a line company from the time we went in France till we ended up in Passa, Germany. I'll never forget. . .We arrived at the Mosel river. It is in Germany. After the fall of France, of Paris, I should say, we were in one of the first outfits to enter Paris. We did not fire a shot. We did not do a thing but to ride through it. The free France, took over Paris, which was all arranged. We kept going into Belgium. Then, we ended up in a terrible situation. We became what is known as the Bastards of Bastogne. It was in the wintertime as everybody knows that about Bastogne. The roads became impassable. The snow, God, it was one of the worst winters I had ever seen. We were beyond Bastogne maybe four or five miles out.

D: What division were you attached with?

J: We were with the third armor division which was General Patton's. At this time we were beyond Bastogne. We were working with the twenty-eighth infantry division, which was a Pennsylvania National Guard outfit originally.

D: The Keystone Division, right?

J: Before one evening. . .I'll never forget it as long as I live. The sky lit up as if there were thousands of spotlights in the air only in a greater extent. Everything lit up. We could hear all kinds of noises. When I say noises, machines. We didn't know what they were because it had been about a month of nothing. No movement, nothing. Some scouting. We would go on scouting patrols, so nothing to alert us. We were in a bad situation because we were low on fuel, low on everything so to speak. Then, the damnedest artillery barrage came from the enemy side, and our advanced outpost alerted us that there was a massive attack coming. So, we pulled back towards Bastogne. We were just on the outskirts I would say maybe a mile and a half. I don't remember now. Our casualties started to mount up. All hell broke loose, everything became disorganized. I ended up with a group of personnel who were cooks and office personnel so to speak with the 28th Division. I had members of the 17th Airborne Division. We were a bastard outfit so to speak. We had personnel from all different kinds. Strays so to speak. We just formed our own organization. There was retreating going on back into Bastogne. Where we eventually ended up back in Bastogne was on the outer perimeter. It looked like hour per hour we were going to cash in. Casualties were terrible. Then, the weather broke. The weather at this time was terrible, cloudy overhanging and foggy. Then, the weather broke and our air corp came over. Thank God, I never thought I would be so happy to see an air plane let alone squadrons of them. Then, the C-47's pulling the gliders and the paratroopers. The gliders were bringing in supplies to us because we were down to nothing. I'm not talking so much about food now because food was. . .I never thought I would say this, but it was a minimum thing to be wanted, we needed medical aid. We needed ammunition. At this time Patton came up from the South, broke through, and liberated us. From there on in it was a band ride.

It was at this time we got our first mail. That is when I was notified, I got a telegram from home. The telegram was telling me that I was a father. I thought when I opened the telegram that it was of the day before or something like that. I know it was the 28th

day of December when I got the telegram, and Judy was born on the 4th day of December. All in all it was pretty good service.

After that we were pulled back into a rest area. We were all. . . Well, there was that trench foot. Trench foot is nothing but frozen feet. We had other problems, busy things. Eventually, everything worked out. Then we were reactivated. We got a lot of new personnel. I got some, as I called them then, new shaved tails or Second Lieutenants from the states, but now they were going to see what it was all about. I shouldn't say something like that because what they were doing was a necessity. Then, we took off and we road for days and days and days, it seemed. Next thing I know we are about fifteen miles from the Mosel River and we went to a designated place where we camped so to speak. Then, we had to infiltrate some areas and get to the Mosel River to look it over. That is when we went back to engineering and we were going to put a floating Baily bridge across the Mosel river. Koblenz, Germany is at the mouth of the Mosel and the Rhein river. It is like a point. The Mosel and Koblenz is right in here. We were up in the high ground there and we could see what was going on. So eventually, we had gone down into the shoreline and brought our equipment in there.

D: Did you move by boat or you move by truck?

J: We had truck and we had tanks specially equipped--What am I trying to say?--With wenches on them, which we wenched our equipment with. It is just like a rector set which you put together. You work on the shore, you load them on flotillas so to speak. You put them together in sections and keep shoving them across until you finally get all the way to the other shore. When we got two-thirds of the way out, we lost everything. It got knocked out. Artillery. . . We had to start from scratch again. We finally got that bridge across in a couple nights. Very costly, but it had to be. We were the first troops into Koblenz, beautiful city. Now, we are in Koblenz on the Rhein side. Thank God we didn't have to build a bridge across the Rhein. A Baily bridge would never surfice there.

D: The Rhein was too big?

J: That and the current there was terrific. The current of the Mosel was terrific. Once we got across the Rhein it was clear sailing. We ended up in a little town called Pausa, Germany. P-A-U-S-A, Pausa, which is now in East Germany. That is where my company ended up. At that time the war ended and I was a ranking officer in our outfit, so I was what they called the

Burger Master, the mayor. They had a brewery in this town. I'm getting ahead in the story. The people. . .It was something else. One neighbor would come in and say, "Joe Blow is a Nazi." Joe Blow would come in and say, "Henry Smith is a Nazi, you've got to watch him." Both turning in the other, it was something else. It turned out that one was afraid of the other, but they were human beings and they were damn nice people. They had a brewery in the town. They had nothing to operate it with, so we in turn eventually got them the supplies to open the brewery and got everybody back to work there. This little town was not hurt in any way with bombs or whatnot. It was a beautiful little town about the size of East Palestine. No bigger. When we liberated this town, the Germans had a big hospital there, a military hospital. A sad thing. They were operating without anesthetics. In other words, if you needed surgery, they had nothing to put you under. We supplied the hospital. . .Well, there was a Colonel in charge of it who was educated at Harvard University. He said to me, "The war is over for Germany." This was before everything finished within a week or so. We arrived at his place and we were told that is as far as we went because the next objective was the Elbe River. We did not go to the Elbe River. That is where we met with the Russians. Anyway, this Colonel told me, "The war is over for Germany, but your present ally is going to be your biggest enemy." I said to him, "Who is that?" He said, "The Russians." That is as true as I sit here. We saw nothing wrong in all of our tours and travels. I misgivings by the German soldiers. I know my outfit, and I can only speak for it. We treated them as human beings.

But one thing I can say that I forgot to tell you about. . .I did happen to see on the grounds of Bulcoval. That is where the ovens were. That is where they cremated all the, oh God, I don't know how many people. It wasn't just Jews. The majority where Jewish people, but that is something I can never understand. I can never understand to this day how some of the German people stated that they never knew what was going on there because from miles of ratio it smelled. Thank God that is over with.

D: You were part of the forces to liberate Bulcoval?

J: Yes. There was nothing to liberate. I don't want to mislead you there. There was an infantry, squadron that liberated it we just happened to be with them. I know the commander of that place. . .The boy the 9th infantry division took care of him. You see bodies laying there. You think they are dead, but they are alive and they are just skeletons. Anyway, we ended up

in Pausa, then eventually in about three months, we conveyed to Southern France to Marseille.

D: A truck convoy?

J: A truck convoy.

D: After the war?

J: Yes, this was after the war was over. It was a staging area for departing back to the states. Eventually we came back to the States.

D: What kind of boat did you come back on?

J: The same one we went over on, the West Point, but my quarters were a lot different.

D: It was a lot better?

J: You mean the quarters?

D: Yes.

J: Oh my God, yes. I was above deck so to speak. Of course, I was a GI going over and I was a captain coming back. We unloaded in New York and we went to Camp Kimber in New Jersey. But when we unloaded in New York, the Red Cross was there. We saw the Red Cross in Europe, in France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany. Not up in the lines, but in the rest areas where they supplied us with doughnuts and coffee. But when we got off the boat at the shore, they met us with something we hadn't had since the day we left--Fresh milk, doughnuts, and I don't know what else. I know the milk was in these half pints, and I know I got rid of four of them before I realized what the heck I was doing. By getting rid of them, I mean I drank them. It was so good. Then, we went to Camp Kimber. My outfit was one of the first to be deactivated because we had a lot of points. Then, I was sent to. . .Well, our enlisted personnel went one way and the officers had to go to another in this camp. Unfortunately we didn't get to see our buddies very often after that. We were together, some of us, a long time. Then, I was shipped from there. . .No. Then, the officers had to go into this big theater to be reclassified for separation. There must have been two-hundred of us from all different outfits. It was a big situation. So, as they would call off their names, you would answer with your rank, name and serial number. They called them all off but five, and I was one of the five. They would call your name off, like, they would say Joe Smith, and so and so and so and so and so and so. Then, they would give the source of your commission regular, OCS, or Reserve

Officers. Then, you would go to these various sections that they would have you go. This corner, that corner and so on and so forth. They got down to the second to the last and they didn't call me yet, so I stood up. The Colonel said my name, my rank--"Harry E. Joyce, 01996513." Then, he said, "Yes." I said, "That is it." Finally they came back and said, "You're regular Army." I said, "Oh no, I'm not." They said, "Source of your commission?" I said, "Battlefield." They said, "You go with the regular Army group." I stood there and I said, "I am not regular Army" because I wanted out. I had a baby at home that I hadn't seen, but I had to go. So, I didn't get out at Camp Kimber. I was sent to another Camp Nutterberry in Indianapolis. Anyway, When I got there, I was given a thirty day leave, but I was told to come back. I wasn't discharged, so I started to argue the point. They told me to go home and come back. So, I come home and I had to go back. When I went back, in order to get out of the service, I had to resign as a regular Army officer and sign up as a reserve, which I did do. Then, I got out.

D: As a Captain?

J: Yes. And that is the size of my service.

D: Okay. Did you ever encounter any negro troops over there in Europe?

J: Yes. Yes, I did during the Battle of Bastogne. Some of them were separated from their outfit. You see, it was a wild holy thing at that time. I could never explain to you what happened. There were soldiers wandering around separated from their outfits. Not because they wanted to be, it was the situation. We had in the neighborhood of six to eight colored boys that were with the Red Ball Expresses they used to call it. A trucking outfit that used to haul supplies up to the lines. Mostly gasoline, but then that was the primary thing. I ended up with six of them I think it was. They had very little training with a rifle let a lone anything else, but I can tell you one thing, they were damn good soldiers. There wasn't a yellow streak in their backs, I'll say that. They were just as good as any other man I saw. That was my only association in Europe with them.

D: What did you think of the American weapons compared to say the German weapons?

J: Well, when we invaded France, our tanks had a 37mm so called cannon. We used to call it the pee shooter. It was terrible. It wouldn't penetrate anything. The Germans had an artillery weapon called an 88. It was actually originally an anti-aircraft weapon. I could

be mistaken, but I think it was in a battle over in Africa that Rumble started using it as an artillery weapon. That was superb. It was one of the greatest. Of course, we later on got other weapons. I think at the time the finest one we had when the war ended was, I think, we had a 76mm on our tanks. Our hollister was every bit as good as an 88. I think that 88 was the finest artillery piece.

D: What makes you say that?

J: It was so accurate. It was so powerful. It could do so many things.

D: I understand they use it as direct fire too.

J: That's right. Time explosives, somewhat. Well, other than that I think we were equal with them as far as. . .

D: As far as rifles and pistols and things?

J: Well, at that time we only had the .45 calibers. The Germans had the Luger and the P-38's. I had a treasure, well it was a treasure to me, but I gave it to my brother-in-law up in Michigan. I had a .25 caliber, blue steel, that I took from a German nurse. Now, I didn't strip her to get this weapon. I just demanded that she handed over any weapons. She did. My brother-in-law carries it to this day. My brother-in-law right at the present time is a retired commissioner of the state police in Michigan. He carried that for quite awhile. I brought home two p-38's. I made a vow that if I ever got out of the service alive, I would never have any kind of a weapon again. And I don't. I don't have any kind of a weapon. I have my butcher knife over here, but that is it. Nothing that fires in no way shape or form. There are two things I won't do. I won't go hunting and God I have had enough camping. I will never go camping again. I am not even fond of picnics, but that is about all I can tell you.

D: Were the people of Europe friendly to you?

J: Yes. The most beautiful city that I ever saw in my life was Luxemburg City.

D: Yes?

J: Oh, beautiful. I was fortunate after the war I got to travel awhile over there because I had no personnel under me. I got around a lot. I spent a lot of time in Paris, Luxemburg City, Cologne, Frankfurt.

D: Tresdin?

J: There is no place like Bulgaria. It is the most beautiful country you have ever saw in your life. I was through the BMW plant which is nothing like it is today.

D: In Munich?

J: Yes.

D: Those cities were pretty well bombed up though.

J: Not so much down there though.

D: What did you think of the SS soldiers?

J: They were fanatics. Where I ran into them was when we got them as prisoners of war. They were reluctant to surrender so to speak. You could not trust them. They were a special breed. If it was today's times, you would think they were on dope by the way they acted all the time--Supermen. They got hurt and they cried like anybody else, but the average Europeans were very nice people. We were never mistreated in any way. I was never given any bad information out on patrols. A lot of times we would be off our maps after the break though. I had a driver so to speak, we called him Berhead. We would be out on patrol in a jeep. His name was Larson, Berhead Larson is what we used to call him. He was a French-Canadian by birth. He could speak French, German and Italian. He would never take any kind of a promotion. If my memory is right, he had two purple hearts, a bronze star, and silver star. He would talk to them in their native tongue and ask them for directions and various other things. I'm talking about the journey. By the time we got into Germany, they realized the war was over for them whether the military did or not. We were never mislead at any time that I can honestly say. In every village or every town we took, that is were they were out greeting us. We were never mistreated.

D: Did you ever see any of the top military leaders like your Eisenhowers, or Montgomerys or Pattons?

J: Patton, yes. We were relieved one time after being on the line for almost a month. It was cold. It was terrible. We were relieved and pulled back. We were laying along the. . .Like the road is here, then there is a ditch on each side. We were sitting in the ditch leaning up on the bank, you know what I mean? When somebody says, "Here comes General Patton." I was the ranking officer at the time, and I had to get up and report. He proceeded to chew me out for not having overshoes on. I'll never forget it. I just looked at him and said, "You can do anything you want to me, but

All I want to do is sit down." He said, "You're not answering my question." I said, "I can't wear something I don't have or my men don't have." Then he smiled and I'll never forget it. He said, "You will have them." He said, "You will and your men will be taken care of." Then, he said, "When are you to be picked up and moved to the rest area?" I'm not honest when I say this because I don't remember what I said. I think we had been laying around there then for three hours in the cold, but I know one thing. In one hour we had transportation and we were taken back into the rest area. We had everything taken care of right then and there. Medics, clothing, food. . .Patton kept his word. That was my only encounter with General Patton. I can tell you this much it was cold, It was snowing, and he walked about thirty or forty yards to get to where I was. He walked through mud and everything and when he got to where I was there was no mud on him. Nothing but spic-n-span. I don't know. That is as true as I say. I don't think I can tell you anything else.

D: Okay.

J: Some of the stuff I have completely forgot about.

D: Is there anything else you want to say?

J: No. I lost a lot of good friends and made a lot of good friends too. Someday we hope to make a trip over there. Two years ago my wife and I were in Ireland and Italy. With the hope of the Lord we hope this year to go. Go to Germany and we don't go on tours. We go on our own with another couple and us. I want to take a trip to Germany and I want to make a trip down the Rhein River.

END OF INTERVIEW