YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Veterans

Personal Experience

O. H. 1159

JOSEPH R. REED, SR.

Interviewed

by

John Demetra

on

December 2, 1988

JOSEPH REED

Mr. Joseph Reed is a native Philadelphian, born there in 1919. He grew up in a neighborhood known as Kensington. At the age of 19 he joined the Army and after basic training, was sent to Hawaii to man the big coastal guns that protected Pearl Harbor. When the war broke out Mr. Reed transferred into the paratroops of the 101st Airborne Division. It was with the 101st that he saw combat in Normandy, Holland, and France from 1944-1945.

Mr. Reed and his wife, Kas, have lived in the Youngstown area for more than thirty-eight years, raising five children here.

Mr. Reed is a very active sportsman. He enjoys hunting, fishing, and trapping and is an officer in the Eastern Ohio Conservation Club.

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INTERVIEWEE: JOSEPH R. REED, SR.

INTERVIEWER: John Demetra

SUBJECT: Peal Harbor 1930's, paratroop activities, Bastogne, Holland

DATE: December 2, 1988

D: This is an interview with Joseph Reed for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on World War II Veterans, Combat, by John Demetra, on December 2, 1988.

What can you tell me about growing up in Philadelphia during the Depression?

R: Well, Philadelphia was a very depressed area. I lived on a street in north Philadelphia, lower Kensington section. There were sixty-eight houses on the street and during the Depression--my recollection--we had two men that were employed. One was a policeman, the other was a mailman. The rest of the people were either on relief or savings. There wasn't such a things as relief as you have today. You would go to the fire house or a police station and they would give you either a bag of cabbage today and maybe a bag of turnips tomorrow, a bag of potatoes. You didn't get much if your shoes or clothes wore out you generally wore hand-me-downs. I don't ever remember getting new clothes. I had two older brothers. Your shoes wear out, you put cardboard in them and things like that. Jobs weren't to be had. When my wife and I were young it was almost compulsory that you leave school when you got to be sixteen years of age to help put food on the table. Get some kind of menial job, whatever. First job I ever got was you got a $1 a day and you worked eight hours. My parents always took ninety percent of what I made off me.

D: What were you doing for a $1 a day?

R: Oh, golly! I sold produce door to door. I worked as a Western Union messenger. I worked with a roofer in the summer time. If you got $1.50 it was big money.

D: You turned most that money back into your parents?

R: Yes, about ninety percent of it. My parents would give me $.10 on a $1. Finally my father was able to get me a job working in a hat factory that he worked, Stetson Hat Factory.

D: He worked there?

R: Yes, he worked there all his life. Then, I worked there for--oh, I don't know--a couple of years I guess. Yes, it was a couple of years or a year and a half. When I went there they put me on night turn. Which was like 4:30 or 5:00 in the afternoon until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. The superintendent of that department had a nephew who worked also. At the time I asked him, "Why can't you rotate him one week and me one week?" He says, "Oh, you are just learning. It is not as tough to work at night. So we will let you work this year night turn. Next year we will rotate." So, I worked hard and good. I was a good worker. I was an aggressive kid all my life. So, that went around, next summer came around. First thing I look at the schedule and Duffy has the first month day turn, old Joe has got the night turn. I went up to Ike and I said, "Hey, you told me that we would rotate this year, you know, alternate weeks. I would get night turn one time and day turn another." You know when you are that age that is important to you. "Oh, something came up," he said, "we can't do that. You will have to stay on night turn." I was eighteen at the time. I said, "Like hell I will." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "If you can't rotate, I quit." My father worked in the same department. Of course he had a different type job than I. He said, "I'll tell your father." I said, "I don't give a damn who you tell. I'll quit and join the Army before I do that." It wasn't long before, a day or so, my father got a hold of me. We didn't even work the same turn. He worked day time, I worked night. He said, "Are you going to quit?" I said, "Yes, I'm going to go join the Army." He said, "Well, if that is what you want to do." I said, "Will you sign for me?" Which he had to in those days. He said, "Well, if that is what you want to do. I'll sign for you but do a good job. Don't be a half baked guy." That is what happened. I joined the Army in September of 1938.

D: 1938?

R: I went to the Hawaiian Islands. Of course you had three choices at that time for what they called foreign service. You could go to the Philippines, you could go to Panama, and you could go to Hawaii. Well, I was curious, I didn't hear too much about the Philippines or Panama but I had heard a lot about Hawaii. You know your advertising and all that. Even in those days they advertised it, not like they do today. They advertised it considerably. So, I chose Hawaii and I went away. I had never been away from home. I went away for three years.

Part of that, when I first left school I went to join the Navy. I went down there and they give us a bunch of forms. I was a little skinny kid. They must have known. From looking at me they would have known it. You couldn't join at that age. You had to lie. I marked the application that I was eighteen. Here is a story I never told of myself for thirty some years. The application had a question, "Did you ever have venereal disease?" Well, believe it or not in those days kids my age didn't know what venereal disease was. We didn't run into sex stories and things like this. So, I said to this guy, he was older, beside me, "What is the venereal disease? Is that like chicken pox and measles and stuff like that?" He said, "Yes." So, I put down "yes" on the question. I always seemed to prefer the Navy when I was younger. Anyway we had to go up, there was about eight of us. The guy looked through these papers. He said, "Which one of you guys are Reed?" I said, "I am." He said, "You had VD?" I said, "Yes." He said, "What did you have?" I said, "Oh, I had all of them. I had chicken pox, measles, whopping cough." He said, "Get the hell out of here and come back when you are dry behind the ears!"

Well, you know, a couple years later when I decided I was going to go in the service I was afraid to go back to that Navy place because I thought the same guys might still be there and remember me. When I went to the Army and they accepted me I was a little surprised. Not that I didn't want to go. I wanted to go. So, I did. I joined the Army and they let me stay three days and then they shipped me out in September of 1938.

D: You left by train?

R: We left by train to New Rochelle, New York and they had a P.O.E. I can't remember off hand. I can't remember the name of that post. It is still there, it is a shipping point. Well anyhow, I was up there in the first hurricane that came in up there in 1938, September 1938. Boy it really came in. I had never been in something like that before. They were permanent structures. Actually we were not in any danger. We were

right on the ocean. It was an island actually. What the devil is the name of that fort?

D: Fort Shanks?

R: No, that Shanks I went over there during the war. No, this was at New Rochelle, New York. I'll come up with it later on in the conversation. Anyway the ocean came in and they had a low area, like they use as a ball park and everything else, and they parked cars on it. During the hurricane the ocean came in, covered all the cars. We were in a raised portion but the were in a low portion not to far. All the cars were under water. Well anyway, I shipped out from there on a ship; US Army Transport Saint Maheal, I think it was. We went down to Charleston, South Carolina and they docked them there. They took on some troops that were stationed down there and they put on some ones that were going further. We stayed on it and we got duties on there.

D: What was the ship like?

R: It was a little rough. They had wire rack beds and stuff like that. It wasn't to good of accommodations. It got you there. In those days you didn't worry to much about plush things. There just weren't. We stopped in North Carolina and I got an eight hour pass. I was allowed to go and see Charleston, South Carolina. I was allowed to go around the town and all. I went to a movie and came back, just a green recruit. We boarded ship again and the next morning we left there.

We went down through the Panama Canal. You heard about these things and all. Here I am, a kid like me, getting some adventure. We go down in there and then we go through the Canal. They left us off on both sides of the Canal. Some guy got off on one side, some on the other. I think I got off on the Atlantic side. We were told to watch ourselves because prostitution and all was rampant. Lots of disease and all this kind of stuff. I wasn't interested in that kind of thing any how. I was scared of women. I didn't understand those things and I was actually afraid of them. Of course, they show you some awful pictures when you got these diseases. That is part of your indoctrination course. We walked around the town and all. I was with some other guys. Funny thing they had like a garage, just a little bit. They would have a bed in there and these women would sit on the chair. If they took on a customer they would just close the garage doors. They would go in there. They had whole square blocks of this. Naturally, young like we were and some of the fellows were a little older, they were curious about all this stuff. So, we walked around all of them anyhow. We had certain areas were off limits.

We accidentally got off limits one time and we got to a slaughter house. They were just killing the cattle like you wouldn't believe. They were hitting them with axes and stuff like that and skinning them. While they were skinning them with all the blood around, the vultures were coming down. Landed on the hides and stuff like that, and pulling at them. Finally, I don't know who it was, name of Peter somebody saw us. He said, "Hey, you guys get the hell out of here. You are not allowed in here you know." No sanitation about killing your cattle.

Then we went through the canal and that was a nice experience. I have some photos yet today. They blow the water in and the darn fish come up. You see the fish circulating too. Then we went through the canal, which was a nice thing. We got to the Pacific and we got out there. We started up the Pacific coast and off of Mexico there was, at that time of year I guess--I don't know if they are always there--a lot of whales. You could see them blowing. They would blow their spout.

D: Oh, yes?

R: Yes and not to far off shore. We could see shore when we went up the Pacific coast. These whales were between us and shore. You would see them blowing and rolling and everything else. Plus the porpoise were something too. They would get in front of the ship and keep that up. Then in the Pacific--I think it was the Pacific, it might have been both oceans, it is so long ago--we hit a lot of flying fish. You would see them. They would go out of a wave and they would flying across into the next wave and stuff like this. We had rough seas, I was woozy. I couldn't go down the companion way too much. I get sea sick. I always knew that from fishing when I was a kid. I would go out in the ocean in a little boat and get sea sick. We pulled into San Francisco and . . . Oh boy, what is the name of? Well, anyhow it was behind a rock, the prison.

D: Alcatraz?

R: Alcatraz! Our boat serviced Alcatraz and us, Fort Lawson. Anyway, we go out to this place. We stayed there, I stayed there about a month. Pulled a lot of KP. Used to get in KP, they would get you up 2:00 in the morning. You would still be in that kitchen 10:00 the next night. You would get that for seven to eight days at a time.

D: Holy Cow!

R: Then if you got smart with anybody or said anything out

of the way, they would just turn you right over and you would do another turn. So, you didn't do much other work. Then they gave us one day of San Francisco. We got a pass. We got on the boat and the biggest thrill I got of the whole thing was that boat stopped at Alcatraz. Right into the docks and those walls went up, way up. Very bleak, barren looking concrete thing. They would take on mail and a couple people would get on and couple people would get off. Most of the passengers were our soldiers that were on from the post. They would take us to San Francisco and drop us off on the docks.

So, I went to town. I visited San Francisco China Town. I went walking around looking for a gift for my mother. I am looking in a window, first thing you know one of these odd balls comes up to me. I looked at him right away and this is what they told us about. He said, "Come on soldier, I'll buy you a drink." I said, "I don't drink mister." "Oh come on, don't be like that. I'll buy you a drink." I said, "Hey mister, I don't drink. I'm doing some window shopping. I'm looking for a gift for my mother and that is all I'm concerned with in this town today. Maybe I'll go to a good restaurant." I had a few bucks. So, one thing led to another, and he kept following me. I was shopping in one of these Chinese places. They had nice stuff. He would follow me, same thing. So, after about three or four times I walked to the curb. I said, "Mister, I'm going to cross the street and continue my window shopping. If you follow me, one of us is going to get the shit beat out of him. I don't want you bothering me, get the hell away from me." So, I went over and I started window shopping. I look in the window, he is standing on the curb leering at me. He didn't come across the street, thank God. I didn't have any problem with it.

When I had to get back, you had certain hours the boat ran, you had to be there. I never wanted to violate the rules or anything. I went back to the thing and stayed there a little while. Then the boat took off for another boat. I can't remember what the name of it was. We took off for Honolulu. I'll tell you, we hit one of the worst storms that I think we were more like a submarine than a ship. That, so called, Pacific was as wild as oceans could come. They showed us snap shots afterwards. Honest to God the boat was underwater most of the time. Nobody was allowed on deck. They battened you down. Not only that but I was on latrine orderly and the water, instead of going out, was coming in. Through the commodes and everything. The water would come flying up and everything was awash. I was so violently sick and I was throwing up green and everything else. I am holding on to a com-

mode and I couldn't stand up I was so weak. The guy come in that was in charge of the detail and he was sick. I said, "You dumb son of a bitch, can't you see I'm sick. Get me out of here." He said, "Hey bud, everybody is sick." Even the station complement, the crew on the ship, were sick. It was terrible. I threw up everything I could. Son of a gun! So, then we got out of that storm and we watched the sights and all that. I think it took us seven days to go over there from San Francisco to Hawaii. There weren't any aircrafts in those days.

We got over there and I was Sea Coast Artillery, which I didn't know what it was. One thing led to another, we went up to this post. It was called Fort Kamehameha, named after the king of the islands. Fort Kamehameha was a sea coast artillery port but you had to go through Hickam Field to get there. When you went out of Kamehameha gate then you had to go out of Hickam Field gate to get there. We were behind Hickam Field, more or less, right on Pearl Harbor. We took our basic training there and I had an instructor who was tough. He was tough but I really applied myself. It was a lark for me, I was having a ball. I really applied myself. I was just a young kid compared to most of them. They even got to . . . I didn't shave yet. So, the guys like that they called them "Chicken." My name got to be "Chicken" Reed. "Chicken" O'Conner, guys that didn't shave.

We went through our basic training. I worked hard to try to learn everything. We had a tough instructor. We weren't even allowed to talk to anybody else but the recruits. They would march us in formation to our company. We would go to eat. Like if twelve of us were being assigned to "A" battery, Fifteenth Coast Artillery--which was what the unit was at that time--we could go in that mess hall and sit down but we couldn't even look at this guy over here. We sat at that table for eight weeks. We got our food, we ate, got up, formed outside. While you were waiting outside you couldn't talk to anybody. They knew not to talk to you. They would get you in trouble. They would laugh at you and stuff like this, the guys that were in the outfit. Then we would march back to our place. We did that three times a day. We trained like for four hours. So, finally we were going pretty good. This big hill billy, he had a big affect on me in my service career. He was good, he knew his stuff. We had an inspection one day and everybody got gigged but me in our bunch. I don't know how I got by, to this day I don't know how. I did take my gun apart like you weren't supposed to and clean all the little oil places and put it together.

D: You weren't supposed to?

R: No, no you could only take certain groups. There was a southern boy that knew a lot about rifles and he and I got together. We just took them all apart.

These noncom used to go out and get pretty well buzzed up. They would come in, maybe 12:00 at night, and make all kind of noises. We would be trying to sleep. We slept in parameter tents. We had mosquito barbs, I don't know if you know what they are. You have like a "T" angle on your bed, on the top and on the bottom. We had cots. This mosquito barb was like a netting. Fit all over your bed and all because mosquitoes were bad. It fit all over your bed and hung down, kept the mosquitoes out. Once in awhile one or two would get in there. Give you a bad time. The noncoms would come in and wake us all up. So, we decided one time that we were going to get even. We waited until they had us up maybe about 12:00 by the noise and what we did--which they weren't supposed to do--we waited, we all had a bunch of rocks. We snuck out in our shorts and barefoot and we ran down right outside . . . They slept in separate tents. We ran down and we took these rocks and we banged every G.I. can we could see. Woke them up about 2:00 in the morning. We beat it like hell back to our tents, we go in and feign sleeping.

First thing you know they got everybody out. We all got out of bed in formation, we had our shorts on is all we had. They said, "We want everybody to go back in and get their toothbrush." You had mandatory that you had certain equipment. The stuff you used for inspection you couldn't use on yourself. You had to keep them just for inspection. You had another set that you used personally. You brushed your teeth and all. We all did as ordered. We were way out on the point where they had permanent gun placements there. Made of heavy concrete and all that stuff. Underneath these gun placements would be like a latrine. They marched us in there and had us all get on our hands and knees and scrub that latrine with our toothbrushes. We just finished up the night, about four or five hours, scrubbing the latrine. If you thought you were done they put you back again. So, come daylight they let us out of there. We got cleaned up, went up for breakfast, and then we started our regular training. We didn't get smart anymore.

This guy, his name was Theodore Hale, he came from Johnson City, Tennessee. He had been in the Army maybe eighteen years. One thing about those days, the guys that had the rank, the sergeants and all . . . We didn't have any . . . One staff sergeants was all, in those days. They knew their stuff. They were all

soldiers and they had had been through mill. One guy had thirty-two years in. That was their home. They drank a lot but they were good people. Well, most of them were. This guy took a liking to me because I made it my business to study everything I was supposed to study. When we got turned to duty, to the company, had a detachment out in what they called Fort Weaver. It was what they called the boon-docks, the woods, out in the woods. Where the fellows out there were all specialists. They would maintain the guns and maintain other things out there. The other guys would come out on maneuvers. We would be out there, maybe fifty, sixty of us would be out there all the time. That would be our station. This guy Hale came up to me, he said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm going over with my buddy Pollock, we are going over to Fort Weaver." He said, "I would rather you stayed here. I can help you." I said, "No, hell, I'm going over to Fort Weaver." "Okay."

So, I went over there and we had these ammunition bunkers with all the ammunition in and all; partially underground, partially above.

D: For the big guns?

R: For the big guns. Yes, I was on a crew. Their main weapon was a sixteen inch rifle. Now, you see these big battle wagons with the guns on. Well, the Army's were bigger than that. They fired a heavier shell and everything else. Everything was spanner trays and rolling stock. Nothing could be picked up by hand, it was too heavy. Your projectile cartridge came right over. You leave down a rolling metal plate from the cart, it used to be the sides. Then it rolls down and you see carts with them now that they cart trucks and things in the back.

D: Like elevator deals?

R: No, it wasn't an elevator. It was just rolled out.

D: Oh, okay.

R: At an incline. Then you had some dogs and stoppers. You push these levers and a dog would go down and the shell would start to roll. You could hold it at a certain speed. We would put the shells on a spanner tray. Spanner tray go to the breach of the gun. Gun would be depressed and you would have an electric rammer. It would ram that shell in. Then you had . . . Powder chargers were big, many increments of it. They would ram it behind a gun. Then you had what they called a wheeling, step down, breech block. It had a lot of grooves and lands on it. When you turned

that over, when it was turned over . . . It was turned over electrically. It would lock in there. Then the guy would turn in the primer. You would set all the range and elevation. It could shoot at that time, which was a hell of a distance, thirty miles. It could shoot anywhere around the island. I got to studying on them.

First thing you know this guy Hale came over there. He took over what we called a Panama Mount 155 deal. See Oahu was such a small area that the field artillery could not train as field artillery. To shoot anything, like our 155's, or our 75's. They would have to come down to our place and use our guns to shoot at sea coast targets. We would have a tug go on a target on a cable. They would aim at that and shoot at it. That was how they got their practice in. We governed those targets and these field artillery outfits come in and shoot them, at times.

So, anyway Hale come over and he took over this 155 battery. At the time I was driving an eight ton gasoline engine on a single track. Where we used to go to these power sheds and pick up this ammunition and projectiles and take them to the guns and roll them back. Plus, we were also the transportation around the four-wheeler. We were out in an isolated area so, these big battle wagons would all come in. The Navy, and there was a Marine firing range north of us a little bit. We had a little wooden shack they called a "PX" down there. Where we had beer and candy and stuff. One of our people ran it. These Navy guys came in, they had been out to sea for a few months. They wanted to give them up a little party and picnic or something. We would pick them up . . . They would bring their boats down to our dock and we would pick them up on our train. We had an area there where they could have a picnic and a beer party and raise royal hell. Let the steam off. We didn't bother with them to much but we did get to play them ball, football and things like that. Over there it is all sand and it gives with you. We learned to play on it. I was a jock strap. We used to play them on football and stuff. Geez, some of them were big. We were 140, 150 pound kids, most of us. We had some big Pennsylvania boys. Thanksgiving Day we would play double headers, stuff like that; Football. We had no pads or anything. It was all just physical. You couldn't get going that fast really. Also, the trees over there are what they call algeroby, it is like, I understand, mesquite. I don't know what a mesquite tree is but they had big thorns on them. They were brittle as hell. They used to have G.I. shoes which were heavier than the garrison shoe, which they eliminated with the war. These things go right through the sole of it and into your foot.

You couldn't get them out until they got infected. Then you could pop them out. When it first went in there, to get tweezers, it just kept breaking up. You couldn't get them. You had to wait until it got infected. We got used to that, it was a way of life.

So, then this guy Hale came over there. One day he had a gun mechanic's job open. He came to me. He said, "Hey Chick." They used to bid on these things jobs. He said, "I want you to bid on my second gun mechanic's job." I said, "Hale, Yip Burns will bid on that job. He wants it." He said, "Well, I'll tell you right now Yip Burns isn't going to get it. I am the guy that says who gets it. Now if you want it, bid on it. If you don't, don't bid on it. You keep driving that train." So, I went up to Yip, who was a friend of mine. He had come from Delancy Street, in Long Island or some where like that. I went up to Yip and I said, "Hey Yip, Hale told me that you aren't going to get that job. He asked me if I wanted it he wanted me to take it." He said, "Hell Chick, if you want it, go ahead. I don't want it if he don't want me." So, I bid on the job and I got it. Over there, in those days, you had to take specialist jobs to get a rating.

You know none of us were educated. So, a guy came in with a high school education. Everybody said, "Watch that son of a bitch, he has a high school education." It was only about one. We even had guys that couldn't read or write. I had one guy, his name was Beam or Bone, I forget now anymore. Anyway, this guy was a little squat guy. Every since he could remember he worked in the coal mines. Like six, seven, eight years old his dad had him in the coal mines. He never got any school and he couldn't read or write. I'm getting ahead of my story. A little later on in life, they came up to me. Him and another guy came up to me. This guy I knew was leaving for the states, he was going back home, but Beams still had about eight or ten months to go. Every two years they used to rotate you, before the emergency. They came up to me one day and said, "Hey Chick, will you do me a favor?" I said, "What is that?" That is when I found out this fellow couldn't read or write. This other guy had been doing his writing for him and reading his letters when they came back. They asked me to take his place. I said, "Hell yes, I'll do it. What the heck." You felt ill at ease sometimes but he would dictate a letter to me and I would write it and we would mail it. He would get answers and he would bring them to me and I would read them to him.

Also, in those days you had to take a test. I still have the books up in the attic. The second class artillerymen, the first class artillerymen, and the

expert artillerymen. It was compulsory the first year. You took the second class artillery- men. In other words you learned a little bit about the equipment, the maintenance, the range, and all this kind of stuff. Then, most of the guys they didn't like schools anyhow. They wouldn't take more than the second. They had to take that. They didn't have to take the first or the expert. So, we all took the second class artillerymen. I passed it with high marks. The guy that was the instructor he came over. He said, "Hey kid, why don't you go right on to the first class. We are starting it in a couple of days." I said, "Nobody takes the first class." He said, "Well, you don't have to. The way you took this I think you might do good. You aren't going to hurt yourself. You probably get a pay raise out of it, PFC or something." Well, in those days the gross pay was $21 a month. Out of that they automatically took deductions, where you got $17.50 was all you got total. If you got that. In that $17.50 you had to buy your own toilet articles, you had to have your clothes cleaned. So much it cost you a month. They would take about $2.50 off you to block your hat. Plus they had a credit chips. What they called credit chips. It was like a book of stamps worth . . . They were all $2. You were allowed one-third of your pay in credit checks when you got broke. About one-third of the month you didn't have nothing. So, they give you these things where you can buy toilet articles and maybe go to a show. Stuff like this. We all got them all the time. So, when your pay day came they were automatically taken out. So, maybe sometimes you would get $5.

It was good. Those old time guys, they took me in their group. They had a little shack out in the woods. They had a little fireplace. They built it out in the sand dunes. They would go out there on a Saturday night or something. They would buy some beers. Like pay day some of the guys, older guys, would go in town. They would get involved with a woman for a bit and then they would bring back whiskey. Which is against the regulations but they would bring it back. They would bring back some steaks.

In the meantime, during the day, we had a .22 rifle and we all had our fishing gear, which you piece meal. It didn't cost that much. Some of us would go out surf casting. We used to get barracuda. They were good eating. Barracudas is like a walleye, big chunks of meat. You could see them out there. You could see their shadows in the sun on the coral. We would go out when the tide was out. You could wade out pretty far, up to your waist. All you had to do was cast a Johnson Silver Spoons is all we used. You just throw them out there. By God, you pulled by them a little bit and boy

they would hit it. Then we would get them in, we would get a few of them.

We had a .22 rifle among us. We all chipped in a couple of bucks and bought one. It wasn't much. They had these doves that they have; morning doves. They had them on the islands. We would go shoot them and they were only breast meat. We would get these morning doves and we would have the fish. The guy would bring back a couple of steaks and some whiskey and we would have a little bit of beer. We would go up to the mess hall and steal potatoes. We had these cans and all in this place out there. The only thing was you couldn't put anything down, you had to suspend everything on wire or in water, because the ants were so bad. If we got time. I think that is when Crisco first came out. The guy used to bring a pound can of Crisco back with him. We had it suspended on wires in an old wash basin with water in it. That is where we left it. You couldn't leave it anywhere, the ant would get in it. They would get in it and eat it.

So, they taught me to fish and hunt out there. I really enjoyed myself. Also, I learned to sew surrounding nets. You see these natives that they throw these nets out, with the lead weights around them and all. Hell, I learned to sew them and work with them. I learned to throw. I wasn't as good as some of the guys. What you did was get up on a coral rock. You would wade out and there would be pockets of depth and coral would be sticking up in the air. Where maybe you would only be . . . You would get up on one of them. There would runs through here were the water would be three feet deep, but you would be in two inches of water once you got up on the coral rock. Then you would watch in the sun. Here these mullet, they were mullet . . . You would get up on these rocks and there was certain way you held this and threw it. I could probably still do it. I still have needles and gauges up in the attic. Anyway, you get up on these corals and you watch these come by. They come through like a black cloud. So, when they get a certain place then you throw your net, you spread your net out. You throw it in such a manner that it would make a big circle. Then, the lead weights would take it right down. I have seen guys catch as many as thirty in one cast but the most I ever got was eight. I wasn't as good as some of them. Then, you pulled it together. What they natives did over there, the guys, the would put the fish head in their mouth and bite down on their brain.

D: To kill the fish?

R: To kill the fish, yes. They would bite down. I couldn't get myself to do that. I used to get them and

break their necks with my hand. They were good eating too. We couldn't go anywhere or anything like that because we didn't have no money. We would go out there for the three day holiday, which is unusual, and you didn't pull duty. Heck, you could go a week out there and stay in the sand with a blanket for two or three days. Eat this fish and stuff like that.

D: Sounds nice.

R: Everybody didn't get this opportunity but for some reason I did. These guys weren't bad. There was no such thing as odd balls in those days, they were regular guys. Plus the fact that we used to take this .22 rifle. . . You know years ago rats were a pest in the island. So somebody, long before my time got the idea they would import mongoose to eliminate the rats. What happened was the mongoose became an additional pest and the rats lived in trees like squirrels. They just had a very sloppy nest. Plus domestic cats were very wild over there. You could get a kitten that just opened his eyes and there was no way you could put a hand on them. We would find them out on the coral rocks, in the woods area. They just open their eyes, and boy they are like a tiger. You couldn't touch them. We used to shoot them.

The rats . . . We would go out on a Sunday, two or three of us. What we would do was go down to the butts on the rifle range, where we used to shoot and the marines used to shoot. We would dig in with our hands and you would get the projectiles, from the bullets. We would get maybe 100 of them and put them in a little pouch. We all had sling shots made out of an inner tube. One guy would take the rifle, the .22, and we would go out there and we would sling shot these nests. Well, maybe four or five rats would come out on a limb. The guy with the rifle, he would pick them off. He would shoot for so long, and the next guy would shoot. We would spend a Sunday that way. So, what we would do is we would take their tails. Sometimes we would have over 100 rat tails by the end of the day. Things like that we kept our self entertained with and it was good.

I took this test and the guy talked me into taking the first class gunners test. I was very interested in this. I wanted to learn. I wasn't a dumb kid in school but I was bored. I applied myself and it wasn't tough. I got through the first class gunner. So, then somebody got around to how many guys are going to take the expert gunners test. This is in my first year, which is unheard of. Generally it is three years before they do this. So, I think there was only one or two of them guys that had been in the Army for years, wanted to take the expert gunners test. This guy came

up to me and he said, "Hey Chick, take that expert gunners test." I said, "Bull shit, these guys are riding me now for taking that first class gunners test." He said, "Don't worry about them, worry about yourself. You take that." I think this Hale was behind this guy pushing me. He said, "You take that expert gunners test." So boy, I picked the expert gunner's book up . . . I had put my name in for it. There were only three or four of us. This was a battery of 240 guys. They give me the handbook and I start going through the handbook. It was mostly oral. This expert test was all oral. It was a board of three officers. I went through this book and boy some of it was to technical for me. I didn't understand it. I looked at it and I thought, "Boy here is a question that they surely will ask me." I memorized it backwards, forwards, upside down, and inside out, verbatim. But I can't tell you what I was talking about. If you told me to go apply it I wouldn't have been able to. I am like a lot of these college kids today. They have got the theory but they have no practical experience.

So anyway, I go through this thing. I was a jock strap. I played on the football team, I played on the baseball team, and I swam on the swimming team, and I swam on the post swimming team. Lo and behold when I go before this board, there is a captain in charge of these three officers, Captain Clark. He was my swimming instructor. Coach, not instructor, he was a swimming coach. It was a figurehead thing, he didn't know anything about it. We just had some guys that could swim and we swam good. I looked at him and I thought, "Oh boy, if I get any breaks he might give me one." This one question about inducing alternating currents, I could probably still find the paragraph in the book upstairs, I had that down pat. I tell you, don't you know the first question out of the box was that one. I start rattling, and I start rattling, and I never shut up. Christ, when I got done they looked at one another and they said, "That's all." So, I was an expert gunner. Plus the fact that the year it took me on the guns, I got to be number one gunner.

All of these qualifications I came up with made me look good. So, the first ratings that came in I got to be a PFC in less than thirteen months, which was unheard of in those days. I also got a $9 pay raise out of that, which wasn't bad. So then Hale took me on as first gun mechanic and my job went to Pearse Second gun mechanic, he took care of the tool shed. We used to chip those tools down to nothing and paint them every year and everything else. I mean it was spick and span. The peace time motto was spit and polish, there is no two ways about it. You did or you got hurt. The first gun mechanic, he took care of the guns out on the guns.

Like if you had a work crew he got selection of a number of people. Then a gun mechanic and a second gun mechanic what get what was left and work around the shed. We had them planted. I had a papaya orchard. I had some banana trees. That was later. Unfortunately, the banana trees never produced when I was there. But the papaya, if my memory serves me right, you could plant it, it is bearing fruit in eighteen months. We had a papaya orchard behind the gun park. You had to watch because every time a papaya got a little bit of yellow on it it disappeared. So, we had what they called waste bins. It was like a million rags into waste materials for wiping the guns, the oil, and all that stuff. We had a whole bin of this. So, as soon as we saw a papaya that looked like it was going to get yellow, we would pull it off and put it down in the waste bin to save for ourself. You learned to like them. They had a funny flavor to them. You learned to like them and we used to pour some ice cream in them. They were real good.

Anyway, I made the expert gunner and, oh God, did the guys get on my ass. They just never let up. I was the only guy there and I was young. They just kept pushing me ahead. First thing you know I am assistant gun com mander, on these sixteen inch rifle jobs. These are bigger than a house. These guns are big. They weighed over a million pounds. They had 144 conical rollers that were worked electrically. The gun would be rotated electrically. The elevation and depression was all electrical. Son of gun, I got to know them pretty good and I was able to chose different people.

First thing you know this Hale . . . He was a drinker and he would get high once in a while and get in fights with the wrong people. He goofed off. They busted him down to private. They approached him to see who did he think would be qualified to take over the 155's. He recommended me. So, they give me the guns and they made me a corporal. Which was another pay increase and I can't remember now. I think it . . . I would hesitate to even guess the amount of pay. It wasn't that much, $8 or $10 different, but I had the responsibility of the gun park. Well, he had been a buck-sergeant. I know buck-sergeant those days was $54 but I was a corporal in the $40 somewhere. Because it was $30 as a PFC. I think $42 was a corporal. So, then they let me pick the mechanics. We had no officers over where we were. The guy that was in charge of detachment also came from Philadelphia. I didn't know him but we hit it off real good. He got to be one of my better friends. I got the guns and I worked on them real hard and kept it up. First thing you know . . . Anytime there is a maneuver or anything I would turn these guns over to the field artillery that came down. Like a

island wide maneuver. I would go into the sixteen inch rifles with . . . What the heck was the guys name? Boy this guy had tattoos all over him. Grunky, Sargent Grunky. He was in Panama for twenty years and all that kind of stuff. Anyway I would go over and be Grunky's assistant. I learned a lot from him, about the guns and all. How you maintain them and how you keep them clean and all this kind of stuff.

D: Did you fire them very often?

R: We never fired them while I was there. I'll tell you why. They had fired them a year or two before I was there and we never had to. We fired the 155's. Every year we had crews on the 155's, firing them. We had four inch antiaircraft guns, which became an additional responsibility to me later on. Then I would go there on maneuvers and my gun mechanics would take care of my gun park and maintenance of these other outfits that came in. I had two gun mechanics that stay there and maintain the guns and maintain the shed. They would tell these guys what they wanted done and then they would have to do it. All these officers and all came from Scofield Barracks. Our colonel would tell him, "That guy is only a corporal down there, but he is boss. If you feel he is unfair, you let me know, but don't try to tell him what he has got to do. You know what your unit has to do, you do it. If there is any conflict get a hold of me. By the way the corporal knows the same thing. If there is any conflict with you people he is to get a hold of me right away." So, there was never any problem. I had one problem one time with a captain but he got straightened out real quick. I called the colonel. The colonel got him on the phone. He just gave me a dirty look when he left.

Then they made me a sergeant after eight or nine months. I guess I was close to two years there when they made me a sergeant. Which was another time that I was setting a precedent. One thing led to another, then the alert came on the Japanese. Now this alert came in either late 1940 or the middle of 1940. We got the word that they had lost contact with the Japanese fleet. We were put on the full alert. We never had this before. Live amunition. We worked day and night, seven days a week. We strung barb wire out into the ocean. We put machine gun enplacements in. Live amunition by our guns. We dug pits by the guns. Put available supply of amunition and everything else. We were on guard. You were either pulling fatigue duty, which was a work detail, one day and you were on the guns the next day. That is the way they did it with you. There was no such thing as getting out because where we lived we had to take a boat of our own Army across Pearl Harbor. First boat was 8:00 in the morn-

ing and the last boat was 9:00 at night. You never got off before 1:00 in the afternoon. Even on Saturdays you worked until 1:00. You had to get over there and get back on the 9:00 boat. There just wasn't those kinds of leaves when we started this alert. So, you were working day and night, night and day. The alert came. They automatically extended. We were listed for a short discharge about twenty-seven months before the emergency. Soon as the emergency came in you stayed for three years. So, we were doing alright there. Then our battery commander and our two lieutenants. . . We only had three officers in 240 men in those days. The non-coms did everything in those days. Hell, during the war second lieutenant did what a corporal did in peace time.

These trees they found out . . . They had let this trees grow for years and they were gigantic. Big trees, these algaroby trees. Here they couldn't depress the guns or rotate the guns the way they had to be to be fired. They couldn't fire through these trees. So, the first order of battle was we had to take all these trees down that were natural camouflage. It used to be a laugh to us. Everytime we had a manuever against the Navy the Navy dive bombers would throw like a pound of flour down. They would put our guns out of action every time, right off the bat. About a pound thing . . . How they did it I don't know. It was just like a pound sack of flour came down, right on the gun. The divers would come and they would knock us out right away. So, then they would take us to the four square A.A. battery. We would sit on the antiaircraft guns then because that gun was out of action theoretically. Then we got to doing these trees. I will tell you physically it was a terrific thing. We worked into shape. All we were doing was chopping and you didn't have the things you got today. You had a two man saw, you had axes. There was no power saws or anything like that. You did it all by hand. Then when you got it down you had to cut it up so you could get back to be handled. You know, cut it up. We just did that for so long that I just got exhausted. We had the live ammuntion on the guns and everything.

I finally was rotated. My term was up and I was allowed to leave in thirty-three and a half months. I took a boat back to the states in preperation for discharge. There was no emergency as far as the American public was concerned. But we were on the alert. You know, when this Pearl Harbor thing happened I had just been out two months. The only way I had to go back was if war was declared. I had a 4A classification. So, they bombed Pearl Harbor on the seventh and I went back the eighth. Then after the war I couldn't imagine how they could . . . Our PBY patrol bombers

went out there every morning 6:00, 6:30. Like clock work they went out all the time. I could never understand--my experience over there--how this could have happened without us knowing about it. Personally, I'm of the opinion to this day that it was a set up. That they had allies in the American public. My own opinion. To verify this after the war, when I lived through the war and all, I knew a fellow that I had left there. He lived in Oil City, Pennsylvania. We were good friends. He was a fighter. We called him Punchy Philips, his name was Marshal Philips. So, when we come out in this part of the country I told my wife one day, "I'm going up and seeing Punchy because I just got to find out what the hell happened."

D: He was at Pearl Harbor?

R: Yes, he was at . . . No, not at Pearl Harbor. He was at Fort Weaver where I was stationed. Which is Pearl Harbor. Fort Kamehameha is on the left going out, Fort Weaver is on the right going out. Fort Weaver is more like a sand bar, Fort Kamehameha is a built up post like Hickum Field was. I am sure when they bombed Hickum Field they caught part of Fort Kamehameha. I don't know this for a fact but they were like one. It is like Boardman and Youngstown. Weaver, they might not have come in there because it was jungle. We had to cut these trees down.

So, I went up to see Punchy Phillips after the war. He said, "Joe, you won't believe me. The Saturday before Pearl Harbor we had to put all the powder back in the sheds, all the projectiles back in the sheds, we had to turn in every round of live ammunition we had, and we had to sign affidavits." I said, "You are kidding me." He said, "No." I said, "I still can't understand this thing."

D: What kind of an affidavit?

R: That they didn't have any live ammunition. They turned it all in. So, this is what he told me. In the back of my head I'm believing this. I still believe it to this day that there had to be political maneuvering to arose the American public. It cost quite a few lives but maybe in the long run it didn't cost as many. That was my Pearl Harbor days. Then I came back and, of course, the war broke out.

Actually when I was over there in 1940 they started the paratroops. They put out a notice up on the board. That was for me, I went right for it. I signed up. Then, the first thing you know, I had so much red tape involved. You had to have three years previous experience as a line infantrymen. I was in the artillery.

So, it just eliminated all of us artillerymen. I didn't give it anymore more thought. They offered me a staff sergeants job to stay. They were going to promote me to staff if I stayed. I had had enough at that particular area. Plus we got a new commander. He was a reserve guy and he wasn't half the man that our commander was. So, I came back and I got out and I got a job in a roller bearing plant for a couple of months. That is when they bombed Pearl Harbor.

Kass and I were out at the park, walking through the park. We went to lunch someplace and we heard it on the radio. I said, "I can't believe this. It couldn't have happened. They were sitting on the guns." Of course Sunday morning is the best day in the world to hit the Hawaiian Islands as I knew them. Everybody is either getting over a hangover or they weren't in. So, they had skeleton forces on everything at that time. I went right down to the Army and I told the guy, "Got any openings in the paratroops. I'm a previous serviceman and I would like to sign up for paratroops. I don't want to go into just any outfit."

D: Did you have to sign up again?

R: Oh, yes. I was 4A and the classification was in event of war I had to go. The funny thing about it is I went down to enlist the next day after Pearl Harbor and the guy, the director of the board, called for me. I think he sent a post card or something. We didn't have telephones in those days.

D: Was it crowded down there that Monday?

R: No, not that I recall. Few people that is all. So, the sergeant and I talked back and forth. He said, "You know, I can't help you now. I'll tell you what we will do. Keep in touch with me and within the next couple of weeks we should be hearing something." So, I kept in touch with him. I went down. There was, "No, I ain't heard nothing yet." In the meantime I didn't report to the board. They wanted me to report to them right away. I didn't report to them because I knew I was going back in. I would go down once in awhile. I went down this one time and he said, "Well, we got it. You can sign up for them if you want." I said, "Certainly I want it. That is why I waited." He said, "Okay." It was December 23 before it came in. He said, "Let's sign up for it." So, I did and I said, "You know, I haven't been home for Christmas for over three years. It is December 23 now, how about giving me a three day pass or something until right after Christmas. I'll come in." "Ain't no problem," so he gave me a three day pass. I had to report to leave on December 26. I had three days I was home over Christ-

mas.

Kass and I had started going together then. I knew her since she was a little girl. We got pretty high that night. Not her, but me and another kid down the street. My father always had a Christmas tree. He had Christmas balls over fifty years old. Charlie and I are three sheets to the wind up on this platform, Kass is throwing the Christmas balls to us. My father walked in, he almost died.

Anyway, I went down and joined the troops. I qualified and . . .

D: Where would you have to go to?

R: We went to Fort Benning, Georgia. It was the only place I'm aware of that, at that time, had it. I went in it. I wanted the action and I was a kid that from the time I was real young I wanted adventure. I don't know why but I had a taste for adventure in my mouth. I used to pull dumb stunts as a kid. Kass can tell you that I pulled stunts that nobody else would pull. Why I don't know. Not that I was brave. I just didn't have common sense I guess. Anyway, I went down and I went into the air. In those days we packed our own parachutes. We learned to pack them and the first chute you ever jumped you packed. You spent a sleepless night before wondering if you packed it right. Now, did I do this right. Did I do that right. So, in those days you packed your chute all the time. For the first five jumps, which are qualifying jumps, I packed my own chute. There is about five or six check points on it that you can be pretty sure it will open. Thing about a parachute is . . . In that type of parachute they didn't always open right. They opened but not always right. That is where the danger came in. We had guys that, during the course of training before we went overseas . . . Some airplanes would get below the jump plane and we had a guy hit the propeller of a falling plane and stuff like this. We had one guy get hung up on the tail of the plane.

In those days, we had a little pen knife that was in a little zipper pocket up in your breast . . . High on your chest, right in the middle of your chest. This knife was in there for cutting yourself out of trees and stuff like that. This guy, he jumped out of a plane one day and for some reason or other his whole chute got over a tail and the wheel in the back. He just hung up there and they were flying around with him. Trying to figure out what the hell to do with him. They couldn't land with him. They would kill him on landing because they landed about ninety miles an hour. We didn't have planes in those day either. They

weren't available. The planes that did come in were Army C47, a cargo plane. They weren't made for paratroopers. They had to open up cargo doors and they had big hinges on. All they would do when you jumped out of them was they would take masking tape and tape the hell out of these hinges. I don't know if you ever got up in air, or something like that, how that wind operates on them. Sometimes that tape would tear and there would be an exposed hinge and you would be going out the door. Anyhow, later on they got things like you see these Navy guys with. The dogs that you pull them and open. The door would be an inner door. It would pull out. Then you had a clear shot, you didn't have anything hanging. Nothing to grab you. So, I made my qualifying jumps.

What happened then was I got hurt on a jump. I think over in Alabama there was a lake over there. It was January of 1942. Boy, when my chute opened I looked down right in the middle of that lake. Even though it don't get heavy snow down in Alabama and Georgia, thirty-two degrees is damn cold. I am looking at that lake. This had to be the middle of January of 1942. I'm looking at that water and boy, no way am I going in there cold. I wonder if we would have drown. I just knew how cold that water was. So, they teach you different things you can do and one of them is slip your chute. Well, to slip your chute you have riser and suspension lines, you walk up to them with your hands and you grab a hold of your canopy if you can, if you can get up that high, and pull hard. It spills the air so that you go a little bit to your right or left. You don't go much but a little bit. So boy, I am doing that. I am doing everything I can. I didn't get all the way up the skirt but I got there pretty damn high because I was pulling hard. You only jumped about a 1,000 feet in those days. We jumped lower later on but that was at training jump. I'm going down, I'm going down, and I ain't clearing this lake like I want to. So, instead of preparing to land . . . You know you are supposed to like a 100 feet to the ground, you are supposed to forget everything else and, what they call, prepare to land. You grab your risers and you rock your chute to try to keep it from oscillating, swinging like a pendulum. You rock your chute and try to get stabilized so you go down even. No matter which direction you hit sideways, or backwards, or frontwards, you couldn't control this. You had some idea, sometimes you could. Most the time you couldn't in the old chutes. Anyway I landed about ten feet from the bank. Not only did I land ten feet from the bank, I slipped all the way in. You are coming down faster. So, what I did; my ankle, my knee, and my hip popped. My whole leg was numb. I didn't know if broke it.

The first time I ever jumped, first thing I saw was two meat wagons going past; red cross wagons, ambulances on the field down there. My chute ain't open yet. I thought oh boy! That is another thing I remember, John, to this day. I don't know whether I said it out loud or not but the first jump I ever made I'm out there just turning over in the air and my chute hasn't started to open. I said to myself, "Joe Reed, what in the hell are you doing out here?" It was just how it reacted on me. So, anyway I was in a hospital . . . Not a hospital but they had an injured place. They put me on crutches and I couldn't stand on my leg or nothing. So, I had maybe about thirty days . . . I sent Kass an engagement ring and I was still on crutches when I went into the jewelry store in Columbus, Georgia, to get it for her.

There was a Jewish lady there, a real nice person. She was recommending things to me. I don't know nothing. What do I know about buying engagement rings. She was recommending getting it engraved and all this kind of stuff. Any jewelry I bought for her . . . I bought her a couple of lockets down there. This lady said, "Now why don't you have this done like this." "Go ahead, do it. How much does it cost?" "Nothing, we will do it for free."

I guess they wanted to hit back as quick as they could. They had this Colonel Rapp and he took all the paratroopers that they could give. Paratroopers weren't built up like they were paper outfits, they didn't have the personnel. Like a company that is maybe 136 guys had maybe forty guys in it. So, what they did was take all the loose ones and they made an organization. It was a 509th parachute regiment. They are the ones that got involved in Africa and all. The first ones to hit. Our intelligence was very bad in combat, they were getting beat up and all. Two guys, as a matter of fact, went down from Philadelphia with me. They were both previous service men too; one's name was Farmer and the other was Merz. One got killed and the other lost his eyesight. They went over with that bunch.

D: In Africa?

R: Yes, but I was hospitalized or I would have been with them. I was hospitalized. I was sick, lame, and lazy--what they called the guys that couldn't do nothing, were recuperating from injuries.

Then, when I got out of there, I went to the 502 Paratroop Battalion. Which was a paper battalion too. They lived up in the main barracks in Fort Benning, brick buildings, real nice you know. So, I went into "C" company 502 Battalion and everything was going

alright. We had a twenty, thirty men little company. Even a little bit more than that maybe. Everything was coming alright, because they were filling them up as guys come in.

My knowledge from the Hawaiian Islands on theory and technology of the guns stood me in good stead. I went up there as a private but I had a lot more know how than some of those guys that were there.

D: You were a private in the paratroops?

R: Yes, you don't carry your rank. In those days that was a . . . You carry what you call a "salt water rank." You didn't get paid for it, you went back to private's pay, but you still kept the three stripes. When I got out then and reenlisted I was automatically a private. So, when I went to the C company 502 I was working out alright. Then one day they had mortar instruction. They took us from that brick barracks in Benning and they put us over in Alabama. We started building in the Alabama area, which was a big, tremendous maneuver area. So, they took us over there and we lived in paramenal tents.

We were out one day . . . I never saw a sixty millimeter mortar before, it is a little gun compared to what I was used to. We were out there in instruction and they guy is giving us the nomenclature of the gun. It wasn't hard to pick up. So, then he got into technique of fire. Technical fire was the same as the artillery. The only thing is the ranges and the increments and all that stuff were much smaller. This fellow starts talking and I say to myself, "Oh, boy." He was bs-ing, he didn't know what he was talking about. Hell, I had instructed in this kind of stuff over at the islands. Of course, once I got my experts I was automatically an instructor then. So, this kid is going on and on and on. We have a break. . . In those days about every hour or so they would say, "Smoke if you got them." They would have a smoke break. They didn't do nothing for us nonsmokers but the smokers had a break. These platoon sergeants are way out. They weren't listening to this guy. I walked back to them and I said, "Hey fellows, I got a problem." Sergeant looked at me, I hadn't been in the thing maybe three months with them. He said, "What would your problem be?" I said, "Look, I don't want you to think I'm a smart guy because I'm not. But I'm going in combat with these bastards up here and that guy instructing them on a sixty millimeter mortar don't know what he is talking about." He said, "What makes you think that?" I said, "Well, I had some three years of artillery experience. When he gets into technique or firing he is lost. He doesn't know what he is talking about. Once again don't get

the idea that I am a smart guy. I didn't say nothing out there. I am just telling you guys. You better make him brush up or something, because if I'm going in combat with these guys I want them to know what the hell they are doing." "Okay, you get back to the class." I went back to the class.

When everything was done and over that night . . . We ate supper, came down from supper, all you did was sit around on the steps and bs or something. First thing you know, "Private Reed report to the orderly room." I thought, "Oh my ass, me and my big mouth," but I was an aggressive kid I have to admit. Sometime I wonder how people could stand me. Anyway, I go down to the orderly room. Here were these three sergeants, the first sergeant is sitting there also. First sergeant says, "Reed, these men are telling me what you were saying to them today." I said, "Hey Sarge, I'm not a wise guy. I didn't mean it that way but I'm concerned." He said, "Do you know anything about the sixty millimeter mortar." I said, "Sixty millimeter mortar as is, no I don't, but I know technical fire. I know the terminology and everything else. I used to instruct it over in the islands." He said to me, "You think you can do a better job than him?" I said, "Wait a minute I didn't say that. I thought we could get him to brush up." He said, "I'm asking you. If you had some time, you think you could do a better job than him?" I just told him, I said, "There is not a doubt in my mind. All I have to do is get the ranges and things like that oriented but I've never handled the gun or anything else." He said, "Suppose I get you a gun and a handbook. How much time you need?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I'll do what I can. I'll absorb it as quick as I can. How about giving me a week?" He said, "Okay we'll give you a week and you aren't going to pull any other duties. You get the gun, you get handbook, and you get the hell out of the way." So, he gave me the gun and the handbook and it was just a case of getting down the ranges and things like that. Which didn't even compare to what I was used to. Of course zeroing it in and everything else was the same as the artillery pieces; your line of sight, your gun bore and things like that. Your increments were a little different. I went on it. About seven days he said, "You come back and see me when you think you are ready." I came back and I said, "Sarge, I would like to give it a try. I don't know if I am entirely ready but I think I can handle it." So geez, I went out there and everything came right to me. I acted like I had been doing it all my life. He called me in and he complemented me. He said, "From now on you are our mortar instructor." "Okay." So, about a couple days later he called me into the office. He said, "Reed we had a chance to check on you service record. I like what I saw." I said, "Thanks, I

tried." He said, "As you know we are understaffed. We have all kind of rank floating around here. Suppose I give you sergeants stripes and you take over a first squad." I said, "If you are willing, I'm willing."

D: You could go from a private to a sergeant?

R: Buck sergeant in paratroops, yes. This paratroops wasn't as tough as I envisioned it to be. I get in there, I find some draftees and all. So, one thing led to another and I made up my mind nobody was going to out perform me. I was going to be right up there with the top. On our running deals and everything else I was right there all the time because I was in good shape and I was athletic.

One thing led to another and one morning a captain came in, Bob Cole. Bob Cole was our active battalion commander. He was only a captain at that time so you know how few we had. I was on charge of quarters, it was Sunday in the morning. He said, "I want a noncom to go on a recruiting detail with me tomorrow. We leave at 6:00." I said, "Captain do you have any preference on your noncom." "Hell no," he said, "just give me a good one." I said, "I'm a good one, how about me." He said, "You want to go?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, you are my man." Christ when I told these other guys theycould have died. So, I packed up and I went on a five or six week tour with him.

What happened was, right then and there, they started the expansion. I'm getting a little a head of myself. They had started the expansion when they moved us to Alabama. They took a company and they made a battalion out of it. Like the third platoon would become . . . Let's see, how did that work? Anyway, they took a company and made a battalion out of it. We were G, H, and I. The first platoon was G Company, so you had thirty-six guys. Second platoon was H Company, they had thirty-six guy. The third platoon was I Company, they had thirty-six guys. They broke the company up see. They had already decided I guess. This was part of the formation of it. They let guys sign in civilians, sign in at a civilian level, to become paratroopers. Which they had never done before. So, this captain, and a medical officer--I think his name was Thompson--and Colonel Cole, and I, and two other noncom, one from H and I . . . One guy's name was . . . Anyhow I forget the names temporarily. Anyhow, we three sergeants and these two officers, we went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. It was where we were going to take off from. The idea was we would jump into every camp to impress these people, but also the idea was war was just starting and there were no airplanes. So, we jumped off the backs of trucks. When we got up to Fort

Bragg what they did was they took these two officers we came up with. We were supposed to go to California and all. They went to California and they put us with two other officers. We hit all the southern camps there. Our job was to put the boots to these guys that wanted to be paratroopers. We ran them, we gave them calisthenics, and stuff like that, and we didn't let up. The guys that fell by the way side were washed out. We wanted the guys that go on guts alone . . . They wanted. We just did it. We were in tip top shape compared to them.

D: Was there a lot of volunteers?

R: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact a fellow I went to school with was a volunteer in one of the places. I looked at his dog tag. He said, "Yes, you know me Joe," and I went to school with him. We met together coming out of the service at Camp Lucky Strike, down in Marsailles, France. He had gotten a battlefield commission also and we met as he was going home. I said "Why the hell don't you get out of here while you still can?" So, anyway we went around these different camps and we did this for about a month or six weeks. Then I went back to the company.

It wasn't long after that, first sergeant called me in and he said, "Reed we got a request for one noncom for Cadre Duty. We are going to form another parachute regiment. Looking around I think you are the most qualified of the men I want to spare." He is unloading me. So, he said, "I'm turning your name in." He didn't ask me if I wanted to or not. He said, "You're my man." I said, "Okay, when do I go." He said, "Hell, I don't know. You'll know when it is time to go."

So, Kass and I had made arrangements that we would get married on somewhere around July 8, my sister's birthday. At that time the Army in July 1942, for some unknown reason, they never did it before, they held up the pay day. They held it up for several weeks. They made some kind of change. Nobody got paid for several weeks. Here Kass was coming down on the train, we were going to get married. I had a three day pass arranged. We were going to get married and she was going back home, because that is the way they wanted it. She is coming down on the train already and I had to make two jumps in two days.

So, what they did as soon as war was declared . . . They used to have what they called drop dummies. They were like the real heavy Marine Hawsers that they had on these big ships that they tied at a dock. They had like human bodies made out of them. In other words

they had a loop going for a head and they had two loops for the arms and two loops for the legs. The body was rope. They used to use them in peace time to test equipment and all. Soon as war was declared they started using the company noncoms. Like if we were going to fly over a field and they were afraid it was to dangerous to jump eighteen men in this strip of it. They would put noncoms in and one would jump and then the other guy would count to fifteen seconds and then he would jump. They would see where he landed. It was safe to come back the next day and jump all the troops. I had a couple of those. One was right in the Chattahoochee River.

Well anyway, the day Kass was supposed to get in at 2:00 in afternoon I had made the first jump. I came in and as I walked up the company street, the first sergeant said, "Reed come here. Your transfer came in." I said, "Shit I can't take a transfer, I got a three day pass." He said, "Don't tell me your problem. Your transfer came in and there is going to be a truck here for you in a half hour. You be down there with you gear and be on it." I said, "Gee thanks." He said, "I can't do nothing about it. You knew this was happening." So, by golly I get transferred over to the other area.

Anyway I had to go over. They transferred us across the river, Chattahoochee River. Benning was on one side and this Alabama area, they called it, was on the other. I went over there, and here all these guys that were assigned to this company of cadre, are all together. Nobody knows what is going on. Milling around like a bunch of nanny goats. 2:00 comes and goes, I figured she was at the train station crying or something. So about 5:00 these guys start to get excited, that were married. No officers, no nothing around. One guy said, "To hell with this I'm going to town. I'll leave a phone number. If anything breaks one of you guys call me." "Okay, okay" We already had found out who was going to what companies. They had these first sergeants that were going as first sergeants. They were platoon sergeants. They were going as first sergeants. Like myself as a squad leader, I was going as a platoon sergeant. We had gotten to know one another, say hello and all this and that. This Muir was married and his wife was in town. He said, "What is this problem you got?" I said, "Well hell, my girls coming down. We are supposed to get married today. Her train was supposed to be in at 2:00. Here it is 5:30 and I don't know what the hell happened." I had solicited a sleeping room. That is all you could get in those days in Army towns. If you could get a sleeping room you were lucky. You know, you paid so much a week. She was only going to be there three

days, so I paid the lady for three nights on this one bedroom. I wait, and I wait and he says, "I'll tell you what kid. So and so has got my phone number. You give me the address where you got the room and let me know which room it is. I'll get you a ride to town. If anything breaks and I get a phone call, I'll come by and pick you up." I said, "You will?" "Yes, no sweat. We are going to soldier together, we might as well take care of one another."

So, son of a gun I went to town with them. They left me off at the train station. I go in there, no wife. I checked . . . Trains in the wartime were terrible; eight, ten hours late. I check at the ticket office. Here that train hit a car at a grade crossing on the way down and it was running way late, about eight or nine hours. So, she still wasn't in. I waited for her and she came in. It was late at night. I mean we couldn't go get married or anything else. The guy told me he would be by at 5:00 in the morning for me if nothing broke. We went . . . I don't remember if we got something to eat then or not. The town was open all night, some parts of it. I took her to this place to sleep. People think a lot different then than they do today about sex and all. I told her, I said, "I wouldn't want to sleep with you." I had to jump the next day too because we were going out to finish off this test we did. All the troops were going to jump the next day. No, before that, when she came in I had to jump. So anyway, she was in the room. I took her to the room. I kept all my clothes on and slept on top of the blankets, just so I wouldn't be tempted. She went to bed. Then I left at 5:00 in the morning. She said, "What do I do?" I said, "I don't know what to tell you. Maybe you better get a train and go back home. It ain't that I don't want to marry you or anything else."

They had a judge down there in Phenix City, Alabama. Which was about the most notorious town in the United States in World War II. It was nothing to have GI bodies floating down the river and stuff like that. Believe me this is true. They had all kinds of corruption in the town; mayors, police, sheriff, everything. I said, "Somehow or other I will get a message to you." Whether the lady had a phone in the house or not I don't remember. I said, "Somehow or other I will get some kind of a message to you. You eat and if you want to stay in the room or if you want to walk around town." Of course, a young, good looking girl in that town there was thousands of soldiers. They were all trying to make it. So, I went back to camp. Same thing, we sat around all day and nothing happened, 5:30 the hell with this, we will go.

So, Kass and I . . . Walt Bowyer was from town. She came back down with him. He was in the 29th infantry there and a friend of his, they came back down with Kass. Those two are our witnesses. We went over to Phenix City, Alabama at 10:30 at night. Marrying Judge Gillott married us. We went to a place Googoo's Diner down there. It was a chicken house. We went there and had a dinner and we gave each one of these guys something. It was her idea whatever we got them. We gave it to them and then they left and we went down to the room. It so happened that I had better than a three day pass. I had seven, or eight, or nine days there. Same thing every day, in and out. No time off in the daytime with her but from 5:00 at night till 5:00 the next morning I could be with her. It happened about seven or eight days before we got orders, then she went back. I think I was even able to put her on a train, I don't remember now.

Then we got into some serious training. We went to this place. It was called Toccoa, Georgia. They had a place out there called Camp Toombs. That is a hell of a name for a paratroop outfit to have. A lot of us are going to have tombstones sooner or later any how. Hell of a name. So, they changed it to Camp Toccoa and we built that camp from muddy roads up. I caught another good detail then.

As platoon sergeant the first battalion, which filled up people first. As platoon sergeant in C company I was given a special detail with a platoon sergeant B company and a platoon sergeant A company. They are both dead. The one guy got killed in combat and the other guy died later; Red Robinson or other and Van Utterwork. Van Utterwork knew Kass too. There was no troops other than people starting to help build the camp around, no training or nothing yet. We didn't have the people in. It was our job, we had twenty-four hour duty, seven days a week. Each one of us would take eight hours. We had to meet every train and bus that came in. There were no airplanes in those days. Every train and bus come in we would get these recruits. They would have orders with them and we would pick them up, throw them on the truck, and take them down to regimental headquarters, and unload them. Each guy worked eight hours and we were responsible. Then, if we wanted a day off, each guy would work twelve hours. Two guys would work twelve hours and the other guy would take a day off. We did that for about four or five weeks. What happened we used to bring them up to regiment at first and then they form what they call a W company, which is a bastard company. We took all these people to it and turned them over.

After about five weeks this Peteo out and I went back

to my company and we started some training there. Geez, I got involved in training; teaching them bazookas. I hated that bazooka. When I fired it I couldn't help but get burned by the particles from the propellant. They would come back in my face all the time. Some guys could fire them and never burn. They would burn the hell out of me. You would have little burn marks in your face. I could train them up to shoot and then I would try to get somebody else . . . Nobody, I would have to shoot. That was one of the worst weapons we had. That was really a killer. Those bazooka teams caught hell because nine times out of ten we used the bazooka on a tank. The tanks were like infantrymen, one would cover the other. One tank come under fire and that bazooka, there was no concealing it. You had a flash back twelve, fifteen, twenty feet. Nobody could stand behind, you had to get to the side. When you shot that the propellant would just ignite. Like you see these rockets going up and all, same cell. You had to give your position away and those tanks covered one another just like we did infantry. One guy covered the other.

So, I taught tommy gun and everything else. I stayed platoon sergeant. I had a crack platoon. I had a lot of compliments. My battalion commander wanted me to go to OCS and I said, "I don't have the educational background." He said, "You got the IQ," and I did. I have a pretty decent IQ. So, I said, "Well, Colonel could you . . ." He was lieutenant colonel, you call a lieutenant colonel, "Colonel." This guy was a West Pointer. He was a little guy, skinny, but he was all man. From the sole of his shoes to the top of his head he was all man. If you were going on a twenty-five mile force march he wasn't riding up and down a column in a jeep. He was up front with his pack on setting the pace. That is the kind of guy he was. We all had a lot of respect for Billy. Strict disciplinarian, oh my God he was tough. You couldn't pull anything on him. Although we did.

Anyway, we started training the troops and I had a pretty crack troop. We would always end up in high one, two, or three in competitions in a regiment for shooting mortars or machine guns, or rifle fire. I lost my ass on one of my guys. He was a crackshot from West Virginia. We just went down and saw him, George Rollyson. We told you about it last summer. He is supposed to be dying from cancer. Now they can't find any cancer in him. They did some kind of exploratory thing with . . . They didn't operate they used some kind of other thing in him; probes or something. He was a crackshot but dammit there was a sergeant from B Company that was a crackshot too. I bet three or four cases of beer, $20. I didn't have that kind of money.

Ole' Rolly choked. He choked. We were laughing about it the other day. He choked and King beat him out by a couple of points. I had a good rapport with my guys too. We used to play football and everything else together. One of the other platoon sergeants he was gross. He just wasn't there. Well, what happened was, of the cadre of one first sergeant, three platoon sergeants, I was the only one ending up going into combat with them. All the others went by the wayside and I was the first sergeant.

Anyhow, Colonel Turner wanted me to go to OCS. I said, "You guarantee I'll get back with the regiment." He said, "I can't guarantee you that." I said, "Well, I ain't going." He liked my drawings, I had our plans and all . . . We had sketches of our gun positions. When we got in a position we had to sketch it out and send it on. Well, he liked mine for some reason. "You do this?" I said, "Yes." "Where did you learn it?" I said, "Well, I have been in the Army for four years now." One thing led to another and he used to get me to make overlays, big ones. In addition to my regular duties, he didn't take me out for no special duty or nothing. So, we went on like that and we trained well and it was getting near combat time and we would go to town. These guys would go to town and they would get rolled royally. They would get rolled right and left. We were allowed to send seven percent of the command to town on pass every weekend. This guy he always wanted me to be his platoon sergeant because I didn't like him at first; Lieutenant Raudstein, you met Raud-stein. Anyway Raudstein said, "Let them all go Joe." I said, "What the hell if they call for detail?" "Then you go get them." So, we used to let all the guys go. Every time we let them go, two or three guys come back . . . Got a mickey fin and got rolled. They get involved with women and women lead them to a place and stick something in their drink. A couple guys come in and take all their money and everything else. So, I would give them hell. I didn't go on pass until about a month. We were confined for two weeks. We couldn't go anywhere. We were restricted, we had to get orientation, how to work with the native and all that kind of stuff; the Englishmen, you know. The officers were allowed out. That is how Muir got in trouble, Ted Muir, the first sergeant. He was a ladies man and no way was he going to let any officers get any jumps on him. He was going to be right there. So, he walked into Colonel Turner two nights in a row. Colonel Turner ordered him back the first night. The second night he busted him.

At that point and time we lost a lot of guys through injuries and stuff like that. Raudstein was company commander and he called me in. He said, "Joe, I want

you to be first sergeant." I said, "No, sir. I trained the second platoon from scratch and I am going in combat with them." He said, "Well, let's sit down and talk." There wasn't another guy in the company with previous military service. The guys we had in the company up to Muir had all washed out. The only four of us were the leading noncoms and three of them washed out. I was the only one left. He said, "What would you have me do? Make one of these people first sergeant and you be here. I'll tell you what, you take it as a test. If you come to me in a couple of months and you don't like it, you can have your platoon back." I said, "Okay, but how about letting me name the platoon sergeant." "No problem, who do you want?" "Dominic Peternel, `Big' Pete." "Peterel, and who do you want to make squad leader in his place." I named him. "Yes, that is good. Okay."

I had my way and they treated me like a king. I had no problems with them. Billy Pyne was executive officer, I think, at the time. No, Beatty was executive officer. He and I didn't get along but that is alright too. This K.A. Beatty was a southern guy and he was company executive. A company commander, whenever he was on hand, he gave me orders what he wanted done. When he left he gave me orders what he wanted done. This K.A. Beatty was executive and he wanted to take over that company in the worst way. I was a hard head and strictly GI. He came in and said, "Sergeant we are going to do this today." I said, "No sir." "What do you mean?" "Because company commander left these instructions. This is what we are going to do." I said, "Sir, I am only following orders. There ain't much I can do about it. Now if you don't want to go contrary to these orders we will do it but I got to report it." So, one day he was three sheets to the wind and he said, "You know Reed, you son of a bitch, I hope someday before this war is over you are an officer or I am an enlisted man. I would like to tie into you." I used to do some tangling. I was always lucky too.

So, I took the first sergeant's job and then we were getting closer and closer to combat. We were making night problem jumps. A night jump . . . There is not to much to a night jump. You jump out, after a little bit your eyes get oriented. You can see good until you get below the horizon and then everything gets black. It is like somebody pulled the shades down on you. You can't see nothing, you prepare to crash in. Before that we got into equipment jumps. Nobody had ever jumped with equipment on. Nobody had ever jumped the riggers chute before. Then in this 502 one Sunday morning . . . They were working six days a week during the war. They wanted volunteers to jump riggers

chutes.

No way, nobody would sign it. The notice went up on the board a little later in the day, "All men who didn't volunteer to jump a riggers chute will report in front of the orderly room at 6:00 a.m. Sunday morning to march to the packer sheds to pack chutes. Well, Sunday was the only day for getting off. We looked around, "Hey will you jump a riggers chute if I jump a riggers chute." "Hell yes! You jump a riggers chute, I'll jump a riggers chute." So, we all signed up to jump riggers chutes. That was the only time they ever asked us. From then on we never packed our chutes again, we jumped riggers chutes. You know the guys that were professional parachute packers. They were GI's and all but that was their job; parachute maintenance, parachute packing.

So, we started jumping rigger chutes. Same with equipment chutes. We used to jump, everything would come down in a bundle from under the aircraft. There would be six bundles under there and they would salvo them. When you jumped they would salvo them with you. They come down above them; like you had a blue chute, you had a red chute, and you had a yellow chute. Each meant different things. Like the red, nine times out of ten, was ammunition or machine guns. We didn't jump with them on us. We didn't even jump with rifles on us initially. Then we started making equipment jumps. First they put a canteen and a belt on you and a helmet. You would jump with that. Then the next time you would jump with a canteen, bell helmet, and a rifle. Some of the times these things get ripped right off your body. Chutes open and they don't open with no cushion. They open up with an explosion and they would rip the damn stuff right off your body. Your helmet would go down there. Of course, if you didn't make a good body position . . . Body position was very important in parachute jumping. In other words you shuffle up to the door, you got to get your left foot over the edge of the door, then you push yourself out the door like this and you make a left turn at the same time. In other words your back is to the propeller. You tuck your head down, keep your hands in front of you. Then your chute theoretically goes peeling over your head and inflates. That inflation is a bang but it is a welcome bang. You are god damn glad to feel it.

So, we started equipment jumping. We really got to where we really equipment jumped. We put everything on us. We would have as much equipment on us as our body weight. You went down there, there was no landing position or anything else. You went in like a ton of shit. There was no if, ands, or buts. The British had what they call a boot pack, and we got to be where we

would lose so many weapons and all by salvoing them from under the plane. They got this boot pack in and you have three guys in the airplane. The first three guys that . . . Of course, the commander of the airplane, the ranking officer or noncom would be number one man out of the aircraft. Then he would have an assistant who was the last man out. Then you had . . . Number two, three, and four man would each have a boot pack. This boot pack was like a real heavy cloth. Like a quadruple duty canvas or something like this, with a little a padding. It had a slot underneath where you could put your toes in there, like in a stirrup. It had a legging that you put around your leg. It had a grommets there with a little leather piece come through them, maybe eight or nine going down there. You had a little piece of steel wire that went through there. So, what happened was when you jumped and your chute opened, this also had a thirty-foot extension of rope coiled up that run from that to your belt. These first three men, you had to help them get out of the plane because it was so heavy and awkward. They would jump with the chute and it would be attached to their leg until after their chute opened. Then they had to reach down and grab this wire and pull it out and same time be holding this thirty foot rope. They would let the thirty foot rope go hand over hand. In other words, this bundle of heavy equipment was hanging thirty feet below them, coming down on their chute. They would go down faster than everybody else but as soon as that equipment hit the ground thirty feet below it would be like a shock absorber set up. They would vibrate a couple of times and it would slow their descent down. They come down a little better. Then, the machine gun or mortar would be right in that. That would be the crew right there with it. See, they would be tied to it. So, then you had the equipment to move off with. We had things like that.

One night in England we made a night jump and I was supposed to be in the assembly area. From the directions of the plane and all . . . We had good intelligence as far as sand tables and orientation. We knew what was what. In other words if my plane was going this way, I wanted to go to my right rear. I would hit the assembly point, or approximately. We also had compasses. We would know before hand what to expect as inexperienced as we were. So, our plane would be flying from south to north or northeast to northwest and we would know which way we got to turn after we hit, and watch the aircraft. I was never in the air long there because we always seemed to be in the first echelon. You had planes going over your head all the time, so when you hit the ground you got oriented and took off.

So, this one night in England I am going across this plowed field; as you are walking you are going across. I hear a guy moaning. I walk over, he is there, and I couldn't see him real well. I said, "What is a matter?" He said, "Oh, I'm hurting." I start feeling, I could feel nothing but blood on the bottom of him. I thought, "I had better declare myself." This was in training in England. I go, "I better turn myself in nontactical and give this guy first aid." He could have laid out there all night and bleed to death. So, I flick a flashlight . . . I was a first sergeant, I was equipped with a flashlight. I took my flashlight and I waved it in the air. I got down and I took my flashlight . . . Hell, Christ, he had a compound fracture. His leg was all shattered. We had been taught first aid. I took his rifle and wrapped it around so he couldn't move it, and all that kind of stuff. Once in awhile I waved the thing. "Anything else hurt?" "Oh my head hurts; my back hurts," and this and that. So, the guys name was Detrick. Naturally with all this . . . I'm full of his blood.

I get into the assembly area, I was late. The old man was mad as hell at me. He said, "What in the hell are you doing getting in here so late?" I said, "Hey, I was afraid this guy would die and I stopped to gave him first aid." Well, he backed off. It was still not combat. I am calling myself "Doctor Joe" because I gave this guy aid. So, we are out for a three day problem. We had made a night jump and we stayed out for a three day problem, which is not unusual. We went out one time for one day and stayed out three weeks. We didn't have clothing or anything. We all had blisters. Anyway, we get back into the Barracks, I start going through papers. There is a regimental bulletin everyday. I go through it and there is a, "Anybody having a claim against the state of so-and-so Detrick in H company, get a hold of the regimental adjutant." This is the guy I gave first aid. Christ he had a fractured skull, his back was broken and everything else. What happened was John, sometimes a guy will cross under you. It creates a vacuum. You start free falling again. If it is to close the ground a guy will fall maybe a hundred feet into the ground. This is critical, it is bad. So, what you try to do is stay away from somebody. Of course, we have had emergencies where a guy has caught the other guy whose chute didn't open.

I got a friend up in Boston. He is blind today from the war. They were training in England. He was out floating down. Some guy come down, his chute didn't open properly. Which happens most of the time. It is not that they don't open. They don't open properly. This guy is coming down like a bat out of hell and he

hits Francis's canopy and comes down through. Francis reaches out and grabs his risers and the suspension lines. Then when the guy has got up to his canopy skirt, Francis's fingers were burned and all and he hooked onto the skirt. This was pretty high in the air; 800 feet or so. He holds the guy until he had no control over his hands. When he got near the ground the guy slipped out of his hands but the guy broke both his legs. He would have got killed otherwise. So, Francis got the soldier's medal for that.

These freak things did happen. Oh, I don't know, we had all kinds of things happen. Down in combat, when we jumped in combat, we jumped damn low; 300, 400 feet. A lot of guys left their reserve chute right in the plane because there was no chance of using it. So, your main chute didn't open and it wasn't going to be. Then it got to be where we were going to combat. We went down to some place on the coast down there.

D: By train?

R: John, your asking me something I can't give you an intelligent answer right now. I don't remember if it was by train or by truck. We went down on the south shore of England, troops galore. It is a wonder the island didn't sink.

D: You left your . . .

R: Base camp, yes.

D: And debarked from where in the United States?

R: Oh, when we went over there? We were from Camp Shanks, New York.

D: What kind of boat did you go over on?

R: We went on his majesty's ship Samaria; a British ship. It was very similar to U.S. Army Transport Saint Maheal. We went into Blackpool, England from there.

D: Did you go across in a big convoy?

R: Yes we did, because we were in a slow ship. The big ones like Queen Mary, they went on their own, because they had the speed. We had a rotation deal. Eight hours down below and eight hours up, or something similar to that. Boy, I knew I got sea sick. I couldn't get in that companion way. I talked my whole platoon into staying on deck. We stayed on deck all the way. Then, we didn't figure on those North Sea gales. We got soaking wet several times. Damn ocean come across, not under. We got soaking wet, it would

be cold, the wind would be blowing. We went over in September.

We got in Blackpool, England and then they based us. We were down by Ramsbury and Hungerford down there. We did a lot of training, a lot of jumping. My friend Big Pete was killed a couple days into Normandy. Anyway, he always wanted to be a jump master and he never was. He used to get airsick. So, I had been jump master . . . Well years ago, when I first got into paratroop, when you go to be a noncom you qualified as a jump master right away. You jumped the troops. So, he always wanted to be jump master and we knew he got airsick. I said, "Okay," and then I got to talk to the company commander Raudstein. "No way Joe, no way, not him." I said, "Look Captain, I'm going to have two good men right along side him. Moe Morrison and Roy Speak good men, both of them." They both got killed going into Normandy. Plane got blown up. Anyway I said, "They are going to take care of things. If Pete gets where he can't handle it they will throw him out and follow him." So, I convinced him he should give him a try. I got Pete down and I went over and over it. I said, "Now look, when the green light comes on and you see that hard surface road, you go." You see these movies now and again the guy will tap the guy and say . . . It is supposed to be a combat jump. He will tell each individual to go, go, go. There is no such thing. They blow out of there like an explosion. They are belly to back. One guy goes and everybody just burps out of there. You get out of there in seconds. There is no if, ands, or buts. If you don't you are not together, and you spread out to far. You are not effective. That is why they get away from that in parachuting.

Anyway, we go on this three day problem. The pattern of aircrafts, they were going right over our barracks, where we stayed. We stayed in the stables down there at some Sir Francis Burnett's Manor house. We lived in the stables, the troops. They had four GI's in one horse stall. They built two by four bunks on the side. I had company headquarters . . . We were up in the tack room where the harness was kept. Of course the harness was all gone and so were the horses. We just took over the stable.

Anyway, we go on this problem and we get in the assembly area and everything else. Pete's whole stick of eighteen guys don't show up. "Damn!" The man is looking daggers at me. He said, "What is your excuse?" I said, "They'll show up, don't worry about it. I got confidence in him." We had the three day problem, they never did show up. So, we are getting back. They take us back to the barracks on trucks. This problem wasn't

to far from our barracks; a matter of five, eight miles. They take us back to the barn. I walked into the area. Here is all these guys leaning around with sick looking looks on their face. The old man looks at me, "Get an explanation." So, I go in and I get a hold of Pete and I get a hold of these two guys. I said, "Come on, we got to talk." We go over and sit down and they got shit eating grins on their face. They said, "Joe, you won't believe it." I said, "Sure I will, tell me." "Well, when the red light come on we stood up and hooked up. All the sudden Pete hollered go." The green light wasn't even on yet, that is the jump altitude. The plane is at full power. Pete hollers "go," and they went out the god damn door. Here the road he looked at, he looked at a road down there, didn't wait for the green light to come on. When the green light come on he would have hit the right road. He hit a road five, eight miles away. He jumped out before the green light ever come on. So, those guys went out at full power. That straightens you out when you go out like that. You know in jump altitude they generally lower the plane to about ninety miles an hour. They went out about 140, 150 miles an hour at least. He hollers go, and they all went after him. Hell, some of them landed right in the god darn place where we were living. This road was right outside of where we were living. So, Pete never got to jump master again after that. Boy, I'll tell you! "Hey Joe, I didn't mean it."

Then we started getting replacement officers and stuff like this in. We got full company strength. Hell, I didn't know some of the guys names when we went into combat with them. They were on the roster, but to know them I wouldn't. Because they came in maybe a week a so ahead. You didn't get a chance to know them. So, then you have heard of this cricket deal they issued out. Okay. Before the jump I made out all the load manifests and laid them out. Raudstein left that up to me. They got this box of crickets and it was my job to issue them out. Well, I issued them out and I was one short, but I didn't get excited about it. I was one short so I didn't have any. Last minute Raudstein turns around, he says, "How you got these guys Joe?" I showed him and here I had myself in as assistant jump master to the company executive. He didn't want us together. We were company headquarters; him, the executive, and me were like the power of the company. I was a top enlisted man, he was a top officer, and the other guy was second officer. He didn't want any of us in the same plane because if anything happened. So, son of a gun, don't you know? He comes over at the last damn minute and he had twenty copies and we had ten carbons. We had to take those ten carbons and give them away when we got done. I made them all up. He

came over at the last minute. He saw me and K.B. meeting at the plane. He said, "I want you to get out of that aircraft. You get in with somebody else. Switch." So, I'm calling him a SB and everything else. I had to do everything longhand and there wasn't much time left. I'm doing everything longhand. I get a guy on the airplane and I went in with Bill Kennedy, who was my original platoon. Either way I would have been with half of my original platoon.

So, I went in with Bill Kennedy and we had an equipment bundle on the cart . . . We had a cart that wouldn't go through the airplane door. You had to tilt it on the side of its wheel, flip it out with a shaft. Make it flip out to get out the door. I don't know what was latched on it, mortar ammunition or what the hell was on it. I don't know. I got there late. So, we took off for Normandy. You know John, getting 900 airplanes up in the air in formation takes quite a while. We must have flown around for two and a half, three hours. We headed for the coast of Normandy. Well, it was a moonlit night and my position was that I was the assistant jump master in the plane. First sergeant and lieutenant was the jump master. He was first to go out. My job was to be last to go out. We had no lights, we weren't flying by lights. The night before the invasion, or the day, they must have had millions of crews. They painted the aircraft wings black and white, which you have seen. That didn't happen until just about one or two days before the invasion. Nothing was flying around with that on. This was an identification code that was top secret probably until that time. So, we had them on the airplane. Bill Kennedy and I are in there. No lights, they didn't fly by lights. I don't remember seeing any guide lights or anything else. You could see the aircraft. All we had inside was a very low Red Glow light. You could see a guy's silhouette but you couldn't identify anything about him. You knew a guy was there, that is all. Having eighteen guys in a crew, in a plane, fully equipped. Pete was practically sitting on a pilot's lap. He was number seventeen, I was number eighteen. My job was up at the door helping the plane commander get everything out and get the guys going. If anything happened I was supposed to take care of it before I jumped.

So, as we went over the Guernsery and Jersey Islands . . . That was a checkpoint for us. They must have turned there. I'll tell you, all hell broke loose. There was so much anti aircraft fire up there. Some guys say it was sparse but man, I'll tell you, you felt like you could get out and walk on it. It was like little green hornets; small fifty caliper or twenty millimeters or whatever. It wasn't a big explo-

sion type thing. It was more . . . Honest to God it was so much coming up it wasn't even funny. It started out from maybe five miles from Guernsey and Jersey Islands. Then we took our turn going up there. This Air Force was supposed to stay in formation during the thing. They weren't supposed to use evasive action. Well John, they used evasive action. They knocked us to our knees. We were stood up and hooked up as we go into coast. We had the red light on. All we had to do then was wait for maybe ten, twelve minutes until we get the green light to jump. We knew from the sand table, Pete and I, we were flying right toward the town Saint Marie Du Mont--is the town we were going to attack--we were flying right toward it. We knew if anything delayed us we would either land right on the town or right behind it. We wouldn't land where we were supposed to about two miles in front of it.

So, these Air Force guys, they started evasive action. It knocked us to our knees. This cart we had . . . Bill and I had balanced. It would have been easy to flip it out. We lost control of the cart. It went down on its wheels. We had to get these three equipment guys, bundles standing there. We had to get their help to get it out. So, we were delayed. The green light was on and we were having trouble. It seems like that forever. We finally get it up and throw it out. Bill goes, then the packers go and guys start coming. I'm hollering, "Pete, Pete, Pete!" "I'm coming Joe." So, finally he jumps and Pete was a big guy to begin with; all bone and muscle, about a 190 pounds, and about 6'1". He was about as big as they let them get in the paratroops. Pete was the kind of guy that anything anybody else couldn't carry, he would hang on him. So, he had an extra base plate hung on him. I don't know what happened. When he got up to the door he lost his footing and he got caught in the jam of the door. He lost his footing and he slid down the door and he was sitting in the door with his feet hanging out in the air. I pulled him to get him off of there. I just reared back, "You son of a bitch, let's go." I threw a shoulder in him and his chute popped in my face. We knew it if we got a delay we had problems. John, when my parachute opened I was right over the church steeple in this town.

D: The right town?

R: The right town, but the wrong place to be. They built their towns around the churches in a little square in the center. They built them around, you know. Son of a gun I'm right over this town. I didn't know it was that town at the time but there I am right over the church steeple and I assumed as much. So, I tried to get down. I got down. In those days we didn't have

what later came about, a quick release. It was a British thing. They had a dog dial on your thing. You make a quarter turn and you hit it and all your gear popped off of your parachute. Your parachute was on you so tight that I couldn't even get the d-rings and snap fasteners off. I had a southern fellow that sharpened my knife. We had a trench knife. We always strapped them to our ankles. I reached down and got it and I cut myself out. I also cut all my gear off except for a bandoleer of ammunition and my carbine that I had at the time. Christ, the krauts were running up and down shooting everything; making noise, or shooting, giving orders. I am right in that town.

D: You landed on a street then?

R: No, a little field there. A little field right . . . The cobblestone street was maybe thirty feet from me. These krauts are running up and down, giving orders and all. So, I am in this little field and I see a guy with a butch haircut running and jumping. I didn't have a cricket and I heard some crickets. The idea was if you snapped a cricket once and you didn't get two clicks right back, you shot them. So, this guy came over without a helmet on and I saw him jump . . . To this day I think it was Big Pete. I hollered, "Hey Yank, wait for me." Boy he just took off the other way. I thought, "What am I going to do now?" I had no fire power . . . I had an old carbine. I had no fire power to fight these guys. So, I thought, "Well, I'll just work my way out and maybe I can meet somebody." That is what I did. I went through the weeds and out and I didn't get on the road. I didn't hit anybody. They had their strong points on the road. I didn't hit anybody but I hit a Lieutenant Santasario. You met him, Sandy Santasario.

Well, Sandy used to be in our company. He got washed out because he tried to get realistic. He had a couple of deals for regiment. He invited me to go along. There were supposed to be six or seven of us. He and I went, most the time it was just he and I for a few days. You weren't allowed to go anywhere because they were so screwed up. 82nd, was with us, our guys were with the 82nd; they covered a whole peninsula with us. Maybe it worked out better because the German high command was afraid to commit their reserve. They thought it was faint, because paratroopers were all over the god damn place. We shot up and cut up everything we found; any communications, any men, we just shoot them up. There was never anything mentioned about taking prisoner of war. Plus the fact that some of the Germans pulled atrocities on our guys.

D: Right then?

R: Right then and there and we saw it. Now, they might have been trying to intimidate us but it didn't work that way. It made us mad. We were better at it than they were. That is all I can tell you. We were better at it than they were. I wondered about myself. What am I going to do when I kill my first man or when I see my first man? Am I going to get sick? It was an intoxicating feeling. I was elated that I did what I had to do. It was just one of those things.

We had a couple three days of clearing out that area. Then we got into combat. That Billy Turner I told you about, our battalion commander. He was a former mechanized cavalry officer. He had a tank come up from the troops that landed. He wanted a tank to go in and knock out a gun position. The tank commander wouldn't do it so he order the guy out and he got in. The only thing he didn't do was he didn't button up. The German's had a hell of a lot of snippers on line. They got him right between the eyes.

Something that might not even be available in later years that people don't know. The German snipers used wooden bullets. The powder chamber was the same but the projectile was a wooden bullet. The reason for that was they wouldn't carry to far. So, when they shoot our guys in the back if they missed it wouldn't go back into their lines. It didn't go as far, didn't have the velocity. Al Hassenzahl got hit with a wooden sniper bullet. He was in terrible shape. We thought he was dead. They tore him all up. As a matter of fact after the war he had to go to the hospital. These bullets would splinter and they would fester. That is what they would do. You would get an infection. He went up here since we came out with him. He had to go to the hospital and get cleaned up. He hasn't been since.

We took Normandy. We had the only organized bayonet attack, as I understand, in World War II. We took a causeway out of Carentan, France. Carentan was one of the first major cities to be taken. Our regiment took it. Our division took it, I'm sorry, not our regiment. What happened was we fought up to the causeway and the Germans . . . There was three bridges. Like the Mosquito Lake area. They blew the bridges. So, there was three of them and we had to get across it. We couldn't get across in daylight. They organized a bayonet attack at night. Everybody with fixed bayonets and grenades, you weren't allowed to fire a weapon.

D: What was the purpose of that?

R: Not shooting one another and detection; your location.

Those Germans were good with their artillery, they were real good with their artillery. So, we got across the causeway and then my battalion was supposed to infiltrate to the right and go up through them. This is night time. Go up through them; no shooting, just bayonets and grenades. That is all we went up with. Over there it was double British summertime. It didn't get dark until about 11:00 and started getting daylight about 4:00 in the morning. It was nice as far as combat was concerned. We went up that thing and the column stopped. I'm in a hedgerow. I hear this mumbling on the other side of the hedgerow. Some guy come out with suspenders and a undershirt on. He spread the hedgerows. He said, "What is this?" It was a kraut you know. So, man I beat him up right away. I went to the back of the head and I hit him twice. I pulled him through. I put my bayonet on his neck. Just at the break of daylight deal the old man come down. Is he dead now. "What have you got Joe?" I said, "A kraut." He said, "What is wrong with him?" I said, "Oh, I butt stroked him a couple of times. If he lets out a peep I'm going to lean on this." Boy, he was furious about something. He unloaded on the guy. This happened often John, and I don't criticize anybody. I personally didn't do it, didn't normally do it. I killed guys but I didn't murder them. This was happening on both side. These guys that made the laws they were behind there somewhere. They weren't up there where it was going on. Plus, you come to see an atrocity on one of your buddies that you trained with for two years. Man, you saw red, white, and blue. No bs, the next couple of krauts you saw were in trouble.

D: Was it the SS doing that or was it just your guys?

R: Some of them were regular troops. They were combat hardened though, we weren't. We were green at that time. We got hardened real fast. You had to or you couldn't handle it. You remembered the humorous sides of the war, not the bad sides. I mean you still get visions to this day. People say, "Well that was forty years ago." To me it was yesterday. Everyone of the other guys are the same way. It was yesterday. There is no such thing as forty years ago. It is still vivid in your mind. You can't get rid of it. You can see the guys, you can see their bodies.

I had a guy . . . We had a thing in Carentan, France. I had a tommy gun at the time. I was a great one for . . . As soon as I could I would pick up a tommy gun off a casualty, because I liked that. It gave my moral a boost. I loved fire power. So, this one time in Bloody Gulch Carentan. . . It was what we called Bloody Gulch because our guys were trying to dig holes down in the gulch and the snipers were getting them.

First thing you know they holler, "All tommy gunners up front." Well, I was acting platoon leader at the time and I had a tommy gun, but we weren't the assault outfit. We were in back. I said, "Anybody want a tommy gun." Hell no, they weren't going to take my tommy gun. So, I had to go up. I got up there late so I had to take the middle of this Gully. These two guys--one guy's name was Monroe and the other guy was that Francis Fleming I told you about got the soldier metal--he had a tommy gun. They went up the two sides of this ditch and I went right up the middle and we burped. It was June and there was a lot of foliage. We burped everything that could conceal a body. We burped everything. Then when I got to the end I started through, crawling through the hedgerow. Somebody grabbed me by the ankle and said, "You dumb son of a bitch get back here." There I looked down in the face of one of our headquarter's officers, Iggy Knott. Sniper got him right in the temple.

He was dead. I just crawled over his body accidentally because I was trying to get out there. This guy pulled me back. He said, "Christ, they just killed Iggy. You want to get killed too?" They pulled me back into the ditch. So, temporarily we held up in that end of the ditch. Then they sent us around to flank the counter-attack. This is something I remember vividly.

I had a guy by the name of John Ward. John Ward wasn't the top soldier but he was always there. They had a high express line from Paris to Cherbourg. It was well kept except for where our Air Force bombed it, you know. We were above that and it was really well kept where we were. It had these real big rocks in it and everything else. This guy Ward he sat in there. They had a little offset made of stone where they might have put railroad tires or something in there. There was nothing in there. This John Ward went in there, right by a bridge, and he sat down. I said, "Ward, get the hell out of there. There is all that concrete there, you will get a ricochet." "Hey Sarge, I'm so god damn tired. Let them ricochet." Something to that effect. No, you wouldn't believe it John, but those damn shells start coming in there; .88's. They didn't zero any in.

Well, just after I warned John about moving from a bridge area the krauts opened up with one of the worst artillery barrages we ever got caught in. They didn't throw in any zeroing rounds, aiming rounds. They threw in a concentration of fire. Must have been thirty, forty shells. They were right on us. They had that all plotted before they ever withdrew. They must have had an observer somewhere that saw us. So, these shells came in on us and all I could do was throw

myself down in the middle of the railroad tracks between these high speed lines. The shells just rained in among us. I can remember I was sort of laying on my side. I don't know whether I said it out loud or to myself. I could actually see the shells in that last part of there decent before they hit the ground. I said to myself, "Please God, no direct hit," or I said it outloud. I don't remember which.

They threw that one heavy concentration and then it ceased. We got up and started moving around, checked our casualties and things like that. Bill Pyne was acting company commander then. Six of the officers were casualties and one was a fatality. There were only two officers left, and consequently I was running a platoon as a platoon leader. We checked our casualties and all. Ward didn't move over there. So, I hollered at him. He didn't answer me and I thought, "Uh oh!" I went over and checked him and he was dead. Here an artillery shell somehow, or a large part of it, deflected off that wall just like I was afraid of it. It is one of the training techniques. You know to stay away from things like that. It had entered his body and his chest cavity area. It went through him with such a big mess that you could have put your arm through John, and never touched any part of his body. You know, it was such a big hole in him. There was just a little blood trickling out of him.

The ironic thing was that Bill Pyne, who took over as company commander, and myself always made it our business that if a guy was killed in an out of the way area we drug him to an area where the grave registration people could pick him up without too much trouble. Where he wouldn't lay him there for days. Bill and I went over to get him and when we did there was a little kitten that worked its way up into his crotch. It was laying in his crotch, meowing. Bill remembers this also, we have talked about this a couple of times. So, we went over there and we grabbed his harness. We checked, we were taking care of what other casualties we had. I don't remember what other fatalities we had right there.

D: You would still wear a harness?

R: Well, the harness isn't the parachute harness. It is your back pack. We had musette bags where, I don't know if you would know what a musette bag is, in the regular line infantry the officers have them. They are a little bag that has suspenders on it and it little d-rings here. It snaps into it over your shoulder. It is like a backpack. It is different from the bedroll thing and all. We had musette bags and it had a suspender type harness.

Anyway we grabbed him by his harness and his clothing and we drug him up to the road and left him there. We did the same thing with Big Pete when he was killed down by the river. We drug him out and put him on the road side so the GRO could get him. We went about our business and then the next thing I remembered there is the krauts started . . . We had them pushed in Carentan, they had part of the town, we had the other. They sent somebody up to relieve us on that flank, and we went into the part of clearing out the town, and getting the krauts out. I got out in . . . My platoon got up on the side of the town, up to a little town, little area, like suburban area, called L.A. Bullionaire. It was on the hillside, and we worked a couple of machine guns up there. When the krauts tried to withdraw in their trucks and all, we had fire on them. We had a heck of a fire fight there. The krauts that couldn't get out, went a different way. But we blocked that road with fire power. Then we worked our way down to the road in a ditch, and we had a machine gun right on the ditch, and the krauts worked around. They put counter-machine guns up the road a piece. We were having a fire fight there for about half an hour or so, and I radioed back that I needed a resupply on machine gun ammunition. There wasn't too many of us then, we had pretty heavy fighting, and we were pretty low on people. They said, "Well, we can't get down to you, but, if you can get some people up to us, we will have Bull Wynan"-- who was a Lieutenant at headquarters--"he will bring a jeep up to the back of the buildings in the L.A. Bullionaire with some machine gun ammunition." I said, "Okay." So I got myself and two other guys . . . The machine guns were in good shape, the machine-gunner had them going and all. We had run up that darn hill to get behind these buildings, to get this machine gun ammunition, and as we did, the krauts picked us up with .88's. For some reason or another, they were a little behind us, on the way up. As a matter of fact, when we got around the building, we found ourselves laughing, that we had run a foot race and beat them. Bull Wynan showed up with the ammunition, we each took two boxes, and then we started running down. The same thing happened; the observer, who ever he was, could see movement and he put artillery on us. So we get down in this little gully and we were having a fire-fight. I'm laying prone on a thing trying to pick out targets for the machine gunners, and first I know, somebody tapped me on the foot. I looked back, and he said, "What's going on here?" I looked back and it was the regimental chaplain, Father Malone. He was a Catholic priest, a hell of a guy. I said, "Padre, what are you doing here? Get the hell out of here." He said, "Well, I want to know what's going on" I said, "Well, we've got a heck of a battle going on. Get the hell out of here, you don't belong here." So

then, we get...I don't remember what he did or didn't do, but he got away from me anyhow. So we kept up the fire-fight and the Germans were giving us counter-fire, and all of the sudden, one of our battalion headquarters junior officers, come running down that hill, like crazy, "Don't shoot, don't shoot, Goddamn it, they're our men." We had been fighting them for forty-five minutes, we knew they were krauts, because we had good observation on them. So he comes running down that hill. I said, "You better get down Holmes, you're going to get your head blown off." I hollered at him. About that time, they hit him in the wrist with machine gun fire. "No, Goddamn it, they ain't our men, kill the son-of-a-bitches, kill them, kill them." Well he never came back to duty, he was crippled by that. He just died recently. He never came back to duty with us. From that Normandy thing, you know.

Anyhow, we proceeded with everybody, with a concentrated attack, we pushed the Germans back. Then we formed an outpost line on the outside of Carentan, and La Buillionaire there, and we dug in. We were supposed to have been relieved by an outfit coming up from the beach, a regular line outfit. For some reason or other they were having difficulties, they weren't getting to us. So we stayed about maybe a week longer than we were supposed to. We were an assault outfit. We hit hard and fast and then somebody else comes in and takes over; supposedly, theoretically. So we held that outpost line, and we used to take turn on outpost.

The funny thing, the Red Cross would give us rations; cigarettes, and stuff like that. Of course I didn't smoke. We would give each guy a pack of cigarettes--maybe they would send us up five of six cartons, you know--so we would give each guy a pack of cigarettes. So they gave us two plugs of tobacco. I don't remember the name of it, but it had a little symbol that was pushed into the back and it wasn't wrapped, the tobacco. Only had one guy in the company that chewed. So I gave him a plug and I took a plug because I always took my turn on outpost, you know, with the guys. If I chewed tobacco, and swallowed it, I got sick as hell. Plus you had to stay awake when you were on outpost. So every time I was on outpost, I'd take a big chaw of tobacco, and I start chewing it. I had to stay alert, because if I swallowed a little bit, I got sick. It helped keep me alert. During the night, we would put out some of our own type of hand grenades; we made them as trip wires and stuff like that you know. We didn't have mines, per se, to dig in the ground and put up against enemy tank and stuff like that. We did have little tricks that we worked with hand grenades. We would straighten the pin up in it, and wedge it with sticks on the side somewhere, and

then we'd run a string to it, maybe two or three feet, and push it in the ground with another stick see. So in other words, if a German soldier came through there, he'd kick this piece of string, and pull the pin out of the plug. It would detonate within five seconds and we put them out in front. Well, here is a bunch of cattle out there. Before you know it, they're walking into it. They are walking into these trip wires, and they are getting killed, and they are bawling at night you know, and it's dark. Fortunately, up there, that's pretty short night in summertime. It gets dark around 11:00 at night, and it starts getting daylight around four in the morning in the summer like that. It was a wonderful thing in combat, you weren't in the dark that long. So, just late in the evening this one night, a little calf walked in.

We had, we were issued, nine meals of concentrated k-rations that each man had to carry. That's three days rations that he carried on himself; little boxes, that I don't know how long, they were about eight inches long, an inch thick, and two or three inches square. They had different concentrated rations, a can of something. Well it just so happened that I got nine dinner rations, all the same, no breakfast, supper. It wasn't rotated. My nine were all dinner, and they had cheese in them. I hated that damned cheese. So, just a couple of three days into Normandy, we come over like a garage in a farm area, and we opened it. Here, the Germans had stacks and stacks of Norwegian sardines. So, we break open the k-rations, and we take out the crackers, and the cigarettes, and the chocolate bar, and then we would take the sardines. I ate sardines all . . . That is where I got to learn to like sardines you know. These are the little things.

Another thing they had in Normandy there, they said there was no aircraft up. The first enemy soldier I saw was a Mongolian, a Russian Mongolian. He wasn't armed, but they were . . . The Germans took them, and used them as support troops; carry their supplies, and stuff like this. They were working for the Germans because they had been captured. The Germans converted them somehow or other, they were working for the Germans. The first one I saw in daylight, the first day, was this Mongolian, he had this horse with like a troika collar on it. You know what those troika collars are that the Russians had?

D: Yes.

R: Well they had them too. And, so we confiscated about four, or five of these things, and we threw our gear on them. Well, we were working up the hedgerows one morning, and we were working into this field, son of a gun,

here come eight or nine kraut planes right on the deck. There was a spotter plane of ours up, you know, and they were right on it. That was what they were after. They came in and they swope up, and went after the guy, and this guy, he slipped this plane and all down. We could all practically see everything like a movie you know. He slipped it into an apple orchard, and they went in and they shot up the plane in the apple orchard, and then they went after him. Now, I can't tell you whether they got him or not. They came back over us, and to this day John, I don't know for sure, but they had these leather helmets, like you used to see about World War I, and they had the tassels flying in the back. They came back on the deck, we stood there as plain as day, right out in the middle of the field and saw them, and the guy wagged his wings at us and waved, and I waved back at him. I thought, boy they are damned good sports. In the back of my mind I could never understand why this happened but, you know what, those troika's and horses must have threw them off. They thought we were friendly troops of theirs, you know. Because we were all inter-scattered there. It took us about five days to get organized to where we knew what was what. You never knew when you turned a corner in a building, there might be two krauts standing there. You always had your gun up and ready, and your finger on the trigger. This actually happened and to this day I wonder whether the guy was a good sport, or he just misidentified us. I will never know but it's something that stayed with me.

D: You don't hear too many stories about the Germans air planes on D-day?

R: No. But there were some. They can say what they want, there were some. We saw them. Anyway, after that, we stayed on the outpost line. This outfit ate what we did though, which I felt sorry for, and I've often thought if I have some extra money, I'd send it to the mayor of Carentan. We raided those peoples gardens. They were starting truck cartons. Radishes, and lettuce and all that kind of stuff. This is June 6, 7, 8, and 9. It was just started to come up good, and we were taking it and eating it. We raided about every truck garden around there.

A little calf wandered in one evening, just before dark too. Our outpost line; right in front of the main line of resistance. I was on outpost and I was the main line resistance. So, this calf walked in and I said, "Hey you guys want any meat?" "Yeah, we'd like some." I had a .45, and I took it and I put it on the calf's head and shot him. He just stood there and looked at me. I shot him right in the temple. So, I had to shoot him about five or six times before he would fall over;

with a .45 caliber pistol. I'd never skinned an animal before or anything like that you know. I got a piece of rope and put him up in a tree, and I start cutting him up and everything. It got dark. So, there I am in the middle, in the dark with the field method of pulling these hides, cutting some, or this and that; trying to skin him down. Next morning I was full of calf blood, and guts, and everything else. We did eat him. We got him down and we cut him up and they took him back a distance, and ate him.

Then this outfit came in to relieve us, and they took us and they stuck us down in the Brittany Peninsula, between Cherbourg and Carentan there. They stuck us down there as counter-paratroop invasion troops. We were all beat up. As a matter of fact, we went into Normandy a hundred thirty-six strong, we walked out of there twenty-three. I was one of the twenty-three that walked out of there. Our fatalities were terrific. We had . . . Well half of my original platoon was blown up in mid-air and everybody was killed. About another six or seven of them were killed after we got on the ground, so out of thirty-six guys, you know, that makes about twenty-four, and some other guys were wounded. Ours was a deadly business, it was kill or be killed. They didn't make any arrangements for taking prisoners or anything like that in Normandy and all that, you know. I don't ever remember it being mentioned.

Then we went down to this counter-paratroop deal there. Over a stream we rigged a barrel, knocked holes in it, and it made a shower where two or three guys would get on the ladder, and one guy would get up top. We would take the water out of the creek and throw it in the barrel, and a couple guys get under it and take a shower. We hadn't washed or anything in about thirty-some days, nothing, and take a little shower.

I had a little red beard, and I wanted to get a picture and send to my wife. All the sudden, one day, the company commander called me down and said, "Hey Joe, you've got to go to regimental headquarters and report to Colonel Chase." I said, "What for?" He said, "I don't know but I suggest you take that beard off." I said, "Oh no Bill." We didn't give formality to rank and stuff like that you know. I said, "Oh no Bill. I'm going to keep that on until I get a picture of that to send to my wife." He said, "Joe, either take it off willingly, or I'm giving you a direct order. You shave before you go to regiment." So, when he gave you a direct order like that, you did it. I shaved and went down to regiment, here it had to do with that battlefield commission. There were two other guys, Charlie Hudson from A Company, and Francis Fleming from Headquarters. We were the first three that they commis-

sioned. I went down to regimental headquarters, and what they did was they got us on a plane and took us back to England and they gave us a clothing allowance. We had to buy officers clothing and all that kind of stuff. I had an exceptional thing happen to me at that time. When guys got battlefield commission like that, they generally got transfered. They always did, as a matter of fact, get taken out of the battalion and sit in another battalion with another company. They let me stay in my company and hold my platoon.

D: Oh yes?

R: Yes. It was unusual.

D: At your request?

R: No, no, it was their idea. It was my company officers idea. They said they felt that I could handle it and I did. I had no problems. As a matter of fact, you get a few of these guys that are borderline cases, where they are always looking for trouble. They started to get smart you know, when they knew I'd bare knuckle them when I was a sergeant, when I got to be an officer I couldn't. Once in a while they would throw a slur. So one of the guys come up to me one day says, "Hey Joe, I hear that so and so is giving you a bad time." I said, "He is pushing his luck. He knows all I can do now is court-martial him." "Don't worry about it Joe we'll take care of it." About a week later he come in all beat up. He was so damned beat up it wasn't even funny. I never had trouble with him again. I don't know what happened. They took care of him. The guys, they were good to me.

Anyway, we flew back to England--we had three days--and they gave us a list of things we had to have. We were in combat so we figured, well we don't need this, and we don't need this. We spent that money on having a good time, you know for the three days. So, we bought what we thought we had to have, and then we had a good time. This guy from Boston, he knew how to live. He knew about all these spas, and rub-downs, and all that stuff. And steam rooms, I had never been in one in my life. We went to them, and all, and then you stayed right there, and slept that night. Real nice! Then we went back. We are all still good friends.

Anyway, we went back, and I went back to C Company. In the process of scouting the country we found a Germany defensive position, they were thick concrete and all. It was an ammunition bunker with railroad tracks into it and everything else. When we got inside, a lot of German wounded were on one side, and they had the other side was all full of all kinds of fancy liqueurs, and

whiskeys, and champagne, and stuff like that. So, we turned the wounded over to the other outfit, but we took care of the booze. (Laughter) Some how or other we got back to England. Of course we got pulled out then and we went back to England to regroup and get replacements and retrain for future operations. What they had was a booze party when we got back there. These German-English girls were all drafted just like the men were. You had some of them in the Air Force, some of them in the Army and then they had what they call the land army. These girls had uniforms that had worked on the farms. So the guys . . . Somebody got the idea to take buses out, and we made arrangements to these places that we'd get a bus load of girls for a party. We had all this booze, plus we had a medical officer who used to take lemon extract, and G.I. alcohol. He made a beautiful drink out of it. How he cut it I don't know, but he cut it and it was a nice tasty drink. I had one bus load that I'd get from the Air Force people. I went and got a bus load of girls, and they had a sergeant in charge, you know, and we picked them up at their headquarter, and trucked them into where we were having a dance and party. Honest to God, so many people, girls included, they got so gosh darn drunk they couldn't stand up. So come time to take them back, I was responsible to see that they got back, I had about five or six we couldn't find. We never did find them. So I took them back and here the sergeant in charge, she was drunk as a skunk. I put her on a bus and we get back to this place, and this officer came out that was there when we left. She saw the condition of these girls, she backed me up against the bus, I thought she was going to assault me. She gave me all kinds of hell. I said, "Hey, I didn't pour nothing into them. They drank what they wanted." They had a good time, letting off steam deal. We had so many guys we didn't bring back with us. So, then we go back and we regroup, and I can't remember...

D: You went back to England?

R: Yes, we went back to England and retrained because the war hadn't been pushed through too far yet. It was still on the beach, eight, ten miles from the beach was all it was. We were special troops that they used for assault purposes, and they took us back. We had several operations listed after that, and Patton was a good friend of ours. He would keep over-running our objectives. we were supposed to jump in outside of Versailles, outside of Paris, and we were all ready for it, and sometimes we were even quarantine ready to go. We had a couple more John but I can't stand here and tell you what they were. Anyhow, the next big operation to come up, we got reequipped, and resupplied with people and all and we retrained, and the next big

operation we got was the Holland deal. These Air Force guys that I told you they used evasive action and all, they got reamed out unmercifully because they screwed us up. The critique had come out that they threw us all over the Brittany Peninsula. So the German high command was afraid to commit themselves to reinforce any area. They thought it was a fake because we were all over the place, instead of concentrated like we should have been. So, when we went into Holland I was an officer then and a jump master. I stood in the door and I was the first guy to go out, and I had an assistant jump master. Anyway, when we went into Holland, we were flying over and all this ack-ack was coming up and everything else, and you see these krauts on the road with their rifles aiming at you. We were only about four hundred feet, the lead echelon, which we were. Echelons up from there. Each one goes, I don't know how much footage they figure on, but they're not too far, you can see the planes behind, you know, echeloned up. So you look at these guys on the road and I was thinking, I wonder if I could pull the pin on a grenade and drop them, and give them a little surprise. But it didn't materialize. Anyway, we made the jump in Holland by a little town of Eindhoven.

D: How long were you back in England retraining, and refitting and all.

R: Well, we made the June 6th jump, then we were in combat thirty-six, thirty-eight days, forty days maybe. Then we come back and jumped on Holland September 17th.

D: Okay.

R: So, that took care of that. Anyway, we also lost a plane in Holland. One of our company planes, see, we had nine planes to a company. We had one blown up going into Normandy, and we had one blown up going into Holland. The other thing with Holland is, we had five guys get out. Where in Normandy, nobody got out. Everybody got killed. These five guys get out, they dropped right on an anti-aircraft placement that shot them down, I've seen them since at our get-togethers, and they come to me and say, "Joe, I couldn't do nothing."

D: They were captured?

R: Yes, they were . . . They said, "Christ, I lit into the ground, start to get out of my suit and I had five or six guns shoved in my face. There wasn't a damned thing we could do, you know, we had to surrender." They felt guilty about it. But they were good men. And the one thing about them in Normandy, half of my platoon was blown up, but they were damned good men, they never got a chance to fire a shot at the krauts. You know, that

bothered me. Well anyway, we go into Holland, we had three objectives there. There was the Wilhemina Canal, is in this town of Eindhoven, it was our job to take this town, run the krauts out. The British were coming up, you know, through the road, this Montgomery Bull, this was the Montgomery Operation incidentally. Eisenhower somehow, was, according to what I read, he was coerced into giving it to Montgomery because of inner-politics. If we would have known the politics going on during that war while we were fighting it, we would have been scared to death. Fortunately, we didn't know, you know. We thought everybody was doing their best like we were.

D: What was you objective?

R: We had three bridges, we were supposed to catch them intact so the British armor could rush through.

D: Okay.

R: You see and take the town of Eindhoven. Now we jumped north of Eindhoven, we jumped north of these bridges, on the Wilhemina Canal. Now each company in my battalion had a different objective, my objective was the right bridge, it was made of wood. Another company's objective was the center bridge, was made of concrete and steel, and the other bridge on the other side--and the secondary roads was on the outside--that was made of wood. And John, I don't think my chute even opened before my objective was higher that I was, the krauts blew it, you know. They saw this Airborne armada coming in and they just blew the hell out of it. They held the center bridge, and then our objective was, if your bridge got blown up, everybody concentrate on the center bridge, because they didn't want it blown. Hell, about half way down to the ground they blew the center bridge, and then they withdrew into Eindhoven. We had to work our way across that bridge, the broken part of it, but we had to fight a lot of Germans. I had one of our officers, who was in our company, and he got a battalion staff. I could see him from a distance, he was running around with an orange grenade, which was a recognition grenade, orange smoke was friendly troops. He was running around with it in his hand, and he got hit in the head and he lost his eye; Dixie Howell.

I never saw him again until, oh, four or five years ago, we finally contacted him and got him to one of our get-togethers. He had a heart attack there, he had a very bad heart, and he had a heart attack when I had talked to him, I was talking to him when he had the heart attack. He jumped up out of his chair. I said, "Hi. Dixie." He looked at me, he says, "Who are you? I

don't know you." I said, "Yes, you know me Dixie. I'm Joe Reed." "Jesus Christ Joe" and he jumped up and he shook my hand and all and he says, "Joe get me to my room quick." I said, "What's the matter Dixie?" He says, "Get me to my room quick." I don't know whether he was on medication or anything. We took about ten steps, and he started sliding down on me, I tried to hold him up. I hollered, we were in a hotel, you know. I hollered, "Man down, man down." Geeze, the guys come running like crazy, and we got an emergency vehicle for him, took him to the hospital. He stayed in the hospital for several weeks. As a matter of fact, the former company commander, he had terminated him, he was on his own, he stayed over while this guy was in the hospital. They took him back to. . . He lived in Arlington, Virginia. We were down someplace in Virginia, I can't think of the name of it now. One of the other guys lived there, and he threw the get-together. Well anyhow, while Dixie was in the hospital, we were still there, I went to visit him. I said, "Something has been bothering me so damned long, I can't tell you how long. Ever since you did it. What in the hell did you walk around with that orange grenade in your hand for?" He looked at me with a funny look on his face, he says, "You know Joe, I was so Goddamned convinced that was our troops firing on us. I wanted to be sure they saw the smoke." Just those quirks that you get, you know?

So anyway, we went down to this bridge we started fighting over the bridge, and this Francis Fleming that got commissioned with me, he got hit. A German smauzer gun hit him in both legs, and he's lying down, and the gosh darn kraut, was up on some bridge structure trying to kill him after he wounded him. We saw that and we loaded that kraut full of lead, and he was done. So then I got down there to the bridge, and Sam Smith was down there, and Christ, I look at him, and his nose . . . Right down the middle of his nose, it's about, 3/8, to 1/4 of an inch spread, but it's not bleeding. You could see in his head, I mean, you could see way in there. I said, "Sam, what the hell happened to you." He said, "I don't know Joe, something hit me in the face as I went out the door." He jumped out of the plane you know. I said, "Well we've got to do something with that." We didn't have medical set ups and all that stuff, you know. We had an aid man with each company, if he got in. We had a battalion aid station, which was one doctor and a few people. So I said, "Sam, we've got to do something about that nose of yours." We finally got the aid guy . . . Fire fight was still going on, and we weren't across the canal yet. I pushed his nose together, and this aid guy put a patch on it. Well, first thing you put their sulfa tablets and powder, use theirs on them, never use yours on someone else, you keep it for you, but use theirs on

them. We sprinkled sulfa powder in there, and gave him a couple of sulfa pills. We pushed his nose together and we put gauze over it, and then heavy tape. "Jesus Christ Joe, what are you making me? A target." He reached down, got a handful of mud. He thought I was making a bull's eye from him.

Anyway, our job was to assault these bridges and then the second battalion was to move through us and attack through the town. We assaulted the bridges and we made it a bridge head across and the second battalion went through. Resistance wasn't that great.

D: You crossed on a wrecked bridge?

R: On a broken bridge, yes. We crossed hand over hand and stuff. The resistance wasn't that great, the krauts started to fall back south where their main reinforcements are. Anyway, we get across and we form a bridge head and the second battalion comes through us. We are following up through that town and I got pictures of it yet. Through our regimental book, they got pictures. These people come out like it was a parade. They had flowers, they apples, and they stood shoulder, to shoulder cheering us. The other guys are two blocks down the street, they are fighting like hell. We are coming up behind after we had done our part of it; the initial part of it. We are coming up behind and these people got roses and they want your name and address. They are going to write you after the war. They are giving the guys beer and schnapps. I had to make the guys quit drinking. I said, "Hey, cut that bull. We have got to fight." They were giving it to you and giving apples. I have got a picture of it, I'll show you. You can't believe it. That night . . . We went outside of town and formed a defensive perimeter. That night the kraut Air Force come over with bombers. They bombed that town and killed over 2,000 people.

D: They thought you guys were in town?

R: Well, they didn't know who was in town but they figured maybe some troops were, maybe the armored. The British never got out for quite a few days. They should have. When they did get up, instead of having the bridging equipment up by the front of the column . . . It was a narrow road column, there was no way you could maneuver. It was all inundated and stuff like that, they flood the canals and all. All you had was this one shot and they had the bridging material in the rear of the column and they couldn't get the stuff through the tanks and the armor to get it up there. The tanks and armor were stuck right there.

We as infantry had to go out and force them out. They

couldn't maneuver see. That is the way that armed thing happened. This is the British thing and that is how they got stuck. They never got up there like they were supposed to. They never got up to reinforce . . . Plus the fact that the Germans had reinforced that whole area right before we jumped. It was poor intelligence. Anyhow, we had quite a few fire fights there and what they did was kept breaking the road. What we call breaking the road. In other words, they would fire . . . They cut the roadway, you couldn't use it. We got stuck. We had to work our way out there a mile, two or three miles, and drive them back. Then maybe they would come up here two or three miles. All we had was Shanks Mare to get after them. We had to walk. We would get up there in half a day and we would drive them back and then the British would move further. So, then it got to be where early October we started moving up toward the Waal. I can't think of the name of the river now. I think it was the Waal River up there above Nijmegen, above Nijmegan and Arnhem. We got up on the left flank there and we started up there. There was a little town called Opheusden. Third battalion tried to attack it and they had two battalion commanders killed. They weren't making any progress. So, they committed us through them.

There was a guy there, he got the D.S.C. in Normandy and you see him now but I'm not going to mention any name. He was down in a hole and I was attacking . . . My platoon was attacking through them. He said, "Joe, what are you doing? You are going to get killed. That is not our tanks out there." The krauts had our equipment and using it. They had our tanks and our half trucks and they were using it with our insignia on it. He said, "That is krauts." I said, "Sandy, we have got orders to move through you." He said, "You better get down there or they are going to kill you." Well, it just so happens I had a Mexican-American fellow with me, right along side me, maybe two or three feet. He got a burst of machine gun fire in his chest. I grabbed him to keep him from crashing down. Of course, I had to go down with his weight. All he kept saying was, "Mama, mama, mama." He died in my arms. Guilermo Martinez, heck of a nice guy.

So, we went in and we kept attacking. We got to the edge of this town, right to the very edge, and the Germans had that mortared and artilleried in. They had everything marked. We no sooner got to the edge when they opened up with so much mortar and artillery. I got hit there and I ended up being evacuated. This attack was a deadly thing for us. That is why when we have our anniversary October 5, that was the date of when we got beat up in Opheusden. That is what we use that date for, is like a memorium. Al Hassenzal was

the only officer left there and he got wounded a couple of times but they were superficial. We didn't know they meant point to get out of the Army or anything at that time. A lot of times, you shrug it off, get an aid man to put a little patch on you. As long as it didn't take you down. So, Al Hassenzal ended up with twenty-eight men out of that operation. They walked out with one officer; twenty-eight total men, one officer.

D: How did you get out?

R: I was stretchered out. I was hit in the leg and the arm. I had shrapnel in me. They took me back to the aid station. I walked with the aid of one rifleman back out of the ways, out of the fire area. We came under fire as we were going back as a matter of fact. I got to the aid station and they put me on a stretcher and they stretchered me out. I went to a British hospital initially. It was two or three days before I got operated on. I got back to some American hospital. The British hospital boy they . . . What they did, they put you on, I think it was, a whole 1,000 units of penicillin or something like that. They start shooting you with it and geez, you get hard as a rock. When they stick the thing in it blows, poof. It gets so painful, your arms, your legs, your hips. I don't remember how often they gave it to me or anything else.

Then they put us on a train and took us back to an American hospital. They operated on me there and when I woke up there I was in a hospital tent. This hospital was getting ready to pull out. I didn't know if they were going to fold or back or what. They were getting ready to pull out. I woke up and I was in a trauma ward, very serious stuff. I woke up and looked around and said, "Holy God, I wasn't hit this seriously. Sure I got a bullet hole through my leg and hit part of my shin bone and I got a bullet hole in my arm and shrapnel in my bone." So, I sat up and I looked around me and the beds were . . . The girls had to walk sideways to get around the cots there were so many wounded in there. Cutest girls you ever saw, they were beautiful these American nurses. They had a good sense of humor too. This kid beside me he had a tracheaotomy, and his whole head was covered except he had two slits were his eyes were. Every once in a while he would gag and blow flem out of this thing. I said, "What the hell to do, somebody's knife slipped while they were operating me." She said, "No, we are short of beds and you were put in here. You are not as serious as some of these fellows. How about doing me a favor being as you can maneuver a little bit?" I had my right arm good you know. I said, "Sure, what can I do?" She said, "Here." She gave me a syringe. She

said, "Every time he gets gaging like that you take this and squirt it a couple times in the hole, clear it you know." So, that is what I did. The kid would give me the ring, he would give me the finger of the ring. "Thanks, okay." He never did talk to me. I don't know who he was or anything else. I was there for a couple of days and then they put us in a British hospital and we laid in there.

Then, I got into a hospital outside of Paris. I don't remember the unit designation but anyway some major and I were in the same room. I was up on crutches and my leg wouldn't function properly yet. In the course of the operation . . . These SS guys used to have pistols clipped behind their belt, the officers, .25 caliber. So, in the course of operation I had confiscated two and I had them with me. All I had with me when I got out of the operating room or when I went in the operating room, was my musette bag. Everything else they cut off me or took off me. So, I had these two .25's in my musette bag. I think I told the surgeon off. I said, "Look, we know what you son of a guns do, when we are back here you rob us blind. That stuff of mine better be there." The nurses laughed but it was there. So, I got back to this Paris hospital and I was kept there for several weeks. There was a nurse there from . . . She was a chubby girl, her name was Browny. She was from Boston or somewhere. We didn't have any civilian clothes or anything like that. I also had a bombadier from the Air Force, B-17. They got shot down but he said all they worried about was getting back behind our lines. So, they crashed behind our lines and he happened to be in the hospital with us. He was in a body cast with both arms up in the air. He couldn't do nothing for himself, couldn't feed himself or anything. So, he said, "How the hell can we get to Paris out of here?" I said, "Beats me, let's talk to Browny." We got ahold of Browny, she was leery. I said, "I'll tell you what Browny"--they all wanted guns, these kids they were all afraid--"if you see that we can get some clothes and get out to Paris, I'll give you a .25 automatic." Well, that was some incentive for her. So, she got us GI clothing and she left us out like at dark, at night. We had to be back in before 5:00 in the morning. This guy and I . . . All you had to do was go down the road there, hitchhike. I was on crutches and he was in a bodycast. We did the best we could.

So, we go into Paris. There is no lights of course. The black out is black. You see these movies, you see light, it wasn't so. It was black. If you wasn't black somebody would shoot at you or make you put the light out. We go down into Paris and you walk down the . . . This trucker picked us up on the road out

there, it was a GI truck. He dropped us off in Paris. He said, "You are on this highway, go to so and so, when you come back okay." So, we get in there. We go in these cabarets and all. Honest to God this guy with his cast was like a magnet. All these women in the joint come over, they wanted to hand feed him, and give him his drink. We got a little high and it worked real good. We got back in time and nobody even knew we were out. Browny took the clothes and put them back where ever she got them from. We did that two or three times and about the third time we either got on the wrong road. We got to high. We either got on the wrong road or something because we went way past the hospital. We weren't no where near the hospital. Here it is daylight, 9:00 in the morning,.and we are wandering out there trying to found where the hell we had to go to. Finally we got back, and these medical officers they try to keep these gals as their personal harem. The gals didn't like the deal. They didn't like the way they fathered them or mothered them or whatever they did with them. They would rather fool with the combat troops. So, anyway we go in there and this guy is there. He is a major and he is in charge of that wing. He is all up and down and high and mighty. Hell, we had been shot at and hit, he didn't worry us a bit. Anyway, this major is going to court-martial us for being AWOL and all that kind of bull. These guys in the rear had a different outlook than we did, strictly GI. One thing worked out to another and I said, "Browny, you know I got another .25 automatic. You think we could sooth his soul if we offered him one." She said, "Well, don't you do nothing. Let me try." So, she came back. She said, "Yes, he said he will drop charges if you give him the .25." So, I gave him the other .25 automatic that I had. I had two of them. I never got one after that again.

D: Better than money, huh?

R: Yes. Anyway, they shipped me back to a repo-depot and boy, it was knee deep in mud. This was in France and we had heard our outfit was back in England--through the grapevine. I get in the repo-depo and boy was it bad. These state side senior officers were coming over; never had combat or anything else. They were strictly GI. We weren't, we weren't near the men we were at one time. Once you are in combat you get a different outlook on things. Things that are trivial you don't get excited about. So, these guys start getting awful touchy. Getting up in the morning, everything would be sniff and snuff and all. We weren't like that any more. I went down to the headquarters and there were some GI's that knew me. "Get us the hell out of here, we don't need this bull." I said, "Well, I don't know. I'll see what I can find

out." So, I got them to the headquarters and I walk in there and there is a couple of captains and stuff like that there. It was right around 11:00, 11:30 in the morning. I said, "What's to keep me from taking my temporary records?" Which they start on you when you are in the hospital. You get what they call a temporary record and it follows you then. I said, "What is to keep me from taking my temporary records and getting back to my outfit." "Oh no, we can't do that," and this and that. So, one thing led to another and this sergeant, he had combat ribbons on, and I looked at him. He just looked at me and didn't say nothing because these officers were there. I walked out. I said, "Well, thank you anyway," and I left. I watched the tent and around noon time these officers all come out together going to dinner. Noncom was left in there. I went back in and I said, "Hey sarge, you pull my temporary record jacket and give it to me. Nobody is going to know the difference." He said, "No." I said, "What do you say? All I want to do is get back to my outfit." He went over to the file and pulled it out and I put it in my shirt and I walked out. All those guys are, "You going to take us out, you going to take us out." I said, "Look the best I could do was . . . I had a hell of a job getting myself out of here. I can't do nothing for you." So, I walked out to the road that was out there. Here comes some GI trucks. I see one with Air Force thing on it. I hitchhiked to the next stop and picked me up.

All I had on me . . . I had GI clothing but I had a second lieutenant bar on. I was still a second lieutenant. I said, "Do you have an Air Force base around here?" He said, "Yes." I said, "You going there now?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, I would like to go there." I went down there and I went into the operations office and I said, "Any chance of hitching a ride back to England." The guy said, "Well, I don't know. We got a bunch of guys going on leave shortly. Maybe there will be room that you can get on but I don't have the authority to put you on." So, I'm sitting in the operations room. Some how or other I must have had some parachute identification on me too. I'm sitting in the waiting room there; a ready room or whatever it was. First, you know, these guys start coming in with their bags that were going on a two weeks leave or something, or ten days leave. This one guy looked at me. He went over and was talking this, and that, and the other. He looked at me again. First thing you know he came over. He said, "You airborne?" I said, "Yes." He said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Well, I just got out of the hospital and they had me in a repo-depot and I hear the outfit is back in England. I'm trying to get back to them without wasting months in the process. This guy told me that there is

a flight of planes going to England and maybe I could hitch a ride on it." He said, "You know I got a buddy from home in the airborne. I wonder if you happen to know him." I said, "What is his name?" I could see this guy had a Bostonian accent. He said, "Francis Fleming." I said, "Hell yes, Francis and I are good friends. He got all shot up in Holland too. He is going to the hospital with both knees that were shot at." So, he said, "You stay right along side of me. I'm navigating this flight." They had three C-47's and they loaded them up with these pilots and all; had some leave coming. A weeks leave in London. So, he walked right up to the cockpit and stood between the pilot and copilot and he had a map. I stood right along side him. He took his thumb on one end of the map and told these guys which way to do this and which way to do that. Honest to God he read that better with his thumb in the air than we could have read a map on the ground.

We landed in London. So, naturally I figure what the heck I'll spend some time in London. Geez about the first night I come up out of the subway there is two MP's standing there and I'm strictly out of uniform. They stop me and I had no actual I.D. as such on me but I had my temporary orders. I said, "I'm going back to my unit, which is up in Swindom." He said, "Okay lieutenant but don't let us see you around here again." I said, "Don't worry, I'm going straight through." About a week there I run into the same two. I was still in London. They hustled me to a train and I left town.

I went back to Swindom. Here the outfit was still on line in Holland. Of course, we had a unit in the back that were replacements and replacements officers. We went back there and this guy Foster, well, he didn't last with us. This guy was some major that was in the battalion, he was executive. He wasn't a command officer, you know what I mean. When it fell in his lap he just fell apart. So, they headed him back to keep this rear echelon established. We get up there and he is up there with all these state side officers being a big shot. We guys had been in a couple of combats, come back, and he didn't like that at all. So, he sent all of us out on a rifle range to qualify these GI's that come from the states. We are out there chewing our nails; Kessler, and Burns. These are guys that are dead now. Kessler got killed in combat. He and I roomed together. Big Jewish fellow, he was a captain. He was company commander of A company. He had been wounded to. So, we got different replacements and all. We put them through our paces and finally the outfit come back and we rejoined them. They were up in Marmalon, France and we rejoined them over there.

D: Did you fly over?

R: John, I can't sit here and tell you. Yes, we must have because the only time we came back on landing craft was from Normandy. We came back to England on a landing craft. Any other time we were flying. It is the only time I remember being on a landing craft was when we were leaving France. We got a landing craft and they brought us back to England.

So, we got back to the outfit. I no sooner got back in the outfit . . . This had to be about four or five days before this thing broke in the Bulge. I just got back to the outfit and they didn't rush me. Get set, and get your equipment and we got people doing the job. So, I didn't have my guns or anything left. This Bastogne thing broke, which we didn't know what it was at the time. We jumped on trucks and I didn't have a weapon. My assistant platoon leader was in the head of the platoon. He said, "Cripes Joe, I got a tommy gun wrapped in my bed roll I'm trying to sneak home to my dad. I'll get it for you." So, he went and got the tommy gun. We left Marmalon, France. We left in those trucks. We had to make time, so they rode with lights on. Which was unheard of. Rode with full lights on and we were going like hell. Half of us didn't have ammunition. It is hard to believe but we were not set up to go. They grabbed you, "Put your coat on, let's go." You believe it or not, we got up into the Bastogne area, my battalion was committed to attack right away, and take a town on Noville, and the high ground around it, and hold it. Of course, to get to Noville, we were in Bastogne, we had to walk through a town of Foy and we had to go out to Noville. On the way out we had half tracks and tankers and all withdrawing from that area, you know armored people. We were asking them for ammunition, they were gladly giving it to us. This seems far fetched but it is the gospel truth. They were giving us ammunition for our rifles and machines guns and everything else. They were running back to Bastogne see. My platoon, my company, was the advance party and, of course, at that point and time Hassenzal and I were buddies. So, anytime we were the advance party I was the point, my platoon. The way we did that was like we would put a scout out in front of us and then I would be next. On the other side of the road would be another scout staggering back, then a platoon sergeant would be behind him, and then the column of file on both sides of the road with my assistant platoon leader being the rear.

So, we go up into the town of Noville, no trouble at all. We walk all of the way up there, we hit nothing. We get into Noville, and of course we had to move through the town and up and out. We got up on the top

of that ground on the outside of Noville and the krauts were dug in and they were exhausted. They were sleeping in their holes and we start popping them in their holes; in their fox holes. Honest God, I got up on that town John, and I looked over the side of the hill and I'll tell you right now there was 1,000 German tanks there in my mind. I don't know if it was thirty or forty but there was a lot of them. The minute we start firing, they start getting in their tanks and reving them up. We had nothing to stop them with really. We had nothing to stop them with. So, I told the guys, "Let's get the hell out of here." We got back into town and they started to circle into town and we had a couple of little tank destroyer deals. Now a tank destroyer don't have the armor that a tank had on it. They had speed and maneuverability and they had the same size gun. We had a couple TD's, it was a 705 TD battalion that was there with us. There were a couple tanks that would defend, they stayed there with us in that little town of Noville. A couple of jeeps and maybe a half track or something was the armored people. Otherwise it was our battalion.

D: Does a half track have any armament on it?

R: Yes, just a little plating though. It wouldn't stop nothing.

D: I mean any kind of gun on it though?

R: They put a machine gun up in front of it on the top, on the crown. It was removable. Half track was for transportation, more than anything else, over the rough terrain. So, anyway these krauts started surrounding this town with these tanks. We were given the order that we would hold at all costs. Well, we look at one another; you heard these orders were going to come but we never expected them. We start digging in around these buildings.

D: You weren't in the buildings?

R: No, no, we were outside. You couldn't shoot from in the buildings. They killed our battalion commander, he must have opened the door and went in the building. They were sitting up on the hill with a tank and they threw two rounds right through the window. Killed him right in there, right off the bat. Guy by the name of Laprade.

So, we proceeded to try to hold the town. They started hitting us and these TD's were hitting them. The only trouble with them is they had run out of armor piercing ammunition. All they had was high explosive. Well, a high explosive won't penetrate a tank. It might knock

that track off and it might scare the hell out the guys inside, which we did with one. I stood along side this one TD and the guy was standing up in turret and I was helping him pick targets. This one time we knocked a tank. He knocked a tread off the tank and the tank stopped and the guys pulled out but I said, "Watch that son of a bitch behind him." There was another tank coming up behind him. He used that tank for cover and he laid his gun down behind and he shot this TD right beside me. The only one got out of the TD was a guy in the turret and he was on fire. We beat it out. Then we had the battle. All night long houses were on fire, equipment was on fire, and everything else. The krauts were trying to get in the town with the tanks. They probed their way in. We had what they call a gammon grenade, I think it was a British grenade. It was a British operation in a plastic cap, like you milk bottle caps only deeper, and it had a string on there. It was elastic skirt and you could put composition C in there and you could pull a skirt and get as much in there as you wanted.

D: What is composition C?

R: It was an explosive but it had to be detonated. You couldn't shoot it and make it blow up, but we had a detonator in there. So, these guys would get in the building and these tanks would come up and try to probe guys from the second floor with these gammon grenades. We knocked out two or three tanks trying to get into town during the night. We were up all night shooting and everything else. I had a machine gunner who was pretty good, a guy by the name of Barrett from Baltimore. Krauts were way up in the woods, and it was heavy snow. They tried to get from this finger of woods to that finger of woods; the infantry. We could see them. I said, "Barrett get on them sons of a bitches, don't let them get back there." They were getting back to their own people. They were a little bit to far out I guess they figured, I don't know. So, Baret got on them and he laid eight or nine of them in the snow up there. Just short bursts as they come out and start running across. You pick them up and keep after them until he nailed them. You could see eight or nine of them laying in the snow up there.

So, anyhow we fought all night and we were getting the hell clobbered out of us. Then about 9:00 a.m. I told the guys, "Don't nobody go anywhere," because we always had one or two scroungers that would go looking for eggs, or get a chicken out of a chicken house and ring it's neck. I said, "Be sure nobody takes off because everything is up in the air." So, all of a sudden we get an order on the radio that we would withdraw. The town behind us, Foy, the third battalion had taken but

the Germans had pushed them out of it. The Germans were in this town of Foy and Bastogne was back beyond and we are out here on a limb. Anyway, about 2:00 the next day, which was about December 21, we got to withdraw. We would withdraw by the road and bring all our mechanical equipment and wounded with us. Hell, if we had cut across country we had a good chance but withdrawing by the road . . . We knew this town behind us was surrounded by the krauts and then we had to go into Bastogne later. They give us the word that they are going to recommit the 3rd Battalion to attack Foy behind us and they would be attacking Foy at the same time we would. So, right away C Company was the advance party again and, "Joe, you are the point." I used to give them hell. I said, "You bastards think I'm an exceptionally good man or you are trying to kill me, I don't know which." So, we start on this. John, the fog was--that morning or that day--so thick but it was in rolls. It would roll in and roll out. It would roll in to where you couldn't see six feet in front of you and then it would roll out and you could see a 100 yards. It just kept that up. You couldn't depend on nothing.

D: The German tanks stop their assault?

R: The German tanks temporarily, yes. We had scared them off a little bit. So, they got us out of there. The German tanks had bypassed us. They are the ones that went into Foy and all. We were like a strong point that had a little trouble. That was what they were doing in those days. Their job was to bypass any resistance they got and get as far in as they could. Anyway, we start out and I tell the guys before we go, "Look, there is only two man made object between us and Foy." There was a farm house down there and it was on the map. I said, "Now you lighten your gear, don't have anything rattle, and walk softly, and have your finger on the trigger. Because we are going to hit you know where." December 21, foot of snow on the ground . . . Just like us, we got in the building out of a wind. Even if there wasn't no fires or anything there. You got out of that wind it was half the fight or even if you got below the surface of the ground, like with a shallow fox hole. That was half the fight. You were half as cold as you were before. So, we went down this Noville road and we were going and going. Honest to God out of a clear blue sky these clouds roll away and there were three krauts setting up a machine about ten feet from me. I'm right on the edge of their gun but I'm walking real soft. My scouts already passed them. I had a tommy gun and I hollered, "Kraut!", and I burped these three guys. I got them all. Geez, I look around and there are two Tiger tanks sitting in a yard by the house. The krauts weren't in

the Tiger tanks, they were on the ground. As soon as I hollered and fired they start getting in their tanks and reving them up. You hear them motors roaring and kick the exhaust. Then this fog kept rolling in and out.

So, there was some armored back there. I don't know what they were. They had short guns on, ours but from the 10th Armored Division or some division like that. Some captain was in one and he came running up. I'm in the ditch there starting to fire fight because there were guys in the house starting to fire fight. My guys were building up a line of fire on the other side of the road but I was on the wrong side of the road. My scout was too. Anyway, the fire fight developed and this guy came running in his tank. He leans out and he says, "What is going on here?" I said, "Get the hell out of here." I no sooner said it and this one kraut . . . Boom, boom, two rounds went in it. He got on fire. The captain came out, he hit the ditch, he crawled over, he never slowed down going to the rear. He never said, "Can I help you? God bless you," or anything else. He crawled right over me and took off. I was in a ditch that was pretty deep. I was able to be protected a little bit. It is a funny thing hit me there, I was going by the book. I wouldn't shoot twice from the same place. I would move forward, shoot, move back, shoot, and everything else. In the meantime the company was spreading out, creating fire. So, there was a damn kraut up in the second story and he had what they called panzer shreck. I can't tell you which was which, but it was anti-tank gun like our bazooka.

D: Panzer shreck.

R: Panzer shreck and Panzer faust. The shreck I think is a projectile. He starts shooting at this tank with the damn thing. It so happened there was another tank . . . Well, one of our guys that went to tank school and he volunteered to get in and bring the tank out. He got killed in it. They knocked that tank out too; behind this other one. Behind the one that I was beside. So, this one beside me is on fire and the one behind is on fire. At that point and time I didn't know there were two tanks there. I only thought there was one. So, this guy has got this bazooka up there--kraut bazooka--and they keep shooting this damn tank. I thought, "That son of a bitch is trying to get me by a ricochet." Or make it explode that would get me in a ditch because he knew I was in the ditch. I was working my way back and forth. I back up and bam-bam, and up and bam-bam. So, all of a sudden one of those damn things ricocheted, John. There was all hell broke loose, bullets flying all over the place. One of those damn things ricocheted off that tank and it went

end over end and you believe it or not it went in between my legs and my crotch. All I could think of was I going to get my pecker blown off. I got up out of there and I ran around the other side of the tank. I got around there just long enough to have my platoon sargeant die in my arms.

What they did was they committed the 3rd Battalion. I think there was a lot of misidentification there. I think the 3rd Battalion was firing on us and I think they killed a lot of our people. I had about six guys coming out in my platoon, coming out that road. They got killed. My platoon sergeant was one. Johnny Mize was another. Joseph was another. I can't sit here and tell you exactly . . . Burk, J.J. Burk was killed. He went scrounging for eggs right before we pulled out. His buddy was Rafe Bramlett. I said, "Rafe, god damn you, I told you not to let anybody go." He said, "I couldn't stop him." We took a long while to identify John. They found his body in Noville. By a dental chart they identified him. John was the kind of a guy, if he come out of the building and saw a kraut, he wouldn't hesitate at all to stop and fire. He would start shooting, that is the kind of guy he was. Mike Parros died in my arms. He said, "Joe, I'm so sleepy." I slapped him in the face. I said, "Mike, don't go to sleep." He said, "I can't help myself, I'm so sleepy Joe." You could just see the blood draining out of him. He got hit with a machine gun. I don't know if it was our 3rd Battalion or the krauts had got him. My orders were, no matter what I hit, to fight through it if I could. That is what I did. I proceeded to fight up the road. That was a strong point for them. We got through that. Those two tanks withdrew; the kraut tanks. They didn't come on, they pulled back. We proceeded up the road. When we got to Foy, the 3rd Battalion had reentered the town and we walked right through them and we went into the outer edges of Bastogne. We never were back in Bastogne. We were out in the woods.

So, we went in there and there was a big barn there . . . My platoon went in a big old barn and that night the bombers came over, the German bombers. We could see them through the holes in the roof. You could see their exhaust. It was like moonlit nights, all cold and wintry. You could see the aircraft and you could hear them. Their motors were not synchronized like ours. You could tell a German aircraft without looking up. During the night we were licking our wounds and what we had left; getting ready, got a little k rations.

D: Were the casualties pretty heavy?

R: Yes, casualties were heavy.

D: Heavier than Normandy?

R: I can't end up telling you that because I would have to look at documentation. The simple reason is this is the first time we ever got replacements on line.

Anyway, we are in this area. The 2nd Battalion is on line and they were on the right flank. We were on the left flank and the 3rd Battalion was in the middle. We were on Recogne. Anyway, the 2nd Battalion is on line and communication came back that a reinforce German platoon got behind their lines during the night. So, C and B company--I think we were eighty some strong--we were coming in it the next morning to attack those krauts that were behind 2nd Battalion. Believe it or not it was a scrub oak, where they cut down the trees and all that stuff was growing up. It was hard to see, you know. You couldn't see anything. These Germans were dug in to the best of their ability. It was hard to dig a foxhole in the winter when it is twenty degrees below. They were dug in and we walked on them. We had a hell of a fire fight. Plus, their artillery come in on them. They must have called for artillery or something. They would come in on us too. In that fire fight, you hear about the combat exhaustion, I came about as close as I ever got. I had six guys shot in the head; six of my men. Two of them had been replacements after we got out of Noville the day before. I got two replacements on line. One was named Lacy and the other Truit and I don't know to this day what they looked like. I don't know what their first names were. This guy that is a priest down in Bolivia, of ours, he was in my platoon at the time. I got up there and I said, "I need somebody to do me a favor. Somebody go pull those dog tags, I can't." I just was choked up. Here, not to long ago, we got together. He said, "Joe, do you remember a time up there behind Foy that Sanchez and them guys got killed?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You remember asking somebody to go pull the dog tags?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Who did it?" I said, "Honest to God, I can't tell you now Harold. I don't remember." He said, "I did." I said, "Well, thank you friend, thanks again." Because that was one time I was really choked up. It really bothered me.

D: How did all six of these of guys get killed between the eyes?

R: Well, they got shot in the head I'm saying. They got shot in the head. Because we are laying there facing the Germans and they were in holes in front of us. Sometimes there would only be four or five feet between them. We were throwing grenades and everything else.

assume it was.

D: You fought until you were?

R: Just fought until you were ineffective anymore. You weren't enough to do the job. They would relieve you with some other unit and you would pull out. By the same token, at times we were facing crack German outfits. We had vigorous patrolling. They knew we were coming and we knew we were going. Every night we would take prisoners and stuff like that. Yes I'm losing my train of thought, getting old.

D: You were at Bastogne there and Patton relieved you.

R: Oh yes, they brought up replacements to us. Later on we took back all the territory . . . We had a reputation of not losing any territory. Of course, the krauts with those tanks and all pushed us back quite a bit. We counter attacked with other outfits with us when they got there . . . When we started breaking the Bulge up. We counterattacked and took anything we lost plus. When we got out of there our buddies frozen bodies were still laying where they were. That is how heavy the fire fighting was. On the way in to get this German penetration six guys were shot in the head, seventeen German aircrafts came in and dive bombed us when we were on the road. At that point and time I was the rear guard and I heard their aircraft planes and I looked. What they told us later was, these guys missed us by about fifty yards to the side of the road. They just turned that woods upside down. There were seventeen planes. The Air Force told us later not one of them got back to the German lines. Whether this is true or not I don't know. What we understand through a critique later on was that that was one experienced pilot and the other sixteen were from a training school. He led them in there to do that. They didn't hit us, they hit along side of us. They went up right along side; about fifty yards they missed the road.

Then, after we got established in Bastogne they pulled us out and they sent us down into Alsace-Lorraine, southern France. It was a occupation troops. We went across from Dusseldorf at first, over the Rhine River. We sent some of the first patrols over the Rhine River, in rubber boats and stuff like that. We got pulled out of there and we went further south. We went to this town of Haguenau in Alsace-Lorraine.

By that time, when I moved down, I got called up to battalion. Battalion commander said . . . I was a first lieutenant then. By the time I went into Bastogne I was a first lieutenant. Battalion commander called me in and he said--and my former company com-

mander was executive officer--Lieutenant Colonel Clarence Hester called me in and he said, "Reed, I want you to be my S-2." It was the intelligence officer at the time. I said, "Colonel I don't want that job." He said, "Why?" I said, "I think it is a protected job. I don't want it." He stood me at attention and read me up and down. He said, "God damn you I want you there because I think you are the best man for the job. No other reason. Now I tell you, you will be my S-2." So, I got taken out of C Company which I had been with from activation. I became Battalion S-2. Well, it was a good deal for me. I had access to jeeps once and awhile and stuff like that. We only had two jeeps to the whole battalion; colonel's was one, the executive officer was the other. Every once in while they would be sitting on their fanny in the thing and I would take a jeep and do something. Anyhow, they put a lot of work on me while they would go do other work. I don't know what they did but they put a lot of work on me. As a matter of fact we went down to this Alsace-Lorraine and we took this town of Hagvenav. It was a bugger. You have seen these German canals where the barges go up and down. How close they are in middles of towns and all. Well, this town had one. The Germans were on that side and we were in this side. You couldn't walk around in daylight. You had to walk around at night and at night the flares were going up and mortars were coming in. You feed the troops at night and everything else because we had them in fox holes right up on the river lines. We run down the road with a jeep and the first thing you know there would be flares going up and boom-boom-boom mortars, trying to pick up the jeep. You got the chow on the jeep giving it to the guys.

D: Geez!

R: Anyway we got a guy, he was from West Point. His name was Fitzpatrick. Old Fitz come in--of course I was S-2 and it was my job to coordinate supporting fires and all. I could take a while . . . I would rig the guns and mortars where we would make them out of a withdraw route at certain coordinates on the map. You come back that way and we will cover your flanks with artillery fire and mortar fire. You have got a channel to come in. That was always my job and communications. I had to be sure that the communication were good and set. So, this guy Fitzpatrick was from the 3rd Battalion. He was a West Pointer and he was full of theories; nice Irish guy. He came down everyday volunteering. I said, "Fitz, don't kid yourself, take your turn." "Oh no Joe," he said, "this war is going to be over soon. I got to get some rank."--West Point theories you know. I said, "Fitz, you are going to be a dead man. Take your time, take your turn." "Oh no,"

he said. He had a buddy from West Point too that went with him. So, they volunteered--I don't know--six or seven patrols and the guy couldn't sleep in the daytime. He sucked whiskey. He was so keyed up. To me the most--oh, I don't know what you call it--the most exciting thing, where the hair stands up on your back and all, is an infantry patrol. You know you are in enemy territory, you know you are going to get shot at, it is a matter of when or where. You're ready, you're on edge, you're a hundred percent. We used to go out on these things, come back, and get in fist fights with one another; in combat. For little things, you know, you would be so keyed up. Especially at night and all, you are waiting for somebody to blast your head off as you go out there. When action does start you don't know if you are shooting him; you are a goody or a baddy. You are just shooting them or throwing grenades at them. To me that was the most exciting thing you could do. Every time I had to do it . . . I took out daylights I took out nights. So did everybody else, you had to take your turn. Just every hair on your body would be standing up. You would be just waiting for what was going to happen.

D: Pretty nerve racking.

R: It was, very nerve racking. This Fitz, he kept volunteering every day and the human make up can't handle it, I don't think. By God in about the seventh one he got killed. They had machine guns in these buildings and our guys are climbing up over the dock. They blasted him. He happened to climb right in front of one, right in front of one of the machine guns; old Fitz got killed. I tried my best to keep him alive longer. We used to try our best when new guys come in. We would get somebody to try and shepherd them for two or three days. You figure if a guy made it two or three days in combat he was a veteran. Like you could tell when artillery was coming in. You could tell if it was going right, left, or it is coming in on you. You know the tones and all. Screaming meemies is the same way, when screaming meemies come in. They had shells that they threw a whole bunch up at once and they made an eerie scream; we called them screaming meemies. You listen to them go off and you just listen for a little bit and when you didn't hear any noise you hit the ground because they were coming in. If you hear a little scream or a little moan out this way, or that way, or up back that way, you knew they were going over, right, or left. When they got silent then you hit the ground because they come right in on you. So, Fitz got killed and we were in Haguenau for quite some time. Then we got pulled up and we got sent into Germany. We were sort of following up in Germany. When that got down around Bavaria-Austria, intelligence

came through that there was 4,000 German fanatics that weren't going to surrender. They were going to get into what they called . . . If I remembered right they called it a redoubt out area.

D: Alpine Fortress?

R: Yes, they were going to hold out. Our job was to get down there as fast as we could. All we had for transportation was these big amphibious ducks. Get on them and go down the road. On the way down there we came into Landsberg, Germany which is right on the edge of the Bavarian Alps. It is where Hitler wrote that book Mein Kampf and they had a concentration camp there. We liberated the people there, it was pathetic, it was really pathetic. We took those people out and we went into German's houses with bayonets. We rifled their food shelves and gave it to these people. They were burning the people in ovens and we made them stop. We made seventy-five German men and twenty-five German women go in there and dig common graves and bury the bodies in. They were dying on the streets and all. They went crazy when we got there. They even ran into our equipment going down the road and stuff life that and got themselves killed. The people were out of their mind really. John, you never saw anything worse in your life. They had these pajama-top type outfits on. They were nothing but skin over a rack of bones and their eyes were popped out but they were sunk in at the same time. They get in together in groups and they would start wailing. It was heart rendering. Of course, we were seasoned tough troops you know.

D: Jews?

R: Yes, I would say some type of Jew. They didn't have stars on them or nothing like that. I don't remember seeing any stars. Then we had to stay there because they had blown the bridges right outside of Landsberg, Germany. It was just the spring of the year, it was March or April, and the mountain snows were thawing. They were coming down like torrents and there was no way you could even wade across there. It was like waterfalls coming out of them mountain down these streams. So, we had to wait until engineers came up here and built some kind of bridge for us. They give us a battalion of French tankers, they were French officers and Moroccan black troops. We couldn't understand them and they couldn't understand us. What happened we let these people out and got all this food. They were eating and dying. So, before we pulled out of there some people come up . . . I don't know if they were Red Cross people or who they were. They come up and they said, "God, whatever you do, get these people back into camp. They can't eat." They had to have

broth and stuff like this. Fortunately it didn't end up our responsibility, we were pulling out. They got a bridge across there and we pulled out with these tankers. Then, all the way down the autobahn . . . We went right down the autobahn; four tankers abreast over and over here and we were right behind them or we were on them. We get to a stream and the krauts would blow that stream bridges. They would be way up in these damn mountains with machine guns and mortars. So, these French tankers would stop, sit back. We would have to climb them damn mountains and chase them guys off. It would maybe take us half a day; get up there. By the time we got up there they pulled out and are running to the next one. This is what they did to us until we got into Berchtesgaden. We finally got into Berchtesgaden. I got some pictures of Raudstein and me in a jeep in Berchtesgaden, right by a sign.

D: You were the first American troops in Berchtesgaden?

R: Yes, we took Berchtesgaden. Don Zon, who took over my platoon . . . My platoon was sent up into that eagle's nest. Had an elevator and all up there. We took the place down below. As a matter of fact I got a spoon out there with Adolf Hitler's initials on it. When we were cleaning the town we went down into this resort place he had there that used to rotate or something. You could look out in the mountain; beautiful area. We went down there with fixed bayonets. The soup was still hot, people were eating it. They went out the other door, we came in this door. I was running down this place . . . Like these Italians have a kitchen down in the basement. They had a kitchen down in this basement in like a hallway set up. I'm running down here and I look and here the soup is still hot. Somebody had been eating it, there was a spoon in it. I look at the spoon, it had A.H. in the initials. So I took it and shook it off and put it in my pocket because we couldn't carry anything. We chased them out the other end. Then there was a Czechoslovakian border where we were given orders to hold up. We were not to go into Czechoslovakia. So, we got to the Czechoslovakian border and we couldn't cross. We still hadn't run into these fanatics that were supposed to be there. I remember Al and I standing up on a windy mountain one day. That was as far as we could go. Him and I were standing up there talking. I don't remember what it was about anymore. Then we consolidated that area and we had a whole lot of political arrests. I mean the Germans, if I remember right, they had seven cards. Everybody had to have one of these seven type cards. Everybody had to have an ID. We had seven of these cards were automatic arrests, political arrests. So, we start throwing road blocks up and everything else. This is where I got involved; so called intelligence

officer. I had a jeep, and a jeep driver, and I had an interpreter, and an intelligence sergeant. We established these road blocks. Everybody had to show one and if he was any one of these seven he was arrested and sent back. We sent them back where ever they were doing with them. I was given nine check points to catch Hermann Goring. We went down by Zell am See, Barvaria-Austria and John you wouldn't believe it that the people were shoulder to shoulder covering the roads and everything else coming our way. They were afraid of the Russians.

D: German soldiers.

R: German soldiers with their women. They carried women with them and everything. And German Cavalry. We even got behind their lines. We had to wear white flags because we were behind were they were disarming them. We got down there that we couldn't go any further. I checked the place where Goering. . . His wife was still there, General Fegeline's wife was still there, but Goring and General Fegeline went over the mountain at 5:00 in the morning. I got there at 9:00. Missed him by that much time. Third division got him on the other side of the mountain, Hermann Goring. In this whole area where we were was a rest area for them. There was an awful lot of big wigs there. I'm up in the mountains here one day, with the sergeant and all, we are looking an area over. This guy come out of the woods and he had a tirolian leather pants on, those suspenders and all they have, he had one eye, the other eye was sticking way up in his head, and he was gaunt and tan. He came over and in broken English and German through the guys there he wanted to know who was in charge. They pointed to me. He came over and he said, "Lieutenant." I called the interpreter over, I said, "Come here, get this." I wasn't sure I could understand him; talked very bad English. The kid says, "He says he is an OSS agent." I said, "Well, if he is an OSS agent he should have some ID on him." So, the guy reached in his belt line there and he pulled out his. . . He had an identical ID that I had. I got on the radio and I radioed on in. They said, "Joe, get that guy back here as quick as you can." So, we took him back. Here he had been working that area and he had all these big wig politicals spotted; where they were staying, what shacks they were in. Some of these were chalets way up in the hills and all. Christ it took you a day and a half to get up there. No roads up there, walk trails. These were like hunting camps and all that these guys took. All kind of political big wigs and our division caught a lot of them. I can't sit here and tell you who they were now but we got . . . Some where around I got information on who they were.

What happened was it got so bad that one day a cavalry outfit was coming through. Somebody said, "Hey, why don't we get enough horses to ride up these damn mountains. Maybe we will do better." I thought that was a good idea. There was guy by the name of Porter, B Company, he was a cowboy from Texas. I said, "Porter come on, you and I are going down to the road," and we took an interpreter. We got the SS General. I don't know if he was SS. He was top a veterinarian in the German Army there. They had these jumping horses in the stable down there were we were, by Lenz. We told him, "Come out here." To the interpreter I told him, "Now, I want thirty-six of these best horses that come through here. Don't bullshit us because we will shoot you. Because this man is cowboy and he knows horse flesh." I didn't know if Porter did or not but I'm giving him the whole spiel. These guys are coming through on their horses and straggling just like all the people going by us. We let them go, at a checkpoint they were being checked. This one, this one, and then we took them off. Tell the guys to get of their horse. We let them take everything but the saddles. Some of those guys hugged their horses and cried. Honest to God, some of those Germans they didn't want to leave them for nothing. One German through the interpreter said, "Can I stay and take care of the horses?" "Rouse, get the hell out of here." So, we took those thirty-six horses and Porter took charge of them. He had some of these jumping horses and some of the guys were riding them. He came to me and he said, "Joe, can't you do something? These are very valuable horses. Can't you do something to keep these guys off." I said, "Sure, we will put them off limits. You take care of that, you can do that. Put them under guard and nobody takes them. If they want to ride horses they ride these." Regular cavalry horses. These were beautiful horses, powerful, big, strong, and they were jumpers. So, what happened was they used these to go up in these mountain and did pretty good with them. They came back down. We got a lot of political prisoners, an awful lot of them. Some of the guys even got one guy with suitcases full of $1,000's of American. They stole the money and never said nothing about it. I found out after the war was over. They went into business with it. I think they got $10,000 a piece.

Anyway, what happened was one night at the town. . . We occupied a castle down there. They had civilian workers like Russians, Czechs, and Poles.

R: The war still on at this time?

D: No, it was just ceasing; just around May 8. We occupied these castle where I chased Hermann Goring out of

or where he had left. We occupied that as quarters for the battalion headquarters. Every night we would have all kinds of cut glass and everything else, three or four different wines, and they had women out of these . . . They weren't concentration camps, they were labor camps. They had women out of these that were working as our servants. One thing led to another and one night this colonel got a little bit to much to drink. He said, "You know what? We are going to have a review tomorrow. I want the cavalry . . . Thirty-six horses, the first time they will come around behind the troops walking. Then when troops pass off the parade ground, they will come around again at a trot, and the third time they come will come around as a gallop." It was strictly his idea. Oh hell sure, big deal. It wasn't going to be the monotony of the regular day. I used to work as the parade adjutant because I had a loud voice. We didn't have microphones and all that day. It was just column of companies. When I say march then the drums would start beating. Nobody thought about this god damn band being in the middle of the parade ground; big tubas. These guys went around, everything was fine. Right after I got the troop started I had to walk real fast to get up in the review stand with the colonel. Nobody thought about these damn horses and this band. It didn't enter anybody's mind. So the first time . . . These guys that were riding them weren't cowboys. Half of them didn't know how to ride. It was a lark for them. They get in these dog gone saddles and they come around. The first time around about two horses threw two guys. They are on the parade ground, laying down, and the horses are cavalry horses, they stay with the other ones. They go around the second time and this band is going; the tuba is going and the band is playing. The second time they come around at a trot. God damn, about half the horses threw the guys. Guys laying all over the parade ground and the horses running with their stirrups flapping. We are having a hell of a job keeping a straight face up there. The old man is looking at it. The next time they come out of their trot I think Porter was the only one on a horse. Guys were spread all over the field because this band scared the horses. I don't think they ever must have been near a band before. None of us knew enough about it. So, that night we get to supper and the old man tried to blame it on everybody but himself; that it was their idea. "No man, that was your deal."

Then we settled down a little bit and we had a deal where we had a hell of a big area to govern, take care of. These military government people and all weren't up there, they were behind. So, don't you know, they said, "Joe, you take care of this." I got about seven or eight of these labor camps that you got to make sure

they get fed and all this kind of stuff. We weren't allowed to fraternize with the German women. There was a lot of good looking women in these labor camps. We were able to take them to town and have them make dresses for them and get their hair done. Some of these guys would take them to parties with them. We had a good time. There was also a bunch of Holland nurses down there. They had some hospitals down there in Bad Gastdine and places like that. It was a recuperative camp for wounded military people; German. They brought in all these Holland nurses to work there. They had some red headed gal, she was in charge of them. Well, right away I'm responsible to see that they get rations and all. Christ the rations were tough. We gave them concentrated rations and stuff like this. It so happened I had to work with this gal a few times. I was her contact with the American military. She was a nice person, she spoke some broke English. Out of a clear blue sky we started getting people cleared out because we couldn't feed them. There was over 15,000 Hungarian soldiers down there. Our horse troops come in with a report. They were in boxcars. What they did was have the train pull them through the tunnel, the Czechoslovakian tunnel, on a railroad tunnel and prop them on our side of the line. They didn't want to go to the Russians these Hungarians, they wanted to go to us. So, I go down there with a jeep and driver and the interpreter and the sergeant. We go down there and God these guys are all over the place; boxcars. 15,000 is a lot of guys. Through the interpreter I said, "Find out who is in charge." He was gray with a goatee and all, he seemed to be in charge. They hadn't had any food for several days and they were going in the hills picking greens and stuff like this to eat. I told him, "There is not to much I can do for you other than what you see here but I'll see what I can do about getting some rations up to you." So, I had to go back and make some phone calls. We got some concentrated rations up to them. I don't know how much or how long they stayed there.

Then another thing I had was we had a lot of Italians and we couldn't feed them. In the Bavarian Alps and this was in . . . May 8 the war was over. So, this had to be middle of May. They were still snow like on the drift down . . . I got some pictures somewhere John. I'll show you in a minute. Snow would drift down and cover the roads. Like on this side of the road it would only be two feet deep but over here it would be eight or ten feet deep. We figured on marching these Italians back to Italy over the Alps, the Bavarian Alps, but we had to get the snow out of the way. That was another detail I got. So, I got some engineer bulldozers up there and we start knocking the snow over the edge of the mountain; clearing the road up. I got

some engineer people to tell them what we wanted and they just went ahead and took over. They start cleaning the mountains up. I had a convertible Phaeton Mercedes Benz that I confiscated from an Austrian Prime Minister. I think I gave him a receipt marked Abraham Lincoln or something. That was standard procedure. If we took anything we gave them a receipt whether it was Charlie Chaplin or whatever. I had this convertible Phaeton and we weren't allowed to drive them and we weren't allowed our own driver. So, I took one of the Russians out of this labor camp that I was told he could drive. He was an ex tank driver or something in the Russian Army before the Germans got him. Anyway I would take him around and I didn't understand Russian and he didn't understand English. All I knew was langsam meant slow, and rex and links was right and left. I don't know if that was Russian . . . That was German. "Langsam Ruskie." We were going down one of these valleys and in these Bavarian Alps these valleys are nothing but mountains down to the road. Down at the end there would be a little settlement down in there; maybe twenty, thirty houses. People lived there all their life. There was one place down there, Rauris, Barvaria-Austria. Al's company occupied that; C company occupied that after the war. The rail head was seventeen miles up to where we were at Lenz. There was people down there seventy, eighty years old that had never been up to that railhead; seventeen miles. All they had was horse and wagons. There was people in that town seventy and eighty years old and they told us they had never been up there. They had no idea what was up there. They lived in this mountain but they had a nice set up there. God our guys took over the best tavern and hotel and all it was down there, little one. They had it painted. They had a German come in there and paint characters on the wall. They had parachute pictures on the wall, guys jumping and everything else. I went up to this mountain and we got it cut through and about that time everything started to quiet down.

Then it come up to be short timers. I had a lot of points because of my time in Hawaii and all. See, for points I had five years overseas duty. My three years in Hawaii, most of it was after the emergency, so it counted. Plus I had been wounded and I two years something. Anyway, the way they computed it I had more than enough points to come back. The old man called me in and he said, "Hey Joe, stick with me. I'll get you railroad tracks in about three months." That was captain's bars you know. Of course I had been newly married before I went overseas and everything else. I said, "No, I'm getting out of this man's Army." I came home on a rotation deal and I did get out. It was a terrific experience for me. Thank God I lived through it.

D: How did you come home?

R: Aboard ship.

D: You left out of one of those . . .

R: Marseille; Camp Lucky Strike, Marseille, France. Now I don't remember the name . . . It was an American ship because we came into Boston and when the ships came in they had all these fire boats pushing the hoses up. We come in up there. Then they took us by rail. We went to Indian Town Gap, is where I got my separation trunk. Kass's cousin was come back to. He had been in Panama and he came to us as a replacement. He didn't come into my regiment but I met him before he saw his first combat action. I was able to get a jeep and go over to see him. So happened that a lieutenant came into our company as a replacement. I said, "Hey Evans, did you happen to see a Master Sergeant McGuinness on the way over?" He said, "Charlie McGuinness?" I said, "Yes." He said, "He was my platoon sergeant on the way over." I said, "Where the hell did he go?" He said, "Oh, they sent him to 501." So, I got a jeep and I went over to 501 and they told me what company he was and where it was. I went out there and he was on his first night patrol. I met him there. He came back in the rotation deal too. I was his payroll officer a couple of times. We used to get a whiskey ration, the officers. I couldn't drink the stuff and some of those guys were getting more than enough so I used to give it to Charlie and his buddies. I think they appreciated it. All and all that was about it, I got out.

I'll tell you something in retrospect. I should have stayed and taken that rank. The only thing was we had a colonel, regimental commander, who I have absolutely disliked. He is dead now, he got to be a three star general. I have absolutely no respect for the man. I had five encounters with the man and not one of them were good. He was a drunk. I think my father was pretty much of an alcoholic when I was young. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday he would have at least a hell of a glow on if he wasn't buzzed. He always seemed to want to take his frustrations out on the boys. That is one of the reasons I went in the service to begin with; to get away. My mother told me, she said, "Don't you ever hit him." I said, "Well make him stop hitting me. There is no reason for him beating up on me." Then he got angry, when I got a little bigger he started using his fists. I couldn't go for that. I would parry him. He wasn't that big a man physically. Then I thought, "I better get the hell out of here." I couldn't get along with this colonel. As a matter of fact he tried to court martial me. We had a hassle. I had taken over one of those German motorcycles. They were heavy

gear driving and all. No chains on them, they are powerful things. We lived about thirty miles from regimental headquarters. Well, I had to get around. We only had the two jeeps. The commanders would take them some time and I had things I had to get out for. I had this motorcycle and I would go around those Bavarian Alps like you wouldn't believe. I was young and crazy at the time. We had a get together one night and he cut over by me. He said, "Reed, I want to talk to you." "Yes, sir." He said, "I see you riding that motorcycle around." I said, "Sir, I need transportation." "I don't give a God damn what you need. I'm giving you a direct order right now, don't you ride that motorcycle around. You are on foot from now on. Do you understand me?" "Yes sir." What else could you do, he is a bird colonel.

The very next morning he calls battalion about 10:00 and I'm the duty officer and everybody else is out in the mountains. We didn't have communications at these places. We had radios that go four miles but some of these places were thirty miles away. The companies were stuck way down these mountains. The battalion commander, executive officer, would be going down checking on everything with the jeeps. I was left at headquarters. So he calls . . . We had a telephone line to regimental headquarters. He calls up and he said he wanted an officer at 12:00 sharp at regimental headquarters. This is day after or two days after he had given me this order not to ride that motorcycle. I tried to tell him that . . . "Colonel," I said, "I'm the only officer here and I have no transportation." Right away, "God dammit I don't give a God damn about your problems. I want you here." So, "Okay," I walk out of the headquarters, there is a motorcycle. I jump on that damn thing and I was inclined to leave it a couple of blocks from regimental headquarters or walk up. I thought, "Hell no." I pull up in the courtyard and there he is on the top step, like a tiger. I don't think he even hit the ground, I think he landed on my back. He stood me at attention and he ate my butt out; up one side and down the other. I tried to tell him and he wouldn't let me talk. He said, "I'm putting you in for court martial for refusing to obey a direct order from a superior officer." So I thought it was kind of chicken because I never had any problems. This guy he was an alcoholic. I had seen him in situations where we had . . . One time I had to prop him up against the wall on a mattress and it was a combat situation. I lost a lot of respect for people like that. I heard him one time say, "We took an objective. We don't need artillery. My men will take it anyhow." We did but with a lot of casualties. Things like this happened. Yet, his assistant was a gentleman all the way through; a real guy.

Another time . . . I only served on one court martial board as an officer. Of course in those days only officers were on the court martial board. There was four officers on a court martial board. Before this guy come in to be court martialled he come in, this colonel. He made a speech, "This man is guilty. I don't give a God damn what happens, he is guilty. You understand me?" Of course the president of the court said, "Yes." So, this kid come in and he had gotten away with a lot over the couple of years. His company commander wanted to be sure he was convicted. His company commander killed himself. He lived down Washington Court House, Ohio. He became adjutant general of all the state of Ohio in the National Guard; Hebe Minton. He was a friend of mine. He came in and he said, "This guy has gotten away with so much. I got to nail him for something." Then the evidence didn't back up what the guy was accused of. You have a secret vote. One of them showed up "not guilty" all the time. They would all look at me. They would make a speech, "We will take another vote." Turn the vote in, one of them showed up "not guilty." They look at me again and start making speeches. This went on five or six times and Raudstein said, "For Christ sake Joe, we are not going to get anywhere this way." So I ended up out voted. I changed my vote but the guy was cold decked. I didn't like that kind of stuff. Maybe I'm wrong I don't know, but I can't see it. We had a lot of guys. In the course of the training years we punished a lot of guys for things that had it been combat you would have patted them on the back and said, "Good for you, you had a good time." Before that with all this GI and red tape and everything else a lot of guys got court martialled, did extra duty, were restricted to quarters, some did prison time, thirty days, and stuff like this. Not for major crimes but for chicken shit stuff.

D: More of that peace time Army stuff?

R: Yes, peace time Army stuff was what it was; discipline. We had a lot of good times. I had a friend. . . There was a Harold B. Northcott there that . . . He was a British guy. Where we lived in the stables they had a diesel powered engine that gave us all our light, water, and everything else. Every once in a while it would blow out and I would have to go down to this house in the jeep and pick him up to come in. We weren't allowed to touch it. He would adjust fuses or whatever had to be done and then we would take him back home. They had a tavern around the corner. It was the Cricketer in Marlborough, England. Maybe Marlborough was eleven or twelve miles from where we were. The road was like this and at night you couldn't see well. When the moon lit you could see real good. It was like

driving on water, it would reflect. So, every time we took him back we would take him down to Cricketer and buy him a couple of beers because he did us a favor. Then he got the idea that after the Cricketer he would take us up to his house and they had some chickens and stuff. His wife would cook us a couple of eggs. We didn't get eggs. We would put like a £1 note. . . Anyhow it was worth two and a half of our money. We would put one of them under the plate, each plate, for her--my jeep driver and me--and we would go back to camp. We got to be good friends that way. It got to be fun. These bars that they had in England, they generally had a center place and then they had rooms that were like wheel spokes off of the bar. In other words the bartender could work on any room but you couldn't go into this room. They had rooms where they funneled the servicemen in and the towns people in and stuff like that. Sergeant Reed in that particular joint was an exception, he went in with the towns people. We went up often.

It was one Christmas eve they started the big turkeys and all for the men, the troops. This must have been 1943. About 8:00 at night all the lights blow and the motor stops. Here we are starting to bake turkeys. No lights, no nothing, so we get a flashlight light and they continue to do some cooking. Meantime I got to get a jeep from battalion and a jeep driver. I always took Nigger Horton, he was a southern boy. We called him Nigger because he talked that way. I get him--he is dead now, he had a heart attack and died--I get him and we would go and get Harold Northcott. You go in there and, "Mrs. Northcott, where is Harold?" "Oh Joe, he is down at the Cricketer. They are having a Christmas party." We go in there and we open the door and walk in. Honest to God they are having a ball; all old people, all the young people are in the service. This Harold Northcott, I didn't know it, he had a guitar with a mouth organ attached to it and he had cymbals on his knees. He was the entertainment. He would bang those cymbals and he played this thing and played the mouth organ. I walked in there and I looked. I said, "Nigger, what the hell are we going to do? We can't take this guy out of here." Harold says, "hi," and he is playing away. These people are having a ball, some of them are dancing around. So, I go up to the bartender. I said, "Hey, I got a problem." He said, "What is that sergeant." They all knew me as Sergeant Reed. I said, "I got to take Harold back to camp. We had a blow out, we are making Christmas dinner for tomorrow." He said, "Oh boy! Why don't you wait a little while, have a couple of beers." So, we did. We waited maybe forty-five minutes. I said, "Hey, I can't wait no longer. I got to get him going." I made a little spiel to the people. "Okay, but you bring him

right back." So, we put him on the car and he was three sheets to the wind. We took him back to the camp and he got the power going. I said to . . . Horton was one of our better thieves anyhow. I said, "Horton you better get a god damn turkey out of that kitchen or I'll kill you." We stole a turkey and took it back with us and gave it to the people. Give it to him to give to the people. It wasn't cooked, it was partially cooked. These were the things that happened. As far as I'm concerned there will always be an England, those people treated me terrific. I didn't get to know anybody else. Now the Hollanders were good to us but I didn't get to know them. I was knocked out of Holland pretty quick.

There are people in Holland when we have a division reunion every year, there is some like thirty, forty people come over here to our reunion. They have never forgotten us. They have monuments all through the town and they have a museum. It is just terrific. This fellow, a guy by the name of Pete Pulles in Eindhoven, he decided on his own--he is about my age now--he decided on his own that he would like to know where ever one of our fatalities dropped in their battle in Holland. I guess he had been going on for a couple of years and somebody had given him a line on me. It just so happened that Bill Knight, who lives down in Naples, Florida, out of his own curiosity one time he sat down and pinned a lot of this; where this guy was killed and that guy was killed. You don't remember these things. You know they were killed, you know aproxiamately where they might be killed. Other guys you don't even remember where. Bill had a lot written up so what I did . . . This guy got a line on me. He wrote me what he was trying to do. C Company was a lot of blanks, he didn't have no information on it. I sat down and I wrote a letter and I photostat it and I sent it to about twenty-five guys. I wrote him a letter to what I was doing. Geez, when it come back, I think we got ninety-nine percent of C Company accounted for and I sent it to him. Then it started it a little correspondence back and forth. We had some guys that . . . It is a funny thing, we had some guys that, replacements and all, one guy lost his leg. He wants nothing to do with us. We had nothing to do with him losing his leg. He was a little less fortunate or maybe he was fortunate. He could have gotten his head blown off. We were all there. We saw more action than he ever thought of seeing. He saw one operation and lost a leg real quick. He wants nothing to do with us. He writes to all these publications and everything else and wants to know things. This guy Pete Pulles wrote and he said, "Anything you give me and anything I give you I'm sending a copy to Joe Reed because he keeps a good record of C Company." Which I have done. So then

this guy got it pretty well up to date and he keeps sending me updates copies.

I met him, he went down to Piatt's one time. Piatt called me up one day, he said, "Hey Joe, Pete Pulles is staying with a guy in Akron." What happened was Piatt went to Europe, he son was stationed over there. His son was a major in the paratroops. He went to Europe to visit his son and when he got in Germany then they toured everything. Pete Pulles corresponded with me, so in one of the letters I put, "Hey, one of my war buddies is coming over that way. He is going to be Eindhoven. I don't know just when." He sent me back a letter, he said, "Joe, when he gets here you have him contact me. We will give him the royal treatment. We will take him anywhere he wants to go. We will show him anything he wants to know," and they did. That is how he got to know Piatt. Then he was in Akron with this fellow he always meets everytime he come. He stays a few days with this guy in Akron. That is what they look for, somebody they can stay a couple days with. Cut their expenses down. Piatt called me up one day, he said, "Hey Joe, do you know Pete Pulles is coming down to my house this Sunday and he asked if there is anyway you could meet him down there." I said, "Sure Max." So, Kass and I went down and we met him down in Piatt's house. I met him at some conventions too but I didn't know him then. Since that time he has got the idea that he has pursued the outfit through Normandy, Holland, Bastonge, all the way through. He has taken it upon himself.

D: Don't we have records on all of that?

R: Yes, well he got a lot of this information from the Army. The Army can't tell you he got killed a 100 yards east of there. The Army will tell you he got killed in Holland. They won't tell you he got killed a 150 yards east of Eindhoven or north of Eindhoven. This is what this guy is doing. He is pinpointing it down. Or he got killed on the Foy-Noville Road. Now, he got some information on . . . He wrote a letter to the Division Association, they printed it in. Some guy sent him some information in about this guy was killed on the Wilhelmina canal and this guy was killed here. It was all wrong so I told him about a guy. Joseph Joseph he said he was killed in Holland. I sent him a note. I said, "Pete, Joseph Joseph couldn't have been killed in Holland. He was in my platoon, got killed on the Bastogne-Noville Road." He wrote back, he said, "Geez Joe, this is conflicting evidence. It is hard to do." So, what him and his wife did one morning . . . It is a four hour drive from their home to Bastogne. They went down there and Bastogne has museums and all too. They went through the GRO grave registration

office down there. They found out that I was right. He was buried initially in Bastogne. He wasn't buried in Holland. See, what they have done is they buried all these guys initially. Then as people got sent home they would eliminate some complete cemetaries and consolidate the cemetaries. We got a lot of guys back. That is one thing that bothers me too. We have a lot of guys that were killed in our outfit that their families left their bodies over there. Now don't misunderstand me, they are beautiful cemetaries and they are well taken care of. Probably better than back here. If I had thought that was going to happen to me I would have been concerned, I would have been very concerned. I would want to be buried in this country. Of course if anything ever breaks over there again and like the Russians . . . They are going to destroy all that stuff. They will knock down the tombstones and knock down the statues and the monuments. It is not likely to happen in this country. Then we came home and I got discharged out of Indian Town Gap.

D: Did they give you mustering out pay and some sort of a state bonus?

R: Yes, there was a . . . Well, I had some pay coming. I don't remember about mustering out pay. There was no bonus as far as that was concerned. The state gave us--Pennsylvania at the time--I think I got about $400 from them. That was it and I don't remember the circumstances of it. You just had to put in the application, the amount of time you were in the service, amount of time you served over seas, whether you had been wounded, and this and that and the other thing. We had a good outfit, we had a crack outfit, they were tough.

You know John, when I sit back and try to analyze on my own the one thing that enters my mind, that we did what we did so many times, was physical endurance. We were in tip top shape. More than once we shot Germans in their holes sleeping. I had a deal up in Holland one time. Al Hazzenzal and I were in a platoon; he was platoon leader, I was assistant. We were going in a column file up to this farm house and they had a big stack of hay beyond the farm house. He is on one side of the house and I'm on the other side of the house. We figured krauts were in there. We go right along side this hay stack, these guys must have been asleep. The hay stack moved, the bottom of it. There is three krauts with a machine gun. Hazzenzal used to do a dance when he got going, his feet would be going as quick as his trigger, and me too. I just turned around and we burped the hell out of them. Here the krauts were all sleeping in holes around there. We just ran down the line popping them in their holes. They were

slow waking up, reacting, they were exhausted.

We wouldn't get sleep. That was a whole thing in the war, you didn't get any sleep in time. Sometimes you stayed awake all night and all day. It was so cold in Bastogne that if you could fall asleep for five minutes the cold would wake you up. You just couldn't sleep. Your shoes and stockings and your pants were soaking wet and they would freeze to you. You had to move around, you had to move to get a little bit thawed. What we did in the daylight hours if everything was stable, we would get two or three guys and send them back to some blown out house that had a fire place. Let them build a little fire in there and try to dry themselves out a little bit, get a little comfort. Then when they got done, they would come back, we would send three more guys. That is the only way we could do it. I think physical endurance as far as the paratrooper were concerned, and at that point and time we were the elite of the American Army--the American Airborne Paratrooper--physically we did a lot of training and everything else. We had what they called log rythms. We used to throw poles up and down and around. I got pictures of that too. I think you might have seen them. I think it was our physical endurance that kept us going.

I had a deal in Holland one time. I had an M1 and I always kept a bayonet on a M1 for two reasons. One thing I could keep the M1 clean, I could sink the bayonet in the ground and just wipe the end off. I could use the bayonet. We stopped in an area, in a cobblestone street, and I stuck the bayonet down in there. I was so exhausted I leaned on the end and I fell asleep. I was standing up there, standing, leaning on my rifle at the head of the column. The column would stop. I must have fallen asleep for a few minutes I was so tired. First thing you know some British officer come up. "I say chap," he wanted to know some things about it. I had a nervous habit of flicking the safety in a M1 rifle is in the front of the trigger guard. I had a nervous habit of flicking it back and forth. I would never know whether the safety was on or off unless I checked it. So, this guy woke me up and I was talking to him and somebody said, "We are moving out." I said, "Okay guys let's go." I pulled the gun up. The gun discharged between my toes, hit the cobblestones. Christ that guy took off like a big bird. He didn't hang around.

D: After peace was declared in Europe did you give any thought to going to the Pacific and fighting the Japanese?

R: It was a matter of we were assigned. It wasn't a

matter of thought.

D: Even though you had enough points to go home?

R: Yes, but what they did was rotate. The theory was that we were going to go home. They were going to rotate us to the states, we were going to get a thirty day leave, and then we would go fight the Japs. It was standard procedure. There were no ifs, ands, or buts. We weren't getting out.

D: Even if you had sufficient points?

R: There was no such thing as sufficient points. The war was still on. While we were in Marseille, France waiting for a ship the Japanese capitulated and that took everything out of it.

D: You got to go home?

R: That was a procedure initially. The high point guys got to rotate and get a furlough but you weren't getting out of the service, not initially. When we were in Marseille, France, waiting for a boat to take us to the states, the Japanese capitulated.

D: Did you ever see any black combat troops?

R: Actually not combat troops. What I saw in blacks was supply troops; truck drivers and things like that. We had a couple of funny incidents, which I would rather not repeat, happen with blacks. They used to drive the trucks. As a matter of fact they were in Normandy, they were driving trucks. I never came across them as combat troops. We weren't integrated or anything like that.

D: As far the SS goes on the German side, what is your feelings towards them?

R: They were an arrogant bunch of bastards and we used to beat the hell out of them. We didn't take any guff. I had an incident. Remember me telling you about Al and I killing the machine gunners and the crew they had. Well, when we got around to the front of that house here as the war started to deteriorate the Germans put an SS guy with every regular unit. His job was to keep them from withdrawing if he possibly could or if they deserted to shoot them. We got around to the front of the house and we took about twelve prisoners there. We made them take their helmet off and then put their hands on top of their heads. One guy, "Nein, nein, nein." He wouldn't. "Nein, nein, nein." So, one of these guys drifted over to one of the guys and he said, "SS." These Germans would tell us, "SS." It

got around to me and the guy told me, "Hey Joe, that guy is an SS guy."

D: He was just being belligerent and wouldn't do it?

R: He was trying to show that these guys that they didn't have to. So, I went over to one of my guys, a tough kid, named Kissee. He is dead now, he got killed in combat. I said, "Kissee, I don't give a god damn how you do it but get his hands on top of his head." "No problem." Bam, he butt stroked him with the rifle. That kraut went down flat. He laid there for quite awhile, got up then. His hands went up with no trouble at all.

D: Were they harder to fight?

R: They were tough, they were tough. A lot of respect for them, they were tough. They were dedicated. Their parachute troops were tough and dedicated. We always found ourselves fighting SS and paratroops. One thing they did, they played chess with us. I told you we did vigorous patrolling. We would go out there and we would find out . . . We had a regular line outfit across from us instead of a paratroop outfit or an SS outfit, or one of their regular outfits. We would be pulled out of line and maybe we would move sixty miles down the road and we would be thrown in. Christ who were we up against? The same guys that were up north. They would maneuver us, they would play chess with us. The better troops were against the better troops. Now whether the Germans did this or not I don't know. We supposedly in the Normandy invasion, I think it was a six parachute brigade. Supposedly we decimated them but hell in about eighteen months we were fighting them again. Supposedly there was no way they would ever come back to combat. We weren't fighting maybe the same guys but they had the same unit designation and they were just as tough. Germans were tough. Germans were good soldiers, they were good soldiers. Even in combat I think they had a lot more discipline than we did. Of course our guys were no problem. You hear this stuff about Vietnam shooting their officers. We didn't have that kind of stuff. If you had a guy along side of you with a rifle, he was your best friend.

D: As far as the black market activities go on that, was there much of that with dealings in chocolate bars and cigarettes and things?

R: Well, there wasn't with us. There was with people in position to do it, like the troops that were stationed in Paris and places like this, and a few people who had access to transportation. We were a quick hitting combat outfit. We didn't have that many vehicles to

fool around with that. I don't say some people weren't doing it. Silk stockings and stuff like that, I don't know anything about this. This is one thing I didn't get involved with stuff like this. I'm not aware of much of it going on in our outfit. I was aware that in the rear echelon there was a lot going on. As a matter of fact the mail people, the people that worked for the post office, I heard some guys in the States, in a bar, laughing about how they used to ransack the packages and all that kind of stuff. I have sent lots of things home that never got here. Just didn't get here, now why I can't tell you. Another thing, when we go in combat we leave all our gear back in some particular area. Our own people were supposed to be guarding it. Hell, they would steal the stuff and then sell it for booze. It just seems that everybody would go with the flow. Our units personally were mobile. I don't know of us being in a position to do anything like that. I personally never had the desire. I would have never allowed it and I had some position of authority. I would have done something about it. Because you were robbing from Peter to pay Paul, your personal gain.

D: That is all I have, if there is anything else you want to say.

R: Gee John, I could ramble on for all time because different things come up after I talk to you. The Red Cross people were terrific with me; always nice and everything. Here people complain . . . These guys complain about the Red Cross only giving donuts and all that stuff. They gave us a place to stay. In London they had the Rainbow Corners and they had a place in Paris but I never got to that but in London they had a Rainbow Corners. I was in it five or six times. I still remember a lady's name, her name was Jo Sippy. She lived out in St. Louis, Missouri. Treat you nice . . . I did see her in Paris. She took me to the cathedral of Notre Dame and showed me around. They were just nice people. Fred Astaire's sister, Adele Astaire, she married a British nobleman and Adele Astaire worked in our Red Cross club all the time and she knew me personally and I knew her. Good sport, good sport, always, "Hey Joe, how are you doing?" A lot of those girls were terrific in remembering names. You maybe only get down there once a month. You walk in the door, somebody call you by name. Whether that was one of their requirements or what I don't know. They were really nice. They let you know where the black market restaurant was, where you could get a decent meal; stuff like this. Like I tell you about guys getting rolled, they didn't have any train fair back sometimes. They would go in there and these gals would loan them train fair to get back, "Pay me when you get back." No big problem. They were just good

people and it was good to hear those Yankee voices once in a while because we weren't in a position where you ran into American girls. After I got to be an officer I did. I knew some nurses through all the guys and all. The thing about them was, whenever they had a hospital set up they had a bar and they had cold beer. In England you didn't get cold beer out of the spigot, you know hot, warm beer. I hated it. Their beer wasn't good to begin with as far as I was concerned, I didn't drink that much of it. The nurses, and the doctors recreation room they had a bar and they always had cold beer. What you could do there was . . . All you had to do was knock on the door and you asked for a particular nurse. They would just let you in but you had to know somebody. Some of these guys married these nurses over there. So, maybe ten of us had gone, asked for the same girl, but we would get in. Then you sit at the bar and have a drink.

I didn't fraternize with the Germans. I hated them, I could have killed every German I came across. I still picture my buddies' bodies and all. As far as going back to Europe, I have no desire. There is to many bad memories, to many bad, bad memories. This guy Pete Pulles, "Come on Joe. You can stay with me." I said, "No way." I have no desire to go back there, none whatsoever. It is all bad memories for me. I would imagine there is five guys out of my platoon of thirty-six that are still alive. They didn't all get killed in combat but a lot of them died prematurely. Some of them died over combat injuries. I got one guy, he died about five years ago. He was in and out of the hospital for thirty-six years; Vets hospital because of his mental injuries. All and all like I say it was a terrific experience but I wouldn't want anybody else to have to go through it. Yet, if there was another war and I was younger, I would go back in the paratroops. No better outfit to be in. I mean I'm not taking anything away from any other organization I don't know. Anybody under flat trajectory fire has got my respect. It takes a little bit of something to continue. Just like we always felt the paratrooper was just a cut above the rest because it takes a little guts to step out of that door up there with all that equipment on you and in the dark of night and going into the enemy territory. Telling people the excitement of a parachute jump, how you got to parachute jump with 180 pounds on you, plus everybody down there shooting at you. It takes a little extra. It makes you a better man or a dead man, either one.

D: Thank you very much.

R: You are welcome John.

END OF INTERVIEW