

1999

Our Hometown Heroes

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Recommended Citation

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VETERANS APPRECIATION DAY
NOVEMBER 13, 1999
WAL-MART SUPER STORE
STATESBORO, GEORGIA

**OUR
HOMETOWN
HEROES**

WORLD WAR II VETERANS REMEMBER

EDITED BY
SUSAN G. MOODY AND TAMMY CANADY

CORRECTED
INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY:
MS. LINDA AWE
DR. DANIEL GOOD
MS. SUSAN G. MOODY
DR. DELMA PRESLEY

BULLOCH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
POST OFFICE BOX 42
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Our
Home Town
Heroes

World War II Veterans remember

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Home Town
Heroes

Interviews conducted by

World War II Veterans remember

Dr. Daniel Crane
Mr. Susan G. Meady
Dr. Delma Prasley

On Saturday, November 13, 1998, the Wilkes County Historical Society along with the Wilkes County Chapter of the American Legion and the Wilkes County Veterans Association held a Veterans Day observance entitled "Our Home Town Heroes." The purpose of the event was to honor local veterans, educate the community on the sacrifices of war and raise funds for the Arlington Memorial for World War II veterans. The program began with an address by the Director of Arlington Cemetery and several other noted officials. Throughout the day local witnesses were asked to share their stories and war experiences in recorded interviews. The following are transcriptions from a few of the stories recorded that day.

Our Home Town Heroes

World War II Veterans remember

**Edited by
Susan G. Moody**

**Interviews conducted by
Ms. Linda Awe
Dr. Daniel Good
Ms. Susan G. Moody
Dr. Delma Presley**

Saturday, November 13, 1999, the Bulloch County Historical Society along with the Walmart Super Store in Statesboro, Georgia hosted a Veteran's Appreciation Day ceremony entitled "Our Home Town Heroes." The purpose of the event was to honor local veterans, educate the community to the sacrifices of war and raise funds for the Arlington Memorial for World War II veterans. The program began with an address by the Director of Arlington Cemetery and several other noted officials. Throughout the day local veterans were asked to share their stories and war experiences in recorded interviews. The following are transcripts from a few of the stories recorded that day.

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George Wotherspoon

Interviewee: George Wotherspoon(GW) Interviewer: Dr. Delma Presley(DP)

DP: Today is Saturday, the 13th of November 1999. My name is Delma E. Presley. We are going to be talking with Veterans of World War II at a special ceremony and exhibit which is being held in the Walmart parking lot with the assistants of the Bulloch County Historical Society coordinated by Dr. Kemp Mabry. The purpose of these recordings are to interview individuals who served our country during World War II, to allow them to tell their stories if they wish to do so, and to explain any memorabilia or artifacts that they brought to the exhibit. This day is designed to raise funds for the Arlington Memorial for World War II veterans and it's an extensive project. We are happy that we are able to play a very small part in this ceremony and observance in Statesboro, Georgia.

DP: George, tell me where you grew up.

GW: I grew up in Pennsylvania.

DP: What part?

GW: In the western part in Midville. The home of the zipper.

DP: In Midville, Pennsylvania. And you went into the war at what age?

GW: Oh I don't know. I enlisted in 1940.

DP: That was shortly after Pearl Harbor?

GW: That was before Pearl Harbor.

DP: That's right. That would be before. What time in 1940?

GW: I think it was in October. Because I went to the first OCS they had. I was commissioned in the last of November just

in time for Pearl Harbor.

DP: Where did you do your training?

GW: Fort Monroe and then from there I was sent to Greenland. I spent 2 years in Greenland. We didn't have all this modern equipment. It was really pathetic because I had a bunch of boys from Mississippi, and they like to have froze to death. They weren't use to that kind of stuff. From there I came back to the states, and, of all places, I landed at Camp Stewart, not Fort Stewart, Camp Stewart.

DP: Near Hinesville, Georgia.

GW: From there I went with a division out of Wisconsin and Minnesota. We went to Germany. Because I had previous experience, they said, "We are going to send you overseas up to the front." You can catch up with your division later. I didn't see my division for a year. (Laugh)

DP: So, you spent 2 years in Greenland.

GW: Yes

DP: And how long were you at Camp Stewart?

GW: About, lets see, about 4 months.

DP: And from there?

GW: I went overseas again. I think it was in the 50's when I came back. No, I came back in '47 because I went back overseas in '48.

DP: Where did you go went you went back overseas from Camp Stewart?

GW: I went up to Wisconsin and then we went overseas. Because I had previous experience they sent me on the advanced

party. I caught up with the division after they came over about 8 months later. Then we went through Germany and everything...and Luxembourg.

DP: Who was your commander?

GW: I'm trying to think who was the commander of the division. I really have forgotten his name. I have it back home somewhere but...

DP: Who was the enemy? I suppose the Germans.

GW: The Germans. Yes in dee-dee. Yes, sir.

DP: And what sort of activities did you do?

GW: Well, I was in the artillery, so I had a 105 batteries. The leagues have pictures of some of the devastation we did when we fired on the different places. One of them that really gets to me. We fired on a horse drawn artillery outfit the Germans had and we had horse and guns scattered all over, cause we got some direct hits. It was a rare thing. This Lieutenant gave me the wrong coordinates. My driver and I went up... it was too quiet so I crawled up a tree and looked out. It was just a German tank outfit getting ready to attack. So, we got on the radio and called down.

DP: Oh, my goodness. Well that was good thinking, quick thinking.

GW: Well, it was one of those things. This Lieutenant gave us the wrong coordinates, and we were in a place that we shouldn't have been. But those things happen in combat. Things like that.

DP: I would like to ask you a few questions about your family in the military. Where you're parents in the military?

GW: No, my parents weren't but I have five brothers and all five were. When I was in Korea I met three of them that I had not

seen for over five years. One was in the infantry, one was in the engineers, and one was in the Navy. We met in Korea.

DP: So you were Army all the way.

GW: All the way. Artilleryman from the first day.

DP: Are you the oldest brother?

GW: Yes, I am the oldest. You know it's a little funny thing. My brother who was in the Navy, he told me you're nuts to jump out of Airplanes. But I told him who you calling nuts you're in the submarine service. He was in the submarine called the [Hado?]

DP: Well, George what was your most trying experience in the War? The time you felt it was very dangerous or difficult?

GW: When we were in Korea... after the Korean War. I had a job. I had 100 Korean soldiers, "Rocks" they called them, and we were in the DMZ. We policed it from one end to the other taking out land mines and putting up signs. We were down in the British sector, and it just happened it was lunch time. The British took off, and when they took off, 50 "Chinks" popped out of the ground just like they were mushrooms. I threw up my hands and I said, "What do you want?" This one, he could speak English, he said, "We want to see if you men are armed." I said, "You dumb SOB if they were armed you wouldn't be here." Well I had to report that. When I report what happened, the Admiral said, "Well, don't worry. If they capture you we'll get you back." Being the short-tempered guy I am, I blew my gasket. This Major grabbed me and said, "You can't talk to him that way." I said, "I already did." I said, "It was my butt that was going to be in that Chinese jail, not his." He said to me, "I'll tell you George, when you go out tomorrow, take a camera." He said [...] picture. You don't have to have any film, but they stayed about 100 yards along the line and just followed us for about 2 days and then they quit. (laugh)

That's one of those things. You know anything could happen because we only had a few. I had just my radio operator and driver and that's all I had with me. We could have easily been captured.

DP: What was some of your most happy experience in the War?

GW: Getting home (laugh) in one piece.

DP: Tell me about coming home at the end of World War II. Where were you when the war ended?

GW: I was in...lets see what is it now? Just the other side of... across the Rhein River. What happened was we had one of our aviators who was a spotter. He would spot targets for us, you know. He said, "I got to get back to my division and see about going home." I said, "You just got here." So we went there and this Warrant Officer said, "Anything I could do for you?" I said, "Yeah, went do I go home?" He said, "What's your name? What's your outfit?" He said, "Wait a minute go eat and come back after lunch." This is one of the funny things. The files were set like this, down like that. He said, "You should have been home long time ago. We'll send you on a "special" in about 2 weeks." I said, "I'm ready right now." He said, "What about your career?" I said, "Forget it." So, I flew out of Germany into France and then transferred. From France we had to wait 3 days. Then we flew to Marseilles. I waited 3 more days. Everyone else that went home went home on ships. They were home in two weeks. I went to Casablanca and was there for 4 days. From there I went to [Baycar?]. We blew a tire out on our plane so I had to wait 4 more days in Brazil. I stayed there 4 days. When we got to Miami I said, "God, I've never been in Florida, got a lot of money I'll have a big time." Then it came over the loud speaker there was a hurricane coming and everybody had to get out of here. So they took me up to Harrisburg to Indian Town Gap. I had to report there. We got in this group [?] he said, "Anybody that it going to stay in the Army raise your hand." I raised my hand. He said,

"Well, come back in 3 days." I went back and reported to this General. He told me how nice it was that I wanted to stay in the Army. I said, "There's only one thing General, I have been overseas for over five years." I said, "I want, guaranteed, six months in the states." He said, "Oh, we can't do that." I said, "How the hell do you get out of here?" Well, I went home, and I found out the only way you could get ahead at that time was by having a college education. So, I went to Allegheny. I had 120 days of leave coming. That was the most you could get. They gave me two years for all my service and everything. I was just short one semester and this teacher says Lieutenant, I was a Captain, he didn't know. He said, "You know it kind of irritates us to see all these people in "khaki" in classes. I said, "If it wasn't for "khaki" you wouldn't be here." So I quit right then. Well, I went to the recruiting office and said, "I want to get back in." So, just like that I got a letter that said, "Here you go." So, I went down to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Well, when I went in I went to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. I reported to this Captain. He said, "You got to go airborne." So I became a jumper.

DP: You were getting older then, weren't you? You were in your thirties I guess.

GW: Oh yes, yes. I went to Fort Benning they made me a captain of the group that was going through school. They would say to me, Captain, go on this [?] again and show that guy how to do it. You have to make 5 jumps. I made about 10 cause they would say, "Captain go up there and show 'um how you come out of that door." That was my initiation in being airborne.

DP: Let's talk a little about your ranks. When you enlisted, I guess you were a private just like everybody else.

GW: Private like everybody else.

DP: Tell me about your ranks.

GW: Well I was promoted to Sergeant. Then they sent me to OCS and I became a Lieutenant. I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant and then Captain when I was in Greenland. I was promoted to a Major when I was in Korea, and I was promoted to a Lieutenant Colonel when I was in Germany.

DP: Well that's going all the way up. That unusual isn't it?

GW: Well you know, I think if you deserve it. I was one of the few Majors that had a battalion in Korea. I had...there were 6 battalions in the outfit I was in and 5 of them had Lieutenant Colonel. I was the only Major, so I felt pretty good about that.

DP: You mentioned that you were in Bastogne.

GW: Yeah.

DP: And did you meet French people there?

GW: Well, there were French people there. The only people I was connected with was the poor soldiers that were lost, encircled in Bastogne, but we broke out and that was a great day. I'll say this, I was pleased with the service I had. I've been all over the world. I don't want to talk like the Chamber of Commerce but there is no place to me better than Bulloch County, and I've been all over the world. It's really great. We have fine people, we've got good churches, we've got schools, and we've got recreational areas for the children. I'm proud to be here.

DP: You mentioned that you had 4 other brothers who went into the service. Did any of them have as long of a career as you?

GW: My brother Sam put 20 years in. The rest of them got out. My brother was in the infantry and he got wounded.. This was the thing. He was laying in a hospital and they were

going to cut his arm off. And 2 of his buddies, he was a Master Sergeant then, told this Captain in the Medical Corp, if you try to cut that arm off, we will brain you with these crutches. So they called in the head of the Medical Unit, and he saved Sam's arm. He has his arm today.

DP: That's a marvelous story.

GW: He has been all over. He has been in Vietnam and everywhere else. It was an odd thing in Korea. I met my brothers I hadn't seen for five years.

DP: Let's go back to your service years. You told me about your ranks, but you did not tell me about how many years you served all together.

GW: Well, I serviced 26 years total. I would have served a full 30, but they were going to send me to Vietnam. I said, "Look I've been in 2 wars and in combat in both of them. I know I'm not going to get a soft job or chair job in an office. I'm going to be in combat and I've used up all my chances." So I said, "That's it. I quit."

DP: Let me ask you another question about your service. Did you serve with females and minorities?

GW: Let me tell you about the first female that I ever saw. When we came back from [?] we landed in Boston. The 1st Sergeant and I were walking up the street. This young lady comes by, you know, and we just walked by her. She said, "Soldiers." I said, "I guess she means us." So we turned around. She said, "What do you do when you meet an officer?" I had never seen a women in military clothes before. The 1st Sergeant says, "Lady, I'd get out of here cause he eats people like you." That was my first encounter with a female. I seen some good ones. How the only females we ever saw when we were in Greenland were the Red Cross ladies. I want to tell you that was something up there. We went up and we were supposed to give military

cover to the Air Force when they land on what is [Blue West One?]. When I think back, I think, who is going to steal an Airplane...50 below zero? But we had to walk guard and all that stuff. I got assigned to a 5 inch Howitzer outfit and we were put out on the edge of Greenland so we could see the first enemy ships that came in. That was a real experience, because I had a good time with those boys. They were great soldiers. What we did was we put out points where we could see the first ships and in the winter time when it froze over we would put steel [battles?] out there. We shot until we hit them and we'd mark that down. Then in the spring when the ice melted we would put those same [battles?] on a raft an weight it down and shoot until we hit them. We knew that no matter what the weather was we could shoot and hit the first ship that came in. I got a high commendation from the inspector from Washington who came up to inspect us. I told them to pick a target and they picked it. We had to call coordinates, red fox 7. We hit it. He said, "Well, your pretty lucky." I said, "Name anyone." They did. I said, "Tiger 7." We hit it again. They said, "I've never seen anything like that." So we got a real high complement from those fellows. It was really something.

DP: With a name like Wotherspoon. I think of Scotsmen.

GW: You got it.

DP: I wonder if you ever looked back into your own ancestry?

GW: Let me tell you. I belong to what you call the SAMS. The Scottish American Military Society. You have to be of Scottish kin and have served in the Military. Of course that's why they are all kidding me about kilts. (laugh) But we only do that for special ceremonies and things like that. I went to Scotland, and when I went, I got the phone book I looked all the Wotherspoon's up. When I came to one that said Reverend I said, "I've got to see him." He gave me a good background and told me all about... I told him where my parents came from. My parents came from a little place

called [Coat Bridge?] it is out of Glasgow. Those people were coal miners and steel workers. They came to homestead Pennsylvania to [work in] Carnegie's Steel Mills. It's where US Steel that use to be Carnegie Steel all came from. I found a lot of them, and they were glad to see me and hear about me. They wanted to know if I could come over and stay with them sometime. They took me on a trip, and I went all the way up to [?]. There was a Wotherspoon that was the Burgess of [?] and when he saw my name....[?] great thing you know. He told me a lot about where the Wotherspoon's were and everything else. It was really interesting.

DP: I would think so. You mentioned that you had photographs. Could we look at those?

GW: Sure, sure. I'll show you these.

At this point Dr. Presley and Mr. Wotherspoon review some of Mr. Wotherspoon's photographs. These are a few of the points brought out while looking at photographs.

Mr. Wotherspoon's grandson graduated from the Academy. His granddaughter is in the Air Force. His brothers names are David, Sam, George and Clark. Clark is a Doctor. He was a professor at Morehead in Kentucky and he lives in Texas now. He was a tail gunner in the Air Force. Robert was on the [Howdo?] he was a torpedo man. Sam was in the Infantry. David was in the Engineers

DP: George as you look out on American life today what are your thoughts on the military and the people that served?

GW: Well, the military today is nothing like the military that I know. The first thing, from being an old soldier, the discipline is lax compared to what we had. The second thing is the teenagers today have no idea of morals or responsibility. That has got to be taught to them. I'm surprised when you go up here to the high school and common language is profanity. Young ladies use words which we didn't even use in the military. There is no home life, I don't think, anymore. As I saw, instead of yea and

nay, what happened to yes sir and no sir and yes madam and no madam? That's a foreign language to these young people. When you talk to them about the military. They say what for? To make a point, I go to church regularly. I'm the secretary and treasurer of my Sunday school class. I asked this boy who is a senior in high school. I said, "Do you go to church?" He said, "What for?" That's the reasoning of these young people. It really concerns me what's going to happen in the next 10 years, because they are going to be voting and they are going to be running a lot of this country. We have to change that around. We got to get together. We have to go to the schools, the churches, all young gatherings and teach them morals and responsibilities. I don't know just exactly how we are going to go about it, but that is a regent thing for all [of us?].

DP: So you think the military experience is going to help?

GW: It's going to help. I'm proud of all these ROTC Students, because if you notice when you meet them, they are yes sir and no sir and they are neat. They will sit back and listen. They don't butt in or anything like that. I don't want to be saying everything is iron clad and straight laced. You got to have some leeway because to me these modern day kids, even little teenagers, they can do tricks on a computer that I don't even know. If it says turn it on and off I can push those buttons, but they can do all.. it's amazes me. I got some grandsons that can get on a computer show me what they can do. It amazes me what they can do. So these kids are plenty smart, but what we have to do is learn them to control their smartness. If we can do that I think everything is going to be alright.

DP: I think so too. Well if you had it to do over again would you have spent 26 years in the military?

GW: Oh yes, yes I would. Knowing what how...because it was right down the line, straight laced and you did what you were told. You knew that if somebody above you told you to do something that it was for your good and they were going to look out for you. You know we talk about all this modern

day communication. How fast we can go on the computers and everything else. Let me tell you, my experience. My first pay day in the Army was \$13.20. I took it from the Captain put it on a pool table and shot it one time. I put 40 cents in my pocket and said, "shoot 26. One more time, 52." I said, "One more time." I said, "\$104.00, how much does a Sergeant make?" I thought he was the top of the world. They said, "\$60.00." I said, "So long. I'm gone." I just got back to my bunk and here come the [?]. He said, "First Sergeant wants to see you." We're talking about communication. He said, "I hear you won some money in a crap game." He said, "Give it to me." He said, "Don't you know privates aren't suppose to have any money." He said, "I'll let you keep \$4.00 and I'll put \$100.00 in the bank." When I got through OCS and got commissioned. He was the first one to salute me. I gave him a dollar and he gave me my bank book. (laugh)

DP: What a story.

GW: Well that's the way it goes.

DP: Is there anything else you want to say about your experiences?

GW: Well, one of the things I was really proud of. I got assigned to the Inspector Generals Office at Headquarters in Germany. From there I went to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and I went to France, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Libya. I went all over Europe. Thanks to them I got to see that part of the country.

DP: You saw the world. Finally once you got out of the service, I noticed you didn't go back to Pennsylvania, but you came back near Fort Stewart. Camp Stewart.

GW: Yes, it was Fort Stewart when I retired. I went out to work at what is now Brooks Instrument. It was Lockwell then. My wife died here, and I married Miriam Deloach. We have just a charming life.

DP: Well that's just marvelous.

GW: The only sad part of that is we lost our son David. It was a scary thing. David was going out to the University, it was a College then. I thought I was going to teach at High School. Jim Sharp was the principal and after two weeks I told him, "I'll be in jail if teach here." Because I was use to when I told someone to do it, no questions, you do it. They weren't use to that. David was at the University. He saw me, and he asked me what I thought about going to Vietnam? He said, "If I go there I'll put my time in, come back and finish up." I said, "That's a good idea"... and he got killed. I always felt bad about that.

DP: Was it an accident?

GW: Yeah, a land mine...

But you know it's funny, my first day out at the High School. Usually when a new teacher comes in what they do is kind of stay there and observe, but they left me. The first day this boy came in with his shirt all the way down. I said, "Young man button up that shirt." Well, he kept on walking. I said it a little louder. "Young man, button up that shirt." He just walked in and sat down. I reached an grabbed a hand full. I said, "Button up or I will knock your damn head off." His eyes got big. I said, "Tomorrow you come in with a necktie on." Well they weren't use to that, I don't think. I told them this is what I want in this classroom. All I want on your desk is your book, a pad, and a pencil. The next day I said, "Nobody move." I went down and I threw everything on the floor. I said, "When the bell rings you can pick it up." Now you know what I mean when I tell you to do something. I'm really grateful, although I only stayed there a few weeks. I saw some people that went out to the University that said, "Mr. Wotherspoon, I am so glad you talked to me and you told me that when I went to College the first thing I was going to do is fail English and then Math. He said, "You told us that you would have school in the events to help us get over that hurdle." He said, "I would never have made it without your help."

DP: That's a marvelous story and I want to thank you for your time. I do have a form that I would like you to sign. It's a way of us to be sure that you agree that we can use it. Thank you for your time and I have enjoyed it. Of course you and I have known each other for many years, but I have learned more today.

GW: I enjoy talking to people like you. It's nice to talk about old things. I said, "I'm really getting old, but I told one fellow today that I wanted to expel a rumor, that I was at the dining room at the last supper." (Laugh)

Carl Atwell

Interviewee: Carl Atwell(CA) Interviewer: Linda Awe (LA)

LA: First we are going to talk about the beginning of the War.

CA: Yes.

LA: Today is November the 13th, 1999. This interview is with Mr. Carl Atwell. Mr Atwell do I have your permission record?

CA: Yes.

LA: First I'd kind of like to know what you knew about the war before the war started, before you enlisted.

CA: What I knew about it?

LA: Yeah.

CA: Well, the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor and Hitler was already fighting in Europe. I heard it on the radio and all.

LA: So you were already kind of politically aware of what was going on. Did you think the United States was really going to go to war?

CA: Well, after they bombed Pearl Harbor, I knew they were going to war.

LA: You knew for sure?

CA: Yes.

LA: Did you enlist?

CA: Yes.

LA: Was Pearl Harbor the determining factor? Is that when you decided?

CA: Well, one thing was that I was a teenager and I wanted to see what it was like.

LA: How old were you?

CA: I was about 19. I wanted to see what it was like.

LA: Just to go and see?

CA: Yeah, I found out the hard way.

LA: How did your family feel about you enlisting?

CA: I didn't have anybody but an Aunt. All the rest of my family had died out. My mother died when I was a baby and my Aunt raised me. Her and my Granddaddy.

LA: So you didn't have any brothers or sisters.

CA: No, no brothers or sisters.

LA: She must have been a little like, Oh no! he's going to war.

CA: Yeah, well I wanted to see what it was like and I found out.

LA: Where were you living at the time?

CA: Sylvania.

LA: Where did you go to boot camp?

CA: Camp Wheeler in Macon.

LA: What was a typical day like in boot camp?

CA: Well, it wasn't bad. I enjoyed it.

LA: Really?

CA: Yeah, because I was raised out on sort of the edge of town as a country boy. I got plenty of exercise and all. Them city boys were coming in there. They would fall out. We would go on hikes, marches and they would fall out, and I would laugh at them. They wanted to know how I took it?

LA: Did you know about weapons and everything like that. What they were training you with was it new?

CA: Well, I didn't know about the Army's weapons. I knew about civilian weapons and stuff like that.

LA: Were you a crack shot?

CA: I did pretty good.

LA: How many weeks was your basic training?

CA: 13.

LA: Were there any of your friends that went with you when you joined up.

CA: I was the only one when I joined, but I met some of my buddies on the train going to Camp Wheeler. One of my buddies when he was leaving one morning, he was drafted, and he was down there on the side. He said, "Carl you better come go with us." I said, "I'll be there the [same] time you will." [I was] just joking. So, I decided to go ahead and volunteer, because they were going to draft me anyway. I went and volunteered. We were going to Camp Wheeler. I was walking down through the coach of the train, and somebody caught me by my coat tail. He said, "Hey were you going?" I turned around, and it was one of my buddies. The one I was talking to that I had told I would be there the same time he was. I said, "I told you I would be here, didn't I?" He laughed said, "You sure did."

LA: Do you have any special memories that came out of basic training you'd like to tell me about?

CA: Well, I volunteered for the Air Force and took all my examinations, you know what I mean, the paper work and everything. When I got to Macon... what kind of service you were going in. No it was Atlanta. What kind of service you were going in. I told them I volunteered for the Air Force, and I didn't know a Lieutenant from a house cat. He wanted me to join the paratroopers. I said, "No. I didn't want to join no paratroopers. I joined the Air Force." He kept on ... I told him, "No. If I get ready to commit suicide I can go out there and do it myself." I said, "Jumping out of the airplane with them shooting at you up there you ain't got no chance." He kept on and kept on. So he kind of made me mad. I kind of got a little hot with him. He just sat down there and he had a little card, some kind of form he filled out. It had numbers around it and he went to clipping those numbers out. So next thing I know I was up at Camp Wheeler. I was there about 4 or 5 days when they told me come down to Battalion. I said, "What in the world do they want with me down there?" I went down there and saw a Warrant Officer.

He said, "We want to know something? Where are you supposed to be? What did you volunteer for?" I said, "I volunteered for the Air Force, but a Lieutenant got mad. He wanted me to join the paratroopers and me and him got in sort of an argument. He got hot and I did, too. And here's where I wound up in the Infantry." He said, "You sure did, but I tell you what we can do. We can transfer you back to the Air Force." I said, "No." I have been here about 4 or 5 days, maybe a little bit longer. I done got use to the guys. I said, "I'll just stay on in here." But if I knew then what I know how..(laugh) he couldn't of (hired?-fired?)...

LA: So after you got out of boot camp did they tell you before where you were going?

CA: Yeah, they told us all, right at the end of boot camp. [They said alright if ya'll don't go over the hill you will get to go home for a week. I mean a month.] then you'll come back and ship out overseas. We got restricted to the company area. We couldn't leave or nothing. Couldn't get mail in and couldn't get nothing out. No calling or nothing. When we found they was fixing to ship us overseas, we asked them about what they promised us. They said, "We don't know nothing about that." Well then we went on overseas. We went on up to New York, Camp Tillman, I believe was the name of it. Anyway we got on a boat and headed out overseas. One lone boat going across the ocean. So one night a sub got to chasing us. [They spotted us so they chased us.] We turned around and came back, started back. We out run it. We back tracked all night and turned around the next day and took off again.

LA: How many days out?

CA: We were out there about 14 days.

LA: Then you turned around and came back?

CA: No, I mean the whole time it took for us to go overseas. We landed in Casablanca.

LA: What year was it you landed in Casablanca?

CA: I couldn't tell you that. I don't remember. Anyway they transferred us from Casablanca to our outfits where we were suppose to go. We went there and joined an outfit. That's where they had that big battle in Africa. We joined it that night and the next morning we were being attacked. I had never been in combat.

LA: So this was your first real battle?

CA: Yes, and we were going up there where they had had that big battle. It had changed hands 7 or 8 times. We'd take it and they'd take it. They'd take it and we'd take it. It had changed 7 times, we'd handled it. Well I said, "This war wouldn't last for the week, because I had ever held a job for 7 days. (Laugh) That was a long 7 days.

LA: What was it like your first day of battle were you really prepared for it?

CA: Well the first real battle I was in we took a position. The Germans seen us when we went in. They knew where we were at. They started shelling and they shelled us for about 30 minutes. I don't know what happened. They finally figured, I reckon, they got us all or something. They quit shelling. So we stayed hidden. We had holes dug there, and we stayed in them. It was in a cactus patch and them things over your head at night. They chewed them cactuses (up?). From then on we just scattered, you know, and have major battles somewhere along the line. Don't ask me the name of the towns.

LA: Is kind of hard to remember, because you kept on moving.

CA: You'd take a town. We'd move on through. We never did stop. We'd take a town and we would move through it. We'd set up (?) side. We may stay there a day. We may not stay but a couple of hours and move on.

LA: You kept on moving east? Right?

CA: We kept on moving. We didn't have time to get familiar with a town or nothing.

LA: What were the people like when you went through the town. Were they glad to see you or did they just not care?

CA: Well they acted like they were. Frenchmen and all, anyway.

LA: You didn't really get to know any people because you guys were moving pretty fast.

CA: We just kept on moving. Never did get friendly with nobody or nothing.

LA: You kept moving east, where did you stop?

CA: Well, Berlin is where we stopped.

LA: How did you get from Africa to Berlin?

CA: Well, I invaded Sicily. That's actually where you want to start. I joined them in Africa we were the clean out guys. I went to Sicily and invaded. After we cleaned Sicily out, we went to England for 6 months training for the invasion of France. So we invaded France. I went through France, Belgium, Holland, and German.

LA: How many years were you over there?

CA: Lacked about 3 months of being 3 years.

LA: 3 years with the only time off that you got...

CA: I mean 2 years. Well, 3 years because I got over there first in 43 and '45 and got out.

LA: Did you ever get to come home?

CA: No, from the day I left home I never did ever come back.

LA: Never did come back till everything was done?

CA: If I'd known what I know now though, I'd been AWOL the first time. Because he told us that if we didn't go AWOL... He made a speech saying that if you boys don't go home, you'll get a pass back to the states before you go overseas. No one. Well, maybe 1 or 2 went AWOL, but not very many.

LA: Was there any place in particular and I know from what we were talking about you were constantly on the move except for when you had that 6 months in England. Was there any special location that you were in battle that you remember?

CA: Yeah, Crucifix Hill. That's what we called it, Crucifix Hill.

LA: Where was that?

CA: It's right there almost at the (German?) line. We had a big battle there and at (Octan?) We didn't go to (Octan?). We blocked the road off leading out of (Octan?) We tried to cut that off, and the German's tried to escape out of (Octan?) back to German lines. We tried to block that road off, but they would run it anyway. One time the planes caught a convoy. I don't remember where it was at, on the highway. Oh man it was about 4 or 5 miles long. They tore it up. We when back. We were going to use that road, but we were about 2 hours late getting there. The Germans already had

it, so they called the Air Force in, and they worked them over. We just had a ring side seat. We sat back there watching the planes strafing.

LA: The German convoy was leaving, our guys were just totally bombing them?

CA: Yeah, bomb'n them, strafing them. I don't know if it was the next morning. Anyway, when we went down that road there were vehicles, animals and everything laying up in the road, men and everything dead.

LA: Let's go to England for a minute. We will kind of change pace to a different time. When you were on leave, what did you do six months in England?

CA: Well, we trained for the invasion of France. We stayed in billets. I don't know if you know what that is, something like ridged or round top things. We stayed in them in the little old town, I believe the name of it was (Ridport?). That's where we were stationed, right out of (Ridport?). We would go into town every night. I thought it was a great thing to get fish and chips for about a quarter. All you could eat and your drink, all you could eat, I think it was about 25 cents. About the whole company would go every night and eat fish and chips.

LA: That was probably a big change from the rations that you had in the field. What kind of rations did you have, when you were in the field?

CA: We had regular Army food. See we had our kitchens and everything, but at night we would go out. We weren't supposed to do it, but we would go out and eat. They had food for us, but we would go out and eat. Everybody, well not everybody, but just about everybody.

LA: How did the British treat you while you were there?

CA: They treated us good.

LA: You didn't have any confrontations or problems or anything with them?

CA: Oh, every once in a while, the American boys and the British boys would tie up. They would get mad at one another.

LA: And try to say who was better and ...?

CA: They would say they were better and that they were doing all the fighting. We'd say no you ain't, we're doing it. And the first thing you know there would be two tied up and the next thing you know there would be a bunch of them fighting.

LA: Did you see a difference in the change of attitude? I know when you first went over there I know you were in Africa. That was in '42-'43.

CA: Must have been about '43.

LA: So did you see a big change in everybody's morale or were they just tired?

CA: No, everybody's morale stayed up pretty good. I'll have to give 'um credit. Very seldom did you hear someone fuss about something cause they knew they had a job to do. They were trying to get through with it.

LA: Did you ever get to see any of the USO shows?

CA: I went to a couple of them. I didn't like the USO show.

LA: Really? Was it just so many people or...?

CA: No, it was just some times you would go down and there wouldn't be nothing there.

LA: Really?

CA: Then again it would be a pretty good crowd, but I never was a drink'n fellow and they had beer and stuff all like that.

LA: Oh, OK. I just thought it was (strictly?) like entertainment or something.

CA: Well, they had entertainment too, but a lot of them would bring their own drinks and stuff. And where you got drinking going on there always a (fight?).

LA: That's true, that's true. What was your last day like before you were being shipped home?

CA: Well, my last day. You see when I got to Berlin they transferred me because I had enough time to come home or just about enough time. So they sent me back to a place where they were sending troops from the battlefield to England for three weeks. I think rehabilitation. They sent me back there to help ship them out. There was about 15 or 20 of us back there. They would ship a group in and we would have billets there. We would build them, beds and stuff. We had mess halls to cook for them. When we shipped them out, we put them on the train the next day, they would go to (...?) or somewhere like that and catch a boat and go to England across the channel. Then they would come back after the 3 weeks were up. We would go down there and pick them up and bring them back to the billets, put 'em up and we'd ship 'em out the next day or either the next day back to their outfits.

LA: How did you come back?

CA: On a ship.

LA: Did you come back faster than you went over?

CA: I believe it was. We had so much stuff to carry back. You see we had to bring all our clothing and everything back that we had carried over there. I had two duffel bags and that night before we left I got high. Wasn't my fault, we had two Captains and a First Sergeant and a (staff?). They said, "you're leaving us tomorrow we're going to celebrate tonight." So at that time they were having a dance. So we went down there. I can't dance, never could, and they were (?), but anyway I got high. I mean high. We took (two-fifth of (?) like a peach?) And we went out and got about four or five quarts of wine, french whiskey. We drank that and I got high. Some things I could remember and some things I couldn't. I remember one thing, when I came to my senses, I was out in the middle of the dance floor, all by myself. I looked around, I could see people line up against the wall over there. I wondered what those people were doing. I remember that and anyway blank. The next thing I know there was two MP's one on each side of me carrying, holding me, carrying me out. When we got to the door these two Captains were standing there and one of them was the Golden Glove Champion of New York. He asked, one was standing in the middle of the door and the other was standing on the side, "Where you carrying that one?" They said, "We're carrying him to lock him up. He's drunk." You ain't carrying that boy nowhere. He's going home tomorrow. We're out here celebrating. He said, "You ain't taking him nowhere." They said, "He's our responsibility. If you don't get out the way we're taking you in." They just ought not have said that. You see I was standing right in front of him, he was right in front of me. All I seen was arms flashing. And about that time, blump, blump and both of them was on the floor. Everyone, soldiers, and civilians just ganged up and just pushed us out the door. Blocked the door so they couldn't get out. They threw their arms over my shoulders and we walked down the street.

LA: Oh, my gosh. (Laugh)

CA: I don't remember nothing else until we got to the house we were staying in.

LA: That's great.

CA: After it was all over the next day or two we talked about it, laughed about it. Look like he just done like that and blump, blump they were gone. Then they just pulled me out the door and the rest of the soldiers and stuff were standing and blocking it. Just stood there and blocked the door. They couldn't get out.

LA: That would have messed you up big time trying to come back home. So did you ever have any personal confrontation with the enemy after they were taken prisoners.

CA: Yeah, We were in a little old town, just moved into it that night. They attacked it the next morning. I looked out the window and I seen a tank coming up the street. Me and another guy had just went up steps, into an upstairs apartment. I think about four rooms and I looked out the window. I said, "Here comes a tank down the street." He said, "Where?" and he came into the room. I showed it to him down the street. I said, "don't stand in front of the window." But he must have 'cause about that time. I looked out and here comes the troops, too. I said, "We got to get out from here." So I turned and went to running for the door. About that time I heard something say bam. I looked about and they had thrown an armor piercing through the wall. You know that armor piercing, that's steel. The other guy, believe me, I don't know what happened to him until later on. I come to this window. I looked and they were shooting. I said, "I got to get out of here." I jumped out of a second story window. I threw my rifle out on the concrete floor, you know concrete down there at the bottom. I don't remember if it was broke or what. I looked down there and

thought it's better to jump than to be captured so I jumped off and sailed out. I landed on my feet, got up, picked my rifle up and about that time 2 or 3 more guys come up. There was about 6 of us got there together. They said, "What are we going to do?" I says, "We are going to get out of here. There ain't nothing we can do. I don't know where the rest of them is." We come in last night. They was supposed to lay a bridge down and let a tank over. They never did do it. We walked up that canal. You see the canal run across and turned a little away from the town. We were walking down there. A rail road was down there, and we were walking down it. The next thing I know I look down and here comes some Germans hopping, and holler'n wait! hey! hey! We didn't know what they were saying. I said, "Wave back, don't fire on them." So they went to waving back at them and we went to walking right on didn't stop. They didn't fire and we didn't fire. We went and jumped in the canal and went a little farther. We went down the canal. We went down there about a half a mile to a bank. We knew where the town was. We left the next morning. It was supposed to be... Another reserve outfit [was] up close in there after we moved out, but they was waiting until we moved out. Anyway, we went back there and there was eight of us escaped. The rest of us got in touch with the Piper Cub and he seen the Germans carrying what looked like about seventy men back over the hill from that town.

LA: You guy just barely escaped from being captured yourselves.

CA: Yeah! and this buddy... Last year we were laughing and talking about it and he said [there's] that fellow there jumped out of the window. You see he got wounded when the shell went through the wall and I didn't know it. I just turned around and said, "Let's go." I thought he was following me and when I got to that window. I looked around he was gone. I just looked down and said that's a long ways but I got'a get down there. So, I just sailed out. He told me at the reunion here last year, this August, he said, "There's the man that jumped out and left a wounded man."

He laughed about it said there's the man who jumped out and left the wounded man. I said, "Who?" He said, "You left me." He remembered me. (Laugh) He said, "You left me."

LA: After all that time.

CA: I didn't know that was you. We got to talking about it, you see, and telling about it, talking about things, you know. He says yeah I got wounded. They carried him down the stairs there and put him in a room. There was a German nurse in there and a German Officer. She was patching up American soldiers, she was patching up the wounded. He shot her. The German officer shot the women, and we were talking about it. I found out about it when I came back and met that other reserve company. They had seen this German officer out there in the field. He was firing, shooting back at them and they shot him down out there in the field. In the big field, vacant lot. They shot him down out there. We got to talking about it that's when he found out it was me.

LA: Well at least you met again, so that was good.

CA: That was about the closest experience I had to being captured.

LA: That was very close.

CA: Now we had some more escape later and come back later on that night. One of them his story was. They were prisoners, and the Germans were taking them back. There wasn't but about three Germans with them. They were marching them alone. This guy in the back he tapped this guy and told him to passing it up. He was going to jump'em. He was in the back you see. So they marched them on. I believe it was him, he reached over and grabbed his head and snatched it back and took to hitting him in the head. By that time all the excitement got started and all of them knocked them others down and beat them up, stomped'um and they escaped.

LA: No kidding, oh my gosh.

CA: That was the way they got out, but we just walked out. We didn't run we walked out. It was the (craziest?) thing, but the next morning as we made an attack that's when I got blew across the road. We were going to make another attack up that road. We were about (?) someone got the guy in back of me and blew me across the road. A piece of shrapnel hit me in the back. Sort of under my rib back there, but it didn't go in. I could feel it back there. I mean I could feel where it hit. I reached back there, after I came to. I was unconscious, I reckon, for a little while. It blew me cross the road into a ditch.

LA: Of course.

CA: I came to and I could feel a sting back there. I reached back there and I could feel it. I could get my little finger right in the hole, that's all I could do. It didn't feel like it was deep, but I didn't feel no metal. But it just hit and stuck in. So I just laid there a few minutes and I got to thinking. I thought what if it pushed our outfit back but the Americans pushed the Germans back. I couldn't hear nothing, everything was just quiet. So stupid I, walked right up the road and at the top of the hill was a cross road, something they just loved to zero in on. I stood right there at the cross roads. I heard the machine guns. From where my position was, the cross road went this way and the road I was on went this way. I liked to have (?). I heard that town over there, that's where we were suppose to go, to that town. Reckly, I heard a machine gun, a German machine gun, you could tell the difference.

LA: You could tell the difference by the sound?

CA: Yeah, and I said, "Oh that's our men down there or some of them." I'll go out there and join'em. I walked right on down the road, stupid. I don't know why I did it but I just walked right on down the middle of the road. Something we never was trained to do. I reckon I was dazed.

LA: Was this during day light?

CA: Yeah, it was daylight. I guess I was dazed from getting blown across the road. Anyway so I went on down there and I seen a guy. I asked him, "Hey where's G company?" He said, "I think it's down there about two streets down on the left." I went down there and sure enough I seen a guy there. He said, "What happened to you." I told him I didn't know. I was a platoon runner you see (?) head quarters, platoon runner (...?) first platoon. I walked into the office where they set up a CP, that's were we stayed the CP. A message came in we had to go out. "I" post is where we were. I walked in, and they were all sitting around there, they all jumped up and looked at me. They said we thought you was dead. I said not quite I hope. They asked me if I got hit. I said, "Yeah. I got hit in the back. He said, "Let's see." He looked at it and told me there was a little hole there. You had better go back to the aid station. He sent me back there. They checked me out and told me that it didn't go in. They said, "You want to go to the hospital?" I said, "No. I'm going back to my outfit." They said, "OK, but if it gives you any trouble come back." We will write you up for the Purple Heart, but I never did get the Purple Heart. I don't know what happened.

LA: Oh, my god.

CA: I never did say nothing about it, but (?) to me that didn't mean nothing. I got a bronze star and then I was supposed to get a silver star. I never did hear nothing. They told me I was put in for it, but I never did hear nothing for it.

LA: Paper work and red tape.

CA: It got misplaced somewhere.

LA: Yeah.

CA: Someone asked me why I didn't write and ask them about it. I said, "Oh, that's been so long it ain't no telling what

happened to it."

LA: Tell me about when you got back home.

CA: Well, my Aunt she was still living. She had a little farm. She had about, I think it was about a 52 acre farm, and I was farming that when I went. When I come back. I decided what kind of business I wanted. I got to thinking, I said you know I think I will go in the cab business. I hooked me up a cab business. First I went to driving for another fellow. And then I thought why don't you go into the cab business for yourself? I got the idea then and I went and told him. He said I got it sewed up. I said, "Maybe so but the way people talk you ain't." I started my cab business and in about a month he quit. He went out of business. Everyone came to me. And along when he was in business he wouldn't haul blacks. He said, "No. I ain't going to haul them." But I hauled'm all. How I didn't mix them. I'd put the blacks on the back seat and the whites on the front with me. It was a small town and in about a month I had it all sewed up. Black cab drivers and the other black people came to me. If a black person started some stuff with me they would come around there and tell the person that's our cab driver you better not mess with him if you do you got us to mess with too. I had good friends as a cab driver with black people and white people too. I never did have no trouble.

LA: How long did you do that?

CA: What? Taxi? Thirty years.

LA: Thirty years, oh my god. You just started out driving a cab and then you just went into business like that.

CA: Yeah, just went into business like that.

LA: Oh my gosh.

CA: I imagine I would have still stayed on longer, but the government got to raising taxes on everything and putting such high tax and gas went to going up. I don't know if you remember all this. Your time, but anyway gas got to going up. It got up to about a dollar something a gallon. I had to keep raising prices and a lot of the people were old people and they didn't have much income. I couldn't afford. Well I figured it up. I lost about a thousand dollars a year. I charged it to them, but I knew I wasn't every going to get it, but I had to cover up some way, charge it to keep other people from saying something. I figured it up, some years I lost maybe about a thousand five hundred. I'd just mark it off and forget about it.

LA: Is there anything I haven't asked you that you would like to tell me?

CA: No, I think you just about covered it.

LA: Any particular memory that sticks out or anybody?

CA: Well after I was home about, I guess about six months longer. I met a girl at the Café, she was a waitress. Everybody come in there and everybody knew me and knew her. She was raised right there in town where I was raised. They would come in there and said it was because she was working at the café that I started driving a cab for the man that run it. They said, "Carl comes in and she gets all excited and tries to pour coffee in the bottom of a saucer."

LA: I take it that this went beyond just meeting her. What eventually happened?

CA: We eventually got married. We went together, I guess about six months and then about nine more months we got engaged and then got married. And we are still married.

LA: Is she around today?

CA: No she not here she's at home. I tried to get her to come. She said, No. I'm not going anywhere." I said, "Well you can go shopping." But she said, "No."

LA: It would have been great to talk with you both. Well thank you so much I appreciate it. I'll end the tape now and let you get up and get the circulation going.

William Brannen

Interviewee: William Brannen (WB) Interviewer: Linda Awe (LA)

LA: Today is the 13th of November 1999. This interview is with William Brannen. Mr. Brannen do I have your permission to tape?

WB: Oh, yes, yes you surely do.

LA: Can you tell me what branch of the service you were in?

WB: I was in the Army.

LA: How many years were you in the service?

WB: Two and a half years.

LA: Can you tell me what date you joined?

WB: Yes, I joined December the 12, 1942 when I was a freshman at the University of Georgia. I was discharged October 1, 1945.

LA: So you were a freshman at the University, so you knew basically, politically what was kind of going on.

WB: Oh, yes. I was enrolled in basic ROTC while I was at the University. I knew quite a bit about military history and the military... I can't think what I wanted to say. All right, OK

LA: Did you know before December 7th that we were actually going to go to war?

WB: No, no I didn't know that. I don't think anyone knew it. We knew it was likely, because the Germans were fighting in Europe. They were giving the English there in England the devil because they were bombing England every night. It was rough on the English.

LA: So it was more than likely to be eventually.

WB: Oh yes, more than likely, yes.

LA: Were did you go to boot camp?

WB: Fort Riley, Kansas

LA: Fort Riley, Kansas? How did you get there?

WB: Well let me back up a minute. There were 300 of us at the University of Georgia who had to go in at the same time. So half of us who were enrolled in cavalry, basic ROTC at the University went from Fort Lyons we went to Fort Riley, Kansas, and those who were taking infantry ROTC went to Fort Benning. Those of us who went to Fort Riley took infantry basic training under a cavalry officer. Do you want me to tell you where I went from there?

LA: Yeah.

WB: All right. I went to Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

LA: What kind of training were you doing there?

WB: Infantry training. We stayed there a month and left there and went to Fort Mead, Maryland, still taking infantry training. Then we left there and went to a Camp in, Massachusetts. We were there for about six weeks. Then we left and went up and boarded a troop train. Went up to Nova Scotia in Halifax and loaded on a ship and sailed for Liverpool, England. We arrived in Liverpool, England on or about November 8, 1943.

LA: So, you almost went through a years training. Being you were in ROTC, what was your rank when you went in?

WB: Private.

LA: You were a Private? Even though you were in the ROTC they put you in as a Private?

WB: Oh, yes, yes.

LA: So at the end of the war what rank did you hold?

WB: I was a Tech Sergeant. That's a Platoon Sargent.

LA: A Platoon Sargent. So that what they called a Platoon Sargent back then was a Tech Sergeant?

WB: Yeah, right.

LA: So when you first got to England. After you got stationed there where did you proceed from there?

WB: A week later, I along with a few hundred others, were assigned to the First Infantry Division. We were shipped to Dorchester, England. From there we scattered out and were assigned to different companies. I was assigned to "I" company, 18th Infantry, 1st Division. We trained there in England for the invasion of France from November until D-

Day landing, which was June 6, 1944.

LA: So you were part of the troops that came in on D-Day?

WB: Oh, yeah. My regiment came in on the second wave right behind the 16th Infantry Regiment.

LA: This question I have to ask because you were in D-Day.

WB: Yeah, go ahead and ask it.

LA: Did you see Private Ryan, Saving Private Ryan?

WB: Yes I did.

LA: You were there. What's your opinion of it?

WB: Of the movie?

LA: Yeah.

WB: It's the nearest to real combat as anything I've seen. It's a great movie. I think every citizen in the United States should see it.

LA: I saw it and I have to tell you that it was probably the most difficult movie I have ever had to try and sit through. Knowing that it was probably pretty realistic.

WB: It was very realistic. It surely was.

LA: OK. After D-Day. After you landed, successfully, where did your group go? Which direction?

WB: All right, we went straight in and we went in as far as we could each day. We did that every day for about two weeks and when we reached the little town of (Colemount?),

France that's where we dug in and set up a defensive position there. While the units of the American Armies and other division cleared out Cherbourg. The shipping town. While they were clearing that out we were setting up on a defensive position holding ground.

LA: Were you mixed with British Forces at all?

WB: No, the British were on our left. All the British Forces were on our left. Of course they were pushing in too just like we were.

LA: How long were you dug in at...

WB: At (Colemount?) we were dug in there about a month. Almost a month. Three weeks at least.

LA: Then what happened?

WB: We were pulled out and pulled back for a rest area getting ready for the St-Lô breakthrough.

LA: OK

WB: I don't know if you have read about that or not, but that was the big breakthrough when we broke out of the area there in Normandy. We then headed south to France almost to Paris. Then we cut to the left and we crossed the Seine River, north of Paris.

LA: OK, so you were just north of Paris?

WB: Right, that is correct.

LA: From there where? What type of people did you encounter along the way?

WB: The best I can recollect we encountered the infantry, the Panzer Divisions, Panzer German Divisions. We encountered, I think, two tank divisions when we were going

across France. If I remember correctly. Then we headed right on into Belgium.

LA: How long a period of time was that from...

WB: Well we hit Belgium in September because you see when we got to Belgium we first went into Belgium. Right at that particular time we cut off three or four German Divisions which were located in Calais, France. They thought that the invasion was coming, so they left. They started pulling back and when they started pulling back then we hit them on the side on their flank.

LA: Oh, so you cut them off?

WB: Right, we cut them off. We destroyed or either captured, it was either two or three German divisions right in that particular area.

LA: How many men is that?

WB: Well, a German Division, I think, ran about seventeen thousand.

LA: That's a lot of prisoners.

WB: Oh, yeah. Of course we didn't capture all of them. I say we either capture them, killed them, or we upset their organization so badly until so many of them got away by just stragglers. Just a few at the time went back. They were headed back to (Octan?) because that's where they wanted to setup defensive positions.

LA: Right. At that time, I know I've read that in Africa that when the Germans knew that they were defeated they started volunteering to be captured.

WB: Oh yeah, They started surrendering. We ran into that as soon as we got to Belgium. From Belgium we turned to the right and went into Liege, Belgium and on September the

10th on a Sunday afternoon. September the 10th 1944, I broke my arm there in Liege, Belgium. I fell off a truck when German planes came over and started strafing us, the truck driver, our truck driver, pulled off to the side of the road into the ditch. All of us jumped off, got off the best we could. I feel off. When I tried to jump I fell.

LA: I had heard ya'll mention that word strafe, strafing?

WB: Strafed?

LA: What is that?

WB: That's airplanes coming over and firing the guns at us. Firing 50 caliber at us.

LA: I have to get that cleared up because I'm not really sure what it is.

WB: Airplanes strafing us. Strafing us. Firing those 50 caliber guns.

LA: Could you tell when you hear planes coming in did you guys know who it was?

WB: Mostly, most times yes.

LA: Could you tell a difference in the engines or were you just looking for the emblems?

WB: We could tell the difference in the engines, of the engines running and we could tell the difference in the way they were flying in.

LA: I didn't know that.

WB: Well you get accustomed to a lot of those things.

LA: I image you get accustomed to a lot of different stuff over there.

WB: When I broke my arm, I was sent back to a field hospital. From the field hospital I was flown back to England. So I went all the way back to England to the Army Hospital to recuperate from my broken arm. I rejoined by division, my company, on Christmas Day 1944 in the Battle of the Bulge.

LA: That was little bit cold. I mean I know war..I know.

WB: War is war. You couldn't think of things except to keep going forward in trying to win the war.

LA: So after you rejoined your...

WB: After I rejoined my company I was assigned to a squad and then we started pulling patrol duty up until January the 15th we jumped off on an attack, attacking the Germans. Our objective was to push the Germans back. Since they had broke through we wanted, we were pushing them back. So on January the 15th, I had just made squad leader about two weeks earlier, I was a brand new Sergeant. I had seven men in my squad and the morning of the 15th of January we were crossing this snow field. Snow was waste deep. We were attacked in the woods out in front of us. The Germans let us get about 150 yards, 200 yards in those woods and they cracked down on us with everything they had. Machine guns and rifles. I lost every man in my squad except myself and I got a bullet through my left heel from a German rifle. Some German was out there in those woods and he fired at me and hit me in the heel. The first burst of machine gun fire got both of my scouts ahead of me and one of two behind me, but I was the only one come out either alive or unwounded except for the bullet in my heel. Of course that didn't stop me, I could still walk.

LA: How far way from your main group were you?

WB: Oh, it was like, we had units on our right. Units on our left. See we were pushing the Blitz.

LA: Yeah, yeah. OK, we will jump ahead a little.

WB: All right, now after the 15th we regrouped and reorganized and then we just kept pushing. We would push everyday until we finally pushed the Germans back in as far as we wanted to push. And then a long about...

LA: How far was that?

WB: Oh, it was several miles, I don't remember exactly but it was several miles when we got the Germans pushed back like we wanted and then we were ordered to the rear for another rest period and then we were sent back up to the front in the River area. By that time the snow was gone and we didn't have it as rough.

LA: So that was what, March?

WB: No, well it was approaching the later part of February.

LA: Later part of February?

WB: Yeah, then during the month of March we would, cross Germany and reached Bonn, Germany on the Rhein River and that's were I observed my 21st birthday. On the Rhein River at Bonn, Germany and we were looking across the river at the Germans on the other side. After that we crossed.

LA: How did you get across?

WB: We crossed down there at the (Remmagen?) Bridgehead where the 9th Armored Division captured the Bridge. That's where we crossed, but we crossed on a pontoon bridge that the engineers had set up for us. Then after we got across the Rhein River we just kept pushing, pushing, and pushing. Capturing this little town, as soon as we get it captured, get everything reorganized we go for another one.

LA: Did you run into any type of like local resistance from the civilians?

WB: No, not then, no, no. Civilians, we didn't have any problems with civilians cause they were either gone or we would find them in a cellar.

LA: Oh, they were like hiding from everybody.

WB: Hiding from everybody, that's correct. And then after that we pushed right on into Czechoslovakia. We were in Czechoslovakia, my division was there when the war ended.

LA: So what was that day like, when everyone found out?

WB: Oh, when everyone found out that was proud thing. Happy day. But some of the Germans didn't know it and they kept fighting. So it was about the second day before some Germans got the word.

LA: Really?

WB: Yeah, surely was.

LA: What was it like when you got home? Who was there?

WB: Well it was a happy day. My mother, my daddy and my sister, baby sister and two, three brothers, younger than I.

LA: So they didn't have to go to war, because they were younger.

WB: Oh, yeah. I had two older brothers in Europe at the same time I was there.

LA: The same time?

WB: The same time, yeah. There was eight boys all together in my family and just six girls.

LA: And just six girls?

WB: Just six girls (laugh) yeah, just six girls.

LA: Was this average for the time? Were you all a farm family?

WB: Farm family, we were born and grew up on the farm. And lived there until we left home.

LA: So what did you do when you came back?

WB: When I came back that was in October of '45. I stayed there at home and helped my family with the farm chores until the first of January. Then I went back to the University of Georgia to complete my education.

LA: So what did you major in?

WB: Agriculture.

LA: Came out with an Agriculture degree?

WB: Yes, animal husbandry.

LA: And your profession was?

WB: Extension Service. I was the county agent for thirty years. I retired 20 years ago.

LA: 20 years ago?

WB: Yeah.

LA: That's great. I am so appreciative that you told me about this because it is somewhat familiar basically because I am taking a course on World War II, but it helps to get information from somebody who has actually been there.

WB: Well it helps. How I was born and reared 6 miles west of Statesboro. See I'm an old Bulloch County boy.

LA: Is your farm here?

WB: Well the farm we grew up on is west of Statesboro. Six

miles west. But I live in Sylvania. I had been there since 1950.

LA: So after you got out of the school...

WB: Right, when I finished University of Georgia I went to work over in Sylvania as Assistant County Agent. After twenty-one months I went to Claxton as County Agent in Evans County and then back to Sylvania in 1957. So I retired in Sylvania.

LA: Well I'll turn off the tape now and let every one go get some lunch.

Clayton Sheley

Interviewee: Clayton Sheley (CS) Interviewer: Linda Awe (LA)

LA: Mr. Sheley do I have your permission to tape?

CS: Yes

LA: OK. Tell me first what you knew about the war before you were actually in it as a soldier.

CS: Well I remember December the seventh (7th). We had a guest for dinner. It was then that we got the news that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. That was the first.

LA: So you were at home with your family?

CS: Yes.

LA: Were you still in high school?

CS: No, I was a Professor.

LA: You were a Professor?

CS: I mean I was a teacher at a local school.

LA: Really. Here in Bulloch County?

CS: No, I was a principal at Scotts Georgia. A small school, typical for beginners. When I came out of the army I was hired in Augusta, Georgia and stayed there thirty-one years.

LA: So as a teacher you already knew the politics and every thing that was going on in the country. So did you think that we were actually going to go to war?

CS: Well, I did and I wanted to. I was drafted, but I didn't resist the draft. I felt as it was imperative that I serve my country above my own sense of well being, besides I love this country.

LA: So, how did you're parents react to you going into the service?

CS: Well, as a matter of fact, I was married and I also have parents. My parents were very reluctant and my wife also. Leaving was a sad time.

LA: What did your wife think?

CS: She thought that I would come home.

LA: She knew you would come home?

CS: Yes, she couldn't naturally know it.

LA: Still, it was an emotional time, I imagine.

CS: Yes, an emotion time.

LA: Were there any friends, acquaintances that you knew that happened to go into the service at the same time you did?

CS: No, I was all alone.

LA: Did you make friends during boot camp?

CS: Oh, yes. It was absolutely important that you had some friends. I did. One friend that I'm sorry isn't here today was with me in action on [Numfor?] that's Campbell Howell. We two are the [?] people that actually saw combat. He was, he was wounded badly and I only received superficial wounds. So he was disabled and I was not. That's the luck of the draw.

LA: Can you tell me what, you said you were in bootcamp up in South Carolina, an average day was in the beginning?

CS: Well, an average day was a twenty mile hike (laugh).

LA: Was that before or after breakfast?

CS: It's just as liable to be at midnight. They certainly kept us busy in training and getting to know the different things you need to know about your rifle, compass, and that sort of thing. In seventeen weeks we were well trained, but I learned more in the first day of battle than I did in all the seventeen weeks.

LA: Really, why is that?

CS: Because you can't help but learn when you trying out the things that you have been taught. How you going to measure up under [fire], who learn who your friends are for sure. Who's in the fox hole. I tell you one of the saddest evenings that I had was when I came back. My wife was teaching in Newton, I was with her for a while, and I went to George Peabody College for Teachers on the GI Bill of Rights. Secured my Masters Degree. Getting on a bus and going on when you didn't have to do, it was pretty bad. But I'm glad that I attended that school. It was the only way I could have gotten a Masters Degree. So it was a wonderful thing. The GI Bill was a wonderful thing for us.

LA: I imagine it was. How were you transported from the United

States over to Europe when it was time for you to go to Europe?

CS: I didn't go to Europe. I was in the Japanese sector. I, was at Camp [Stoneman?].

LA: Were is that?

CS: California, Camp Stoneman, California, outside of Fresno. That was where we were stationed until we could embark. We embarked in San Francisco on what was once the luxury liner the (Lauraline?). We had a nice passage across. Then we disembarked at [Milder?] Bay, New Guinea. [Milder?] Bay has a volcano that gives a cloud out all the time, because it's active. From there we went to join our fellows, our peer group in New Guinea. They had seen a lot of action and we were going into relieve a division, the 158 Regional Combat Team. Instead of relieving the division, that part was easy, but they ran into the Japanese Imperial Command. Japanese Imperial Soldiers, who were large Japanese, from what [I understand?].

LA: Large like in number or large physically?

CS: Physically, they weren't average Japanese. The men were in serious battle with them and had to be relieved by the sixth division. Am I rambling on too much?

LA: No, no keep going.

CS: Well, we, I'll tell you about [?] for a while.

LA: All right, about what date was this?

CS: July 4, 1944. We left to go to [Numcore?]. [Numcore?] was sitting on the northern perch of New Guinea. General MacArthur needed it for his advanced bombing post. To bomb the Philippines, so he could return, this was his most advanced bombing position at the time. So we had to take [Numcore?]. We spent the night on a troop ship July 3rd and

we went in on July 4th after a terrific bombardment. The bombardment was so effective, well it was the best I've seen. Ended July 4th. Anyway we met no opposition when we went in because the bombardment had been so [heavy?]. We advanced until we ran into opposition. The sound of the Japanese machine gun sounds like an American woodpecker. We withdrew to one of the best positions we could have found anywhere. It was like a football stadium, only larger, with the valley below. We occupied positions next to our ships and all July 3rd night we could hear the truck coming up with troops, reinforcements. We didn't know what would happen, but we dug in and waited to see what would happen. That's the way they do things, they wait until the moment when the moon has gone and the sun hasn't come up at all, pitch dark, and then they attack. Well they attacked us up the hill, yelling "blood for the emperor," "to hell with Babe Ruth," and that sort of thing which they were famous for. It was a massacre. Our ships in the harbor lobbed shells into the rear and we were fighting in the front. In the morning we had about 400 dead Japanese on the valley floor. The remaining would raise a white flag and we would hear "cease fire." Then they would run. Typical Japanese action. But, we had to drag them up, people in "B" Company. In the tropics the spoilage is just so sudden and so fast that we had to drag them up. We did a mass burial with our bulldozers and such. Then we proceeded to march on and we came to a river. We hunkered down to see if we had any enemy opposition. The Lieutenant that was in charge of our squad thought that we needed reinforcements, so he picked me to go back and get them. I was under the impression that I was being honored because he was saving his best men. I perceived, I didn't know where I was going, I didn't know where I would find reinforcements. I went back to where we came from. I was really afraid, because the Japanese were well known for giving their blood to the Emperor. They would tie themselves, the sniper would tie himself into a tree and see how many people he could get before we were able to get rid of him. So I was afraid that I was going to be sniper bait. I ran on, out of the blue, out of the sky came a voice and I thought sure it was God. He said

"What are you doing here?" I said, "The Lieutenant said to come back a get reinforcements." It was Captain Cook from Atlanta, fine soldier. He said, "You go back and tell the Lieutenant he doesn't need any reinforcements." I went back the way I came and rejoined the men and we proceeded from there.

- LA: That's remarkable. How many of the group that you were with were you really, really close to that went through this ordeal from beginning to end?
- CS: Well, the toughest part for every soldier was putting his buddies in body bags. I had several friends who were killed in action. At the end of the war we came back. We went over on a luxury liner, we didn't have any luxury. We had hammocks and so on, we came back on a slow ship through, and it was really slow.
- LA: How many days were you there?
- CS: There's the answer to that question. Campbell Howell and I and some other men from this area had a steak in San Francisco the night that we came back. Then we were on the way to Fort [McCuser?]. Campbell Howell is the only friend that I know right now. That I had as a friend back then.
- LA: Going in kind of a different direction away from the battles. After the battles and you were able to get to some place that was right for R and R. Where did you go and what did you do?
- ICS: I didn't get R and R. We were in the midst of some of the most furious combat of the war. We had gone through the Philippines then to Japan. I was offered R and R and could come back home. So I came back home. I didn't get any R and R.
- LA: The entire time?

CS: That's right.

LA: Oh my gosh.

CS: Now Campbell was wounded and just as soon as they could patch him up they sent him right back into action. That's the way they did things.

LA: Really.

CS: Yes.

LA: Do you have any funny memories / humorous memories at all from being in the Pacific?

CS: I have plenty of memories. I don't remember any of them being humorous.

LA: When you were over there, you said you went through the Philippines and you were in Japan. What was it like being in Japan and knowing you were in the enemies country and they were there?

CS: Well let me tell you, we were stationed at [Et Cen tam ea?], that's about as close as I can pronounce it. It was a Japan ball bearing complex where they made tools for their Air Force. It was an eerie moment when we marched in, I wish you could see the picture or image. Because when we marched in all of the citizenry were lined up along the streets in complete silence and we were in complete silence. The only thing that could be heard was the directions of the drill Sargent. I suppose all of us, including the Japanese, they had been taught, I've been told that American soldiers would eat them. That was humorous I guess. To us it was humorous not to them. But the complete silence of our marching in was extra-ordinary. We were stationed in a barracks at the end of the town. I didn't know I would remember.

LA: Talking triggers some memories. Let go to another phase,

Hopefully a happier phase, coming home. How did they ship you home? And who was waiting for you?

CS: I wanted to have a little reunion with my wife. So, I think we were all ready getting some future signs of the way the kids were treated when they came back from Vietnam, because there was no place to stay. I finally found a room out at the airport.

LA: What city was this?

CS: This was Atlanta. We were checked out and I was dismissed. I called my wife to come to Atlanta. She came out on a bus and it was Hapeville. The motel was just about like Jesus's time, no room in the Inn, because it was only half completed and we were in semi stalls. But anyway it was a joyous reunion. We boarded a bus to go back to Newton. In Newton my parents were waiting for me at Louis's apartment. And some of our friends, Miss Valeria Harrison, prepared a scrumptious banquet for us. So it was a happy time.

LA: That's good. That's nice. Did you get regular mail when you were over in the Pacific from your wife and your family?

CS: Yes, mail call was always an important event.

LA: Was it like a weekly or a daily?

CS: Well, we couldn't put any time on it, really it was just when the mail showed up.

LA: Whenever it caught up with you. That's great. Is there anything that you would like to tell me that I haven't asked you yet? Anything that springs to mind that you think might be important?

CS: I'd like to say that there were two cultures in Japan. The culture that the American soldiers brought back with their

wives, this was the tea and crumpet society and the [Geisha] girl society and they were not responsible for the war, but the military I haven't forgiven because they were incredibly cruel in all of their actions from beginning to end.

LA: Thank you, I really appreciate it.

CS: Thank you.

John T. Coleman

Interviewee: John T. Coleman (JC) Interviewer: Susan Moody (SM)

SM: Today is November 13, 1999 and we are at the Walmart in Statesboro, Georgia. My name is Susan Moody and I will be conducting an Oral History interview with John Coleman.

SM: Mr. Coleman do I have your permission to record this interview?

JC: Yes, I can always stop ya.

SM: Yes, sir you sure can anytime. Mr. Coleman what branch of the service were you in?

JC: I was in the Navy.

SM: When did you enlist or were you drafted?

JC: I enlisted.

SM: Do you remember what year and month you enlisted?

JC: I went to the Navy recruiting office on December 8th after Pearl Harbor.

SM: Right after Pearl Harbor?

JC: Right, and I got to boot camp on active duty on December

16, 1941.

SM: Where did you go to bootcamp?

JC: Norfolk

SM: What was your rank while you were there?

JC: I went in as a Apprentice Seaman and came out as a Chief Quarter Master. Chief Petty Officer, that's a Chief Quarter Master.

SM: What vessel were you stationed on or connected with?

JC: Well, I first served on the PC 550, that's P as in Peter. That means Patrol Craft. We commissioned this ship. This was a new ship with a new crew and the commanding officer was Lt. Commander Crandel. I do not know his first name. We didn't talk to our Captains by first names.

SM: What was your job on the ship?

JC: Well, I had many jobs. Once I got to be a rated Quarter Master I was on the bridge all the time. Either steering the ship, assisting the navigator, etc. etc. I was on a couple of ships during the war. I covered a lot of territory.

SM: Could you tell me when you enlisted did you go down as a group or was it an individual decision?

JC: No, I went down by myself.

SM: So, you just decided. You had told me that you enlisted right after Pearl Harbor. Did that inspire you to go down and enlist?

JC: Absolutely. I was in North Georgia in school and I came home. I lived in Savannah and I hitch-hiked home but I stopped in Metter. In Metter my Grandfather had just been brought home from the hospital. He died that night, so I

stayed over and was a pall bearer at his funeral. I continued my trip to Savannah. I got there about day break, because I was hitch-hiking. I road on trucks and stuff. He did not have a radio on so we had no idea what was going on. I got home or close to home, all I was hearing was Pearl Harbor, Pearl Harbor. So I said, What the heck is this now? Then the time I got to my own home the family was already gathering and getting all excited. Everybody was trying to find out what was going on. The following day I was down at the recruiting office. I wanted to get in the Navy anyway, but I was only 17 and my father wouldn't sign for it, I was going to stay in school. So in a patriotic furver he agreed. He came down with me, because you need parents consent at 17.

SM: Oh, at 17 you had to...

JC: At 18 you could enlist on your own. They couldn't draft you, but you could enlist, but if you were 17 you had to have your parents consent. So with that accomplished I was off to Norfolk. Took several days to get enough to fill a train load. Nobody knew what was going, nobody new how they were organized. So they took, I don't know, about a 4 or 5 passenger railroad car. And picked up everybody from Savannah up to Augusta, wherever there was a stop, on up through Carolina and we wound up in Virginia with a full train load. Ever how many it was it was all Navy, it was strictly for picking up and rescuing.

SM: What did they call the Navy, is it boot camp or?

JC: Yeah, still boot camp. I mean that's real boot camp [laugh]

SM: There's a difference?

JC: Oh, yeah, and Norfolk was the real boot camp in the Navy.

SM: What was it like an average day at boot camp?

JC: Well, being December and Norfolk had a terrible winter that

year it was trying [laugh]. Cause they were, I think they were over doing it a little bit. Because of the hysteria of the War and within two days once we got uniformed and told the rules, so to speak. They were breaking us out at 4 o'clock in the morning with a whistle and chasing you out on the, they had almost like golf courses there then, and this was almost like military, something like West Point or something. It was a real nice two story brick dormitory and everything, but they really broke us in. So when they went charging out of those barracks at night and they blew that whistle you had to hit the ground. It didn't matter where you were, how you were dressed or nothing, so I laid out there on the ice a lot of times. Not a nice trip for the first couple of weeks. After that it eased off a little bit and they started getting their composure back. Being instructors instead of tyrants.[laugh] But it was not bad at all, I kind of enjoyed boot camp. It was rough and ready, but I was pretty tough, young, guy.

SM: Yeah, being young and all. How long did boot camp last?

JC: Six weeks, I think.

SM: Six weeks?

JC: They cut it way down, it used to be way over 3 months. And then they cut it down to six weeks at the beginning of the War to get some people moving along. Later on they extended it to 3 months plus, I mean it was up to 6 months a lot of them, but fear... First few weeks of the War it was only 6 weeks. They moved us right along.

SM: Once you got finished with boot camp how did they decided where you were going to go, I mean did you have to take tests or anything?

JC: Well, they gave you a sheet, about like you're using there, of questions and answers. In the meantime they are putting you through all this qualification stuff to see if you are smart, stupid or in between. Once they got your request of duty. I

put in for submarines.

SM: Oh, OK.

JC: And they liked that. But the one hitch with the submarine was that you had to go to submarine school. They had just opened up a training school in what we called Navy Pier in Chicago. I had no idea what this was all about, but I was certainly glad to get to it because I wanted to get on the sub. I got about two or three weeks into the training school out there and I wound up in diesel school because apparently if you served on a submarine then you had to know something about diesel spirit. Didn't matter what rating you had or what you were being trained for. In that period of time, I guess I was out there about a month, they came through with another form and I found out I need my parent's consent again.

SM: Oh, OK.

JC: So I shipped it off to home and my father refused to sign it. Because he didn't want me in submarines. That took the wind out of me and made me a little mad, so I put in for immediate fleet duty and skipped the schools. They obliged me [laugh]. They pulled me out of school shipped me to Pier 92 in New York City. That was the distribution center. I ended up on all kinds of various jobs, because they had no ships. They had no ships!

SM: When the war first...

JC: Yeah, right. I mean the few that they had, they had Fleet Destroyers and all that, they were all manned and at sea for the most part. So, when I found out I couldn't get into the submarines I went on to the next thing. I wanted to get into the fleet and it took quite a few weeks, quite a few months as a matter of fact before I could get a ship. In the meantime, I stood guard duty over the Normandy, were she had rolled over, because she was right across the way from Pier 90. I think, and we were on pier 92. Stood watch over

the Normandy and that was interesting for a while. Then they took, I guess, 50 to 75 of us and shipped us down to Miami. They were opening up an anti-submarine school in Miami. So we had one ship down there, I don't remember the name. I remember we could go out and train. But they were sinking ships so fast down there that we got only emergency calls, but we were getting trained real fast. I guess, I think my first ship that I belonged to, or it belonged to me, was May the 8th, 1942. We commissioned it in New Orleans. The first day after she was commissioned, we weren't a day old, we got a call to go out into the Gulf of Mexico. Submarine, submarine, submarine! All kind of emergencies. Not another ship around and we went dashing out into the Gulf of Mexico. We took, I think, only 8 depth charges aboard and this was a ship made to fight submarines.

SM: So, the enemies submarines had come up into the Gulf of Mexico?

JC: Right

SM: Oh, OK.

JC: Oh, this was German submarines.

SM: German submarines.

JC: They made that quite clear.[laugh]

SM: OK.

JC: As far as I know we encountered the enemy submarine, as guess, as close to America as you can get. Because we picked her up on the sound gear before we even got out of the river opening. You know, to go into New Orleans you have to go though a long, like a river and through the marsh.

SM: Yes, sir.

JC: And we got out there and we weren't hardly out of the marsh before we picked her up. And we were all green, except the Captain. We had two or three good sailors in every group, but more of us were not that experienced, obviously. So we picked her up and made a run on it and went through our depth charges in two attacks. Now they were out there and now we were at his mercy. [laugh]

Sm: Oh, my goodness.

JC: I mean, he's down there and we're up on top and we don't have any depth charges. So we radioed back into NOB, Naval Operation Base, in New Orleans and they told us to come up to a given point. It was about half way to New Orleans, up into that little split of land. Little, little country road at that time. They got it marked as a state highway. You can go out and sight-see, but at that time it wasn't much and we were supposed to be at that place at a certain time so we took off and went back in there. We got to New Orleans, I mean we got to the given point, and sure enough here comes an Army truck up this rinky dink county road. We're looking for the dock and it was a little fishing dock. They referred to a dock, little fishing dock, it couldn't have been more than ten feet wide and it had no stability to it. We couldn't tie up to it. It had about 100 yards of walkway from that little dock out to the road. So Captain Crandel he put two and two together and he said well that's where our ammunition is and that's where we got to be. So we put the bow right against the dock, but not too much, just enough to keep us there. We had nothing to tie to, we couldn't tie to that dock. They talked back and forth. I think it was a Second Lieutenant in the Army was in charge of the truck. They had plenty of depth charges, all right. We had to roll 'um in one at a time along that little walk ridge, because they weighed so much you couldn't fool around with them.

SM: What does a depth charge weigh?

JC: This had, I believe 300 pounds of TNT in them at all time. They got bigger as the war went along. We called them a

standard 1000. They came down this little walkway one at a time. We had to take our life lines off and everything to get them over the bow. Because the bow was pointed and you had no places to walk. We got them on there. Just rolled them aside so we could get ready to go. Put our safety lines back on, backed out and went out and found him again. We ran through every depth charge we had practically. I think we were down to 6 or 8 we left them on the K-guns and stuff when we lost contact with them finally. We radioed for instructions, and they said to proceed to Key West, so we never got back into New Orleans. We went straight to Key West and got organized a little bit. After that it was pretty busy life on the 550.

SM: When you were in Key West did you leave Key West and go out to a station or did you go back and forth, travel out and come back to Key West?

JC: That depends on how much time you want me to take telling you this. [laugh]

SM: [laugh] I have all day, if you have all day.

JC: After we reported to Key West it was touch and go for a long time. We serviced all up and down the east coast. We would have one ship taking a convoy or being a part of a convoy, but we were convoying steady, oh for many months. I guess about Christmas of 1942. By Christmas we started to get a little bit better organized and we got a lot more ships on the line though. Several, I think there was about 8 patrol crafts like ours with commissions in rapid succession so we were starting to get into it pretty good. The Four Stack Destroyers that were available, there weren't very many, I think we had about 4 of them. They were four stack World War I Destroyers that they had re-outfitted and they were our leaders. So we would generally have a group of about 4 PCs and 1 Four Stack Destroyer and we would just do what we could do. We dropped a lot of depth charges in the next few months.

SM: Was it fairly common to have submarines coming up along the east coast?

JC: Oh, lord. I have seen as many as 4 ships burning at the same time, I'd say within 2 miles of shore and we, plus the smaller Coast Guard ships, were the only thing out there. All the big ones were running convoys from basically New York to England and Ireland. All the big convoys after they were organized were with bigger ships in bigger groups.

SM: So they were going back and forth across the ocean?

JC: We were gathering them up along the east coast and taken 'em in. It got so bad that, I don't know if all this is known by the public or not, but they were sinking so many ships that we setup safe harbors in about 6 spots. I think, the closest one around here would be in the Beaufort area, I believe. They would have had a big wide open area. Close it off with a fence and under water fence, a floating wire, big stuff. We would take 'em from one to the other. Once we broke 'em out move from one to the other they would get one or two every time. I think there was almost 600 ships sunk off the east coast.

SM: When you are saying ships you are meaning submarines and all?

JC: I'm talking about freighters.

SM: Oh, my goodness.

JC: We didn't sink any submarines in the beginning to speak of. If you got one or two you were pretty good. But they were knocking them off, they were knocking our ships off just on a steady basis. I know there were approximately 600 sunk on the east coast. From there over to England was a, well not as bad as it was in the beginning along the east coast but they sank a lot of them going over there. Believe me, because I was back into that group later on. After that the PC 550 went to the Mediterranean. We went to, our sister

ship which was the 496. We weren't in the Mediterranean but just a matter of days before the 496 was sunk. We were going for the (Oran?) area to the (Berzery?) area which is about 500 to 600 miles apart I believe, with 40 LCI which are landing craft. They carry about 200 soldiers each. We were going through a terribly thick, dangerous, mined area. They had swept it with the end of the wooden WMS which were good mine sweepers, but they sweep only a narrow channel. Just put two of them out there and let them go side by side. We followed them up within a matter of hour. We had this pretty well organized. I guess we were about 7 or 8 hours away from (Berzery) a normal route run. Suddenly the whole stern of the 496 was blown off and her bow was up in the air. She was down in I'd say less than 2 minutes. Cause the e whole back end was blown off. We didn't have to slow the convoy up or anything, they just kept coming. We thought it was a mine, so we closed them up a little and moved out in the middle so that left us with just one escort and a whole raft of ships. We were sure it was a mine that we just wrote it off that way, that's what it was. The following day we were in (Berzery?). I'll have to end that story for a moment to go to one crazy things that happen during the War. After about 6 months or so the Italians had surrendered long before the Germans did. When the intelligence people took over all the records and stuff from the Italian Navy's headquarters they found that the 496 was sunk by a submarine and not a mine. The commander of the submarine was called in and reprimanded, lost a stripe for wasting his last torpedo on a PC instead of waiting for a Destroyer.

SM: Oh, the commander of the ship that sank the 496?

JC: Submarine. The commander of the submarine was literally reduced in rank, chastised, and pretty rough go for him. So I thought that was one funniest tragedies that I'd ever seen.

SM: Well, that was kind of unusual that you would find out about it.

JC: There have been a couple of articles written about that and was kind of glad to see somebody finally mention something about that. Anyway, the 496 had been with us for a year or so and to see it disappear like that.. They only lost 5 men, they just picked them up as they floated pass on this LCI. 2 or 3 of them just lowered their ladders in the front and scooped them up. The only ones that were really killed, were the ones that were back by the kitchens. The galley.

SM: Because that was where the torpedo must have hit?

JC: Ironically, one of the survivors was aboard our ship the following day. He was [the] first class cook. He was in the freezer which is a far back as you can go. He said when he woke up, it must have been only a couple of minutes he was knocked out, he was floating on a door, an insulated door to that freezer which made a good floating pad. They scooped him out of there and he and our cook on the 550 had quite a hugging operation going when they came in there. Because he said That's the miracle of my life, if nothing else ever happens that's an absolute miracle. Because the whole back end was blown off and that's where he was. The explosion just knocked him out but he didn't get hurt.

SM: The freezer must have insulated it enough, but he had to have landed on that door because if he'd not been on the door he would have probably sunk.

JC: You named it pretty good. He was part of the explosion and the door not only protected him from keeping him from getting killed, it gave him a little life raft.

SM: That is a good story.

JC: From there we went into the invasion of Sicily. After that we went into the invasion of Salerno and then after that Anzio. But after that we were preparing for the invasion of southern France. They called us back and told us we had about 3 days to get that ship ready to turn over to the French Navy. After we'd done all the invasions and knew exactly

what to do. They decided that they need some French people to go in with the southern France invasion. I think they took over 4 or 5 of us at that time. That's what they did, they marched the crew on it unit, two weeks before the invasion of southern France. They had a little training and we were shipped back to the States.

SM: So they took the ship over?

JC: Right, there were 4 or 5 of those PC that were the first in the southern France invasion.

SM: When you came back from turning the ship over were you stationed on another ship?

JC: I got another ship and went back into it. We broke up and everyone went in different directions at the receiving station. I came back and got 30 days leave. I got married on that leave. My wife and I had corresponded for a couple of years. Even though I had not seen her since we left. Anyway I came back and drew a new ship. I got on a DE, the DE 327. The Blister, the name of the Blister, we made several trips to Europe. We ended up taking the high speed tanks to France. As soon as they opened up Cherbourg that was the main fueling....

SM: Oh, so you were shuttling the fuel. Were you running like guard or protections for the big ships?

JC: Oh, absolutely, this was a convoy at sea. Depending on the size of it. I would say general we would take 7 or 8 tankers because they were big fast tankers, huge things. There would be 5 escorts, which was a small squadron. Squadrons are generally 9. We ran several over there. We had a lot of happenings on those trips too, but I don't want to get into to much of that. That will drag us out here all afternoon. We did have one particular trip though. The two biggest tankers in the United States at that time were the Nash buck and the Mount..., oh lord I can't think of the name of it now. Anyway, I want to say (Mount Pealard?) but that's not it.

Anyway, one rammed the other. We had ourselves a night that night. I mean, it lit up the whole ocean, you know. Two or three of them had to screen. We went on up along side of the Nash buck and put our bow against her beam. We poured foam in the water and everything. Just a terrible fire. But in the meantime two guys went over the side and started pulling anybody in that was swimming or had not been rescued. We didn't put a boat over or anything. We stayed with the ship trying to put the fire out. We saved 19 people off the tanker. I don't know how many we picked up that were dead, but that was a pretty bad trip. We came back several times. We arrived in New York, May 8th in the evening. That was the day that the war in Europe had been declared ended. So our plans had been changed before we got up the next morning. We had gone into Leonardo Pier which was the ammunition station to the New York area, the whole harbor. We had to off load all the ammunition before you can go any farther in. The merchant ships go right on straight in but the escorts have to off load all their ammunition before they can come into the harbor. I was by that time a First Class Quarter Master in charge of the bridge. So the message came across to scrap our previous orders and go directly to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. So we went into the Brooklyn Navy Yard. That was the trip my wife and I got married, when we got into the Navy Yard. They went to work before, I mean before we ever got a chance to finish tying up. They swarmed over that ship, I think at the peak they had 200 men on that ship. This was all prearranged, what they were going to do. They ripped off our torpedo tubes and just devastated the deck and rebuilt it with all anti-aircraft guns. It took about two hours to figure out, we were going to the Pacific.

SM: So then when they finished the boat ya'll took it out and headed to the Pacific with it?

JC: Just as fast as... We made one trip after about 4 hours to test everything to make sure. After that we gathered up our same group. Same thing happened to all 5 of us. We went out and met a Carrier, one of the smaller Carriers. We

trained together for about two days and we were off to the Pacific.

SM: How long did you stay in the Pacific?

JC: Well, until the end of the War. That was quite a story on the end of that. We went through all the Islands and got to the Philippines. We were processing from the Philippines, even though the Philippines weren't all taken yet, we were going from the Philippines up to Okinawa to train for the invasion of Japan. We didn't get that far, they called us off. The war suddenly, just like a bead of light the war in the Pacific was over. That was even more shocking and more news than the one in Europe. Anyway, the problem had developed almost immediately, they had a whole raft of prisoners all over Asia and the prisoners were starving to death. And they were starting to make drops from planes and all, to keep them alive. One of the most abused and worst condition groups were the ones in Northern Formosa, which is now Taiwan. But a good deal of these, matter of fact most of them I think, were in the death march in the Philippines during the war. So we were ordered in there to get them out. This is before the official surrender and it got a little sticky but you can make a whole story out of that. But anyway we went in. First off three of us went in, we had two Carriers with us. One of them had been converted to a floating hospital almost over night.

SM: Kind of like with the torpedo guns. Ripped off and put right back on.

JC: Well that's the way things happened, they took all the planes out of the lower deck and put them on flight deck and made a hospital out of the lower deck. So as we went in we picked up twelve hundred of that first group of prisoners. That was a terrible, terrible sight. Some of them were just, you had to watch how you picked them up. Most of them came out of there on litters. Anyway we got them all out on the Carrier. I think the Carriers was the Old Block Island, one of the small Carriers, the U.S.S. Block Island and she

ended up as the hospital ship. We got them all out of there and brought them back to the Philippines. We were anchored for two days and word came down from the President that anyone with a certain amount of points, that was so many months over seas and all, would be released back to the United States immediately, no excuses would be accepted. Those were basically his words you know he was a little caustic every once in a while. With that, I was on the bridge when the message came across by lights and I read it, I told the signalman I'll take it down. I handed it to the Captain and stood there while he read it. He said, "That's pretty good news." I said, "Yes, sir and I want to make out a form to go home right now." He said, "No, you can't do that." So I said, "Captain you can refuse it but you got to sign it." He said, "I'll sign it, but I'll refuse it, OK." So I went down to the Yeoman and the Yeoman typed it out. I took it down to the Captain. The Captain says refused. I just put on my hat again and gave my salute and said Captain, permission to speak to the squadron Commander. He said, "Granted." So I grabbed a whale boat and went over to the Squadron Commander and took it in. He said, "Coleman you realize that your Captain has refused this?" I said, "Yes sir." You still want to pursue it. I said, "Yes sir." He said, "OK. then I will approve it." I was off that ship the next morning. It was 24 hours and I was off there. Then I got on probably one of the slowest transports [laugh] you ever seen. I came back into Seattle and I was regular Navy. I really should have stayed in. In the meantime I was a permanent appointed Chief. One of the best ranks in the Navy. I got back and I got the third ship right after the war. That was one of the newer Super Destroyers and they just worked the living-day-lights out of us for no apparent reason. I put in for relief because they were trying to reduce a lot of people. They wanted them out but my rank was one they didn't want out. So I wrangled it out and I got out in January of 1947. But we hit a lot of highlights, I probably took up too much time already.

SM: Oh, no. Before I let you go is there anything you think that I might need to know or should have asked that maybe I

didn't know about the war or anything that happened.

JC: I don't know. It's hard to believe that people didn't know a lot of this stuff. Especially about the east coast. I don't think I found an adult yet that was aware of what was going on on the east coast.

SM: I wasn't until you told me. That one with the submarine, that really kind of... Now when we were talking about the east coast you were saying that we were sinking the enemies ships out on the east coast, right.

JC: No, no.

SM: It was the other way around, they were sinking us or blowing us up?

JC: They were just obliterating us.

SM: Oh, Ok until we got our Navy built up and things like that. Oh, OK.

JC: Well it took over, I guess, around the middle of May of 1942. Admiral Andrews sat in New York City. He was in charge of the east coast fleet. Captain Macland was his assistant, he was the one that took care of all the technical stuff. We used to have to go into there for instructions. I was a young Quarter Master during that time. They get pretty close to the Captains, don't you know. So the Captain took me along as his messenger most of the time when he drew his orders. I was with him except when they had a confidential talk to the Skippers. I got to know the way around that quite a bit on that east coast deal. I'm forgetting my point I was going to make. Oh, a book came out about these patrol craft a few years ago and Admiral Andrews says the backs of the German Submarines were broken in May of 1942 and he listed ten ships that were basically responsible for this and the 550 was one of them.

SM: Oh, how wonderful, wonderful.

JC: So that's about the only recognition I personally felt about of the whole war. [laugh]

SM: Well if there's not any thing else that you think that I might need to know, I want to thank you for the interview. I have really enjoyed it and I've learned a great deal. I'm going to shut off the tape now and I'm going to leave you with a thank-you very much.

Harry Raith

Interviewee: Raith, Harry Louis (HR) Interviewer: Susan Moody (SM)

SM: Today is November the 13, 1999 and we're at the Walmart in Statesboro, Georgia. This is an interview between Harry Louis Raith and Susan Moody. Mr. Raith do I have your permission to tape this interview?

HR: Yes you do.

SM: We are working with the Historical Society today to interview war veterans. Could you tell me what branch of the service you were in?

HR: I was in the U.S. Army Engineers.

SM: And the date you enlisted or the year?

HR: I entered the service May 11th and I went on active duty May 19, 1943.

SM: How many years were you in the Army?

HR: I was in the Army until October 25, 1945. Approximately 30 months or 2 ½ years.

SM: Do you remember the name of the company you were in?

HR: The 420th Engineers.

SM: Where were you trained?

HR: Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

SM: What rank did you obtain while you were in the service.

HR: PFC

SM: After you finished active duty where were you stationed?

HR: Home. (laugh)

SM: Home? (laugh) I'm sorry, I didn't mean active duty, I meant after you went through boot camp and your training where were you stationed?

HR: After I left Fort Belvoir we were sent overseas in December of '43. I landed in Liverpool in January of 1944.

SM: Do you remember your commanding officers or maybe your first commanding officer's name?

HR: When I was overseas?

SM: Yes, sir.

HR: No.

SM: In the engineer core what exactly was your job?

HR: I was basically a truck driver.

SM: Could you tell me why you enlisted in the Army?

HR: I didn't enlist. I was drafted.

SM: OK.

HR: I was working at the time in the defense industry and I could have gotten a deferment, but I wanted to get into the service. I was

young and full of ginger in those days. My mother was a widow. She just had two boys, myself and my brother. He was two years older than I am and she asked me not to enlist. I said OK, but whenever am called I am going to go. She said alright. So whenever they called me I went for an interview in April and then they told me to come back in May and that's when I was sworn in.

SM: When they drafted you, was there a group of you drafted from Statesboro at one time?

HR: I wasn't in Statesboro, I was in Pennsylvania at that time.

SM: Oh, you were in Pennsylvania when you were drafted. You were living in Pennsylvania during this time. Well, did they draft in groups of people?

HR: Yes, yes.

SM: So their were groups of people.

HR: Quite a number.

SM: That you knew, that were going in all at the same time?

HR: Well, you know, we went through the physical and then they had an interview and what-not. Some made it and some didn't make it.

SM: What was it like when you went down to be inducted that first day? Do you remember?

HR: Well, they had us all in the room and they read us something that we were suppose to pledge to. We all raised our hands and they said you are now in the service. They read it off and we said we do and that was it. (Laugh)

SM: (Laugh) And you did.

HR: That's right.

SM: When you went in did you have any idea or opportunity to choose what branch of service you went into?

HR: No. The first thing they did...well we went from Pittsburgh to Fort Mead which was the induction center in the service, Fort Mead, Baltimore. From there we took our examination for IQ and all those other tests. Then after a couple of days they sorted us out. I was shipped to Fort Belmore in the engineers.

SM: So, they came in and told you, that you were best suited for an engineer in the Army.

HR: Yes.

SM: How did your friends and family back home feel about the war and about you being inducted?

HR: Well like I say, my mother was a widow and she just had my brother and myself. She didn't exactly enjoy the idea of me going into the service. Then he got married before he went in the service so she was all by herself. My father died in 1933.

SM: When you went to boot camp what was an average day of boot camp like? Did they call it boot camp?

HR: Basic Training

SM: Basic Training? What was an average day like?

HR: Well you would get up in the morning, early. They would have what they called roll call. I can't remember if we use to do some exercises and what-not before we had breakfast or not. There was one period we would go through the obstacle course. I imagine we ate before we did that, but I'm not sure it's been awhile. [laugh]

SM: How long did basic training last?

HR: Well, we went through 8 weeks of basic, but it was a condensed version of a 13 week training program that was basically Army and then after that we had some Engineer special training where we learned about explosives and different things like that. It was more technical than the original training which was just to get us in shape. Where you do close order drill, physical training, more or less.

SM: Once you were trained, I'm sure they came down and gave you orders to where you were going to be stationed. Where was the first place you were stationed?

HR: I wasn't stationed any place but Fort Belvoir in the United States.

SM: So, you weren't stationed overseas you were stationed right here in the United States?

HR: No. I was stationed at Fort Belvoir while in was in the states and from Fort Belvoir I went to Camp Shanks and then overseas.

SM: Oh, so when you leave and go overseas there was not a place where you were basically stationed over there?

HR: No Ma'am. Oh, no, no it was during the war you know.

SM: So where did you report when you went over there?

HR: Well, your company landed at Liverpool, England and we went to a staging area. I think it was close to Coventry where we got our equipment and everything together. From there we went to a place in Wales where we helped build these warehouses and invasion depots. From there I went to Southampton and then on to Omaha Beach. From there til August when the war ended in Europe they shipped our outfit direct from France to the CBI. Then the war ended in Japan and so they sent us home. I didn't have any furlough while I was in the service so they gave me 30 days to go home and then they wired me 15 more day and then they

said come on back and get your discharge because I had enough points by that time for discharge.

SM: As you were in the area where you were working, building, construction the buildings, you were driving the truck?

HR: Yeah, we work at quarries hauling rocks from the British rock quarries and things like that. And of course over there, why, at certain times in the morning they had tea time and every thing stopped. That's where the American coffee break more or less evolved from.

SM: When you were over working in the area where did you sleep?

HR: We lived in tents. In fact whenever we first hit this area it was like a swamp, you know, there was muddy, soupy mud that was almost over the top of the wheels on the truck. We had to fill in a lot of those places to make them bearable to live. We lived in these tents that had about a half dozen people in them. We operated out of that. That's where our quarters were 'til we finished that job and then we went to another area and started to prepare for whatever, you know, specialized training.

SM: Did you carry a weapon while you were over there?

HR: Oh yeah, we had a carbine and I put it in the truck. Probably 9 times out of 10 it wasn't really operational, because like I said we had a lot of dirt and what-not around where we were most of the time, but it was suppose to be in working order. Of course whenever the Bulge came we had to make sure they were in working order, because we never knew exactly what was going to happen. I had been to Germany before the Bulge started so a lot of that territory I had seen before and after. Some of the places had not been damaged very much and then after the bulge was over [?] and the roads started falling apart too. We had to try to build them up and get our supply going again.

SM: How did you spend your time when you were off duty or did you work all the time?

HR: It seems basically we worked all the time, actually there was two of us assigned to the truck and we were supposed to be on 24 hours and off 24 hours, but it didn't always work out that way. Sometimes we were split up. I know one time my friend was in Belgium and I was with another outfit in Germany and at that time it was just one on one. So every day I would work with the group of engineers I was assigned to. Did every thing from carrying personnel to equipment and things like that.

SM: So you spent 24 hours working and then you were suppose to be off?

HR: Yeah, no, well you know you got some time off to sleep and what-not. I mean during the bulge that was the time we didn't get any [time off.]

SM: During the Bulge that was the time you didn't get any [time off]?

HR: We were basically interested in pulling outfits out before the Germans got there.

SM: OK, when you say you were pulling them out, did you like load them up on the truck and bring them out that way?

HR: Right, right.

SM: When the Bulge started how did you know it was going on. Did you get orders and just...?

HR: No, no, as I say, we were working in that area and the first word we got from some of the fellows that had been in Luxemburg. They came back and said the Germans were making a move and we knew that there wasn't a heck of a lot of Infantry or anything in that area because it had all

been pulled out. I guess the Germans knew that too. So we got the alert and everybody put on their pack and saw that their guns was in working order and waited word. Then all of a sudden the word came, I was in France and we had people up in (Meledy?). They said well we are going to try to get the people out. To get there we had to go up through Bastogne. It was night time and we started out. I was by myself that time and when we got through Bastogne we had to stop. Our tank corp had one tank on each road facing to the east and they said you can't go any farther. So we went back through Bastogne and back to Arlon. The next morning my buddy went to go, but Bastogne was already sealed off. Nothing moved fast. The fact is that our Air Force was stymied because of the weather. That was always our biggest asset anyway, our Air Force, so we just had to go by ourselves. I know there was one forestry outfit we pulling back and we'd just go to these places and load up stuff and move them to what we thought would be out of harms way. There was one place we went, it was (St. Ubert?), that's not the French pronunciation, any way, we got orders that they needed to be pulled out of that place. So we get in convoy at night again and we finally get there and when we did the people thought that we were the Germans. It was like a court, like a castle with a big court [yard] and everything like that. We loaded them up and got them out of there before, I don't know if the Germans ever got in there or not to tell the truth.

SM: So you loaded the civilians up that you..?

HR: No, no just the service. Things were pretty mixed up in those days and very [foolish?]. I was in the 1st Army and whenever we were withdrawing why they called on the 3rd Army that was to the south of us to come up and help. So there was a time I would be running from the 1st Army into the 3rd Army area and they had changed the password and the counter sign every 24 hours. So if you were in the one area and you didn't know the password then they would ask you all kinds of foolish questions about the United States, like what's the capital of Pennsylvania? I'd say

Philadelphia. But you know they had German's in American uniforms that had infiltrated our lines so they had to be very careful. A couple of times I had to go back for replacements and people would always come up and say what outfit is this? I'm not supposed to go into combat because I've already been in combat and things like that. You'd say oh it's alright. I remember one night I was coming back after we had gotten some of that land back with a load of recruits and there was snow and ice on the road. There was a convoy of artillery and they had these metal trends on their carries and they were all over the road, I mean to tell you. I think they were the 220 millimeter, the big guns. Of course my truck had 4 wheel drive on it and I just pushed into it and walked right on through them. But, boy oh boy somebody should have wised up because those treads were not too good on ice.

SM: What type of truck did you drive over there?

HR: A 2 1/2 ton dump truck. Of course we used it to haul personnel and every other thing imaginable. When the Bulge first started they sent me and 2 other trucks down to Metz to load up with explosives, because you know that's one way to slow them down if you blow bridges and do things like that. It was like I said things were in pretty much of a turmoil.

SM: So, when you went out did you have a specific places to go?

HR: Most of the time , but a lot of time they would just hand me a map and say you go there. Of course our German friends had a quaint habit of changing road signs so they would read different ways. One time I ended up with a bunch of American tanks because I was following a man with a load of steel. He came to a fork, but he was way ahead of me and he took a right and I took a left. Whenever I got up to the office I went in to the tank commander and he tried to find the bridge that was supposed to be located close by. They didn't have it on their [maps?] I just went back to where I had been and went the other way. Then I found the outfit

that was working on this bridge.

SM: Oh, OK. So you didn't get too lost [that time.] Did you ever get lost, where it took you a couple of days to get back?

HR: No, no. Not that long. A couple of times, I [thought] where am I?

SM: While you were over there did you have the opportunity to meet and work with any of the civilians?

HR: Well we had some people that could speak the language and they usually [?]. We had some civilians working in tandem with us. Of course we used German prisoners of war on road work. There was certain things you could use prisoners of war for, like repairing the roads. Like in Normandy there were a lot of bombed out roads and what-not, that had to fill them up.

SM: Did they have a camp for the prisoners of war? Would you like check them out?

HR: No, the way we did it was I went up to a place in (Sur...?) and picked up some prisoners. Me and a few trucks. Then we brought them back to our area. They lived in a little compound and they had their own cooks. They ate the same rations as we did and everything like that. That's about all I can say. Some of the people could understand German.

SM: While you were over there. What was one of the most unusual things that happened?

HR: I don't know if you ever heard of the Red Ball Express? This is one of the other projects that we had whenever Patton and them started to move. We were trying to keep up the supplies and everything. Normally at night time we would drive without headlights. You know, we would have black outs. You couldn't see if another truck or [if] something was in front of you, but on this Red Ball Express, it was called, they had the quarter masters and all the supply

people moving stuff with the headlights on 24 hours a day and of course we carried maintenance crews. If some trucks broke down, we would try to help. If they went off the road we would try to pull them out. So we were on that detail for a while. I was in Cologne whenever the Germans were on one side of the river and we were on the other side. Because Cologne is on both side of the Rhine. I was with an engineer outfit that was repairing the International phone cable. It ran through Cologne. The 2nd Airborne was there when I first went there. Then they withdrew them and brought some other ones in. Am I running too long?

SM: Oh, No. No sir.

HR: Like I say, I was up and down the Rhein an awful lot. I was in Koblenz which was south and I didn't always keep going in one direction. I'd either go north or someplace like that. I spent quite a bit of time there during the Bulge in Luxembourg. You know, when they were really moving in. I'm just trying to think. There are so many thing that happened. One place I was I got stung by Yellow Jackets. They got between my wrist and my jacket and I moved and the things really let me have it. I didn't pay any attention to it but it hurt. The next morning I took my jacket off to wash and I had a purple strike almost up to my arm pit. The Sergeant said we have to get you to the hospital. So they took me to an EVA hospital and they called it (Limp-gland-tics?) or something like that. They gave me sulphur tablets to take and then they wrapped my arm in terry cloth and some solution. Then they put chemical hot packs on it. I just lay in bed all night and the next morning. They said well, we're getting ready to move out so we'll send you back to the general hospital. I said I didn't what to go to a general hospital. I want to go back to my outfit. My Sergeant came the next morning with my gear because he thought they were going to keep me. Whenever they unwrapped my arm well the streak was down, but there was a big old blisters on my arm from the chemical hot pack.

SM: Oh, from the chemicals.

HR: Well it was hot, but what did I know. I thought that's just the way it was. When the nurse took the bandages off she said why didn't you say something? Well I didn't know.

SM: You were just doing what you were told.

HR: (Laugh) So after that I lived in a pup tent for a little bit and there was a farmer that was plowing a field with an ox. One single ox, one single blade of plow. One day I went to lay down and all of a sudden I hear something move. I get up and a big old snake goes shooting out from under there.

SM: It wasn't very funny.

HR: No, well I mean you go back and lay down again. There were some unique experiences like when my Sergeant came to pick me up from the Evac Hospital and the Doctor said you get to a medic or something. So we were close to Paris and we wanted to see Paris.

SM: Did you have a good time?

HR: I mean, we just drove around it in different spots. We stopped at the Eiffel Tower. There was like a carnival effect under that thing. They had hawkers selling different things and what-not and then we went down to see the dam. We went down and took the Yugo Boulevard. We saw Notre Dame.

SM: Did you get to stay very long?

HR: It was interesting. Later on I went through Versailles and saw the palace they have there. I saw the Cathedral at Chartres. It is one of greatest Cathedrals, I guess, ever built. I don't know how many hundreds of years it was building that thing.

SM: Do you remember where you were when you heard that the war had ended?

HR: The war in Europe?

SM: Yes.

HR: I was down close to Czechoslovakia. We were heading that way. Whenever we heard that the war was over and then after the cessation of conflict in our area, why they sent us back to what they called a rehab camp. Then from there we were supposed to be prepare. They were interviewing people to see if they would go back home. It depended on some people's age or how many points they had, or if they were married.

SM: What were the points now?

HR: Well, you added so many points for each month you were overseas. You added so many points for each battle star you got and you added so many points for each medal. If you were married you got extra points for your wife. Children you got more points for them.

SM: So that was kind of what they used to guage who would go home first?

HR: Yeah. That's right, and age.

SM: Age would also be a factor?

HR: Yeah. Then we spend, I don't know how long in the rehabilitation centers. They were suppose to fix us up. I had my teeth filled and some teeth pulled. The first time I ever had a tooth filled in my life. I had 3 teeth filled in 3 hours with this guy with this make shift drill. (Laugh) It was sort of primitive. Well anyway, a little while after that I came down with a fever. I got up one morning and I wasn't feeling too good. I went to go to breakfast and came back and laid down on my cot. There were some guys playing cards close by and when I woke up, I was burning up. One of the guys playing cards was a medic and he said Raith, you don't look so good. I said, "I don't feel good." So they

called an ambulance and they took me to the base hospital. I had a fever of 105. Of course, I was in and out of consciousness at that time. The doctor told me the next morning when I first saw you I thought you had Scarlet Fever.

SM: Oh, my.

HR: Anyway I don't know what they gave me, but it went through me like salts. I had crap all over the place, but it broke the fever and they kept me there a few days. They never did put a name on what I had.

SM: Oh, they never did tell you exactly what it was. Oh dear.

HR: When I went back to my outfit I had orders to go down to France. From there I shipped out to CBI.

SM: The CBI was ?

HR: China, Berma, India theater.

SM: O.K., so did they bring you home after that?

HR: No, we were headed for the CBI, but the war ended in Japan and they said well send them over there so they sent me home. I went 30 days temporary duty and then they wired me 15 more and then they said come back and get your discharge.

SM: After that you were free to go back to Statesboro or did you ?

HR: No, I was in Pennsylvania then. I've only been down here 26 years.

SM: Yes, Sir. Is there any thing that you think you might want to tell me or that maybe I should know about the service or any thing like that?

HR: No, like I say I got around a lot more than the average GI. I was in 3 armies. I started with the 1st Army in France and then I went to the 3rd during the Bulge and then later on I was with the 7th Army which was in the southern part. My brother was with the 63rd Infantry Division. I saw that they were being pulled back and I told my Commanding Officers. He told me I was supposed to report to a certain area. I said, "I want to see my brother." He said, "OK but be at this point at a certain time." So when I got to my brother's outfit, I asked about my brother. I couldn't find anyone that even knew him. I finally did find one guy and he said, "Well your brother was wounded." He told me he had run up against a guy firing a machine gun but they didn't know how bad he was wounded. So, my brother is left-handed and he was wounded in the left arm. He got hit in the shoulder and it traveled down his arm, broke it in 3 places. They wanted to amputate, but they sent him over to England and they got a good neurosurgeon that saved his arm for him. He still has a crook in his arm.

SM: What is your brother's name?

HR: Clem, he was a infantry Sergeant. His outfit took so many hits that day that there was all new personnel. It went that way some times, but I got a note from him that he was in the hospital and getting ready to be shipped home. When he was a kid because he was left-handed they made him write with his right hand. So he was able to write. They don't do that anymore. But I couldn't even write my mother or his wife that he had been wounded because our mail was censored in those days. Whenever I was in Wales and we were down in the Bay of (Brisell?) one time I wrote home to my mother and I told her I walked down by the sea side. You know the seashore. They ripped it out and they said you can't write that.

SM: Oh so they wouldn't let you write any location or anything?

HR: No, no and you know in Great Britain why it was [even worst]. Anyway they would tell you whenever they took

anything out so you wouldn't keep on doing it.

SM: So basically when you wrote a letter then it would go through a censor board and they would tell you what to take out?

HR: If there was anything wrong they would cut or cross it out and if it was too bad they would say write something else.

SM: Well I have really enjoyed speaking with you today. Are you still in contact with any of your buddies or any of the people you served with over there?

HR: No, there was one motor pool Sergeant that I kept in contact with for years and then he died. There was only a couple I keep in touch with right after the war and they sort of drifted away. I had a buddy that was in the 8th Air Force and he and I have been friends since we were six years old. He was a bombardier, so whenever I went to this 8th Air Force Museum I wrote and told him. We still keep in touch.

SM: They are serving over there and I don't want you miss out on your lunch.

HR: Well I enjoyed talking to you. I hope I didn't ramble too much.

SM: Oh, no you did a wonderful, wonderful job. I enjoyed this and I learned a great deal. There is a lot of it I was not aware of, especially not being stationed. I thought you would go over there and be in a definite place. I'm going to end now. Thank you and I will let you go eat some lunch.

Charlie Williamson

Charlie Williamson (CW) Dr. Daniel Good (DG)

CW: Would you identify yourself?

DG: Yeah.

CW: I'm Charlie Williamson, and I served under General Patton during WW II. A (lovely?) experience that I saw at one particular instance. When General Patton came into the city of Metz. It goes back to WWI when he was a young Lieutenant. The city of Metz was so heavily fortified during those particular days until they just by-passed instead of trying to take it. He remembered that during WWII, and Metz was in his direction of occupation that he was going into. So he was determined to take Metz this time. When we went into Metz, 2/3 of the town was taken and he thought the whole town was taken at that time. So he comes driving in with his jeep and with his driver. Somebody in the German Army took a pot-shot at him and hit the side of his jeep. Well, immediately he turned his jeep around and went on out. That was the first time that I saw Patton and that was the last time I saw him.

The worst experience that I might say that I had was during the Battle of the Bulge. Not only did we have to fight the enemy at that time, but we had to fight the cold weather as well. It was the coldest winter that they had had in 20 years. Some of the Germans who had been shot and killed, some of the boys just stood them up. It was so cold that they just propped them up and they stood up. They were frozen stiff. It was quite an experience during that time because it was so cold like I indicated we not only fought the enemy, but we fought the weather as well. A lot of the boys had frost bitten feet at that time...had to go (?) and some of them lost their limbs from frost bitten feet...bad situation at that time, but after the weather cleared we had air support and we broke out of there. We was liberated and so things began to get a little better. We knew that it was coming close to the end of the war at that time.

DG: Oh, Great. Thank you Charlie.

C.D. Collins, Jr.

C.D.Collins (Cjr) Dr. Daniel Good (DG)

DG: Tell who you are and whatever you would like to give for posterity.

Cjr: My name is C.D. Collins, Junior. I am originally from Candler County, and I was in WWII. In the early part of the war, I flew the P-40, old sharp nose job, the P-47 Thunderbolt and I was an instructor. I didn't have but one or two crashes in WWII, and I came out of WWII and continued to fly for the National Guard. I started flying jets in 1948, and I was called back on active duty in 1950. I went in the Korean Conflict flying F-84's. Flew 100 missions in Korea.

DG: A hundred missions?

Cjr: Yes, sir. Came back with a problem. But anyway to make a long story short, you can fly a jet drinking, but you can't fight a P-40 or P-47 drinking. Jets are the easiest airplane in the world to fight. (laugh) So I went through... A lot of people don't know that the military issued 2 oz. per mission flown to all flying personnel in combat. A lot of people don't know that. I said, "We had coffee in the briefing room, but I didn't (hear of ?) anybody drinking coffee". All of us old WWII boys drank liquor. Went north when we first started flying combat out of the southern part of Japan. Then we moved up to (Tay-goon?) and flew up there, but we left the states with 75 (winged?) pilots and we killed 37 of them while we were over there. All of them WWII boys. All married with families and all that. I had a lot of feelings about the Korean War. I was not eager about the Korean Conflict. WWII I was eager about, but the Korean Conflict I was not. I came back home out of that deal, and I continued to fly planes for the National Guard until I was 60 years old. I retired out of the National Guard and am still flying by the way.

DG: Oh yeah?

Cjr: Yeah. (laugh)

DG: You'll never forget that. It's like riding a bicycle, right?

Cjr: That's right. I still like to fly, and I still like to do acrobatics. The city of Statesboro knows that real well, that I like to do acrobatics.

DG: Where's your airplane?

Cjr: It's a super decathlon. I have just sold it. My wife made me sell it because she was afraid I was going to get killed in it, but I have a lot of insurance. My son has a 6 (blade?) so I'm still flying, but I'm not doing acrobatics. I haven't done any now in about 4 or 5 months.

DG: So you have been flying now for how long? How many years?

Cjr: I've been flying since 1937. When I went to the Citadel I learned to fly. So I have been flying over 60 years.

DG: Were you drafted for WWII?

Cjr: Naw, I volunteered for WWII and went in. I was in law school when the war broke out, a senior in law school. I volunteered and went into the old Army Air Corp and became a pilot. I enjoyed that very much and still like to fly.

DG: Any significant people you remember from WWII?

Cjr: Well, WWII I flew with Bob Johnson. He was one of the leading "aces" and Doug Douglas from Austin, Texas who was, he shot down 27. We flew together for a long time. Anyway, I met a lot of outstanding pilots that were a lot better pilots than I was. They were "aces" in WWII. I met one in the Korean Conflict over there. The Korean Conflict we were flying an air craft that wasn't designed for air to air combat. The F-84 wasn't. The F-86 was. We just dropped bombs, blew up bridges, rail roads, trains and all that stuff. Anyway, it was quite an experience. I didn't like the Korean

deal. I came back not at all happy with it because of all the guys, WWII boys we call them, that were killed over there. But I'm OK. with it, I'm happy. I'm glad I was in WWII. I did what I did do and the good lord let me stay alive. Thank God.

DG: Well thank you.

Cjr: Thank you.

Johnny Aldrich

Johnny Aldrich(JA) Dr. Daniel Good(DG)

JA: My name is Johnny Aldrich. I live at Brooklet, Georgia. I joined the Marine Corp August '41. I was 17. I went through boot camp at Parris Island. From Paris Island I went to New River, North Carolina, just out from Jacksonville. My outfit left the States in April of '42. We went to Samoa, British Samoa. Where we trained in the jungles to fight Japanese warfare. From there we hit Guadalcanal which was invaded on August the 7th, but we were held in reserve for a week or so. Then we went in. We had a good many casualties. When things sort of quieted down they took us to Melbourne, Australia where we got replacements for the wounded and the dead. We went then to New Guinea and we trained those replacements in jungle warfare. And from there we went to (Cape Casta?), New Britain on Christmas Day of 1943 where we made an invasion on the Japanese held Island. Then we came back to (La-Voo-Voo?) to a rest area. From there I came back to the states in June of 1944. A couple of incidents that happened after the 25th of December's invasion we were trying to take a hill. There was a little open space there, say about a 10 by 10 clearing. If a Marine walked in there and stopped for 5 seconds he was dead. The Japanese, there was a good sniper. He killed about 8 or 10 Marines right there in that one spot. So we looked back on another mountain, and we saw our artillery. We said, "They may be fixing to fire on us." We got just outside of the area. The bushes were head high, and I stood

on my Lieutenant's shoulders and signaled back, waved the flags and got the attention of these artillery people and told them who we was. They said that they were fixing to fire upon us. Then that was the end of that. We finally made it down off that little hill by following one of our tanks. We had to get a tank. We couldn't get down. The Japanese could see us when we started down, but we couldn't see them. We had to get a tank. Then in this incident that you read (Tape Ends)

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