

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH GRADY V. CORLEY

FOR THE  
VETERAN'S ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEWED BY  
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KINGSPORT, TENNESSEE  
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KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Grady V. Corley on September 1, 2000 in Kingsport, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

JOSEPH HARVEY: Joseph Harvey.

PIEHLER: And, I guess, I'll let ... Joe ask the first question since he—this is his Normandy Project, and he's helped arrange this interview.

HARVEY: I'd like to start off by asking you some questions about growing up, and your family, and your parents.... What was your mother's name?

GRADY CORLEY: Dora.... Some of this stuff is probably a little more information than I put in the other [pre interview survey]. I didn't know. I found this since then. The birthplace. Her maiden name was Mills, Dora Beatrice Mills.

HARVEY: Do you know where she was born?

CORLEY: That's one of the things I found out since then. I believe it was Rock Hill, South Carolina.

HARVEY: And was her family also from Rock Hill?

CORLEY: They ... followed the cotton mills around. Her dad did. So he moved from one town to the other, one mill to the other.

HARVEY: When did they come to Kingsport?

CORLEY: We came in 1928. March ... of 1928.

HARVEY: And you were born in Kingsport or in South Carolina?

CORLEY: Greenwood, South Carolina.

PIEHLER: ... When were you born?

CORLEY: June 3, 1916.

PIEHLER: So, you were ... a young boy, but you ... still remembered living elsewhere?

CORLEY: Oh yeah. I was nearly twelve years old when we came here.

PIEHLER: Where had you lived before coming here?

CORLEY: Greenwood and Anderson, South Carolina.

PIEHLER: And you said your family followed the mill. What did your father do in the mill?

CORLEY: He didn't—it was my granddad. My mother's dad, he dragged the family around here and there. Dad, ... he had gone to night school, he went—well, let's back up a little bit. There in Greenwood, one of the family connections back somewhere owned a cotton mill there. So dad and my granddad—I think they were tenant farmers or something at the time—they brought them in and give them jobs in the mill and told dad to go to night school and get him some learning. So eventually, why he—granddad got on the police force and dad got in the bank. So he did bank insurance, real-estate, that kind of stuff. Never very successful now, my dad.

PIEHLER: And did the family come to Kingsport because of the mill and your granddad?

CORLEY: He had a job. He had a job. No, my dad had a job.

PIEHLER: Your dad had a job and this ...

CORLEY: One of Granddad Mills's "students" I'll put it, in the loom fixing business. He got him some learning and he was a superintendent in the mill here in town, so dad had about run his limit where he was, and called on old family ties to get him a job. He didn't stay there long. He never did like these inside jobs.

PIEHLER: What kind of jobs did your father like?

CORLEY: He wanted to be out selling something.

PIEHLER: But it sounds like he wasn't a great salesman.... He had a hard ...

CORLEY: It was the Depression days.

PIEHLER: How tough was the Depression on your family?

CORLEY: I brag that I lived through it, it and World War II. It was misery. Couldn't pay the rent. You was lucky if you had a pair of shoes that was fit to wear, that kind of stuff. It was just hand to mouth. It took several years 'til I got old enough to get a job.

PIEHLER: So it sounds like your parents were out of work a long time.

CORLEY: Well, they had something to do, you know. Enough maybe to bring food in most of the time. But he says, "I owe everybody in town. Everybody sued me." And when the war broke, why, ... he went to work at Holston Ordnance and he started paying off his old bills. Things eased up then. But he never had much.

PIEHLER: What about your mother? Did she ever work outside of the house?

CORLEY: Yeah. She worked in the cotton mill. She run looms, [as a] weaver.

PIEHLER: And did she work while you were growing up?

CORLEY: Some. She was what they would call a spare hand. We got extra people coming in, in case some regulars want the day off. You know, you're here, "You can work today." That was it. You may work a day, or two, or three, or all week. She did that occasionally. But she had babies popping up every two years. Which, I was the oldest of nine.

HARVEY: So you have eight other brothers and sisters?

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: Did all your brothers and sisters make it into adulthood? Did they all ...

CORLEY: Yeah. Until a couple of years ago, one sister died. The rest of us still are kicking around.

PIEHLER: And being oldest, did you have extra—it sounds like you had extra responsibilities ...

CORLEY: Yeah, you're not kidding.

PIEHLER: What were some of those things that your younger brothers and sisters didn't have to do?

CORLEY: Well, I carried papers every morning. Three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Rain or shine, snow or blow. Had a paper route. And we had to keep up the fire starting stuff. It was just in a grate or something or other then. We didn't even have a warm morning heater. Had to have that stuff ready for the next day. Or going down on the railroad with ... something you don't hear of anymore, [a] croker sack.

PIEHLER: I've never heard the term. But ...

CORLEY: It's a big sack that holds a big bunch of potatoes or something or other, made of real coarse weave.

PIEHLER: I've seen those sacks. I didn't know what they called.

CORLEY: Well, in my day and time and place, why it was called croker, C-R-O-K-E-R, I think. On the railroad tracks picking up coal.

PIEHLER: And that was for the house? To heat the house ...

CORLEY: To heat the house.

HARVEY: How old were you when you started doing your paper route?

CORLEY: Let's see. I'll have to think on that a minute. In 1932 we had moved back to Kingsport from Virginia, and I got the same route over again so it must have been a couple years before that. About fourteen, I guess.

PIEHLER: Where was the first school you entered? Can you tell us a little bit about when you first went to school?

CORLEY: I went to school in Greenwood. I passed there several years ago and it's an abandoned wreck now. Of course, it passed a lot of years.

PIEHLER: How big was your first school?

CORLEY: I don't ... I expect they had up through sixth grade probably. I didn't go there long, come up one of these moves, and I got sick. The next time I changed school I got sick, I got typhoid fever. And they didn't have semesters, they just had years, so there went that year.

PIEHLER: Typhoid fever is fairly serious.

CORLEY: Yeah. It killed one of my aunts just about four years before that. Two or three years before that.

PIEHLER: Was it a clo ...

CORLEY: ... she was an adult.

PIEHLER: Was it a close call with you? Do you ...

CORLEY: I don't recall.

PIEHLER: You don't recall?

CORLEY: I was just six years old at the time.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

CORLEY: Something like that.

PIEHLER: But you ... it sounds like you were in bed for a number of months.

CORLEY: Yeah. Quite a while.

PIEHLER: When did you—after you left the Greenwood school ... what was the next school you went to?

CORLEY: Up in Anderson. I went to three different schools there and I don't remember a name of any of them except maybe one. I have a hard time thinking of it, I guess.

PIEHLER: So, I get the sense that childhood is memories in different places. That, until you got to Kingsport you really—you were on the move a lot.

CORLEY: We were still in Kingsport. I told you, we couldn't pay the rent.

PIEHLER: So what would happen when you couldn't pay the rent?

CORLEY: Move out. Talk some other landlord into letting you in for about three months. About as long as they'd last. I don't know how many places—I lost count how many places we lived in Kingsport.

PIEHLER: So, in other words, when you were a teenager you ... were constantly moving?

CORLEY: Yeah, seemed that way. At least the house where we lived and school several times. It cost my about a year or two of schooling. Losing out.

PIEHLER: You couldn't pick it up again.

CORLEY: ... He had the bright idea of going up into Virginia, Big Stone Gap. He got acquainted with some guy. So we moved up there, and that fell through. I had started the high school there, my freshman year, and went until probably the middle of October. So that fell through up there and he came back to Kingsport and I went to (Dobbins-Bennett?) [High School], six weeks behind. Started with, "Too bad old man but you got to catch this work up before you get passed." And I couldn't catch it all up. They'd already started algebra and I hadn't. I said, "Well I better lay off that and drop back to 8A" or something like that and start over on this algebra. That kind of stuff. I did make up the science projects all that stuff, but English, I just ... couldn't get it all. So there you go again. I wound up—I thought I had two years of high school, but I got a GED, and in that it said I had a year and a half. Maybe six grades or something like that.

PIEHLER: When did you leave high school?

CORLEY: When I was eighteen, 1934.

PIEHLER: But you weren't able to finish high school because you had lost this time in the different moves?

CORLEY: Yeah and the sickness that year. That cost me a whole year.

PIEHLER: The typhoid fever?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: When did you get your GED?

CORLEY: '47, I believe.

PIEHLER: Now, did the GI Bill have a part in that, getting your GED?

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: You didn't use the GI Bill for education?

CORLEY: Yeah. I started on a correspondence course. It was a big correspondence school.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm, yes.

CORLEY: But at the same time, I was going up to Bristol at night school. (Sperry?) had put on some night schools up there ... several different courses. So I was going there and I couldn't handle both of them.

PIEHLER: Were you using the GI Bill for the courses that (Sperry?) was putting on?

CORLEY: No. I was paying out of the pocket. The GI Bill was paying the other, which it didn't last very long. So I couldn't keep both of them going. That (Sperry?) was working me every—I would take a night off. I'd go up there twice a week, four hours a night. I had homework, it was every night. Other nights, except Saturday, I took Saturday night off.

PIEHLER: What were you studying at the (Sperry?) courses?

CORLEY: Mechanical/Electrical, which I could use in my work. This other was the engineering stuff. That's part of the future.

PIEHLER: Graduating in '34, leaving high school really in '34, that's not the best year to go out and get a job.

CORLEY: I know. I was lucky to get one.

PIEHLER: What was your first job leaving high school?

CORLEY: Out there at Eastman. I worked a summer job at the dry cleaners. Sometime back several years before which was just a matter of three months. Then I started work at Eastman. That was better than nothing. (Laughs) If you call making thirty cents an hour and hoping there was a job there the next shift you come in on. Sometimes there wasn't.

PIEHLER: Because, I assume, that Eastman, like a lot of companies, reduced hours or laid people off.

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How steady was work?

CORLEY: ... Well, I only lost—was laid off for two years, I mean, two weeks one time. Other times maybe a shift. You know, come in, “Well we have to shut down some of this stuff you go home, with no pay.” I had them tell me that one night, went home at 11:00 snow that deep out there. About 12:00 they was still sorting people out, says, “you’ll have to go home,” buses all run. Car. (Laughs) That’s a dream. So I walked to town and got a cab and he’d take you to the city limits for a quarter. I lived over in West View, which was about as far as you could get away from the plant. You know where West View is? Cherry Hill?

PIEHLER: How many miles was that?

CORLEY: I don’t know.

PIEHLER: It sounds very far though.

CORLEY: Well, in that cold and snow. He said, “I’ll give you all I can,” this cab driver did, and when he got to the city limits he kicked it out of gear and coasted me a ways. (Laughter) I was pretty near home then.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

CORLEY: So that’s the way it was.

PIEHLER: So you stayed with Eastman until you enlisted in the Army?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Were you living at home while you were working in the ‘30s?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: I assume you helped your—it sounds like you were a big important help to your family.

CORLEY: Oh, yeah.

HARVEY: What was it that you were doing while you were working at Eastman?

CORLEY: Running a winding machine where it had wound spools. They sold to whoever made the clothing I believe it was. Couple of years I worked on that, and then I would make cones which was—you get with yarns and stuff. It wasn’t bad. It was pleasant work. I worked on that for about two years, and then they decided they needed more maintenance people. I stayed over one morning after a night shift and took a test, along with ... several other people. Four of us made the grade. So I got into maintenance then, and I stayed there forever. Same department,

but the shop—they had a bunch of shops. They furnished maintenance with several other divisions besides the yarn plant. So I spent most of my maintenance years out of the yarn plant.

PIEHLER: What were your hours at Eastman when you were working—I mean, you said there were occasional—they'd say, "Go home, we don't have work," or you even had a two week layoff, but what were your hours typically? The hours—how many days a week?

CORLEY: For the first four years, when I was an operator I worked two shifts. Three to eleven, eleven to seven, and then day shift, the seven to three was women operators. And when I got on at maintenance ... it was a three shift deal, which I came to get some day shifts.

PIEHLER: Was there a union in the plant?

CORLEY: No. Never been, I don't think.

PIEHLER: Was there any union organizing or efforts to organize?

CORLEY: It's been tried several times. They never could get off the ground.

PIEHLER: When you were in the plant in the 1930s were any of your coworkers involved at all with any organizing?

CORLEY: Not that I knew of. Wouldn't talk much anyway.

PIEHLER: In the '30s, you mentioned you got thirty cents an hour.

CORLEY: Well, that was where you started ...

PIEHLER: ... you started. When you went off to war how much were you making? Do you have any recollection ...

CORLEY: I was making about seventy-five cents an hour, something like that. I forget exactly what it was.

PIEHLER: And did you work a forty hour ... week or was it ...

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: How did—I mean, when you started work there were no Social Security numbers, and there was also no minimum wage. How did, for example—the minimum wage, did that ... lead to an increase in salaries? Do you remember? Any recollection of that?

CORLEY: Don't remember. As business gradually got better they'd give people a raise. Let's see, I believe they started—let's back up just a little bit. I was going out the gate one day the guard says, "Hey Corley!"—it must have been bonus day or something, he said, "You remember when we started work out here at twenty-eight cents an hour?" I said, "Now you just back up a

little further than that.” We worked down at the school room four hours a day for a week at no pay. Learning what you had to know about identification of various yarns. Twenty-eight cents an hour when you got out of that, they put you up on the regular shift work for twenty-eight cents and then you worked from there. And when I quit operating four years later it was about—making about forty cents. Maybe, maybe it was a little over that. I think, when I first started on the mechanics I was making fifty cents. That was ’38.

PIEHLER: You didn’t have a lot of money growing up, particularly before you family, as you said, before you went to work. But what did you do for fun? Knowing you didn’t have a lot of money, but ...

CORLEY: Played ball with the neighborhood boys in good weather, had activity ticket at school. You know, you go over there for concerts and plays and ball games, whatever. And, the next brother and I—he was two and a half years younger than me, mom and dad would play Set-Back sometimes at night, and he and I had a library card. Ninety days for twenty-five cents. So we generally keep three books around. One ninety day spell, I think I averaged about a book a day.

PIEHLER: So you really liked to read?

CORLEY: Yeah. I told you I liked to ... Yeah. This eye has been bothering me, I can’t ...

PIEHLER: Yeah. Oh that’s too bad. You were reading a book a day—for someone growing up you really did like to read. So you had to pay to use the public library?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And this was the Kingsport Public Library.

CORLEY: Yeah. Twenty-five cents for three months.

PIEHLER: ... And did you have to go without a library card often or ...

CORLEY: No. We generally keep one.

PIEHLER: What about movies? Did you ever get to a movie?

CORLEY: Yeah. Saturday, maybe, get to see one, for ten cents. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did you ever play any sports in school.

CORLEY: I wasn’t good enough, or big enough, or fast enough, or whatever it is. Sandlot stuff, played that. We played at noon hour, touch football. Maybe after school get up a sandlot game if somebody had a goal in the backyard, that kind of stuff.

PIEHLER: What church did you and your parents go to?

CORLEY: None regular. We—let's see, we went to, what is now, Mayfair Methodist several times. I guess we went there more than anywhere else. And there in Borden Village where we lived they had a church then. So I went there for a while.

PIEHLER: But your ... parents were not active in the church?

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: And ... were you active in any church groups or ...

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: What about the YMCA? Were you—or the Boy Scouts?

CORLEY: Tried it, but this moving around killed it pretty quickly. After we—after I got to work and a little more income where we could pay the rent and stay put, why my brother got pretty far up in the Scouts. Next brother to me, I don't know just how high, it wasn't Eagle, but he was considerably past first class.

PIEHLER: So your younger brother and sisters had, in, some ways, a very different experience growing up. They were—their lives were much more settled than yours.

CORLEY: Yeah. When the last one was born, I'd been working about three years then. He was born in '37.

HARVEY: You said that you lived in Borden Village?

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: Were you parents working at, or your father or your mother, working at Borden Mills?

CORLEY: Yeah. That's the only way you got to live there in the village and cheap rent. Ten dollars a month, or something like that.

PIEHLER: And so ... Borden Village was a company town?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Were your parents paid in cash or in script?

CORLEY: Cash.

PIEHLER: Cash?

CORLEY: They were still paying in script there in Virginia when we were up there.

PIEHLER: This was ...

CORLEY: 1932.

PIEHLER: That you could use in company store?

CORLEY: Yeah. You take it into town and they discounted it.

PIEHLER: And, I get a sense, sharply discounted.

CORLEY: No doubt. I don't know. I never did have enough to fool with.

PIEHLER: Had your father been in the military at all?

CORLEY: No. In World War I, I kept him out, he says.

PIEHLER: What did ... your parents think of Franklin Roosevelt? And, I guess, what did you think of Franklin Roosevelt growing up?

CORLEY: Thought he was a fine fellow. We thought he was doing a lot for us, for the poor old working people.

PIEHLER: Did you vote for him in '36? If you don't mind me asking?

CORLEY: I don't think I even voted—I don't believe I ever voted until after I got out of the service.

PIEHLER: Really? So you don't have no memory of voting before the war? What about your parents? Did they—do you know, if they voted?

CORLEY: Not regular anyway.

PIEHLER: Did you have a radio growing up?

CORLEY: No. Well now, when I was about six years old, my dad was still working in the bank, that was our prosperous time. [We] had a radio that run off a battery, car battery. What's that station in Cincinnati? About the only station you could get.

PIEHLER: I can't remember the name of it, but I know that the Pittsburgh one and the Chicago one, the big station.

CORLEY: And that disappeared. I don't know whatever went with it. We didn't have another one until probably about 1935 after I'd started to work.

PIEHLER: The various houses that you lived in, did they have indoor plumbing?

CORLEY: No. That includes some inside the city.

PIEHLER: So you would have outhouses? Which, I have been told by people I've interviewed who grew up with outhouses, it adds a whole different light to winter particularly. That it gets pretty cold in the winter when you have to get to the outhouse.

CORLEY: Yeah, it does.

PIEHLER: What about a car? Did you—when did your family ever get a car?

CORLEY: Well, in my younger days they had one.

PIEHLER: That was in, you said, the prosperous times?

CORLEY: Yeah. I was six to eight years old or younger than that. After that, it was probably about 1938, I'd say before we bought an old—well, my brother and I, he was coming to work at Borden Mills by that time, we bought an old—I think about a ten-years old, Desoto. Daddy couldn't swing one for the rest of his life.

PIEHLER: Really, he never bought a car after that? You said you dad worked in the ordnance—during the war he worked in the war production in the ordnance factory?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did he work the entire war?

CORLEY: Well, I was gone all that time, and I don't know. I know he was still there when they shut down after the war.

PIEHLER: We would like to ask you a lot of factual questions, but what are your memories fonder otherwise of you parents? You mother and your father. Is there any memories, things that we should know about?

CORLEY: Well, they always tried to treat us—they never did get abusive or anything like that, but it was work, stay busy. With nine kids playing around, you know, you ain't got much. If you could just keep up you was doing good.

PIEHLER: How big were the houses that you live in? I mean, nine children are a lot of children.

CORLEY: Well they didn't have nine all that times. They was still coming up until—'37 was the last one. It'd just depend on what you could find.

PIEHLER: So it sounds like there was also some sharing of beds and ...

CORLEY: Yeah. We had three people to the bed.

PIEHLER: And clothes, I assume even more. Did your family always have enough money to eat growing up? Or were there ever really any tough times where ...

CORLEY: Well, there was one time we lived in East Stone Gap and one of my brothers was born there and he was still a baby then, and dad had to go up to Norton after work one day for something to do with the work, I don't know what it was about. He and some other guy was going, and I begged him to let me go for the ride. I did, and we got back home that night after dark. Mama was in there in the dark crying. All we had was a kerosene stove and kerosene lamps and they'd run out of kerosene before she could get supper cooked. Said, "I had to put the kids to bed hungry." That's about the bottom.

HARVEY: Did you go—you were working at Eastman, and then you enlisted in 1941.

CORLEY: Say that again.

HARVEY: You were working at Eastman, and then you enlisted directly from working at Eastman. And that was in 1941?

CORLEY: Yeah. They had such a thing as called the draft. (Laughter) And you had a number and mine was very low. And the assistant superintendent in the department was working, he was a mechanic buddy, and he was an officer in the Guard and he knew they was going to get called up. He said, "You best go with us. I'd like to have you." So I thought well, I had a low number and it won't be long, probably land with a pack on my back, walking. In a field artillery outfit at least you get to ride. So that tipped me over. Then he got turned down in his exam! (Laughter) After that, after I got back, I ran into him one day. I says, "You got me in that thing and then you got—you chickened out of it." He thought I was serious, he come around a day or two later and says, "You really mean that?" I said, "No, I was just kidding." I was sorry to see him go. He was a good man.

PIEHLER: So, you knew your number was soon up. But you probably—you might have waited for your number if it wasn't, sort of, this prompting to join the Guard?

CORLEY: Yeah. I would have waited. I wouldn't have gone and jumped in there.

PIEHLER: When you were growing up did you regularly read the newspaper?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What did you know about what was going on, say, in Europe during the 1930s? I mean, I know its been a while and ...

CORLEY: Didn't pay a whole lot of attention to it, you know. I'd say "well that's way over my head and so, and so, and so, and so." But after I got ready to go, you was hearing that—hearing

it besides reading it. As a paper carrier, I had mine plus I'd swap with some carrier for a different paper. I'd read two papers.

PIEHLER: Do you remember what paper you were a carrier for?

CORLEY: Bristol Herald Courier. We got fifteen cents a week, if you could collect it from each customer, which you owed the paper man a dime. You could keep a nickel.

PIEHLER: So if a customer didn't pay it was out of your pocket?

CORLEY: You paid.

PIEHLER: So how tough was it to collect?

CORLEY: I got so—there were people [that] moved off. That was the main problem, always shifting around.

PIEHLER: People who were there one day, gone the next.

CORLEY: ... I got to where I could tell when I'd pitch my paper on the porch, the way it echoed. Nobody there, they'd moved on. Just by the sound of it hitting the front porch. It took a keen ear I'm sure.

PIEHLER: How long was your route?

CORLEY: I don't know. I started—I had to walk downtown on Main Street to get the papers, and then I had to walk back, got on Dale Street, there was Five Points, or the end of it there. Then I walked back that section, Dale Street, the length of it, and those other streets on up there. So, I guess, I was several miles.

PIEHLER: And it would take you how long to finish your route?

CORLEY: Don't remember. Don't remember. And this was a morning route too. We had to get that done, get your breakfast, get to school.

PIEHLER: When you got your job in the factory ... at Eastman, did one of your brothers take over your route?

CORLEY: I think he did. I think he did. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Of the people you went to high school with, did anyone ever go to college, in the 30s, that you remembered?

CORLEY: Well I'm sure ... quite a few of them did. There was some smart cookies in there, especially the girls. They'd go on to college before the boys would. They said, "I don't need to

go to college, I don't need to go to college." When they got in the service, they ached over that, "Why didn't I go? I could have been an officer instead of a private." (Laughter) Or whatever.

PIEHLER: Were you disappointed you weren't able to finish high school? That you were forced to get a job?

CORLEY: At the time it didn't bother me much. I—on account of losing those credits I was telling you about there, they dropped me back from the bunch I started with. So I read that that cooled off a lot of people. They was bunch of strangers. So, I guess, all I was waiting for was to get old enough to get a job.

PIEHLER: ... This is a question we should have asked earlier, but to get your job at Eastman did you have to know someone?

CORLEY: I think it helped. Dad says—he knew this guy over here 'cause he's a good friend of personnel manager, and says "I give him a little present to put in a good word for you." True or not, I don't know. I wouldn't doubt it. But I made him a good man.

PIEHLER: I guess—how long did—I mean, this is a question we'll ask after war, but how long did you remain with Eastman?

CORLEY: Until I retired.

PIEHLER: Which was in ...

CORLEY: About forty-four and a half years or something like that, counting my service time. They counted that.

PIEHLER: That's a long time. What year did you retire? Do you remember?

CORLEY: '79. '78 or 9.

PIEHLER: So you started in 1934 and ...

CORLEY: It was about forty-four and a half years.

PIEHLER: That's a long ... run.

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you have any sense—did you—when you entered the service in 1941, did you expect that the United States was going to war, at that time? I mean, I know we eventually did, but did you expect it, say, growing up, did you think—well you mentioned even though you read the paper quite a bit, you didn't necessarily follow a lot of the foreign news.

CORLEY: Yeah. You always hear this “the Yellow peril,” you know, reading in a magazine, fiction, fighting the Japs. Yeah. They’re going to ship that scrap metal back to us one of these days. But we went to Camp Forrest down at Tullahoma, Tennessee in March ’41, which was nearly a year before the war started. And come August they was going on maneuvers in Louisiana and I got shipped off to service school in Fort Sill, Oklahoma for about three months. I got what was almost like a kick in the stomach there one Sunday. Guys was playing around, “Hey! Have you heard the latest news?” This was, I expect, November before the war. “The Japs just attacked.” Oh my God! I was expecting to get out of here in two or three months, go back to my girlfriend, my job. But that just hit me right in the stomach. Just somebody playing then, you know.

PIEHLER: Because you were expecting to go back—I mean, the Guard had been called up and you were expecting to go back home?

CORLEY: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: How disappointing—I mean, I have been told that a lot of people on this—I have read a lot, and people have told me, that a lot of people who had been drafted and who were in the Guard that had been called up really weren’t too happy in the Guard. I mean being called up, federalized and that there was a lot of griping. Do you remember any of that?

CORLEY: No. Because we knew we was gonna be. Now, some of the guys that had been in there—see, I had just joined just before they got inducted. Some of their old timers got out on account of that. They had a chance, I think, to give them a fair chance to get out of the Guard so they did, some of them did. Which I never got acquainted them, because they left as I came in. So they were out scouring around and trying to find recruits on over to the Three C’s Camp, over around Unicoi, over in there somewhere and got some boys. Some of them good.

PIEHLER: Had you or your father, or anyone ever worked on a WPA project or one of the public works projects?

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: What about the CCC? Did any of you brothers?

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: You signed up for the Guard, where did you sign up and, and ...

CORLEY: I guess at the Civic Auditorium. That was their headquarters.

PIEHLER: And after signing up, how long was it before they were actually called up by the federal government?

CORLEY: About a week. Something like that.

PIEHLER: So when you signed up, you knew that this was pretty imminent, that it wasn't just going on weekends or nights?

CORLEY: No. You knew you was going in the service.

PIEHLER: After the Guard was called up and federalized where did you go? You mentioned Tullahoma. Was that your first ...

CORLEY: Camp Forrest.

PIEHLER: How long did you stay in Camp Forrest?

CORLEY: We shipped out of there, I guess, on about the 20<sup>th</sup> of December. Before Christmas, because we got a troop train and we wound up at Camp Roberts, California about a week later. (Laughter) A week on a troop train and no bunks. So we had Christmas Day on the train. I don't know how many miles we covered with that thing.

PIEHLER: A lot of people remember their initial induction very vividly. Where did you get, for example, your physical and get your shots and your uniform? Was that in Tullahoma?

CORLEY: No. That was down here at the Civic Auditorium.

PIEHLER: And where did you get you basic training?

CORLEY: More or less self-administered down at Camp Forrest. I'd had a little bit of this left-right, left-right stuff in grade school. The gym teacher would make us march. And that, I said, "That came in pretty handy. I know how to do this." So we more or less taught ourselves as went along.

PIEHLER: So, in other words, you didn't—if you had joined the regular Army, in 1940 you would have gone to boot camp and had the eighteen week, the sixteen-eighteen week course. But you didn't have this because of joining the Guard unit?

CORLEY: No, didn't have that.

PIEHLER: So, in a sense, you were ... given jobs right away as part of your unit?

CORLEY: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: What was the unit you served in, the smallest unit, and, I guess, one of our questions is who was your sergeant, your first sergeant? Do you remember him?

CORLEY: "Weak" Watkins. I don't know what his first name was, they called him "Weak." He got fired there and he left.

PIEHLER: Why did he get fired?

CORLEY: He was supposed to have—we'd got some new men in. Back up a little bit now. Went down there and we had less than thirty men in the battery. The battery is a company. The artillery called a company a battery. Usually runs about ninety or a hundred men. We had about twenty some, I think. So they shipped us in some, a bunch of new boys, and they was having some kind of ceremony or lecture or whatever in some other building. And it was pouring down rain and he didn't take those men out in the rain. He didn't show up there at the meeting. He was gone, he was old enough he didn't have to take a demotion or anything.

PIEHLER: He just went back to being a civilian?

CORLEY: Just went back home. He was the first one.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: You were initially in a very under-strength battery?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Where did these new people come from, that they added?

CORLEY: Ohio was—we got a bunch from Ohio. Pretty good—most of them good boys, but some them on the rifle range you'd think that they'd seen a snake picking up that rifle, scared to death of it. I said more than once I was glad my life hadn't depended on one of those guys to shoot their rifle and hit anything. They had one of them one night—I regress a little bit, it was at the end of the war, and they'd had a—we were guarding a POW encampment [with] just barbed wire circling it. I think maybe they had cows or something or other. Anyway, out there it was a rainy night, and one of the ole boys saw a prisoner, he wasn't supposed to get past that inside fence. He ... shot at him and hit him in the calf of the leg. We all said that was the worse thing that ever happened to the poor old soldier, the unluckiest thing, because that guy couldn't hit a barn from inside. (Laughter) I guess, he was the only one in the whole battery who'd ever actually shot one of the enemy. He wasn't the enemy by then, the war was over.

PIEHLER: I have been told, and actually this was a compliment paid by an officer I interviewed—actually he was one of the first people I ever had interviewed, and he said for a while he was assigned to a unit with a lot of Kentuckians and Tennesseans, and he said they used to drive, particularly the old sergeants, crazy because these guys could hit anything but they wouldn't shoot the Army way, they wouldn't used the sights, they wouldn't follow what the Army—I have a feeling that was—that you were one of those Tennesseans/Kentuckians who drove officers crazy.

CORLEY: Well, the only time, I believe, I was ever bothered by one was shooting prone, "Get your feet flat on the ground." Well mine wouldn't go flat on the ground. This guy come along and didn't say anything. He just grabbed my heals and pushed down and I said, "Gaaaaaah." (Laughter) It was like he'd shot me.

HARVEY: So you had had some experience with rifles before you went into ...

CORLEY: ... BB gun. I was raised hot with a BB gun. Pitch it up. Ping! Twenty-two rifle, that kind of stuff.

PIEHLER: Did you—when did you start going hunting growing up?

CORLEY: I never was much of a hunter.

PIEHLER: So really—you were—it was more for marksmanship?

CORLEY: Yeah, yeah. Guy at the plant says “I’d walk all day through the wood for a shot.” Says, “it’s the walk that I like.” I said, “It’s the shot that I like.” I like to shoot all day, I would. I was in organized shooting for a while, then I saw I couldn’t beat the bucks especially, the money, couldn’t afford all the first-class equipment.

HARVEY: How old were you when you started doing that? Started ...

CORLEY: Shooting? I don’t know. Quick as I could get the money to buy a BB gun, that was probably about sixteen. And I still have a BB gun. Not that one. I got it before they had a dog law here and packs of them would come through. Turning over your garbage cans, I popped two or three of them with that BB gun. Wouldn’t hurt them you know. It would sting them. I had one big ole bulldog one day, and I got a hedge cross the back of my lot, and I think the garbage can was back there, he was after something with his back to me. Ping! He jumped right through that hedge. (Laughter) When they passed the law about the no loose dogs, why I hardly ever shoot the gun.

PIEHLER: When did they pass that law up here?

CORLEY: Oh, it’s been quite a while.

PIEHLER: Was it in the 1940s or ...

CORLEY: Oh no, it ...

PIEHLER: It’s been more ...

CORLEY: It’s been fifteen years ago, maybe.

PIEHLER: This BB gun experience is more recent than ...

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What do you remember—what were some of your initial impressions, say, of Army food? And Army barracks life?

CORLEY: Well, some of it I liked, some of it I didn't.

PIEHLER: What did you like?

CORLEY: I don't really remember. But I tell you when we got into Normandy after so many days we got off K-rations and onto hot meals. Most of us didn't like it that way. We would rather have K-rations.

PIEHLER: Really?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Why? Do you remember why, because I've usually heard it the other way?

CORLEY: It tasted pretty good.

PIEHLER: The K-rations?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: I have interviewed fewer people in artillery, and, I guess, could you talk about ... a little bit—first, I guess, they sent you to specialized school at Fort Sill.

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How long were you at Fort Sill? Do you remember?

CORLEY: About three months. Twelve weeks.

PIEHLER: And what did you learn?

CORLEY: Well, there it is. (Shows records)

PIEHLER: This is your academic record, and you were ... part of the (reading academic report) "Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma academic record enlisted specialist battery mechanics course #12, and the following report on students of the enlisted specialist battery mechanics course #12 Field Artillery School from August 25, 1941 to November 15, 1941. Is the record of the field artillery school having copies furnished the organization commander each student." And so, you were "Corley, Grady V. Private First Class 20451449 Battery F 191<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery, stationed Camp Forrest, Tennessee." You had an eighty-six percentile, your class standing was six. You did graduate. Your rating was "excellent" and you were an artillery mechanic according to this. What did they teach you? What did they teach you about being a mechanic, and how did it differ from being a mechanic ...

CORLEY: Maintain and repair firearms, canons. That's about it.

PIEHLER: How much more difficult was it being a mechanic in the Army verses being a mechanic at Eastman?

CORLEY: Well in the Army you didn't have any tools much to work with. A firing battery, that's a battery with guns. The ... organization is a battalion.

PIEHLER: Yes.

CORLEY: ... which consisted of three firing batteries. That's three batteries either with guns or service battery and a headquarters battery. That's the five batteries. So really for the fighting end of it they didn't expect you to do much. Gotta keep your guns operating, and if you had any serious problems, why you go back to the service battery or ordnance outfit somewhere further back. So, it was my job to keep those guns able to shoot.

PIEHLER: And what kind of things could go wrong? What would breakdown? What was routine to have a problem with and what was some of the more difficult problems? And you said you didn't have a lot of equipment to work with?

CORLEY: Didn't have a lot of problems. Tried to keep ahead of it, on the top of it, you know. Don't let them ... start. We had one gun that we had to trade off. You know what lands are in a gun barrel? The grooves ...

PIEHLER: Yes. What was the ...

CORLEY: ... one of them started shucking off some of that stuff in there, and you can't have that. If you jam a shell in behind that and she blows ... (Laughter)

PIEHLER: It would kill everyone.

CORLEY: ... ain't no doubt! So, we called ordnance and they come and picked it up and dropped us off their spare gun, I guess, which it had come from A Battery. It was a dirty mess, if I might add. I had a hard time cleaning it up. So that's the only one—and I had a gun commander have a sight ... a rotating thing [that gives] a reference point he comes to, and I had a piece on one of those break one day. Here comes the lieutenant, "Sergeant Corley this gun—this sight is off so many hundred meters." "Lieutenant it was all right when I checked it this morning." "It's broken." So that was the only thing out of the ordinary.

PIEHLER: Well, could you talk a little bit about the artillery pieces that you worked on, and what they were like and what might be the maintenance for someone who doesn't know a lot about artillery?

CORLEY: You can't see anything in this, but there is a couple of pictures. It's two wheels, a long barrel, called a tube, and on the back it has got a trail. And during World War I, there was just straight trail back there, and it would buck into the ground and [you] tried to get it loose when you had to shift it a little bit. So what they got in World War II was split and they'd go out like this (gestures), one here and one here and you'd traverse your gun way yonder more. And

our gun used—was 4.5 bore size, four and a half inches, and it shot about a fifty-five pound shell with a range of about twenty thousand yards. Used a big tractor to pull them with. I may have a picture of one there somewhere.

PIEHLER: You say—what would be a typical day for you as an artillery mechanic?

CORLEY: Well, it just depended on how the fight was going. If the infantry was in command of whatever they were after, why they didn't bother us. Didn't shoot for fun. You shoot for profit. If it hurt the enemy more than it cost them, do it. So, it just depended on how it was going up front.

PIEHLER: But let's say you were needed to shoot. Would that effect how your day went?

CORLEY: Oh yeah, you'd be busy.

PIEHLER: What would you be doing? You know, in your case, first yourself, what would you be doing? Would you just be waiting for something to break or would you have to do things to the gun before ...

CORLEY: I'd be watching down the lines to see if we got any problems or anything coming up. Or I had to maintain the recoil mechanism and the sights every morning. I'd check all the recoils on four guns and I'd set the sights on four guns so they'd all shoot the same, hopefully, in the same spot, and, if it got much use during the day, why I'd have to do that again, or if we moved, why I had to do that all over again. Sometimes we'd move two or three times a day. I had a good job. I liked it. I didn't have too bad a time. I was also a jeep driver and drove the battery executive officer, the first lieutenant. He was in charge of all the guns and ammunition carrier and such as that. He and I—we got along, he was a good guy. I run into him at a reunion a few years ago. He lives in East Florida. His daddy was a sheep rancher.

PIEHLER: You missed the Louisiana maneuvers?

CORLEY: Yeah. I was in school, and it made me happy.

PIEHLER: ... It sounds like you heard quite a bit about these maneuvers from people in your unit who didn't got to service school.

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What did they tell you about that?

CORLEY: Bugs and mud. Brother-in-law was in there he says, "now when you finished that march in the dark the cooks laid out the food," he says, "I got mine and my mess kit," and says, "Instead of going over there under the truck lights I got off in the dark, so I couldn't see the bugs," (Laughter) says, "Most of the guys run to a light to check their food." He said he got where he just couldn't see it, didn't know it. He got shook up later in the war. He was riding in a tank that got hit. He was an armored infantry. He wasn't a tanker, but he had rode on top of

the tank, you know. He said it killed about everybody on the tank but him. It jarred him, messed up a hip, and eventually he got a hip put in. I think it's been a misery all of his life.

PIEHLER: You mentioned about the sergeant, your first sergeant, who didn't want to take the men out in the rain. It sounds like he didn't want to go in the rain either?

CORLEY: Probably not. It was pouring that night, I remember it was—shoosh!

PIEHLER: And then others—he was not the only one to go. How many of the National Guard officers made it to December '41? ... You said others would go too, do you remember other officers or sergeant who didn't make it to the actual war, because they couldn't make it?

CORLEY: Well, there's a lot of times you don't know that they can't make it, you know, you don't know that that's the reason that they get shipped out. The saying is "keep it upstairs." Give them a promotion, ship out. Oh, we had one second lieutenant and I think he stayed a second lieutenant 'til the end of the whole war, but not with us. Don't know where he went. I don't think he ever got promoted.

PIEHLER: It sounds like he was put into someplace where he couldn't cause any harm.

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Because it's pretty hard to stay, I mean promotions can't—I've gotten the sense that those who were in the Army in '40 and '41 promotions or responsibility could often come very fast, particularly for officers.

CORLEY: Yeah. I expect so. Before we went overseas we had a bunch of extras. I guess, they were on trial. Standard fare was four officers to the battery.

PIEHLER: ... How much extra did you have?

CORLEY: Oh, I don't know. Not a crowd but several, I guess, in our battery, and I'm sure all of them did.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you'd gone to Tullahoma first, and then they shipped you out to California. How long were you in California for? Do you remember, in 1940 early '41?

CORLEY: I went out there '42.

PIEHLER: So this is after the war?

CORLEY: No, no. This is right after Pearl Harbor.

PIEHLER: That you were sent to California?

CORLEY: The whole outfit, the whole outfit.

PIEHLER: So you first went to—you were at Tullahoma and then you went to Fort Sill for your schooling?

CORLEY: That was just me.

PIEHLER: Just you?

CORLEY: Plus the first sergeant. He went to a different school.

PIEHLER: And then you came back, and you rejoined your unit in Tullahoma or was it ...

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And it was after Pearl Harbor that ... you were sent to California.

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And what did you do in California?

CORLEY: Trained.

PIEHLER: Trained.

CORLEY: Trained. It was more or less a training organization there for a long time. We stayed there at Camp Roberts for about a year-and-a-half I'd say. And then we went up to—what's the one up in Washington State?

PIEHLER: Fort Lewis?

CORLEY: Yeah, Fort Lewis. We went up there. Well, we left Roberts and went up to eastern Oregon for maneuvers, the Oregon Desert, we had maneuvered in the Mojave Desert the year before. So we left there, it was about late October, I guess, then went on to Fort Lewis, which was getting close to November, and we stayed there about four or five months. I think we left the next March, going overseas.

PIEHLER: So you didn't go overseas until March of 1944?

CORLEY: '44.

PIEHLER: When you say it was training, did any men ... serve as cadre for other units? Were people taken out of your unit and made cadre for other units?

CORLEY: Yeah. That went on for, I guess, upward of two years.

PIEHLER: So in other words you were constantly training, but you were also constantly losing experienced people to start other units and get new people that needed ... the training? And to join the unit?

CORLEY: My buddy and I, your somewhat ancestor I guess, (Mr. Burris?), we got our heads together and decided—he wasn't married at the time, I was. "It looks like that we're going to be training people here forever, for the rest of the war," he says, "Let's just bring your wife out and I'll have Marjorie, his fiancée, come out and we'll just stay here." Well, my wife quit her job, she was working at Eastman. I don't know whether Marjorie was or not working at anything, probably was though. They come out there and got there probably around Christmas time, and then we hauled out in a couple months. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: When you were in California, you were in the 191<sup>st</sup>?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And then when did it change over to the 959<sup>th</sup>?

CORLEY: I don't know, but it was along that time we were there, they reorganized. They was—what it was to start with was two battalions, it was a regiment. So they thought it was maybe something easier to handle. They just make each battalion independent. So that's when the first battalion kept the 191<sup>st</sup> designation and we had to take whatever was available. It was still the same people, wasn't anything changed about it, except we lost the band and probably a lot of medics. One thing or another.

HARVEY: And you were training with (Beecher?)

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: Now did you enlist with him? Did he ...

CORLEY: Yeah. We went at the same time.

HARVEY: So you went ...

CORLEY: All the way until the end of the war. And he got home before I did, because he had a baby. They gave him five extra points. Old (Beecher?) was a fine boy, he really was. I don't know that he had any enemies. He was a motor sergeant, took care of the vehicles. He had about four men working for him. Yeah, our wives had rooms in the same house a couple of times there in Tacoma.

(Tape paused)

PIEHLER: Your job was a mechanic?

CORLEY: Yeah. I told you I drove that jeep. I had the lieutenant and radio operator in the back. We rode it that way from the English Channel, or wherever, to Omaha Beach to the Elbe River.

PIEHLER: It was spent driving? You drove most of it?

CORLEY: Yeah, I drove all of it.

HARVEY: Were you the only mechanic in your battery, or did ...

CORLEY: No. Beecher had—Beecher was a mechanic and he had about three, at least three, maybe four more. He took care of the rolling stock.

PIEHLER: But you were the only man that worked on the artillery?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And each battery had another mechanic?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And who did you report to, immediately, when you were in the battery? Did you report to a sergeant, or did you ...

CORLEY: No sir, the executive office, the one who rode with me. He stayed the guns, he ran the—you got an organization there. Every gun's got a telephone line running to it. It come back here someplace. The center runs that, gives all the orders, fire, or whatever. So, the first sergeant was a friend too, he never bothered me. He was an old country boy from out here at (Sullivan Gardens?). So, I never had any problem with anybody.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like, in some ways, you were off—while you were with his lieutenant driving, you were really off on your own in the sense that you weren't a part of this larger unit. Like if you were in a battery you would have been just one person among several in that battery.

CORLEY: Well, you always had a bunch of people.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

CORLEY: We'd have a column of vehicles, or at the gun positions, whatever. Around every gun was probably ten men.

PIEHLER: But you never actually, you know, loaded and fired weapons? That was not your ...

CORLEY: That wasn't my job.

PIEHLER: ... It wasn't your job.

CORLEY: I done it a time or two.

PIEHLER: When did you do it? Just in training or ...

CORLEY: No. I did it for the heck of it. I said, "Let's send this to Germany." One day we got enough ... to begin getting a little sloppy toward the end of the war.

(Phone rings, tape paused)

PIEHLER: People were getting sloppy toward the end of the war?

CORLEY: You didn't actually need ten men to fire that gun. So, they divided into "you work and I'll rest, I'll work and you rest," that kind of stuff. And them guys that wasn't on the job would begin to wander off. So we got an order one day that said twelve rounds, which is very unusual. Twelve rounds per gun, for a battalion, that's how many—anyway, they got to working their guns and some of them couldn't make it. I got in and helped to load the last two or three. Fired them shells that had mud on them, didn't have a chance to clean them off. They was the last ones that went. I said, "Some poor old German stuck his head up and thought they was all gone and then that last one got him." (Laughter)

HARVEY: On this letter that you gave me before, I noticed on a couple of places that it said, "three of our men deserted." Was that a problem? Were people leaving?

CORLEY: Just that one time is all we had.

PIEHLER: When was that, that the three that left, deserted?

HARVEY: That was when they were—you were just north of Paris?

CORLEY: Could have been, I'm not sure. They stayed with us awhile but then one day they weren't there.

HARVEY: Where would they go?

CORLEY: They joined up with these free French, civilian military stuff. These guys were running around all over the place. I don't know where they were before we got there, but they were afterwards. My first sergeant and the captain had to go back someplace to identify these guys where they'd rounded them up. It was after the war. The sergeant said that old boy talked just like they did, that broken English stuff. He said, "I knew who he was." I didn't hear anymore what happened to them or anything about it.

PIEHLER: Going back a little bit earlier, it sounds like you have some fond memories of Tacoma when your wife came out to stay with you.

CORLEY: Well, not too fond, I'm sure. We got that card there about Christmas dinner. I just got to thinking, the last day or two after I found that thing, I'd forgotten about it, I wasn't even there. 'Cause Beecher and Marjorie, they got married while they was out there, and we had a pass or maybe a furlough—I don't know what it was, probably a pass—to go to town, because the wives were living in town. So we was trying to get Christmas dinner, and there was only one café open in town. We were on the short end.

PIEHLER: Housing was pretty ... scarce. Where did wives stay? In Tacoma?

CORLEY: People that lived there would rent you a room, two rooms there. Like I say, he had a wife, and I did too then. So probably all for the best that we got shipped out, 'cause that would have got old mighty quick.

PIEHLER: Did your wife work at all in Tacoma?

CORLEY: Yeah. She worked in the State House doing something. No, no, that wasn't Tacoma. What's its capital?

PIEHLER: Olympia?

CORLEY: Olympia. That's where we lived.

PIEHLER: Or is it Salem? I think it's Olympia, Washington.

CORLEY: Yeah. She worked there in that office building, the capital building. Said people would come in this in the middle of winter, "Did you see that ice out there this morning?" (Laughter) Unusual.

PIEHLER: You have little red marks on some ...

CORLEY: Drawing attention there.

PIEHLER: I guess, one person was (Captain Ralph Delaney?), what do you remember about him?

CORLEY: Well, he was a good guy. He's from down around Maryville, I think, and the battalion commander was from down around Knoxville somewhere. I don't know if he's on there or not, Raymond Smith I believe was his name, lieutenant colonel.

PIEHLER: He's not on here, but—so (Ralph Delaney?) was a guardsman? He had been in the Guard? He did well in the war ...

CORLEY: He'd got his commission by the time we got in ... the federal service, he was a second lieutenant. He had been in the Guard and made it working. Most of the guys liked him. I always thought well of him until about the last, I guess, maybe the war was over. He pitched a fit one time that I thought was uncalled for. Not at me, but at everybody in general. I don't

know whether I ever saw him again after that or not, because when you went to these camps to get you shipped home they went every which direction. He and I was standing side-by-side one day, we was going into position, and here comes a bunch of our tanks coming up and going through us along with 155 guns, self-propelled, big “Long Toms.” and the Germans started shelling that mess. We was standing over there watching, and shells hitting here and there. Here come one pretty close. The captain, he his nose to the dust right quick. I just stood there didn’t hear ... a fragment or nothing. He got up, neither one of us looked at the other one. I don’t know what he thought about me, whether I was crazy or what. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What about the first lieutenant listed on this roster for the Christmas dinner a (Frances Sitz?)

CORLEY: (Sitz?), he was the one I was telling you about his dad had the sheep ranch. I talked to him, we had a reunion about five years ago down in Nashville. We had a long talk, he seemed to like me. We got along, I liked him. We were trying to bring each other up on the family news and one thing or another. But I haven’t been back to another one. I don’t know whether he has or not.

PIEHLER: The reunion you went to a few years ago, was that your first reunion?

CORLEY: Yeah. We hadn’t had one I don’t think—I don’t know if that was the first one or not, but they hadn’t had many, if any, before that.

PIEHLER: How many people turned out?

CORLEY: Ha ha, half a dozen, plus a few maybe.

PIEHLER: But you did run into people you knew?

CORLEY: Yeah, yeah. Well, it’s like I was telling you, one of the guys that had come out of the CCC, he was a sharp boy. Anyway, he called me before the next convention and asked if I was going. I told him I didn’t know. He said, “Well if I knew who was coming I might decide whether I’d go or not.” Most people you don’t even know. You worked off on this gun down there somewhere, you know. There’s a picture there, and boy, I wouldn’t have any idea who they are. So unless people—just like that say war is a very close thing, what’s happening over there, you don’t know what their talking about. One night, after we got the Germans on the run, we headed toward Paris, I guess it was. We made a night march which was unusual because we had the air superiority, you know, and we usually run the roads in the daytime, didn’t have to do blackouts, but we had to do a blackout. I think they was switching divisions from one way or the other, something or other. Anyway, it was drizzling rain and black as pitch. I got stalled in a jam going through a village. I looked around and I looked up in the air, and there was a big old church steeple all the way up there. I said, “Them Germans know that to a foot. If they just knew we was jammed up in here.” Well, we got out and it cleared up after a while and we went on. They said, “Fall off here and go into position.” (Pauses) Don’t want to lose my place now.

So there was an air battle going on overhead. The Germans were after the British night bombers, and you'd see, Swoosh! Fire would go up, you know, and then you'd hear, brrrrr! the sounds of the guns coming down later. And I heard a shell come in. We was in a hayfield is where we were. And nobody else seemed to pay any attention to it. And I was telling him about that at the reunion, I said, "I went out the next morning and looked around and I found the hole that that thing made and nobody else ever heard it." Anyway, we was so close up, that one battery was aiming that way and the other battery aiming that way and the third battery aiming that way, which was unusual because usually their all the same, twelve guns the same. But there was four that way, four this way, and four that way. Them Germans was scattered around everywhere. They said they was still getting them out of the haystacks that night. And I liked my little old gun so much I didn't want to get it wet so I was out there prowling in the dark. I had a knife. I didn't run into any mean Germans, but we was so close behind, the stuff was still burning along the road.

PIEHLER: That is close.

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What was your closest call ever in the military?

CORLEY: I don't know whether I had any or not.

PIEHLER: So you never had a case where you really—you were under such heavy fire, or by accident?

CORLEY: Well that was several times. Them Germans dearly liked to bomb you at night. I seen there, especially in Normandy, where these things was concentrated. Seen our planes going for home with their running lights, or whatever, on and before they got out hearing: Drrrrr! Drrrrr! Drrrrr! Here comes the Germans. It'd be pitch dark by the time they'd start to work. They'd drop flares, they knew about where you were. They'd drop flares, go out there and turn around and come back and drop bombs the next time so they could see what they were doing. That wasn't too uncommon. It wasn't every night's business, but it was—and some old guy one day there in Normandy, I don't know where he was, he was a fair piece away, but he was shooting a rifle. Nobody heard it but me, and I don't guess. (Makes shooting sound). He must have undoubtedly been shooting at something else, because you was getting fly-bys, you know, because they was coming the same. He wasn't scattering his fire, it was going in the same place. I had my jeep parked under a—it was apple country, under an apple tree. (Laughter) I sat there with my back toward him reading the Stars and Stripes that buzz going through that tree right over me. He wasn't about to hit me. I believe that's the only very few times you hear bullets, because you can't afford to get a big gun that close. Good man with a rifle could wipe you out.

PIEHLER: What about accidents? Were there ever any accidents where a gun misfired or exploded? Did you ever encounter ...

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: No. What kind of casualties did your artillery unit take?

CORLEY: Ours? Very low, we didn't have anybody killed, I don't think. We had one man went home with the shakies.

PIEHLER: Nerves?

CORLEY: Another one got his face skinned from a land mine that went off on one of the trucks, one of Beecher's trucks. Blowed the back two wheels, you know, it blew two of the wheels right off of it. And, I guess, as far as I know that was about it. We had a man killed, but that was before we shipped out, before we left the States. He was taking the guns to some shipping point, and this sergeant was sitting right up in the middle of the thing, right in front of it steering. And he was following another gun. See that picture there? (Show picture) That was what he was looking at until he took his eye off it to look at some WACs standing on the corner, so they say, and he run right into that gun and it killed him. It hit him in the chest, I guess.

PIEHLER: Driving?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And he just drove right into the ... this large ...

CORLEY: The gun in front of him. That guy stopped, and he had his eyes on something else. He was a good ole guy too, he was another one for his age.

PIEHLER: So you—the things, I guess, you feared was just little accidents like traffic accidents could hurt you, or land mines?

CORLEY: Yeah, mines. That stuff would scare you to death. But we never did get tangled up in any. (Captain Dalaney?) was in an accident. The night we was headed for—we'd been camping out in Salisbury Plain there in England, and we got the word go one night after supper to—what's the shipping point there? There's one across the Channel there at Omaha?

HARVEY: Southampton? Was it?

CORLEY: No. Anyway we can convoy in the dark and stop for a break. He says, "Everybody off the left side," and him standing in the right side and bam! Weapons carrier hit him. They hauled him off to the medics and he rejoined us next day. He was awful sore, but he didn't have anything broke.

PIEHLER: That could have been really—I mean, it sounds like he was very fortunate.

CORLEY: He was a battery command too. He was telling us what to do, but he wasn't doing it. That's some sound to hear, when a car hits something like that. I heard it once more before I got

to Germany. Truck one night hit a civilian girl, I think it was, a young girl. Wham! It's a very unpleasant sound.

HARVEY: When you were on the continent, did you have to be real mindful of watching for mines and stuff?

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: Was that a problem?

CORLEY: Yeah, sure did.

HARVEY: So oftentimes they weren't cleared out very well by the time you had gotten into position?

CORLEY: Yeah. And sometimes you'd see a sign "Mines not cleared past this point," which we was going over that point, past that point. That makes you feel a little queasy. I had my jeep. I had sandbags in the bottom of it, three or four grenades laying underfoot. It's a wonder I hadn't blown a foot off, but they weren't too easy to blow, you had to mean it. You hoped the sandbags would soak up some of the force if you hit it with a mine.

HARVEY: You mentioned earlier that you had a rifle issued to you.

CORLEY: Carbine.

HARVEY: Yeah.

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: You never had to use that?

CORLEY: No.

HARVEY: Was everybody in the battalion issued a carbine?

CORLEY: Or a pistol, one or the other. Some sort of weapon. I did kill a crow with it one time down in England. I accumulated a few rounds of ammunition. Illegal, of course. That gun was just about like a 32-20 Winchester if you're familiar with that. Anyway, I'd filed me a little groove in the case, the brass case, and poured about half of the powder out. We was doing some practice firing with the big guns there. And anyway, this old crow come over and landed right up above me, pow! We sat there. No way could I miss that crow. But I had to get on back to where they was firing. One of the guys that was standing they said, "After a while that crow fell out of the tree." (Laughter) Jacket bullets, you know, so you just punch a little hole. Don't expand or anything. So that's all the killing ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Grady V. Corley on September 1, 2000 in Kingsport, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

HARVEY: Joseph Harvey.

PIEHLER: ... And you were saying about a gun show, and the one time you had killed—you told us the story about killing a crow with a carbine.

CORLEY: Now this was years later down at the Civic Auditorium gun show, which they have occasionally, and I was looking at the whole row of these carbines. I never did get one when I had a chance. And I was looking down and I was hoping to see 64639, which is my number. And they had serial numbers about like that on them and said, “You got any five digit numbers here?” “Lord no!” he says. It was some of the first ones that come out. We got them when we was at Camp Roberts. We was on the rifle range there one day. They only had maybe a dozen of the things, so I wrapped a piece of tape around the stock of mine so I could tell whose it was, and come a bunch of times I got mine and got down and cleaned it. I guess, the captain saw that. Anyway this is months later in England, they sent us out of the barracks out to, like I said Salisbury Plain, and we was living in pup tents. And they made it formal. Everybody had to be so and so, and all the traffic the same way, and they was just dust stirring up, and the wind blowing, covering up your stuff. I looked at my old gun one day after we come in for supper. It was an awful dirty mess. Better clean this thing. I cleaned it and had it shining like new. “Fall in,” rifle inspection. I had the only clean gun in the battery. Captain says, “Did you know we was having an inspection?” I said, “No sir.” (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Could you talk a little bit about your ... the voyage overseas? What kind of ship did you travel in?

CORLEY: The New Amsterdam. It had been a passenger liner.

PIEHLER: And how comfortable or uncomfortable was that?

CORLEY: Well, we had the staterooms, because we was the first on, we was working on whatever jobs needed to be done, dinning room, kitchen, such as that.

PIEHLER: So you weren't in the hold?

CORLEY: No. Not going over. I don't know how many of us was in that little old stateroom, probably six or eight. So it wasn't too bad. Coming back, why there was an old bunk, rack of bunks, three or four high, down in the bottom of the ship. And it took days longer, but we were going home, that's the main thing.

PIEHLER: And the war was over?

CORLEY: Yeah. I don't even know what kind of ship it was, except that it had been converted from something else.

HARVEY: Where did you leave from? Where did you get on the ship to go to Europe?

CORLEY: You ever hear about the “Cigarette Camps?”

HARVEY: No. I don’t ...

CORLEY: Named after cigarettes, Luck Strikes, Camel, this that and the other was the name of the camp.

PIEHLER: But did—from the United States—I’ve heard them leaving from England—from France to the United States. Were there similar camp names in the United States?

CORLEY: No, no. I think they’re just there along the coast of France. Where they was getting rid of all that ... yeah.

PIEHLER: Where did you leave from the United States? Do you remember? Was it ...

CORLEY: New York.

PIEHLER: New York?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you spend any time in Camp Kilmer?

CORLEY: No. Just about overnight was about it. No, maybe a little longer. We had to get a bunch of shots. We weren’t there but a few days.

PIEHLER: At Kilmer?

CORLEY: Yeah. Then went down the river on some kind of boat, ferry boat, I guess it was. And then they landed us off at the dock, and right on to the New Amsterdam. “Corley, Grady V.,” “Yes sir!” check. You look at that Statue of Liberty as you go by and wonder if you’ll ever see it again. Don’t know what you’re getting into. Before we landed, I cleaned my rifle again. (Laughter) We was four days on a landing craft, LST, landing craft tank. Our big guns qualified as tanks as far as weight went. I was the first one on, I guess, with my jeep. Went on up to the top of the deck back against the pilothouse right next to their coffee machine. Old Navy boys lived it up, coffee all the time. Twenty-four hours a day, cases of cream, bags of sugar. We stocked up while we were there.

PIEHLER: So, in some ways you, thought Navy life was a little cushier?

CORLEY: Yeah. Did you hear the one—I hadn’t heard it until a few days ago, about the infantryman grousing about the Navy boy having a warm bed to sleep in? Fresh food to eat.

Said, the Navy boy doesn't complain until the water gets up to his chin and then he wishes he had a foxhole to lay in. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You were in England for a while—for a few months.

CORLEY: Well a couple of months maybe. I think we got there sometime maybe in late March.

PIEHLER: And the invasion would be June of '44?

CORLEY: All of April and all of May. Some of it we lived in barracks, and then after they, I guess, squeezed us out, we got into Salisbury Plain, if you ever heard of that. Southern England.

PIEHLER: And you were continuing to train?

CORLEY: Yeah. No, we didn't do much once we got out in the field.

PIEHLER: You were, in other words, just waiting then?

CORLEY: Well, I tell you what—we've got to waterproof all these vehicles. All the battery, eighteen or twenty tractors, trucks, jeeps. I was going over here to this school, and they was going to show us how to do it. Says, "Waterproof your big tank so it could run under water." Well then we had to do all our engines that way. We didn't idle too much, but we didn't get out and march back and fourth such as that. I had to make one trip while we were staying there in the barracks to Bristol to pick up our tractors. They had landed off plum across England. We took off one night after supper, I believe we did. I think that was the way it was. We drove all night. Picked them up the next morning, and drove them back. No sleep for a couple of nights. I tell you, wet brick on slanted roads is slick when your driving a tractor with steel treads on it. I went along on that trip for the fun of it more than anything else, and coming back the driver said, "You drive." I had driven one a time or two, I wasn't entirely green over it, but, like I said, it was drizzling rain. We come to this little old village. The road went down, and also tipped to the right. We was going downhill and tipping to the right and shops were built right to the sidewalks right in the middle of the town and that doggone thing started slipping. I was carting it around like that, pulling her up uphill to keep it going straight down the road. That was kind of scary. If it hadn't caught traction, I'd have went through some of those shops there. Life was fairly cheap there.

PIEHLER: Did you ever have much contact with any English civilians when you were in England?

CORLEY: No. We didn't stay long enough to. We stayed out of touch with them, you might say. I think they give out passes a few times. "But don't go to London," that's right where the guys would head off for, going to London.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to London?

CORLEY: No. Went to Paris when we was coming back through, because by the time we had fought our way up to Paris the Germans was running. And they took all our rolling stock to haul infantry to keep up with them. So the rest of us got a pass into Paris. We were pretty close by then, but the last of the fighters were moving forward. A place called M-A-N-T-Z, I believe, right on the Seine River.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to pubs in England?

CORLEY: No, no. I wasn't a drinker.

PIEHLER: What about other people in your unit?

CORLEY: If it was handy I'm sure they did. In fact, I've heard some of them talk about that beer joint.

PIEHLER: What about smoking? Did you smoke?

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: You weren't tempted at all by the cheap cigarettes and—what about gambling?

CORLEY: I didn't do that either, [I] couldn't afford to lose.

PIEHLER: Were there others who gambled?

CORLEY: Why yeah. After payday, they'd take three, or four, or five nights, and maybe on Sundays there might be a game going.

PIEHLER: What—when you were busy, you were very busy with the battery, but what—I get the sense there were times, both yourself and even the battery, when they were waiting for something, for orders to fire. Is that the case, and that—there's a lot of waiting?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What did people do to keep, you know ...

CORLEY: Sit around and shoot the bull, fuss and fight maybe. Reading Stars and Stripes if they could get one. Whatever. Sleep.

PIEHLER: What about contact with French civilians?

CORLEY: No. We just passed—more or less passed through. By the time we caught up with the Germans we was in Belgium.

HARVEY: Where did you land? When you got on the boat in Southampton? And then ...

CORLEY: Southampton was what I was trying to think of. Proceed.

HARVEY: And you took the boat to—where did you take the boat, where did you disembark in France? Where did you get off the boat when you got to France?

CORLEY: You mean going to France?

HARVEY: Yeah. When you were going to France, where did you go?

CORLEY: We left Southampton, like I say, and went to Omaha Beach.

HARVEY: And what was Omaha Beach like when you were there?

CORLEY: It was a big mess. Sunken ships, wrecked pillboxes and guns. It was calm though, the fighting had moved inward several miles, so it was easy to land supplies. We had been on a landing ship four days, and a storm blew up out there, and we stayed on that ship four days before we ever went across. Otherwise instead of being there at such and such date, D-plus-eighteen it would have been about fourteen, D-plus-fourteen, four days sooner. Yeah. We went on across the beach, like I said a while ago, went in the field, saw the war for the first time that night and heard it. We just parked and waited. We didn't know what they was going to do with us.

HARVEY: And when you got to Omaha Beach did you see the cemetery, had they already ...

CORLEY: The next summer I did. We had moved back into France and was waiting to get shipped out. So, three or four of us borrowed a jeep one day at Mantz, call it whatever you want to, where we were. Drove over there to that cemetery and looked over the beach and took some pictures. Another rainy day. Our next-door neighbors, when we lived up there in Highland, they had lost a son there that D-Day. I found his grave for them.

HARVEY: He was buried at Omaha Beach?

CORLEY: He was a captain of engineers. Hard working boy, he'd go to school, and then he'd work, and he'd go to school, and then he'd work. Got killed the first day.

HARVEY: You mentioned that ... you saw the war the first night you were there?

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: What happened that night?

CORLEY: Air raids. Places I've already described there, you know. The bombers come over and drop flares and come back and drop bombs, and in the meanwhile some idiot on the ground used their machine gun shooting up there to try to hit the airplane or the flares. They saved our bacon one night. Somebody did. Hit a flare right over us. They hit it and that's unusual. You'd see them old red tracers going up just like fireworks. They hit our A battery one night. What

must have been five hundred pound bomb by the craters they produced. They made a direct hit on one of our tractors. And there was a man under it that had bragged they couldn't make him dig a foxhole. He had been in our battery. I don't know when he got transferred over to A, but they got pretty well shook up that night. They lost some men, the other two batteries did.

HARVEY: When you first got there, were you ever afraid that the Germans might push you back to the beach?

CORLEY: No.

HARVEY: You knew that it was secure?

CORLEY: An old Frenchman I saw there one day—I had a hand grenade, and I was figuring on throwing it in a pool back here to see if I could get a fish. (Laughter) This old Frenchman come along. He could talk some English. “Careful,” he says, “Bosch be back.” I said “No he won't. He won't be back.” He was insistent they would. And they really tried. And I didn't get any fish either. (Laughter)

HARVEY: The way I understand the way that the artillery units were organized is that you weren't assigned to a certain division.

CORLEY: That's Corps Artillery.

HARVEY: Okay.

CORLEY: No you're not assigned. A corps is usually made up of three divisions, infantry divisions, and an armor division. So, as the case may be, they swap wherever they think they need them: this, that, and the other place. So, the corps artillery ain't beholdin' to any division and can get sent to any hot spot you know. “Go on over there, that's a hot spot. Go on over here they need a few dozen shells in.”

HARVEY: So, more or less, you could have been with any division in any time?

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: Any one of the 12 Corps?

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: Did you ever have a friend while you were over there, like a best friend in your unit that you were with over there?

CORLEY: (Mr. Burris?). I'd known him back in school. We had lived houses back to back, about 1933 for a while. I knew him in school. Yeah, he was my, he was my buddy.

HARVEY: Did you keep in contact with him after the war?

CORLEY: Not much. When he come back he went to work for the Chevrolet dealer, and he was there several years. He was instrumental, you might say, in my buying a Chevrolet. Then he shipped off to [Holston] Ordnance. Got a job down there and eventually was over all their vehicle maintenance. So I didn't—after he left the Chevrolet place, I hardly seen him. His oldest son, David, he worked out at Eastman. I'd keep contact with him that way sometime. See how he is getting along. News wasn't always good then.

HARVEY: Did you bring anything back with you? Any souvenirs or ...

CORLEY: No. But I sent a few.

HARVEY: What did you send back?

CORLEY: Bayonet or two. Rifle or two. Pair of binoculars, which I still got. Most of the rest of the stuff is gone.

HARVEY: These are German rifles?

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: Do you know what happened to them?

CORLEY: I sold them. Yeah. I was surprised that they got back, but they did. I kept them a while and sold them. I was red hot for the small bore rifle-shooting tournaments, and way back then you needed this and needed that. Said "Well, I'll sell some of this stuff rather than take it out of the household money."

HARVEY: Was there—what's your most vivid memory of being over in France? Do you have a memory that stands out the most that you think of?

CORLEY: Well, one day, [during] the real early days there in Normandy—like I say, things were concentrated then, battlefields, they wasn't scattered all over—and a couple of us, quiet day for a change, we went on up toward the front. That country had all been fought over and come up on a German 88 in a ditch two or three dead Germans laying around it. Said, "Let's have a look over here," we was actually looking for bayonets, something like that. They'd had a scrap there. There was a couple of dead GI's there. One of them wanted his field jacket and he was laying on his face. It said "Kaiser's Outlaws." I figured Kaiser must be a sergeant or something or other. And he was laying out on top of the ground. And over here in a hedgerow with a hole dug sat what seemed to be a great big guy sitting on something in there. Laid his rifle between his knees and his hands on his rifle and head resting on them. Something had hit the tree right next to him. I decided I didn't want his bayonet. So I picked up a couple of Browning Automatic Rifles, you know what they were?

HARVEY: Yeah.

CORLEY: Machine rifle, picked up two of those things. They was laying on the field and took them back, cleaned them up. Built one out them that I thought was better than the other one, and kept it in my jeep the whole rest of the war. And I'll never forget that. Wasn't any danger to me at the time. That's just what happened in there.

HARVEY: What was your reaction on V-E Day?

CORLEY: On what?

HARVEY: On V-E Day. When you found out?

CORLEY: Happy about it. Happy about it. They told us shut down. We won't be firing anymore. That was a day or two before that. (Shows picture)

PIEHLER: Did you—were you going—were you destined to go to Japan, or did you have enough points to go home?

CORLEY: I don't know. I don't know what it would take. I was sure happy I didn't have to go. I've read and learned about it since then.

HARVEY: (Refers to picture) We were just talking about this picture. This is the one where you're firing when you crossed the Rhine?

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: How long did—did you build up that ...

CORLEY: No. That was a road right there in the foreground, and that mound was already built there. We didn't have anything to do that with except picks and shovels to build or dig or whatever.

HARVEY: So you just pulled up behind the embankment for protection?

CORLEY: Use what's there. We was talking about how trick explosives can make.

PIEHLER: Please tell others ...

HARVEY: About the bomb that went through the truck?

CORLEY: Oh yeah. Beecher's maintenance truck? (Beecher Burris?).

HARVEY: He'd be my great uncle.

CORLEY: Great uncle or something like that. Anyway, he went in what you might call a pick-up truck. It was his issued vehicle. Maintenance tools, and all that stuff three or four men. Anyway, he parked in position close to some little town. I believe they was still in Holland.

And on or more German planes come over one day. Small planes, not the big bomber stuff. They had trucks scattered all around the town. Anyway, he was dropping anti-personnel bombs, no big stuff. One went through his truck, the top canvassed off, about that far from the rear end of the truck, and on down through the wood floor and on into the ground under that when it went off. And it was between the two rear tires and gas tank right over it. It never touched a thing except the floor and the canvas—just didn't touch—puncture either, the gas tank. And we were on position there somewhere waiting to cross the Loire River. This was getting in February, I guess, '45 maybe. We was in position on marshy ground, but there was a creek that made a bend down there. And on the far bank it must have been twenty feet higher than what it was on this side. Maybe not that much, but quite a bit. And on the top up there was a battery of one hundred and fifty-five "Long Toms." Must have been sitting right out in the open field, couldn't see anything. I—We were in position back on this ... side of the creek. Ground was—it was February like I said, and it was rainy and marshy. Anyway, whoever the spotter was, the Germans had out there, thought he would stir up that battery and he started shooting at the "Long Toms" up there. It was bound for them, but we were catching his overs, coming right down on ours. He'd have wiped us out and he wouldn't have known it. But he did get some hits up there, because we saw them bring an ambulance in. Anyway, I don't know how many rounds hit down there amongst our stuff, but not a speck of damage. I think that soft ground soaked it up.

PIEHLER: Artillery was—you were giving out artillery, which made life difficult for the Germans. How often would your batteries receive fire, artillery fire? Was there any counter battery?

CORLEY: No. Never did run into that.

PIEHLER: You never had that, where you had to silence another battery that was trying to silence you?

CORLEY: We silenced theirs, I'm sure. They had a little ole cub plane up there looking, and he'd pick out the targets for you and fire for you too. You move, he picks him out a spot somewhere centrally as possible, and registers on it with one gun. Then he works from that whenever he finds a target that is somewhere in reference to that with how many guns he needs, usually twelve of them.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go—did you ever encounter any chaplains when you were overseas?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What do you remember? Did you go to any services?

CORLEY: Sometimes they'd come right up and have service. Not very often, but occasionally. I went back one day—I was somewhat of an errand boy, to look at the hospital back there for some reason or other, to pick up somebody or drop somebody off. I eventually found the place. I got to talking to another guy there. He was—I don't know what you call a hand that goes with the chaplain, does his driving.

PIEHLER: Chaplain's assistant.

CORLEY: And he was awful thrilled and skittish when he heard. I told him, "Why yeah, you're in artillery range here." He couldn't wait to write home, you know. It was a big deal for him. Would have been for me too, I guess, if I hadn't been there before. All those books I'd read and the newspaper articles and all the World War I stuff I could find, I'd read. I had somewhat of an idea what was going on.

PIEHLER: What did you—does anything stand out with what you had read? Did you have, for example, read All Quiet on the Western Front?

CORLEY: Yeah. I read it more than once.

PIEHLER: Did you ever see the movie before the war?

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: No. You had just read the novel?

CORLEY: Yeah. And I got a book at the house I sure wish I had read—had access to before the war, A Rifleman Goes to War. McBride, I believe, was his name. He was in Ohio. His dad, I think, was the commander of the local guard. Anyway, he was a little too young to catch the Spanish American War. This is World War I he was going to, and he said it looked like he was going to be too old for his one the way they kept fiddling around. So he was, by this time, a captain in the Guard himself. Said, he had a friend in Canada, a Guard up there. He says, "If I come up there will you let me enlist?" He resigned his commission and went to Canada and they enlisted him as a private. And then was shipped to Germany or France. And he fought there a couple of years, and finally got shot up enough they sent him home. And he said after two years there the experience right there on firing lines he couldn't tell them Americans a thing. Trainer—sent him back to help train, you know. He said, "You couldn't tell them anything." Anyway, he'd been a sniper, machine gunner, and basically was a captain again, but there was a lot of stuff there come in handy for people to know.

First time we got dug in, first shell we heard coming over, the guys were standing around arguing, "was that incoming or outgoing?" It didn't land anywhere near us, you know, that's why we could hear it that long. It went all the way behind us somewhere and hit. They was arguing was it incoming or outgoing shell by the sound it made. I knew. I hadn't heard any before, but I knew it when I heard it. I told my friend, the lieutenant, back at the reunion I was glad to get home. I got a dirty deal from Eastman, and I resented it for a long time. So now I wouldn't take a million for that experience.

PIEHLER: What was the dirty deal that you got from Eastman at the time?

CORLEY: Well, I had got first step promotion before I left. I had three other guys. I was a working boss, four of us together. They had one on each shift like that. Well, I come back, people I'd worked with and foreman was all gone, changes here and there, somebody new.

“Well, I’ll start you back as the third class mechanic,” which is on the bottom. It took me seven years to get back where I figured I should have been.

PIEHLER: And you were promised your old job back?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you ever say that to them?

CORLEY: No. They said, “Well what are you doing?” “I’m out here mechanicing.” “Well that was what you were doing when you left.” And probably that’s all it amounted to. Anyway, at least you had a start, but that they didn’t even recognize when I come back. So, they were taking and starting—I’m having a hard time finding my words today. Where they take and train guys for four years?

HARVEY: OCS? To be an officer?

CORLEY: No, at Eastman.

HARVEY: Oh, for the plant.

CORLEY: For a trade.

PIEHLER: Vocation school?

CORLEY: No. What do they call that? But anyway it’s ...

PIEHLER: Technical school? College?

CORLEY: No. It was just run in-house there.

PIEHLER: Yeah. I don’t know what they would have called it in-house ...

CORLEY: Anyway, it was a four-year deal. Go in and you learn drafting and drawing, mechanicing, and this, that and the other.

PIEHLER: This was all in-house at Eastman?

CORLEY: Yeah. But there was a little jigger in there that says, I believe, twenty-nine was top year, or thirty. Maybe that’s what it—anyway I was a year too old. But those guys, they went and pulled their four years and come out some of them was making foreman pretty fast, and I was still trying to get to first class. I had three to go—second class, I made the second class pretty fast, but the third come slowly. So, I was a total of seven years getting back to first class.

PIEHLER: Where you had been when you ...

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you ever make foreman?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: When did you make foreman?

CORLEY: In '65.

PIEHLER: And when you were a foreman, how many people did you supervise?

CORLEY: About—I think I had about eight. That was shift work not—the regular daytime crew and shop were bigger, because they handled the heavy work. You get all the heavy work that you could get rid of and put on them. Fireman you might say. Put out the fire! Put out the fire! Get this thing running, get this thing running. Keep production going. So I didn't need a big crew for that. Had two or three. It was pretty well stationary, in place, and a few more we called floaters, they could be used here or there. I was fussing at my boss, the superintendent, one time. Well, I had known him before the war when he was a yarn hauler. Come back, he was an officer, gentleman, and pilot. Anyway, I was complaining that I didn't have enough help or equipment or something, I don't know what it was about. He says, "Do the best you can with what you got." Exact quote. (Laughter) I thought that was pretty good advice. They can't fuss at you if you do that.

PIEHLER: Did you ... think of going—you mentioned you had a correspondence course but had you toyed with any other schooling? You mentioned also the (Sperry?) courses.

CORLEY: A lot of in-house stuff there at Eastman, a lot of that. I couldn't tell you how many or what all.

PIEHLER: Yeah. But you felt like you could get a lot of training from Eastman?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you ever—did you use the GI Bill to buy a house?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Do you still live in that house, or have you moved?

CORLEY: No. I stayed there thirteen years though. Then I moved.

PIEHLER: Do you think you would have bought a house before, without the GI Bill when you ...

CORLEY: No. Before I come out, I think I had two thousand dollars or something like that, plus my discharge pay, couple of hundred. My wife had been able to save, I think, like about two thousand dollars out of what I had sent her, so you couldn't buy much of a house for that. Not after the war.

PIEHLER: Did—have you ever used Veteran's medical care?

CORLEY: No. Fortunately I haven't needed it.

PIEHLER: Had you thought of staying in the Army?

CORLEY: No. Not seriously. I thought now if I get shipped to Japan, which was pending some time or another back then, I want to get in such and such an outfit if possible. I know what I want if I ever have to go back. That's as far as I went. When Korea started, I said, "I just passed my thirty-fifth birthday." I said, "Goody! Goody! I won't have to go."

PIEHLER: Had you stayed in the Guard or Reserves after the war? You were totally out once the war—you didn't buy the whole thing about pensions and ...

CORLEY: My wife's—a friend of hers husband stayed in and I think he got yanked back in. He was a medic. He said, "What! You didn't have to go you mean?" (Laughter) "No, I been right here the whole time."

HARVEY: If you had gotten to choose the unit you could go into, what would you have chosen?

CORLEY: Well, I'd still like to be in artillery. I might have tried some of the other work in there, but other than that—I thought I might like the instrument section, maps and hunts, find your positions and where the enemy is, and that kind of stuff. They seemed to be on the roam most of the time. You'd hardly ever see them.

HARVEY: What did you think about the decision to drop the atomic bomb in Japan?

CORLEY: I'm glad they did. Kept me from having to go.

PIEHLER: Where were you when the atomic bomb had been dropped? Do you remember?

CORLEY: Le Mans, France waiting to come back home. Right then, I says, "I wished they hadn't found the thing, but I'm glad that they used it." I had read enough science fiction to know what atomic energy was, after a fashion.

PIEHLER: So you remember when it was science fiction?

CORLEY: Yeah. Yeah, it was full of atomic stuff back then.

PIEHLER: Speaking of science fiction, did you remember the War of the Worlds broadcast?

CORLEY: I missed that! I know when it come on and I turned it over to something else I wanted to listen to. I've been sorry ever since.

PIEHLER: Others did listen to it. Do you know anyone who really believed it at the time?

CORLEY: No. They made it sound real though from what I've heard. Read the book two or three times, I guess.

PIEHLER: Did you read at all when you were overseas?

CORLEY: What I could get to.

PIEHLER: You mentioned Stars and Stripes earlier, were there anything else—any other things that you read?

CORLEY: I don't think so. Don't know that I did.

PIEHLER: Did you take a Bible along?

CORLEY: Yeah. I had a small one, a testament.

PIEHLER: Did you ever make it to a USO show?

CORLEY: Yeah. Once that I remember, I believe once, I believe it was at Camp Roberts. Bob Hope, I think. Got overseas there—what are these women that come up with doughnuts?

PIEHLER: Red Cross ... volunteers?

CORLEY: No, it wasn't the Red Cross. I fell out with the Red Cross. I'll tell you later.

PIEHLER: Salvation Army?

CORLEY: Something about these Army shows, one thing or another, I think. Anyway, there would be a couple of women who would come up, you know, and bring that—or make a batch of doughnuts and coffee. The cooks would fuss if they'd take our flour to make the doughnuts. (Laughter) They're not giving you a thing. I fell out with the Red Cross another time, middle of the winter. I was on another one of these errands back for some reason or another, which it escapes me at the time. It was cold. Jeep didn't have any—had the top up, but you know no side curtains, no heater. Just pure misery. I got back there to town I was going and ahhh, there's a USO girl, women. Good! I needed a cup of coffee. I went in, and this was back in either Holland or Belgium. I guess, I had—every country that you went into they'd change your money, give you local money. So, I had whatever where I was at the time, Germany I'm sure, probably a hundred dollars worth of it. "Cup of coffee, cup of coffee." "That's so much. Can't take that here. Can't take that here." You've got to have Dutch money or Belgium money, whatever. And none of those rascals setting around there would offer to buy me a cup, with me

freezing to death. There was a Red Cross place and I held that against them for years. I might have mellowed a little bit, but I really wanted a cup of coffee.

PIEHLER: That's not the first Red Cross story I've heard.

CORLEY: Well, they had their rules, I guess. I had plenty of money in my pocket, but not their kind of money. And before I go back again I want me an old sealed vacuum bottle, if I have to go again. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Why?

CORLEY: Carry my hot coffee in. Usually you could get the day old grounds out of the kitchen, you know, and make you up a pot if you had something to put it in.

PIEHLER: So not getting hot coffee—it was tough to get hot coffee, and that's something you really didn't like missing?

CORLEY: I went across the street to a café and got one hot water, colored water. It beat nothing, but it sure didn't go for a cup of coffee.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned on the boat you had eaten a lot of K-rations, and once you landed in France it sounds like you got a lot of hot meals.

CORLEY: We were on K-rations ...

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: Overall, how did you like Army food? You said you didn't mind K-rations. Was there anything ...

CORLEY: Well, it was passable. Well, first I'll tell you another story about that. I told you in the early days there at Camp Forrest we got some guys from Ohio?

PIEHLER: Yes.

CORLEY: Well, I guess, this was their first morning there and they had grits. I'd eat grits all my life when I could get them. They looked at that stuff and put milk on it or sugar or butter. I put some gravy on mine and eat it up, you know, and they went, "Ugh!" They couldn't stand the sight of it. They said, "What is this stuff? What do you do with it?" We didn't have grits anymore. Their gripes got to the top fast.

HARVEY: You had some pictures here of POWs, of a POW camp and some German prisoners.

CORLEY: Yeah. That's some at Le Mans after the war. They served them out to us to work. We had four of them there, I guess.

PIEHLER: And this was after the war that you had these prisoners?

CORLEY: Yeah. Yes. That was back in France there. Don't laugh at me, Le Mans.

PIEHLER: Oh! Trust me my French isn't going to be any better.

HARVEY: This is another picture of ...

CORLEY: That's a POW camp.

HARVEY: And that's also in Le Mans?

CORLEY: No, this was further along. I don't think this actually belonged to us. I think we were just passing through.

HARVEY: This first picture, are those prisoners that your unit took, or ...

CORLEY: No. That's some that they issued out, you know, to help work. Give them something to do, I guess, before we could send them home.

HARVEY: So they would take the prisoners of war, and assign them to units, and you could get ...

CORLEY: Yeah. They'd wash trucks or whatever. About all there was to do. They'd wash it and wash it again.

PIEHLER: So once the war ended you did a lot of waiting around?

CORLEY: Yeah, just lolling around.

PIEHLER: Did you do any sightseeing?

CORLEY: One time I went back to the beach.

PIEHLER: To Omaha?

CORLEY: To Omaha.

PIEHLER: What was that like?

CORLEY: Well they had the cemeteries then, and they'd straightened up. And the beach had been somewhat cleaned up, but still a bunch of old rusty hulks out there, and like I said, it was another rainy day.

PIEHLER: And you went to Paris but—when did you go to Paris? Did you go after the War or was it ...

CORLEY: No. That was while they had our trucks hauling infantry chasing the Germans. We got up to M-A-N-T-Z, I think it was, there along the Seine River, or I'd have still be there. We couldn't do anything. Didn't have any way to move guns, and they didn't need artillery they needed infantry boys up there. So they issued some passes. So, I went in there, I don't know whether we stayed overnight or not, probably did. About the first of '45, cold, snow, Bulge, after the Bulge got over. Battle of the Bulge, after that was over with they started giving passes back to Brussels. Went back there and stayed two or three days. Wasn't anything much there though to see. That's about all the sightseeing I got in.

PIEHLER: Have you ever been back to Europe?

CORLEY: No, I haven't.

PIEHLER: Have you ever been back to say Tacoma or ...

CORLEY: Passed through one time.

PIEHLER: California? Have you ever been ...

CORLEY: Yeah. Made a sweep with my wife and my boy, he was fourteen years old that summer. We had a small camping trailer. We went to the West Coast, all the way North, and then back around. About pretty close to a thousand miles—I forget how many thousand miles we traveled. I had two sisters who lived in San Diego, made a special trip going there. I went to the Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest, cave, a big cave, on the way to San Diego. And then we went up the coast to the tip of Washington. I didn't pass through Camp Roberts. I went up the Coast Road, which was a beauty, especially that and Oregon. It was a bright, sunshiny day, waves coming in breaking white. You could see them for miles. That's the only time I ever been back.

We had in the battery, during the war, a pair of twins, and they were, what you call it, doing this fancy writing. They could do that kind of stuff. Make signs and one thing or another. Anyway, I run into one of them at this reunion. And he said his brother had died, but for several years, their older years, they had made about three trips back and followed our route. They talked like they made a lot of friends on the way. Buy a car, use it, sell it, come home. Said they followed the route. Now up to about five years afterwards I wouldn't have minded doing that, but after that it's going to be changed and you won't know it. They was talking to other people, I think, to make friends with. I think maybe they were in gun sections and had off days. I had to hang around there all the time.

PIEHLER: So you didn't—it sounds like people did get to—other people did have contact with civilians during the war and traded and ...

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You really ...

CORLEY: Fraternize was the word, I think.

PIEHLER: Yes, fraternized with the French.

CORLEY: Anybody that they could ...

PIEHLER: German, French, it didn't ...

CORLEY: ... anyone that was available ...

PIEHLER: Anyone that was available. Any war brides? Did anyone ever marry someone from overseas?

CORLEY: I don't know of anyone.

PIEHLER: You don't know of anyone. What did you think of the Germans? I mean, it sounds like they are the enemy, but, I mean, did you have any animosity or did you think you were just doing your job or ...

CORLEY: There was times when I would really hear about some of the things they did, but they were very workman like, and I said it many times that if they'd have had what we had we would have still been over there fighting. We had a hard time whipping them with what little stuff they had. They knew how to use it.

HARVEY: Do you have any lingering feelings about them, or ...

CORLEY: I've owned their cars for thirty years, I guess, or so. Volkswagens. Since '60, I guess, is when I bought my first one. I still got one of them. I've had three or four over the years. So I don't dislike them that much. I wish I could afford a Mercedes (laughter) or a BMW. I kid my son about buying him a Mercedes. He buys the cheapest thing he can get, I guess, which is what I got today. I told you about that Prism, Chevrolet Prism. Bought one the other day. He's had one for about eight years. Makes all kinds of bucks.

HARVEY: Where was this picture taken? Do you remember where that was?

PIEHLER: This is the picture with the four prisoners of war?

HARVEY: No, that's the picture.

CORLEY: I don't know where this was. It's in Germany somewhere though I'm sure. It was probably about the end of the war. Ray Jones, that other guy, we always kidded him, but I can't think right off hand of his name. He was in the so-called 5<sup>th</sup> section, hauls ammunition. And he used a .50 caliber machine gun to put out the defense, you know. We all kidded him before he went over there. We said, "The average life of a machine gunner is ten minutes." (Laughter) "What did—you mean, I ain't gonna last but ten minutes?" Had him shook up about it. The one

on the end, I don't know who he is, I can't think of his name. I think he worked in the kitchen, a cook.

HARVEY: So what kind of defenses did you have? You mentioned the machine gun ...

CORLEY: Two .50 calibers plus your personal gun. Had one of those little bombs one time come down—what they do is set the thing up on a tripod so you can stand—against airplanes was the main thing we had it for. This little ole bomb come down (makes whistling sound). Arced in right under that thing. They had a tarp over it. Didn't cut a hole in it nowhere or make a scar on that gun. Them anti-personal bombs, I expect they'd chew up a man if it hit between his legs. But I didn't even scratch that. Punched a hole in that tarp. That's more of that high explosive stuff. Had several cases like that.

HARVEY: You mentioned that if the Germans had had the stuff that you had they would have done a lot better. Did you think ...

CORLEY: Yeah. We would have still been trying to fight them over there, trying to whip them.

HARVEY: So you thought that the equipment you had was a lot better than what ...

CORLEY: Well, and the volume of it. Not necessarily better, but they had—we had a lot more of it than they did.

HARVEY: How were you—you talked about coming back to Eastman, but how were you received by other people? By your family and your neighbors when you came back, I mean were they ...

CORLEY: "Glad to have you back. Glad to see you."

PIEHLER: Did you join any veteran's organizations when you got back?

CORLEY: American Legion.

PIEHLER: Were you active at all?

CORLEY: No. I sent my dues in yesterday.

PIEHLER: So, you're just a dues payer, you're not a ...

CORLEY: I don't—I've been a member there for thirty years or more, I guess. I figured my son was coming along, and I might need hospital help or something or other one of these days. I better get in the Legion, medical help. That's mainly the reason I got in, and I just stayed.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, backing up a little bit, and this is in some ways related to war, but not. When did you meet your wife, how did you meet your wife, and when did you get married?

CORLEY: I knew her in high school. I knew who she was. We weren't acquainted. Then for a while, her mother took in some relatives as boarders, and they were from up around Blountville and Bristol. So, they wanted the Bristol paper and I delivered the paper there, and I'd have to go collect. Sometimes I'd see her and then she come to work at Eastman. That's where things began to get serious. We dated, I guess, a couple of years before we got married.

PIEHLER: What was it like—you had been separated from your wife for a while, how did that process of getting to know each other again go?

CORLEY: I don't remember that there were any problems with it.

PIEHLER: You just picked up where you left off?

CORLEY: I'll tell you I've had more trouble since then. Her mother had a fall and broke a leg, or hip, or something or other. Whatever the problem was anyway she was bedfast. And my wife practically lived with her for four years. Coming home every other day to cook me something, or something like that. So, I had the house to myself and I got use to it. And it hadn't been all the same since then. When I got out of the Army I got all this to get use to, you know, so it's just part of it.

HARVEY: Did you correspond with her while you were in France? Did you write letters ...

CORLEY: Yeah, yeah. We had a pretty good marriage.

HARVEY: So you were able to get letters—did she write you letters and you were able to get them?

CORLEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Is there any movie or novel that reflects your experiences being in the Army?

CORLEY: I haven't—usually the artillery men didn't have a bunch of hand-to-hand fighting, you know, and that kind of stuff. So you don't have that hero.

PIEHLER: I once interviewed someone who ... was an actor, but he had also been in the Army. He said, No Time for Sergeants, he said that really—he had a role in it in the movie, but he also ... he said that was a lot like my Army days. Nothing that you can think of? What about Ernie Pyle's writings?

CORLEY: Always liked his stuff. I got one of his books, cartoons.

PIEHLER: Bill Mauldin.

CORLEY: Bill Mauldin, that's who it was. Yeah, we'd always look for Ernie's column in the Stars and Stripes.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like you liked Bill Mauldin's cartoons quite a bit.

CORLEY: Yeah. Yeah! Lot of truth there. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What do you think—I mean, what did you think of your officers as a group? Not individual officers. Did you think they had privileges they weren't entitled to? Did you think ... they really knew what they were doing as a rule or—do you have any view of officers as a group? Not necessarily as individuals.

CORLEY: Well, they all seemed to be competent.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't really come across many incompetent ...

CORLEY: No. Like I told you, that one guy, I think he stayed a second lieutenant all his career, but I never was with him after that. He got shipped out, I think, early. Had one happening though, that kind of reflected on the captain. That's about the time of the Bulge. Anyway, things were quiet. It was after the Bulge, because Lieutenant (Sitz?), the executive officer, had gone on pass back to Brussels. There was no big battles going on. Anyway come down somewhere or other we need so and so. Saw the paperwork. Well (Sitz?) was gone and he would have been the man to take care of it. The captain, he had to get out of bed at night, pouring rain, black as pitch. I don't know what they were doing, surveying or something, and he comes in mad and wet. And (Sitz?) come back. They was telling him about it, you know. Says, "(Captain Dulaney?) had us out in that rain, cold rain, so long a time." Sitz said, "Why, this is all he had to do was make a correction with a pencil." (Laughter) That guy got mad, said, "I wish you would teach the captain to do that."

HARVEY: I wanted to ask you about how they directed fire. You mentioned that there was a plane that flew.

CORLEY: Yeah. A two passenger cub.

HARVEY: Did he radio directly to your battery? Or did he radio ...

CORLEY: No. He radios his fire control. That's the headquarters. Then they'll phone down or radio, probably most of the time phone, the instructions to us as to what signal you want, the elevation, deflection. They don't talk direct to the airplane.

HARVEY: So, the guy that was in the plane, he got his order from, directly from the Corps Headquarters?

CORLEY: Well, they'd give him a beep, he'll go along and be pretty close to the front going back and forth. Sometimes whenever he stops, slows up to make a turn, he's pretty much the same plane, or something or other—the Germans Ak-Ak gun and they'd wail at him. Anyway, if he sees a likely target he'll call his people. That's the way I understand it. I don't actually know. Or else, the infantry will call in for help. I guess, you can see what that is holding us up

and do something about it. That's where—you know, we're two or three steps down the line before we could actually get to load the gun.

I always would have liked to have checked my four guns one at a time to see if I was getting accurate adjustments on them. One gun hits here, and you don't want one of the guns hitting way back here, and another—not too much, some dispersion is all right. But I never had, I knowed when they did it in practice, but I never saw them do that over there. I'd set the sights, put them on their aiming point, bore sight the gun so it matches, so it's parallel with the sight. The guy that did it over there is guesswork as far as I was concerned. One time I took (Lieutenant Sitz?) up to his forward observer, but I didn't even see them hit them, I just saw a smoke come up back there where it had set something on fire.

PIEHLER: So, you knew that the shells were going, but you didn't have a sense of what they ever hit?

CORLEY: No. You never see your target, because if you see him, he can see you.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) That's too close.

CORLEY: And a gun like that, it takes time to move one. You can't get it out of harm's way.

PIEHLER: How long does it take to move it from beginning to—let's say they give you the order that you are moving out?

CORLEY: Probably an hour, anyway.

PIEHLER: At least an hour?

CORLEY: I'd say a least. Because you got to put that gun away, take it out of action, get it out of its pit that it's dug for itself. (Laughter) The recoil that kicks back you know, the spades on the end of the trail. It's nice if you can get some logs laying around to put them back there to keep it from imbedding. They're a devil to get out. So you got to get that out and all your equipment up before you can start on your equipment. Don't want to get in range of any good rifleman.

HARVEY: What kind of trucks or vehicles did you use to move the guns with? What hauled them around?

CORLEY: Tractors.

HARVEY: That was a tracked vehicle, or like a truck or ...

CORLEY: No. It's—I did have a picture somewhere of one. It's treaded the full length on each side, and it's got seats for the gun crew and a place to carry a few shells for quick use, place for the driver up the front, where I was telling you that guy got killed with one. And B Battery, I think, one day right ahead of us was on a road march, and they said there was a big ole German

howitzer or something, rocket propelled or whatever, I don't know what they called it. It fired off a round at a patch of woods. This projectile come down and hit this hard, tar and gravel road right beside the tractor. Some of the boys that lived through it said they could see that thing coming. It was that big. It just totaled that tractor. Killed three or four of the men on it, butchered up some of the others. I think it set off the outer charges. I don't know it could set off the projectiles in there, but marks on the old tractor looked like it because of its fragments. You could tell it went in. And you could tell the fragments that went out the way they bend. And the gun that it was hitched to wasn't touched.

We went up the road a ways, and went into position and I told the lieutenant, "How about me scooting back down there and stealing that gun sight. We might need a spare." He says, "Go get it." So, I went back down there and the gun and all was already gone. Ordnance had picked it up, I guess, or that service battery, I don't know. They usually have a spare tractor. They might have picked up their own. We had several men killed there. Right up in front of us.

HARVEY: Did you ever see, or did you ever liberate a concentration camp?

CORLEY: No. Never did see it. Just heard about them from people who had been there.

HARVEY: Did you hear about it while you were over there or after ...

CORLEY: Yeah. This guy says, "They was stacked up like cord wood." I don't know which one he was talking about. Didn't know anybody around those places.

PIEHLER: Your son, he never served in the military.

CORLEY: No. No. He was born in '54.

PIEHLER: Did he ever think of serving in the military?

CORLEY: No.

PIEHLER: Would you have wanted him to, or ...

CORLEY: No. He was doing what I wanted him to do. He was serving the schools.

PIEHLER: I notice your son has a Ph. D. What field is he?

CORLEY: Polymer Science and Engineering they call it. Master's the same thing. Bachelor's is Chemistry.

PIEHLER: Is he a teacher or a university professor?

CORLEY: No. He works for Shell Oil, does research for them. They got a chemical business besides the oil business, which they're trying to sell. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: That sounds very familiar.

CORLEY: He's been with them since he's been out of school. It think it's twenty-one years, coming up twenty-two years. Like I said, he makes a lot of money.

PIEHLER: How much of the war did you tell your son growing up? How much about the war did you tell him?

CORLEY: Not a whole lot, because he was always busy. He was studying. He studied, and he studied, and he studied. He made A's all the way, until he took this last exam, his master's. Made a B. His professor said it liked to have killed him. Made a bunch of enemies in town as he went through school, because he was making A's all the time.

PIEHLER: How much of the war have you told your wife?

CORLEY: Not a whole lot, because she's not interested in it. Doesn't know what I'm talking about. Once in a while I'll tell her something.

PIEHLER: You mentioned going to a reunion, but over the years have you stayed in touch with anyone that you served with?

CORLEY: Not really. One guy from Michigan, he was my understudy. I'd use him once in a while if I needed an extra hand, I used mainly him. He was pretty strong after this reunion thing. He has called me a time or two, and written me several times, stopped and visited me once. I stopped and visited him one time out in the campground. He goes to Florida for the winter. I think he was big in seed corn up there in Michigan. I expect he's a pretty rich old boy. Good old country boy as far as I can tell by looking at him or listening to him, so he's about the most—I talked to (Sitz?) a time or two over the phone. I think I'll try him again Sunday, maybe. He's getting along in years, too. Not as many as me, but he's getting several.

PIEHLER: Where does he live?

CORLEY: Town in eastern Oregon, southeastern Oregon.

PIEHLER: So he still lives in ...

CORLEY: Yeah, he went back. He said, "When I went back, my brothers all had jobs on the farm or ranch or whatever." He went to Alaska and was a carpenter for about four years before he come back. I think he's in the cattle business some way or other.

HARVEY: Does your son have any children?

CORLEY: Almost two. Little girl. She will be three years old sometime this month and then they're expecting another one, I think, about the last of the month.

PIEHLER: That's very exciting.

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: Do you get to see them much?

CORLEY: No. We were down there last November, I believe, and I said, “If I get home I won’t go again.” I had been for years, going twice a year. We had a big Ford van, you know, plenty of room for whatever you wanted. But then when they got married, we didn’t go, and she got sick.... So, I hadn’t been down in about four years. I’ve this eye problem, this macular degeneration or whatever. It bothers me quite a bit. I said if, “I get this old van back home, it’ll stay.” They came up last summer. They’d been up the past two winters in January for a week. They like to ski. The rest of it is by phone. You can tell by looking at the phone bill.

HARVEY: Do you ever regret enlisting?

CORLEY: No. Like I said, I wouldn’t take a million dollars for that experience. If I hadn’t gone, I would have always wondered. Always wondered about it.

PIEHLER: What do you think, I mean, it obviously cost you some promotions at work, at Eastman, but what do you think your benefit—what benefits did you get from that experience. Did you seem to get any benefits.

CORLEY: You mean from my service?

PIEHLER: Yeah. From your service.

CORLEY: Well, I expect I got quite a few that I don’t realize. Habits, way of doing things, or not doing things. Yeah. You learn a few tricks along the way.

PIEHLER: Is there anything we forgot to ask you? That you want to tell us?

CORLEY: Well, you read my serial number off there. I could have told you what it was.

PIEHLER: You still remember that after all these years?

CORLEY: And my number on my carbine.

PIEHLER: I remember you saying that.

HARVEY: When I talked to you earlier, you told me a story about, I think it was, your brother on the firing range.

CORLEY: Yeah.

HARVEY: Would you tell that one again? The one about ...

CORLEY: The brother next youngest to me, he got drafted late during the war, and went in, I don't know some camp or other, training camp and he was on the rifle range one day. You gentlemen familiar with the set up of a target range?

PIEHLER: Yes.

CORLEY: Targets go up and down you know, and your bunker's here to catch the shots and the men huddled behind it to run them up and down. Well, he was on that detail. Up and down. And his lieutenant in charge of the detail had these strict rules, you don't move by. You don't move back there while they're firing. Lieutenant says, "Go back there for something or other." He said—somebody ricocheted one off that frame right through his arm. Browning automatic rifles, I think they used. And he got—I tell people he got hurt worse in training camp than I got going through five campaigns there. He finally had to go overseas, but it was all over before he got over there.

PIEHLER: So he was the only brother who also ... served? Did any of your other brothers or sisters serve?

CORLEY: Let's see. Well my third brother he was in the Navy. Fourth brother, he was in the Navy. I guess that's about all. He was sunk two or three times.

PIEHLER: Now, that's pretty serious.

CORLEY: Minesweepers, I think he was on quite a bit of the time.

HARVEY: Was he in the European theater or was he in the Pacific?

CORLEY: He was in the Pacific. He got him some of that night fighting there around Guadalcanal. What they call the Iron Bottom Bay, such as that. He was on one of those destroyers that got pretty well shot up.

PIEHLER: I smell some future interviews.

CORLEY: Beg your pardon?

PIEHLER: I feel there might be some future interviews coming some day with your brothers if they are willing.

HARVEY: ... Do they live in Kingsport?

CORLEY: I got three that lives within a mile or two. I'll have to stop and count. One, two, three, that means we all live about a mile, I guess, from each other. That one I was telling you about being on the destroyer he lives up in Northern Indiana. The youngest one, I think he was in the Navy for a short time. I don't know anything about that. He never did any action anyway. One shot and one sunk. So, I guess, that was about the total.

PIEHLER: Well thank you very much. We really appreciate your time and your stories.

CORLEY: Well, I've enjoyed it.

PIEHLER: Oh good!

CORLEY: You don't get a chance to tell your war stories anymore.

PIEHLER: Well I know Joe—if you have more war stories, Joe will be glad to—Joe's in my—not only is he in my Normandy semester, but my course on U.S. Military History, and I predict he will be a candidate for the oral history course I teach in the Spring. So there may be a chance, I have a feeling another one of your brothers may be a likely candidate for an oral history if he is willing, another brother to be interviewed.

CORLEY: One other brother, he was in the Navy too. He got shot. No. His boat got hit with one round in the Korean fight. They was on a destroyer patrolling Inchon Harbor, or somebody.... Said they got up in, and Bam! One round was all the Jap man fired. Said, "It went through the side into the chain locker." Said, "It didn't hurt a thing ... it happened to be lunch time. Otherwise there'd have been a poker game going on." (Laughter) Talk about luck, bound to be.

PIEHLER: Well, thank you again. Again we really appreciate it

CORLEY: Well, I hope it's been worth your while.

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, absolutely. It was a real pleasure.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

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Due to illness, Mr. Corley was unable to proofread the final copy of his transcript.