

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES MORTON, JR.

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

INTERVIEW BY
G. KURT PIEHLER
AND
KELLY HAMMOND

FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE
APRIL 16, 2000

TRANSCRIPT BY
KELLY HAMMOND

KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview ... with Charles Morton on April 16, 2000 at Franklin, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

KELLY HAMMOND: Kelly Hammond.

PIEHLER: I'd like to first begin by asking you a little bit about your parents. Could you ... tell me a little bit about your father?

CHARLES MORTON: Yes. My father was the son of a Confederate soldier who was shot at Shiloh in the shoulder, given a horse, and sent home. At the Battle of Shiloh. My father was the son of a native Tennessean from Maury County. He and his two first cousins—my grandfather—walked away from that courthouse to Shiloh when he was sixteen years old. The two first cousins also came back. Both of them made doctors, and practiced in Columbia. My grandfather went to Perry County and was commissioned by all people of [the] Pennsylvania Company—talking about doing business with Yankees now—(Laughs) to write checks of up to \$15,000, which was a lot of money. See, ... you all are way too young to know when a dollar—and we referred to dollars as silver dollars. And in those days, they were about the size of wagon wheels. They were very large, and they could buy a lot. But anyhow, he was commissioned to spend fifteen thousand dollars—write checks up to—and this was for timber. To buy hardwood timber in that region, and approximate to the water, the Tennessee River was the region to buy the timber in that part of the country, see. I'm telling all of this to tell you my father was born under those circumstances at Perryville. And while my grandfather was in that—another tale about my grandfather, my daddy being born in Perryville: He said that my granddaddy was—he was sharp. He was a little fellow, but he was sharp. He said they didn't know when Christmas was, and said he would go up to ... the junction there, where the train crossed the river, up in New Johnsonville, a week later than Christmas, and buy their Christmas presents, and come back, and they would have Christmas one week later. A lot cheaper, you know. (Laughter) But anyhow, that's where my father came from. My mother was a Hamblen. H-A-M-B-L-E-N. And they had ancestors—some of them were pretty noble. And she came out of an eastern county. Wilson County, near here. And of course, they came together in Nashville under poor circumstances. They were very, very [poor]. My grandfather had lost out, and had to move on to Nashville after the—I reckon I'd have to look and see. Probably the Cleveland administration—had a tremendous depression right along in there. But anyhow, my daddy—they moved there on Caldwell Lane, there, in Nashville.

PIEHLER: When you said they lost out, did they lose out—were they farmers?

MORTON: Well, see, what it was—things—if they cut off things—back in those days, if a business decided to shut down, they told you on Monday morning it was closed when you went to work. But anyhow, that's the way it was. So my daddy was kind of a—he had a lot of ambition. I take it he had a lot. He showed it in my lifetime. And he had ... one brother, younger than he was. He told me, he said—now, his name was Johnny. He said, “Johnny, ... I'll go to work to pay you to go to school, and when you go to school, you come home at night and teach me what they taught you at school.” So they worked ... in that frame, you know. Incidentally, Johnny became one of the head men in Proctor & Gamble, the soap people. And my daddy had tremendous abilities, and was a student all of his life. He even wrote a book. But

without education, now, remember, that you can do this. Formal education is a myth. You can be educated other ways. But anyhow, he worked at the post office. He got a job, and would never cut loose, because in those days, security of a job was a ... blessing. Working for the government, where they almost couldn't fire you, or wouldn't fire you, because he wasn't of that nature, but that's how steady your job was, you know. So there he spent all of his life. But he did deal—in later years he dealt in real-estate, buying and selling real-estate. You've probably seen some of it that he'd owned. Which is worth lots of money today. But that's the family I came from. They were very religious, very religious.

HAMMOND: Church of Christ?

MORTON: Uh huh. Very religious, and of course, sometimes two pluses make a minus, you know. (Laughs) But anyhow, I came along.

PIEHLER: When were you born, and where were you born?

MORTON: In 1918, in Nashville. August 4, 1918, in Nashville.

PIEHLER: And that is where your dad was a postmaster, in Nashville?

MORTON: He was not a postmaster. He was a ...

PIEHLER: Well, he worked at the post office.

MORTON: He worked at the post office. Well, he worked in the main office. He was superintendent of the West Station, which was a very large station, ... where all of the industrial business came through. And that is where he retired from, West Station. Incidentally, my daddy was a Republican. My grandfather was a Republican. My grandfather fought on the Confederate side, and sided with Lincoln ... on the national issues. And he was a Republican. That is very unusual.... I inherited that same thing, as being Republican, but anyhow. My daddy ... was in the post office there, had a real good job. I think he was about the third man in the hierarchy. And the Democrats came in, and they promoted him backwards, (laughs) to a private. You know, to a clerk, and sent him to North Nashville as a clerk. It was really, really rough, the way the postmaster treated him. We had a senator, a United States senator, named [Kenneth D.] McKellar, in Memphis. I was getting grown then, and started dealing—oh, I was nineteen—started dealing in automobiles. I developed a friend that had political power, persuasional ability. And I told him the story of how my father was treated, and he said, "Let me tell McKellar about that." He told McKellar, and he wrote this postmaster in Nashville a blistering letter, let him out of the office, and promoted my daddy. McKellar, of course, was a Democrat, but when he heard somebody had mistreated somebody, over a political reason—and that made me have the highest regard to McKellar, you know. You asked me something about my family, and my daddy was a very religious man, very religious. That's about all I can tell you.

PIEHLER: Was your father a deacon in the church?

MORTON: He was an elder. That was a step higher, yeah. And for years, yeah ...

PIEHLER: How active were you in the church?

MORTON: Oh, I hate to tell you. I'm not a religious person.

PIEHLER: But growing up ...

MORTON: Oh, yeah, I was. Yeah. I believe in the principles. I believe in the principles very thoroughly. I believe that ... the Bible in its entirety is the greatest example for anybody to live by. But when you get into religion and want to go into depth, there are things there that I don't understand. And people that say they understand it, I know from the beginning they don't know what they are talking about.

PIEHLER: Could you tell me a little bit about your mother, and how your parents met?

MORTON: I don't really know. I reckon my mother and daddy met—uh, well, she came to town.... My mother was very good with her hands. She could make anything with her hands. She worked in this cotton factory, where they made shirts. My daddy was working there, too, before he went to the post office, and that's where they met. They met there. The name of it was Washington. No, it wasn't Washington Manufacturing Company. It was (O'Brien?). (O'Brien?) Brothers.... I believe I got it right. That's where they met. My mother was the daughter of a (Clack?) Hamblen. And ... Teddy Brown Hamblen. My grandfather, (Clack?) Hamblen, if he was walking down the street with President Harding, and somebody would say, "There is the President," they would point to my grandfather. Not to Harding, but to my grandfather, because he was the one that was dressed to the occasion. (Laughter) That's just a little example of him. But—and he came from people. Their ancestors, they ... got counties up there, close to where you all are. The name, Hamblen, and they came on down here from up your way, Pennsylvania, up in there, and down through here. They left a trail.

HAMMOND: Are you the oldest in the family? Child?

MORTON: I am the oldest. Yeah. Got two sisters. The one next to me was a schoolteacher. The other one's a housewife. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: You mentioned that your grandfather on your father's side fought in the Civil War. Did your father fight in either the Spanish American War, or ...

MORTON: My father never went to war. Uh uh. My father never went to war. He was exempted, on account of my birth, from World War I. And ran the post office in Belle Meade. You know where Belle Meade is? They had a post office, and that was a big armament—mustering—what do you call a place where a ...

PIEHLER: Mustering station?

MORTON: Where the soldiers are. Anyhow, he ran the post office out there, where this

encampment was, and I remember him telling me—see, during World War I, of course, you all weren't even here for World War II—but World War I, things were scarce in this country. They suffered a lot. I was too young to know about it. But they suffered a lot, from scarcity of food items, such things as lard. They weren't using Crisco in those days. It was lard. They cooked with that. My daddy said his rations—he just couldn't get any lard at all. He said every morning he would go by that—where they were cooking breakfast for these thousands of men. He said there would be gallons and gallons of good grease. He said, “You think that they would give me a jug of it.” He says, “No, they poured it all in a hole.” I remember him giving me that example of the waste in the army. Of course, I lived to see a lot of that, myself. There's some other tangents. If you'd ask questions, I could maybe give you some answers.

PIEHLER: ... Roughly what year did ... your father start working for the post office?

MORTON: I would say 1915. I think that's pretty close to the right date.

PIEHLER: And when did he retire?

MORTON: I would say—I'd have to do a lot of thinking on that.

PIEHLER: ... How old were you roughly when he stopped ...

MORTON: Oh, Lord! I mean, I was probably up in my fifties when he retired.

PIEHLER: So he worked a long time for the post office.

MORTON: Oh yeah, yeah. Forty-some-odd years. Forty-odd years.

PIEHLER: When did your father pass away?

MORTON: Uh, I think it was—I've got it written down in yonder. I wish you hadn't asked me that. I couldn't ...

PIEHLER: We can always fill it in later. Kelly can always fill it in later.

MORTON: When he passed away—I don't want to guess at it.

HAMMOND: Christmas day, 1974.

MORTON: Nineteen what?

HAMMOND: '74.

MORTON: I was going to relate it to you. It was the year that (Chug?) came back in, was an intern at Saint Thomas Hospital. And so you've got it there.

HAMMOND: Yes.

MORTON: That's right, '74.... Everything I do, I have to—if I don't put it in with a key, I haven't got it. (Laughter) Do you teach people to put things in with a key? Do you know what I'm speaking of?

PIEHLER: I have a sense that you have to ...

MORTON: I have to ... think of one thing before I can get to the other.

PIEHLER: You grew up in Nashville, then.

MORTON: Until I was—I came here when I was twenty-two years old.

PIEHLER: What part of Nashville did you grow up in?

MORTON: West Nashville. Right around—do you know where that golf course—(McCabe?) Field, I think is the name if it. Right there, that was an airport.... When I was a kid, it was a cornfield. A dairy farm. It belonged to Warren (Sloan?). But then it became (McConnell?) Airport, Nashville's only airport. Then before right after the war, they converted it to a golf course, (McCabe?) ... golf course. And that's known as Sylvan Park. That's where I grew up. Incidentally, they had a fellow flying airplanes a lot in those days. Became very popular. And he flew across the Atlantic, and they glorified him here. You know? His name was [Charles] Lindbergh. He came over there, and landed, and my school was about like that school sitting up there. See that one sitting up there? It was about that far from the airport. And somebody hollered that Lindbergh had landed, and the whole school took off. The teachers were standing, there trying—they couldn't calm—the students kept on. And they ran! Oh, they raised holy "H." But they took off to see Lindbergh. About the time they got over there, he was taking off. They didn't even get to see him, except his airplane. But the whole school took off to see Lindbergh. (Laughter) Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... Did you grow up in a house? Did your parents own a house?

MORTON: Oh, yeah, they owned houses. Yeah. My daddy had a nice home. I was born in a nice home that he owned.... See, back in those days, it was—you were looked down on if you didn't own your home. Down here in the South, you know. So he always owned his home, and bought other homes, other houses, to rent. As years went on, he started doing that. The Depression came along, and caught him doing that. These people would live in a house, and they had laws here in Tennessee, where you couldn't move people out if they were sick. So, they would ... pull that on you if you were the landowner. They would pull that sick deal on you, were you couldn't move them out of the house 'cause they wasn't paying the rent.... Usually, they would claim that they had TB [tuberculosis]. You couldn't move them out. It was a state law. So he had lots of trouble. That made me hate rental. I had no part of ever renting anything. You pay me, give me the money, and lets shake hands, and good-bye, you know. That was my theory. It followed on over into the automobile business. Back in those days, you could sign notes with no-account people, and make more profit. But I like to sell my notes without recourse, and tell them good-bye.

PIEHLER: How many rental houses did your father own? It sounded like he owned quite a bit of real estate.

MORTON: Well, look, it wasn't anything like that, you know. At the most, never over four or five.

PIEHLER: Four of five houses?

MORTON: Yeah. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: You mentioned about the ... airfield that was close to your school growing up. What was your neighborhood like? What sticks out?

MORTON: What stuck out in that neighborhood more than anything else? Well, right north of me, ... two blocks over, was Richland Park. Three blocks over was Charlotte Pike. That was the dividing line, Charlotte Pike. If you lived below the line on the north side of Charlotte Pike, it wasn't as well thought of as if you lived on the south side. There was a distinction. You know, people have class distinctions. That prevailed. That distinction prevailed, north and south of the Pike. Fortunately, I lived on the south side, and I liked it. And we had—on the north side, a mile or so over, was the river, and lining the river was the tremendous industrial part of Nashville. These people lived on the north side, most of them, that's where they lived, on the north side of Charlotte. On the south side were the owners, and the superintendents, and the people that ran those factories. That's where they lived. That was the distinction, you know. There's always dividing lines, and you're not old enough to know about all of that in New York, but they sure had them up there.

PIEHLER: Oh yes, oh yes. There are still dividing lines.

MORTON: Still got them, huh? (Laughs) Well, they had them down here to where, you know, they were so bad that sometimes they'd throw rocks at each other. You've heard of things like that, I reckon. And, back in those days, a black man didn't have a chance. I feel sorry for them. They couldn't get a drink of water, they couldn't go to the bathroom. It was just absolutely horrible. Mm hmm. It was absolutely horrible. I hope to God I never mistreated one.

PIEHLER: Did you have any black friends growing up?

MORTON: We didn't associate with them on a personal basis at all, but I had many contacts with them that were pleasant. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did your family have someone help out in the house?

MORTON: Yeah, they did, they did have. And my wife's brother-in-law, living down the street here, was probably the most wealthy man in my time, and lived in Franklin. He was very wealthy, and he's still living and still very wealthy, unless he's given it all away. I don't ask him, don't know. But, he came into my place of business in 1941, which was a Ford dealership

here in Franklin, one Saturday afternoon. Of course, I was always open Saturday afternoon, and Sundays, too. He came in and said, “Charlie, will you cash a check for me?” I said, “Sure.” I said, “How much you want?” He says, “Four dollars.” Says, “I want to pay the cook and buy some groceries.” “Four dollars?” “I want to pay the cook and buy some groceries.” Things were cheap. You could get help all week for four dollars. Black, you know, help. Things were awful cheap, yeah.

PIEHLER: Growing up, what did you do for fun?

MORTON: Work.

PIEHLER: Where did you work, and what did you do?

MORTON: Did everything on earth you can think of to make a dollar. (Laughs) I was horrible on making that money. It was a game with me.

PIEHLER: So, what were some of the jobs? What was the hardest job you did?

MORTON: Oh, I didn't have any hard jobs. I wasn't stupid. (Laughs) The hardest job I ever did in my life, I told a woman one time—they were big shots. He had been a big man. Came in here driving a new Packard automobile, right in the middle of the Depression, and had gone broke. He had this business—I forgot what it was—in Chicago. He came back here to his family. They moved [into] a house close to us, and the grass had grown up. So I contracted—I didn't contract. I agreed to cut their grass for them. I knew they would really pay me. Golly, the grass was that high. Most of us—old Bermuda that had grown real high, you know. Or whatever it was. Whatever kind of grass that is that grows—that's so tough. And I had to cut it off most all with a hand, and then go over it with a lawnmower. (Laughter) And it took me a week to cut this grass! They paid me five dollars. I knew they'd give me a good piece of money. They gave me five dollars. That was one of the downfalls of my moneymaking. (Laughter) Pitfalls, one might say. But I did everything. One time I lay—we also—my father was very enterprising. He could do anything. And my mother could, too, but we always ... raised a lot of vegetables, and I would sell them. This old lady said—I was selling vegetables, and she said, “You didn't give me enough lettuce for a nickel.” So I went back home, got a (coaster?) wagon full of that stuff, and carried it. Her name was Tidwell. I'll never forget her name. I can give you her address, if I think. Right now. And I carried her a (coaster?) wagon full of lettuce back down there, because she criticized me for not giving her enough. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You mentioned a job with the railroad.

MORTON: I never had a job with the railroad.

PIEHLER: Well, you mentioned—not a job with the railroad, but it involved the L&N.

MORTON: Yeah. I was putting that ice cream ...

PIEHLER: ... How old were you when you got that job?

MORTON: ... I had turned sixteen that summer. When I got the job, I probably wasn't sixteen.... In just a few days, I turned sixteen. Driving a truck, a sedan. Chevrolet sedan delivery truck. And, um, they had a glove box on it.... In that glove box I would put dry ice. That made a little refrigerator, the glove box. Then in that, ... I would stack it full of Eskimo Pies and put the dry ice in there.... Kept them frozen, you know. And anytime I wanted to give my friends an Eskimo Pie, a frozen Eskimo Pie—of course, I ate them too. But I had a lot of fun. That was a city delivery. I met all the trains, and then all the orders of Mrs. Vanderbilt.... If she wanted to have a party, if she wanted fancy ice cream, well, I delivered it, you know. That's the kind of work I did. And the drug stores running out of ice cream. I carried special orders to them. And to the schools, most of the big schools, church organizations. Things like that, that wanted a special order of ice cream. I delivered it. The mayor of Nashville, standing order. Sent him one quart—I think it was one quart. It may have been two quarts—of the ice cream of the month on Sunday morning. I had to deliver it, and he would be—he lived there on Richland Avenue in Nashville. His name was Mayor Hillary E. House, and I would deliver at the front door, not the back door. The mayor, he, lots of times, would be sitting in his swing on the front porch. And I'd carry it in there and give it to him, and sit down and talk to him. I enjoyed talking to the old man. He was very good to talk to me.

PIEHLER: What would you talk about?

MORTON: Whatever would happen to hit my mind. I don't remember any of the particular conversations. But whatever it was, maybe the topic of the day or whatever, I would bring it up. I have been that way all through my life, and I have talked to some high-powered folks in my life.

PIEHLER: ... How many hours did you work at sixteen? It sounded like you were working quite a bit.

MORTON: Oh, we didn't have any laws about how many hours you worked. Work all you wanted too.

HAMMOND: Did you go to school?

MORTON: That was in the summer time.

PIEHLER: Summertime. So your job delivering ice cream to the railroad and to the other—that was in the summer time?

MORTON: In the summertime, yeah. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Where did you go to elementary school? Do you remember?

MORTON: Sylvan Park, Sylvan Park. Still there today, but not the same building. I think it's been torn down. But there is a Sylvan Park on the same property.

HAMMOND: Did you like school?

MORTON: Oh, I did when I was young. When I got up about high school, I didn't care much about it. Some things—they had some teachers that were interesting. And most of the times, I thought I knew more than they did. That developed—you know, that's a horrible situation.

HAMMOND: What was your favorite subject?

MORTON: Current events. (Laughs) I don't reckon I—ah, History, maybe a little bit. Math, arithmetic.

HAMMOND: And you went to David Lipscomb to high school?

MORTON: Yeah, I went there seven years. I enjoyed that, yeah. Enjoyed the association, meeting people.

HAMMOND: Did you have a lot of girlfriends?

MORTON: Oh yeah. That was part of the program. Yeah.

PIEHLER: What would you do on a date? What was a date like growing up, when you were in high school?

MORTON: Like hell, if you didn't have any money.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) So, where would you go? Did you go to the movies at all?

MORTON: Well you was afraid she was going to order more ... than you had money [for]. See, you don't realize. You're young. But times were hard. Dollars were big. You couldn't get one of those dollars in your pocket, you know, they were so big. For other reasons, maybe. Yeah, things were hard. And that made—all of that wound that spring, to make you want to—my wife's brother-in-law, which would have been my brother-in-law too, I reckon, he was president of the bank, and became a very wealthy man. But I made more money than he did, back in those days. I felt sorry for him. He'd work, you know. Did you ever realize when—I had a boy working for me in the parts department, there. I forgot his name. I could think of it, I reckon. He sold parts out of the parts department. I had to pay him for selling parts, and I thought, "My goodness! When I sell an automobile, you know how many parts I sell?" That's a hell of a lot of parts at one time that I sell. And, um, when I sold automobiles—to kind of give you a perception of the lay of the land, in 1940-41, the average man—we didn't have but one factory in town. That was (Deutsch?) Steelworks. I would cash the checks for them on Saturday afternoon, 'cause the bank was already closed, and they'd work a full day on Saturday, just like they did on Friday, and I'd cash their checks for them. What do you think their checks ran, as an average? About what do you think? A man's gone—worked all the week. Fourteen, fifteen dollars. Can you imagine a grown man working a whole week for fourteen, fifteen dollars? That gives you an idea about how—and then to paint the picture the other way, I could sell an automobile and make, oh, sometimes \$200, and sometimes \$100. I always tried to make \$100. And that was

done in a relatively short space of time, see. So my ability to make money, compared to the other man, was tremendous. So, therefore, it meant that, like a fool—I mean, I was wearing those high-priced clothes when that poor man didn't have clothes fit to go to church in, you know. But anyhow, it was all a matter of arithmetic. It was just ...

HAMMOND: When did you start work at the dealership?

MORTON: How old was I when I bought that thing? I was twenty-three. I had already turned twenty-three. Yeah.

PIEHLER: And this was after the war, or before the war?

MORTON: Before the war.

PIEHLER: Before the war.

MORTON: Yeah! They took me up—well, I'll tell you. I was running that thing and—shoot, you couldn't touch me ... to save your life. I was proud of myself. I sold Fords. Had a Ford dealership. You know what kind of car I drove? A brand new Buick. They made me hide it, to where nobody would see what I had. But I had it. And I ... bought this thing primarily to meet my wife, Emma. So on the first date in this big—I can tell you the name of the Buick. It was a (56 C?), ivy green convertible coupe. It was a superwide bottom body Buick, which was the hottest automobile in the United States. Hotter than a Cadillac. Cadillacs wasn't even hot. The Buick was hot. And so I drive up, and pick up my wife to be, my girlfriend, I hope, and we start out riding, and I imagine she was scared to death of it. Started up Columbia Pike, up Breezy Hill. And like a fool—I was a fool in so many ways. I said, I told her—she was undoubtedly the prettiest girl in town. Everybody knew that. She was absolutely beautiful. I said, "I'm gonna marry you." How do you think that went over? Like a soup sandwich. You know, that was horrible! (Laughter) Tell somebody, "I'm gonna marry you." By God, I did, too. Took me four years to do it. Three, four. Yeah, I reckon four. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: How were you able to buy the dealership?

MORTON: Sir?

PIEHLER: How were you able to buy the dealership? By borrowing?

MORTON: By borrowing, yeah. By borrowing money.... But the automobiles, they had some sucker automobiles, and uh, parts, shop equipment, office furniture, accounts receivable.... A going dealership named (Walten?) Motor Company. How much money you think it took to buy it? The whole dealership! They even had some used cars to go with it, inventory. \$6,500.

PIEHLER: In what year did you buy it?

MORTON: 1941.

PIEHLER: So it was just before Pearl Harbor you bought it?

MORTON: Well, a year before. It was in that year, yeah, because Pearl Harbor was-

PIEHLER: December of 1941.

MORTON: Yeah, it was the 7th day of December, 1941.

PIEHLER: Who did you borrow the money from?

MORTON: Kinfolks, the bank, and just whatever I had myself.

PIEHLER: Did you have to convince people that you could make a go of this dealership?

MORTON: No. Not much ...

(Tape paused)

MORTON: Well, I'll tell you, (laughs) I never did go around asking anybody whether they believed in me or not. We didn't have to do that.

PIEHLER: But that was a lot of money to put together in the ...

MORTON: \$6,500 was a lot of money then. It's nothing now, you know, but it was then. Oh, I think—I sold a Chevrolet dealership in town, considerably, the first year I was here. Of course, that was the only year I was here.

PIEHLER: What happened to the dealership when you went to war?

MORTON: Well, I had a fellow come in there and take part of it. He was going to take care of it during the war. He had a job there in Nashville with a contractor. He messed it up.... Probably made a lot of money, but I didn't get it. I think all I ever got out of that was \$15,000 at the end ... of the war. And it had made lots of money. Automobiles were very much in demand during the war, and if you bootlegged them, the profits were real high. Most all the dealers understood that bootlegging.

PIEHLER: You mentioned that you liked current events growing up. Did you read the paper regularly, and which paper did you read? Do you remember?

MORTON: I reckon I carried the *Banner* as a boy, and I always was preference to the *Banner*, and it also was a Republican, as I told you, newspaper. The *Tennessean*, it was probably the better newspaper, and it was the morning newspaper.

PIEHLER: But it was Democratic?

MORTON: It was Democratic, yeah. It was probably the better newspaper, and more

interesting to read. The articles more interesting, more interesting.

PIEHLER: In the 1930's, what did you think of Franklin Roosevelt?

MORTON: Uh, I was schooled in my thoughts. And all my thoughts were not my own. They didn't originate with me. You would say, "Why did you go to such and such a church?" Well, I'll tell you right quick. Because your mom and daddy did. And that answers a lot of questions along those lines. I was brought up to think that Roosevelt had taken—my father was a student. Not educated formally, but a student. He knew what was going on. I remember him telling me that Herbert Hoover had—in the interim between the election and the incoming president being—I think they didn't go in until March in those days. Hoover had said to Roosevelt after he had been elected to the presidency, "If you'll come over and help me, we can solve this thing before it gets out of hand." Talking about the downfall of the market, and the gloomy days that loomed ahead. And what was Roosevelt's reply? His reply was, his reply was "She's your boat; you rock her." He did not help him.

Roosevelt was a son of a bitch. He ... was the first to come down the pike that had gone to school to become a politician. He was our first politician. Maybe we had some that kind of dwelled on it, but this man was a—he knew that if he captured certain segments of the market—put arithmetic to it. All this arithmetic in this world. He studied that he could get all of the people that didn't have anything, a credit card, to where they could vote. What do you call it? A registration card. Then he could stay president forever. So, he turned his energies toward that, and did very well in doing it, and he got the classes that favored him, wanted something for nothing, where he had promised them the whole way, you know. And became a very powerful man because—he was intelligent. Of course he was. He could make a good speech. You didn't know what he said when he got through, but he made a good speech. It sounded good anyway. He was an accomplished politician. And if you wanted to hang something on his grave today, you would have to say [he was] our first educated politician. Now, you're a history student, got a Ph.D. degree, I'm sure. What I'm saying, does it make any sense?

PIEHLER: Oh, yes, Oh yes. So, you were for Wilkie in 1940?

MORTON: Well, that's who was running, yeah.

PIEHLER: So ... it sounds like your parents and you voted republican in the '30s and ...

MORTON: Oh yeah, we always voted Republican, yeah. Because—oh, you know. There were reasons they would say, "Why we vote Republican." Tariff was a big subject in those days. Didn't know a damn thing about it, but it was a big subject, you know. (Laughs) High tariff and low tariff. And I think it would be good if we knew something about it today. But anyhow.

PIEHLER: What did you know in the 1930s and 1940-41, about what was going on in Europe and Asia?

MORTON: We knew a hell of a lot. Because we put our ear to it. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you think war was coming in 1940-41?

MORTON: Oh yeah, we knew it was coming. In '41, of course, it was already here. We knew when Hitler walked across that Rhineland, into ...

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

MORTON: I used to go up North when I was a kid. Those damn fools up there. I thought they liked us, but all they was doing, they was trying to get us to talk where they could laugh at us. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: When did you go up North?

MORTON: All the time.

PIEHLER: Growing up?

MORTON: When I was in the business. I had to go up North ... to get automobiles, which saved about fifty dollars by going and picking them up, ... and bringing them back.

PIEHLER: So, you would go up in 1941 ...

MORTON: Oh yeah, I went in '40. Before that, even, I was doing that. I got a lot of traveling in, but in the automobile—in the Ford.... I could go over to ... where you all are, and all over farther. I could almost go over there with my eyes shut. I knew those old roads. The old road was 70 then, in those days. 70 north, right on through. I used to could name those towns all one right after another. After you left Knoxville, all the way up to Bristol. I can't do it today. They've changed some of those roads to where they don't go through those towns. I remember, I remember. I picked up the paper ... yesterday maybe. Was reading something about Jefferson City, Carson-Newman [College]. Yeah, we'd go through Jefferson City, Strawberry Plains. You know those towns? I can't name them now. But you asked a question about knowing the war was coming on. We had ... good newspapers that reported all that. We read it diligently. I remember where I was standing the day in September that it was announced that he had gone across the Rhineland into Czechoslovakia. We knew then that war had started.

PIEHLER: ... Were you given a draft—what was your draft status regarding the 1940 peacetime draft? Were you eligible for that?

MORTON: (Laughs) Absolutely. The first time they put that thing out, my name was on it. I escaped it until November 11, 1941. November 11, that was—I was standing over here at Tullahoma. Camp Forest, I think was the name of it. I put up my right hand and swore to be a member of that organization. Like a damned fool, I had a—nobody had a \$100 suit on. Nobody had a \$100 suit. But I was wearing one. And like a fool, I didn't have enough thought, and I threw up my hand with that suit on. They immediately sent us on over to Chattanooga. Had us all lined up, and there I was, still in that \$100 suit. That son of a "B" —and you know what the "B" stands for—Sergeant came out there and said, "I need some truck drivers." Well, I didn't

fall for that. But the truck drivers were going to be wheelbarrow men. They were gonna give them a wheelbarrow. And then he said, "I need some KPs." He pointed at me, number one. "KP." So in two days, I was spent on KP in my blue suit before they gave me a uniform. That's what that blue suit got me, a job on the KP. That's Kitchen Police. You know what it is, don't you? Pretty noble job. Get plenty to eat. Well, that's the way life is.

From there, I went to—that was at Oglethorpe, at Chattanooga, right down below the Tennessee line in Georgia. And from there they—I met my very best friend. Never had a brother in my life, but I had this friend that was the same as a brother. He had gotten in there about a year before, and became an officer. I ran into him about as soon as I got there. I said, "Buck, take care of me now," and "Lord almighty! I don't know what I've gotten into." He said, "Alright." He took care of me. He put me—well he probably—he may have, in a way. At least he didn't send me to infantry school. He sent me to engineering school at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. And, uh, I got twelve weeks of basic training there at Fort Belvoir, right out of Washington D.C., about ten or twelve miles south of Alexandria, if you know where Alexandria is. Then from there, after twelve weeks, they sent me to an old army outfit in Fort Benning, Georgia. A bridge-building engineering outfit. Pontoon bridge, putting up [a] pontoon bridge across the rivers. And these were the commonest, dirtiest talking reprobates I have ever been around in my life. I just couldn't stand them, but there they put me in the middle of them. I had to hold my mouth, and whatever else I had to hold, to get along with them. I remember paying one of them off. A sergeant. I think I gave him five dollars, or a quart of whiskey, one of the two, to let me come home. To give me a pass. And he did. He gave me a pass.

HAMMOND: Did you come home to see Emma?

MORTON: No, uh uh. I came home to see my mama and daddy. But anyhow, from there we went to—soon as spring came on around, and they sent us to Camp Edwards. Up in Massachusetts. You probably know where that is. They sent us out on the Cape [Cod], out where the rich folks play. Martha's Vineyard. These horrible southern boys, who I was not proud to be with, but ... I reckoned they were gonna make good soldiers. That's what it's all about, you know, killing people. It's horrible. And, um, they sent us out on the Cape where all these rich people came to play, the (Asterbilts?), and the Vanderbilts. All—you know. They had homes and places out there. And after we'd been there a while, the mayor called our colonel and asked him to come to a town meeting. He was complaining to the colonel to do something about ... these horrible people that they had drug up here from the South, in their midst. To try to control them. He said, "They're raping our women!" Said, "They're doing everything in the world," just how horrible it was. Then the old colonel got up to speak—this is true—he got up to speak. He said, "I sympathize." I'm not quoting him directly, exactly, but I'm pretty close. "I sympathize with you all's problems. I understand them." Said, "We've been sent here because of the proximity to this water, where we can practice beach landings. And this is ideal territory for the purpose." He said, "We are here training men for war.... War is a horrible thing." He says, "We're training men to fight—" and (to Kelly) you close your ears, now, to this sentence. He said, "Men that won't 'F' won't fight." So, you know, he was talking about rough characters. And that kind of closed that conversation. But anyhow, that was true. From there—we left there, camp out there on the Cape, and went down to your hometown, down there on the river. Got a little inlet there that opens up to the sea, you know, in New Jersey.

PIEHLER: So, you were on the Raritan?

MORTON: Sir?

PIEHLER: ... The Raritan River?

MORTON: No, no, that inlet there to the sea. In New Jersey.

PIEHLER: ... By Jersey City?

MORTON: Now you're talking.

PIEHLER: Bayonne Military Ocean Terminal? Bayonne?

MORTON: Sir?

PIEHLER: Were you in Bayonne?

MORTON: I don't know. I know one thing. I know they had a bunch of ships lined up out there in the harbor, and about every five minutes, here comes another train. Boy, she'd pull up there and stop. These soldiers would fall out just like chickens coming out of a roost, you know. And marching off, and ... marching on those ships. Oh, I imagine we had eight or ten of them lined up there. They filled up, sat there overnight. Sat there all day the next day, loaded, ready to go. These big Navy ships pulled in there. One of them was the Boise, and one of them was the Savannah. Cruisers. Eight-inch guns. Four or five destroyers. We sat there all during the day. That night, we got under steam, and left on a zigzag course. We'd go fifteen or twenty miles and change course, fifteen or twenty miles and change course. We did that because that water out there was infested with submarines, and we didn't lose a ship. We did not lose a ship. Of all those ships. Of course, we had this tremendous protection, with those destroyers and these two cruisers....

After about seven days, ... six days, we started smelling land. You know, when you've been on that open sea for seven or eight days, you can smell that land as you get close to it. Land has got an odor to it. We could smell it. We knew we were coming. Then, on about the eighth day, we pulled into Belfast. And pulled right in the docks there, by a granary, where they were making flour right there in the harbor. I never will forget it. I was one of the first ones off the ship. I don't know how I got off so fast, but I was one of the first ones off. Down there talking to those men handling the ropes, tying her down. I don't know how in the world I got off that fast, but I did. And I never will forget [what] the man said to me. He said, "You look just like your daddies when they came over here in 1917." Those were his words. He said, "You all, you look just like your daddies when they came." So, we went into Belfast there, and ... I reckon we spent the night in Belfast somewhere. Probably under a tent. I kind of forgot.

But anyhow, we went on down to Londonderry. Londonderry, yeah.... About forty or fifty miles, I forgot exactly how many miles. It wasn't very far. Londonderry. And had a nice setup

there in tents. Oh, it was immaculate. Brand new, clean. We stayed there, and they had a bar—I mean a pub, you know, real close by. We had plenty of beer, and everything to drink. We enjoyed that, talking to the old Irishmen down there, that were hanging around in the pub. And then we were told we had to move out, that there was danger of these Irishmen from the south of Ireland coming in there and taking a shot at us. So it was best for us to get the whole outfit out. So we did. We went back to port there, and went across there, went across the channel there, to the Clydebank and went up the Clydebank to Dunoon. Inverness. You know what the Clydebank is? The great inland waterway there in Scotland, where ... all the shipbuilding was constructed.

And we went up there and took over some property there, to stay in. The weather began to get cold up there. You's up pretty far north when you get up there. I remember it began to snow, a heck of a snow. We were staying in this old castle. I don't know ... whether the people had left out of it, or what the situation—how we inherited it, but we were in it. It was the (J.P. Coats?) Estate. Do you know what that is? Have you ever heard that name before? That was the people that made the thread that was sold all over the world. (J.P. Coats?) Thread. That was their home grounds. (J.P. Coats.?) So, we stayed there for a little while. I don't think we stayed there over three weeks. I remember we got some food in there that was pretty good. They shipped us some fresh meat in there, frozen, of course. Fresh, frozen. And, uh, they told us they were going to give us some white uniforms, [and] that we were going to Norway. We were going to meet the Germans in Norway. So I looked forward to that, you know. So, they loaded us back onto these limey ships, and if there's anything in the world that's worse that has to go on, on those third class limey ships ...

PIEHLER: What was so bad about a limey ship?

MORTON: Well, they didn't have anything to eat, for one thing. And they were dirty, trashy, and horrible. I'm not talking about the good grade. I'm talking about the ones they took the immigrants back and forth on. You know. So we ... got prepared to go to Norway, and so we went to sea with a few other ships. I kind of forgot. It wasn't many. I'm sure we had an escort. I forgot about what it was. But anyhow, we went to sea. And a few days out, I said, "Hell!" Said, "This is a funny way to go to Norway." It didn't take a damn fool to study that out, that we were going to Norway, and the weather getting warmer. There's something different about that deal. So, we went to the Atlantic, and went out there, and went into a big circle for three weeks. We went to sea from the Clydebank to the open Atlantic for three weeks, and finally, one night, we went through Gibraltar. Of course, we didn't know we was going through Gibraltar. We knew damn well we wasn't going to Norway, though. 'Cause it had done got hot. And we went through Gibraltar, and the next morning, of course, after we'd got in there a pretty good ways, we knew pretty well where we were. Maybe we were told—I'm sure they started telling us what our project was, you know. So we went on down there and we landed, began that invasion of North Africa there. Right west of Oran at (Les Andalouses?). About seven, eight miles out of Oran, on the west side. And we was in this limey ship. All the time, we had nothing hardly to eat. We ate a lot of tripe. I told you what that was. I bet he don't know.

PIEHLER: I've seen tripe.... It doesn't look very good in the supermarket.

MORTON: No, it's not very good. It's intestines of a dang cow, of the stomach of a cow. You know, tripe. And so we pulled up there in the harbor, about seven, eight miles. We could see it. We could see the fortifications on the mountain. There's a great big peak right there at Oran, and it was fortified at the top, you know. Heavily fortified. We pulled up there like fools, within range of those guns. Why in the hell they didn't stay back, I don't know. The high range of them—they couldn't hit us in small boats, you know, but they could knock the "H" out of us in the big boats, and they did. They'd hit those big boats, and the big plates of steel would just fly off of them. You could see inside, bedrooms and things, inside these ships where these big pieces of plating were being blown off. They hit our ship several times.... I remember I got over on the other side, away from the battering. Finally, it came time for us to go ashore and before we got to go to shore, they was shelling us, and these damn fools were lowering pots, tea kettles full of tea, on ropes down to the LCAs in the water for these British soldiers to drink. They had to have their tea. Under fire, now, they had to have their tea. I had a lot of respect for the English, and I still like them, but they are different from us. (Laughter) So, we get in these LCAs. LCAs. Landing Craft Assault. Made in the United States, had two V-8 Ford motors in it. And was a good landing craft. But these British, like everything else they did, they wanted to take care of them, and use them for the next war, and when we got close to shore, they put us off in water, about like that.

PIEHLER: Almost up to your ... chest.

MORTON: Yeah, couldn't hardly walk, had to hold rifles up like that.

PIEHLER: Up over your head. You had to [carry] your rifle.

MORTON: Yeah. Holding rifles over our head. Packs getting wet, and you couldn't move. Fortunately, there wasn't any small arms fire. If there was, they'd have got us all. 'Cause we couldn't move, you know, fast. We finally got ... on dry land, and got rid of some of that stuff. Right beside us, where we landed, this was a resort area where people had boats and everything. They wasn't expecting company from that direction, you know. Incidentally, before we got on shore, we had a naval ... battle. There was a ship hid by—it was a little island out there in the harbor of Oran. A pretty good size little island, big enough ... where a ship could hide behind. This son of a gun came out, and started—and these British, naval-wise, they run from nobody. If you want to pick a fight, don't pick one with the British Navy. Anyhow, he laid into this ship.... We stood there and watched the whole thing. Bring him right on in the water. 200-some-odd men drown. Bring him right on in the water.

But anyhow, I'm gonna ask you a question now. We landed, and we was on land, and the naval battle was over, and all that. We were beginning to fight, do a little shooting around, assault. One man with a 37 millimeter rifle there, which was on a trailer—a 37 millimeter, which is about that big around. And an armored car came down the road, about—oh, I'd say less than a mile away. He took a shot at it, and got it, and there was another one came behind him. He took a shot at it and got it, too! Two shots, and two armored cars. Now, here's my question. Now who were we fighting there? Now, he's a—if you know don't tell her, I want to see if she knows first. I expect he does know.

HAMMOND: ... The French?

MORTON: Yeah, you're right. We weren't fighting the Germans. We were fighting the Vichy French. And those son of a guns were putting up a pretty good fight. They fought for three days before they capitulated. And then they capitulated and came over to our side. Yeah, we were fighting the French, not the Germans. A lot of people don't know that, do they? You knew that, didn't you?

PIEHLER: I know that, but you're right. A lot of people don't know that.

MORTON: Didn't know that. We was fighting the French.

PIEHLER: What ... was it like to be fighting the French?

MORTON: I didn't like it. Hell! (Laughs) If somebody's got your name on a bullet, you don't know where it came from, and you ... wasn't out there talking during it. On the battlefield, I have talked to the German soldiers a lot. I've done that. And they'd tell you right quick, they didn't want any part of that thing. Yeah, it's pitiful, but anyhow. I've talked to German soldiers on the battlefield, and then I've talked to them off the battlefield, too. One time, right there in Oran, we was getting ready to leave Oran. We stayed down there ... until the spring, around that area. (Arzew?), Oran, right in that territory there, until spring came. Let's see now. I reckon it was in Oran harbor. We were getting ready to go up to Algiers. We were going on east, getting ready to go on east. That is where the battles were, was up around Carthage and Tunis. So this ship pulled up beside us, just pulled right up in the harbor there, and I think finally tied up. The only thing was separating us was rubber tires to keep from hitting each other. It was loaded down with some of the best-looking Germans prisoners you ever seen in your life.... I got to talking to them, and they were the best, big looking—they were that ... Afrika Korps, Rommel's men.... They were—you know, somehow or another, they had gotten captured, got cut off or captured, surrendered. And they said, "We're gonna whip you all's A-double-S," you know.

Any time you get these German soldiers together, if you get as many as four, you are "D" sure one of them can speak English, and most of the time two of them can. So, we didn't have any trouble talking to them at all. And oh man, they were telling us how pitiful soldiers we were, and all that kind of stuff. And I halfway believed them. 'Cause if they were all as good as he was, then he was telling the truth. But I told 'em, I said—you know, we called—we told 'em "You all are a lucky S.O.B.'s., 'cause you're ... getting out of this situation. You're going back to the States, where they'll treat you like babies and feed you good." We talked to them that way, and they flat knew that, too. They wasn't excited about being captured. I mean, they wasn't sorry about being captured. But anyhow, we left there, and went up to Algiers. Stayed there a little while. We learned everything about the Algiers and about the Kasbah. You ever heard of the Kasbah. You don't know what that is, do you? Alright. It's a big part of the city, and it's very notorious. Anything on earth that can be bought—black, white, indifferent, hot, or whatever, can be bought in the Kasbah. I don't know how it is now, but anyhow, it was that way then. And, uh, we left there and went up to Carthage. The main thing that I remember about Carthage was that I found a hand-dug well rocked up. Circumference-wise was as big around as this room here.

PIEHLER: Which was—you have a fairly large room here.

MORTON: Yeah! We're talking about a well [that] if anything, it may have been larger than this room in circumference around. And that was Carthage. Now, I'm going to ask you a question. Why do you remember Carthage? Hmm? I bet he knows. Now, don't tell me! (Laughter) There we were in Carthage, and I reckon ... Carthage is in Tunisia. If it's not, then it's right on the border. Carthage. Well, I'll tell you. A fellow got a bunch of elephants one time, together, and started up through there. He was known as a Carthaginian. What was his name? William the Conqueror?

PIEHLER: Hannibal, I think.

MORTON: Hannibal. Now you got it. His name was Hannibal. Mm hmm. It wasn't William. And we were right there in his hometown. Hannibal's hometown. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: You probably remember Hannibal's stories from Latin.

MORTON: Oh, yeah, yeah. (Laughs) Oh Lord, life. Life. Then we went up to Tunis, and Tunisia. I don't remember—I didn't do any sightseeing around, so I don't know a whole lot about it. I knew a lot about those other places, but this place was a hotbed, and I didn't care too much. Like I've been all around London. Do you know how many times I've been to London in my life? None. Why? Because they was dropping all those damn bombs in there. I didn't—I wasn't in the favor of receiving any of those. (Laughter) So I stayed out of London.

HAMMOND: Did you ever have leave in any of the cities in Africa, like in Oran, or Casablanca, or anything?

MORTON: What?

HAMMOND: Did you ever have leave?

MORTON: (Laughs) We had leave all the time.

HAMMOND: What did you do in the cities?

MORTON: Well, anything you wanted to.... When we hit that thing, we were footloose. There was very few controls put on us. When you go to war, and put out on the battlefield, they don't—if you do what they told you to do, anything else you want to do, you can do it. Ain't nobody saying much to you, you know.

HAMMOND: Do you remember any stories about being in any of those cities?

MORTON: ... I remember Christmas coming, and I had been dealing. I had been buying. An old man there had a hockshop. I had found that out right quick. I had more or less bought him out, and was reselling these watches. You ever heard of an (Omega?) watch?

PIEHLER: Oh, yes.

HAMMOND: Mm hmm.

MORTON: Well, see, (Omegas?) were not known in the United States down this way. They may have been known up East before the war, but not here. The only thing we knew was the standard American watches and some of the English brands. But (Omega?) was a famous—and I was buying those. I was paying on equivalent of three or four dollars a piece, and selling them back to those boys for thirty, thirty-five, forty dollars a piece. Pretty good profit, you know.

HAMMOND: Did you get your from the money you were making from the Army?

MORTON: We were getting it from the soldiers. I was selling it to the soldiers.

HAMMOND: How much money did you make in the Army?

MORTON: Oh, I don't know. I made a lot, yeah. (Laughter) I was sending it home.... They kidded me all the time, about me doing that. But I did it, and enjoyed it. But I ... didn't bring that up to tell you so much about the watch business, but ... about an old man and woman. I don't know how come they did it. But Christmas came along, and they invited us up for Christmas dinner. And I had a beautiful pocket watch, gold pocket watch. That thing was worth some money. Not big American money, but it was worth some money, you know.... Really had a value of thirty dollars, at least, on their market. Probably \$100, if I was selling it. They gave us this dinner, and it was good. Right there in Oran on the waterfront, in apartment houses, right on the waterfront there. Quayside. And I gave this watch to that man for a Christmas present, for having us for lunch. That man was much older ... in age. And, uh, we had an air raid alert, and they told all of us that they could get a hold of—to start putting out smoke pots around the port side there. Up and down the quayside. Trying to hide as much of the port as they could with smoke. And I was ... on down towards the water, on the roadway there. This boy came—I saw him coming down on a motorcycle.... As he got close to me, I recognized him. I hailed him over, and he was a Smith boy, from right where I lived in Nashville. Smith. He had carried the newspapers. The boy had carried the newspapers. Smith. That was Christmas. Right along there some time, I got burned and had to go to the hospital, and stayed about thirty days. Got burned pretty bad. Then I think my outfit had moved on, and I had to join them on up the road there somewhere.

HAMMOND: How did you get burned?

MORTON: With gasoline. And, let's see, they had moved up above (Arzew?) and took up some nice cottages. See, the army would just take over anything. So they took over all these cottages, and I had a private room in one of them. My room went out, and when the tide was in, the water would come up under my bedroom. It was that close to the water. We were out on some kind of alert or something there. I never will forget walking there. Way up in the night. It's awful to walk in the night. Miserable, you know. And here these airplanes started coming in. Where I was sleeping, I'll be John, they shot it up. If I had been in there sleeping, they'd

have got me, see. So, how lucky I was to be out there doing this dreadful walking? I remember that happening real well. And incidentally, ... the airplane that shot up right through there, they knocked it down. I went down there the next day and looked at it. It fell right in (Arzew?), right beyond (Arzew?). It killed the German pilot.

But anyhow, we finally got on out of there in ... North Africa. The war got over in the spring, you know. Ended up at Tunis. Horrible thing.... Germans started to flee out of there. They were [using] every means on earth they could, trying to get back.... Our outfit was shooting down these defenseless transport planes that they were in. Knocking them right in the water, you know. They didn't have any defense at all. It's a sin to shoot at something like that, but we did. I didn't, but the Americans did. War is hell.

But anyhow, we went on down to (Sousse?). They had something new come in there, LCIs. Carried 200 men. Flat bottomed boat, landing craft. And it had big, big diesel motors on the back of it, and we went down to (Sousse?). (Sousse?) is down around the end of Tunisia, there, close to—not too far from Libya. (Sousse?). So we all congregated there, and all got together to go across the sea there, to invade Sicily. So, here we go. Bang, bang. Oh it was rough water, and the roughest ride. Flat-bottom boats can't—they'll tear you all to pieces in a rough sea. Of course, they spank that water, see. And it was a horrible—a lot of boys got sick, you know, going in there. So, we go in there, and finally, in the morning, we come up on Sicily. And it wasn't a very dramatic—nothing outstanding about the invasion. I don't remember any bombardment. As a rule, we'd have a whole lot of help from the Navy. I don't remember that going into (Gila?), on the south side of Sicily. The only think I remember, I remember some of the boys were drowning coming off. They were putting them off in water, and ... with their packs and everything, they couldn't get to shore. That was pitiful. And I remember being one of the very first. We were always the first to get off to start that minesweeping, and business that we had to do.

Just as soon as I got off and got on, oh, twenty, thirty feet into the beach, going up the sand dunes, here comes a German ME-109, and he ... had it on about a half throttle. Just sitting there like he was taking a Sunday afternoon ride. He came right in, and I looked at the pilot just as plain as I'm looking at you. He pulled that stick, and shot one of the little airplanes down. He could have punched that button and knocked us to kingdom come, but he didn't do it. He had his mind on that little old spotter airplane that we had up there, and he knocked it down. Thank goodness, the pilot was in the little plane. He hit the silk and didn't lose his life. The little old German plane went on down the coast, like nothing had happened. But we had a—we got in there and got established a little bit. I hope I'm not boring you all.

PIEHLER: No, no! Please keep going!

MORTON: Well, the second day in there, we had got everything set up. The beach was clear of mines. I don't think we found any. (Laughs) I don't think they thought a damn fool would come in there anyhow, where we came in. It was a foolish place, in a lot of respects.... When the minesweeping was over, I was classified as a machine gun sergeant. I had my machine gun set up on the perimeter. A perimeter ... composed of cactus, in between cactus, and a back end of a vineyard, overlooking a railroad track that was raised up pretty high. The railroad track was.

It had a little opening in it, where a cart could go through it under the railroad. I told some of the boys there—things were relatively quiet. There wasn't any firing going on around us at all. I told some of them, said, "What in the world are our tanks doing coming back here?" In a few minutes, I said, "They are not our tanks." Boy, they went out and put on this little play like girls do in some kind of a dancing school. They put on a—they put on a little—whatever you call it. What do you call it when you put on some kind of little skit? Anyhow, they went into their little maneuvers.

PIEHLER: These are the German tanks.

MORTON: There! I believe they were. And they went into their little maneuvers, and pointed their guns our way, and they literally shot the hell out of us. I had men ... hugging that ground, had their helmets creased. Packs shot off their back. Black men came in there unscheduled, unloaded, got up and started running, which a damn fool would do, you know. Were not trained to be soldiers. They were trained to be truck drivers, I reckon. They started running, and of course those Germans were knocking them down just like they would blackbirds.

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

PIEHLER: ... This continues an interview with Charles Morton on April 16, 2000 in Franklin, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

HAMMOND: Kelly Hammond.

PIEHLER: You were just saying, ... German tanks were shelling your position, and some black truck drivers were dropping off stuff, and they ...

MORTON: No, you misunderstood me. These black people came in here, and I said they obviously weren't soldiers. They were probably truck drivers, and they came over the sand dunes, oh, ten or fifteen of them, and ...

PIEHLER: And they were delivering stuff to you?

MORTON: No, they wasn't delivering anything. They were just—they ... just came over the sand dunes. They had been unloaded, probably out of schedule, you know.

PIEHLER: Yeah. They just happened to be in the vicinity.

MORTON: They hadn't been assigned or anything. They just came over the sand dunes in our territory. They were attracting attention, and, of course, getting shot. So, that's how come the black folks in there. Of course, they were drawing a lot of fire, where our machine guns were.

PIEHLER: Were you firing back at the tanks?

MORTON: We were not firing back, uh, but one of the boys there under me, I reckon, went crazy and started—opened up. I hollered and hollered at him to shut that thing down, 'cause he

was firing in the position to where some of our troops were. That was awful easy to do. I finally got him stopped on that. Of course, a machine gun, that's like me spitting at a bulldog. That don't do much damage. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Yeah. No.

MORTON: Yeah, uh. Those tanks were shooting, and ... tearing us all to pieces in there. And there was—one of these fellows that later became a noted general wound up firing—at the time, I think he was a major—and he wound up firing one of our guns up there on the sand dunes. He would up firing that. Killed the ones off in front of it. And he wound up firing his artillery at the tanks. But that wasn't the answer to it at all. Stuff like that wasn't any account against a tank. You had to have some awful heavy guns.... An artillery piece and a gun, do you know the difference in them? Well, an artillery piece lobs shells over, and a rifle projects it flat. And we had some rifles, but not very many at that time. The Germans had plenty of them. They would shoot about—many miles, seven at least, on a flat trajectory. The name of them was the .88. You've heard of—he's heard of them. They were highly accurate. They'd tear something all to pieces when they hit it.

But we won the battle, and we didn't have anything to fight with, and we won the battle. How did we do it? We had a little old boy up there on that sand dune that had a map. And what good is a map going to do on a sand dune? He laid those cross bars across it, and he could tell you where you were sitting, if he could see you. That's how accurate. Of course, that map was made—she was perfect. Everything, the calls on it, were perfect, you know. That's one thing that we had. We had good information. And he was calling to the sea, and he was telling those cruisers, “so-and-so in such-and-such a block.” And he would give the coordinates, and in would come the shell, and there would go the turret. Absolutely blew a turret off a tank. It was unbelievable to see. We were sitting there, seeing it happen. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Could you hear the Germans trapped in the tank?

MORTON: Could we hear what?

PIEHLER: Were you close enough to hear the Germans in the tank?

MORTON: Talking?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MORTON: Oh no, we couldn't hear.

PIEHLER: This was at a distance.

MORTON: No, but even if we were real close by we couldn't hear them, because they're enclosed. Yeah. (Laughs) Oh, I can tell you a lot of stories about that day. This officer, he was a new officer to us. He told—uh—we had a new boy there in the outfit, named Robertson. He was from West Virginia. (Burrhead?), chewed tobacco. He was a typical West Virginia boy.

And you know, he had mountaineer stock in him. This officer said, “Rabbit,” says, “Crawl up there and get us some bazooka ammunition.” ‘Cause a bazooka will penetrate one of those things, if you can hit it. Of course, we was a little bit out of range. The tanks were about—the closest they were was—mm, I can’t see. They were closer than that school right [there]. They were closer than that. This building here.

PIEHLER: Yeah, which is in the distance, but ...

MORTON: Yeah, they was closer than that.

PIEHLER: Still, that’s not that far away for tanks.

MORTON: No, but they were closer to this other building here. They were about that distance.

PIEHLER: So, they were about several hundred feet away.

MORTON: Oh yeah, they were. They were 800 feet. At the very closest.

PIEHLER: 800 feet, approximately.

MORTON: Yeah, 800 feet.

PIEHLER: That’s pretty close for a tank.

MORTON: Oh, yeah, that’s pretty close. But remember now, they had this railroad track in front of them that was elevated. See, on this, uh, that’s the only reason they couldn’t get to us. They couldn’t get across this ...

PIEHLER: Elevated railroad.

MORTON: This elevated railroad track. They couldn’t get across it. So the Navy started firing at those tanks, and got every one of them, got them all. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: What about this guy with the bazooka?

MORTON: Oh well, yeah, this little old officer, he was young, and he came in there. Of course, he was over us, because he was an officer. He told Rabbit—he said ... he knew where the ammunition was.... He says, “Crawl up there and get me some bazooka ammunition.” Rabbit said, “If you want any God damn bazooka ammunition, you crawl up there and get it yourself.” Now what do you think about—he was a private, too, telling an officer that. What would you think about that? What would you think would be the consequences of—he had given him a direct order. What do you think about him? What do we think the consequences—if an officer gave you a direct order on the battlefield, the punishment is death. But now, what is the punishment under this, under this situation? Nothing. Nothing. If it’s life threatening, you can tell him to go to hell. Did you know that?

PIEHLER: I've heard that before.

MORTON: Yessiree, if it was life threatening, you'd tell them to go to hell or do it hisself.

PIEHLER: Did this young officer make it through the war?

MORTON: Yeah, I reckon he did. He didn't stay with us very long. We didn't ... shoot up our officers. I never did know of anybody shooting one of 'em. It was done though.

PIEHLER: You knew other units who would shoot up their [officers]?

MORTON: Oh, of course they did. Hell yeah, many of them got shot in the back.

PIEHLER: Why? What would happen?

MORTON: Cause they gave bad orders, and they were cowards, and ordered things they wouldn't do themselves, and stuff like that. Hell, yeah, they got shot.

PIEHLER: But they would be made to look like an accident, or it happened ...

MORTON: Why, hell, no. Nobody ever asked them a question about it. They didn't have to make it—there wasn't any answers to it. They didn't go out there and say, "Talk to every dead fellow on that scene and say, 'Why did you die?'" You know. They didn't get that information. And they moved on pretty fast, anyhow.... What you don't know—I'm sitting here talking to you like it was a game—but it is the nearest thing in the world that's—war is hell. And whatever general or mayor made that statement, that son of a gun knew what he was talking about. It's horrible. For men to kill men, and not only to kill men, to kill women and children, too. And you know what these great Americans did? They killed more women and children than Hitler ever killed in his life. How? By dropping those bombs. Why, I'd go in there, and I had enough sense to see. We'd read in the newspaper about what a great job our strategic bombing did, then you'd go in there and you'd see, "Hell, there's what they ought to be hitting, and here's what they hit." They hit ...

PIEHLER: You could tell it wasn't that accurate.

MORTON: Why, hell yeah, it wasn't accurate! They was hitting the—they were hitting where the people lived. I never will forget—just to give you an incidence, right out on the east side of Paris there, there's a great railroad terminal, where the trains come together coming out of the—coming out of the east into ... Paris. Did I say Berlin? Paris. And, why, I've never seen as many craters in my life [as] between those railroad tracks. I didn't see one—I'm sure some of them did, and they repaired them, but 90% of the craters were not where the railroad tracks were. Bombing was from the air, and was highly inaccurate, and they killed—and those pilots ... would joke about it. They'd say, "What did you hit?" And he'd say, "The corner drug store." You know, such phrases as that. Of course, I'm sure we did a lot of good—if you can call it good, killing people—toward the end of the war. The word "good" shouldn't be connected with that type of business.

PIEHLER: A lot of people call it “The Good War.” You’ve heard that phrase a lot.

MORTON: Well, I mean, it’s not well thought out, because war is not good. And you didn’t have the Lord on one side, and the devil on the other, you know.... Well, we ... got through—we was talking about Sicily, I reckon.

PIEHLER: Yes.

MORTON: That lasted forty-two days, I remember. How in the hell I remember all that stuff, and I can’t remember things that happened yesterday. Uh, but I can remember this. That’s peculiar, ain’t it? That you can do that. I can visualize it, too.

PIEHLER: So, you can still visualize that tank battle?

MORTON: Oh, I can visualize a lot of that stuff. I guarantee I could go back, and wouldn’t get lost in some of that territory. Right today. Oh, I say I wouldn’t get lost. It’s probably changed up, or grown up or whatever. Yeah, oh yeah, there were good times and there were bad times. (Laughs) We had a—there was no water to drink. The Germans had poisoned the wells. They gave us two canteens of water. They had to ship all the water in, and they gave us two canteens of water a day. They told us, said, “You can wash your teeth, you can wash your face. You can do whatever you want to with that water, but I advise you to keep it and drink it.” Two canteens, one on each hip. And it would get hotter than hell, and you’d still drink it. The weather was terrible. We were not given our summer uniforms. We hated the general that we were fighting under. And we were wearing winter clothes.... He had put out a directive to charge fifteen dollars to any man rolling up his sleeves on the battlefield. Can you imagine? You had to fight with your sleeves rolled down. That was the order. Fifteen dollars if they caught you rolling up your sleeves.

PIEHLER: Is this Patton?

MORTON: Yeah, that’s who it was. He was a hated son of a bitch. And, uh, he’s the man that slapped the private, you know, just a little bit after that. They almost kicked him out, then they promoted him back up. But anyhow ...

PIEHLER: What did you think of that slapping incident? What did men in your unit ...

MORTON: Well, it was just an act. It ... showed off a man. It showed off what kind of fellow he was.

PIEHLER: Did you think he was right to slap the ...

MORTON: You’re never right to slap one. An officer to slap a man, no. No you shouldn’t. I don’t know what the boy did, but whatever he did, he shouldn’t have slapped him. And more so, he was in the hospital. But I was telling you how horrible things were there, about the water and everything.

PIEHLER: And about having to roll your sleeves down. ‘Cause I’ve been told Patton also expected for his tankers to wear ties.

MORTON: Oh yeah. He pulled out directives like that. And uh, halfway through it—the weather was hot. Boy, she gets hot in Sicily in the summertime, and I don’t mean maybe. Have you ever been to Sicily?

HAMMOND: No, but I’ve been to south Italy.

MORTON: Yeah, but Sicily, you get over to where the other side, where Aetna is, it is pretty. It is beautiful. It’d make Miami look shabby. That’s where the multi-millionaires go to play, out of central Europe, you know. But anyhow, uh, I was kind of painting a condition of the situation, out on the battlefield, fifteen days in, at least fifteen days in. What do you think we had for—I’ve already told you, I think. What do you think we had for lunch? If they could get us food, if the Americans could get food to us, we had food. Otherwise, we had to live on tin cans, you know.

PIEHLER: The C-Rations?

MORTON: Yeah. But if they could get it to us, uh, we ate.

PIEHLER: When you were on the line in Sicily, ... in a given week, [or] the fourteen days, many hot meals did you get?

MORTON: Oh, I didn’t count ‘em. I couldn’t answer it that way, but I can answer it this way. Damn few times did I ever go hungry. I can’t tell you how many times. But I’ll say this. I never did really go hungry, but I did one time get cut off, down there in Africa somewhere, and we didn’t have anything but chili con carne. If you wanted breakfast, you had chili con carne. If you wanted lunch, you had chili con carne. Then for suppertime, they had something different. They had carne con chili. (Laughter) But anyhow, so we were in here fifteen, twenty days. It lasted forty-two days, I reckon. The whole ... Sicilian campaign lasted about forty-two days. About halfway in between there, in this hot sunshine, we had ice cream for lunch. That is absolutely unbelievable that they got ice cream to us, but that’s a true statement.

But anyhow, that thing got over with, and we got back on our little boats, and went back to our home base in Africa. Went back to Algiers. Stayed there—I don’t think we stayed there, oh, about ten days. Got back on these ships, and took out for the big invasion of Italy. Went into—right in Salerno bay, right south of Salerno, at (Paestum?), where two Greek temples stood. Have you ever been down there? Right south of Naples. Right south of Salerno, we went into (Paestum?). And we were told on the way in there, and we had plenty of ships this time, and Americans, and—everything was American. God bless ‘em. We had the best. And, uh, we had the best of everything. On the way in there, they told us that the Italians had capitulated. They had given up. I thought, “Gosh, we’re gonna have an easy invasion this time.” And the Germans put those Italians between the sea and the German army, and made them fight us, and it was hell. It was a bloody battle, yeah. I never will forget. It was horrible, watching people get

killed. I got caught with a boy right next to me there, named Charlie Paine. And all these fields were in front of us, inland. They were terraced. You know what a terraced field is? It's got a ridge, you know, that high. We was laying on the sea side of the terrace, and uh, my cigarettes—I smoked in those days, and my cigarettes had got wet, and Charlie was giving me cigarettes, and I was smoking them this way, you know, like bringing 'em up, you know. You couldn't raise your hand or anything.... Liable to get hit. So I was smoking like that. This is kind of crude, but you're grown. Aren't you?

HAMMOND: Mm hmm.

MORTON: I had to go to the bathroom. And you know, you can't tell those Germans, "Excuse me, I've got to go." That's just—that's a no-no. So, what did I do? I went right where I was, without moving an inch. That's a hell of a thing, isn't it? ... That happened. I'll never forget it. I was laying there, and one of my best friends came off, came on shore, and I was sitting there just like this, you know, but I could see the beach. I was laying there.

PIEHLER: You were laying flat.

MORTON: Oh, laying flat, looking right straight at the beach. I wasn't fixing to turn over. My shoulder would make—you know, get hit. And here comes a friend of mine on the beach, driving a damn bulldozer. And all at once, there he goes. They splattered him.

PIEHLER: Of all those who went up ... with the ship.

MORTON: Oh, it was the whole thing. Yeah. An .88 hit him. Years later, a boy came through town here, and came in my place of business. I had automobile dealerships around, and [he] came in my place of business, and—I got out early in the morning always. I'd open up before anybody else did. And we had a fellow here in town that was the town drunk. He was looked down on by everybody. He came to me early in the morning before anybody else had opened up, and said, "Charlie, there's a man in town wants to buy a car," said "He's sitting right up at the bank." He says, "What will you give me if I bring him down here and you sell him a car?" I said, "I'll pay you. I'll give you whatever you—" I think he may have asked me for twenty-five dollars. I said, "Yeah I'll give you twenty-five dollars." And he brought the fellow down there, and uh, he picked out the car he wanted, and said, "Well, now, I'll pay you for it when the bank opens." And he got to talking to me. I said, "Where are you from?" He said, "I'm from (Only?)." I said, "Well, did you ever know such-and-such a fellow?" I forgot his name now. He said, "Yeah. That was my uncle." I said, "Well, I saw him get killed." He says, "You did?" I said, "I sure did." He says, "Well, my family always wanted to know what happened to him." I said, "Well, I saw it when it happened." He just couldn't believe that I saw his—and incidentally the boy that got killed, we called him (Only?). (Only?) from (Only?), Tennessee. (Only Green?). And the boy bought a car and went on home. Paid me the full price. Got the money out of the bank, had the money. Been saving it up, been in the Army, you know. Come back here. That happened quite a bit. Well, I got to tell his kinfolks, got the word back to them, how their cousin, uncle, and brother got killed. That was in Italy. There are a lot of stories I could tell you along the side.

PIEHLER: Well, what was your mission in Italy, in Salerno? What was your ...

MORTON: Our mission was—the only thing in the world we had to do was get to the little infantry boys, without getting their feet blown up. Getting those mines off the beaches, putting those white—are you familiar with the tape they cut off from cloth when they're making—the white tape that comes out of the textile factories? Well, we had that. We would put these white tape lines down. That meant that we had cleared that, so they could go on through the minefield.

PIEHLER: How long did it take you to do that?

MORTON: Just as fast as you could go.

PIEHLER: And how many mines did you detect on the beach in Salerno?

MORTON: Oh, maybe you wouldn't run across very many at all. And then you'd miss one or two. Sometimes, yeah, I remember—I don't know whether it was there. No, I think it was in France, maybe, where we missed one. Somebody got blown. We never got blown up. Yeah, it can happen, but you get too much sand over it, and you wouldn't pick it up, you know.

PIEHLER: You mentioned—in Sicily, you were in charge of a machine gun.

MORTON: Yeah, I was always in charge of a machine gun. After ... we did our work.

PIEHLER: After you did the mine clearing.

MORTON: That was the first thing. That was before the infantry came in. After that, we set up perimeter defense. That entailed the machine gun.

PIEHLER: So, you would be the perimeter defense, and then the infantry would move past you.

MORTON: Yeah, they'd go through us, yeah.

PIEHLER: When you're landing on the—you're one of the first people on the beach.

MORTON: We were the first. The only time we were not the first was ... in France. We were the first on the beach then, but they had sent some in by air. Parachutes, you know. That's the only time we were not the first in.

PIEHLER: So you're the first people the Germans were shooting at.

MORTON: There were pluses on that, when you would think of minuses so much. We were in there, and they didn't know it. We weren't in there raising hell or shooting, you know, or anything like that.

PIEHLER: So you were not trying to shoot.

MORTON: No. (Laughs) We were in there to do a job, and we wasn't making any noise. I'll tell you some stories about that later on down the road. Uh, we were talking about that Italian thing there. Invariably, invariably, I got to talk—I'd run into very prominent people. Right there—that day, probably, the second—no, not that day. It'd be the second day. The second day, I got to talk to [General] Mark Clark. We were coming up the road, and there was the damndest battle going on you'd ever heard of in your life, on the other side of the hill, where these Germans were coming up, and they got cut off down in the bottom part. See, they cut all these Germans off, and they were trying to break through our lines to get back to their lines. And it was a hell of a battle raging. And Mark Clark had been up there on that hill, seeing what was going on. He came walking down there, and he got to talking. I talked to him, and we talked. He'd tell us—that's one thing a general would do. They'll tell you everything about what was going on. You know, you get some little old major or something like that, and they kinda hush up. But Mark Clark was very, very explanatory.... Explaining things. And I thought a lot of him. He was a good fellow. Big, tall, handsome man. Mark Clark. So, we went on to the battle. Went on by, went on up. We worked our way on up there, taking up mines around Mount ...

HAMMOND: Vesuvius?

MORTON: Say the word.

PIEHLER: Mount Vesuvius?

MORTON: Mount Vesuvius, taking up mines. These kids. The reason we fell in there—it wasn't a tactical reason at all. We was trying to help the Italians out. These kids ... and cows and things were getting blown up by all these mines on the side of Mount Vesuvius. The Germans had mined the hell out of that place, ... right above Pompeii there. You know where that is. And, uh, we would clean up the side of that—cut down on all that carnage going on on that. It was horrible. And then from there, we went on up to Naples.

HAMMOND: How did you defuse the mines?

MORTON: How did I? Take the thing out of the top of them. It depends on what kind of mine it was. Uh, those big mines like that, you'd just unscrew the top of it.

PIEHLER: ... Could it blow up on you as you were unscrewing it?

MORTON: No, uh-uh. It took about 300 pounds to blow those up.

PIEHLER: So, those you really have to put weight on.

MORTON: Yeah, a truck or something like that. But these [mines] that these kids were fooling with, were these little old mines that stick up out of the ground. Shoe mines, they called them. They jump up about like that, and shoot out about 300, 400, 500, maybe, ball bearings. Cut somebody all to pieces.

PIEHLER: How would you diffuse those?

MORTON: You had to take the fuse out of 'em. You had to take the fuse out of them.

PIEHLER: Now, could those go off on you? The smaller ...

MORTON: Yeah. You had to be careful, fooling with 'em. And uh-

HAMMOND: Were you there when Mount Vesuvius erupted?

MORTON: Yes, I was. I got to see the eruption. I reckon, that's probably the last time. Is that the last time, the big eruption?

HAMMOND: Mm hmm.

MORTON: Yeah. As I was leaving—I forgot what day it was. It was in December, I reckon.

HAMMOND: '43. '42 or '43.

MORTON: Oh man, she was cutting up, and I mean blowing.

PIEHLER: Probably February of '44.

MORTON: That wasn't '44.

HAMMOND: I think it was '43. Yeah.

MORTON: '43. Mm hmm.

HAMMOND: So, you went up to Naples?

MORTON: Went up to Naples, and Naples was out of water. Didn't have any water. And you take a big city out of water, ... that's hell, you know. Think of a city out of water. So, a friend of mine came into town, that I grew up with, and I don't reckon I'd ever been in business with him. I may have. But anyhow, his name was John Hahn. He was half Italian, half German. Hahn, H-A-H-N. His daddy was German, his mother was Italian. And he could speak Italian. And of course, he had all—he was a handsome-looking fellow. And on top of that, he was in charge of a water outfit, and they were bringing water into Naples. Now you know how popular he was! (Laughter) Bringing water into town in these big Army trucks, tank trucks. Yeah. And I saw him coming. It was something to ... run into people that you knew, which I did. We had quite a bit of conversation. But out of there, we left. We sailed out of Naples. Napoli. Isn't that a beautiful harbor?

HAMMOND: Mm hmm. It is.

MORTON: It's the most beautiful—was known as the most beautiful harbor in the world. We

sailed out of there to the Mediterranean, and the open Atlantic, back to Glasgow.

HAMMOND: When you were in Italy, did you have any contact with Italians? Did you talk to them?

MORTON: When I was anywhere, I had contact with all the natives, yeah. I got to know them all. I had one ol' girlfriend, and she was good-looking, and Italian, too. And she wrote me a letter. I don't know what I must have told her. But anyhow, she wrote me a letter. Now, you won't believe this, and I don't believe it myself, except it happened. She wrote me a letter. "Charles Morton, Tennessee, USA." And I got the letter.

HAMMOND: (Laughs) Wow!

MORTON: Can you believe that? How in the world that letter got to me! It got to my mother's house.

HAMMOND: Did the Italians like the American soldiers?

MORTON: Oh yeah. Lord, yeah. They all wanted to come to America. You tell one they could come to America. That's all they—that's all in the world they lived for, the Italians. To go to America. They done heard that was the land of milk and honey, you know. And, uh, to tell you the truth, around Naples, that was the garden of the world. I've never seen as many nut trees and stuff in that area. Fruit trees. Oh, lush territory. And to walk past them by pretty fast. As soon as we passed on out, the war to them was over forever. They were free. Free folks.

So we left out of there and went back to—went back out to that open Atlantic, in that God infested, uh, submarine territory. But we made it, and we got into the Irish Sea, and I've never seen such rough sea in my life. All the ships have got this pendulum up there that shows the list, and that thing was going over in the danger zone, just repeatedly, falling over there in the danger zone. It could have capsized, and I knew it. But we finally made it into Glasgow. And in Glasgow, we got on a train, and—the steam train, the Royal Scot—and I never rode a train as fast in my life, under steam, as that thing did coming. It was on the way into London from Glasgow, and they ditched us up there at Birmingham, I reckon. We took off over toward Bristol. Went on down to Land's End. Went on down to—went on down to Land's End to a little town called Pentewan, down below ... St. Austell. The train goes through St. Austell. Down below St. Austell. We got off the train in St. Austell, then went on down to Pentewan. And stayed there. That was before Christmas. And we stayed there ... for a few days, before we made the invasion. Well, maybe three weeks. We stayed there about three weeks, before we made the invasion. About the last two weeks that we stayed on English soil was in Torquay. We were in a compound. They put us in a compound, and uh—incidentally, we got a air raid on it. They knew we were in there, and they tried to bomb us. But we stayed in those big ditches they had.

But anyhow, we stayed in this compound with absolutely no outside contact. These trucks that brought us our food and mail, or whatever we had from the outside, had to drive up to that gate, get out, and march back. Our troops would go to that truck, pick it up, and bring it on inside....

Absolutely no contact with [anyone]. And I'm sure they searched it, to where no written word or anything like that ... could have happened. But we were in there, and we were told and schooled on this invasion that we were getting ready to make, of Normandy, of France. And each day we were told a little bit more, and each day we were shown pictures. Our airplanes were going over there and flying at ... sea level. We knew what it looked like, as well as the day we got there. We already had pictured it that well. Where we were going, what it looked like, and the whole thing.

HAMMOND: Did you have any idea of when the invasion was coming?

MORTON: Yeah, we—yeah, we knew. There wasn't anything that they didn't tell us that they knew. But we were absolutely sworn—not only sworn to secrecy, we were put in a position to where it couldn't leak out. And, uh, I'm gonna tell you another tale about that, too. Absolutely all of the censorship that could be imposed on us was imposed, and we were given rice maps about like that. A little less than a yard squared. Rice paper maps that had on them every location, along the coast, of FFIs [French Forces of the Interior], where ... if we got cut off in any way, we could reach these people that were ...

PIEHLER: The free French.

HAMMOND: The resisters.

MORTON: Yeah, FFIs. Free French, yeah. Not just free French, but those that were collaborators and wanted to fight with us. We were told, if anybody gets killed, to take that map off of him. And "If you get captured, eat that map." Said, "You can digest it." And, uh, so we were indoctrinated, or whatever you want—schooled, to this invasion, you know. We were told everything in the world we could, so ...

PIEHLER: So, you knew which beach you were landing on?

MORTON: Oh, Lord, yeah. We knew what kind of grass was growing on it. There wasn't anything we didn't know about it. We were told that well. And the old General finally got up on the last day of the sermons, schooling, and said, "Well, boys," says, "We're going to France, and we're going to go on a high tide, whatever day the weather will permit on the high tide." We knew it was the 4th, 5th, or 6th. And the very latest, the 7th or 8th. But the 7th or 8th, storms, it looked like, could develop, and they did. But anyhow, he said, "We're going," and said, "We're not going to Dunkirk." Said, "We're going to the (Cotentin?) Peninsula. He said, "This is going to be a success." Says, "We're gonna have ships to take you in, and plenty of armor to back you up." Said, "In any case this operation is not successful, and your country still stands," says, "Maybe someday they will put a monument on this beach, and say with the inscription, 'This is where they landed and this is where they died.' There'll be ships to carry you in, but no ships to take you out." That meant that when you hit that land, you were on your own.

So we marched down to quayside in Torquay about noon. And the whole town came out to holler at us, greet us, throw oranges. There wasn't an orange in Great Britain! Where they got [them], I don't know, but they threw oranges. Hell, they knew where we were going. Of course,

there's the big ships sitting right out there with all these landing craft hanging on the side of it. Any damn fool knew what that was. But anyhow, we went out there and got on it, and stayed on it till dark. Then at dark, we got under steam and got underway, and went east toward Calais. That's where the Germans knew we was going. They knew we were coming in Calais, so we faked that run. At midnight, we changed course and went straight toward the (Cotentin?) peninsula. And pulled up there to anchor about three o'clock in the morning. Everybody was awakened, and gotten up at three. Oh, they were having the damnedest air raid you ever heard of in your life. I mean, it just—the whole beach for miles was lit up with flares, and explosions of bombs and big shells. Incidentally, those big shells that come off of those 16-inch battleships, the three—you can see them as they go through the air. They light up, and you can see them. Of course, they arch, and you can follow them right onto the ground. And they broke radio silence. Hell, the Germans knew we were there, then. It wasn't any ... surprise left, then. We got torn, what we thought, all to pieces, but we really hadn't.

But anyhow, an admiral or general, or whoever it was, came on and broke radio silence, and said, "Men, breakfast is being served." And said, "The menu is steak." He says, "Any man that lives or dies on that beach in the morning will have a steak in his belly." That's the way they talked. They wasn't very polite. But they served steak, I'll guarantee you that, for breakfast. And I had one, of course. And so, about daylight, about time when you could see, they lowered us in these LCVPs, and we headed for the beach. First ones in, first ones in. And as I came in, we were running the LCVPs. They were pretty stout—strong motors, I mean. Of course, they were pushing as hard as they would go, and as we were going in facing the beach, off to our right, there was a lot of small arms fire. It looked like it was raining. And I told the coxswain, I said, "Go left! Go left! Get out of that!" And he did. There wasn't a damn fool that would go through it, you know. It would hit you. And so we did. We made it into the beach, and got under the protection of—when you get on the beach, of course, there's the sand dunes that protect you. You'd get pretty good protection then. And there's a great big pillbox. Oh, it was a hundred feet in diameter, at least. And, of course, eight or ten feet thickness. A big bomb would just bounce off that. (Laughs) These Germans inside there were eating, cooking breakfast, and they ran. Left their breakfast cooking in that big pillbox. And, of course, we were supposed to be landing. We had the First Infantry Division coming in right behind us. We had to prepare for them to come on as fast as we could. They was supposed to be the most elite of our Army infantry divisions. But they were not the old First. They had been rejuvenated, re—what do you call it?

PIEHLER: Replacements.

MORTON: Right! Replacements is the word I was trying to say. The replacements had made a new outfit out of them.

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

PIEHLER: Please continue.

MORTON: Well, so the First Infantry Division was coming in, the first one behind us, which was a joy to us, because we knew they would move on in real fast and clear up that small arms

fire. Of course, that artillery was going to last. And, uh, there was a tremendous amount of unloading of people, soldiers, within a very short time. You can't imagine—if I would say there were 3,000 ships that I could look out there and see—there may have been 4,000. You could virtually walk from one to the other, it was so many out there. Every type. I saw some ships out there, some monitors, or something—they called something close to that—[which] the English owned. They had two big guns, and they were 24-inch guns, they tell me. They just had two, and they were the funniest looking ships you've ever seen. And they had brought those across the channel to fire inland. And of course, we had battleships running up and down there like—you know, well, and I noticed—I counted, at one time, five British battleships. I used to could name every one of them. It was unbelievable, the amount of armament we had there, and still at Omaha, we were having a losing battle. Just eleven miles right across from us, we were losing.

Where we landed, our reconnaissance—we knew what we was doing. We were landing right in the roughest part of the German line in that area, but those son of a guns had gone on maneuver! See, that's the thing we didn't know. We didn't know they had pulled out and left that beach area, and gone on up to Omaha. See we were coming in on Utah. So, all these crack troops and all this stuff that we had on our beach, we had it pretty soft there, compared to what they did on Omaha. And they had a lot of slaughtering. There was a cliff up there too. They had to climb up a cliff to gain entrance. Of course, ours was flat. Each man that came across that beach in ... that morning, in our outfit, carried two sacks besides his regular equipment, ten pounds each. Just think of that now. We had to carry our full gear, plus twenty pounds. Two satchels, each containing ten pounds of (tetrato?). The minute we hit that beach, of course, we discarded that stuff. We didn't care whether we ever saw our pack again or not. Just the minute we got on that dry, high water, above high tide, we discarded that stuff. And then ... the next morning, we had to gather up that (tetrato?) and blow that sea wall. I think we put 300 pounds—thirty sacks—dug down under the sea wall, and put 300 pounds under the sea wall. The purpose to blowing that was to make the roadway, or nothing came across.... The only things that came across had to stay on the beach. You couldn't get off the beach. The next morning was when they blew the—I don't think anything. No, I don't think so.

And anyhow, we blew that the next morning, and of course, had to holler "Fire in the hole" for a long ways around. They had to repeat it on down, to get people to go down. 'Cause this was going to be a tremendous explosion.... One of the reasons we put so much stuff in there was to try to blow it into dust, small pieces, ... where as it was coming down, it wouldn't kill anybody, you know. And uh, I remember that ground shook like that. I was laying flat a couple hundred yards, at least, away from it, laying flat on the beach, when we fired it. But then that's where the major entrance to the war effort was, right there, where we blew that. They came—they floated a steel pier in from England, and mounted it there, to were they could—of course, we had a storm, and that disrupted that thing. But anyhow, that was the main entrance to the Europe invasion. That was.

PIEHLER: Did you lose anyone in your unit?

MORTON: Oh, Lord, yes. Yeah.

PIEHLER: How many people did you lose on D-Day?

MORTON: I really don't know. I don't know how many we did lose there. When I looked out, we were having trouble. And I don't know why. I reckon I went—you know, you go hyper on the battlefield. You're not normal. I mean, you're just not normal on the battlefield. You're not normal if you get up walking where somebody's shooting at you—you know that's not normal—where there's fire going on. I did some of that. And I hustled up these boys that was hiding behind that jetty wall, making them get on out. Some of those infantry boys ... wouldn't go across the wall there. And as you would look out, dead men laying everywhere. Fields in front of you, you see them everywhere. The next morning—you know how many you'd see the next morning? None. They were picked up during the night, and I was told to—yeah, that first night in, they told me to go get a DUKW, and go out to those ships at sea and collect blankets. Get each one of them to give us all the blankets they could give us, and I went from ship to ship, collecting blankets, and carrying them inland to a hospital. I know we went through German lines, because we didn't know where they were, and trying to find that hospital in the black of the night—but we got there, and got back out, thank goodness. There's so many things, I can't think of all of them. But I remember doing that very much.

I also remember this. This is unbelievable. About the third or fourth day in, I was sitting down—we had sandbagged in the machine gun, and I was sitting down. We had had an air raid. Some Germans had come through, five of them, fighters, and they had knocked all five of them down. I've never seen as much—of course, we had thousands of guns in that area, and every one of them was shooting at the airplanes as they came over, and the reason they wasn't shooting—the reason the airplane wasn't—we were protected by balloon barrage. See, they had those balloon barrages, and those airplanes couldn't fly through them, 'cause they'd hit those cables, see. So they avoided where we were. You could stand there and look at them. You knew damn well they wasn't going to come close to us, but they'd stay off to the left. And after the air raid, a short time after the air raid, I saw this general come walking up the beach, walking right straight toward my machine gun emplacement there. I saw a colonel walking toward him, and I knew this colonel wanted to cut him off and talk to him. But the general didn't pay any attention to him. He kept walking right straight toward the machine gun pit. And he came on up there. I started to stand up, and he says—he told me to sit down. You don't salute on ... the battlefield.

PIEHLER: He told you not to salute?

MORTON: Yeah! Well, I started—hell it was a general. Hell, I didn't know what to do. I wasn't talking to one every day. He had three stars on. And I saw this colonel stop, oh, twenty, thirty feet out there, and stand there. This general came on up there and sat down, and started asking me questions. Oh, he'd ask me everything you'd think of, and uh, then I asked him some. I asked him how they were doing on Omaha. And he told me. He said, "It's been hell up there." Said, "They have got it in a stabilized situation now, but it's been awful rough." And I forgot what all he told me, or what all. Yeah, I'll tell you. He did ask me how many airplanes we shot down, and I told him, and told him they got all five of them. I wish I could remember everything he did ask me, but I don't know. Anyhow, at the end of the conversation—he stayed up there quite a while—he says, "Go down and tell that beach master to send me a DUKW up here, and radio my PT boat to come up in close, ... to meet the DUKW." So I went down and told the beach master, "I got a order for you to tell that PT boat, wherever it is, to come in close and to

give me a DUKW, and send it up there to that machine gun up on the right of the beach.” Man, that got done right fast. That DUKW was up there before you would turn around. And that general got in. He told me, he said, “I’m going back to England.” He was going to hit that open water in that PT boat. Figured they could outrun any—the Germans had some boats that could take care of him, but he was going to risk it. If I had been a general, I’d never have done it. Hell, I’d have flown back in there, but he took to the water in a PT boat. General [Omar] Bradley. He finally got to be the head of all the ground troops there.

PIEHLER: Sounds like you were very impressed with him.

MORTON: Oh, you could tell he was a man with a heart. You could tell that just by talking to him. Hell, he wasn’t up there sacrificing a bunch of men. And then another time—let’s see. We went on—stayed there on the beach a long time, at the hospital. [Until it] just had cleared out completely. Stayed there until we made that run to Paris, down—we stayed there through the Battle of St. Lo.

PIEHLER: ... Were you on the beach when the Battle of St. Lo took [place]?

MORTON: Oh, yeah, yeah. (Laughs) I’ll never—oh, let’s see. The Battle of St. Lo. It wasn’t [until] after the Battle of St. Lo they had the breakthrough, you know. And they ran on—ran past Paris, went on several miles past Paris, until they ran out of fuel. If they’d had fuel, they could have gone to the German border. But that’s the way it was. We went on up through there, and went into Germany, went into Germany, and finally went on into Germany. Went in there at Aachen. Then went up in there a little farther than Aachen, and got orders ... to go to Japan. There it was. I done made all those invasions, and they were gonna plan one for Japan. We knew what it was. And they were going to give us a month’s stay in the United States. Leave. Then we had to go to Le Havre. So we trucked off to Le Havre and run into snow. Now, we done got out of the snow belt, and got back up to Le Havre, and there was snow. They put us up in old tents up there, and freeze to death, and got to Le Havre, and they changed our orders again! They changed our orders not to come to the States, and sent us back to Rheims, France, in the hills above the little red schoolhouse. Do you know what the little red schoolhouse was? That was SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force] Headquarters. That was Eisenhower’s headquarters. I passed by it everyday. We didn’t pay any more attention to it, than—it was a schoolhouse over there. Of course, they had this British guard, and they had the American guard. It was a fancy to do—guarded deal. But being a soldier, they didn’t pay any attention to us.

And ... right up from it, they had a wagon up there, a truck, where you could go up there and take a shower bath. Oh, we had everything on wheels toward the end of the war. You could do anything. I remember running up on a bakery on wheels, on a truck. I told that man to give me a loaf of that hot bread. They wasn’t supposed to give us hot bread. Supposed to make it be a day old, because the Army claimed it wasn’t good for digestion. But there the man was, and they were cooking it, and of course, I wanted to get it and put—we had butter. Always had butter. Put that butter in that hot bread, you know. But anyhow, we had lots of luxuries. Rheims, France.

And another thing I remember: we were up in those hills. I don't know whether we were supposed to have been on guard, or why we were up there, but wild pigs everywhere in those hills, and at night they would run for food. Have you heard about the wild pigs above Rheims? It's unbelievable. But anyhow, we stayed there at Rheims for quite a while. Finally started going on back up through Germany. Yeah. Rheims. Rheims. Yeah. I know why we were in Rheims. We were waiting to make that—Rhine crossing. We were going to make an—that's what they were going to pull on us, an amphibious crossing of the Rhine River. And I knew that would be deadly. Here we are, done made all these invasions, and they were gonna pull this deadly thing on us. Surely that would get me and I knew it would be that bad. Those Germans weren't about to give up that Rhine River too easy. Of course, if they saw anybody building bridges, 'cause—they threw [them] up and died all the time. And some lucky soldier, some way or another, ran that Remagen ... Bridge, and established a bridgehead, and that eliminated our necessity of putting a ... pontoon bridge on that Rhine. I was the happiest man in the world when I read—I reckon the next morning—that they ran the bridge. Took a lot of fortitude, took a lot of good ability to do what they did, but they got it....

That ... almost was the end of our war. Well, as far as we were concerned. I don't reckon I ever heard another shot fired. May have heard a bomb dropped or something, but never—don't think I ever heard another shot. I remember, yeah, later than that, we did have—Salzburg, something like that, an airplane came across and dropped one bomb, and killed one of our—killed our supply sergeant. He was standing in the doorway, and it got him, right at the end. We went on up to two or three little towns there in Germany, cities. And finally wound up at (Worbis?). Right out of Nordhausen. Yeah, (Worbis?), not far from the Elbe River. Not too far.

PIEHLER: ... You didn't see the Nordhausen concentration camp, did you?

MORTON: I wouldn't—that's where I was eating my meals. At Nordhausen. But I would not go in it. I also went to that one in Weimar, too, Buchenwald.... Hell no, I didn't go in either one of them. They—you know, I'll tell you what they did in Nordhausen. I had to go up there every night. I don't know whether I went up there in the mornings or not. I don't remember going in the mornings. But I'd go at night. They'd feed you pretty good. And the old colonel up there made the whole population of Nordhausen come out there and go through that thing. Did you know that? You knew that! Hell, I didn't want to go through it. I stood there—there's an old building right there, and I've been in it, been up on the top floor, there in Weimar. You know, the Weimar Republic, I reckon this may have been their main office building. But right straight down from it was part of that Buchenwald. And, uh, hell yeah, the Germans knew all about it right there in town. But whether they knew it or not there in Nordhausen, that Army officer made the whole town go through it, to see what was going on. It was hell. I had friends, later to become friends, that had been there during that period, and they'd gotten out. Some living right here in Franklin. This man living here in Franklin was in ... the port city there in north Germany, the big port city.

PIEHLER: Hamburg?

MORTON: Not Hamburg, but another port city right there. Uh, not Hamburg. Oh, hell. I can't think of the name.

PIEHLER: Yeah. I can't ...

MORTON: Dresden! My, I'm getting old as hell, and I can't think. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Well, we couldn't think of it either, so ...

MORTON: Well, I'll tell you, uh, Dresden was a tremendous commercial center, and this Jewish man was a hell of a—oh, he was a fatherly type fellow. Incidentally, his daughter married a boy that worked for me. And she became the schoolmaster of the academy here for the children in Franklin, Tennessee. (Ingrid Smith?). And her father, to whom I am referring, he was a china merchant, and he left in 1939. He left everything he owned. Picked up and got out of there. He's told me, but I don't remember—he'd dead now—but he told me of the whole deal, and he got out of there, and got his family to the states. He was living up there in the New York area. And Paul Smith, who had worked for me in the parts department, or whatever, married his daughter, and that got him down here. Highly intelligent. Hell of a good man. He had resources, I reckon, somewhere or another. I don't know what they were, but he didn't ... work.

PIEHLER: And his daughter still lives in town?

MORTON: She still lives here, yeah. I talked to her the other day. Highly intelligent. Mm hmm. Yeah, she was schoolmaster here, running schools here for the kids. Which is part of (Battle Ground?) Academy. They changed over, you know. Part of (Battle Ground?) Academy now. (Ingrid Smith?). Her Daddy was very interesting, to tell you ... about all of those tales. He was a china merchant, and you know, Dresden was a china center. Dresden china was much sought after, and he was a china merchant in Dresden.

PIEHLER: You had mentioned—were there other survivors that you had met?

MORTON: Oh yeah, I've been around a lot of them. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Who else do you remember?

MORTON: On a name basis, I can't think of anybody. You know.

PIEHLER: Was this in Germany, or back here?

MORTON: In Europe, yeah, Europe. I probably—I don't know if I ever knew any in the ... States here. Of course, it was very common to run across them in Europe. They were everywhere. Disguised. "We are Hungarians." That's it. It was something that they'd say. "We are Hungarians." Hell, I knew what they were, but they wasn't any Hungarians. It was hell. We had a Jewish man in town—see, when you haven't been around a lot of Jewish people, they become very loving people to you. If you were around a whole lot of them, why, they'd get the best of you, and it was different. But here in Franklin, they were regarded as very lovable, you know. And ... we had one here named (Ikie Bryant?). And they would tell (Ikie?),

they said, “(Ikke?), what are you going to do if Hitler comes over here?” He had ... recently come up here to Franklin from a backward village of Hohenwald. He said, “I’m going back to Hohenwald!” That was really funny. Like if he could get back to Hohenwald, he could hide ...

HAMMOND: So people over here knew about the Holocaust?

MORTON: Why, hell, yeah, they knew about it. You think we didn’t know about it? I don’t know how much we knew. That’s a good question. We knew. I said that real fast, didn’t I?

PIEHLER: You said earlier, you wouldn’t go to these camps.

MORTON: Uh uh. I wouldn’t go in them, they were so horrible.

PIEHLER: How did you know they were so horrible? I mean, ‘cause—a lot of G.I.’s did go. I mean, did other G.I.’s tell you how horrible ...

MORTON: I don’t know—I never did talk to them about it. I knew what they were, and I stayed out of them....

PIEHLER: Did you get the news from Stars and Stripes, or from ...

MORTON: No, no. Uh uh. Hell, I never read anything about that in Stars and Stripes. In fact, I hardly ever read a Stars and Stripes. Never got it. They never did get that to us very much. If they did, it was old. Uh, word of mouth. Things travel pretty fast.

PIEHLER: What did you think of the Germans after you learned how bad the camps were?

MORTON: Well, that’s a good question. Believe it or not, I couldn’t blame the Germans. Somehow or another, my mind would not make me believe that people as good as the Germans would tolerate something as horrible as that. I thought it had to be confined to secrecy within that—I don’t believe that the average German knew about that. But that—I don’t know. If he knew, he wasn’t talking it. Man, I’ve seen those cattle cars. Horrible.

HAMMOND: Did you see any of the Jews that had been in the concentration camps, and were thin, and things?

MORTON: There was a lot of them that got out, you know. Escaped and things. Yeah, I’ve seen them like that. Especially after the war, there was a whole lot of them that would show up after the war. And there were—so many of them were skeleton and bones, bones and skeleton. Bones and—horrible situations. But you all want me to start preaching now?

PIEHLER: You can do whatever you’d like.

MORTON: Well, I’ll start preaching. Now, we’ve talked about how horrible Hitler was in our lifetime, in the last so many years. I’ll grant you, that was the most horrible thing I ever heard of. That a man could do what he did. But you know what? I run my timetable back just a little

bit, 200 years, 250 years, and I find out a race of people that did exactly the same thing, and maybe did more than Hitler did. And the name of them was Americans, when they got a hold of the Indians. They came in here and slaughtered those poor people—there ain't no question in my mind—and took this land away from them. So, you know, that holier-than-thou stuff don't go too far. And I can also—if you want to get down to it, I can tell you where the Jews, back in time, got a hold of a few folks themselves. You think they didn't slaughter a few along the way? You had to go back a couple thousand years, but they were in the business. So man, man is—how would you say it? Man has got a lot of bad in him.

HAMMOND: So, you were in (Worbis?)?

MORTON: Hmm?

HAMMOND: So, you were in (Worbis?).

MORTON: Oh, I was in (Worbis?), yeah. I was in (Worbis?), and went up to Nordhausen there, to get supper.... I got through eating supper, walking away, and somebody said, "There's a bulletin on the bulletin board about going home." They said, "They got the names up there." And I rushed back to see, and by golly, my name was on there. And the orders were written very plainly how to do it. And there wasn't any time lag. It was immediate. Withdrawal from the army. And I think the next day, I was to start on ... my way home. And [when] I went outside, there were some officers there that didn't like me anyhow, and they never did come out to wish me good bye or anything. And I noticed that, but I didn't care.

I didn't have any money. I had kept sending money home, as a pay down on that Ford business.... I didn't have any money. And I told Rabbit Robinson, that little burr headed little boy that told the officer to go get the ammunition, I said, "Rabbit, give me \$300." I knew Rabbit had a lot of money. And, uh, we had a whole lot of German money, but that wasn't worth a damn. You couldn't do anything with it. I said, "Give me \$300, and I'll get it back to you.... I'll send it to your mother when I get back to the states." So he peeled me off \$300 in American gold. We had gold money, you know about that? Gold on the back. A ten-dollar bill, on the back would be gold. Front of it would be green, just like one in America. He peeled me off \$300. (Kastanza?), [an] Italian, was standing there and he said, "Charlie, let me have \$100 of that." Meaning he wanted to match me for \$100. I said, "Alright." I matched him, and I won. I told Rabbit, I said, "Here's your \$300 back. I can make it. I can make it on \$100." And when I walked in the United—when I got home, when I got back to Franklin, I had over \$500 in my pocket. And I gave it to Louise, my wife's sister-in-law, to buy Emma a wedding ring. That's what that \$500—I didn't stick it in the bank. I gave it to Louise to buy Emma a [ring]. And it looked like to me she paid too much for it, for what she got. (Laughter) But anyhow, that's the way.

PIEHLER: How did you turn \$100 into \$500?

MORTON: Mostly by buying and selling German pistols. I handled a lot of German pistols. And these poor boys, your prospects were those in green uniforms. You know what a green uniform is? That's one that hasn't been worn very long, and you could spot them. They stand

out like a sore thumb, and they all wanted to buy souvenirs. And, of course, I was buying those pistols and selling them. And I sold some—I sold one up there, right at Luxembourg, right out of Luxembourg, on my way home. These poor boys didn't—they paid—I think ... they paid me in Belgique Francs, and they didn't know how to count the money. They were that ignorant. And I was getting—I think they gave me \$130 for one, and I was just asking \$100. But you could make money buying and selling stuff, which I did all my life. Got to—went down to Marseilles on a forty-and-eight. You know what a forty-and-eight is?

PIEHLER: Well, there ... are room for horses.

MORTON: ... Forty people and eight horses. You ... put eight horses to a car, or forty soldiers. That's kind of crowded, you know. We would ride down those railroad tracks. We were on our way home under orders, beginning to get attention, and being hungry as hell. Almost lunchtime, and all these trains were pulled with steam, you know. Didn't have any diesel in those days. It was steam. And he started blowing his horn, and going to a side, and these tables would be set up with the food on them, for us to pull in and eat. We'd get our food, get back on the train, and he'd pull on off. They had the timetable worked out that perfect.

Went on down to Marseilles, France. Stayed there a few days. We were told, "Absolutely no misbehaving. Any misbehaving, anything, we will send you back to your outfit, and you can stay with the Army a little longer." So, that kept things in a quietude situation. And in a few days, they put me—it was an airplane ride. And they had this old boy—he was a Jewish boy, too, and I hated that son of a "B." I got me the best seat on the airplane, down front. It was a converted B-17. And he was a major, and that son of a gun made me get up and get back in the back. And, of course, you know how that went over, like a—that was horrible. But they'd pull that rank on you. And so we got on that airplane and went ... over to—across the water there, to—oh yeah. We went to Casablanca.... We went to Casablanca and stayed overnight. The next day, about noon, we got on a brand new DC-4. And—I never will forget it—there was about forty-two seats on that thing, and do you know how many people they put on that boat? We're going to the United States now. Fourteen. I thought, "That's a hell of a waste. Here we are going to the United States, and all these boys want to go home, and fourteen of us are going to get to ride that thing...."

We got on it in Casablanca about noon. Flew up to the Azores, Santa Maria. Got off at Santa Maria and ate supper. After supper, we got back on the airplane, got in the air, and a full colonel flying the thing. You know, all the officers were high ranking, a major [as] a navigator. And the reason they were such a high rank, this was a trial run. They were setting up the Green Light Project. They were setting it up, and this was their first run. That's why the high ranks were on the plane. I asked the major, I said, "Where are we going?" He said, "We're going to—" that island out there in the middle of the Atlantic. What's the name of it?

PIEHLER: Iceland?

MORTON: Huh?

PIEHLER: Iceland?

MORTON: No, we were going south. Out to Bermuda.

PIEHLER: Bermuda.

MORTON: Yeah. We were going to Bermuda, out of the Azores. I said, "How long is it going to take us to get in there?" He said, "Eleven hours and two minutes." And it was a moonlight night, and it was perfect. Flying was absolutely perfect. The next morning comes around, and I was talking to him again. I said, "How long we been out?" He said, "Almost eleven hours." I said, "I thought you said we was going to be there in eleven hours and two minutes." He said, "There it is." (Laughter) Looking right ahead of us, and we wasn't looking at the island. We were looking at the runway, right ahead of us. I thought, "That's the most perfect navigation I ever heard of in my life." To come out of the Azores, do it on that time, you know, frame, and come right across that airport. And I was dirty as—I don't know what. I was still wearing the same—when I left up there at (Worbis?), I didn't take anything with me. I left it all. They told us we could take anything we wanted. I didn't want that stuff. And I bought me some—I bought me a uniform. Went into the PX up there, and bought me a uniform. Of course, the army would have supplied me with one, if I'd found out where they were. But I bought me one to wear on home, and I made it back to—oh, I reckon, oh, around—I made it back to Atterbury in that uniform.

But anyhow, we ... stayed there overnight, ... on the island. Got on another airplane the next day to go to New York City. We was supposed to parade in New York City, the timetable was. And we ... had trouble with the plane. Lost a motor, and had to feather another one. And we were coming into New York City on two motors, and couldn't land. Put us at 10,000 feet, and put us in a circle, told us to circle at 10,000 feet. But the radio down there—this is another crew, another airplane, completely.... I reckon that good airplane turned back. And they said, "Well, you can't land here on account of the fog." So we went on up to that first town up there in New Hampshire. I can't think of the name of it now.

PIEHLER: Manchester?

MORTON: Right. And landed there, and we pulled up there to the—of course, in those days, the airplanes would pull right up to the front gate, you know, or whatever, the entrance. The old man on duty there—uh, we started piling out of that airplane, and he said—I reckon he wanted to know where we was from. And we told him we was coming in from Europe. He said, "Well, you can't come in here." Said, "I'll lose my job if I let you come in here." Said, "This is not an embark." We said, "The hell we can't! We're American citizens returning from war, and nobody can stop us." We talked to him that way. He said, "Oh, please don't." Said, "I'll lose my job." He said, "I'll get the cooks up, I'll feed you, I'll do anything," but said, "and I'll get you another airplane, but ... you can't stop here." And we agreed to that. I reckon we came to our senses, and knew the man was right....

Oh, he got them up and was feeding them breakfast, but I didn't eat breakfast, I went and called my mother. Hadn't talked to her now in over three years, about three years. And it was, oh, about two o'clock in the morning. She said she knew—when that telephone [rang], she knew

who it was.... They got us back on an old parachute airplane. Had bucket seats. And sent us to Presque Isle, Maine, the closest place we could get in the United States. So we landed in Presque Isle, Maine. That's about the most northern place in the United States.... I never will forget, all I had is sweet milk. The only ... milk we ever had was canned milk, you know, since we'd been gone. I drank a bunch of those little half-pint bottles of that. We stayed up there a day or two. And we didn't get the parade in New York City. We missed that. And they put us back on first class passage. First class tickets for Atterbury, Indiana. And had to go to New York City to change trains. We stayed there a few hours. I walked around downtown there, out of Central Station. Went in Central Station, and came out of Central Station. And ... got a train going ... over to Ohio. I don't know ... which route we took, but anyhow, we ... got to Atterbury. In Atterbury, they gave us ...

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

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Charles Morton on April 16, 2000, in Franklin, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

HAMMOND: Kelly Hammond.

PIEHLER: And they gave you your discharge at Atterbury?

MORTON: Atterbury.

PIEHLER: In Indiana. And ... then what happened?

MORTON: Well, there I got a train down to Louisville, and got an airplane. When I got to Louisville, I went to the airport, and got a plane into—I called home and told them I was on my way, and what time I would get in there, so they met me at the airport. I got in the airport—it was way after dark, ten, eleven o'clock, when I finally got to Nashville. (Laughs) Old guard—[I] went through the gate—see I was home way before the war was over in Japan. War was still going on in Japan. It was about the 1st of June—maybe not even the first of June.... Yeah, I reckon it was about the 1st of June. And the guard there ... asked to see my pass when I went through the gate, coming out of the airport. I told him, I said, "Buddy, I got a good one." I had that rusted duck on my shirt. I don't think he knew what it was, but I told him. That was [an] honorable discharge. And that was the end of it. And what did I do after I got home? I went to bed, and got up, and went to work the next morning.

PIEHLER: And you went back to the dealership?

MORTON: Went to work the next morning. Yes sir. Went to work the next morning. That was the end of my European crusade. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: Did you use any of your G.I. Bill benefits?

MORTON: No.

PIEHLER: You didn't buy a house with your G.I. benefits?

MORTON: Lord no. I didn't buy nothing, anything. Mm hmm. Didn't do it.

PIEHLER: I want to back up and ask you some questions about—you've told some great stories. No, really, particularly on D-Day. We really ... appreciate it. I guess, one question—I have a graduate student who is going to be doing a book on chaplains, a dissertation and a book on chaplains. How many encounters did you have with chaplains when you were in the military?

MORTON: I saw—every once in a while I'd see one, but I didn't—you know, ... they didn't have any business of mine, and I didn't have any business of theirs. So, we didn't have much—I never went to church, anything like that.

PIEHLER: You never went to Church while you were in the service?

MORTON: No.

PIEHLER: Because you came from a really religious background.

MORTON: That was probably the reason I didn't. It was so—it was so—man, my big back end, on Wednesday night, you know where it was sitting? In that church. On Sunday night, you know where it was sitting? In that church. On Sunday morning, yeah. Yeah, I came from [an] over-religious situation.

HAMMOND: Did you carry a Bible with you?

MORTON: Ma'am?

HAMMOND: Did you carry a Bible with you throughout the war?

MORTON: Now, what did she say?

PIEHLER: Did you carry a Bible with you during the war?

MORTON: Uh uh. Did I carry a Bible with me? I don't think so. That's a good question. If I had one, I don't remember it. I don't think so. Mm mm. If I had one—of course, where I was, we didn't carry anything with us. You know ... what you carried with you? You carried a spoon, and a mess kit cup. Any food, you'd put in that mess kit cup. Or if they'd give you a tray, or something, you'd eat out of that. Otherwise, you'd put your stuff in the cup, and took your spoon, and ate out of it. Had too much stuff you couldn't carry. So that's a ...

PIEHLER: What else did you carry when you were in the field?

MORTON: We had to carry ammunition, of course. Always carried the ammunition, belt of ammunition, and, uh ...

PIEHLER: What type of weapons did you carry? You mentioned you ...

MORTON: The M-1 rifle. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Did you carry any side arms at all?

MORTON: No, I never carried one. They were—side arms were only given to the officers above me.

PIEHLER: But you never bought one for yourself, because I know some soldiers ...

MORTON: Oh, I had plenty of them, but ...

PIEHLER: But you never used a ...

MORTON: No, never carried 'em. Uh uh.

PIEHLER: What about—particularly on D-Day? What about anything else you carried? Knives, or ...

MORTON: I didn't carry any. That old (tetrato?), I carried twenty pounds of (tetrato?), full pack, and rifle. Of course, we always had the gas mask. We were carrying that. Full pack, that's enough. You talking about weight, now. If you fell in the water, there wasn't any way to keep from drowning. Of course, you couldn't get out. And we did carry a Mae West with us. I will say that. I don't know whether that would have floated us or not. But I saw boys going under. I have seen whole tanks being unloaded, going right ...

PIEHLER: You saw them just ...

MORTON: Go right on in the water. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: I also want to back you up, way back, to your initial—you were drafted. You went to Fort Oglethorpe. You remember your great blue suit, that ...

MORTON: I had the blue suit on, yeah. I stood out like a sore thumb. Most of these boys, they were—you know, country dressed. I was [from] around here, and I just stood out like ...

PIEHLER: Sounds like you were—and your first unit, it sounds like it was ... an old army regular unit. A lot people ...

MORTON: Oh, they were horrible. See, I came from a background of religious people, and pretty high-grade people, and they didn't use ugly words. That's the first time I ever heard the word "MF." And that's the only word—if they said, "Pass the gravy," they had to use that word with it. (Laughter) It was horrible. And I certainly didn't like them. I hated them. But I was in there with them. And they were ...

PIEHLER: ... Were you with them throughout the war?

MORTON: No, no, no! Just a short time! When we got to—when I got up there to Edwards, they had ...

PIEHLER: That's when the unit got broken up.

MORTON: Broken up, yeah.

PIEHLER: This initial group, ... so many of them were ...

MORTON: I'll tell you about one. Excuse me.... Here we had, as a first sergeant, a big, redheaded fellow. He could whip a company by himself. The first day in battle, he ran. So you know, those fire-eaters were not fire-eaters at all.

PIEHLER: He just ran? He just took off?

MORTON: He ran. He didn't perform.... He ran. And he became a private right fast.

PIEHLER: What was ... basic training like for you? Anything ...

MORTON: Rough. It was rough. I could take it physically, but it was rough. And they made it rough ... by cussing you, and the way they'd talk to you. And—it was rough.

HAMMOND: Did you have any friends in there with you?

MORTON: Hmm?

HAMMOND: Did you have any friends in there with you? Or men that you knew?

MORTON: Well, not particular. Of course, you develop a common liking to people around you, or you couldn't exist. There were always—there was always good people. Good, bad, and indifferent. We had one Jewish boy in my outfit, and he was from the old country. I forgot where he was from, but he wouldn't talk. I'll never forget that. There was several Jewish boys in my outfit. And, uh, I remember one thing about them. The ones that came out of New York and up there were real handy in gambling. Oh Lord! Uh, there was quite a few, because we had connected up with that Brooklyn bunch of people. Mm hmm.

HAMMOND: Did you gamble much?

MORTON: Every time I got a chance. Lord Almighty.

PIEHLER: This—you're with this pretty hard drinking, swearing group.

MORTON: Oh, of course they were.

PIEHLER: Then when you assembled into the unit that you would serve with, that was up ... in Massachusetts. You mentioned there were a lot of ... New Yorkers in that group.

MORTON: Well we met—they started integrating them in while we were at Edwards, there, down at the Cape, bringing these boys in ...

PIEHLER: So, they had cadred out other people from your unit and they'd put in new people.

MORTON: Yeah. They made cadre out of most of those old fellas.

PIEHLER: And you got new people.

MORTON: Got all these new ones. Most all these new replacements came from the New York/New Jersey area. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: But you mention you had a guy from ...

MORTON: I wish I had the names. A lot of Polish boys.

PIEHLER: And they were also from New York, or were they from ...

MORTON: Well, the Polish boys, ... some of those were [from] Massachusetts and up in through there. If I could find it—it's around here somewhere. I got the names and where they were from.

PIEHLER: Actually, I have to go to the bathroom, so if you want to ...

MORTON: Yeah, you know where it is.

(Pause tape)

MORTON: Here's a roster from some time during the war. I don't know what time that was.

PIEHLER: You mentioned just a minute ago—you said you were really close with this Jewish boy who was from ...

MORTON: Yeah, 'cause I felt sorry for him. He and I were very close, because he was so heartbroken. That war must have been hell on him, and I never did ask him, you know, the "whys." He was a great person. I don't know whether he got killed. His name's not on there. A lot of those are on there ...

PIEHLER: So you don't know whether he was killed or wounded.

MORTON: I don't remember. I don't know. I don't know.

PIEHLER: Well, let me ask you ...

MORTON: Let me see there, let me see that stuff just—I want to see something. A lot of these are replacements that I don't even remember. There's one little boy there—there's one little boy there that they'd given us as a replacement, you know, when we went into England there. I mean, went into France. They gave us, I reckon, fifty percent over strength. That means that they doubled the size. Not doubled, but fifty percent bigger. And one of these boys they gave me, I can't remember his name, and I don't see it there. But he had never had a razor on his face. A nineteen-year-old. A lot of them that were coming in were nineteen-year-old. And I told him, I says, "Son, when we hit that beach in the morning, you dig you a hole, and don't come out of it, 'cause I don't need you, and I don't want you to get hurt." By golly, he got through it, too. He didn't get hurt. And I was always proud of myself about taking care of that boy. Of course, he was scared to death, I'm sure.

PIEHLER: But you told him at D-Day ...

MORTON: I told him, "When you hit that beach, dig you a hole and stay in it." Of course, if he'd dig a hole, chances are he's not going to get hurt. Uh, and I never did see anymore of him.

PIEHLER: So, they gave you an over-strength of fifty percent?

MORTON: On account of death, yeah.

PIEHLER: ... What was the—If you had to pick, what was the most memorable—is there one period of combat, or one instance of combat, that really sticks in your mind?

MORTON: Yeah. I can't tell you without almost coming to tears. Uh, I've already told you about it, but I crossed over it lightly. On Sicily, there, when we got pinned down. We got pinned down, and the Germans had broken through on us. There was no salvation, I knew we were gone, 'cause how in the hell could we fight all those tanks out there with bb guns. And, oh, they were shooting us up something terrible. Boys were getting hit. And I told you about all those black guys getting killed right there, trying to run. And, uh, it was Sunday morning. And I got to thinking, "I know my mother is in church, and I know she's praying for me." And that brought me to tears. So that is ... still the same morning that Rabbit told the officer to go get it himself, the ammunition. That all happened in that morning. I suspect if I could think at all, I could write a book on that morning. Oh, I was so brilliant, standing up there, looking at those tanks coming, then all at once I said, "They're not our tanks." That was the beginning of a hell of a day. Our only salvation in the world was that railroad track that elevated up. What do you call it when it's elevated? You know, built up, on the ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, I know. A real barrier.

MORTON: Yeah, and the roadway between it was made probably—many, many years ago for carts and wagons to go through. Those tanks couldn't get through, see. So they pulled up right there, and did their little dance, and went into position, and cut loose.

HAMMOND: Do you think that was your most difficult invasion?

MORTON: Oh, I don't know. That was one of the worst. That day was one of the worst. Of course, I reckon the worst one was up—oh, I don't know, in different ways. I reckon the biggest, of course, was Normandy. We took artillery shells there for, oh, at least three weeks. Maybe four. One place up there, right out of Cherbourg, a railroad went through a tunnel, and these Germans had mounted these big guns on these railroad track cars, and they would pull out. Everything the Germans did, they did methodically. If they were going to fire on you—if they were going to fire, and they were firing at that house over there, tomorrow they'd fire at that house. And that's the way they did things. But every day at twelve o'clock, or one o'clock, they'd pull those cars ... out of that tunnel. See, our airplanes, our artillery couldn't hit them in the tunnel, and the airplanes couldn't either. So they were protected. As long as they didn't tear the track up, they could pull out and fire, and they did. That lasted a long time.

HAMMOND: When you were preparing for ... the Normandy invasion, could you tell a difference between the men like you, who had already made previous invasions, and men that hadn't?

MORTON: Oh, you probably could. Probably could. The young ones were scared to death. And we knew how to be a little bit more afraid than that. (Laughs) I reckon you could tell, yeah. Anybody that goes to battle, if they're not scared, there's something wrong with them. Then when you get in battle, you go crazy. Any man that can get up and walk while people are shooting has gone and lost his mind. And you know, that's the way—go back to the Civil War. That's the way they fought. They marched right into the fire. That's the way it was. And during the—so we walked, and fire was going on. Has to be some kind of insanity in a man to do that.

HAMMOND: How did you handle holidays and birthdays?

MORTON: Didn't know anything about them. Except we knew when Christmas was. I can tell you very easily. We had the breakthrough there. The Germans had broken through on us there at ... the 19th day ...

PIEHLER: At Bastogne?

MORTON: Yeah, the 19th day of December. And, uh, we were on one side of the Meuse River, and they were on the other. They called it the Maast River up there where we were. We were in Maastricht. And, uh, all that was going on. On Christmas—you asked about Christmas—the sun came out about noon, and our airplanes were in the sky. First time we'd seen them. You couldn't—we had all that super weather. Horrible, cold. It was unusual weather, horribly cold, with fog. The two usually don't go together. But this was—that Bulge was in fog and tremendously cold snowy—the snow was already there.... But on Christmas Day, mm hmm. And I reckon it was on Christmas Day also—yeah. The sun came out, and our airplanes were beginning to fly, and that battle was more or less over by Christmas Day. I was at Maastricht, Holland. On the Meuse—on the Maast River. Once it flows south of there, they call it the Meuse.

PIEHLER: What was your mission at that point? What was your unit's mission?

MORTON: Our mission was to keep those Germans on the other side of that river, and to blow—to blow the—we had a pontoon bridge across there. The Queen Wilhelmina bridge had already been blown. It was a big, beautiful bridge, and hell, they blew the hell out of it. And they had put a pontoon bridge across there, and these Germans were wearing our uniforms, and they could slip up on you that way, you know. So ... it was a hell of a thing going on. But our mission right there was to—I reckon our major mission there was to guard that pontoon bridge, both sides of it.

PIEHLER: ... Did you have contact with the Germans at that point?

MORTON: Not physically, no.

PIEHLER: Not physically. They didn't actually make it to the ...

MORTON: No. They were all around, but we didn't—we didn't have any.

PIEHLER: They didn't try for the bridge?

MORTON: Uh uh. They never tried for it. Their airplanes did. They flew in there one day. The sun kind of peaked out there one day and they got through. But they didn't hit it.

PIEHLER: What do you think of your officers? You've mentioned a few officers. You've mentioned the ...

MORTON: Most of them were aloof, and they were not very—enlisted men didn't like the officers. That's just—I reckon it goes back forever. Officers were—and, uh, some of them were cowards. We had a captain that stayed with us quite a while, was a coward. And he would have gotten it in the back if he'd ever got out in front of us anywhere.... His name was Robert (Griffin?).

PIEHLER: What did he do that was so cowardly?

MORTON: I could give you lots of examples, but I'm going to give you one. Let me go get—I'm gonna get—uh, we landed on that beach. I told you about that beach, and I told you about how big that pill box was, and about those boys running, leaving their breakfast cooking. What do you think happened after that breakfast was cooked? This captain, Robert (Griffin?), set that up as his headquarters, and he never came out. You think anybody could've got him in there? The only way they could've got him was coming in the back door. The bombs and shells and the rifles couldn't—he was a damn coward. He set up shop. That was his headquarters. Like he was supposed to have a headquarters. He was the only S.O.B. on the beach that had one.

PIEHLER: So, instead of leading his men, he ...

MORTON: He had to run the outfit from in that pillbox. That was the kind of fellow he was.

PIEHLER: Any other incidents where he didn't ...

MORTON: You never saw him. Wasn't anything going on. One time—one time—one time, I think—I was trying to think exactly where it was, but every once in a while, he was big on exercise, especially taking it by himself. You'd see him out taking all kinds of exercise by himself. Then every once in a while he would take the men on a march. So, one day—I was trying to think where we were. We were—I don't remember where we were, in England, or where we were. He carried us on a pretty long march, and totally unnecessary. We were getting more exercise than anybody needed. But ... he put us in—what do you call it? Attention. He put us in attention to march, and we marched several miles at attention. And that tore the men's feet all to pieces. And when they got back they had blisters. And the doctors, oh, they raised more hell about that. That got way on up, that son of a "B" marching these poor men at attention for so long a time on the hard pavement. Just tearing their feet all to pieces, see. That was one of the—you said why we hated him. There's many other things he did ...

PIEHLER: There was an expression used in World War II a lot, I've been told, and it sounds like you saw your share of it. Chickenshit.

MORTON: (Laughs) Oh well, no. Or chicken feathers.

PIEHLER: Or chicken feathers.

MORTON: Oh Lord.

PIEHLER: Because this sounds like a classic case of chicken feathers.

MORTON: Yeah, now you're talking. You understand what you're talking about. Where were you born and raised? How did you get all of this information? (Laughter) Your daddy and mother, where did they come from? Where'd your daddy come from?

PIEHLER: My natural father from Germany, and my step-father from America.... He goes way back to Ireland, so ...

MORTON: He does? But your real daddy came out of Germany?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MORTON: Whereabouts?

PIEHLER: Passau.

MORTON: Huh?

PIEHLER: Passau area, Straubing.

MORTON: Yeah, you told me before. Down on the border. Down below Munich.

PIEHLER: Yes.

MORTON: What kind of business was he in?

PIEHLER: He was an electrician. He's now back in Germany. He has some real estate.

MORTON: He's back over there?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MORTON: He likes it over there?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MORTON: Bless his heart. Yeah. He's not a merchant.

PIEHLER: No, no.

MORTON: It's hard to think of a German not being a merchant, you know. Most of them are. And good at it, too. And you know what, most of them are honest. If they are your friend, you can count on it and you don't have to write anything down. Write nothing down. One of my closest friends was Jewish, and he got back here, and he and his brothers got in the wine business. He'd come to see me everyday. And he grew as he got old. He grew very wealthy. Very wealthy. This business still flourishes. I see the trucks. Morris (Litman?) was his name, and I see his trucks running everywhere. (Litman?) Brothers.

PIEHLER: I wanted to follow up a little bit more about ... Salerno, because from what I've read, that was a pretty confused operation landing on Italy.

MORTON: It was more than confused.... Because the Italians had capitulated, and the Germans made them get between them and fight us. The Germans got behind the Italians and made the Italians fight, you know.

PIEHLER: But I've also read that this was—we weren't very well coordinated, so we shot down a lot of our own planes.

MORTON: Oh! I forgot to tell you about that. How did you know that?

PIEHLER: People have told me that, and I've read that.

MORTON: Yeah? (Laughs) Well, it's every simple how it happened. I was laying there looking at it. We had a air raid. Had a air raid going on. And, of course, an air raid going on, you gonna get in that ground. And ... all at once, here comes our gliders in. Right in the middle of the damn air raid. Well, of course, the boys on the guns, they didn't let up. I don't reckon they knew the difference, or didn't have enough sense to look at what they're shooting at. And

they just shot our gliders down. That's what you're talking about. And ... that's the only time I know of us really getting into it, and they did. But the thing about the gliders—shouldn't have come in. Maybe they couldn't help it. Maybe they were unattached. I don't know what position they were flying in. They may have been already unattached, and had to make land, you know. But ... anyhow, all the anti-aircraft was firing in the air raid when the gliders came in, and the gliders came in and got shot up. It was horrible, yeah. Lots of times—one of my close friends got killed by our bombs going off. They dropped a lot—they had a raid down there. I forgot how many soldiers they had, but ... it was unbelievable. The sky was—you'd think the airplanes would run into each other, or they would drop bombs on each other, 'cause some were above the others. And the sky was just clogged with airplanes. And they got all mixed up and started dropping them on our—at St. Lo.

PIEHLER: When did you learn about St. Lo, what had happened?

MORTON: (Laughs) When did I learn? We learned about things like that pretty fast. Word like that travels fast. You asked me something about that while ago, about Stars and Stripes. You'd be surprised how fast information in the war—yep. Let me go get my handkerchief and I'll be right back. I don't know how I got rid of it. Why don't you pass him some of those? He likes that foreign stuff.

(Tape paused)

MORTON: And he was a farmer. Well, he was well-to-do from inheritance and hard work, frugal, highly intelligent, and he had this cousin that—first cousin that grew up with him, and he left him, and so did my father's father, and went to Oklahoma. And Emma's granddaddy, he ran for it.

PIEHLER: He was part of the Sooners?

MORTON: No, he ran for it. When they ran, yeah. Do you know what I'm talking about?

HAMMOND: No.

MORTON: You could—you ran for—all the land you ran around and staked off, and went back and report, she was yours.

HAMMOND: Oh, I did know that.

MORTON: So, this cousin of my father-in-law, he got a hold of this land, and they found oil on it, and he was just an old dirt farmer, just like my father-in-law. I mean, they were farmers, you know, worked in the dirt. And he'd come back here and he said, "Ernest," said, "They send me all this money, and I just don't know what to do with it." And he was still ... acting like he was—didn't have much. But that oil made him rich. So many people. When you said Oklahoma, I think about oil.

PIEHLER: And there's still ... a good bit there.

MORTON: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: Going back ... to the war, how—you mentioned, particularly in North Africa, eating a lot of K-rations and C-rations, and also in Sicily.

MORTON: Yeah, a lot of times we did.

PIEHLER: How well did you eat in the army? If you had to look at ...

MORTON: As a whole?

PIEHLER: Yeah, as a whole.

MORTON: As a whole, dining—we got cut off on rations there one time. I said something about it.

PIEHLER: The chili con carne.

MORTON: Chili con carne. But as a whole, if they could get it to us, we had the best. If they could get it to us. That meant not fighting conditions. That meant if the ships or whatever, if they could get it to us, we had the best.

PIEHLER: For example, after you landed at Utah, when did you get a hot meal? When was the first hot meal ...

MORTON: Utah? First hot meal? Oh, first hot meal in Utah, probably a week, or less, or less. Now, let me tell you something else. Yeah, or less. And one bomber came over one night and hit one thing, and he hit our kitchen. (Laughter) Yeah, I remember that very well.... But anyhow—yeah, we—they set that up pretty fast. That food was coming in. And we not only fed ourselves. Of course, there was a lot of—the American soldier was full of thievery, and they fed everybody, especially girls. They fed them all, you know, up and down the road. If they were a girlfriend, they got to eating pretty good, you know. You'd just be surprised how life went on.

PIEHLER: So, it was a pretty good deal, with food and chocolate bars and cigarettes.

MORTON: Well, now, if she wasn't here, I could tell you a whole lot. But anyhow ...

HAMMOND: You can tell it.

MORTON: You could get a whole lot of equipment with a candy bar, and a bar of soap. Of course, I knew all the tricks. Not particularly that, because I was scared of disease. But ...

PIEHLER: But others were not.

MORTON: Well, some of them were fools, you know. But anyhow, the desire was there, but

you know, a man had to have a little sense. I was going to tell you about the soap. I'm not any smarter than the rest of the fellows, but I've been on the street, and I've got a lot of knowledge on the street, and I know that. From my childhood on—being so religious, coming under such—got me to see the other side of the world, and learn a lot about it. Hell, I mean, I knew how to shoot dice when I was twelve years old, you know, as good as anybody. Uh, there wasn't anything that I didn't—on the street—that I didn't know about. I was going to tell you a tale, but I've lost my thought about ...

PIEHLER: About soap and what you could ...

MORTON: The soap.

PIEHLER: Because it was a pretty valuable commodity.

MORTON: Very. You know, they always said—well I'm not going to say it in front of her. But it was something connected with the Queen. You can draw your own conclusion. Let's see now. I was bragging on myself wasn't I? Well, it was the damn truth. (Laughter) I could not—I got—I was naked in Italy, I reckon it was, taking a bath in a mud puddle. Did you know you could take a bath in a mud puddle? By golly, it's water. It may have a little mud in it, but it's water. And here comes a damn airplane strafing, and me naked, and they hollered, "Gas!" Of course, I jumped and hit the ground over in the trees. Cut myself all up. It was the man—somebody had come in one of the storage areas there, and was wanting gas for his equipment, and ... hollered, "Gas," or something and the word got out, and people thought it was a gas attack, you know. And one man said, "I'm going to kill somebody if I don't get mine." I never will forget a little boy from Lexington that made the statement close to those words. But I was starting to tell you on myself about the soap. Uh, I could not stand to be dirty. I can't today. If you ever see Charlie Morton, he's had a bath, and very recently, too. Uh, I learned that if you take a bar of soap and go up to these monasteries, knock on the door, and tell them you want to take a bath. And you know, soldiers just wouldn't get around a monastery at all. Well, of course, I didn't know anything about Catholics, but I found that out right quick. And they would prepare the water, the towels, and everything, and I'd always leave them the soap. I got that going. I just continually worked that deal.

PIEHLER: So, you did this in ...

MORTON: Through Europe.

PIEHLER: Through Europe. You did this in Sicily and Italy.

MORTON: I did it everywhere I went.

PIEHLER: What about North Africa?

MORTON: In North Africa, yeah. I never will forget, that little ol' gal down there would give you a bath at the jail. And a boy caught syphilis off that woman. Thank God I wouldn't touch her. But anyhow, she gave them—and ... I don't know whether she was in jail, or what it was,

but I remember that situation, the shower beds in the jail. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Because a lot of G.I.'s would tell me they'd go weeks without a bath or shower.

MORTON: Hell if I did.

PIEHLER: So, how often could you pull this off, getting a bath or shower?

MORTON: Pretty, pretty soon. Especially—uh, in cold weather, not as often, of course.

PIEHLER: Let's say D-Day, on Utah beach, when was your first shower?

MORTON: Hell, I didn't have to. I was in the damn water all the time. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: But after you landed, I mean, how were you ...

MORTON: I said, we was in the water. I got in the water all the time.

PIEHLER: Oh, so you would just go down to the beach?

MORTON: Oh, we had to get in it working, you know. We helped them.

PIEHLER: So, you were unloading stuff, also ...

MORTON: Oh, everything happened. Yeah.

PIEHLER: So you were in these fixed posts, but you also did ...

MORTON: Oh, we did everything connected to that situation. From fixing the dock to everything else. They called on us for everything. But as far as how many days I actually took a bath from the beach, it was a pretty good while before I had a formal—you know, before I could say I went to a shower or something like that.

PIEHLER: You put a lot of emphasis on trying to keep personally clean. What about other men in your unit?

MORTON: Oh hell, some of them was filthy. People are funny, you know. I'll tell you a little something that you don't know. People come in grades. You do know that. (Laughs) They come in a lot of grades. Ain't that awful? And that don't mean some of them are not well educated. That's not the dividing line. They just come different. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: You had—you had mentioned earlier you would have conversation with the German soldiers when they—when you were still in battle ...

MORTON: Oh Lord, yes. Only not when we were physically in battle, but ... when they wasn't in battle. Yeah, a lot of times, and invariably, they would—the decent ones, not those coming

out of Africa that I told you about, but just the ordinary—see, the ordinary run, all the good German soldiers, they had been sending those to the Russian front, and we were getting the scallywags, you know. So many of them, and they were pitiful. Yeah. They hated the war. It was pitiful, yeah. And I'd talked to them. I was given the job there to a—to a—I forgot what reason it was. We had to build a tent city on the beach there, and they got me and maybe some other sergeants, two or three.... And they gave us—I think—they may have given us 200, a company of niggers. And they wouldn't work, they ... wouldn't do things right. And we complained to the—I don't know, one of the higher officers, of what was going on, and they pulled the niggers. And we asked them to give us good German prisoners. I remember I talked to them. I don't know whether some of the rest of them as a group or not, but I remember I did. And uh, told them we would feed them in our chow line. Said, "You will not be" —see, under the Geneva Convention, all we had to do was give them C-rations. Of course, they're just like us. They didn't want any C-rations. They wanted something good to eat. We told them that ...

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

MORTON: ... Different sergeants that could speak English to put them in charge. I don't remember how many Germans we had. Probably well over 100, maybe 200.

PIEHLER: So, they did eat in your chow lines?

MORTON: Yeah, we told them, "If you all do what we tell you, put this tent city up right and then take all this crap down that these niggers been messing up here, we'll do this and that for you." And when they got through, you could take a rifle and shoot right down through there, and it wouldn't hit a one that was out of place. It was absolutely perfect, and when we got through eating, they fell right in behind. They ate the same food we did. And I talked to them. There was one of the times there I may have mentioned. I was talking to a kind of a small German boy, and we were talking along those lines. I said, "You don't dislike me and I don't dislike you." I said, "We don't even know each other." And said, "A few days ago you'd take a shot at me." I said, "Ain't that awful?" (Laughs) We'd talk like that. They didn't want any part of that war. They were made to fight.

PIEHLER: You mentioned contact with a lot of civilians, but what about other armies, troops from other armies?

MORTON: We didn't get around too many of them. A few English.

PIEHLER: A few English?

MORTON: A few English, that's about all. And not many of them. We stayed apart. On that breakthrough, though—I'll tell you this. See, they broke through on us. The Germans did, on that thing up there when they went around—what do you call it? The breakthrough we had there, in December of '44. When the—when Bastogne got—when they went in there. What was the big breakthrough, what did they call it? But anyhow, they had to call the English soldiers, and I saw right off Englishmen hitting the ground, and I wondered, "Why in the world are they here, coming right through our lines?" And they had sent the English to back us up, through our

lines. Yes sir, that actually happened. I don't know whether history bears that out or not, or whether they'll tell it, but it happened. And there is one little bitty difference between the Englishmen and the American fighting the Germans. The Englishmen hated them, and we didn't. But the English had a reason to hate them, 'cause they ...

PIEHLER: You had a sense that they really hated the Germans?

MORTON: Oh, hell yeah, they hated them. They'd been dropping those bombs along there, that was one thing. If they'd dropped bombs on your mother, well you'd hate it too, you know. So that's the way it was. There's probably other reasons than that.

HAMMOND: When you landed on Utah, you had a map of where the FFI were stationed. Did you ever come across any Resisters?

MORTON: We didn't have to, no. See, that was made if you got disassociated with your outfit. I don't even know what happened to my map. Probably threw it away. Of course, after so long—I don't know what happened to that map. That's a good question. I haven't ever thought about it. But I don't imagine—I imagine I was pretty careful with what I did with it. Hmm ...

HAMMOND: What did you think of Paris?

MORTON: Who?

HAMMOND: Paris.

MORTON: What did she say?

PIEHLER: What did you think of Paris?

MORTON: Oh, everybody likes Paris! My goodness! Yeah, I was there several times ... through there. One time I stayed a week there. Um, yeah. There ain't no question, there ain't nothing like it. (Laughs) And I got me a girlfriend there, and she was real nice. I don't know how I met her. And carried them out to eat, and right in the middle of the war, you know. The war was going on. I don't know how I got there. They—let's see where I was. I was in Belgium. I don't know whether this was before or after the—I reckon this was before the—oh yeah, probably had to be after the breakthrough. But anyhow, I went to Paris, and I wanted to take them out to eat. I wanted to take her and her sister, I reckon, and her husband. They had a nice apartment there in Paris, and I wanted to take them out to eat, so you know, there wasn't anything to eat in Paris in those days, you know. There wasn't anything to eat in Paris. The hell it wasn't. (Laughter) They took me to right there on the Champs-Elysees. Went right down some steps into the finest dining room you ever seen in your life, and I thought, "God almighty, have I got enough money to pay out of this place?" I got to worrying about it. Of course, the first thing they ordered was steak. You say, "Steak in Paris?" Hell, yeah, they had steak! And where it probably came from, the United States, too. But anyhow, they had it, and—or it may have come out of Normandy. But I did. I managed to pay out. I never will forget that. But that's a hell of a feeling to be in a foreign situation, in a big, fine situation like that and worrying

about whether you got enough money to get out of it. And they weren't taking any credit cards, you know. I didn't have one, anyhow. But you had to ... take that golden franc. (Laughs) Had a lot of experience with francs. My daddy's mother was a French woman. My grandfather went off down yonder, and on those trips carrying that wood down the Tennessee River and down the Mississippi River, and met my grandmother at—down in Louisiana. She was a (Thancher?). My granddaddy married. Yeah, in Jackson, Tennessee. But anyhow. I had something I was going to tell you about those—what was I telling? I got off of track when I got on that about ...

HAMMOND: You were talking about Paris.

MORTON: Oh, about that. Let's see now. I came back to France, and I was telling you about going to Paris. There was something else, another story, but I forgot what it was. I lost it. It was a good one, too. I forgot what it was.

PIEHLER: It sounded like you had some fun in Paris.

MORTON: Oh, yeah. I enjoyed Paris so much, and so many things happened in Paris. I never will forget standing on—in the (Invalids?), what's the name of it?

PIEHLER: Yes. The hotel, the (Invalids?).

MORTON: The (Invalids?) and looking down on Napoleon's—it's a ...

PIEHLER: It's a sarcophagus.

MORTON: Sarcophagus. Round, you look down on it. It's round. It's all marble. Inside that is ... his entombment. You go in there and you look down on it. Very impressive, isn't it? Yeah, Paris. I did study French in school, but I wasn't "parlez vous"-ing very much. Uh, but you know, you could do enough to get by. (Laughs) And ... Rabbit Robinson, I mentioned him before, about telling the officer to go get it himself. Rabbit and I went—see, all those grocery stores, they wouldn't be any bigger than this room here, in Belgium and all up through there, and they'd all serve liquor. Every one of them, under the counter, they'd serve liquor. So we were in there having a drink, and this girl, oh, she was a good old girl. I never will forget it. She was highly impregnated, and she was—she asked Rabbit did he speak French. He said, "Oui, Oui Mademoiselle! Chevrolet-coupe-on-the-highway." I thought she was going to have that baby right there. (Laughter) She hasn't stopped laughing yet. Rabbit said, "Oui, oui Mademoiselle, Chevrolet-coupe-on-the-highway. Yeah, I can speak French." He was a character. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What ever happened to Rabbit?

MORTON: I lost him when I left (Worbis?) and didn't borrow his money. I never heard from him again. I never heard. And I never hear from any—one time, one ol' boy came through to my place, to my automobile place, and he came late at night, and ... I think I was busy or something. He was from Toledo, Ohio, and he didn't stay. And then I had a friend, (Dugger?) is his name. He and I were in the war together, and he died here two months ago. I was going to ask him to come here. I was telling you. (Clifton Dugger?). But he died.

PIEHLER: Could you tell us a little bit more of your friend?

MORTON: You gonna make me keep on? I'll tell you something—oh Lord, don't make me do that. I don't want to make up anything. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: But he was a close friend of yours.

MORTON: Who is this?

HAMMOND: (Dugger?).

MORTON: Oh, yeah, (Dugger?) and I were sergeants together. I'll tell you how close.

PIEHLER: When did you guys ...

MOTRON: See, when ... you walk in that shadow of death, you get pretty close to people. It's kind of a normal phenomena. And when one starts thinking, you know exactly what he's thinking. He doesn't have to stand up there and start talking to you. You can read his thoughts. So, we were walking right there on that beach, inland, walking back toward the beach. He and I walking right side-by-side. His foot started down, and I did that, that fast, and knocked him off a shoe mine. One of those little—of course, it would have killed both of us. He was going down on it, and I just happened to see it. He stopped and took the thing apart, but ... that happened. And the last time I saw him—he was a patient of (Chuck's?). Last time I saw him, he was coming out of the hospital up there. We got to talking about that, and that subject came up, and his wife knew about it. About me knocking him off of that. Of course, it saved my life just as same as it did his, 'cause it would have got both of us. They shoot up about that high, and burst with several hundred little ol' steel balls, cut you in two. (Pause) Turned out to be pretty, didn't it? We're in for good weather now. Time, yeah.

HAMMOND: Did you and Emma correspond throughout the war?

MORTON: Did what?

HAMMOND: Did you and Emma ...

MORTON: Yeah, uh huh.

PIEHLER: What would you write—did you write home often?

MORTON: Not very often.

PIEHLER: What would you tell people—what would you write in your letters?

MORTON: Oh, about the same thing. I imagine they all read about the same. There wasn't much to tell. There wasn't much you could tell. They censored everything we wrote, you know.

I didn't want anybody reading my mail. They'd do it. That's the way it was.

PIEHLER: When you got home, what did you tell people about the war?

MORTON: Nothing. I wouldn't talk about it. I didn't really talk about it much. Nobody ever asked me much about it. I never did talk about it. I wanted to get it out of my mind.

PIEHLER: If you had to pick a movie or novel that depicts what you went through during the war, is there any movie that comes close?

MORTON: What?

PIEHLER: A movie or novel.

MORTON: I don't know of anything that I've read. Not anything that I know of.

PIEHLER: Did you see Saving Private Ryan?

MORTON: You know, I'll have to confess: I don't go to picture shows. I probably haven't been to five, ten at the most, since World War II. I just never did go to them. Somewhere in my mind I started saying they were all fake, you know. And I didn't appreciate the artistic and the historical value of them. I just—when I was real young, my daddy carried me to California. We took a month off, and had us a fine automobile. Went out through St. Louis, and Kansas City, and all up through there, and up through Montana, the national park up there, Yellowstone. Back down ... through Idaho, and Nevada, Utah and Nevada, however they come, ... and on into California. Then we spent a week—came in Roseville, and went to San Francisco, and then went down to Los Angeles and stayed a week. There I got to see—they carried us out there several times to those movies [in Hollywood]. And I got to see—I was only thirteen years old, and I reckon that grew on me as to what a fake everything was. So, I reckon that thought lingered on me. “This is fake city,” you know. Had all those buildings with fronts, but no back ends. But I never did go to the picture show. Emma used to like to go.

HAMMOND: How long after the war did you get married?

MORTON: Well, let's see. I got back here right at—I don't know what day it was, about the first of June. I got married on the 27th day of October. Wasn't long was it? 27th of October .

PIEHLER: Did you ever join a veterans' organization?

MORTON: Hell no. I didn't join nothing. (Laughs) Not to give you a short answer. No, and I never have been a joiner. I never did join anything.

PIEHLER: So, you never joined the American Legion, or ...

MORTON: I think I paid them dues a time or two, but I never did anything.

PIEHLER: But never ...

MORTON: Mm mm.

PIEHLER: How did you feel about your own son going to war, or the possibility he might go to war?

MORTON: Well, I had—I had great feelings about it. Like, I was damn sure he wasn't going to go.

PIEHLER: Really?

MORTON: And what did I do? I worked it to where he didn't have to go. That's awful that I told you that, but that's the truth. And he didn't go, either, did he?

HAMMOND: No.

PIEHLER: You really thought that war was just too terrible?

MORTON: Well, of course! It was horrible. It was unnecessary. I heard this fellow, [Gerald R.] Ford. Did y'all hear the television this morning? This—they had him on there. He made more sense. I never knew the man was that smart. Had he and Jimmy Carter on there together. They seem to be great friends, ran against each other, too. And ... they agreed on things, just in such sensible ways. But that war, that war—that was uncalled for.

PIEHLER: You ... never supported the Vietnam War?

MORTON: No, sir. But I kept my mouth shut. I didn't say one word against it, but I was totally opposed to it.... So many things—you ask me a lot of questions, and I'll give you some of the answers right today. We got situations today all over the world that need attention. I think we take it—the biggest thing we got today is our ability to know how and what about China. That's the biggest thing in the world. And, uh, from an economic standpoint, a military standpoint—especially economics—they can swallow us. In time, their economics can. Building things so much cheaper, and the heck of it is, building good stuff, too. You know, when I was a little boy, anything—if you showed me your knife and it came out of Japan, well, it was cheap. It wasn't fit to have. Now, if you show me one that comes out of Japan, it's as good as a German knife. So in time, China's the same way. Oh, I was going to ask you a question. You been asking me so many, I'll ask you one. You ever been to a Kibbutz?

PIEHLER: No.

MORTON: Well, I'll tell you, you ought to go. So I go to a Kibbutz, up on the Lebanese border, you know where that is.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. Yes.

MORTON: And oh, they got more cows than you ever saw in Tennessee. And they got all kinds of gardens, and banana—what do you call it? Would you call where they grow bananas—would you call—what do you call that?

PIEHLER: I think a banana grove.

MORTON: You'd call it a grove. Alright, banana grove. And it went from, oh, hundreds and hundreds of yards, square. And every stalk, bananas. But what would they do? You know they grow straight up. You know bananas grow up that way. They had a sack over them. Where in the world did they get all those sacks? Did you know that? They ... had a sack over them so they wouldn't ripen too fast. But anyway, this is at this Kibbutz, so we went on up there, and went up to the headquarters, and here this gal was up there, introduced herself. And right—right nice looking, you could tell she was all business. But she had a charming personality, and ... I said, "Where in the world did you come from?" She said, "Holland." You know, I gave her a rundown right quick. Oh she talked to me so good. And she was head of the whole thing. She was the head. Out to the right she had a baby factory. Believe women had these babies, and they'd take them away and put them in that incubator room and ... whatever you call it, and raise them, and the mama's would go to work. That's the workingest outfit you ever seen in your life. And you take your eyes and stare out the front door, and look out across those cow pastures, and right up there, there are those hills, and do you know what those hills are? They are the Jordanian hills. Up to the right is Lebanon, but you can just look at the Jordanian hills. But this girl was very impressive, and ran the damnedest outfit you ever seen in your life. Everybody ought to go to Kibbutz.

PIEHLER: When were you in Israel?

MORTON: I was in Israel—I was there, oh, somewhere in the late '80s. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go back to Europe?

MORTON: I have never been back—let's see where I've been. I have never been back anywhere that I was in during the war, except Sicily. I have been back to Europe, but not up where I was in the war. I've been to Spain, and—I don't reckon I've been to Italy. I've been to Sicily. I've been to Malta. (Laughs) Oh, I have been to Italy too. I've been up where the water is. What do you call it? Florence—no, not Florence, but ...

PIEHLER: Venice.

MORTON: Venice, yeah. I've been to Venice, and Yugoslavia, and on down through there. Israel is the most—when you pull up to Israel in a boat, you come into Haifa, and if somebody had told you "We're pulling up here to such and such a city outside of San Diego," you wouldn't know the difference.... All of the hills and everything look just like California. And, of course, Israel, a lot of it does, too. But ... it's the most interesting place in the world. Of all the places I've ever been, it's number one in interest. And I put on a cap and go on down to the Wailing Wall. My friend next door, he's dead now. I told him, "I'm gonna put your name in the Wailing Wall," and I did, too. My name, too. You have to put that cap on. I've been in that ... temple,

and it is gorgeous. The ... Mohammed ...

PIEHLER: ... The Dome of the Rock?

MORTON: Yeah. And I've been in there where Christ was born, and they say—well, in that place, there are two floors. And one of them, the tile under it, they say, is 2,000 years old. Outside, there is some olive trees, and they say they're two thousand years old, and they look it, but they're still alive. And this hollowed out stone manger, which was used to—undoubtedly to feed stock in, you know. Of course, the curvature and everything is perfect, but it's big. It's big enough for—I could get in there and lay down. All these women laying around there crying, you know. I didn't understand all that, but anyhow, that was going on. It's interesting. It's a very—anybody goes anywhere should go there, regardless of what religion you are, or what your affiliation is. It's ...

HAMMOND: When you got back from the war, did you ever have trouble acclimating back to society?

PIEHLER: You never had any nightmares?

MORTON: No. (Laughs) No.

PIEHLER: You never—if a car backfired, did you ever want to duck?

MORTON: (Laughs) Not that I know of. But that's a good question. I may have done that. I may have. I don't know. I may have, I may have done a little of that. Uh, your mother grew up where?

PIEHLER: My mother was bombed out in Germany.

MORTON: What city was she bombed out in?

PIEHLER: She was bombed out in Karlsruhe. Karlsruhe, by Stuttgart. And she said whenever she hears sirens, she thinks of air raids.

MORTON: By Stuttgart.

PIEHLER: Whenever she hears an air raid siren, whenever she hears a fire engine siren ...

MORTON: Bless her heart. Is your mother still living?

PIEHLER: Oh, yes.

MORTON: How old is she?

PIEHLER: She's about sixty-four or five now ...

MORTON: She's young!

PIEHLER: Oh yes, she was a young child during the war.

MORTON: She was just a young child. Yeah. Bless her heart. She remembers that, though.

PIEHLER: Oh, very vividly. She was also bombed out, so that also ...

MORTON: ... That'd leave an impression on me, I believe it would. I can—that's a hell of a feeling to hear those things coming down. They make a whining sound, and a terrible explosion. I been to Stuttgart. Stuttgart is on the Rhine, and it's down—I was trying to place it exactly where it was. Karlsruhe.

PIEHLER: Yes.... Karlsruhe is not too far away from Stuttgart. Probably about two hours. From Stuttgart.

MORTON: Which way?

PIEHLER: Heading south. It's not too far from Strasbourg, France.

MORTON: Yeah, Strasbourg. I never have been down in there, I don't think.

PIEHLER: You were much farther north.

MORTON: Yeah, I never have been down in there, but I was trying to think, coming back through somewhere. I crisscrossed back and forth quite a bit, but I never was that far south. Never was that far south. People living down in there, they—well, of course, I've been to Munich. I've been to Weimar. I've been to Weimar, not Munich. When you were talking about that, right across there, they wasn't too far from Munich, I don't reckon.

PIEHLER: When you ... were at the Elbe, did you have any contact with Russian troops, Soviet troops?

MORTON: I don't think I ever saw one, as I can remember.

PIEHLER: You never did see one?

MORTON: I don't think I ever saw one. I don't think I ever saw one, but when I was in (Worbis?), we knew that they were—that was their territory, and they were coming in there, and you know what the Americans did? Our command did it. Right there in (Worbis?), there was a great wood business, and the whole stock inventory was teak wood, very expensive wood, teak wood. Wood that they use to make the floors of ships. It's a rot-proof wood. Very expensive. They made our outfit load all of that inventory on flatcars to send to Russia. It was all under sheds, tremendous size. And (Dugger?) and I—I was with him. (Dugger?) and I, and maybe someone else, found a locomotive and got that thing started, a diesel, and got it started, and went up there and hitched up to ... all these cars they had loaded up with the teak wood. I don't know,

at least twelve, and they were going back to Russia. They were going to send them back to Russia. Of course, they had to be transported over to another track, 'cause the Russian gauge—their gauge is different from ours, you know.... But anyhow, we got them pulled down there, and there was a little bit of downhill and a straight ... out to the track. And I saw another train coming way up there, and (Dugger?), I reckon, was driving.... I think Dugger was driving the train. And we only had breaks on the engine. That was the only breaks we had. Didn't have any breaks on the car. And boy, I tell you, that was exciting, because we were heading right straight toward it, but he got the thing stopped. He got it stopped, and we left it there. And just think of all that fine wood that we left out in the weather, and they were giving it back to the Russians. That's how crazy Americans are, taking that stuff that wasn't theirs to start with. Taking it from the Germans, plundering it, and giving it to the Russians. We were damn fools. We've been so many, many—I'm reading a book—you all know very—I bet you know a lot. You study a lot about communism? You know a lot about it? Well, it's a horrible situation. Of course, thank goodness, as a whole, except in China—and it's different. They're not practicing the same thing completely that Marx put out, you know. Uh, but his theory on ... that stuff was horrible. The man that came after him, what's this name?

PIEHLER: Lenin?

MORTON: Lenin, yeah. (Pause)

PIEHLER: I wanted to ask you. You came back and took your dealership over again. How did that go?

MORTON: Well, I'll tell you. I had developed a man there, when I left, to run that, and he took it over, and I came back, and it was a no-go. We couldn't—he had done stole it blind, and plundered. It had made a lot of money. I mean, for the time, it had made a lot of money. I wound up getting \$15,000—that's all I got—and walked out, walked out. And a few weeks later, I had an Oldsmobile business started. And in a short time, less than two years, I ran it into some big figures. I ran it too big, and people in Nashville curtailed me. Any time—back in those days; it's not that way now—and the man that curtailed all that, a man that gave the poor man the rights of the little man—not necessarily the poor man, but the little man, their rights, was a Democrat. Estes Kefauver. He passed a lot of legislation and got a lot of things passed, to curtail what happened to me. They got together and got my—I was getting fifty cars a month, Oldsmobiles, and oh, I was so proud.... I was outselling Chevrolet and Ford combined, with Oldsmobiles. And they got together, and I heard, gave ... one of the boys there at Lansing a \$6,000 rug to cut my quota from fifty to eight. And I called Lindsay Jones. I was so proud of my quota. Of course, my next year's quota always hinged on how many I'd sold the previous year. And I said, "Lindsay, what's my quota?" I was wanting to brag on myself, you know, or get him to brag on me. He says, "Charlie, I kind of hate to tell you, but we're going to have to cut your quota to eight." I said, "What?" Said, "Eight! I can't pay my overhead with eight." I said, "Are you serious?" He said, "Yeah, serious." I sold that business that afternoon. I didn't sell it. I gave it away that day. And I've done that. I've done that in the stock market. I've got a bad habit of cutting bait right fast, and that's not a good way to do things, but I can't help it. That's built in nature you know.

So after that, I got—I had that Oldsmobile business. I also owned half of a Pontiac business in town. They got wind of a funny ownership of it. My partner was a used car dealer, and they didn't like that, but anyhow, we had trouble. So, Ford called me up, and wanted me to come with them. Said they were going to put out a new car. And said they was going to put out a car on a hundred—I think a 109-inch wheel bit. But I knew it would be a good seller, because right then, America was needing ... small transportation. Everything was big, you know, and gas beginning to get high. That was a big, big—so, I told them I'd take it. I took that in Nashville. An Edsel dealership.

PIEHLER: So, you had an Edsel dealership?

MORTON: Yeah, the only one they had in Nashville. And ... I ran it, and did right well with it.

PIEHLER: 'Cause the Edsel didn't have a great reputation.

MORTON: No, but Ford misrepresented it. They didn't—and as great as I love Ford Motor Company, because they've been so good to me in so many ways over the years, I liked the people that ran it, but they misrepresented that. They did not put out the 109, or whatever it was, ... wheel base automobile. They just stuck a front end on existing models and called it the Edsel, which was bad business. But I ran in and got by. Then one day I ran it, and stayed in the black, and about the hardest—then one day they called me up and said, “Charlie, we got bad news. We're going to quit making the Edsel.” I said, “Well damn, you're putting me in a bad shape.” And this was right out of Detroit, ... from Ford Motor Headquarters, American Row. He says, “Charlie, we're going to take care of you.” I said, “Well, that's good news.” They said, “Yeah, ... come to (Dermott?) as soon as you can, in the next day or two.” They told me, I reckon, what day to come. And said, “We're gonna take care of you.” And I went to (Dermott?), and they paid me off. Paid me every penny. I was the happiest man in the world, you know, to recover. I was about the only one I ever heard of them doing that, but they did it. I got to meet—I never did meet this boy that is the head of it now, but the rest of them I got to meet, Henry and Benson. They were awful nice to me. And I wish I had a whole lot of their stock in the morning. It's going to be interesting to see what happens in the morning, on their stock.

PIEHLER: And you stayed with Ford. You had opened another dealership again after ...

MORTON: No, I didn't open any more Ford dealerships. No, I never did have another one after that.

PIEHLER: That was your last dealership?

MORTON: No. I had one here in town, but it wasn't Ford. They asked me ... up there, they said, “We got a dealership in Knoxville, Tennessee, that we'll give you.” Said, “You ain't got to put a penny in it! We'll give it to you, and all you got to do is go up and run it, and pay us back out of the profits.” And I came home and told Emma about it, and she said no, she didn't want to go. And then they said, “Well, if you don't like it, we've got one in Birmingham. We'll do the same thing with it.” Some great football or golf player—maybe it was a golf man—took it after I turned it down. It was a golf man. And I turned that down, too, and took a ... Rambler

dealership right here in Franklin. See, Rambler was small and very popular. They sold like hot cakes. And then Ford came to see me there, and tried to get me to take this Ford dealership here in Franklin. And I told them no. I didn't want it now. But they tried to get me to do that, and I didn't do it. And that was the last of my—and I had Chrysler/Plymouth with that too, and that's the last of my automobile business.

PIEHLER: When did you retire from the business?

MORTON: I never did retire. I never would use that word. I sold out of that one. I gave it away, I didn't sell it. And I got some money for it, but it wasn't ... adequate. And that was the end of franchise business. It's a good business. Changing now, a lot of changing in it now.

PIEHLER: The one question I had, you had mentioned about some of the things that was done to you when the—when the company restricted your quota. You mentioned Estes Kefauver, who worked to put an end to that. Could you talk a little bit more ...

MORTON: Yeah, Kefauver. I had that problem here in time with that \$6,000 rug, so they tried to pull the same thing on the Oldsmobile dealer at Gallatin, and this boy in Gallatin—I'm trying to think of his name. I know it, but it's not coming to me. He and Kefauver were buddies. He was maybe ... one of his representatives, whatever you call them, in that area up there, one of his campaign people, yeah. And he went to the Justice Department on that. And you know, that is—oh, I don't know what law that comes under. Oh I did know, and I do know, but I can't think.... But it's a terrible thing for them to restrict. And they had laws that—all of them were really against our labor—not labor, but whatever laws they were ...

PIEHLER: Well, it was a restraint to trade.

MORTON: A restraint to trade, yeah. Territory rights, and stuff like that, which is absolutely taboo.... And they enforced them to the very limit. And Kefauver broke all that up. He—I wish that boy could tell you. He could tell you. And I did know ... the story, and ... know it now, but I'm not able to tell it to you in a coherent way, how Kefauver did all that, but he did it.

PIEHLER: But you think this was one of his accomplishments?

MORTON: Oh, definitely. Definitely. He had a lot of good. He was a liberal, and he was a politician, but he was different from—his son used to stay in this house right here, with us. I have picked him up on the ... road drunker than Cooter Brown, hitchhiking. I was beginning to act like I didn't know Estes Kefauver. And I liked him. I reckon, I don't know whether his kid was (Chug?) or (Russell's?). He may have been (Russell's?), the age wise, yeah. Estes Kefauver. I don't know whatever happened to that boy. And his mother was a—I remember her real well. She was a redheaded woman. Came from Scotland. A Scotch woman. I think she had a lot of money. But Estes, he drank that whiskey. I mean, get drunk as a bicycle, too, right in the middle of the day.

-----END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: ... This continues an interview with Charles Morton, on April 16, 2000 in Franklin, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

HAMMOND: Kelly Hammond.

PIEHLER: I guess one of my last questions I often ask is, did we forget to ask you any questions about the war or about your life?

MORTON: I don't remember. I'm sure you did. (Laughter) And I'm sure I'll think of it later. You know, of course there's a whole lot more. A whole lot more went on than what you—what we were talking about, wasn't it?

PIEHLER: How often—how much—of what you've told us, how much have you told this to other people? I'm curious. Outside of your close friend, who went through ...

MORTON: Oh, I never did tell them very much. Oh, every once in a while, we used to get about half drunk and talk about it a little bit, maybe. (Sam Fleming?), I've told him about it. (Stuart Campbell?), I've told him some. Not that much, probably. Hmm.

HAMMOND: Did you ever tell (Chug?) anything?

MORTON: I don't know whether I ever told him that much or not. I doubt it.

PIEHLER: What about your wife? What did you tell your ...

MORTON: She wouldn't to listen to that stuff.

PIEHLER: She didn't want to talk about it?

MORTON: She wouldn't listen to that. Mm mm. And I didn't talk about it. All she wanted to talk about was something pretty, or money, or some place to go. Ain't that right?

HAMMOND: She was a goer. (Laughter)

MORTON: Yeah. She wanted to. Bless her heart. I'll tell you one thing. Of course, in latter years, I wasn't making any money, and lost a lot—hell, I lost \$150,000 in real money! A little over [\$150,000], last week. She would have died on that, wouldn't she? That was the only good thing about it, that she didn't know about it. That was the only consolation on me losing that money. And I was a damn fool. See, I write down—see, I've been in the market ever since I've been grown. All during those automobile years, that's all I ever—ninety percent of the time I was fooling with that market. And I wrote down there exactly what to do. It's on a tablet there. I wrote down, about thirty days ago, and I told my wife's niece—she's got a lot of money, and we talk about the market a lot. And I told her, said, "Now Monday, I'm going to sell all this stuff I got here, ... Ford Motor Company. I'm gonna buy ... Proctor and Gamble, and I'm going to buy Sun Trust." Said, "I'm going to take whatever money I've got, and I'm going to buy those three stocks." Well, all three of those went up, and all the rest of mine went to nothing,

just about. And I wrote it down to do it, and didn't do it. Mm hmm. So, therefore ...

HAMMOND: I have one more question about the war. Did you get any battle stars, or the Purple Heart?

MORTON: The only thing I got was those—the ones they give you for the battles. I think maybe six. Six, I reckon.

PIEHLER: When you got out of the Army, did they try to talk you into re-enlisting?

MORTON: Oh, they said something about it, but that went over like a soup sandwich. (Laughter) I didn't have any time for that. Oh yeah, they had that, and the programs, and what you want to sign up for, and all this and that. But I said, "Let me get out of here." That piece of paper was all I wanted. "You got me, you had me, and I'm gone." (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well, I want to thank you very much for taking all this time.

MORTON: Well, I'm glad to have you.

HAMMOND: Thank you.

MORTON: Enjoyed talking to you all. And I just wondered, how come you being a school teacher, instead of a merchant? I can't understand that. Your ancestors, I know somewhere back down the road, they were selling something. Huh?

PIEHLER: No, my mother's ...

MORTON: Your mother's side, did they sell anything?

PIEHLER: My mother's sides were originally French Huguenots. And my father's side, they were probably peasants. Peasants from southern Germany.

MORTON: My grandmother was a Frenchwoman. Very wealthy. And the war came on. Her father went off to war, and ... was killed in Atlanta, and buried in an unmarked grave. And she had a half brother, and she was young. And he took everything she had. He got everything. He was much older, you know. I was at a meeting one day, where some friends of mine were selling a pipeline down in Louisiana, and we went there, and this big office building in New Orleans. This pipeline belonged to (Stuart Campbell?), my wife's brother-in-law, and (Sam Fleming?), and they sent me down there. And Mr. (Endman?) was buying it. Not Mr. (Endman?). Mr. (Ingram?), who was at that time Tennessee's richest man. (Ingram?), you've heard of him. He was buying it, and we went down there in his office. In Louisiana, of course, they're under the code, the Napoleonic code, you know. They don't practice the same law we practice in the rest of the United States. And ... the chief man in a court of law in ... Louisiana is an old Republican. He sits there, he says "Yea" and "Nay" on everything. Have you ever been to court on one of them? Well, it is very interesting. He was—and I got to talking to him, and he was from the same place my grandmother was from, and in his office are all records. Says that has

been an establishment of the county of Paris—not a county—all the records are there. And you know how his title reads? You know how long he’s appointed for? Until death. But anyhow, they are the law, and—I asked him if he knew the family. That quick, he said “Yes.” He knew them. Mm hmm. And it was very interesting for him to sit there—and this was a big multimillion dollar deal, this pipeline that they were buying from Stuart and (Mr. Fleming?). I sat right next to him! He was sitting there handling the whole deal. (Pause)

PIEHLER: Well thank you again. We really appreciate it.

MORTON: Yeah. I’m glad to have you. And you can see that I’m a big talker. (Laughter)

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

Edited by Braum Denton 4/15/2004
Edited by Greg Kupsy 5/13/2004
Reviewed by Kurt Piehler 8/25/2004

Due to illness, Mr. Morton was unable to proofread the final copy of his interview.