

1/9/02
Begin Side A

Transcript of Daniel Burnstein's interview with Bob Harmon, 1-9-02.

BH: M__ was a place that was designed as an extermination camp, that they deliberately worked them to death there. In some cases doing rather nonsense work it was quarry. And I can't imagine that it was worthwhile to do what they did but they made people try to carry pieces of rock around this bloody quarry and it strikes me as inefficient. But it was obviously designed to just work them to death as they suffered more and more calorie depletion. Another questionable saying is killer can't be stopped from. You end up letting more. Unfortunately, Dauk__ wasn't a killer camp; Dauk__ was set-up as a prison. And a lot of people died there and they had a gas chamber that you can go visit, and maybe even learn something. No, what am I thinking? Dueken__ over at Dienmar was a killer camp. There's 7 or 8, I think there's 293 or something like that camps of one form or another.

DB: In the one that you mention, the name of that was?

BH: Edenza, za of course is a lake. It was a lake. And it's near Mauthausen. Mauthausen was a killer camp. Edenza was one of the ones that we made to be cleaned up. For Christ (chuckles), we were beat.

DB: To clean up in the sense?

BH: To pick up all the corpses, bury them, look after the other ones, clean up the ground.

DB: And this was a slave labor camp?

BH: Yes. But it was also a camp where a lot of people just plain died.

DB: Yeah. And, so when we got there we were assaulted by the spectacle of all these corpses?

BH: Yeah, they were still there. The actual liberation of the camp was done a few hours ahead of us by a light amour unit, a kind of scout car unit. And we had to work it with those people and one of the survivors down in San Francisco, an architect, a retired architect, Max Garcia, who was an inmate of the camp and was one of the first ones to welcome the Americans because he had some English. And, he pretty soon ended up literally attached in front of the R__, the second battalion of the 319. He had a uniform and he spoke several languages. Dutch kid, Dutch Jewish kid from the Jewish N__ community in Amsterdam.

DB: Did you get to know him?

BH: Only years later. We were in the same place at the same time, we must have talked at the same time, probably, but we didn't really know each other until 1999. And we've been corresponding since or we call back and forth. He's written a very fine book on the experience.

DB: Oyo. Do you know the name of that?

BH: Until I die, I think. Of course, I haven't given up. Until I die pretty much smacks it down.

DB: Garcia?

BH: Max Garcia. Safar__ Jew.

DB: Safar_ from Spain.

DB & BH talk together. Unintelligible

BH: There's a bunch of them here. There's some in Bremerton. A few graduates who have come to school at Seattle U. Based on what I knew from the families, they were some basketball players.

DB: This is Daniel Burnstein interviewing Bob Harmon at Seattle University on Jan. 9, 2002.

DB: So Bob, on your Dec. 16, 1944 letter, you talk about how you're learning words from the German-English Dictionary. And with your Sergeant's French, you and he were able to talk to just about anyone in the axis region. So, was that something new for you to learn, German, or had you learned it before, and did you enjoy that aspect? Was that kind of fun to try out your language skills in Europe?

BH: I needed to study the languages, Daniel. First of all, when you're talking to any potential prisoners you want to be able to assure them very clearly that they should come in they should surrender, they would be well-treated and so on. As far as learning any French, then you needed to deal with French civilians and so one would ask directions, or ask questions about the Germans, or try to bargain with them for food, for some French food. The words I learned was "eggs," for instance. (French word for eggs). And, you needed that. And we had a German-speaking Corporal who grew up speaking German here in the states in a Kansas wheat farm before he learned English. He learned English when he went to school. But he came from an area around St. Francis, Kansas where everyone spoke German. So he was willing to teach anyone who was willing to learn any German at all. So I spent a lot of time trying to learn things from him. Then we

had a French-Canadian Sergeant named Rudy DeCr____, and Rudy grew up speaking French and English together in the post-1920's New England area that brought so many of the French Kunuks down into the United States. So we had him, and then we had an Italian who spoke Italian at home, we had several Polish people who spoke Polish at home before they spoke English. So all of these were challenges but we also had the chance to learn bits and pieces of all those languages. The only formal language I had was Latin, which was of no use what's so ever except for trying to understand ____.

DB: So you were picking up German from your Corporal?

BH: Yes, and as rapidly as possible. And, also learned a lot of useful phrases off of the surrendering reports and then he would tell me how to pronounce them. It was those phrases that I used, for instance, later on in the fighting on the sac____ line.

DB: To?

BH: To talk people out of ____

DB: Out of a pillbox?

BH: Yeah, right.

DB: Now, the radio broadcast of December 29, 1944, the transcript of it, is it correct in characterizing your division and your squad in your division as having fought in Normandy in the Fal____ pocket, where the German 7th army was routed. It cut it's way across the Seine, the mo____, and the Mu____, and it threw the first bridge at across the Mouselle.

BH: As far as I know, we were the first ones to breach the Mouselle. We crossed 30 rivers, so crossing or just cross without having to fight our way across 30 rivers.

DB: Either fighting or not fighting?

BH: Yeah. I think we made 11 assault crossings across the Mouselle. If you take a take a look at the Mouselle and the sort of wormlike, snaking and side-wander passage every time you turn around, you cross it again to go someplace. Yeah, I think we made 11 crossings in the Mouselle. I think they're all assault crossings.

DB: So they were all very difficult?

BH: Most of them were, yes, very much so.

DB: And so, some of the others were and some of the others were not?

BH: Yes, this would be true.

DB: And this is 30 in France?

BH: 30 in France, Luxemburg, and Germany. For instance, when we crossed the Ur valley and the Ur River which separates Luxemburg and Germany, that was an assault crossing, right under the guns of the S____. When we crossed the Rhine, we crossed on the fifth division's bridgehead near Meines. So, all we had to do was get in the boat which the navy had there for us, and just sail across. It probably took 20 minutes without hard waters. Some other cases you could spend days, depending on what was on the other side. So, yes, anyway, we were in Normandy.

DB: Basically you were?

BH: Yes, Normandy, the first fighting was in Normandy. And I was really not involved in any Normandy fighting. I saw traces of it, I saw the effects, I could hear it, but, except for one engagement there where one of my friends was killed, an aid man was killed by a German sniper, I really didn't see anything. All I saw was the effects. So I really got eased into battle very nicely.

DB: They're not supposed to kill aid men, right?

BH: No, they're not. People did, though. In Vietnam, and I think the Japanese did this too, but in Vietnam, eventually, I guess the enemy there got to shooting, specifically, the aid men. And one of the English teachers upstairs, Dan Doyle, was an aid there attached to Marines and Dan, apparently, didn't wear his red crosses. He knew that...

DB: Because of the war?

BH: Yeah, I think Dan carried a 45, you can ask him. Anyway, once in a while Germans would shoot aid men. Other cases they wouldn't. And some cases, they were very careful about the wounded. A matter of fact, there's a case some place where some Germans were good about American wounded, I forget how this went, and the Americans were out in the middle of nowhere, and the Americans appreciated this, and sneaked up the next night or so and left a case of cigarettes or something out there for the Germans - just a sort of *quid pro quo*. But that was a rare operation. Anyway...

DB: Was, generally, historians tend to think that generally the fighting with the Germans was, there was more a sense of respect for aid than with the Japanese.

BH: Absolutely true.

DB: But there were exceptions as you just pointed out. And this in turn would get you angry.

BH: Yes, certainly. I think I told you the story – I still own the bloody bandages on the armband from my friend who was killed, the aid man who was killed, in Normandy. I have his bandages sitting at home, or his armbands with his blood on it. You can come up there and poke around some day. Anyway...

DB: In your Jan. 13, 1945 letter, you talk about how Luxemburg men often carried M-1 rifles off the dead and wounded and used them to help Gig's in the breakthrough in the Arnden. And you indicated in a later comment in the 1990s that you would like to elaborate on the Luxemburg volunteers. Can you tell us a little about that now?

BH: A little bit, I should wait until I look at some notes. I've researched that a couple of times during my June visits to Luxemburg during commemoration exercises, but a matter of fact, today's mil brought a letter from Luxemburg from a son of one of the leaders of the Luxemburg resistance. And he is talking about how much the Germans were despised and hated, and how happy the resistance was to try to injure the Germans in any way they possibly can. One of the things I want to copy, and I'll make you a copy this afternoon, is that letter from Luxemburg which came today. It was a Christmas letter.

DB: Thank you.

BH: Sure. Our experience with the French in Marquis had been to be very wary of them because we weren't quite sure, especially in Al____, whether or not they were being helpful or whether or not they were actually German, German sympathizers, German spies. But with the Luxemburgers there wasn't any doubt. But we were still, at that time, a little gun shy. Yeah, there's a lot of incidents about them. I've gone to a lot of trouble to ask people who study this thoroughly, the Luxemburg History Society, are very clear about the fact that this happened. I can look over notes sometime. Specifically, there's a woman named Mary At____ who's the Vice President of the American Friends Association in Luxemburg. And I asked her to research this for me and she came back with a whole bunch of stories. But, yeah, this did happen. And I know the people who write this letter to me, I know the family very well. As a matter of fact, I'd like to get their kid over here to lecture. He's going to school in the United States.

DB: Did you say that you'd see some of these guys sometimes who would carry these rifles?

BH: Yeah, you would. That's why I mentioned it.

DB: It must have been reassuring, I guess.

BH: Yes, reassuring and at the same time, you look at the civilian who's carrying a rifle and you wonder, you just got to wonder.

DB: But you were more concerned in France?

BH: Yes, in Eastern France, not in Western France. It took us a while to get disenchanted or suspicious...

DB: In Eastern France? Did you come across some civilian para-military Vichy sympathizers?

BH: No.

DB: But you heard about them?

BH: You heard about them. You saw them in the Stars and Stripes photographs. And we probably saw some of those people at one time or another, but I don't recall them. In other words, you would see them and the local villagers usually mistreating them. But I don't recall specifically.

DB: Did you see the mistreatment in terms of, like, women having their heads shaved off?

BH: Well, I bet I did but I don't remember it. You know, some memories are very vivid. That should be but I can't say that I can recall a single incident of it or that I saw it.

DB: Now, Bob, in that same letter you use the word "fun." And you use it a couple of times during your letters. And I was just wondering, in those days, was the word "fun" actually in the...In the newspapers that your mom sent to you about the battles, you'd comment that it's fun to read the accounts of these things and some of the things we had a hand in. And you tell Neil in another letter, "I'm doing okay and having a lot of fun considering my position." So, I was just wondering if the word "fun" in those days was sort of an idiomatic expression that today would mean "cool" or "neat," you know how they express these today.

BH: That's an excellent question. I would say that "fun" has, of course, several different meanings and has them still today. One of them was that this is a certain sense of pleasure involved in it or a certain sense of enjoyment, that there are many things that go on that the G.I.'s were very humorous so there would be lots of laughter about sometimes very innocent things, sometimes very serious, and once in a while, something very deadly. But G.I jokes under fire, there are multitudes of them. So, things that would happen that would be amusing to you. Or, that would have been dangerous and the danger passed by and all that you were left with was a sense of amusement. But, these were young, interesting, vigorous young men; they were enjoyable to be around. So, it was that sense of

fun. Another, it was a pleasure to be able to read about battles in which we had taken place or we had taken part, and to realize that those battles were being appreciated and witnessed the news in the newspaper.

DB: Sense of pride, then?

BH: Yeah, there's a sense of that pride. So, it was fun in the same sense we would use that now. There's another, very touching, use of that word, and I wrote a little specific paragraph about it sometime and I'll give you a copy of it. I said, somewhere in the summer of 1945 I wrote a letter about a patrol which I survived and there had been a lot of interesting things that had happened, and when I wrote about it to my parents, I said something about "it was dangerous, but somehow it was kind of fun." And then I aligned this deal with a previous reference of mine to the Battle of the Bulge, and no one ever said that about the Battle of the Bulge, that it was fun. Playing cops and robbers, as I'm sure you and every little kid who ever lived or grew up, it had that sort of adventure. But that was not true of the Battle of the Bulge. That was frightening, but it was fun. It was grim simply because it was cold and it was very dangerous, we had 80,000 casualties. You know, that's not fun. But running around the, specifically, the patrols near Weimar, I was running around in a park and we captured some German officers. One was a Lieutenant and I shot the Lieutenant and wounded him. And we got away with that and a couple of other things, and I had a kind of "Gee-whiz, I'm running around getting away with this stuff, and it's pretty dangerous." And it's cops and robbers.

DB: And you didn't have any casualties?

BH: Not in our group. We had four or five men patrol, so once we heard there were Germans out there and we were supposed to go find them.

DB: In your Jan. 23rd letter, you say, "Say hello to Dot and Susan for me if they're still at home. I'll wait and if maybe, if Dot decides to stay."

BH: These are close relatives. Dot is my cousin; she just died about three weeks ago, as a matter of fact, in her eighties. Her daughter is a very brilliant girl named Susan down in...

DB: So she's your age?

BH: My cousin who just died is closer to my age. I'll be 77 in April. Her daughter would be 22-20, maybe 18, years younger.

DB: Oh, I see. So the Susan at that time...

BH: Susan was a baby. But Dot had lived with us. She was married to an airline pilot. Anyway, she stayed with us for a while, and she was always a favorite because

her father was one of the great uncles of all time. So we were always pleased to see her come, in part because her dad was a favorite in the family. So, it was just family members.

DB: Well, then you comment that Jean...

BH: Jean McDonald

DB: ...when her first two letters were late in arriving, "I just said the hell with answering any of hers at all." Now, Bob, did you convince yourself when you did not get those letters that it was over, was it a relief, a sort of letting go, not having to have that other part of your life when you have to concentrate so hard on the combat and everything? Or...?

BH: I don't know if I told you this story, but Jean McDonald's a very wonderful girl. And the two of us discussed in a kind of abstract, very interesting way whether or not we would ever get married. We were high school seniors. She was a woman whom one would be proud to marry, pleased to marry, and would be lucky to marry. She was going off to college and so we discussed this. And I said, "Who knows when or if I'm going to be back? We may as well forget this and if someday we see each other again, fine." And when I was home on leave, one time I went to Whitman to visit her there and it was a sort of goodbye. But, we would continue to write. So, what you get there is me thinking is, "Well, if Jeanie didn't write, well, that's okay, she didn't write. That's another connection from home that's been severed. And, that's just the way to go." Other than that, I just can't way what I was thinking. It certainly would not be relief at losing a connection. But there wasn't any sense that this was some almost-opportunity to marry that I had – there wasn't going to be any marriage for sure, either for Jean or for me. And we were smart enough at 18 to know that, which pleases me. At any rate, Jeanie and I are still in touch. And I think that I've told you, I have permission from Jeanie to refer to her letters.

DB: Right, now by relief, I certainly did not mean relief that you would not hear from her, but more a sense of not being able to deal with thoughts of a serious relationship while you're having to focus on this combat.

BH: No, that would not obtain. It's too widely separated. The idea of any sort of romance for people at home would certainly be unreal about it, not surreal perhaps, but unreal because it was so far away and so different. Jeanie was just a very interesting person who apparently was writing at the time, and I found out later that she was. I kept the letters. As a matter of fact, one of her letters was folded into my paybook the night I swam the Ur River, around the 9th or 10th of February '45. It was folded and it was many pieces of paper in plastic so it didn't get wet. I carried her letters. Obviously, I was interested in Jean, still am. I'm very proud of her, but not in that way, you know, potential marriage, it was just

that abstract thing that we would make a good couple 'cuz we were st__ together in high school and we liked each other. We would have made a good couple.

DB: Did it hurt your feelings when you...?

BH: Oh no, I don't think so. I may have been disappointed but I can't say, you know how young kids are. She was certainly the first serious possibility of a romance, not a romance but the possibility at 17 or 18. Great woman, great woman. A valedictorian.

DB: Apparently a smart girl.

BH: No kidding, no kidding.

DB: In another letter you say that this _____ was really something. January 23rd.

BH: That, I think by coincidence, is now part of the formal finish of the Battle of the Bulge, I'm not sure. In many cases, I think I said that I always thought of it as going on in the end of January. Anyway, it was pretty well wiped up by then.

DB: Well, when do you say, "It won't be long until the finale." So, it does...one of the lawyers that I'm reading about the war stated that "when the men begin to get the sense that it won't be long until the finale, then," and I'm quoting, "we can demand to make war as the war of Europe approached its end."

BH: Whose war, the Germans or ours?

DB: Europe's.

BH: Well, maybe it did for some people. Most of us were made more careful and a lot more suspicious of orders from anybody who didn't know exactly what they were doing or whom you didn't trust. I've talked about this with officers _____ who wanted to discuss it, other officers not men of my own regiment, that you're always afraid that some Lieutenant was going to get you killed or some Sergeant who got transferred in. One of those patrols that I was on, one that showed up in the newspapers, that was actually supposed to be led by a tech Sergeant, John Bean, who was a nice guy but just came in from some operation. I don't know what he did but he wasn't a Corporal. I led that patrol as much as anybody. I was the one who told John what to do, which he appreciated. So, it was always, you know, if you get someone who won't listen and they want the strikes, they can get you killed. But of course, chance can get you killed. We just got more careful, and I got more and more concerned about being killed in the last few days before the war ended. We knew it was going to end. Eisenhower said the same thing. Eisenhower made his guess before September and he was wrong. The Captain made the guess and he was wrong. But they were both realizing that this was a chance to kill off the last of the German power, the last stirring up that was. That

- wasn't appreciable really on that level to me, at my level. But we were smart enough to realize that...
- DB: It was the beginning of the...
- BH: We could see the beginning of the end because you could see the quality of the men you were capturing or killing, for one thing. You were right at war with these old-timers, these reservists of some sort who got called up and didn't really have that much training. We got a lot of the good ones because we were fighting some paratroopers but mostly armor divisions, some SS armor. They were good.
- DB: This is at a West Wall...
- BH: It was a part of the West Wall before we got there. The people who were there seeing the West Wall weren't really that good. A lot of them were in their 40s and they got called up, didn't have much training. They would kill you, though.
- DB: Right.
- BH: Like this First Sergeant who was just called down from Ft. Lewiston today from Galveston. Apparently he was killed by a youngster. Like the head of our company regiment headquarters when I was stationed up there was killed by a young boy with a bazooka.
- DB: You're beginning to see youngsters towards the end?
- BH: Yes, that's right. But the ones we really saw were once we got into Germany. As a matter of fact, the story that appeared in the newspapers is really a broadcast about on the same day I captured a whole bunch of war prisoners who were sick. And that same morning, as I ran down patrol, shot a Lieutenant, captured four or five of his kids and they were all 16 or 17 years old. Right on the same day. So in the morning you did the little kids and in the afternoon the old men, or vice versa, I forget which way it went. But that made the national news.
- DB: I didn't realize there were youngsters.
- BH: Yeah there were youngsters.
- DB: Bob, you mention at one point that you hadn't heard from your parents in a couple of weeks because of the mail. Was that really difficult when you wouldn't hear from them for a while?
- BH: Not really in the sense that I wonder if my parents have forgotten me because you knew they hadn't. You just knew that the mail was not coming up. And you needed something every day if you could possibly get it, so it was a big case when the guards would come up with the mail, the ammunition and the rations. It was just different, it was something to do. Imagine what it would be like if you

stripped all of the books out of this office and you sat here every day with nothing to do. You look forward to anything. So mail call, food, and ammunition were big things. So that would be all.

DB: Who is Ernie ___ and Chuck O'Neil?

BH: They're grade school classmates of mine. Both of them were in the Navy. So, you just kept following because our Catholic school was very small so you knew everyone intimately. So, you just kept following their fortunes.

DB & BH talk simultaneously, unintelligible.

BH: _____ went down to die on a cruiser, a carrier at Bunker Hill. Also, Carrie, a guy who is still alive, he's one of Jenna's relatives by marriage, he married Ellen Jo C____, who was my first-ever high school date. And is a cousin of Jen's. And these two guys are sitting around talking, "Where are you from? Where are you from?" And, "Do you know?" "She's my fiancé." Yeah, they both survived it. And O'Neil survived it also.

DB: I think my dad was in the Bismarks.

BH: Was he?

DB: Yeah, I think so.

BH: I don't know, I don't know. Well, anyways, that was grade school and high school.

DB: Well, in the 1950s, apparently, you wrote _____ of the attack into the West Wall. I assume that's the same thing with the Sacred _____.

BH: Yes, it is. We called it the Siegfried, which is an error from the first World War carried into the second World War. There was a so-called Siegfried mine in Eastern France, in Belgium, in the first World War that the Germans had, and it was attacked by many divisions. And the Americans did break through it, near S____, the old 1870s...September 1870 battleground. The name just held on. And so you've got, for instance, a British song, "I'll hang out my washing on the Siegfried mine." The Germans always called it the West Wall, the _____.

DB: It was really tough, a lot of pillboxes, and a river as well so it was difficult.

BH: Well, not every p____ place had a river in front of it, of course, but they were all well-sided from the defense point of view and badly-sided from an attack point of view. And they were in depth, so there would be one behind the other, so your tape recorder would be one pillbox, and my glass of water would be another, and that suitcase up there would be another one on a hilltop. And these guys would be

firing guns at these people, who were firing guns at the people attacking the forts down here. It made a mess. And we lost a lot of people until we finally just brought up self-propelled artillery, and I've talked about that before, it's in the letters. But we brought up direct-fire 155 ml rifles, 6-inch rifles, and they fired directly into these pillboxes. One shot and we'd finish the pillbox. It was several days before we got it up there.

DB: Are those hand-held?

BH: Oh no, 155ml rifle is a cannon, an artillery piece. It must be 16-14 feet long, something like that. I don't know what it weighs. It fires a shell that weighs a 100 pounds.

DB: And that would penetrate the...?

BH: That would penetrate the steel doors. Nothing would penetrate those 6-foot thick concrete pillboxes. They had steel doors on them. You would zero in on the steel doors with a coaxial mounted, 50-caliber machine gun with tracer ammunition. With the 50 caliber bouncing off the steel door because once it started firing those little bullets would go inside the pillbox and ricochet like crazy and kill people in there and scare the hell out of everyone involved. So they closed the little steel doors with these tiny slits. Well, they couldn't fire out of a steel door but they could see out. Then the coaxial machine gun fired a bullet as big as the end of your finger. I'll bring you one; I've got a slug from a 55. It would bounce off the steel doors and after 4-5 rounds ___ then the coaxial 50 caliber would stop because it knew that the canon, the artillery piece, should hit exactly where those machine guns had hit. So they'd fire and almost always it did in one shot. Every once in a while it would have jiggled a little so that the ___ itself was placed differently, they were a lot of ta___ so they would rock back and forth like a cloud. Something could have happened or the alignment on the gun, on the machine gun, could have changed a little bit, so they might have to correct and fire a second shot. But they didn't do that very often. Usually, it was the first shot. So a shell about this long would come sailing through, it go quick through the building.

DB: ___ indicated that about this long is about 1 foot and a half?

BH: About 2 feet. I'll get the exact measurements for you.

DB: About two feet?

BH: Yeah, about 6 inches in diameter so they're a big shell. They weigh about 100 pounds.

DB: At the beginning of your recollections, you write that you would receive orders to withdraw and regroup. And that's when you and Bill Schaefer tried to go find the rest of the squad. Unintelligible.

BH: What day? That's like the night of February 7th.

DB: You're writing your recollections so you didn't actually...

BH: Oh, that's the attack on the West Wall.

DB: What had transpired into battle up to that point?

BH: I think we dragged our boats down from the road, where there's a marker now with comments from me on it, honoring me and a little photograph of me. I think we dragged our boats down to the river from that little departure point, got in the boat, boat got tipped over and shells came in, everybody swam or straggled back to shore.

DB: These are shells from the Germans?

BH: German shells, yeah, they were landing all around us. Damn lucky to survive that. And so we had lost the boat, so we scampered back up the hill. Apparently, I was with Bill and if it weren't that it would've been with my friend, Joe Rag____. I know that I wasn't particularly good at telling this story but I tried to help him by carrying his rifle. We got separated there. So I had Joe's rifle, I had two rifles with me.

DB: And then you went back to look for the rest of your squad?

BH: They would've been scattered around this hill. I ended up that night at a house on top of this hill. And this house was hit very badly by shellfire that night and the only room that didn't get hurt was my room. So, myself and the others were in the kitchen at the back of the house. I don't know how the walls were stilted. So if the shell hit the outer wall, it exploded in. All of that shrapnel and all of the stilt, which it was propelling, flew into the interior. And if you were in the interior, you were in severe danger and would probably get killed. But, if you were behind the next wall, unless there was some royal mishap, you wouldn't get hurt at all because there would be a still wall between you and all of this flying steel and rock and mortar.

DB: Now you mention in the farmhouse that the people there were attending to the wounded who were lucky enough to be picked up. Now does that imply that there was fear that the Germans might shoot the wounded rather than take them prisoner?

- BH: Oh, I don't know what the reference is, I'd have to see that again. I have the hunch that I'm talking about trying to crawl around in the dark and try to find the wounded there. It was absolutely dark when they made that attack.
- DB: You were in the farmhouse?
- BH: Yeah, if this is that farmhouse on the first night of the attack on the 7th and 8th. I remember that transcription, it's three or four pages single-space typed. I'd have to look at it, Dan.
- DB: Okay. Was there generally a fear that the Germans might shoot the wounded?
- BH: No, I don't think so. I suppose that we knew that they might want to because everybody knew that they killed people at Normandy. That the Normandy massacre from the Battle of the Bulge began back on the 17th or 18th of December, and they killed a whole bunch of people – 88 people or more. So, we knew that they'd do it. But, no, I suppose we just crawled around trying to find these people. You'd hear them cry out. If they were unconscious, you'd be feeling for them.
- DB: Let me ask you another related question, if that's okay. (side conversation). In a later situation, you note that you had argued with some GI's who wanted to shoot German POWs in an area where the Germans were about to recapture.
- BH: Oh, that's in Germany. I've got a letter on that someplace. There's a formal letter written about that and I know there's some comments on that I've written recently since the war. All I know, I can't even tell you where it was, but the town was surrounded with a big counter-attack. And there was a rumor that the counter-attack looked like it was strong enough so that they might overrun a position that we had. I was with that Ranger group and we had a truck that had a machine gun on it. The machine gun was a 30-caliber machine gun. And I had taken it and I was at one end of one of those courtyard German houses, very typical courtyard German houses, all these prisoners, I don't know how many, maybe 30-40, down in it. And there was my machine gun on one end and then there was another machine gun on the other end. Well, the counterattack began and it looked like we might have to leave. There was a serious discussion amongst some people I don't really like "well, should we machine gun these Germans first?" Well, my comments on this and I've always told my students, I was not moved by any sense of Christian charity but by the fear that if we were really surrounded in the attack and we shot all those Germans, then there was no point in trying to surrender. We'd have to fight to the death because the Germans would be extremely unhappy if the Germans found a courtyard of dead compadres of theirs.
- DB: Is that what you refer to as the L_____, that's what that means?

- BH: Yes. L_____ is a moral background about why you couldn't possibly do that or allow it to happen.
- DB: But at that time it is L_____?
- BH: At that time, I was 19 years old and just happy to survive this. But I just knew it was a dumb idea from a fighting point of view. If the Germans overrun us and we have a courtyard full of Germans, they're going to ask questions.
- DB: Did you know people...you talk about revenge that you took on German POWs in which you made them march in a humiliating cadence, I'm quoting the officer and the officer really didn't like that. But, did you know any other acquaintances of your who took worst revenge on the Germans?
- BH: Excellent question. I can't tell you a single one now. I bet that there were. I could probably, as a matter of fact I will, I will ask some of the other men I knew with whom I didn't serve but are still alive. But there's one men, two or three men from my company that are still alive. I'll ask them for the sake of what we're doing. I don't remember anybody else doing this sort of petty thing but that was the afternoon in which we took some Germans out of a German pillbox on the Siegfried line. They had an officer with them and he was not happy about the fact that I made them march. But I was there with them, I suppose that I was carrying a rifle but I may have been carrying a sub-machine gun.
- DB: I think you mention a colt 45.
- BH: Oh, if I had the 45 I would have been waving it. I acquired that 45, that was probably a Browning 45 by the way.
- DB: Last time, what was the town? Do you know the name of the town that you and Bill Schaefer ran back to at dawn the next day to try to find your squad?
- BH: Oh, yes. Hoesdorf, that's the German name. There's a Luxemburger name too, but we'll just use the German name. Hoesdorf will do just fine; they all know where it is. I think there's something like 11 or 13 houses in the town when I first saw it in '45. There are more there now, but not many. Pleasant little village but no reason to live there unless you like the countryside, there are no jobs. My closest friend there is a cabinetmaker. So he can work all over Luxemburg and do all the work for Luxemburg that he wants to do in his own basement. There's not a lot of jobs like that.
- DB: Now, 12 men of a squad that you ____ plus 3 more from the other squad were all that to come out of the mess in one piece from the 36 men in opt__ two, that's what you said. Did you mean, "by the mess," did you mean the 10 days of action to take the West Wall?

BH: Yes, right.

DB: Whoa.

BH: That doesn't mean we didn't get a lot of them back.

DB: They were wounded when they came back?

BH: Yes, they returned. I remember writing in another letter maybe somewhere, well towards the end of the year, that the wall of people who had been in that group are, I think, the only one left in the regiment by that time. Everyone else had either been shipped home or had gone home wounded or something.

DB: I wanted to ask you why you talked about the man who stood up, that's the man who lost his nerve to surrender.

BH: We'll never know. He didn't try to surrender, he just stood up. That's the amazing thing about it.

DB: And then the GI took, but he had a white flag?

BH: Oh no.

DB: But in your letter, it indicates that he had a white flag.

BH: The original letter?

DB: Yeah.

BH: Oh, I should read that again. I apologize. That's good, I'm glad you know that, see, I don't. I never knew why he stood up.

DB: Said he lost his nerve and then the GI shot him.

BH: If he stood up to surrender, then the Germans would shoot at him too. He's in double jeopardy. That's interesting. I just made...

DB: That may be why he lost his nerve.

BH: Yeah, or someone may have called to him and said, "Don't be a damn fool." Another reason to do this is that this is a memory that has certainly drifted away from accuracy.

DB: Well, actually, this is not your original letter, now that I think of it. It's your 1950's recollection.

End of Side A

Begin Side B

DB: Why did you mention this to the psychologist and psychiatrist that you talked to at...?

BH: Oh, I just thought they would be very interested because none of them, I don't think any of them, had ever been in combat. They were all high-ranking officers and none of them had seen actual combat or had to deal with it. All they had to deal with it in theory; they had to know what to think about. So, I gave them this as a story that is an im__ one: Why did this man wait until dawn to do what he did? If indeed he was going to surrender, then I suppose it made sense. But even that was awfully dangerous because, as I said, the Germans would shoot their own people for surrendering. I just don't know, but I know I talked to the Tripler guys because each of them was a _____ and many of them had their doctorate also. And they were very much interested in the kinds of fear on the battlefield, and that's what my job was like, describing fear on the battlefield.

DB: So it was a VA hospital?

BH: It's the most famous hospital on the Pacific. It's *the* medical hospital in the army in the Pacific Tripler. And one of the reasons I get assigned there is it's got great quarters, great reputation, good faculty and it's close to Honolulu, downtown Honolulu. It's quite a deal. And there's a girl of ours, a graduate of ours, who is herself an MA army Captain, retired now, who is the wife of the Chief of Psychiatry at Tripler when I was there. He's about to get out of the army and go into private practice. He's stationed at Gig Harbor, well, stationed in Ft. Lewis. But she was one of the most brilliant graduates we ever had from up here at this school; she was something else. And she married a great guy who's an army Colonel.

DB: Did you guys feel sorry for the man who stood up?

BH: I don't think the men who shot at him did. I don't remember if I felt sorrow, I hope I did. But I just remember being taken aback by this whole thing and realizing that I could shoot at him but there was no need to. He was going to die. And that somehow or other I didn't want to be further involved in the process. I remember drawing down on him because he was an easy shot, about 150 yards or so.

DB: "Drawing down" means?

BH: Oh, aiming at him. I think that's an enlisted expression.

DB: Bob, in your Feb. 12th letter you're writing your family, and it says, "It's been kind of tough a couple of times and I've been worried a long time about my ability to hold up my end of the job. But I'm getting along all right now. I'll be all right because I'm thinking of you constantly and trying to do my best for you." Now was this written after the battle fatigue incident?

BH: Yes, exactly. Of course, I couldn't explain until the next summer.

DB: Right. Did that incident take place during the 10 days outside the West Wall?

BH: Yes, it took place the second or third night on the attempt to, on the second attempt to cross the river Ur. I don't know when that was; it might have been on the night of the 9th.

DB: February?

BH: Yes. We waited a whole day to try to reassemble that attack. Anyway, it took place somewhere between the 7th and the 10th of February. It was the only aberration like that that I really had, sort of my, I was prescient there seeing that. "Okay, I've had my fair fit now. I'm through with that." And after that I didn't have any problems again.

DB: Those words that you used, "I'm thinking of you constantly and trying to do my best for you," did those words help you to elaborate on your motives and the motives of your buddies for helping you?

BH: Oh yeah, I think so. Particularly it might be of value to use simply in terms of your understanding or appreciation of what we were doing and going through and certainly in the writing of this book. You need some sort of inspiration, and my parents were both very inspirational people, very supportive people in every way. So, I know that what I had done was, when I was going to try to refuse duty, was not the sort of thing Dad would have done. And, so again, thinking about him was one of the reasons I was able to say, "Okay, you can't do that."

DB: And you said, related to the boat, "You have no idea what a comfort and enjoyment it is to have a couple of photos from the family."

BH: We were a very close family; and a great deal of understanding as well as respect, I think, on the part of my brother and myself toward our parents – we realized how lucky we were in our parents. Still talk about them every once in a while.

DB: You say here on the 3rd of March, "Of all the ways to speed up a man's mental throes, I think there is none better than the service." Now you were writing this to your dad in regard to your dad worrying about Neil joining the service beyond his guidance. So, would you like to elaborate a little on your statement?

BH: Well, I think we were probably both concerned about Neil simply because he was 18. And we knew that he was going to be going into the Air Force. And he wanted to fly, and he would probably make, if they had continued to train flyers, he probably would have made flight status. He certainly had all the training in the sense of, and abilities in the sense of, math and everything that's requisite to that kind of thing. He could have been a flyer bombardier and he would have been an excellent navigator for us, for instance, because he really is a wiz at math to this day. And he could, he had good physical health. Anyway, we were just concerned about what would happen to him, that kind of thing. My biggest concern was that he might possibly end up as an infantry replacement either in the Pacific or in Europe, and that I did not want. But otherwise, my experience in the military was very positive, as you know. I'm sure from everything I've said and what you see when you read that stuff. I realize that a lot of it was just plain nonsense in some ways; a lot of people there were pretty foolish. But the majority of the men, the majority of the officers, and ____, I think, served very well. And I think that I learned from them. I had been prepared by my father, who had, after all, been involved in two different wars, to understand the military, that it has its foibles in its visible moments. But, it also, it's a very good training exercise. All you have to do is survive it – that's the big problem: not only to go to the school but survive it.

DB: I think that what you said right after it, kind of related to it is...I want to check this out with you. You said that when you and Neil return, that you will be "far more able to fight for a place for ourselves in the world."

BH: Well, we were Depression kids, you know; nobody gave you anything except the GI Bill. If you wanted to, you could draw unemployment but that was not an option in our family, never, never, never.

DB: So, you thought the army would...the experience would...?

BH: Yeah, but not only that, it was just not something that you would do.

DB: Right, but the army would help you to be able to struggle.

BH: Right, you learn how to survive. You learn how to get along with people. It's like going to camp when you're a grade school kid or a boy scout, only it's a much more severe camp.

DB: Now, on March 9th, you say to leave AT off your address...

BH: Yeah, "anti-tank."

DB: ...Just make it regimental headquarters. "It's a real break for me."

BH: By that time they had really nailed down the function of the Ranger Platoon. Effectively, that's what we had been. And that's one reason I was assigned as a bazooka guy in the Second Battalion in the Hoesdorf and the crossing of the Ur was that this was

one of the sorts of things that rangers were designed to do. And, I think also, there was sort of an embarrassing notion that here you have 30 or 35 young men, all who are fairly well-trained and all experienced, standing around regimental headquarters during Siegfried line attack. That wouldn't look good at all. But on top of that, Castello, Colonel Castello, wanted to prove that he had this brilliant idea – the sort of shock trip___ of his own, if you will – and that's what we were. I don't know if I told you this story, but he was there one day in the midst of fighting the Siegfried line when I came in with a man over my shoulder, the wounded guy, Sergeant ____ got wounded, and he and I were together. And I carried him back. We had to wear these stupid little blue bandanas that Castello wanted his rangers to wear. So when Castello saw me coming in and I'm wearing the bandana and the guy I'm carrying has got one. And Castello was ecstatic. He put me in for a decoration immediately. Somebody else had the sense to squash it (chuckles). I didn't get it but I was recommended for both the bronze and the silver star, it never came through. I finally got a bronze star for something else. But Castello was just delighted – “these are my boys.”

DB: Did the job that you got because you could type, that was after...?

DB & BH talk simultaneously; unintelligible.

BH: The war ended in the 7th and 8th of May, and somewhere that summer, I realized that I might as well put my typing skills to work because that would mean that I would only work certain hours during the day, no point guard or anything. And I did something I've done two or three other times to promote myself into a job like that, once in Indian Oil: I simply went in and borrowed a typewriter. I can type like crazy. Jim Hogan's probably the best typist in the building; I'm not that far behind. \

DB: Oh yeah, I've seen you out there.

BH: Yeah, but Jim is accurate, I'm not. And people say, “Oh, he can type,” well, not an awful lot of people could. So the First Sergeant who was responsible for the paperwork knew where I was using the typewriter. So sometime that summer, I can figure it out I suppose, they just transferred me to a small-time typing job, company clerk or something. So that meant that I was off of midnight guard and all that garbage. I'd just get up and go to work in the morning at 7:00 or whatever. I pulled a normal day. It was a smooth move on my part. I was glad to change. Running around in motorized patrols in the countryside was great fun. We played the tour of Austria, and Germany, and Czechoslovakia. That was fun.

DB: Yeah, in jeeps.

BH: Yeah, in jeeps.

DB: Did you drive the jeeps?

BH: No, I was always the rifle guy. I could, but I was always the rifle guy.

DB: So, you could but did you ever drive?

BH: I was taught. No, not in the army but I may have driven a vehicle once or twice. Mother taught us to drive, so we both could drive when we were 16, I suppose.

DB: What was it like riding in a jeep?

BH: A little hard because the seats...you know, the jeep isn't any bigger than your desk almost. They only sit 40 inches high and your desk is what, 32 inches.

DB: Just a front seat, no back seat?

BH: There was a back seat. Jump seats they were called. You'd seat about 6 people in them sometimes, all hanging onto one another. Comfortable seats for two – the driver and one passenger; adequate seats for 4 with the jumpers in the back. I've got pictures of bringing in German prisoners and there'd be prisoners draped all over the jeep. I'll show you sometime.

DB: So it's a little bumpy, you said?

BH: Oh yeah, they were fairly hard springs, they had to be.

DB: But they were able to go just about anywhere.

BH: Yes, that was their great charm. They had four-wheel drive and really big corridors in the tires, guts in the tires, so there was a lot of grab in those wheels. The jeep was one of the great inventions of the war.

DB: Bob, was it emotional for the anti-tank company to be split up and dissevered?

BH: Oh yes, very much so because, with the exception of myself and the other 33 or 34 men, they all went off to rifle companies, and they all got hurt, I think. I doubt that any of them survived without getting hurt, there may have been somebody...well, I can check exactly. At the end of the war, when I was company clerk, I made a list, I think it's 17 names, of the men who were still around, who had gone overseas with me and had gone someplace, that were either in the Ranger group or were assigned to the company and were still around. So, the summer was spent welcoming people back, who had been wounded usually for the second time. I think all of my friends...There might be, for instance, there was a guy named McGarvey, who was a really close friend, and McGarvey went off to work for the company. He was a very eloquent soldier, to say the least; he made Sergeant right away. McGarvey may have made it but I don't know. But I can look at the list and find out. There were all the rest of these people and there were 17 of us. I had all the regimental records in front of me; I had nothing else to do.

DB: Didn't a lot of men, you say, come back in the summer of '45?

BH: Yes, right, I remember almost specifically when someone would walk in. One of them was a guy named Oliver whom everybody just loved, for instance. Oliver had gotten a second wound and came back, it was sometime in the early summer of '45. Everybody was delighted to see Sergeant Oliver because he was great fun and...good people came back like that.

DB: Did...this is a letter from Sergeant Mitchell in March.

BH: Yes, that's a great letter.

DB: Did most the men get what they felt to be an adequate amount of letters, or were some men particularly homesick?

BH: I suppose some were homesick. I certainly see plenty of stories about that, such as Steve Ambrose who've written about this. Many of these people came from houses, from homes, which really were only semi-literate. It's not for nothing we were either Blue Ridge ridge runners or coal miner's kids. And, so, there were very few people who had the extent of correspondence that I did and who were willing to write back again to everybody. Yeah, there were probably a lot of us who got more letters, but they just didn't come from mom and dad who wrote letters.

DB: Did some of them get "Dear John" letters?

BH: I don't recall anybody getting a "Dear John." That's always a good question. Of course, there probably were. And there may have been one or two of the guys who thought they fell in love with England and sent a "Dear John" letter home, I don't know. I'm sure that that did occur.

DB: It says, "Lt. (blank), who might have been in the break-up of the original anti-tank company, was unpopular." It doesn't say...he leaves out the name, he just puts a blank.

BH: I think that's probably Gates but it could've been Donovitz. We won't use the names either. Gates was an idiot. Gates was a guy I made a comment later on, I may have told you about this scene, he said that he thought he was going to be a field marshal but (unintelligible due to laughing) but he found out how dangerous it was. And his jeep driver got at least one silver star pulling Gates out of stupid things that Gates got them into. And the jeep driver, out of any, got the star.

DB: So, this Gates is the kind of person you were talking about earlier that you "watch out for."

BH: Gates, I think, was one of the men who was eventually sent back to the rear Aschylan to be in charge of the great supply deck where we had all of our barracks space and stuff.

DB: That was a good place for him.

BH: Yeah because he wasn't...he should not have been allowed to...He literally had these fanciful ideas about war. And he was damn dangerous. As I said, his driver learned and really saved him more than once. Everybody in the company knew it. There were probably some people who liked Gates, but I can't imagine who it was. I respected Donovitz. Some men didn't like him because he was so strict, but I thought he was good. But, the guy they gave the company to was really tough, and that was a big New York Jew. I've used that term about him, Kerschov. Kerschov was a _____, and he went to a rifle company. And I think he made it all the way through; he might be one of the 17 men on my list. He's still alive and lives in New Jersey.

DB: Is it...you said you would rather I not use that name, Gates?

BH: No, I don't think it's fair. Just leave it blank. It's like that story that they took the anti-tank company, the 319, my company, away from Capt. Hansen and made him a division historian. Like I told you before, I find that hysterical. But that's exactly what he should be doing – he was a good training officer. Incidentally, there's a very fine examination of Steven Ambrose's Company of Heroes where he talks about one of the men who is a Captain, who eventually, I think, is wounded. Anyway, the Captain disappears and this Captain had trained these people and taken them overseas. But everybody spoke openly about the fact that he was a very good training officer but that they did not like to be in contact with him. I don't recall, but it's like it. Ambrose's name is in the sky, as far as I know, but that's kind of painful.

DB: Apparently he wound up committing suicide – that guy.

BH: Did he? Thank you for refreshing my memory.

DB: So it didn't matter that he mentioned his name.

BH: Yeah, but his family's still around. That would have been tough on his family.

DB: True.

BH: Well, I think criticizing people like that in some ways is unfair, at least to name them. To name them critically is taking them _____. It's like the gossip around here. It's why they make wisecracks, but to put a letter on the board, "This department has an idiot," is not done.

DB: Now, is Sergeant Mitchell still alive?

BH: No, unfortunately, when I finally summoned up the common sense to get a hold of Mitch, he had just died. Somewhere in the last 10 years, I think. And I remember writing to his wife, to his widow, when I found out it was too late. I could've seen Mitchell, I'm sure; I was in DC two or three times on business when we were both a lot younger.

- DB: So, he made it? A little bit of disability in the eye?
- BH: What he did I don't know. I know he survived. The truck driver was in my ___ a lot, Frank Norzack, is still alive. There's probably not many other people. May be none, I might be the only one left. I have no idea.
- DB: Bob, on April 12th, near Weimar, you were on the move a lot. You say, "I get to wash up pretty often, though not as much as you would like."
- BH: This is pretty good. I think I mention somewhere in the letter, I only had four real baths in nine months. You'd walk into a place that at least had some water or you could get water and carry it to a place where you could wash.
- DB: Would you use your ___?
- BH: You might. But you might have found, within a commandeered apartment house for instance, when we were in Darburg, I remember that I washed there. And I got a comment, I think we were on the 3rd floor, I don't remember the story, but we were in an apartment house in Darburg and we went up the stairwell that had been captured by the 3rd Infantry division, who had had a machine gun fight in there. So we were stumbling on the, sliding on these expended 30 caliber machine gun slugs. So, I presume that we washed up there and I doubt that they had running water, but we probably went out and got it somewhere, out of a big puddle.
- DB: And you had basins in the apartment or something?
- BH: Yeah, you would use the poor people's finest china. What were they going to do? They weren't there anyway.
- DB: Bob, were you by that time, mid-April, late April, traveling by...In your late April letter, you say you're really traveling a lot. Were you traveling by truck or by foot? Trains?
- BH: By truck. There were no trains running. But we had, of the trucks that were assigned, in this case to pull that wonderful 57-millimeter gun. We said, the gun was no good as a gun, but it was a marvelous excuse for an easy life for me. Because every time we moved, we stayed with the gun. You rode the truck.
- DB: This is the anti-tank gun?
- BH: The anti-tank gun, yeah. So it was a blessing. You carried all your extra gear, my cooking pots and pans, and piles of extra blankets as I recall, and anything I had stolen. We always had extra digging-in tools. We'd just take some farmers' pick-axes and shovels if we wanted to.

DB: Did the rifle companies travel by truck by that time?

BH: Oh no. Well, it depends on what was happening. Many of the attacks, if they could, they would. If we were associated with an Armour division, and we were with armors a lot, then the armor would go ahead. And there would be rifleman riding on the tanks or riding with the tanks. And you would be right with them so that, right behind them, maybe a half mile back, so they wouldn't get caught in an ambush would be these men, and the men could jump off. I remember one attack some place where we weren't really being fired at very much, we were held up momentarily by a German attempt to make a roadblock. And the vehicle in front of us was what was called an M-50, as I recall, and it was like a big, kind of SUV, it wasn't as high. It had at least a 50-caliber machine gun on it. And some were probably more heavily armored than that. At any rate, they had some slanting armor, which theoretically at least deflect machine gun bullets and rifle bullets and little stuff of shrapnel or shells. It gave you the feeling that at least you wouldn't get shot, if your rifle missed. Anyway, they were running down the road ahead of us so that my vehicle, with the anti-tank gun would be about where you and I are right here, and at the bottom down there by the bookstore would be this M-50 out there sort of scouting around. Literally, that's what they were called. They were scout cars. And seeing what was out there, then shooting up anything. Anyway, we were flying down the road and the Germans fired at this guy and killed probably most of the people in that vehicle. Then, they tried to surrender. Then, we – not I, but certainly people with me, I don't know if I did or not – shot them all. There were two or three Germans there. They did this stupid thing, killing some Americans and then immediately stood up right there with the gun. There wasn't a question that "We didn't do that," which is stupid. They just slaying other men.

DB: You speak of long, arduous and dramatic days followed by guard duty at night, which would be a very exhausting combination. But "long, arduous and dramatic days?"

BH: Shooting through these, flying through these towns that were surrendered, they had all the white bed sheets for their surrender flag, you might get a running gun fight in one or two of them, you might get sniped at from the side. It was never question of thinking this was just a drive in the country. And you never knew when the truck would run over a ___ or some other God-awful thing. So, it wasn't easy. So you were on the alert all day long, that's for sure. That's intense.

DB: And you couldn't sleep, I imagine, in the truck.

BH: If you were asleep in the truck, somebody would have kicked you. Everybody had to be alert and looking around, seeing what you could see. And you didn't know what you could see. As you went through those towns, boy, you watched all those damn windows, that's for damn sure. So you were tense all the time.

- And every once in a while, somebody would remind you that the war was still on, that people were still dying, and it could be you. So that kept you alert. Then to _____ no more than two hours a night. You get two hours guard.
- DB: You really couldn't get enough sleep.
- BH: No. More than once, I literally was asleep on my feet.
- DB: Trying to guard?
- BH: Yeah. I guess that's a common experience. The expression is common enough. But I've talked to a lot of people who said that, "Oh yeah, I kinda came to when I was still standing up and I didn't have any idea where I was." And I know that happened to me.
- DB: Bob, when you found those twenty POWs in a shed in a ___ yard in G_____, Germany that's near Weimar, right?
- BH: Yeah, G_____ and the Napoleonic battlefields if you think about it.
- DB: With one German Sergeant guarding them. Did the German Sergeant put up any resistance?
- BH: I doubt it, and I don't remember. That's a good question. I can't imagine. He was probably so delighted to be able to say, "Look, I'm such a great chap. I've stayed here looking after these prisoners." He probably was quite happy to surrender, thinking about that supertime he was going to have a decent meal.
- DB: Is this the same incident in your later letter that you wrote after the D-Day, in which you describe the third exchange, bullet-through-the-helmet incident?
- BH: That's the same place, the same area of Germany. Girtha, Gira...
- DB: But it's not the same town.
- BH: No, but in the letters home, I bet it does tell what town it was.
- DB: But that's a different incident, though?
- BH: Yeah, it is. But, they all took place in that same kind of closely associated week or 10 days of real drama right around the Weimar - _____ adventures. There was a little stream of interesting things happened there all at once. It was the only time I saw a German airplane shot down by ground fire, by our shooting at it. Some guy, who was silly enough to be streaking us at low altitude, was making passes, firing a machine gun on us. And every vehicle had a machine gun on it, if it possibly could. So pretty soon, 8 billion American machine guns were shooting

- at this guy. But, he probably didn't get as much hit as he ran into the fence that was going up. I think that I was involved in that. It was one of those things where this guy would come from Swedish Hospital and – shew – he'd be gone. And he'd be behind the back of us. And he turned around and come back at us, coming back he second or third time seemed to be the end of him. He got shot down.
- DB: There were a lot of machine guns there, then.
- BH: Yeah, everybody with nothing else to do was yelling and screaming. It was kind of a game.
- DB: Were there ever incidents...you said there were a number of incidents that were of interest during that period that you'd like to talk about.
- BH: There was a dogfight. Probably the only one I saw. I think it was over _____. And they literally had all these planes circling like it was Errol Flynn in the first World War movie. And they were all chasing each other's tails. I couldn't tell you how many planes were involved but I don't think there were many. I think it was just one or two Germans and 8 million Allied fliers up there, chasing these poor guys. I suppose he was eventually shot down. I started to pull the cover off of the 30 caliber machine gun and then somebody crashed on me that they far too high, that there wasn't a prayer of a 30 reaching up there. If it did get there, I'd be firing about a mile behind where the airplanes had gone off. I think most of the 50 caliber guys were firing because they had greater reach with the 50.
- DB: You mention _____. Did you see _____?
- BH: No, I've never seen it and we're credited with liberating it.
- DB: The division?
- BH: Yeah.
- DB: So a part of the division did?
- BH: Exactly. There are two or three men still alive who argue about who was the first officer in there. I've met them both, or I've met at least two them. One of them was from my division. One of them, I think, is from somewhere over Calvary-Scott Calgary, or something. But we didn't even hear about ____ when I was in Weimer. And I think that's necessary for this youngster who's teaching the course on the Holocaust. He should realize that...There's a lot of talk about the Holocaust and "Why didn't we do something about it?" But, I don't think anybody in the division, I bet that includes General McBride, knew that ____ existed. But certainly nobody in 319 in the morning that Weimer surrendered was there. I know that Dan ____ was there. There was too much talk. There was a

bodyguard for the guy, after all. You knew what was happening on a gossipy level. Probably the first Sergeant could fill you in on what was going on. I don't think we did. It was days. I think I have a letter somewhere that says it had been one or two weeks before I ever heard of _____. It was retrospect. But Mauhausen and Edenzig are very clear in my mind, Edezig in particular. And the first time I ever saw a refugees from the camp were in the Rhine Valley just before we crossed the Rhine, in a very specific place. It's called the Hensback near the M__ River, just south of the M____ River. And that's the first place I saw those victims of those camps.

DB: What did they look like?

BH: They were starved. Clearly the 80-pound guy and the 90-pound guy used to be 190, the 75-pound woman who used to be 120. And they were filthy dirty. They were all cold because they only had thin cotton shirts and pants. The men were unshaven and nobody had their hair cut or if they did then their hair was cut off real short. And, with those thin clothes, even though they might have got a bowl of soup a day or something like that, all their calories were expended trying to keep warm. So that they would continue to lose weight.

DB: And they would have worked a lot.

BH: Yeah, they would have been worked a lot. We just ignored them, the first ones we saw were at a challah when we were eating. We didn't know who they were – they were half-naked – we couldn't tell and we were hungry. It's an interesting thing to think about. I spent a lot of time doing charity work.

DB: And then you started to understand what the camps were all about?

BH: As more and more people got to talk to you. Don't forget, we could talk Polish, French, German and Italian so we could talk to most of the refugees. And they'd tell us. The slave laborers, particularly the girls, were full of stories about what it was really like to be a good looking 17 year old Polish girl on some German farmer's farm out in the middle nowhere. Our Polish people, our Polish-speaking friends like Frank Narzack and Artz Streppy, were really incensed about that and they didn't mind translating for us.

DB: Is that the same village...?

BH: Oh sure, yeah, of course. They treated them like cattle. As you got people who came from the farms, you got the people from the work camps and then you begun to get the people from the killer camps, and they were all mixed up.

DB: Did you liberate any of the killer camps?

BH: No, just _____. But, again, I didn't even liberate _____, as far as I'm concerned. Somebody in Division One intelligence may have.

DB: But you were there at the liberation of some of the work camps, such as Edenzig?

BH: Yeah, but that's also a work and ____ camp, but mostly it was a work and a death camp.

DB: Were there a lot of Jews that you saw there?

BH: Probably, Garcia certainly was one. But you wouldn't know one from the other. The world is full of blonde Jews after all, just like it's full of blonde Afghanis. You wouldn't know what they were one way or the other. Once in a while, we'd probably learn to read the tattoos. Did the Jews get the star tattoo as well as the yellow _____?

DB: They would get tattooed with a number.

BH: Everybody had a number, though; everybody had numbers no matter what you were. We had two or three people on campus at one time working here who remembers. But, "How did you identify Jewish prisoners?" is an interesting thing; we should probably try to work on it a bit.

DB: I think they had to wear a star.

BH: I'll ask _____, see if he's still alive. He was last year, down in San Fran.

End of Side B

Interview 1/17/02 52 minutes

DB: This is Danny Burnstein and I'm interviewing Bob Harmon today and it's January...

CRH: 17th.

DB: 2002. I am interviewing Bob at his house in Seattle. Bob, um, Colonel Costello whom you referred to as the person who saved Weimar – was he the CO of your regiment?

CRH: Yes, right. Commander.

DB: OK.

CRH: And he came in when our previous Colonel, Colonel Taylor, was wounded, I think, during the attack on the Siegfried Line and it was at the end of the attack on Siegfried, which was in February. It began on the night of February 7th and 8th '45. Colonel Costello showed up then.

DB: OK. Now this is April 21.

CRH: OK.

DB: 1945. You say, "Everybody is winning the war in the headlines again."

CRH: Oh yes, I remember that.

DB: (Unclear...)...It would not be an easy win. Now, were you and others like you afraid that the Army might be setting itself up for another Bulge-like counterattack, which had happened when most people thought that they could rest for the winter?

CRH: That's an excellent question, Dan, I am sorry that I don't know really how to address it, except to say that we were very much aware that the Germans had been counted out at the end of the summer in 1944, and had managed to revive well enough so that they did the Bulge and then we weren't sure what would happen. We knew that, everywhere we went, we were seeing indications that the Germans, some Germans, wanted to continue the fight. For instance, I can still see a bridge-overpass some place that had a big message painted on it about, something about, "Continue on the fight and death to the Amis, A-M-I-S." Amis, as they called us. Their slang term for the Americans. And we began to hear rumors about a redoubt...

DB: "Death to the Amis" was written in German?

CRH: Yes, right, oh yes. And we heard rumors about a redoubt up in the German-Austrian Alps and, of course, eventually, my division and many others were sent up there, and I have pictures upstairs of the armor from what's left of the German 6th Panzer Army, as I recall,, still on the railroad cars. It was up there, in Gmunden (Gmuenden) - on the northern end of the Traunsee. Ebensee, with its WWII concentration camp, is on the southern end of the Traunsee, and Alt Aussee is directly south of Ebensee. So they did drop forces up there. And, no one really knew. Also, I think you had the general suspicion that all enlisted men have of their officers and their leadership and the idea that you are not quite sure these people are as informed as they might like to think they were.

DB: Now you said also that you "...had seen too many dirty tricks pulled on your buddies in the line and on yourself," you know, to be overconfident. So could you elaborate a little on those dirty tricks?

CRH: Well we've done this before, if you think about it, on one of the tapes when I talked about the planting of mines, for instance, in the streets and under the streets and in holes so that those went off 24, 36, 48 hours after the Germans left and caused injuries both to the French and to ourselves. I mentioned that I have that, still have a bloodstained Red Cross brassard upstairs from the first friend of mine killed in the war. He was an Aid Man who was, obviously, shot by a sniper. It couldn't have been an accident to do that hit under the circumstances. So there were things like that. A long, continuous line of things like that.

DB: Wow. And uh, you talk about the bombing of "...the bigger German cities which I have seen."

CRH: We would have been into the Rhineland by then. We would have crossed in March, I think the 21st or, something like that, on the 5th Division bridgehead near Mainz and many, I think, divisions crossed on the shoulders, you might say, of the 5th Division. They did a good job. They got across the Rhine in virtually a sneak attack as I recall. Surprised the dickens out of the Germans. So we all funneled across their bridgehead and from there...

DB: Was that with a pontoon bridge that they laid down?

CRH: Uh, eventually, but we didn't cross on that. We crossed the Rhine on boats, small boats run by the Navy. They brought Navy people into it. Anyway from there we went on up to Frankfurt, but first we went to Heidelberg and then cut north up to Frankfurt and so on. But that's how we crossed the Rhine.

DB: And you saw some of those cities that had been bombed.

CRH: Oh yeah, we had seen the Rhine cities. Heidelberg was the only one that wasn't bombed. The Germans blew up the bridges across the Neckar so when they did, all the window glass in riverside Heidelberg was shattered. That wasn't bombing. We didn't do that. And I remember everybody looking at Heidelberg and thinking, "Wow, it's beautiful." Except for the shattered glass...

DB: It's where the old university was...

CRH: Yes, very much so. But otherwise, every major Rhine city, had been badly damaged. I think I recall that the American and Allied air force had a shopping list of about 50 major German cities, which were to be literally destroyed, at least the downtown part of them, and that shopping list was exhausted by about the 20th of April in 1945. There was literally very little for the strategic air force to bomb anymore in terms of the

necessary set of targets. So, places like the oil fields at Ploesti, or, downtown Mainz, or downtown Muenchen, for instance, the centers were gone from those towns.

DB: When you first saw these towns was it shocking to see the destruction?

CRH: No because by this time, if you recall, I had been on the road since Normandy and began seeing this in Normandy. So, it wasn't shocking to me, no. It was somewhat satisfying. As Churchill had said, "We were getting back our own." Thinking, "wow, they did this to all these people and we don't really much care." The only thing about the bombing of big cities like that is, as you probably know, it makes them easier to defend, from the defender's point of view, and it becomes even more difficult to attack, in many ways, than an undamaged city.

DB: Did you have to do much city fighting?

CRH: No. We did some. Some of those crazy patrols that I told you about, that sort of thing. (Weimar, Gera, Jena).

DB: Snipers and so on. That kind of thing.

CRH: Yes, right. But no, I had never done the Stalingrad tunnel house-to-house business at all. Thank goodness. I didn't have to do that. I have done a lot of running around corners and dodging down streets but none of that really violent stuff, like running around throwing grenades into houses.

DB: Is that because the German army was disintegrating pretty much?

CRH: Such disarray. Yeah, right. I have engaged in the sort of fighting where you are standing in a barn window or a barn door on the second floor of the house, looking or waiting for somebody, whom you know is coming, to pop up, and to pop them, and I did so. Yeah, I've done that.

DB: Before they pop you.

CRH: Yes that's always the best system.

DB: Do you have any pictures of those cities in ruins?

CRH: Yeah, I have some of the military ones. We can take a look at them. The Army set up the opportunity to buy packets of photographs, black and white photographs and now you can have one of the 57-mm guns in action. I don't even know what division it was. It says right on it, little notes underneath. We'll take a look at that sometime today if you want. They are hiding around upstairs somewhere.

DB: Now on the 22nd of April you say that, "Every G.I. has spent so much time telling other G.I.'s about his particular home that we know a little bit about every section of the

country.” So Bob, do you recall particulars that stand out in your mind about places that you mentioned like Mount Airy, North Carolina; San Francisco, California; Bridgeport, Connecticut.

CRH: Bridgeport, of course, I guess was and is an industrial town, so, to listen to an Italian fellow named Joe, I forget his last name at the moment, talk about his hometown, describe what those industrial eastern cities were like was interesting. I had a close friend named Frenchy Karabjanian from New Jersey, and Frenchy grew up in some small town in New Jersey and his description, his view of life was fascinating to all of us from the west, in part because he was a very fascinating man, as a matter of fact. He was from Vineland, New Jersey if you have every heard of it.

DB: Oh yeah.

CRH: There is such a place and his dad was a professional photographer there.

DB: Oh.

CRH: Something that you may remember from your studies or maybe even from growing up in New Orleans – I don’t know if this happened to you – this was our introduction into, really, a sort of gang warfare. Nothing violent just sort of fights that boys get into. We never really had that out here in the west, at least in my town as far as I know. We had fights between people from different high schools, uh, from the city kids versus the country kids sometimes, if you somehow got together. Different factions in supporting high school football teams, I suppose they had fistfights but none of this business though. There would even be a, you know, certainly wouldn’t be a broken piece of glass let alone a knife or a pistol or anything like that involved – like the nonsense, for instance, we get now from parts of Seattle, Tacoma, San Francisco, or L.A. In the east, I don’t think they did much of that either, but, they would get together and simply pound on each other once in a while.

DB: So you heard about that from...

CRH: Right, there was a great deal of sort of open-mouthed awe. “Do you really do this sort of thing?” This isn’t like the fights between the boys from the high school football teams in Olympia and Aberdeen, where I grew up.

DB: Did they talk about the use of knives?

CRH: No because there really wasn’t much of that. It was just fistfights. And probably not very coordinated fistfights at that. I remember once when a group of eastern boys decided that a number of us who got up early, this was in Fort Benning in training (we were simply early risers), and we were always the first ones in the chow line. They were annoyed that every time they came to the chow line no matter how seemingly early they got there, there were some people including me. Most of us early risers happened to be

westerners and I remember a good fight in the chow line one morning in the dark at Fort Benning. We put a stop to that.

DB: Over food?

CRH: Well, if you were a real chowhound, if you were there early at any meal – and, I was, many a time – you could, ordinarily, eat twice. I wanted to eat and I was growing. We were all 18. I went from 148 pounds - I was 6'3 ½" - I went from 148 pounds to 190 and 195 of solid muscle in about 89 days. And, a lot of that was the result of just plain hard work, and growing up, but, I was just eating an enormous amount of food. Yes: if you wanted to get up early, you could go through the chow line twice.

DB: And later, then, you lost quite a bit.

CRH: I lost 40 lbs. of it in France but when I was in England in '44 before we went over to France, I got weighed and I weighed 200 lbs.

DB: Wow. So it was good that you put on that weight ahead of time.

CRH: It was all muscle. It was hard. I don't weigh much more than that now but I am certainly not hard anymore.

DB: Bob, there isn't any letter per se on or just about VE Day. So the closest thing is a letter on Mother's Day which must have been May 13th which, I figured out.

CRH: Did you look that up? I have often thought about doing that. Thanks, Dan.

DB: So do you recall VE Day? Where you were?

CRH: I was in Steyr. Right, there is a letter that says I was in S-T-E-Y-E-R. S-T-E-Y-R excuse me, Austria, and Hitler went to high school there for a while and we were teasing these people, "didn't Hitler go to high school here" and they were all busy saying "no, no he just was passing through and he was really not from our city." That kind of thing. So that's where I was, far as I know. I was in Steyr. There's a comment some place. I will see if I can find it.

DB: Do you remember your reaction and your buddies' reactions to VE Day?

CRH: Yes, we were very pleased, but we were not able to relax at all because the story for us was that we were up in Austria, because that was to be the redoubt and the die-hard Germans intended to go right on fighting, and we knew there were a lot of them up there. Upstairs there's a picture of several thousand Hungarian prisoners and we were taking so many prisoners that we couldn't handle them in any sensible way, so, we took mine tape, which is a white band of tape about 2 ½ or 3 inches wide, very thin tape and ran that around an orchard. Just tied it around the trees, a whole great big orchard, and we would tell people, "Throw away your weapons. Go down the road to where you see the mine

tape and just go in there and sit still. After awhile, someone will come and take care of you." So, we knew that there were thousands of those people - including the Hungarians.

DB: The Hungarians were fighting along with the Germans?

CRH: With the Germans, yeah. They were forced to. I don't think they were interested in it, but they had defended their own country against the Russians, so they were glad to try to do that. One of the major battles of the war, as a matter of fact, took place on a big pass that runs between Poland and north central Hungary and Slovakia. Somewhere up in the juncture up there [*Dukla Pass*].

DB: Against the Russians.

CRH: Against the Russians right. Few in the west ever heard of it. I have walked over that battlefield with somebody who knows it pretty well, subsequently...

DB: Those huge German-Russian battles.

CRH: Right, right. Very costly battle on both sides, but otherwise I don't think the Hungarians were reluctant to see the war end, and they thought that, with any luck at all, they would be able to simply resume their own lives. And of course they weren't. After a while, the Russians clamped down on them. But anyway they were up there in Austria and, as far as we were concerned, they were Axis soldiers and they were dangerous to us and they were part of the people we were seeing. So that feeds directly into that story of being one of the guardians of the mine at Altaussee, where we had custody of thousands of precious works of art. And, our strict instructions were: "We have no idea how many SS are around" and the world was full of rumors that they were still here and be "really careful when you are back in that mine, 'cause you are back there alone. Whatever you do, don't relax for a moment." And we eventually got to the point where we would run around the countryside quite confidently. But, I'll bet it was mid-summer before we figured out that these people really had quit and that all the fiery talk about "Kill the Amis" and "Fight to the last" - all those slogans - did not pertain.

DB: Now, your letter of the 16th of May says that you spent...(phone rings)

CRH: We weren't quite sure how 'over' it was for some of them.

DB: Right.

CRH: And everybody knew that there had been, that's another thing to think about, everyone knew there had been a fairly successful, certainly long-standing resistance to the Nazis all over Europe and it was done by a lot of amateurs and most of them managed to get themselves killed or imprisoned or tortured to death, but, that there was always someone else to step up to the plate. So, we thought that the Germans were really die-hard because you could see that in the way they fought many times. So it was kind of a dichotomy between them giving up in large groups, and really glad to surrender, and at

the same time you knew there were some who fought very well and we had seen them, of course, during the Bulge, even though we had attacks from some, and mass surrenders, literally, from others. I talked about that in my letters home about Goesdorf, in Luxembourg, but we knew there had been this resistance. So we thought, well, the Germans will probably mount the resistance just as the French did. Luxembourgers and Belgians. But they didn't. They really imploded and I think it's for the best. You and I talked about the fact that I haven't met one German since the Second World War who wants another war. *[Well, there was one. A youngish woman, whose parents had been from the German Baltic provinces. She had been born long after 1945. We met her in an Italian youth hostel and she was emphatic about having Germany regain those 'lost' Baltic areas. CRH].*

Everybody else was pretty glad to have it over. Matter of fact, different conversation, I had a wonderful long talk yesterday with a German Naval Attache in Washington, D.C. I had written to him about something at the embassy and we'll talk about that sooner or later. The whole notion was that we were now allies. And he must have spent 20 minutes, he was so excited, he wanted to talk about something I had asked him about...anyway, go ahead. *[The German Navy attaché – in Washington, D.C. – and I were discussing the famous incident – shortly after the infamous 9/11 2001 attack – and confirmed that the German Navy destroyer Lutjens had, indeed, passed close on the port side of the American Navy vessel U.S.S. Winston S. Churchill, off the coast of Great Britain. “Lutjens” was flying the American flag at half-mast and displaying a big sign reading “We Stand By You.” Lutjens' entire crew – in dress uniform – lined her port side decks, “rendering honors,” as the Navy says. A most gracious thing for them to do, and reminiscent of the full-page ads in the N.Y. Times of September 21, 2002, p. A7 carrying much the same message from the City of Hamburg, Germany, to the people of the United States. CRH].*

DB: Well um, you mentioned that “you spent time at a mountain stream, lying in the sun, soaking up the vitamins and watching the local belles who came down for a dip. It certainly gives us a chance to rest and kind of catch up with ourselves after all these months of constant strain.” Now Bob, your opinion or your thoughts from this compared to the Vietnam G.I.'s who were flown home the next day after their year was up. Any thoughts on that?

CRH: Well, I have always thought that we were really advantaged, so to speak, over those poor guys who went to Nam because they went over, in many cases, on Pan Am and one day they were in San Francisco at the POE, Port of Embarkation, and the next day they were out in the Pacific and maybe the next day or so they were literally in the danger zone. And some cases, they went into danger zones as they pulled onto the landing fields and a lot of those planes, apparently, were, maybe, fired on, or, could be seen by the enemy and could have been fired upon. I don't know. And then when they pulled them out you were in danger until you were off the runway and “feet wet,” as they say, over the ocean. We never had that. I had a completely different experience. Of course I was glad to be in Europe for three months after the war there was over, because it meant I wasn't in Japan. And, then after Japan surrendered in September, there was the

thought that, “Well I could get home pretty soon” but we were doing some fairly interesting things. We went to Czechoslovakia and I had a nice pass to Switzerland, and all that kind of thing. So it became interesting, knowing that we would get home, but we really eased back into it. Even my homecoming itself. I was simply given a bus ticket from Fort Lewis to Olympia Washington. I got on the bus, which was a pretty familiar operation. I was carrying a duffel bag. I was all by myself. There were other G.I.’s, but nobody from Olympia was going home. Took the bus into town and Olympia is a small town. The bus station is right in the middle of town so I shouldered my duffel bag and walked down 4th Ave. and Capitol Way and went down to dad’s dock where dad and my mother would both be working and so even that last 20 minutes or so as I walked home from the bus station...

DB: Did they know you were coming?

CRH: No, they knew I was coming home. They knew I had been in Le Havre. And as a matter of fact we came home through Camp Kilmer, which is at Rutgers, as you well know. And so I went out of Kilmer in late June, I guess it was, what did you tell me, we sailed on the 1st of July? Yeah, I think so. Anyway, I went out through Kilmer and I came back to Kilmer. I’ve still got the little booklet saying, “You are now being discharged through Camp Kilmer” Um, I really had an easy re-entry and I came home, of course, to a very supportive family, very appreciative family, so my experience has nothing, literally, to do with, except for danger, with Vietnam. We were lucky compared to those people.

DB: So they didn’t know that you had gotten to Fort Lewis yet.

CRH: No, they didn’t know and you never knew what the Army would be able to do. We knew we would fly across the country. Now this was interesting if you think about it. There’s a whole series of underemployed DC-3 jocks. Yeah, hundreds of them I suppose and hundreds of DC-3’s so they were flying people, whom they would have had to send on a train, probably a week or so across the country, and I don’t know if these fellows were carrying mail in addition to us, but they put a bunch of us on a plane and it was a night flight and I remember standing behind the pilot and co-pilot most of the night just watching the lights go by underneath and being fascinated of course by light and fascinated by the distances and we probably put down two or three times. I am not sure. We would have had to for gas I would think.

DB: Had you flown before?

CRH: No, I had never been in an airplane before. Not even a little artillery spotter. That was a big thrill. It also gives you an idea of how informal things were. But yeah, they flew us from somewhere in Jersey to, I suppose, we put down at McCord Field.

DB: And shortly after that they gave you a pass to go to Olympia?

CRH: No, they discharged me. I didn’t go home on pass. I just figured that I knew I was going to get out in 36 hours or something and I would just walk in on my parents and it

would be all done. And that's what it was. I was out of the Army, well I had still had about six weeks of duty time coming but they had told me "...that nobody is going to call you for anything. Here is your pass and you're gone. Here's your discharge papers and they would be effective as of end of January." I don't know when it was. I was through with the service the day I walked out of Fort Lewis.

DB: So what was it like when you saw your parents?

CRH: Well it was wonderful. I think the first person I saw was dad. I am not quite sure but the first person may have been mother. I would have to look it up. It was fun because it was just late enough in the afternoon so that all of the trucks were out on their delivery runs and they had time to talk to me. They would have taken it anyway but we had sort of a really nice reunion and then, as the drivers would come back in, these were people I had known, you know, as a young kid, and the last time they had seen me I was 18 years old and uh, then suddenly there I was as a mature, very mature 20 year old, and had changed quite a bit in many, many ways and I remember the astonishment in several of them. Anyway, I was home.

DB: I imagine it was really good to see your parents.

CRH: Oh, yeah. Of course. I've told you before, I had a very supportive, very close-knit family. My brother and I, as I told you, were spoiled rotten.

DB: He had already come home?

CRH: No, he was in Alaska and he had already been discharged from the Air Force and had re-enlisted. I think I told you his comment to my parents that he "was not going to be home when I got home." (Meaning, that he had only a bit of service-time and I was a combat vet). That he wasn't going to get by with just six month's service. And it's a good thing that he did. He had a lot of fun at Elmendorf Field. He learned a lot about hunting and fishing and skiing and flying. I think I told you he was supply sergeant for the 10th Rescue (Squadron) at Elmendorf. He learned a lot about certain rescue operations. I told you the story about him having special pies made up to air-drop on the climbing party on Mount St. Elias. I was talking to him the other day about that. He said that if he had gotten...

DB: That's in Alaska right?

CRH: Yeah, it's one of the big ranges in Alaska and sort of the first big post-war climb. I think it was a National Geographic expedition. It had a lot of famous climbers on it.

DB: He had a hand in that.

CRH: Yeah, they were dropping supplies on them and one of things he did was to drop some hot apple pies (in sturdy, heat-conserving containers) to these climbers up in the snow up at 16,000 feet. They were delighted.

DB: Well Bob could you, you mentioned some photos that you got in Gotha. Is that how you pronounce it?

CRH: Gotha.

DB: Do you still have those photos?

CRH: Yeah I do. I think it's Gotha. It should say something about prisoners coming in on jeeps. I have seen those. We can look. Yeah, they're upstairs.

DB: On May 23rd you note that at the time you were mentoring a young replacement G.I. and that you had yelled at him a lot. You had yelled at him a lot because you were quote, "...pretty damn shaky at the time but it's better to blow your top once in a while rather than to try and fight down your tenseness and fear. I have seen a lot of quiet ones go completely nuts just from the awful strain." [*This would have been in western Germany, in February of 1945*]. So, now Bob would you mind giving a couple of examples, if you remember them, about some of these quiet ones who went bonkers.

CRH: Yeah, I'll do one particularly. A guy named Lloyd, you don't need to use his last name, and he had been with the company right from the beginning. I think maybe he had been with them in Tennessee in 1942, I am not quite sure. But anyway, he was certainly there when I arrived and he went overseas with us and he survived an awful lot of interesting things, and, then, one night we made the approach march to the attack on the Siegfried Line - on the night between the 7th and 8th of February, 1945. Late that night we were in a little village on the approach to the village of Hoesdorf, where we would actually make our first attempt to cross, and the Germans knew we were there and the Germans had all of this area zeroed so that they could shoot there at any time of the day or night. They didn't have to see the town. They could just set the coordinates on the gun and fire it and you knew the shell would land within 50 yards or 30 yards or something of where they thought it would go. So they knew what they had to do to land near us, and I don't know how they knew that we were coming up. I have no idea but, anyway, they shelled this place. I probably told you this story. I remember I hopped over a fence when I heard the shells and it was a stone fence and I landed in a pigpen, so, for the next week or so I smelled like a pigpen.

DB: That must have been unpleasant.

CRH: Oh yeah, it was. But it was better being in the pigpen with its stone walls than being out on that road where the shells were landing. And a shell landed either on the truck or close to the truck where this guy Lloyd was and that was the end of him. He had had all he could stand when that big shell went off that close to him, and the noise itself would have been frightening, but all his suspicions were confirmed, I am sure, that he wasn't going to make it through there and he just went into complete shutdown. And that was the end of him. They shipped him back probably to psychiatric care. I hope he is ok. I never heard from him again and I don't know anybody who did.

DB: What were his symptoms of complete shutdown?

CRH: Uh, well sort of the classic things that you read about in Psych 1. Went into shock, unable to communicate, except sort of trembling and mumbling and moaning and all that kind of thing. Absolutely unable to make himself return to duty and everybody understood and was very sympathetic with him.

DB: Was it frightening to you guys to see it?

CRH: Well it was frightening to us in a way of course. It was also disappointing. There was a great deal of sympathy; after all, this is one of your close buddies. He had been around for a long time. He was in my gun squad so this was important.

DB: So there wasn't any stigma on guys who would get like that.

CRH: I don't think so. No. In my own case, about 10 days later or so, maybe less than 10 days later, I have told you that I was going to refuse duty on the second attack across the Our River, and some lieutenant looked after me very well and they sent me back up the next morning, and then I was fine from that time on. One of my close friends made some wisecrack to me, it was partly fatherly but partly teasing, that, "I don't want to see this again" sort of thing. You know something about, "The boys are back with the men once more" or something.

DB: That was one of your buddies that made that?

CRH: A very close friend. Very close friend.

DB: So there was a slight bit of peer pressure?

CRH: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, right. There was no peer pressure from anybody else. There was Joe Ragno, my close friend. He never said a thing. Bill Schaeffer is the only one I know. If I can find it I will show you a picture of Schaeffer. He was a wonderful little guy.

DB: Is he still alive?

CRH: I have no idea. Probably not. Very few of us are.

DB: This is in regard to what you just mentioned. You recalled in your letter that you told your lieutenant, you name him in the letter, Lieutenant Ellers to "...go to hell. And I was awake one night with plain outright hysteria and kept telling myself that I would never go back." Now Bob, was the hysteria an out loud type of hysteria?

CRH: I don't really remember.

DB: Or was it just inside of your head?

CRH: I have no idea. I doubt that it would have been, frankly, that it would have been tolerated, out loud.

DB: Yeah.

CRH: I think if there were other G.I.'s in the area, they would have been so mad because they would have been trying to get some sleep or they were all facing the same danger that there would have been some sort of riot. I have no idea, I just don't know at this remove. And I probably shut off a lot of that. I do remember Ellers and I do remember that I was certainly not going back to the war, and, the next morning, I went.

DB: Was the content of what Ellers told you something similar to, I read this book by Lieutenant (name) Sledge, you are probably aware of that.

CRH: Very much so. That's one of the most famous books on the Marine Corps.

DB: In Sledge's account, his mentor, "...gently put a hand on his shoulder, asked him what the matter was, and after Sledge told him, the lieutenant said to him, 'I know what you mean. I feel the same way but take it easy we've got to keep going. It will be over soon.'" And Sledge said in the book, he said that "...the Lieutenant's understanding gave me the strength I needed."

CRH: That was, probably, Pelelieu. (Pelelieu, in the Palau Islands. Sept. 15, 1944).

DB: Yes.

CRH: Sledge really took a pounding on (unknown name). One of the things he talks about there is the horrible smell. You couldn't get away from everybody. Everything from dead bodies to defecation to rotting this and that.

DB: Right, because you couldn't dig in the earth.

CRH: Could not dig. It was too hard.

DB: So would Ellers have told you something like that?

CRH: Frankly, I don't know. I just remember that southern voice of his and he was just very calm. Very quiet.

DB: Now when you went back, oh, you already answered that. Were there any times when you had the role of being part of the old gang when somebody with battle fatigue was returning, like you were returning that day?

CRH: No I don't think so. That's an interesting thought and it's never occurred to me. I don't think I ever did that for anybody else, because I am not sure that I ever saw another case of it. When I was talking to this young boy whom you mentioned there in the notes, he was carrying a rifle, guarding me while I was chasing around with my bazooka. And so I would be pretty firm about where I thought he should be with the rifle and that kind of thing and then I told you that, on that series of combat patrols that made the national news, and we had Tech. Sergeant Bean, who was theoretically in charge, but we knew more about this than Bean did, so I think as much as anybody, I ran that patrol. All I would have done was to simply say something to him about this is what we ought to do or this is how we ought to do this, but I don't recall anybody with that sort of sense of panic. And of course the fighting changed radically. There was never again, after the Siegfried for us, a slashing, deadly, destructive fight. There were gunfights at the OK Corral, if you will. [*But, one of our regiments – the 318th Infantry – had a hard week in late March and early April of '45, capturing Kassel*].

DB: Not the massive...

CRH: Not the massive artillery "we are attacking into this mess and I can't imagine that we are going to make it." I don't recall any of that just west of the Rhine and don't recall any at all east of the Rhine. So the Siegfried was probably the last really bitter fight I saw.

DB: Did the men talk about these experiences, about battle fatigue?

CRH: I suppose we did but I don't remember it. I imagine that we did.

DB: Was part of your...

CRH: We talked about everything because there was nothing else to do.

DB: Yeah. Do you remember feeling guilty about this?

CRH: Yes. Very much so, and I think that somewhere, in one of those letters, there's a note that I made, once I got over this, then after that I was, maybe, overcompensating and felt very good about what I was doing. [*See Letters Home, June 14, 1945*].

DB: And when you went to Trippler Hospital you said that, to give a talk, you talked about this incident and that was the purpose, to help the staff there to deal with battle fatigue. [*Army Hospital, Honolulu. I was a guest lecturer there one afternoon ca. 1998 or 1999*].

CRH: Yes.

DB: Is Lieutenant Ellers still alive?

CRH: No, not so far as I know. Somebody talked about it not too long ago at a divisional reunion that Ellers had passed on. I never saw him again after the company broke up and

we came home in January of '46. Ellers probably preceded me out. He had been, I think he was in Tennessee in '42, so he had, probably, a lot more points on his record. Discharged early.

DB: Bob do you recall the time when a platoon leader asked you if you could give his men some covering fire with his bazooka and you told him, "Hell no, but I can go out in front of them."

CRH: Yeah, right. I remember that.

DB: Is this what you were talking about sometimes about overcompensating.

CRH: Yeah, right. But also I was experienced enough to realize that covering fire from the back wasn't what they needed. They needed somebody way out in front of them when they went out.

DB: Oh. Now, about that incident. This is related to another incident that I want to ask you about here. Later you talk about an incident with the "telephone exchange, bullet through the helmet incident."

CRH: Yeah, right.

DB: And you tried to shoot the woman who came out on the porch. Now would you attribute that to sort of what is referred to in one of the books I have been reading, there's a "berzerker rage," an "adrenaline pumping."

CRH: No, no. I remember that. I think we've probably both been over the same studies on that. No, this was simply attributable to the fact that I didn't have my glasses and everybody else reminded me that the poor person I was shooting at was a woman. She was a long ways away, on a fire escape on the outside of a building, and I could see her moving, and that's that same morning that, I think, I shot that lieutenant. Wounded that young lieutenant. So I saw her moving and I was chasing her up and down the fire escape with the M-1 rifle from a long distance and somebody realized after the second or third shot that that's a civilian out there.

DB: Now you tell of a German counterattack on a town in which you and only five other men stuck around.

CRH: Yeah.

DB: Can you elaborate on that incident?

CRH: It's a small village in western Germany, just behind the Siegfried Line and it could have been anywhere from 10-15 days, but more or likely closer to 10 days after we began the attack on the Siegfried. We eventually crossed the Our River, went through the line, passed up over the hill, which held the highest of all the forts, and I told you that's the

one where I talked the soldiers inside out of that fort eventually. Then we went on to another series of small towns and I can't identify them anymore. I know where the regiment went because I've got the official records, but I can't see in my mind. I can just see pictures in my mind. In that small town that we are talking about there was a German counter attack on the town, little village. Most people took off. The captain I was with and the rest of us, three or four of us, didn't, and there was a squad of soldiers from my regiment who we didn't remember or didn't know about who hadn't been warned that this had happened and they had been resting in a basement. So when the attack was all over, I knew one of them, they were not very happy that they had not been warned that most of the company, platoon, whatever and some soldiers we were, was bugging out. But we were defending this town against a single German tank and some soldiers. It was just a little village probably no bigger than the complex of two or three of the buildings we have at Seattle U., so it was small. We looked out on a barn and there was a German tank hiding behind the barn and once in a while he would pop out and shoot at us and he led, the tank led, one of the attacks, and that's one of the cases where I was chasing around out in the streets wondering where the tank was and the tank knew that we were probably bazooka-equipped. So he was very slow about moving into that town and I never saw anything of him, except when – eventually - he stuck that gun around the corner. He never had the courage to bring the whole tank around the corner, and I never had the courage to run down close enough to him to where I could really make sure I was going to hit him with a bazooka rocket, because we only had a few rounds. So I just didn't want to fire this thing in the hope that I hit him. I had to hit his tank treads and you knew you couldn't hurt the tank with that bazooka. He backed off eventually, but in that same attack we ended up playing around in the upper stories of houses we were in. Upper stories of a barn. One fellow figured out that the Germans were going to come through a certain doorway in one of the barns and he just stood there until they showed up and he shot three of them in a row. I remember he broke that attack. He got a Silver Star for that and he killed these three men, bing-bing-bing. I was standing at a window for a while holding a grenade and it wasn't an American grenade; I think it was a German grenade. It wasn't one of ours. And, looking down into a little courtyard wondering if somebody would pop up. Anyway, one of the things that was remarkable there was that the tank fired into the little house, they knew we were there, the tank fired into the little house and it put a shell in the rooms downstairs and we were all upstairs with this captain who had been using a German Schmeisser sub-machine gun, the famous Schmeisser. He was using that to shoot. He was very accurate with this thing and he had figured out a way to use that on single fire and he was popping off German soldiers with that thing and suddenly this shell came in and we all got the hell out of there and that's when, I think, most of the people began to abandon the village, most of the Yankees. Except for my friend, Sgt. Albert Knorr, who was with one of the rifle companies. He was down in a basement someplace, and, so, it was the three or four of us who stayed with the captain.

DB: Why did you guys stay and the others abandoned?

CRH: Part of the game, and, I knew the village was surrounded. This was a case where we needed more bazooka rounds and I was detailed to go get them, so I dropped off all my equipment except the .45 I carried and I went running through the town. It was

dangerous and I went running out of the back of the town and I ran off to wherever the rear area was and got some more rounds and I came back up. I came right through the same barn doors that I had gone through before, looking for cover from the Germans. So I probably had an idea that there wasn't any safety in the back area either, and, that the best thing to do was to stick with the captain who knew what he was doing and that he needed me. I had that bazooka and it was the only bazooka in the village and, we knew we had that one German tank looking for us.

DB: What was the captain's name?

CRH: I have no idea. We were attached, remember I was working for regiment. I'm in Ranger platoon by this time (that's this silly-named unit). So we were simply told go to L-company or whatever it was and you will be up there until relieved. So, I was attached, together with some others from the unit. The only thing I can remember there, I could give you the name of one man and he was dead when I first saw him. His name was Blackie, it was his nickname, literally, B-L-A-C-K-I-E. And he had been the point man, that's what they called them in Vietnam, he had been the first scout, so that meant that he was the first guy in front of his company in an attack. This was a rifle company. So he was always the furthest out, first closest to the Germans. And he had stepped through the doorway...

DB: Got it. Just turned it on.

CRH: Anyway, Blackie, as the first scout, had stepped through the door of this little house that eventually received a shell from that German tank which wasn't, it couldn't have been, 100 yards away. This was close, touch and go, to say the least. And, Blackie was the first one out and he got shot and so, nobody went out to get him of course. They knew he was dead, otherwise somebody would have gone out to get him no matter what. So, he was there all that day until darkness, just lying out there. That's the only man whose name I remember and that's the reason I remember and of course I remember the name of the other man from my old A.T. Company, who was downstairs (in the cellar).

DB: Who is that?

CRH: His name was Sergeant Knorr, Albert Knorr.

DB: Is he still around?

CRH: No, Sergeant Knorr was killed just before the war was over. Terrible thing because he had seen it all. Al Knorr was a great, great person, a great man. Anyway, he was not a happy guy. Everybody had taken off without saying "Hey, Knorr we're leaving." Anyway, I stayed with this captain, partly because it was the smart thing to do, partly because it was the only thing to do.

DB: Now when you were, when you said that you were standing near the courtyard with the German hand grenade...

CRH: I think it was a German grenade. It wasn't one of ours, and I just remember thinking, "I hope I know how to use this thing."

DB: Was it, was that kind of thing, I mean you were basically waiting for great possible danger coming, was that frightening to wait like that?

CRH: Yeah, it was but there's also, I told you, this was kind of a cat and mouse game. It's just, "if these guys come through here, I'm going to kill them." It wasn't a question of "are they going to kill me" it was a question of "if this grenade works the way I hope it will, I will get them."

DB: So you felt you were in a good position then?

CRH: Yeah and I was probably pretty cocky because somewhere around there was this captain who was an ace with his German Schmeisser and we all knew that he had one so it wouldn't be a question of "if a German Schmeisser started firing next to your ear you would think oh my god." You knew it was captain X whatever his name was.

DB: Now you also mentioned...

CRH: Incidentally we finally got rid of that tank. None of us ever did anything to it. The captain managed to get P-47's to come up and simply strafe the hell the out it. I think it left. The story is told somewhere in one of my letters, but either they ruined it so they couldn't use it anymore, or they scared him so badly that he left. But they came up, and I am not sure, they may have bombed him, I don't know. I can't remember. If we can find the story it would be great. But anyway, I remember the P-47's took care of that German tank.

DB: Good to have those P-47's.

CRH: Oh, of course; those are just roving machine gun platforms and bomb platforms. They were great.

DB: Now you mentioned there's another example of a dangerous incident. You mentioned that in Gera, Germany, you had found 20 American POW's behind the Jerry lines, and...

CRH: We were out running around on some patrol.

DB: Now could you elaborate on that incident and is that the same incident that you talked about earlier near Weimar? Is Gera near Weimar?

CRH: Yes they are.

DB: So that's the same incident in which you...

CRH: Gera, for your own information in terms of your own future teaching. When you teach Napoleon's battles, one of the battles you teach is Jena, J-E-N-A. But if you look at Gera, Gotha, and Weimar, Napoleon cycles around them a lot, or, he runs by them because they are on some sort of communication route and there's another place there in Germany called Regensburg and everybody for the past 2000 years has probably hiked through Regensburg and Gotha.

Interview 1/25/02

Approx. 110 min.

DB: This is Daniel Burnstein interviewing Bob Harmon at Seattle University on January 25, 2002.

CRH: Ok and let's check on my voice. Let the record show that yesterday was the death date anniversary of Winston Churchill, 1965.

DB: Ok Bob. Now you mentioned in one of your letters, you mention as an example of a dangerous incident that in Gera, Germany you found 20 tanker POWs behind the German lines. Could you elaborate a bit on that incident?

CRH: OK we'd been on a combat patrol and I remember coming home, headed back to wherever our lines were, through the city streets. And as I recall, as we came up on the left hand side of the street, as a matter of fact, I can still see that; there were some GI's waiting to talk to us who had seen us coming and they were working as POWs whose labor had been farmed out to some small manufacturing plant making widgets of some kind, whatever the German for 'widget' is. And they were delighted to see us. As I recall we told them to just lay low, lie low I should say. That we would be attacking through the town fairly soon anyway and it would be dangerous and that we shouldn't try to take them back with us. I don't think we took them back with us. We may have but I don't recall. But I certainly remember that they were pleased to be liberated and it may have been there or at another place close to there that one of the POWs turned out to be from the division and he was so pleased and he was dancing around saying that he knew the 80th would come and get him. I don't know if it was there or if it was another place. There is a fine picture in my files, you have probably seen it, of a camp. It looks like it was almost out in the country on a farm that had POW marked in big letters on a roof. Somebody there, I think, was washing clothes as I recall. It may have occurred there. And I can't recall the circumstances of over-running that place either but I remember that we freed them also.

DB: Do you remember if this is the same incident that you describe in a letter of April 12, 1945? You talk about being near Weimar and seeing "...a shed full of GI's in a little yard looking at me. I got the Jerries on the way in and on my way back I stopped to ask the men what the score was. There were about 20 of them. French..."

CRH: That would be that incident.

DB: That would be that incident. Ok. And they were very happy to see you.

CRH: Yes of course. For one thing they were hungry.

DB: They were hungry.

CRH: They would have been hungry. We gave them some food. But mostly they were just tired of being prisoners. Of course they never knew what the Germans would do to them. There were all these rumors that somebody would shoot all the prisoners, you know, that kind of thing. They never knew. They never knew when one of our planes would come over and bomb them. They were happy to be headed home, which they were.

DB: Do you remember if the guards readily surrendered to you?

CRH: I doubt there was a guard. There may have been one who had seen us and took off down the street. Frankly Dan, I don't recall. That would be an interesting thing to know. I can't see in my mind's eye a single camp guard or POW guard surrendering to us. I have a hunch that they all ran like little rabbits when they saw us coming, but I don't know.

DB: Ok. Now you mention that in regard to these incidents that were dangerous you said that, "they forced you on the road to self-respect as opposed to the awful feeling of having let my buddies down."

CRH: Yeah. That's from that incident in February.

DB: Right.

CRH: Yeah. Running around playing John Wayne was psychologically good for me I am sure.

DB: And did you and your buddies feel a lack of respect for the others who had experience battlefield incidents or was that sort of a self-inflicted feeling...?

CRH: Probably self-inflicted. I don't remember anybody else in the unit having that, doing that. Having that numb moment of panic, real panic like I did except for Lloyd, who was sent home, literally probably half way insane. I don't recall anybody else having that. They probably all had it and suffered from it but nobody gave into it the way I did, I think. Anyway, I don't remember. Everybody would get cautious once in a while and sometimes you would get complimented for it and sometimes you would get teased.

DB: For being too cautious.

CHR: Yeah.

DB: To sort of a peer pressure?

CRH: Right. When there things that absolutely had to be done and if somebody was being sensibly cautious well one of the non-coms might feel that “well we have got to do this in a hurry whether you like it or not.” But you would also hear wisecracks flying back and forth too. I have told you about a lot of comments being made.

DB: Like, give me an example.

CRH: Well, we were all lying out in a field one time, this is in one of the letters home and you may recall it, all lying out in the field sometime during an attack someplace, I forget where it was. Artillery was coming in and finally one of us, I don’t know who it was. It wasn’t myself, shouted out “Go ahead and shoot; it’s your money” and obviously he was concerned about this. Covered it up with a funny remark, which I have always treasured.

DB: What’s your opinion of the view that all people, even those battle-hardened, can break and that often times there is no predicting who is going to?

CRH: A lot of psych people say that. A lot of army people who spent a lot of time worrying about this who are professional psychiatrists and psychologists with their advanced degrees and advanced studies. They have done a lot of professional studies on this and they say that you just can’t tell. That is the secret of one of the great movies from the Air Force. *12 O’Clock High*, starring Gregory Peck and I forget who else. Some very good people and the whole, Gary Merrill was in that, the whole point of that is that on two different levels you saw people who had, you could say, given all they could give or taken all they were going to take or who had been tense so long that they finally just tied up. With the Gregory Peck character it becomes evident when he is unable to do the rather tricky little gymnastic thing of reaching up under a B-17 right up near the pilot’s chair, there is an entry hole there and swinging your feet up doing sort of kick up like you do on the parallel bars and any young man could do that. And here this guy has been flying for years and suddenly can’t get in the plane because he doesn’t want to get in the plane. Planes have a tendency to fall down.

DB: You mentioned that you had enclosed a clipping of the art and the jewel caches that you all were guarding.

CRH: I don’t know where that would have come from. I remember that line from reading this stuff myself. I haven’t any idea what it said or where it is or anything else. Nothing. There were articles afterward, and I reconstructed a lot of that, and of course there are books on it and I have read stuff from that and taken materials from that. And of course I have been at the mine.

DB: Since then.

CRH: Yeah. Right.

DB: What is it now? Is it a salt mine now?

CRH: No it's not a salt mine. They have cleaned it up and it's a kind of tourist attraction*. They take people through. The director of the salt mine was very pleased to see that I was the only GI, I guess, who has ever come back. Apparently no German who worked there was a soldier and none of the American GI's come back and identify themselves as a GI who had worked there. So the director has plans for the mines and all that sort of thing and they run little tours through the mine and you can go to the little treasure room. Gina was quite thrilled. They had just opened the treasure room the year before and she'd been hearing these stories for almost 50 years. So three or four years ago when we were in Austria we went through the mine. We actually got to go to the rooms where they stacked up the art, where I had spent a lot of time, and I think she and I rode on the little carts. The little mine carts that we used when I was there.

*[*Error here. Alt Aussee is still a working mine. CRH Sept. 8, 2002*]

DB: So it's a tourist attraction because it was a depository for the art or because of the mine itself?

CRH: The mine itself, a depository for the art, there's a beautiful little chapel in there which people will go to see. The miners had carved this out of the salt and it was dedicated to St. Barbara, I believe, who was the patron saint of the miners. They would hold mass in there once in a while. I think they have musical performances in there. There are all sorts of things to sell the place in the off-season because otherwise it is a ski-resort. When the snow goes, you can hike and climb. It's gorgeous. Beautiful country. There's not really a lot of industry in that town.

DB: So it's a good tourist attraction.

CRH: Beautiful tourist attraction. It's just one more incident where they are trying to make something out of something. Several people employed there and there is a typical little coffee shop. Everybody's got a little job.

DB: That's good.

CRh: Like Yellowstone National Park. Get the hot dog and watch Old Faithful erupt.

DB: You say at this point in brackets you say, "This would be a good place for the mine story". Do you remember what you meant?

CRH: I think just describing what the mine is. The whole thing about what that was about. The discovery of the mine. I've got some of these stories about that from one of the men who was originally there. There was a Colonel from the 317th, and I think 317th had the first people in there, and we took over from them. We would have been there, I think in May of 1945. I had written to him long after the war. He was another historian who did very bad history. He wasn't really a professional. But he wrote what he thought

of as historical vignettes of what had happened and so I corresponded with him. My memories of the mine are very clear. There's no question about it. I have, as I say, the drawings of the mine, I have got a professional presentation from the mine itself that they handed to us that shows how it is connected to the very famous salt mine seven miles away by pipe.

DB: The underground maze that is seven miles long.

CRH: No, there's a maze of pipelines that is seven miles long. They use it to consolidate as much of the brine as possible and send it to a central rendering plant and there the salt is rendered out of the brine. There are several of these places and two or three of these places are very famous in pre-history because folks had lived there since long before Christ.

DB: And the mines have been there since the 1300's.

CRH: Yeah at least.

DB: There must be miles and miles of shafts down there.

CRH: There probably are. Certainly hundreds and hundreds of yards of it.

DB: You say that you are sending photos of the boys taken by a German professional photographer hired by the US Army.

CRH: Not hired. He was a POW. I used the wrong word. He was a prisoner of war who was told, "This is what you are going to do".

DB: To make photos of the salt mines. Do you have those photos?

CRH: I have pics of Bill Schafer. I might have Joe Ragno. Bill Schafer's I think and I believe I have mine. But he was happy to take pictures.

DB: Ok. You tell Neil in a letter of June 3, 1945 about the use of alcohol before the battle. "There's a lot of guys who got medals for things that they wouldn't dare do while they were sober".

CRH: Yeah. I remember writing that.

DB: Now did that, in part, account for what you call "foolhardy acts?"

CRH: I am sure. Probably you do combat patrols the same way you do reckless driving on the freeway when you have too much to drink. Some people would have too much to drink, period, and I am sure they did foolish things. But part of that is simply in jest. But you also get some of that relaxation that alcohol brings and it might also relax caution. I am sure there are a number of pregnancies that occurred because of that. I think Silver

Stars get won the same way, probably. I am not sure. I know I certainly never did any drinking before combat, but, I would have a drink once in a while. But people did.

DB: You did not drink before combat.

CRH: I wasn't much of a drinker at all. I am not now, as a matter of fact. Then, a lot of the stuff that was available was too firey for me.

DB: Now, in explaining to Neil that you hadn't been anyone hardly or anyone outside the immediate family you write, "I was always pretty hard to get along with and didn't make friends very easily". That kind of surprised me.

CRH: I don't know where that came from. I have been surprised by it through the years too. I am a very self-contained person and very much aware of, I guess, what I think of as proper conduct and that sort of thing. I don't know. I don't know why I said that. I know that I have really nice memories of the easy way my brother has with people. He's just smoother at that than I am.

DB: So maybe you meant in comparison with him.

CRH: And other people who were like that. You either have it or you don't. I am somewhat reserved in many ways. Which means it's been very funny in the career we have been in, you and I. A lot of time it's up to the person involved to go to the podium and go to the speaker or go to the guests and say "Hi, I am professor so and so". And I am good at that and at the same time I am always a little reticent about it. Anyway, that is probably what I meant.

DB: I understand yeah. Now, you say, in a couple of letters, you say that you might stay in the Army of might even join the Navy. At some point you say that. I would like to ask you, in part, whether your motivation could have been influenced by a number of things. For example, perhaps you might have been influenced that you are having this, recently having this job at the salt mine, which was safe and relatively cushy compared to what you had been doing. Also there is this phenomenon whereby historians discuss ways in which combat puts men in such a different world, apart from others, that it seems as if it had been their life, practically. Along with the bonding that takes place in combat within one's squad. And, of course, there is always also the usual problems facing young people of anxiety due to a lack of a sure focus of what to do as we see the seniors graduating from Seattle U. sometimes etc. Does any of that make sense to you or, I don't mean to put words in your mouth. These are just some thoughts that came to my mind.

CRH: They are good questions and I think that as you say our seniors and maybe even our freshmen face them all the time. We all wondered what we were going to do when the war was over. There are several times in my letters where I speculate upon the idea that something to do with numbers, either engineering, business and so on, would be necessary. I made some speculation about doing teaching, some speculation about university or college teaching but I also was quite aware that there was money to be made

out there and I was thinking about whether or not to do that. I was beginning to apprehend that I never would be able to go to med school, which is something that I really would have like to have done. I just knew I wouldn't get through med studies so I just started thinking about what I was going to do. Also from the point of view of regiment, being up at regiment I met a number of not only non-commissioned officers but commissioned officers who had either interesting careers or were planning on acquiring interesting careers.

DB: Within the service.

CRH: Either within the service or outside of the service. You were continuously thinking about what you could do when you went home again and all sorts of ideas occurred to me but the service looked like a chance to see the world, to offer something that was useful. I had begun to see how things were done in the service. I know after I got out and was home I made a couple of comments, one to one of my uncles who was regular army and one to one of my cousins who was a Navy chief who had gotten out of the Navy but had been in the Navy all during the war. He went in in '39 or something. That I didn't really think much about the world of enlisted men. I thought that enlisted men that were really put upon and if I was going to stay I would want to get a college degree and get a commission. And then I could see various things that you could do. I didn't envision staying in the combat arms. We couldn't really see ahead to anymore fighting anyway. It's like everybody would have realized in 1945 just how desperately destructive this whole thing is and what we need to do is rebuild the world. But there were literally only two powers who held a balance and those were Russia and ourselves and that obviously we would have some disagreements, but, you certainly wouldn't be going back to war. So I don't think I was thinking about becoming a combat career soldier. I was thinking about doing some kind of interesting thing and getting sent around the world. I had the same day dream for a while, I don't know if I ever even applied for it. I found out that the State Department has official couriers and I thought working with the State Department for five years or so, getting paid to float around the world, would satisfy my urge to go travel. So I thought about that job. Then after I got home and the more I was home the more I was talking to my mother and to others and dealing with the Fathers at St. Martins, particularly Father Meinrad who was my great mentor there, and then Father Joe Donovan, for whom the Donovan award is named here, turned me to thinking about college teaching. But I was speculating on lots of things. I had had one aunt who had served in the oil industry in Venezuela. She was doing secretarial work, so ideas like that flitted through your mind all the time, of things that you could do.

DB: I get the sense you like traveling.

CRH: Well I thought I wanted to travel, yeah. And of course I have traveled a lot so I guess I do. And there were possibilities. I had an offer from the old Carnation milk company here to be a trainee with the idea that what I really wanted to do was to work for them in Latin America. I think they were in Mexico too. And we talked about it for a while and I went to work for Union Oil instead. Again I had a hunch that I thought I was going to work overseas for Union Oil.

DB: You did go to work for Union Oil before you became a student?

CRH: After I had finished my MA. As a matter of fact I really wasn't very far along when I took that job. I don't know what sort of song and dance I gave them or what I thought I was doing still working on the MA but I probably assured them that my whole heart and soul was with Union Oil. I was a trainee for a while before they figured out that I wasn't for them and they weren't for me.

DB: And is that when you went into teaching?

CRH: Yeah. That's when I wrote to St. Martins College and said I had just lost the job I had with Union, they said they don't want me, and I need a teaching job. I really want a teaching job. I don't know if you know that story. It's the only time I ever lost a job. And it's the only application for a job, the only written application I ever made ever, anyplace. I wrote to Father Meinrad at St. Martins and said, "I have 1928 Ford and pregnant wife. Need job". That was it. And just by chance, on that day when that came, or the day before, the Abbot and the head of the department had decided to send one of the young Benedictines to Notre Dame for his doctorate and Meinrad said "I will hire Bob. He will do the job." That's how I got into teaching at St. Martins. That's how I got into teaching, period.

DB: And then like a year or two later you came here.

CRH: Yeah. That was in '52 and then I came here, working in the night school in '53. So I was teaching at both schools at the same time and commuting back and forth.

DB: In the '28 Ford?

CRH: No, the Ford wouldn't have lasted. The brakes would have given out. On the bus which was relatively cheap, and I can sleep anywhere, so, I would sleep on the bus. And I was working in the Brewery on the weekends in Olympia. I had three jobs for a long while. I also did have a pregnant wife. That September, the second September, we had Jeanne Marie the oldest girl who is approaching 50 now.

DB: A '28 is a model T?

CRH: Yeah. No Model A, excuse me. It cost \$25.

DB: A little later it seemed in your letter in December, by that time it seemed that you had lost interest in an Army career by that time. Do you know why?

CRH: No I don't. The one thing that I wish I had done in some ways in the Army - I can't regret a single that I did either in the military or when I got out - but I had a chance to get on that guard detail at Nuremberg. Had I known what my career would include teaching German history I would have extended for six months, somehow.

DB: That's at the Nuremberg Trial.

CRH: Yeah. And standing around with a rifle, staring out at all those people, but it would have been fun through the years to be able to say "Well when I was at Nuremberg..." And who knows what I might have picked up there. Material for a book. Material for a couple of articles, who knows. Or just the personal satisfaction of having been around to listen to all of that. That's the only thing that I thought about staying for and then seriously decided against. I think what got me into that was at least one of the men was sent up there. One of the short timers who hadn't been overseas enough yet to get discharged, I think was sent from regimental headquarters to Nuremberg, to guard duty. I thought about it.

DB: Was there a lot of talk in the papers and so on about the trials?

CRH: There was a lot of propaganda out constantly. Of course in Yank magazine and then in the Stars and Stripes, papers from home. Everybody was talking about it. So we knew it was a very important and very prestigious operation. And interestingly enough, I knew one of the judges in the minor court. The Chief Justice from the State of Washington. My Shakespeare guy. [*Judge Walter Beals*].

DB: Oh the one who sent you the books.

CRH: He had gone as a judge on the secondary tier of criminals, so that he was not listening to Robert Murphy prosecute Goering. He was listening to cases on, definitely, the second tier, but, bad guys who had done things for which they should have been prosecuted.

DB: War crime things.

CRH: Yeah. War crime things. I have a book at home by a judge who also served in that capacity and he talks about what it was like. If you want to take a look at it sometime I will bring it down. You could use it in your courses sometimes.

DB: You mention in June 4th that you were enclosing an 80th division newspaper. How often was this published and do you have any of those now?

CRH: I have no idea and I don't think I do. I might have rags and pieces somewhere but I can't believe it. I do have that little booklet which you have seen that they turned out. I forgot that there was an 80th division newspaper. I wonder what it was called. I have no idea.

DB: In discussing your parents' surprise at changes in Pete Campbell [*a childhood friend*] you comment that, "The army does change everyone either for the better or for the worse." Could you clarify and give examples of what you meant by better or worse?

CRH: Well, I don't think it makes any fundamental changes in you, although it might. I don't know. But it seems to me that people were ushered further along the way of whatever they were. The kinds of people they were was solidified more in the service. I saw some people grow up in the military in the sense of personal responsibility toward others. I don't think I had to do that sort of growing up very much. I knew about personal responsibility to others. But I learned a lot of things about how you deal with people and that kind of stuff. What you say and don't say. More or less what the world was like. But I think if people are irresponsible or, ultimately, very careless, if they are inclined to petty criminality I have a hunch the military just enhances those qualities, for the enlisted men anyway. One of the jokes, we were always called the "enlisted swine".

DB: Were there many like that in your...?

CRH: No, not too many but there was always the guy who was physically dirty. There was always the guy whom you know will betray any woman he possibly can and will give her any wild story he can to get her into bed. There's always one or two people somewhere who think they are going to cheat in a poker game against people who had learned to play poker during the Depression and were pretty tight with their pennies. There were the people who would drink too much. I think it just enhances as I said or emphasizes those qualities so that if you are a drinker, well you have an opportunity to go off and mom and dad aren't there, the little woman isn't there, and all you have to worry about is getting home to the ship or to the base or to the division of your company or whatever it is. If you are the kind who is a whiner about responsibility. If you are the kind who is a whiner about doing your share of the work I have a hunch that it enhances it. That's why there are so many funny little Army words about things such as "goldbrickers" for instance. The guys that just can't bring themselves to see that this is a job and I am stuck with it and I may as well just get it over with and get out of here.

DB: Were there any guys who you were afraid of?

CRH: Physically afraid?

DB: Well afraid but that you wouldn't know what they might do the next minute or that they might get you in trouble?

CRH: No I don't think so. There were probably people with whom you went on leave to Dix from Kilmer, went to New York together because you knew that they would be doing the sort of things you want. My big adventure in New York was discovering baklava and the service clubs. You didn't go out chasing girls and they didn't go out drinking. When you ran around with me you ran around with the guys who didn't do that kind of thing. We were perfectly willing to meet girls but there wasn't any thought that you were going to go out and find somebody who would spend the night with you. But there were plenty of people who wanted to do that, so, they tended to club together. There wasn't much chance of things being physically a problem for me. I think I may have told you this. One of the things I carefully did at Fort Dix was to arrange, if you will, a boxing match with one of the most respected and one of the toughest guys in the company, Art Strempeck,

who was a close friend. I knew I couldn't possibly hurt Art Strempeck but I figured I was good enough so he couldn't hurt me and that's the way it turned out. He out-weighed me and he was a hell of a lot stronger, although I was pretty strong, but I certainly couldn't keep up with Art. But I just thought if we have any more problems around here this ought to take care of it.

DB: What kind of problems did you have?

CRH: Just the sort of thing about whether or not people thought they could push you or annoy you or do something to you.

DB: That happened.

CRH: Well I had one guy, I think I told you, Benny Buchler, I told him in the desert, when we were near Yuma, that he and I were going to stay behind while everyone else went off to the chow line, that we were going to stay together. He was scared to death. He didn't need to be, but he needed to be talked to, and that's all I was going to do was to talk to him.

DB: He was giving you some trouble.

CRH: Yeah. There were guys you knew you couldn't handle. The biggest guy in the company was enormously strong, Red Self. Red Self was enormously strong and he could probably fight a platoon all at once. You wouldn't pick a fight with him. There was a guy who I liked to wrestle with, whom nobody could wrestle, and I couldn't either. But you would learn something. Lockhart. He was a powerful coal miner. Lockhart had developed TB somewhere, maybe in the mines. He went home in October with active TB. Wrestling with Lockhart was a losing proposition. All you could do was just figure out that you were going to learn something from him. You sure couldn't handle him.

DB: Were there any guys in combat who you were worried about that might do something capricious or stupid?

CRH: No I don't think so. Not in my group. We all protected this little guy who is mentioned in the letters, Ed Slobechevski, who only weighed about one pound. Slobechevski strikes me as no bigger than Karen Lawrence. [*Refers to Mrs. Karen Lawrence, ever-helpful secretary in the History & Political Science Departments, S.U.*]. If he was any bigger than Karen I would be surprised and he probably weighed about as much. I know, in one case, I think I told you this, shells were coming in, we were in a house, and I actually threw Slobechevski to the floor and lay on top of him to protect him. He was just the little brother who you thought "How the hell did this kid even get here because he doesn't belong out here."

DB: So you all looked out for him.

CRH: Everybody looked out for him because we had all this heavy lifting to do and you could pick him up with one hand. How he got there I don't know, and I think he made it. I think he survived the war. I don't really remember.

DB: So it was sort of strange putting him in an anti-tank unit.

CRH: Anywhere in a heavy combat unit because there was so much heavy lifting and so many things that required sheer strength. And if there had been an active attack while walking forward you probably wouldn't worry about him but if you were defending a house you would worry about him because he was so little that if somebody even got near him with a bayonet I can't imagine that he could have protected himself. He might have. Audie Murphy was one of the greatest soldiers we had, tiny little guy. Audie Murphy was very small.

DB: Now you say that many, this is a comment in June of '45, you say that many of the Germans would come and would fight with us in the Pacific now, if we would arm them and feed them. To what motive do you attribute this phenomenon, Bob? Purely desperation to make a living or what?

CRH: Partly I suppose the desperation to make a living. I don't really know. Maybe they wanted to rehabilitate themselves in their own eyes. May not have been smart enough to realize that they had been on really the wrong side as well as the losing side. Far more interesting is the number of Germans and I don't recall talking to anybody but everybody has dealt with this, including Steve Ambrose, talk about the number of Germans who said that they would gladly join us and go fight the Russians. Quite happy to do that. I don't recall an experience of doing that. Talking to anybody who wanted to do that but it was interesting to me that there were some who wanted to go to the Pacific. [*The 'Germans' have – for almost 1,000 years, considered themselves to be protectors of 'the West' against the 'barbarians' and 'heathens' from 'the East'. This explains – in part – their 1945 resistance to the Soviets*].

DB: But you also said that the Germans could not understand why you have Japanese men in your army.

CRH: Right. Well so did the French. The French had a terrible time when they first saw our Japanese because they vaguely knew, I suppose, from their studies when they were kids, that there were Japanese people in the United States but they never expected to see whole companies of them. They startled the hell out of the people in the French Vosges mountains when the 100th battalion and the 442nd regiment came up there. And they probably startled the Italians when they hit Italy. I know they startled the Frenchmen.

DB: Was part of that a racist thing or was it...?

CRH: From them?

DB: From the German and the French?

CRH: Well the Germans knew that they were allied with the Japanese so they couldn't imagine that there were Japanese citizens or, rather, American citizens of Japanese descent, who would actually fight against the old Rising Sun Empire. You have to realize just how misled, misdirected, misinformed and actually lied to these people really were. They had the weirdest ideas. I remember long discussions with that lady who owned the hotel in Franzensbad about things that had actually occurred. She had no idea because what they got was the official news report and unless they had the courage to listen to British radio, which would get you killed, Germans find you are listening to that and they would throw you in a camp and probably execute you. They just didn't know.

DB: Ok, this next letter is, I am not sure how to pronounce it, Alt Aussee.

CRH: Probably make a "z" sound with the "s;" you did beautifully.

DB: You said you were sending negatives taken at Linz where we were in when the war ended. Do you still have those?

CRH: Yeah and you have seen them I think. The other day. Leo (Sergeant) Bowles and there is Corporal What's his name sitting there someplace with his feet crossed looking highly comfortable. I think some of those are those that show Schafer and Ragno and myself holding weapons. I don't know but those are probably what are referred to. There are a couple of them mentioned, specifically mentioned Wimsbach.

DB: That's where you were.

CRH: Yeah and I think that's where that castle was that belonged to Colonel X.

DB: Colonel?

CRH: Costello. The castle on the (unclear name).

DB: Speaking of which you comment that, "There is a lot of fraternization, not surprisingly, due to all the Polish, Russian, French, German, Austrian, and English girls around." So Bob, why were there so many Polish, Russian, French, and English girls there?

CRH: Well the 'English' girls are hard to explain at this remove, but the others were slave laborers, or they were just the local village girls. In Austria, for instance, we got along famously, you might say, with the village girls. In Germany the same. Again in part it was if they were connected with an American soldier there was a chance that they could connect with some American food. But mostly they were just young girls and we were young men and there weren't any young German men running around, at least very few, and they were, in the way in which boys and girls have always been, young men and young women, quite interested in one another. Of course, there were so many marriages coming out. I don't know where the idea about the English girls came from Dan. I have

no idea. Maybe I was thinking of back in England. If you are in England there is a large supply of English girls who either didn't have boyfriends or whose boyfriends and husbands were overseas.

DB: Worishofen?

CRH: If it is a 'W' it becomes a 'V' so Vorishofen.

DB: Bad Worishofen.

CRH: Where we stayed in the nunnery.

DB: You good-naturedly argued with local Russian and Polish boys about the benefits of US football v. soccer. So I guess one of my questions is obviously just answered by what you just said. I was going to ask why were there Russian and Polish boys around...

CRH: Hundreds of thousands of slave laborers. Plus all of those Russian prisoners of war.

DB: So, eventually, they were deported.

CRH: Yes. Unfortunately most of them were rounded up and sent back to Russia.

DB: Which often times were...

CRH: They would get killed when they got home. A lot of them. We know that now but we didn't know that then.

DB: I don't know if you remember this or not, but, by this time in June of '45, were broader relationships with the Russians noticeably changing by then?

CRH: No. By that time the Russians had, well, yeah, I guess you could reverse your question in terms of time. When we were anticipating the Russians we looked forward to meeting them and we didn't really think there would be any problems. After we got to meet them, we realized that they not only saw problems, from their point of view, they made problems for us, and that after a while you realized that you probably couldn't trust them, but that the big thing was that you knew that they didn't trust us. And I have got notes somewhere in the letters home about how here we all are chasing girls and they are out there digging in positions and wiring positions and laying machine guns. They obviously were not at all prepared for any kind of friendly relations with us. And on a very high level you can see that. You probably read the memoirs of General Clay and the others who set up the four-part commission in Berlin. And they had a hell of a time getting into Berlin and establishing the fact that they were going to be there. Establishing the fact that the French had a right to be there, that there would be a French zone, which was carved out of the Allied zone, the English/American zone. The Ruskies didn't give up any of East Germany. So we shoehorned the French in there and the whole notion was

just, I think, a severe problem on the part of the Russians. If the Russians had had any common sense at all they could have gotten a lot more out of us at the end of the war.

DB: Reparations and so forth.

CRH: We would have done a lot more for them but they did a lot of foolish things and I think they are the direct cause of the Cold War. But the fundamental cause of the Cold War for me is the absolute incompatibility of the two systems, period.

DB: Were you getting an inkling of that in personal relations with Russians?

CRH: No not usually. I think there was a kind of disdain for the average Russian soldier because they were so naïve.

DB: Disdain by you all.

CHR: Yeah. We knew that they were good soldiers and we were pleased that they had been so strongly capable and had had such good weaponry and had done such wonderful things and had died in horrible numbers. We realized we owed them a great debt. But they were literally naïve. Every soldier there, I mean every GI there who ever met the Russians, has got stories of them standing around snapping on and off the light switches. None of us could believe it.

DB: So that they were kind of country bumpkins.

CRH: Exactly. They could pull a string because they had seen those at home but the notion that you would have a light switch in the hallway that could turn on the light in your office and they literally would stand there and flip them on and off because they didn't have those wherever they were. Everybody had stories about literally selling them Mickey Mouse watches. You know, just any old kind of thing. Barely turn the hands and you could sell it to some Russian for good money because it was better than they had. Everybody had stories of them stripping the light bulbs out of places where they went. What they were going to put them in when they got home I don't know, but they were taking the light bulbs because they couldn't get them at home.

DB: And was there, were there areas, like in Czechoslovakia, where you all were stationed near the lines of the Russian army?

CRH: No. The only time I was actually really close to the Russians was in Austria. And, when we were all fooling around in the Elbe River valley or near the Elbe River valley during those days when we were taking Gera and Weimar and so on. If you looked at the map that's not part of where the troops actually met but Austria was the only place where, for instance, the Russians would send over some officer to chat over at Regimental headquarters at the 319th. I would see them come in and I know our people went over to see them. And you could see their lines once in a while but, otherwise, no.

DB: And in that situation did you hear about some of the conflicts, you know, about the Russians, like you mentioned, of being distrustful of us and so on?

CRH: No and I think the evidence is the way in which they dug in and wired in, and that sort of thing, that these guys obviously didn't trust us.

End of Side A, Tape 1

CRH: We weren't at all interested in fighting with the Russians and we didn't give a damn what they did.

DB: On a related topic, did you witness anything about the DP's, these displaced persons?

CRH: Unfortunately yes. I was involved with one of those, to use the old Arabic word, Razzias, where you rounded them up and threw them on trains and sent them home. And that was a social disaster and I have always regretted that I was in that, and I had no idea what was going on, and I don't think our officers did.

DB: Rounded up whom?

CRH: In July, Russian DP's. Russian girls who were living with our soldiers, for instance, but also Russian men who had been displaced persons or slave laborers and soldiers. And they were rounded up, put on trains and forcibly repatriated. The British had the worst experience with that, down in Austria, and there are a number of famous articles about that and one or two books about that. But we did it in July of '45, wherever I was, near Bad Worishofen. But I wasn't in Bad Worishofen when we did that. But I remember we cleaned out all these girls. There must have been a half a dozen in a little house we were all living in. They were with four or five of the guys who had captured, you might say, the upstairs, and that's where they had this little 'ménage-a-many' going. I don't even know if there was an even match of men and women up there. There was just a lot of sexual activity going on all the time. Most of them were Ruskies and that was really heart-rending and in some cases you literally had to push them onto the trains. And we just did.

DB: Because they had an inkling of what they were going back to.

CRH: They knew they didn't want to go back to the terrible conditions they came from. But some of them may have also been Ukranian, for instance. Some of them had possibly been from some of the other populations within the old Soviet empire but the Ukranians, I think, were the ones that displeased the Russians the most.

DB: So they were afraid of reprisals, and there indeed were.

CRH: And certainly there were Ukrainian soldiers who had fought for the Germans who were desperately afraid. And again I think they all got shoveled onto trains unless they had enough sense to commit suicide.

DB: You talk here about, and this is later in September 28, you talk about dating a German girl.

CRH: Yeah I don't know quite what I meant by that but it must have been. I remember that letter because I went back over some of this stuff when you and I started working and I had a very disdainful attitude toward her, which isn't like me. And on top of that I have always taken out women I really enjoyed. I have never spent any time, ordinarily, with some girl I didn't like. So I don't know why I said what I did there but I was obviously very snobbish toward her and disdainful. It was embarrassing to read that letter but it is there. And she apparently was quite uniformed about things that had happened. I remember talking to her. She was probably some good-looking girl. I don't know. Can't help you there Dan.

DB: What would the men do on dates generally? Bring girls to dinner or to a movie or what?

CRH: Probably could have gone to some of the movies once we had that service club, the Goldbrickers club set up, could have gone to that. I think the usual thing to do was to try to go for a walk and then sooner or later figure out some way that you were going to get them into bed. I think that was pretty much the plan and the girl, if she was a citizen of the local town, probably was trying to find some way to get out from underneath her parents and get away from wherever her friends would have seen her. So one of the first phrases most American's learned was about 'going for a walk.' The term for a stroll is, the active verb is, "spatzeire". You would hear lots of girls asked to spatzeiren.

DB: You would have the girls asking the guys?

CRH: No, the guys asking the girls. And that would be an almost automatic introduction the idea that we might walk someplace, but that with any luck at all, we won't be walking long, we will be lying down somewhere.

DB: One of your, another, later letters, in November for that you have bracketed comments, later comments, from 1980 or '99, in which you say that you "had a single occupancy room in Franzenbad"...

CRH: Yes I did. That was quite a treat after all that time in the Army, to have a room to yourself.

DB: ... "Although once in a while some friend with a girl in tow would ask to trade accommodations."

CRH: Particularly Sergeant DePuyt the guy who laid everything to be had in Franzenbad but was the one who saw very clearly that Suzy Zishka should be saved and sent to the convent community.

DB: He saw that.

CRH: DePuyt was the one who thought that up. He came to me with that scheme. I can't say that I originated it. He looked at Edith and Suzy and said, "These girls are so nice that even I wouldn't try to approach them". That is essentially what John was saying.

DB: Were there a lot of prostitutes?

CRH: No. I suppose there were but there wasn't so much prostitution as there was a desperate effort to sell one's self in order to get food for your kids. There were girls who were sleeping with GI's just because they wanted to sleep with GI's, but, in the immortal words of a southern friend of ours whom my brother and I knew in Paris, where we were all rooming together at Cité Universitaire. He was an accomplished girl chaser and his phrase was "Hell I thought she just loved the game." This girl told him, at the end of a long evening, that she wanted money. I have never forgotten that. The accent, this whole phrase was marvelous. No, these girls just loved the game and 'everybody was doing it' and I have a hunch that they thought well "may as well get in on this and might get a chocolate bar or two and some cigarettes." There was just a lot of sex going on. Anybody who wanted it could find it. That's for damn sure. The rewards, I suppose were a little food, that sort of thing. But for the girls who were trying to feed their kids, or feed their parents maybe, it was a desperate matter to get a job in the regimental mess hall for us. It would have been the regimental headquarters mess hall. I remember all those girls and one or two of them, I can't see the girls' faces in my mind but I can just see this mess, "mess" means of course the place where you are eating. And the same thing when I was on a really nice leave, it wasn't where I wanted to go, but, it was up near Metz, in France, right at the end of the war. These places were all being served by DP's. Polish girls, who could talk to half the kids who came in there from my regiment, because they were all Polish-born. Not 'Polish-born', but, second generation.

DB: From up in the coal mining territory.

CRH: Yeah. They were all the coal miners' kids. The girls were quite happy to just have a job and making a little money.

DB: Well Bob, you say here that getting back after June of '45 you say "I frankly don't believe that these people are worth fighting over again, including the French and English."

CRH: Sort of universal anger.

DB: Although you note that you could see reasons for fighting in the Pacific but then you voice a note of ambiguity and say, "I've seen so much and experienced so much in the

past 12 months that I am bewildered and confused by it all.” Now was this attitude, in part, a reflection of, well first let me let you comment on that.

CRH: Well I think everybody made the observation that eastern France was nowhere near as physically nice as Western Germany. In other words you came out of those cow pies in eastern France and, suddenly, you were in the Rhine Valley, which is a little garden. A big garden as a matter of fact. The people were simply better dressed, better housed, and better standard of living. The women were all gorgeous it seemed to me. Those German girls are simply very good-looking to say the least. Life in eastern France, particularly in the winter was pretty primitive. I am sure I have told you, maybe not, but there’s a book published somewhere in the early 1920’s that describes life in the 1920’s and it’s pretty much the way I saw it and I have a hunch it described life in Lorraine in 1870. Fairly primitive background. And we were probably disappointed in the French. I told you that we got to the point where we did not trust the Maquis, the local resistance people. [*‘Maquis’: Corsican derivative = rough countryside, wooded hills suitable as refuge for guerrillas. FFI = Forces Francaises de L’Interieur*]. And I think that we just felt that they all mistreated one another and then we saw the Czechs mistreat the Germans in the Sudetenland. Understandable, but you would also be sort of disgusted because “you guys don’t seem to have learned anything.” I was mad at the English. I don’t know why. They were certainly kind of me when I was there.

DB: Did any of this, you think, reflect some of the pre-war isolationism that was common in the United States?

CRH: Maybe. I have no idea Dan. One thing that you might want to remember about isolationism and maybe it is illustrated here, I don’t know, we never really have had an isolationist policy. We have been very selective about what we would isolate ourselves from and from whom we would isolate ourselves. But for instance, when we were talking about isolation in the 1920’s and anti-Wilson, beating up on poor old Woodrow, we had active platoons of people from the big banks running around Latin American trying to get those people to borrow money from us. We were in places like Haiti. We eventually ended up in Nicaragua, twice. Came out of there in ’34 as I recall. So I always try to tell my students to not swallow this ‘isolation’ thing. We intervened where we felt comfortable and I think we still have that attitude. We will intervene in Afghanistan but not in Iraq or something. It’s troublesome. Isolationism is an interesting thing. Most of us were just so naïve that we really didn’t know anything about the world.

DB: Do you remember before the war beginning to say that Germany would eventually be a threat to the United States?

CRH: I really don’t recall. I suppose we thought so. There were people, such as Mr. Lindberg, who either didn’t see it as a threat or saw it as such a big threat that it shouldn’t be challenged. [*There were people, such as Mr. Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr., the justly-famed “Lone Eagle” who flew the Atlantic, alone, in May of 1927. He was, also, an Air Force Reserve Colonel but President Roosevelt, et alia, would not activate his commission. Nevertheless, he went to the South Pacific and coached P-38 pilots in*

mechanics and flying, and actually fought against the Japanese flyers, briefly, before being called back to the U.S.A.J. There were people like Jack Kennedy's dad who just didn't like the English and there were a lot of those professional Irishmen around. Now I don't know in your lifetime if that is still (unclear word). Americans of Irish descent who have never been in Ireland, don't know a damn thing about it, but, hate the English. Did your generation see that or was that gone by the time you grew up?

DB: Not so much because you know we came after World War II where we bonded, America bonded with England. I think that had a big effect.

CRH: Could be. But there were a lot of Americans who had really violent, Irish-Americans, rather, had violent anti-English sentiments.

DB: I am sure there is still some of that especially, maybe, in Boston.

CRH: Could be. Although the capers the IRA have pulled, I think, have disappointed most people. Now I don't know what the source of all of that would have been, Dan.

DB: You have already told me about some of the anger at Japan due to the long history of a sympathetic portrayal of China vis-à-vis the Japanese brutalities and, of course plus Pearl Harbor. Plus did you all hear stories about Japanese army brutalities during the war?

CRH: Oh yeah. Well you see the Japanese made the mistake, I think, of publicizing some of the activities in the Bataan Death March. They were using, what did they capture, some 70,000 prisoners or something. They were using that to show how inexorable the March of the Rising Sun was going to be and some of those guys looked pretty miserable. People came out of the Philippines constantly. We never really lost touch with the Philippines for very long periods of time. Shortly after MacArthur left, I think it died down a bit, but it wasn't too long before they began to pick up radio signals and that sort of stuff. And of course, you and I have talked about this before. Mr. Luce, Henry Luce, Chinese missionary kid, controlled two of the great propaganda instruments of the country, Time magazine and Life magazine. They hastened to publish pictures, which Japanese allowed them to take or, maybe, even furnished them, of the Rape of Nanking. Using the Chinese for bayonet practice. We knew about that stuff.

DB: During the war did the GI's in Europe hear about the brutalities in the Pacific?

CRH: You can bet that we did because that stuff would show up in Stars and Stripes once in a while. We knew that the war over there was a completely different war and it was a 'war to the knife', so to speak. We just didn't realize quite what it was like.

DB: What do you mean by that, "just didn't realize it"?

CRH: That it was as complete as it was. The notion that you would have Okinawan citizens taking their children in their arms and jumping off those 190 foot cliffs. You

know they are not to be captured by the round eyes. That was astounding to us. The fact that women would do this.

DB: I don't want to push this analogy too much because you just kind of told me that you didn't remember much about this, but, at one point in September '45, you went to go see the movie "Wilson" and you wrote home to your parents that you thought he was a great man according to what you saw in the film, at least. Is that a sign, in part, that you and others were changing toward a more internationalist perspective on things?

CRH: I don't really remember. It's an interesting thought, Dan. I am not sure that I thought about it at the time and maybe I never considered it up until then. I knew that, I know that, somewhere along the line, I began to see many things about Mr. Wilson and I have been studying him, after all, for about half a century, and I had lots of good ideas and bad ideas and I know enough about international relations to realize that in some ways what he proposed by the International Parliament was naïve, perhaps. Some people might think it was silly. But I realize also that what he was trying to do is say, "There's a lot of things that we could just simply talk about. We don't have to be nasty to one another." And he was smart about that. That's that old southern Presbyterian thought. He was a particularly strong Presbyterian and you get together in the old synod and talk things over and obviously we have got mutual problems and we ought to be able to come up with mutually satisfactory solutions to them. And I think Wilson should be praised for that. On the other hand, as you know, when he ran Princeton, he was a dictator, too, so he gets many versions. Wilson the strong man.

DB: Quite a complex guy.

CRH: He is. He is not a simple man at all and of course American politics tend to reduce things to simplicities and it took me a long time to realize something about the complexities in people like Mr. Wilson. Or to become an admirer of Grover Cleveland. It took a long time to figure out who Grover Cleveland was. A very impressive guy. Very impressive.

DB: Now this last year, I mean you say in your letter, "This last year has served to show me what a privilege it is to be alive and how much fun and enjoyment there can be in the world if only one takes the trouble to dig it out." Bob, did this hold true later? That is to say, did combat help in your post-Army life...

CRH: Oh yes.

DB: ...To make you appreciate the little things?

CRH: I don't think there's anybody who has been through that who did not reflect on it for a moment, some people I guess can't reflect on it, but most of us who have are just so thankful to be here. And then of course you get me, unhurt. I am here unhurt, period. So you are just thankful everyday. And I have never talked to any of my friends about this

without getting that same reaction. They all are pretty much aware that we were blessed. Even the ones who got beaten up rather badly like John Talevich, in the Marine Corps.

DB: How was he wounded? What was his wound?

CRH: He broke a bone, wrecked the nerve, cut an artery in his leg. Shot trying to save a wounded Marine officer. Damn near bled to death on Okinawa. He was in the open, on a road, - first of all – they had to get him out of the road. He was out of the middle of nowhere when some sniper shot him. Whoever went after him to help was going to get shot, too. Or, there was a strong possibility.

DB: Was that amputated?

CRH: No. He never had it amputated but he spent 14 months in recovery.

DB: Probably has pain.

CRH: It was serious and he had pain. I never knew it. Nobody here, I don't think anybody ever knew it. Bill Guppy might have. They knew each other pretty well but he never mentioned it to me and he and I talked combat a lot.

DB: So he was an old friend of yours.

CRH: He was founder of the journalism department here.

DB: Oh, ok.

CRH: He just died.

DB: Bob, were you able to transport many of your souvenir guns around thanks to the truck towing the 57-millimeter gun?

CRH: Somewhere there I should have a note. I think I had over 30 of them. And eventually I got rid of all of them except one because there was a threat that the Army would be unhappy if you tried to take more than one home. I myself and many of my friends simply did not want to risk, in any way, a delay in getting out of the military so we gave the guns away. I still have the box in which those guns were carried around. It's that box in which I sent home those beautiful china plates. That's downstairs.

DB: Yeah I saw those plates. The gun you were talking about; that's the gun that was the anti-tank gun for guarding the regimental headquarters.

CRH: Yes. Right.

DB: Now you had planned to use your 15-pound limit of bringing souvenirs home...

CRH: Was it 15 pounds? I didn't remember that.

DB: That's what you say here. Mostly the pistol. But then later, like you just told me, and you had mentioned this in you letter too, you found out that there would be a one gun limit, so did you wind up, did you find out that in time to gain other souvenirs to be part of that 15 pound limit?

CRH: Dan, I really don't know. You know, I have got the flag and I have got the pistol. I sent the dishes home through the mail from the Sudetenland. I really don't know. I can't imagine that I had 15 pounds of souvenirs. I had sent home a lot more pounds than that through the mail and I don't know that I brought home anything, really. No idea. I was trying to steal, as I told you the American .45 that I had carried.

DB: Oh yeah.

CRH: I had even had a false box built and left it on a train siding, with a German typewriter.

DB: Somebody may never still have found it.

CRH: Yeah, that would be funny.

DB: You say, "Here's a couple of prints that Joe had developed that shows how tired Joe had looked. We had just come through the Our River and the Siegfried Line." Do you have those prints? Is it Joe Ragno?

CRH: Yeah and I'll bet you have seen those. I think they were in those pictures you saw the other day but I won't insist on it. I don't remember and I can't remember how we would have had photographs taken just after the Siegfried. I wonder if mom had sent me a small camera by that time.

DB: Was that Joe Ragno?

CRH: It's got to be Ragno.

DB: That's RAGNO.

CRH: Yeah he is the only one I would always refer to as 'Joe.' Joe was really a special friend.

DB: Did you all have, you know you asked your folks to send you a pen at one point. Did you all have to dip your pens in ink?

CRH: Well the Waterman pen had been invented about a dozen years before.

DB: And that is?

CRH: That's the one with the little rubber sack and it was a regular pen. You pressed and the rubber sack somehow released ink, which would be stored in a bladder, literally here, and it would come down through a channel and come out through that very nice point that Watermen had.

DB: So you wouldn't have to dip for every word.

CRH: No, but I grew up with those and we still have, I think my brother has and I know I have, a stone jar, God knows what it was made out of. They were called 'stone'. Some sort of clay, I suppose. It's about this tall and this big around. Probably held a pint and a half or two pints maybe of ink and the ink was kept in that with a little stopper and you poured that into a tiny ink bottle about this big, which sat in a round hole in the upper right hand side of your school desk. And everybody had one.

DB: I remember my dad told me about that.

CRH: Yeah. And you had these steel pens and one time in grade school - I can't remember who it was but I am willing to put my money on either Keith Goldenburger or Pete Campbell - jabbed some girl in the thigh with one of those pens. I don't know how deep it went. You'd have to realize that those skirts that Catholic girls wore, those plaid skirts were so thick that I am not sure it wounded her, but, I think that it did. I'll ask Neil if he remembers.

DB: My dad said that some kids would, the girls would have pigtails...

CRH: And you would put them in the inkwell. I did that. And I think it was obligatory. I had been reading Booth Tarkington and I am sure that is where I got that; that's something you did. If the girl had pigtails. I don't even remember who would have been in front of me.

DB: So every once in a while you would have to fill that rubber bladder thing in the pen.

CRH: Oh, yeah. It ran out quite often.

DB: So did the Army issue you bottles of ink?

CRH: Damned if I know. That's a good question. I suppose you got ink from somebody. I imagine what you could do would be to go up to the company clerk and I'll bet he had it and you would get it from him. And the supply sergeant might have had some but you rarely saw them.

DB: So you probably didn't have to carry it in your knapsack.

CRH: I can't imagine that we did. I never have thought about that. The next time I talk to Milt McCormick I will ask him.

DB: Since you had said that you typed this letter, this in June 25th, on the back of a typed two page letter from your mom...

CRH: Yeah, I have got that.

DB: Is it possible for me to read that?

CRH: Sure yeah. You have seen it when you breezed through this stuff as a matter of fact.

DB: There is one letter in your manuscript, that must be it.

CRH: That's it.

DB: Ok.

CRH: That shows you how short we were of paper. That means how short the Austrians were where I would have stolen the paper, ordinarily. Just taken it from them.

DB: In noting that, I should have asked you this a minute ago, in noting that the fraternization policy is quite often disregarded you then wrote, "I'll tell you a couple of choice little stories..."

CRH: Oh that's about Colonel _____ and Paul _____. Colonel _____, of course, had the mistress of his castle running around with him and living with him, obviously, and hostessing his dinners like Pearl Mesta. And Paul would patrol once in a while, at night, looking for fraternization, and he had a girl with him. I have told you somewhere, I think I mentioned in my letters, I have told so many people these things because I think they are funny. I was one of the men called to be the honor guard when _____ was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions at Heiderscheid, Luxembourg just before Christmas, in 1944. And I and everybody else who had to stand that honor guard were really ticked because we despised _____. Partly it was because he would press charges against people in the battalion whom he caught fraternizing. And we knew damn well he was. I know I used to entertain thoughts about how nice it would be to meet Mrs. _____ at one of the divisional reunions. I never did and I hope I would have had enough sense not to say anything. And Paul may have gone home and told her that he lived chastely. And _____ may have said the same thing.

DB: Both of these guys were married?

CRH: I don't know if Paul was. Colonel _____ was.

DB: Now in June 27th you talk about some scenic photographs of Alsace and then later in 1980 or 2000 you comment that those are lost but you still have "portraits of me and Bill Schafer."

CRH: Yeah. Right. Those were the ones taken by that German sergeant who was the photographer.

DB: Ok. So you still have those.

CRH: Yeah.

DB: And who was Bill Schafer again?

CRH: A fellow from Pennsylvania, as I recall. May not have been. Very popular member of the anti-tank company. He ended up being one of the men who was kept in the regimental gun platoon or ranger platoon or whatever silly thing you want to call us, but anyway he was one of the squads, he was in one of the squads and I think it's mine, who stayed with the 57's. And one of the reasons that I think he stayed in the same squad I did was that, I have this very clear image of him, and I have told you this story that he is lying in bed one time in Goesdorf in the second floor of a barn and a .45 slug came flying up through the floor and went right between his legs. I see that very clearly and I see how unhappy Bill was. [*This story is so improbable that I have hesitated to tell it through the years. In June of 2000, Marcel Goeres (of the Goeres-Thines family at Goesdorf) told it during a reception at the family farmhouse. I was delighted at his independent, spontaneous recitation and told him why. NOW I feel free to tell this story*].

DB: But much happier...

CRH: When he realized, yeah, that he hadn't been hit. I don't think he had been scratched even.

DB: Was he friends with you?

CRH: Yes. We were friends. He is one of the ones who scolded me for chickening out in the Our River. He was one of the few who made some comment about it. He didn't like that at all. Partly because he had been one of the people who did go across the river and stayed on the river, I don't know how many days he was over there, cowering under the guns of the Germans about 20 feet from them.

DB: You mean, are you referring to that incident...?

CRH: Yeah. Told the lieutenant I was out of the war. Bill was on the other, the German side of the river. One of the few boats that made it over there.

DB: Is he still alive?

CRH: I have no idea. I put off joining the division association far too long and most of us began to die off right around 60, 62, 64 and 65. So they went fast. You figure that I will

be 77 in few days, few weeks. They just disappeared, so I am always thankful when I can actually pick up the phone and talk to Milt McCormick, I call still talk to Bob Murrell.

DB: Your birthday is coming up, Bob.

CRH: In April.

DB: You will be 77 you said.

DB: Bob could you clarify, this is from July '45, could you clarify your duties at Bad Worishofen?

CRH: Yeah. I was in regimental headquarters. I think, by that time they had figured out that I could type and I became a typist, clerk typist in regiment. But its possible that I was still either not transferred to typing or actually running patrols as well as typing. I remember two or three very interesting, in the sense of just simply beautiful, tours in the countryside running around playing scouts and just making sure that the Germans weren't re-arming back there somewhere. Instead they were desperately trying to grow potatoes. Running around the countryside on these armed patrols that we ran as the military government and the occupying power. So, somewhere in there, I got transferred to regimental headquarters, or rather to the typist job. I know I had it when we went to Czechoslovakia because that's where I got that german schreibenmaschine (typewriter).

DB: And at Mindleheim you were guarding the SS hospital?

CRH: Yes, right. I have got pictures of that I think. Pictures of me there. That's where I was playing around with the Germans prisoners of war who were desperately trying to out high-jump me. Did I tell that story?

DB: Yeah it's in the letters here. Why were the SS men hospitalized and why...?

CRH: They had been wounded. I think they were all wounded. They had been there for greater or lesser wounds but I think they were there as wounded people.

DB: Why were they being guarded?

CRH: We had a special sort of alert-watch on these guys. Once you captured them you wanted to clear them of Nazi activities because everybody knew that they had been the worst of the war criminal people. They were the ones, the SS Panzer troop for instance, I think might be the 6th Division of the SS. Anyway an SS Panzer division burned down the church at Oradour, in western France, with 600 people in it. We knew that but you didn't know exactly who had done this and so the order would still be coming from places like Nuremberg saying "If you have got your hands on these guys, keep them." [The Oradour reference is to the village of Oradour-sur-Glane, just north of Limoges, France. On June 10 1944, the Das Reich Panzer Division of the Waffen S.S. murdered some 640 citizens – virtually the entire population of the village. A good many of the

victims were women and children, who were forced into the local Catholic church and kept in there while the church was burned down. Indeed, most of the buildings in Oradour were burned, also. The stark remains have been preserved as a reminder of this horror and the renewed village was erected a short distance away. I did not hear about Oradour-sur-Glane until after the war, but, Third Army intelligence was aware of it. The horrible part is that Oradour is not alone in such treatment. Anyone considering my 1945 antipathy to the Germans should recall that flaming church and screaming women and children. CRH. For a useful reference, see Chapter 6, 'Settling Scores', of Occupation, the Ordeal of France 1940-1944. Of special value for research, details, is 'Das Reich: the March of the 2nd SS Panzer through France, by Max Hastings].

DB: Until we investigate.

CRH: Yeah, until somebody can screen them and clear them. But all these kids were wounded. I think I have told stories, you would see them playing soccer on their crutches with one leg gone, that sort of thing. Pretty admirable.

DB: You mention, you talk about the Ardennes in this letter, retrospectively, from July and you say that, "you were driving to cut off the main supply road to Bastogne and protect the flank of the 318th while they went to the relief of the 101st Airborne." So the 318th was...

CRH: One of our regiments. There were three regiments in the division and they were our sister regiment. 317th, 318th, 319th.

DB: And you were 319th.

CRH: 319th. 318th went with 4th Armored and, on another one of our flanks and we could find this out by looking at the maps, there was probably the 4th division. And then the 26th division was with us, or, we with them. 26th, 4th armored, and 80th were the three divisions that Patton cut loose somewhere on the night of the 20th maybe the 21st...

DB: Of December.

CRH: Of December and told us to go north and on the morning of the 22nd we were headed north. I think we may have gone north all night that night. I don't know. But either on the morning of the 22nd or the 23rd we were in Luxembourg City.

DB: And that cut off the main supply road?

CRH: No. We didn't shut that for a long time. I think that the battle went on for another three or four weeks.

DB: Ok. So that was later.

CRH: Squeezing together like this with the 1st and the 9th armies in the north.

DB: Bob is making a “V” shape with his hands. An upside down “V”

CRH: The “V” lying on its side. The “V” was headed from Germany where my thumb is and the Eiffel and the Rhine. The “V” was headed for Bastogne and beyond to the Muese River and to Antwerp. And it actually flowed around Bastogne, obviously, and surrounded it, and then went on another 25 miles.

DB: This is the German counterattack.

CRH: The German attack...

DB: The German attack rather.

CRH: They were headed for the Meuse River and they didn't quite get to the Meuse but they got a long way beyond Bastogne. So if this is the lower part of that “V” then the Army that I was in, 3rd Army had to send three divisions north right away and eventually I think there were 12 infantry, or, I don't know how many. I have got the figures I will give them to us. How many armored divisions went up there, but we were the first three. 26th, 4th armored and then we all went north right away because we had been sort of pooping around in what was to be an attack in the Saar Valley and attack into the Siegfried Line and we weren't committed. In other words when they pulled us out we didn't have to take somebody off the line where the Germans were staring them in the eye. We were moving south in a convoy and getting ready for that attack. Patton had the three of us, and pretty soon, he shut off every attack, and I forget when the order, from Bradley, I think, came down to cut every attack and send everything you can north. And they actually built a new Corps. A ‘Corps,’ as I told you, is two divisions or more and for about 20 minutes we were in something called the 3rd Corps and that was us and the 26th and the 4th Armored. For a few days. Few hours maybe even. The 3rd Corps eventually was the one that actually drove towards Bastogne. I was in the middle of Luxembourg, not driving toward Bastogne but driving north.

DB: Keeping the Germans from breaking through the top of that “V” in effect.

CRH: Yeah. Just squishing them against the top part of the “V”. So we were in the bottom part of the “V” and we were pushing them against people like the 82nd Airborne.

DB: What was a TD?

CRH: Tank destroyer.

DB: That was mounting a 90-millimeter gun sometimes.

CRH: Yeah. It wasn't designed to do the jobs that tanks do, although it could. It was probably more lightly armored.

DB: Half track?

CRH: No it was a tank chassis and it looked like a tank and if you were an average guy, you would look out and think, well that is a tank. But it wasn't. You looked at it and you looked at that long gun and you realized that that thing is a hunting machine. Looks like a tank but it's out there to hunt tanks and the hope was that with that 90 millimeter gun you would be able to reach out there and take on the famous German 88 millimeter gun. I don't think any gun was as good as the 88, including our 90.

DB: But it could at least...

CRH: It would reach way out there and it was far better than the Shermans with those pitiful little 75's and 76's. But it was fast. Relatively fast.

DB: That was one of the benefits of the Sherman, too, was its quickness.

CRH: Yeah it was very quick but it also was, you know, it was the idea of a middleweight fighter trying to take on a heavyweight fighter. It didn't have a chance, ordinarily. But, once in a while if you could get the first shot in, something would happen and they would actually do well. And of course there are guys who killed some of the biggest of the German tanks with bazookas. Ordinarily you would think that the bazooka couldn't do that but there were people who did that.

DB: They would hit the treads.

CRH: Oh yeah. They hit in them in the treads of they would get a lucky shot that somehow or another exploded the ammunition or the gasoline or diesel whatever the Germans fueled those things with.

DB: Do you remember destroying tanks?

CRH: No. Never. Never with a 57, and never with the bazooka.

DB: Was part of our success due to the overwhelming greater number of tanks that we had?

CRH: Yes. Right. Plus the fact that we had all that air cover. Our tanks could always say to the Air Force "We really need help on this. First of all we don't know where these guys are or if you could see the German Tiger tank, which is a big as a house someplace, please go drop a bomb on it for us." Our tankers could do that. The Germans couldn't. They really were deprived by the fact they didn't have air cover.

DB: Luftwaffe was pretty much nil by that time.

CRH: Well it could do great things, and, if it wanted to, once in while it could mount something special. Just before Christmas they pulled one special raid when nobody

thought they could and they destroyed an awful lot of American airplanes. I will give you the number because I have got it somewhere. But that was about the last thing they could ever do. And they didn't dare come up and try to fight the Americans. The only people they had who could do that were either at night, they had some very good night fighters, or the jet aircraft. The jet aircraft could do that. They were no problem. The Germans also developed a rocket airplane. That's scary when you think about it. Firing a rocket and it just literally was a big 4th of July firecracker and it went up and it only flew for a few minutes but it flew like crazy and then they would try to attack the American bomber stream with that and they went so fast that they would fly right through it. Then the thing would tend to flame out so the guy who was flying it was then flying a rock and he had to be a good pilot just to put that thing back down again and he had to be very sensible about not getting more than about 6 feet from his home field because when that thing ran out of fuel it would just go straight down. It's kind of like the Challenger or those things we sent up. They don't fly all that well.

DB: And they don't have another chance.

CRH: And they were flying them with some kind of fuel that exploded. Every once in a while, there has been a lot of work done on this, you can get books where you can see pictures of it; every once in a while one of those rocket planes would explode on take off and there wouldn't be a piece as big as your computer left. There would have been a whole airplane and a pilot in that when it started and it would be scattered for 1000 yards on the runway and nobody would know why it blew up. It took real courage to fly those things.

DB: What was the purpose of pounding the valleys with white phosphorous?

CRH: If there was anybody down in there, you wouldn't know exactly where they were, but, if you threw on that white phosphorous, it went off in a great big plume and when it landed on you, it burned enthusiastically enough, but it really burned if it was near a fluid so when it hit your blood system, when it burned into your skin it just was right at home, like a clam in the tide. The fluid did not bother it at all so if the white phosphorous would burn through your uniform, then it would burn through your skin, and if you got enough on you it would burn through your internal organs. Burn your face, burn your eyes. It was horrible.

DB: So it was a semi-Napalm.

CRH: No. Napalm is a mixture of gasoline and something I don't know what.

DB: But its purpose was an anti-personnel weapon.

CRH: Oh absolutely. The purpose is to coat - this is true of white phosphorous too - to coat whoever gets it with stuff that is aflame and you can't get rid of it.

DB: Also, was another purpose to denude the trees so the Germans couldn't hide?

CRH: No we didn't really use it for that but everybody knew it would do that so that you would see these trees burning in the snow. A shell had gone off right near them and there was so much phosphorous that it set the tree afire or at least it gave that impression.

DB: Now you say the Jerry troops there were very good. Some of the best they had which explains the fierceness of the attack.

CRH: They had a weird mixture in the Battle of the Bulge, Dan. They had some really good stuff and then they had a bunch of people who were kind of losers. If you want to spot them when you look at the map I gave you of the German force coming you look at the ones on the lower part toward you. In other words the southern half or third of the German army they were just supposed to be sort of holding the Americans and keeping our attention. In eastern Luxemburg, somewhere near (unclear word) they actually were in there for a while and they really didn't have much motor transport and it gave them a hell of a problem when they were trying to fight us because we had so many vehicles. We had one vehicle for every four men or something like that. And so these poor guys are walking and the armored force and the famous people like Peiper and the others who had the armor and went to places like St. Vith and Bastogne and so on. They were further north. And they had the wheels but they didn't have the gasoline. But the guys to the south weren't really as good. The guys to the north were pretty good indeed and there were some Airborne people in there, German Airborne. Now they weren't jumping out of airplanes anymore except for one battalion. One very special battalion led by a man named Heydte, who was really great.

DB: Were you guys as good as the better German troops?

CRH: It depends on who they were and who we were. There are some absolutely heroic stories there of things that took place.

DB: It's not necessarily a question of courage but I mean as far as training and skill.

CRH: Training and equipment I suppose that if we ran into, we wouldn't have known this individually but if you ran into some guy who had just been with the armored units the Germans transferred the armored units back and forth from Europe to Russia. And so you are likely to be fighting someone who had spend a year and a half or two years out there fighting the Russians and was as mechanically perfect as you could get. There were a lot of those people in the armored units. They tended to rise to positions of command. They tended to become the senior sergeants and the senior captains and the senior colonels. They would be good, really good at what they were doing.

DB: My impression from what you are saying is that that was offset by the weaker units within the German army.

CRH: Right. They were not very useful. But in terms of us against them what we ordinarily excelled at, was, we were better shooters, ordinarily. We were simply better

marksmen. We were better trained. And there are a number of authors, Ambrose is simply one of them, Cole remarks on this also that the Americans, and Charles MacDonald.

End of Side B, Tape 1

DB: You were saying about Cole and MacDonald.

CRH: We were talking about your question brought up the relative ability of the German soldier in the Bulge vis-à-vis the American soldier in the Bulge. And in many cases our people did very well and if you want to see them acting heroically you can look at some of the men who literally held up the German attacks at places like St. Vith and Clervaux and others and they received the brunt of the German attack in the 16th, 17th, and 18th of December 1944. And some of them collapsed and ran like crazy but others were very, very good and they were tough. They were as good as anything the Germans put against them. When you see the relative POW rates as the battle goes on. The first people who were captured were captured in large numbers. Thousands of them. But ultimately it was the Germans who started surrendering when they realized what had happened. And I talk about them coming and surrendering in droves to us in Goesdorf after the first group came in and they found out we would accept them at Goesdorf. We were as good as they were. There wasn't any question about it. And I would put, at that time for instance, my rifle skills except for sniper with a glass, I would put my rifle skills against any German I ever saw. I think a lot of Yankees felt the same way. But there were people on both sides who were just extraordinary fighting people. We had an Indian, got himself killed doing this, eventually, but he cleaned out a whole house of Germans. Seven or eight of them.

DB: Is that 'American Indian'?

CRH: Yeah. American Indian, with a bayonet. He had a particularly mad on. I don't know if he ran out of rifle ammunition, but the story is he killed every German in that house with a bayonet. He was an enormous man. He must have been a frightening thing to see coming toward you. He eventually, he would go into a kind of berserk rage, and he eventually got killed by a machine gun.

DB: What is a beserk rage?

CRH: Oh it's that Scandinavian word, it's the same word as 'amuck' in the Philippine languages. I think all of them use the same word over there. It is the person who goes into such a blind rage that they simply are out of themselves in the sense of ordinary judgement.

DB: Did you ever get like that Bob?

CRH: No. I have never been like that so far as I know. There were people who did. The Scandinavian developed (the berskerker) if you recall they use that word "berserk". A

berserker was a guy who had gone crazy in battle and was really fearsome. And for the Philippines it's to 'run amuck.' That's where we get the words.

DB: Did you ever see anybody get like that?

CRH: No. You heard about it. That Sergeant Day Turner who won the Medal of Honor at Dahl a couple of miles from me up at Goesdorf, must have been in something of a rage like that. He was determined not to be defeated. That's the guy who poured flaming oil on the Germans who were attacking his barn. He took a rifle away from a German and bayoneted him to death with his own rifle. That same bayoneted rifle killed a bunch of other Germans who got into what he thought of as 'his' barn. He had about a dozen men there and they all got wounded. None of them could really defend themselves anymore. A dozen Americans, and he defended them all, and he defended that barn. He kept it. It was just incredible. He must have been running around like a crazy man, all night. He used every weapon he possibly could but he held that place and they gave him the Medal for it, as well they should have.

DB: So in general you think you tend to go with the school of thought that says the Americans, after some experience, were definitely on par, at least, with the German fighting units.

CRH: Yeah. We were up to the job. The problem I would be, I think, when you would see one unit with a great deal of experience from the German army coming up against Americans who didn't have it yet and it would take time. That's one reason that one studies a particular battle of one of the passes, Kasserine Pass, in North Africa, because the Americans did not do well at Kasserine Pass. And so they sent Patton up there to figure out what had happened and they sent some other people and they really walked through the battle and they tried to figure out what the Yankees had done wrong. And then, after that, they pretty well handled themselves quite nicely after Kasserine. But Kasserine was a losing experience. There were men bayoneted, apparently, in their foxholes at Kasserine. They were just ducking down in the hole, not even looking up to see who was coming, so they were killed by somebody they never even saw. But when you figure the way the Americans dug the Germans out of the hedgerows in Normandy, that's courageous. There were some good people in Normandy.

DB: What do you think about Ambrose and others who say that the Americans were more innovative. They had more of a willingness to think out of the box than the Germans?

CRH: They say that and I have mixed emotions on that because there was a lot of very innovative Germans and Japanese and Malays and whatever. And I know enough to know that the German command structure could be a lot looser than ours was. Much more democratic than ours was in many ways. You read their literature sometimes and it's pretty interesting how those enlisted men would talk to those officers. But on the other hand the officers were liable to turn around and pull a pistol and shoot some guy if he sees him running away. You wouldn't see that with us. It happened. The Germans did

some innovative things but I think when it came to mechanical things, we simply had more experience with that sort of thing. So if you want to see an American do something interesting maybe you would compare him on mechanical elements. The Americans who fought and were a part of, not fighting necessarily, but the transportation Corps in France in the First World War always got a big chuckle out of the fact that the French had never seen the Americans do something which is very common in railroads here. "Flying switches," on the railroads, where you would simply open the switch and a railroad engine maybe a mile or half and mile away would nudge a freight car and then just let go of it and just figure that it is going to go down and hit the switch and go bang into the other track. The French had always very carefully driven the little engine down and painfully pushed one car up against another. And to see this freight car flying around the railroad with nobody near it. Maybe some Yankee soldier on top standing there by the wheel that you turned to turn the brake to slow it down when it crossed through the switches and finally approached the train. But they would make up trains and maybe the engine itself would never even touch the other vehicle.

DB: Something to the Yankee ingenuity.

CRH: Yeah. And the fact that they would even do this. It just hadn't occurred to the French that you could do this. After that, of course you watch the French drive, you know they have got the verve to do that sort of thing, and it hadn't occurred to them to do it with railroads. They would do it with cars instead. But we were innovative. I don't know that we were any more innovative than, say, those Germans who fought on the Russian front. My god, they were good and patient. They died by the millions of course, over there. A million and a half casualties.

DB: So when generalizations like that are made, by Ambrose and others, you have to definitely qualify them.

CRH: Possibly but I think they might well justified. We were good, I think, at simply saying "Well we don't really need directions for this. We have been trained and we know this is what it is supposed to do." There is an Englishman who has written a very interesting book about being an infantry person. He is the same age I am and I mentioned him before. He fought in Burma and he said, "We weren't professionals, we were experts."

DB: You became experts.

CRH: Yeah. You became expert by surviving for one thing. And then you would learn. That's the secret of course of why so many casualties were replacements. So many of us who knew what to do survived but on the other hand we all knew that even knowing that - I have told you this before and you can't emphasize it too much - you knew how to survive but that didn't mean you would survive. The odd chance was that all the intelligence or training wasn't going to help you if your time was up. So that's why a lot of guys were very fatalistic. They simply said that if you buy it, you buy it. There was one guy who would sweep mines and he relied on his religious, firm religious, belief, and

he would run around the mine fields and I have seen him under fire saying “If they are going to hit me they are going to hit me and the Lord loves me and I am saved.” But he would be out there with his little minesweeper just courageous as hell. Maybe he would be the only one sweeping.

DB: Did you feel that way? That if your number, did you think about it in terms of the Lord?

CRH: Oh yeah. You thought about that a lot. You thought about it in terms of praying but you also thought about “don’t do things foolishly and don’t let people push you into doing things foolishly.” Particularly if you were dealing with strange non-coms or strange officers, people you didn’t know. You just wondered, “What do they know about this business?” There were officers who, when told to take a patrol out knowing that it was really dangerous in some place and knowing that the patrol was bound to run into trouble, would simply go out far enough to satisfy their superiors and then come home to make a report and say that we didn’t see anything. * Everybody, Ambrose, documents that sort of thing. Everybody has seen that kind of thing happen where you just, you know there is no point in us going out there this is going to get us killed. And you had seen it happen often enough so that you didn’t want to get killed doing that. Well I am beginning to run down.

**[By the way, I was never with a patrol that did this, that shirked the mission. We did what we were ordered to do. CH Sept. 8, 2002].*

Interview

1/30/02

DB: This is Daniel Burnstein interviewing Bob Harmon at Seattle University on January 30, 2002. OK, so, Bob you were saying about in your letter of July 3, 1945 when you were talking about the Ardennes uh you said, “When the Fourth Armored relieved us the regiment formed the Ranger Platoon.” That means after you, after you crossed the Our River, right? And broken...

CRH: Dan, I really don’t remember if it was in January, for one thing. That was before we went through the Siegfried so we went through the Westwall beginning the night of February 7th and 8th. 4th Armored relief; they would have had to come back from Bastogne in January because they were the ones up there. Uh, I am wondering if I have it, somehow, mistaken for the Fourth Division. Fourth Infantry Division, relieving us because they were one of the divisions that went north with us. [DB: OK] And, I just don’t know, so, I guess, I am no help to us there. I can check that out one way or the other but...And when they formed that platoon I don’t know but if I wrote that letter in the summer 55 years or so ago, 56 it would be a lot more reliable than my memory now, so if I said they formed it then then that’s what they did. I think that, in a way, that came with Colonel Costello and Costello showed up before we made, at least before we got

very far into the Siegfried line. We had a Colonel Taylor and I think Colonel Taylor was wounded in the fighting. Maybe during the Bulge but maybe in the preliminary fighting on the night of the February 7th on the Our river. Taylor was replaced then by this flamboyant Colonel Costello. Costello was the one who came up with the name “Rangers” and also the wonderfully silly blue scarves we wore. So, it could well be that this was February when the Ranger Platoon was formed.

DB: Ok. You mentioned in another July letter that you are enclosing a souvenir that they’d given out that morning. It sounds like the booklet on the 80th division...

CRH: I have a hunch that’s exactly what it is and of course you’ve seen that and it’s there at the house with my other records if you want them.

DB: And, in the letter you wrote over the typed letter from your mother. Your mom and you kind of go back and forth about how tough the GI’s had it versus the sailors.

CRH: Hmm. I can’t imagine why but that’s probably Army/Navy teasing because one of my cousins served on the Enterprise and he had some, I think I mentioned this before, I think he had 18 battle stars. He was out in the Pacific, from Pearl Harbor all the way through. And I know that this was tough duty. Of course some our kids, some of my friends, died. One of them died in a submarine. And his mother never gave up waiting for him to come home. One of my wife’s cousins is now married to a kid whom I knew, [*Jo & Bob McNeil*] who damned near died on the *Bunker Hill*. A friend of mine, named Ernie Malloy, went to grade school and high school with me, was right with him and I had heard them both talk about that. So, it was probably teasing of one kind or another but I think the thing we always thought of was that you were fairly comfortable compared to us up until the moment when things went wrong and I’ve always told my students that you teased the Air Force and the Navy people about their relative comfort, but, for them, when things go wrong they went badly wrong, and instantly. Flaming ships, exploding ships, falling airplanes, aircraft with no control. All those things that just occur violently, and they had lucky survivors, whereas we had moments of danger and then we had relative moments of fair quiet. We never envied the Air Force people, I’ll tell you that. Never, because we realized what it was really like. You might tease them but you didn’t envy them. So that’s what this is, probably.

DB: You had uncomfortable accommodations between the times.

CRH: Yeah, sometimes. You’d be living out in the hole in the mud. Wet and cold for days on end. [*DB: Yeah*].

DB: Now, with the PX, with the coming of the PX talk about that. You said that you traded your cigarettes and gum allotments for chocolate. So did you eat all the chocolate or... [*CRH: Yeah*]. Did you use it to trade for further goods with Germans?

CRH: No. Well I might have traded for something, I don't know, what because chocolate was quite valuable of course. But I have a great sweet tooth and I probably ate all the chocolate and traded it for cigarettes.

DB: Uh hm. Traded your cigarettes for chocolate...[*CRH: Yes, right, right*]. Because you didn't smoke, right?

CRH: No. Still don't.

DB: Very good. You mentioned your were enclosing photos from Mindleheim and Nuremberg, one each. I just wanted to ask you if you might have those still?

CRH: I can't say. I might. There's a few posed pictures with various members of the group and I'll look. I'll see what we've got. None of them will be good because of the cheap cameras. There are no really sharp images there of one kind or another. Some of them are pretty good considering how bad the cameras were. [*DB: hm*]. And we probably had no idea what speed is the film. X speed. [*DB: laughing*]

DB. Now, in July of '45 they opened up the enlisted men's club. [*CRH: Yeah, right*]. By guys in the Company who were, apparently, resentful over the fact, and you talk about this, that officers had a club and you all did not. Now, that brings up a broader question, Bob. If there was much resentment of officers and officer's privileges particularly, was this the case after combat was over or...?

CRH: I think the first dividing line would always be "to what officer do we refer?" because there were some who were absolutely sacrosanct. You knew what they had done in combat and, so if they were good in combat, then they could get away with almost anything with the idea that when push came to shove they would be there doing what they were supposed to do. There were temptations to tease about or to denigrate, in one way or the other, some of the younger officers, especially. Well some of the older ones too, if they hadn't really done a bit, not done well, or if they'd not been in combat at all, we certainly didn't trust them. I'm not sure. I think that envy, officer envy, probably depends on the person themselves. Now, himself or herself. We were, I think, fairly satisfied with our role. We were the GI's and then there were those other people who were the officers. One of the simple things, Dan, that probably would occur to you when you read this stuff is that if the officer shared his whiskey ration around, that was a step up...(inaudible). And, I can remember times when that occurred and they would always apologize when they did for the fact that they didn't get all that much whiskey or brandy or whatever it was that they'd been issued, but, that they

were sharing it was much appreciated. [DB: Uh hmm.] So I don't know that we had any particular animosity towards any of them. We liked them as people, I think, one way or the other. Many of the them were great favorites.

DB: Were there...When you were...before or during the combat phase [CRH: *Yeah*]. when you were over there uh, were there uh, some officers who would participate in combat more than others or were some resented because they did not?

CRH: There were usually jokes in every unit about the officers who always had something to do further back, whatever it was, but serious combat officers were ordinarily right there. With us, with our peculiar job with the guns, we wouldn't see an officer all that much. The first thing the officer had to do was be very clear about where the gun was going to go and then, after that, when he had to report, he had to be very clear about where he put it, together with the squad, and the truck. And then, after that, he might or might not visit all the time but they always had lots of things to do and they were always running around the front line. So this wasn't a question of them all being in Paris on leave while we did the fighting. They were there. It's just they popped in and out when they could and in many cases they would not be able to come up during the day because it would be under observation so we would see them at night, after dark fell. That kind of thing.

DB: Did they have to take off their stripes so they wouldn't be shot at by snipers?

CRH: There may have been those who did. Officers wore bars, leaves, eagles or stars. The non-commissioned officers wore the stripes on their sleeves and, the officers wore collar insignia. Little 'butter bars,' they're called, a gold bar, for the second lieutenants; and the silver bar for first, and two bars, tracks as they were called, railroad tracks, for captains. Then two different kinds of leaves for majors and lieutenant colonels, and then an eagle for a full bird colonel. There was some resentment, I think, when it was realized, after we went ashore, that the Germans were not sniping at officers who were not wearing their bars or their leaves and some people muttered about the fact that these so-and-so's wore them in the States, and you had to salute them all the time, 'cause they didn't want to be saluted in Europe at all [at the Front]. "Whatever, you do, don't salute me in the front lines." And, so there were some wry remarks about that. Some wry remarks of animosity I remember. I myself always thought it was very smart. You shouldn't see some young, trained officer getting killed just because he was wearing his insignia. [DB: *Oh, yeah*]. And yet it certainly was done.

DB: Now uh...

CRH: You knew who these people were. The only one I think I ever really had to know, I didn't know who he was right away, was the general of the Division who showed up once when I was on guard at regimental headquarters and, I had a hunch who he had to be, but, I had not really seen him, personally. So when he popped up, and it was dark, it was at

night, when he popped up in from of the guard door where I was it was a tense moment in my mind about, “Is this guy who I think he is?” and he knew the password so that took care of that. I didn’t have to say, “May I see your business card?” [DB: *Right*]. He knew the password so we let it go.

DB: Luckily, he knew the passwords!

CRH: Well he probably, or one of his staff, originated it that day, probably. They were always silly names or funny names. Whatever you could think of, off hand, that hadn’t been used before. If you want to see funny comments on that, look at Bill Mauldin’s cartoons. He’s got two or three great password cartoons and he has got two or three great teasing cartoons about these so-called security names that were given to switchboard operators, and company switchboard operators in the regiments. So you never said, “This is the 319th Infantry Regiment headquarters.” You had some password. [DB: *Password*]. “Blue bonnet” would be the password for the day or “New Orleans” or something.

DB: So the Germans wouldn’t intercept it and find out where...

CRH: Yeah, or who it was. They knew anyway, most of the time they knew. Somewhere I’ve got a story and I may have told you this, that, somewhere in France, right around Thanksgiving, we were addressed by loudspeakers when we moved into a new place and invited to come over and have a good meal.

DB: “Welcome 319th”.

CRH: Yes, right.

DB: Do you have a souvenir invitation to the enlisted men’s, Goldbrickers Club dance, still?

CRH: I don’t think so. I might have, it would depend on what’s in those papers.

DB: OK. Which papers?

RR: Well the copies of the Letters Home. That’s where almost all of the stuff is now. There is a book of photographs but there’s very little in there except photographs.

DB: What gave you the opinion that the Germans quote, “...have no national feeling for anything except the army.” You said that in late July.

CRH: I cannot imagine. Sorry, Dan. My own studies now, or maybe your own, would tell you that that was the only old institution to which they could turn. The older ones especially, because they never liked the Weimar Republic, as you know. Many thought that alien. Then, Hitler was not to be praised, of course, by 1945, so, to whom would they turn? And the only one institution in which they had some pride was the army. That’s one of the reasons we went to that unconditional surrender, so that we could demonstrate that

“We crushed your damn army. We told you we’d do this in 1918 and you didn’t believe us. Now we’ve done it for sure. You can look around, see the wreckage of your cities, and watch them walking into the POW camps”. I think that was a good attitude. Anyway, that’s probably what I had in mind, but, I can’t assure you that that was it.

DB: That’s a good point. Now uh, you note that you met people from all over Europe and Moroccans too.

CRH: Yes. Running around in the 7th Army area, that was France you know [DB: *Oh right*]. The 7th divided with the French right around the Munich area, so, yeah, we saw some French up there. We’d see the Moroccans.

DB: And that whetted your appetite for travel and I wanted to ask you, had you traveled much prior to the service?

CRH: No, never. You realize that I was 18 when I went in.

DB: Just out of high school.

CRH: Yes. I think the longest trip I had ever made was from Olympia to Mt. Vernon Washington. That was it. Once in a while we would go to Seattle, but not very often because that was 60 miles away. [DB: *Yeah*]. That’s a long way away on 2-lane roads. Probably went up once or twice on the boats, dad worked for the Puget Sound Freightlines, probably rode the boats to Seattle. I remember doing it after the war. Um, you just didn’t travel and we didn’t have the money. The funny thing about that was that dad had all sorts of offers, especially the Lloyd line, the North German Lloyd line, to travel across the Atlantic. Get on a boat and go to Germany if you wanted to. They would have been happy to do that for customer relations.

DB: Is that Haphag Lloyd?

CRH: Haphag Lloyd.

DB: Yeah, I remember that name from New Orleans.

CRH: Yeah, right. Well I still think you could see it down on the waterfront here. Seems to me Lloyd still uses that same logo.

DB: Yeah, yeah.

CRH: Anyway, that was it. My wife was really traveled. She’d been all the way to San Francisco. They went to the 1939 World’s Fair so that was quite an adventure. They drove down.

DB: Which must have taken quite a while.

CRH: Oh yeah. Anyway, people just didn't travel much. As a matter of fact, and you can use this if it occurs to you, somehow, my mother eventually found out that there were people in Olympia who were quite taken aback that my brother and I went back to Europe in 1948 as tourists.

DB: They were taken a back by that?

CRH: Yes. "The Harmons...", it was the inference apparently, "The Harmons, don't have any money. The boys had been in the service and are going to college, they obviously don't have any money." And kind of just, "Who the hell do they think they are going to Europe" because that's something that some of the bankers might do but not the Harmons. And mother took a wry humor out of that. She thought that was very funny. Mom would not make up a story like that. If she thought about it she wouldn't, she wouldn't tell a story like that unless she thought it was true. [DB: *hm*]. That would be out of character for her. She told us that and I always thought it was very funny too. I can just see it. "Who the hell do they think they are?" The hierarchy there in Olympia always started with the Governor.

DB: So there tended to be a hierarchy?

CRH: Oh, absolutely. And where you worked, for whom you worked, how long you'd been there. Another 'prestige' was whether or not you were one of the vice presidents or the president of the Olympia Brewery because that was probably the biggest non-state payroll in town. [DB: *Hm*]. And they were nice people. The people who owned the Olympia Brewery were fabulous. The Schmidt family. Everybody liked them. Everybody liked all of them.

DB: Whatever happened to the old brewery?

CRH: They sold, it's still there of course, they sold out to a Milwaukee firm and I can't tell you which one.

DB: Is there still Olympia beer?

CRH: Oh yeah, yeah.

DB: I don't drink too much.

CRH: Well there's no reason to. Beer is one of those things that I enjoy for about one glass and that's about it. But it was a place where I worked for a while.

DB: Doing what?

CRH: Labor on the line. Then I ended up as a guide showing people through the brewery. I don't know any chemistry, but I was explaining the chemistry of the brewing and so on. There's a little guidebook and I've still got it.

DB: This was when you were in high school?

CRH: No, after I started teaching. I was working at the brewery on weekends, throwing cases on the line and emptying cases that came in. Inspecting bottles as they went through the inspection light.

DB: So when you were teaching down at St. Martins.

CRH: St. Martins, yeah. Again, you and I have talked about this, you're always broke when you are a young grad student.

DB: Yeah.

RCH: Anyway.

DB: Now Bob, you say in your August 1st, 1945 letter that uh, "...you are glad that Jeff got his eagles back."

CRH: Oh yeah. So uncle Jeff got out of Alaska, apparently. I am glad you reminded me of that. Thank you.

DB: This was your uncle Jeff?

CRH: Yeah, uh, mother's sister, mother's youngest sister, married Colonel Jefferson Buckner Willis. Who was Lieutenant Willis, I think, when they got married.

DB: And you comment that you're "...sure that it was due to dirty politics. I have seen so many dirty deals in the service." There is no other institution in a democracy, which so enables an inept or radically unstable psychology to force itself upon those who ordinarily would ignore it.

CRH: I think that's true.

DB: So uh...

CRH: In other words, if you know how to play the game when you are crooked, there's a lot of things that can go wrong, I mean there is a lot of opportunity for criminality or just plain base conduct and many succumbed to that. Look at the colonels, let alone the officers of other rank, who stole art at the end of the war. And, in a very stupid way, threw away their lives.

DB: Threw away...you mean that by that they got caught.

CRH: Yeah, they threw away, yeah, sure, they threw away their credibility, their pensions, their reputation all for that. People will do that. And we just talked about the

idea that at the end of the war, Bavaria was a hotbed of criminality and it was in part due to, a very small but obvious section of the military government people there and the people like ourselves who were army of occupation, and it was easy enough with an unlimited supply of liquor, girls, money to be made. Who knows what happened to some of the gold that disappeared for instance, let alone the art. There's all sorts of stories of people digging up gold and hauling it off. The Army sent a man down from Paris - from what was called Shaef, the supreme headquarters - to try to clear that up somewhere around I think around 1948 or so. [DB: *uh hm*]. And he left behind some very acid comments about the inability of himself and his staff to penetrate this criminal ring. They knew it was there and they just couldn't do anything about it. And he was, apparently, a pretty good district attorney or something. Anyway there was that criminality.

DB: Well what about this business about "...an institution that enables a radically unstable psychology to force itself upon others who would ordinarily ignore it." Can you give me some examples of that?

CRH: If you were to think about the idea that Military power is almost always exercised simply by command and that the command is to be unquestioned and in a way, there is very much, in the military, an aspect of the old Benedictine sense of putting yourself into the mind of the superior. That is, you're supposed to try to understand what the superior wants done and why he or she wants it done. But many people never got that. They just got the idea that if they were officers and they said something, and didn't care whether you understood it or not, "do it exactly the way I said." And many of the enlisted men never got the notion that this is a big cooperative effort. They always saw the Army as some kind of policing institution, which is imposing itself on them. I think most of us who'd been in combat simply saw the necessity for teamwork and were willing, quite willing, to jump in and do whatever had to be done just because we all had a dirty job together. But there were many of the replacements who weren't, and there were a lot of officers, obviously, through the years, who never got the message. That's why people like Patton insisted, and the great Chesty Puller, in the Marine Corps, said the officer eats last, sleeps last, and leads first. And they had to say that over and over and over again for 40 years in their careers. And Patton's words on this are inspiring. Patton's instructions to the junior officers are consistent. They're always, "You are there to achieve victory and the way you do that is that you look after your soldiers." And Chesty Puller, from the Marine Corps, was exactly the same way. Red Mike Edson from the Marine Corps was the same way. And if an officer didn't, then the soldiers of course had funny little ways of getting back at you. You can turn this off; you don't need this.

We want to think about the notion of unstable personalities either within or amongst the enlisted men or amongst the non-commissioned officers. We had at least one lieutenant who um, certainly didn't go out of his way necessarily to force himself in any unkind or untoward way on the enlisted men. He was probably no better, no worse than most officers but he was absolutely unaware of what combat was going to be and when he found out, it was too much of a shock for him and he really was not effective at all as a leader. And he went over there very much with a John Wayne attitude. I think I have talked about this man before and I hope I haven't mentioned his name but I think one of

simplest things I can tell you is the way in which he wore his pistol. And that is he wore his pistol belt slung as low on that right hip as you possibly could, as though he were John Wayne. If you watch officers - I don't care where they are, training films or movies, people who really have some idea at all of what they are doing - usually that belt is worn quite tightly so that the pistol will be there when you want it and it will be in one place rather than you wondering where it is and you can reach there and slap that holster and you can grab it. You don't wear it slung down on your hip and swaggering along like you were in a Western movie. But this guy did for a while. But anyway, they finally got rid of him. He did some innocuous job but I always told people he went into France thinking he was going to be a field marshal by the time the war was over.

DB: How did they wind up getting rid of him?

CRH: Oh there's always some job you can send an officer off to. "Send me an officer who will look after this or that". I think he was the guy they sent back to look after all of our regimental barracks bags and keep track of them.

DB: Somebody above him must have understood that he wasn't doing the job right.

CRH: Oh yeah. His company commander got the record right away. What would happen would be that in that case, his jeep driver would say something to other non-coms or the jeep driver might actually go, perhaps to the platoon sergeant and say lieutenant so-and-so is crazy. "That SOB had me doing this today and we are both going to get killed". Or he might have gone to the 1st. Sgt. Or, the Captain - maybe somewhere along the line - might have said, "Sergeant so-and-so: How is Lieutenant X doing?" And then you would have one of those off-the-record conversations.

DB: So a lot of it depended on whether or not your captain was...

CRH: Observant.

DB: Observant, yeah.

CRH: Well too, and then you could get rid of people or would get rid of people who simply didn't produce. The guy who is given a mission and doesn't fulfill the mission two or three times in a row is going to be looked at very carefully. You know, "why didn't you put the gun on the crossroad?" in our case. "What were you doing in Paris"...when the Germans attacked?"

DB: Right. Well Bob, in your August 3, 1945 letter you mentioned, you comment on it later that the Virg, Ronnebaum [Virgil Ronnebaum] is still alive.

CRH: Axtell, Kansas. I hope. He was there last Christmas anyway.

DB: Axtell?

CRH: A-x-t-e-l-l. Not a place you hear of all the time.

DB: No I haven't heard that one.

CRH: Are you familiar with Broken Bow, Nebraska? That's another one of my favorites.

DB: I haven't heard of that one either.

CRH: I love that name.

DB: That's a great name.

CRH: We had a kid from there. [*Andy Anderson*]

DB: That's a great name. Um, is it OK to contact him?

CRH: Sure, yeah.

DB: Did you know him when he was in the service?

CRH: Oh yes, of course. That's where I met him, was in the service. We were in the same squad. I'll call Virgil, I haven't talked to him in a long time and see if he is around and tell him that this professor wants to talk to him. He will be highly amused.

DB: Was he in your squad?

CRH: Yes. He came in as a replacement. I think he came in after the Siegfried when we lost so many people. But I don't know when. He'll remember. We had a marvelous man who had a really weird story. Rudy Tomacik. Tomacik at the age of 18 or 19 at the latest, had a pilot's license. [*DB: For an airplane*]? Yeah. You'd think he'd be in the Air Force. Some sort of screw up about whether or not we were accepting any Air Force cadets at the moment.

CRH: Led him to the infantry. And you'd think that division would have said, "Wow another guy to fly those L-19 observation planes. The little artillery spotting planes.

DB: Like Piper Cubs.

CRH: Yes right, exactly. He still, he owns an airfield in Connecticut. He's got a flying service. He's still flying at his age. He loves it. Talk about the square peg in the round hole. What he was doing with the Ranger Company, I don't know. He was good, he served well. He didn't bitch about the fact that "Well you know I really should be flying airplanes." You know if nothing else you'd think they'd seize him because he was a mechanic. You know, servicing the aircraft.

DB: It wasn't one of those good uses of...

CRH: No. It's one of those things that goes wrong and you just wonder. Yeah, Rudy's still around. I keep hoping to see him sometime. I write to him once in a while.

DB: Now he was in your squad too? And what's his name?

CRH: T-o-m-a-c-i-k. T-o-m-a-c-i-k. Rudy.

DB: Tomacik.

CRH: Tomacik. Probably s-i-k or I wouldn't have said Tomasik. I would have pronounced the "c-h" has you did. But it is probably T-o-m-a-s-i-k. Sorry. I'll check it when I get home. I think I got an invitation to his wedding.

DB: His wedding?

CRH: Yeah, I think so.

DB: Oh, from back then.

CRH: After the war. Anyway. I do have his letter somewhere. Where he reviewed his career. I keep trying to get him to come to the divisional reunions but he doesn't do it. Or I keep thinking that I'll see him in Connecticut but I haven't done that. Anyway, I'll call Virg and get that info, too.

DB: And Rudy was in your squad also.

CRH: Rudy. Oh yeah.

DB: Would it be OK to contact him?

CRH: I suppose so. He'd be highly amused.

DB: OK.

CRH: I'll make a note to myself to get a hold of these guys.

DB: Now, um, in viewing....

CRH: Hoping they're still alive.

DB: Yeah, yeah. In viewing the movie by the signal corps, which you said probably said was the battle for San Pietro.

CRH: Yes, right.

DB: It brought a lot of, you say quote, "It brought a lot of things I've been kind of forgetting and I can't say that I enjoy the remembrance."

CRH: Uh hmm.

DB: So, do you remember, did that bring on sort of an anxiety reaction?

CRH: Yeah but that was very, may have been staged for all I know I have no idea, but it was very realistic to those of us who had been in the business and they were attacking these hillsides in Italy, which is the source of the battle of San Pietro, hillsides in Italy. And uh, there's just enough artillery coming in and realistic machine gun fire going on so that it got the attention of all of us who had been through this not too long before. And it is still a famous training film. You can get the ROTC to get it from the archives. I suppose they would get them at Fort Lewis. I've seen that thing here with Seattle U cadets.

DB: Do you remember your reaction upon seeing it? Or uh...

CRH: Probably very uncomfortable. I don't know that I made a comment. I think there's a written comment in one of the letters about watching the reports of the battle of Iwo Jima. Watching the Marines.

DB: Battle scenes?

CRH: Yeah, from Iwo Jima, which was going on just about this time of the year in 1945.

DB: Right.

CRH: And it was terrible. God.

DB: And it was terrible also to watch it and to...

CRH: Yes, yeah because you'd see how - you know if you are sitting here in sympathy thinking about these guys - and how exposed they were and how dirty and it was difficult to dig in with any sort of security in the sand that they were in. When they got to the rocks it was difficult to dig in there. Japanese had good observation everywhere and you knew these Marines were just dying or getting wounded up there and that there were going to be a lot of them. What's the casualties out of 20,000, 21,000 men or something from Iwo Jima. Maybe a bit more because I think we had more casualties than the Japanese did and we killed damned near the entire garrison at Iwo Jima but at a great cost.

DB: Yeah.

CRH: I think there's at least 4,000 Marine dead at Iwo Jima. I may be wrong.

DB: Did you know men with more severe symptoms of what we know call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder during the occupation?

CRH: No. They were all so busy chasing around doing their thing, whatever it was. Chasing girls, drinking, doing both, doing nothing.

DB: Swimming?

CRH: Swimming...(indistinguishable). I think, in part, nobody told us we were supposed to have Post Trauma syndromes. There is a lot of that and you see that in life all the time now. People are told that they are supposed to be sick, they're supposed to be victims. So they become sick or they become victims. We weren't told that. We were just, "this is just what you do" and the war is now over. Let's "carpe diem" and enjoy it. So we didn't have that. But, in retrospect as I told you, I probably had some and I talked it out with my dad and my brother and my uncle.

DB: Do you want to elaborate on that a little?

CRH: We've talked about this a bit before. It's on one of the tapes but my uncle got home maybe before I did, even, because he had a lot longer time in the service with the CB's in the Pacific.

DB: Right.

CRH: He stayed with us. He was living with us and working for dad. And then my brother came home and I forget exactly when but probably 1947 sometime and so the four of us would be around the house and we would tell stories, particularly in the evening after supper. And we would always do the dishes and I think that was usually kind of focal point if you would go into the kitchen and you would either be sitting on the kitchen table, or standing around talking and one story would trigger another story and dad would look back to the Pancho Villa adventure or World War I. Uncle Bill would have some comment about the Navy or we would ask Bill questions something that went on in the Pacific while we were doing these other things. I was the only one who had combat experience so I suppose I dominated that part of the conversation. I am not sure. I hope not. Anyway, we were all good talkers and they were all good storytellers. My brother is a marvelous raconteur. He told crazy stories. Working with the 10th Rescue Squadron near Anchorage, Alaska. So there were all sorts of nutty stories.

DB: So, talking it out helped to relieve whatever lingering effects there might have been?

CRH: I am sure it did. And I know enough now about this, I have done enough studies on it, to realize that it was probably a great blessing for me so. It also cautions me that I musn't say, "Well, we didn't have Post Trauma problems." I am sure we did. I am sure a lot of my friends would not admit they did. What you usually get is a comment, if you fish for it a little bit, or sometimes is come just accidentally, about how long it took them to get through or over various habits. Like sleeping very lightly.

DB: Uh huh.

CRH: For me it must have been 10 or 20 years.

DB: Not being able to sleep?

CRH: You'd sleep well, all right, but, the slightest thing would wake you up. I have always teased combat veterans, at least, out of infantry outfits, that, and I do this, "you will not usually sit with your back to the door or back to a big window." You just don't. And, if you think about it, you don't want to sit by a window with your back to it. For me, there is still a wry little reminder, in the back of my mind, that the war is over, it's six decades ago; we don't have to worry about the window.

DB: But you were conditioned about that.

CRH: Oh yeah. Right. And I have told you this before, I never go out after dark or early in the morning. I never go out the front door of our house without turning on the outside light and looking. I just do that. Partly, living in Seattle, it is common sense, but you always got used to looking around while it was still dark and you had your night vision.

DB: What about night vision?

CRH: Well, if your eyes haven't been bothered by any light, of course your night vision is much better than in even a pinpoint of light.

DB: Oh, OK. Right. Now um, you talk about when you were attached to F Company with the bazooka sections with the Second Platoon during the final four attacks before the Ranger Company was formed.

CRH: Well, that must be in the Siegfried Line.

DB: And you discuss the last of the four attacks when you cooked stew for eight hours.

CRH: (laughing) I don't know where I was then. I have no idea. I can believe it however.

DB: It must have been before the Siegfried Line then.

CRH: Maybe, maybe. Probably was. Because we would have had to be sitting still someplace.

DB: When you say that, "When the Germans counterattacked, (you) and five others were the only ones to retreat in an orderly fashion with the captain."

CRH: Oh that was in some small village. We've talked about that before when we got cut off for a while. When we had been up in this village. And I talked to you about the first

man killed up there that I knew was a guy named Blackie who was the scout for the Company and he was out the front door and he got shot and that was the end. That was as far as anybody went because beyond that somewhere there was a barn somewhere with a German tank behind it. How Blackie was killed I don't know except that somebody shot him. Maybe a German machine gun, I don't know. But eventually that tank ended up firing point blank into the houses where we were. That's why people were getting the hell out of there.

DB: But you and the five others retreated in an orderly fashion.

CRH: We followed the Captain around and did what he wanted to do and he was always looking in terms of "OK, where can we defend against the coming attack?" And there were other people who did the same thing. Other people from the Company up there. Not right close to us but we saw them, or we got involved one way or the other but we knew where they were and they had some idea where we were. So, we held on to the village.

DB: And in part that made a big difference are the ones like yourselves who retreated in an orderly fashion as opposed to the panicky.

CRH: Oh yeah, sure. Because if you were saying "Well you know, we can't stay here." That's one thing. If you say "I am running out of here," that's quite different.

DB: Because you can't do anything functional with the latter.

CRH: No you can't. Whereas if your just looking for a better place, a safer place, then that makes sense, particularly if whoever is in command proves to you what you are doing or has directed you to do it. But if you just say "I don't care what happens to you people, I am running away" then that's bad news. And that, of course was the whole objective of cavalry for 5000 years.

CRH: To find men in disorderly retreat and then run them down from the back, from behind. Cavalry, clashing a la Shakespeare, on the fields of *Henry V* is one thing, but the serious purpose of cavalry was to exercise those big, long, heavy cavalry swords by cutting people in two from behind. Or spearing them with a long pig-sticker, 10-foot spears.

DB: Not a lot of re-grouping.

CRH: Pardon?

DB: Not a lot of re-grouping.

CRH: Not a lot of regrouping, and kill all the stragglers, because the stragglers would be running and not protecting themselves, not watching what they were doing. That's why, when the Greeks retreated, they, in many cases, they would throw away their shields because it would mean they couldn't run fast enough. So once the phalanx broke, then the

survivors knew they had to get the hell out of there. So sometimes, they'd strip themselves of all that armor so that, whatever else happened, they would survive because they knew, once they were broken in formation, then they were vulnerable to cavalry.

DB: Now Bob, after you related the incident I just mentioned, you write, quote, "I've told you parts of this story before but never in its entirety. Don't know exactly how I got into it but I had to finish it out. So there it is." I don't mean to belabor this.

CRH: No, no. I just don't know what story we are talking about here.

DB: The way you say it is that you had to finish this out. Was writing these things down, after VE day, was that in a way, a form of what we would today call "therapy" quote unquote.

CRH: Oh, I am sure it was. Yeah, I know enough now to know that that was what was happening but there was also just serious interest in telling stories for dad, particularly, in realizing that I had been involved in something very important, very dangerous, and quite strange for the lives of most people and that I ought to say something about it. But I am sure there is also, looking at it now, especially from the profession you and I follow, I am sure there was just an urge to tell a story which was at the same time, therapeutic.

DB: Did the same hold true for you and the other guys who were with you in Germany after the war? Did you guys...

CRH: We'd tell stories to one another. I don't know of anybody else who wrote home of the detail that I did. I just don't. There were probably several who did but no one I can recall off hand ever came and said, "Boy, I am telling my parents all sorts of things!" I am not the only one I know of who did because there are a lot of good books that have come out on this stuff. And then too, a lot of my writing was probably due to the fact I was at regimental headquarters and you would be charged with answering the phone maybe late at night and you knew it wasn't going to ring. Somebody had to be there. So there was a typewriter and I had an official excuse, not only excuse but reason to be up. I had to be awake. So maybe a lot of that, I never thought of this Dan, a lot of my letters may have come from just that. I know in one letter I wrote two or three pages and I said "Well I am going to finish this thing just because." That was from Austria.

DB: You also had, from my understanding, from what you wrote that you had a mother who was encouraging you to do this. To write.

CRH: Yes, right. Right. Very much so.

DB: And you were, you know, more literate than most of the guys.

CRH: I confess I was but, on the other hand, I was far better read. I told you, I was a terrible student in terms of disciplined study but I read very widely through high school. I

remember, I may have been in high school when I told my father that I had been reading Confucius and he didn't know.

DB: Because your grades were not good....

CRH: Well yeah. That was the advantage of living in Olympia, the state library was there. It was amazing. My brother has agreed that that was a great treasure for him too. He spent hours studying in the state library. He is out of the city, by the way, and will be out for about six weeks but we had talked about the idea that you might want to talk to my brother.

DB: He's going to be gone until...

CRH: He usually hides down in the desert and plays golf. He left yesterday or this morning and he will be gone for about six weeks. He doesn't like the cold anymore. I don't blame him. And he can afford to leave.

DB: Good for him. August of 1945 you say you "feel the need to reflect on the war at times in the letters that you write."

CRH: OK, there goes part of your answer right there. Yeah.

DB: But then you say you need to reflect on the war at times and thus you say things at times "that I sometimes regret later. That's the reason I have quit almost entirely sending anything to anyone but you. I write once in a while to Vic or Mick but I don't enjoy it because I can't see any sense in writing pages of triviality. Jean meant a lot to me but I just don't share the things with her that I did at one time. I am just trying to tell you the way I feel." So Bob, let me ask you this, when um, Hemingway wrote his Nick Adams stories about World War I he has Nick Adams coming home after World War I where um, he was so removed from his civilian friends that it's like a chasm. Was that something that you experienced?

TAPE CHANGE

DB: January 30, 2002. Danny Burnstein interview Bob Harmon. Seattle U.

CRH: OK, fire away. Where are we here?

DB: OK, we were talking about this idea of being removed from civilians after having served in combat. Where you say in you letters that you don't enjoy writing pages of trivialities to people and basically you stop writing everybody but your parents and Neil. So, if you could comment on that if there was a chasm that you felt between those who had served in combat and those left behind or not.

CRH: I think there is first of all a kind of embarrassed feeling at, perhaps, non-combat people really didn't care very much about what had happened or that the details would be simply beyond them. But I think our big concern, my big concern, throughout most of my adult life, has been that I don't want to inflict these stories on anybody who doesn't want to hear them because the world is full of people who actually did something and talk about it too much or didn't do anything and talk about it too much and I never have wanted to be in that category. I also was shrewd enough to realize that there was a wild difference between people who had been in various branches of the military and people who had been on the killing, sharp end, combat end. And certainly the young girls like Vic Draham and Jean Macdonald to whom that paragraph there refers were not that familiar with the military. They knew something about it but the idea of just simply writing to them about what I did today or what the weather is like in the Alps or what people are wearing for clothes I suppose, after a while, that struck me as trivial. I don't know at this removed moment, I have no idea. I think there is kind of a grim realization that you have changed, in the military and that you have walked away from, I wouldn't say 'walked beyond' but, walked away from some aspects of your past. I have no idea.

DB: In a letter from Sergeant Mitchell, this is the second letter, in August of '45, "...he has sour words..." as does your comments later on a... maybe I should turn this off for a second...

DB: You later wrote, in a comment from the 80's, that this lieutenant quote, "...had a startlingly unrealistic vision of himself and the war and what he and his trusty followers were going to accomplish."

CRH: Yes, right.

DB: Do you have any stories about this lieutenant and what he talked like, how he talked and so on?

CRH: Well this is the one that I mentioned who first of all talked and walked like John Wayne and wore the .45 slung low...

DB: OK.

CRH: ...and all that sort of thing and um, and he just was aggressive when it wasn't a situation that demands being aggressive. When it finally got to the point where he had to be aggressive he wasn't all that aggressive. There was just far too much talk about winning and fighting and all that sort of thing and when we finally got to the point where it was put up or shut up, he couldn't do it. I think he was startled by the violence and by the exigency the demands of combat, and, as I said before, we finally got rid of him. But otherwise I can't really think of anything in particular. I just remember him, I see him very clearly when we first came into Normandy, when we came ashore at Utah Beach all ready to storm Berlin that afternoon.

DB: (laughing)

CRH: Anyway, they got rid of him. I think that is *Quid es Demonstrandum* that I was right.

DB: Uh huh. Yeah. I think I might have asked you this before Bob, but is Sergeant Mitchell, he is no longer...?

CRH: Mitch died, unfortunately, about five or six years ago. Much to my regret, I never went to see him and I am sure it could have been arranged during some of my trips to the east. There were people like that who should have been seen before they died, period.

DB: And you mention in August 18th that "...the men took the news of the Japanese surrender rather calmly. It was too dragged out and rather a foregone conclusion that it carried, it carried no electric and startling affect." So Bob, are you referring to, after Hiroshima, the men started to feel that the war was ending?

CRH: Not so much as there was a certain end to the war. You have to realize that when we went into Germany, when we went to France, we knew that Germany was defeated. As a matter of fact one of the great German generals, on D-Day afternoon, went to one of his regimental flak commanders and told him to go down to someplace in Utah Beach or Omaha and do great things, quote, "...otherwise Germany will lose this war." That's how sharp that guy was. This was some field marshal talking to a colonel; "...this mission and this is how important it is. If you don't do this, we've lost the war."

DB: Once you guys got into France that was it. It was a pretty clear question of how long.

CRH: Just how long, right. Because if you think about it, by the time we got to Normandy, there had been the attack and the victory in North Africa and we had gone through Sicily and were too uninformed to realize just how bitter the fighting was in Italy, how bad it was. We didn't realize how many casualties the Air Force was taking up until the time they got the P-51, which is about this time of the year I think, in what, '44. This time of the year in '44. Anyway, in January.

DB: They could go higher?

CRH: They not only could go higher but they could fly all the way to Berlin and back and protect the bombers.

DB: Fighters?

CRH: Yeah these were swift little fighters probably the best. Well the Yak was very good, but probably, the best fighter aircraft of the war.

DB: Were they called Mosquitos?

CRH: No. The Mosquito was made out of veneer and it's high-flying, you could use it for combat. You could use it to bomb but, usually, it was used as a photography plane because they flew high and they flew fast and they flew very silently and they were cheap to make. Mosquito pilots were a group unto themselves. Ordinarily, very, very good. No, this was the P-51 aircraft. People who flew P-51's just loved them. There is a P-51 group in Arizona today and they've got active aircraft they can fly. All these old guys, my age, fly these things. Yeah they were a good airplane. Anyway, we knew and then we knew too, from every word we got from the Pacific, that we were winning. Once we got past Guadalcanal. None of us in Europe, I think, realized just how bad the people in the Pacific had it. Just how bitter and graceless that war was, and how violent it was.

DB: You didn't realize that until when?

CRH: Until long after the war. You had to talk to these men, you had to read some the accounts like Dr. Sledge's account With the Old Breed. And you had to realize just how much more difficult it was but we saw that MacArthur was rolling up from the south and Nimitz was rolling westward from Honolulu and of course we would win. Well, then they dropped the first bomb, and everybody was impressed and then they dropped another one and we were impressed even more, so we got to the point, I am sure, where we thought "Well, it's nice the war is over and we don't have to go there. Does this mean we get home earlier?"

DB: Was that a big relief?

CRH: Oh yes, right. Because we knew otherwise, we would be going back to combat.

DB: Come out of it if you had to go...?

CRH: If you went through Europe, you figure you can't make it through Japan. You just can't and I don't think we could have. The casualties would have been horrible.

DB: Just this concept of your number's up after a while. You've had so much luck so far.

CRH: That's right. You know I have told you, the 90-day rule. 90 days in active combat: well you should get hit or hurt or killed and, if you don't, well, the next 90 days ought to get you.

DB: You talked about going to the CBI. Now, did the CBI refer to...?

CRH: Burma. China, Burma, India.

DB: So Patton's group was thought that you would all be sent there rather than to the islands in the Pacific?

CRH: There were all sorts of rumors that you would go to Burma because the Third Army had so much experience in armored warfare, which it really could not use in those

islands. I suppose we had some idea that we might go to CBI but we had those long-range penetration groups like Merrill's Marauders working there, for instance. There weren't a lot of people who ended up in Burma. It was interesting: for a long time after the war, you'd run into people, Americans, who had served in Burma, been in Rangoon, and it was such a strange place and of course the theater was run by the Brits (Mountbatten).

CRH: There was this realization that you were going to make it home you know, unless you fell off the transport. And of course some did. There's that marvelous story about somebody who was killed by somebody messing around with an unloaded, rather - theoretically unloaded - rifle, or pistol on the railroad train, the railroad car that I was crossing France in on my way to a point of embarkation to come home.

DB: Wow.

CRH: That's another story you could check with that friend of mine named McCormick. Milt McCormick. Because I think McCormick was the guy who figured out how to get hold of the engineer on the train. We had no real communication. They'd stop the thing so we could at least communicate what had happened. I think McCormick figured out what was happening. We would go around big curves and I guess McCormick was waving out of the doors or something. He finally got the train to stop.

DB: Bob, did you and others around you, how did you react to the news of Hiroshima?

CRH: Bewildered, because we had no idea what an atomic bomb was. The Hiroshima bombing was one thing, but, when Nagasaki was bombed, and it was announced the war was over, then the place really went crazy. On one of those nights, I think it must be the night that it was announced that the war was over, so that's September, somebody probably took a shot at Colonel Costello, and immediately, the order went out that all the unnecessary .45's were to be confiscated. I doubt that I turned mine in, well, I didn't turn it in because I tried to steal it and bring it home. I know I didn't turn mine in because it wasn't checked out to me. It had been checked out to Mitchell but when he got blinded, I took it. Colonel Costello I think, was convinced, that somebody fired a .45 and, it had a particular sound to it, at him. So he ordered them all picked up.

DB: Wow.

CRH: So, you get an idea about those of us who tolerated, admired, disliked any officer for a reason. Costello was convinced of that, and the Armored Artificer - in the regimental headquarters - was responsible for checking those in, and, because I was typing, I was there with my little typewriter, commenting that Sergeant Gabola or somebody had turned in his .45. And anyway, there was a lot of drunken laughter and cheering and so on and a lot of talk and I remember, I told him this in the letters and I may have told you, too, verbally, that a lot of us went to our officers hoping that some of them had some chemical or engineering training, none of them knew what an A-bomb was either. Some of them would be bright enough to realize that there must be some engineering gimmick you could use to make an atomic explosion but nobody knew how

and why it was done. We thought, you know, "...whatever an A-bomb is, it is just great." I remember that you eventually get to the point where some junior in Princeton made one but that wasn't in our day. We had no idea about the physics.

DB: And it was all new.

CRH: Fermi's work was, what was it, '39 in Chicago when he started? '40 at the most something like that. We didn't know what was going on.

DB: But you were happy 'cause you thought it would hasten the end of the war.

CRH: Well, you knew the war was over. You could just tell by the reports. Then the Tokyo Peace Treaty just sealed the bargain. So, yeah, it was a relief that you were going home. That you would make it.

DB: And there was jubilation on the night of the news of the capitulation.

CRH: Yes, very much so. Even more I think than over the war in Europe. More so than the war in Europe because we knew we were still faced with Japan and where we were it was still dangerous. We were in a full war footing I don't know for how long because you didn't know, I told you I don't know how many 5-10,000 Hungarian and something else prisoners we had picked up. You didn't know what they'd do. You had no idea.

DB: And you mention a concert by Paul Robeson that you were going to attend. Did you go?

CRH: Yes, right. I did.

DB: And had he, his reputation was still...

CRH: Still fine.

DB: ...was still fine.

CRH: See, on my level you would never hear anything about him anyway but I don't know when he actually began to play footsie with the American Communist Party. I have no idea at all. I used to have some details when I studied American history over at the U.W. but all I know is that this great man had a number of justifiable concerns and two or three justifiable complaints. A lot of people turned to Communism, which I don't approve of. A lot of them could see the fallacy of a kid thinking about Marxism. But that doesn't take from the fact that a great man like Robeson (who was a great man) was sympathetic to him. And he was good about entertaining overseas. Boy was he popular and I think I've told you, I had seem him play *Othello* in New York before we went, so I knew I had to go see him, hear him sing. And I had seen his movies I am sure.

DB: Were there any people who commented negatively about him because of his race and so on.

CRH: Oh no, no. But there again I think you get the idea that this guy is an entertainer. "They're all supposed to be able to sing and dance" would probably be the racist comment you know. As a matter of fact, I used that comment once to a very close friend who played basketball here. Black man. I said "Charlie Brown"...Charlie Brown was amazing, he could have gone to the pros, he had a very successful career, "...Charlie you must be the only black I know who can't sing and dance." He had no sense of rhythm. We knew each other well enough. That would have been the thought when Robeson came, but I knew what Robeson was and I had some idea of his importance in American music. He was very imposing. He was great as Othello.

DB: So he gave a good concert, too.

CRH: Yes. I am not sure where. I remember one other show that was in a barn. Who came I don't know, who performed for it. But I think that was Noel Coward singing in the barn. Anyway, it was a Noel Coward play or musical. [*At this remove – almost 60 years – I am not sure I saw Noel Coward, although it is certainly possible that I would have seen one of his plays. Maybe I will find a reference in the Letters Home. CRH*].

DB: So you saw, this was not the only...?

CRH: There were two or three.

DB: Bob Hope?

CRH: No, never saw Hope.

DB: He mostly went to the Pacific.

CRH: I really don't know. He probably went everywhere. I forget how many overseas trips he made, but I never saw him.

DB: When you were in combat did they...

CRH: Well I saw Noel Coward, I'll bet, in the combat zone. I might swear it was October, November '44 that he was right up closed to the front lines.

DB: But he put on a play.

CRH: There was a play and I can, if I think about it I can probably figure out what it was. I was always interested, I've always been interested in the theater and one reason it was fun to live in London in 1948 was that you sat in the second floor of those, upper second rows, or balconies. Neil and I and Bob Dinsmore would go to performances for virtually nothing.

DB: So you guys would appreciate when performers would come out?

CRH: Oh sure. Because they were household names. People were over there like uh, who was the German movies actress? Marlene Dietrich. Bing Crosby was over there. You knew who these people were and they were household names.

DB: You didn't see those two did you?

CRH: I don't think so. I know I didn't see Bing Crosby. I doubt that I saw her. I do remember Noel Coward.

DB: I saw Crosby's house in Spokane where he grew up.

CRH: Oh did you? He must have been close to the Gonzaga campus.

DB: It is. Yeah. Um, now you mentioned here Bob.

DB: You mention here that you "...believe there is no chance that we will get the Germans to see their guilt and become democratic."

CRH: Yeah.

DB: Did you and others around you, what's my question here...I wanted to ask you if other people around you believed differently than what you said?

CRH: I'd be fascinated to know but I can't tell you that now Dan. I have no idea. We probably talked about it. I may have talked about it with even some of the officers or non-coms but I have no idea at this remove.

DB: What made you think that there's no chance that they will see their guilt?

CRH: Talking to Germans everyday. You know, we paid no attention to that fraternization rule, we just obeyed it. We didn't openly thwart it 'cause nobody wanted to get in trouble over it.

DB: This fraternization rule was about dating women right?

RCH: Not just dating. You weren't to speak to a German unless it was on official business.

DB: I see. Men or women.

CRH: No. No men, no women, no little kids. And of course it was violated constantly. If you look in the back of one of my souvenir books you'll find official record of a minor court marshal. Certainly a record of some kind of company punishment of somebody for

fraternizing. And there is another one that says you shall not fraternize in Austria. I know I have that. But we did it anyway. We talked with these people and there's always somebody who can speak good English. So there was always somebody to talk to and this was just the impression that I had at this time.

DB: From talking to these people.

CRH: Yes, right. So I was, you can imagine, amazed particularly - in terms of our professional lives - when Robert Schuman managed to get together with the Germans in 1947, 1949 and out of that came the European coal and steel community. I was absolutely shocked because I couldn't believe that they would...[*See, also, such names as Walter Hallstein and Paul-Henri Spaak*].

DB: Cooperate like that.

CRH: Yeah. I was gradually edged into the idea, of course. Two ideas: one, that not all the Germans were Nazis, and the second was that there will be an opportunity for a democratic experience here and we will watch them seize it. If you watched the old ex-mayor of Cologne who became the first prime minister, first chancellor of postwar Germany...

DB: Is that Adenauer?

CRH: Yes. And you could see some of these efforts in the British zone. You began to get the idea that maybe there was a chance. And you would be delighted, of course, if it worked as well as they wanted.

DB: What kind of things would these people say who you would meet that made you think that there's not a chance?

CRH: Oh I can't remember Dan. I am sorry.

DB: That's OK. Um...

CRH: I think one of the things, by the way on that is that there was usually some problem with them about the fact they lost the war. Not discussing politics. You know, you almost got the impression "I think that there was nothing wrong with our political system, something went wrong here and we lost the war." Either that or they would tell you that they didn't like Hitler but that a lot of people were very good people in the German government. Of course, we weren't ready to believe that, think about that.

DB: You also said, quote, "I fear too many of our officials over here are trying to impress the population with our universal goodwill towards men and the beautiful results of democracy instead of the message that we have the might to destroy them and "don't mess with us again."

CRH: Can't say more or less than that. I think that is very clear. It is pretty much what I felt. And I must of felt inspired to feel that way. I didn't just dream that up.

DB: Do you remember seeing officials doing things?

CRH: I must have but I don't recall now. I have no idea.

DB: Do you have, oh yeah you do have that photo. In September, you say that, "I'll try and bring home some more of those booklets and maps of the division's activities so that Bob Dinsmore can have a copy. You ought to be getting a couple of maps by now." The booklet I assume refers to the one we talked about early...

CRH: Yes. The little one.

DB: And do you have these maps still?

CRH: Probably not. The only map I have and it may have been the one I referred to. I gave you a copy the other day. The one drawn by Sergeant Miller. That's probably what I meant. I do have some situation maps where overlays, particular overlays, which is just a great big piece of clear paper with four or five lines drawn on them and they have to be set on a map. Once they are and once you look at where the little X's and O's on the overlay are, then you know what sort of play is underway here.

DB: So that's like a transparency?

RCH: Transparency, and it would have the division's location or the division's artillery or location of a mortar unit or machine gun line and you wouldn't know where that went ordinarily but if you lay it down on section 28 of the map so-and-so and you know exactly. Then it's just "oh yeah, division headquarters is right here."

DB: And you would get that from your job as a clerk.

RCH: Yeah, right. And I stole some of those from my job as a clerk.

DB: Uh huh. Well, Bob, this is probably a good place to stop for the day.

RCH: Yeah, I think my voice is going.