Cassell, Stephen Interview 11-5-90

[Speaker 2]
Test one, two, three, test.

[Speaker 1]
Forty-eight, thirty-eight with my degree in economics. And got my commission in Fourth of October. Graduated from Tech.

Virginia Tech. Virginia Tech. Of course there was welfare then.

We were one of the two or three largest military schools in the nation at that time. And there were nearly 4,000 cadets. Thirty-eight, there was no such thing as recruiters coming to campus looking for you.

You got a job, you went out and drug-sell. So there was only about 25 out of the 400 that had jobs. So most of us went into the Reserve Corps that summer to get our second lieutenant requirements out of the way, our training requirements, and to make a little money.

Did you go to SAMP or what? Well, I went to ORC tank at Fort Monroe, Virginia. And when I got there, the principal of this Army doctor jammed his thumb in my right ear and the jig was up.

Because I'd been dead in my left ear since 1932, totally. Been out for 38 years, I guess. Thirty-two, no, 58 years, I guess.

Went anyway a long time. I woke up for months in 1932, the first day of March. Months here, and I haven't heard a sound out of that ear since.

Pinched me, sweating, pinched the nerve off, according to the doctor. But anyway, they said, oh, well, that changes everything. What do you mean?

Well, your commission will be taken away from you. I said, well, what do I do, go home? No.

Now, it'll be Christmas before you get to take us there. So it just wasn't. We can't.

So I did and got a job. OK, then I was discharged. And then about a year later, you know, with the war clouds blooming, they started drafting.

And my classmates, most of them were snapped up just like that. The first lieutenants and captains, immediately. Well, there wasn't anything wrong with me.

I could grab a 1,500-pound steer and throw him without even thinking a thing about it. I was a whole lot more man when there was a lot less man. And, of course, I had told everybody I was deathly cold now.

And I remember one of the farmers that I worked with very closely lost two sons in Bataan Death March. And I was always a little ill at ease around him. He was a rugged character.

And I lost his son. I know it could never cross his mind, but it crossed my mind. Were you from Virginia or what you were doing there?

My home is a little town, a little retreat, about halfway between Marion and Whistler, right on top of the divide. You can walk to 3,000 feet in the back. Anyway, three times, four times, I applied to the 3rd Service Command, or what it was called, in Baltimore, to get in the service on my go-ahead map reading.

Because I had gotten interested in flaws, and I had to read a map just like you'd read the pages in this paper. Got a real nice letter back. Very sorry that at this present time we do not have any demand.

I was thinking about the stickers. Demand for such skills. Signed, Bill Jones, 2nd Lieutenant.

About six months later, I sent another application in. Got a letter back, same thing. Very sorry, so forth.

Bill Jones, 1st Lieutenant. Six months later, did it again. Letter back.

Very sorry. Bill Jones, Captain. At the fourth time, this is less than about two years time, majored Bill Jones.

But the draft, I was very high on the draft. But I was deferred first because of this county agent, county agricultural agent. Remember, you know the job and I do.

[Speaker 2]
Yeah.

[Speaker 1]
And then a year later, I was called up again. I was deferred because of 4F. Then in 1942, called up and accepted for full military duty.

They were scratching the bottom of the barrel. So I went in the service, and the first thing that happened, I got down to Fort Lee, Virginia. Camp Lee, they called it then, right out of Richmond, in personnel or something.

Well, if you go to college, yes. Where? For your military.

ROTC. Yes. Did you graduate?

Yes. Well, I'll tell you next. Went for you in ROTC?

Yes. Did you get your commission? Yes.

Well, what happened to it? They took it away from me. Wow.

Because I'm deaf in one ear. Oh, by the way, here in the drawer, here's the Foreign Department certificate. It came through yesterday.

The former commissioned officers who had been discharged from the service but subsequently drafted would be immediately reinstated down to appropriate duties. That

sort of changes my outlook. By the way, I had been commander of a state guard company at Marion when I went into service.

Virginia State Guard?

[Speaker 2]
Yes.

[Speaker 1]
The VTF, or the Virginia Protective Force. Right. We were armed with full choke, double barrel shots.

For close work. You can't do any worse than that, either. If you fire both barrels at one time, I guarantee you that 190 pounds, it'll knock you down, the full choke will.

But anyway, they said, well, when you get to wherever you're sent, and he gave me a copy of that certificate, you report to your adjutant as soon as you can as per this order. So I went to Fort Bliss, Texas, and signed to an ACAC battalion. The first thing that happened in that battalion, the battalion commander was a classmate of mine, the executive officer of the company I was assigned to was in my battery when I was first charged, and he was a sophomore and all that kind of stuff.

Anyway, I reported as per the instructions. So I started a long series of interviews with officers' boards and physical exams, and I signed waiver after waiver, and this went on through California. What sort of weapons did you have in the air?

That was 90 millimeters. 90 millimeters? 90 millimeters.

Well, I was in there. I became, see, I went in that outfit in October. September, I guess it was.

And finished with basic training for 60 days or whatever it was, and was immediately assigned to the plants and training staff, the battalion headquarters, as plants and training sergeant. So in less than two months after that I went in the Army, I was a staff sergeant, which normally would have been a medical sergeant. Of course, they've changed all the ratings now.

So we went from there on across to El Paso, to Yuma, Arizona. It's been a winter in the desert there in Arizona, and then went on to San Bernardino, California, out in the desert there in the edge of town a few miles. And we were on full military, because they still expected the Japs to hit the West Coast.

In the meantime, I'd gone before board after board, and the captain had told me, the battalion commander, he said, now, sergeant, you're one of the newest men in the battalion, and some of these guys have been here for two years, and to move you all in to master sergeant after just four months, some of them are not going to like it. But he said, the minute we head overseas, you get your ratings. I swear to you that half of our battalion had gone to nowhere, and the rest of us had struck our tents and were sitting out in the desert on the railroad siding.

The train was in sight. Our baggage had already been dumped into a boxcar, and here came a jeep across the desert with orders leaving me behind because of my pending written recognition. Anyway, then I went to this big supply depot there in the Cajun Pass north of San Bernardino, and was made plants and training sergeant at both headquarters, which was a job that I really had a lot of fun on.

And I went before boards again, boards again. Finally, I got a call one day from the post commander. He said, well, I understand you're an agricultural expert, but, sir, that expert word is a little strong about so-and-so.

Well, I've just got a directive here to screen your personnel for any folks who have special agricultural backgrounds or special training for our military development work. And you report to Major so-and-so in Los Angeles. What had you been doing as plants and training sergeant?

Well, of course, plants and training sergeant means you plan all the training for all that. These were supplier quartermaster objects, bakery companies, trucking companies, and that sort of thing. No combat troops, but support troops.

And to give you an illustration, I remember one baking company. We would prepare at a certain stage of their life, they are supposed to be at this type of training, so we would send out every week a training schedule a week ahead of time for a company, 321 Biscuit Company, our baking company, which we called Biscuit Company. Trucking companies, what have you.

And I remember one we sent out to this one bakery for a rifle range. We knew what was going to happen because this had been gone through this many times. I looked out one day and saw Lieutenant so-and-so coming because he was the commander of that company.

At Major, because of Lieutenant so-and-so, he disappeared into the restroom. Lieutenant came in, sergeant, is there a major around anywhere? I don't know if there's one of you, Lieutenant.

Well, you can help me. What can I do for you? You've got us down here for the next, tomorrow morning for a rifle range.

What do we do, go down here, draw some guns, and we'll start shooting. You can't kill everybody in the company. No, you don't quite do it that way.

Well, what do we do? Well, I'll tell you what. I'd already made the arrangement.

I picked up the telephone, called all the ordnance, and they pretended like this was the first day they heard about it. Reserve so many rifles, so forth, for 321 Bakery Company. They'll pick them up in an hour or two.

Okay. Now, sergeant, Lieutenant, take a walk. You don't go out on the range.

You won't go tomorrow. You have drive-ins, and you're scheduled to start that at 10 o'clock in the morning. At 8 o'clock in the morning, you have your three or four best sergeants meet me at such-and-such a place.

We got out of sight before they wouldn't see us and bring one rifle each. And we'll go over and I'll show them the nomenclature of how to strip the rifle and how to take care of it and drive on shooting. So that next day when they went up there, I just happened to be up there observing.

They were experts. You know, I had more to ask for than you think you had because the major was a king. We played with him.

We'd see when I'm coming, he'd have something. Oh, I'm sorry, Lieutenant. I've got an appointment with the colonel.

The sergeant will take care of you. Then we got to shipping units overseas, and I shipped about 50 units overseas, the equipment, the proper packaging, crating equipment, and the proper shipping. And, you know, all of a sudden one day, oh, I reported on that military government thing.

I reported down to such-and-such an office, the first office in L.A., 14th floor, and the dang shag rug was up there. And I talked with the guy. Oh, well, this will come through very shortly.

You'll get that appointment. And it waited and waited and waited and nothing happened. And finally I went back down to see him.

Oh, Sergeant, you've been turned down. Why? I didn't give him the reason.

Well, that's about what I expected him to stand up to. Oh, now, don't feel, don't feel that way. They have your name on the record, and you'll be getting a call from that bullshit major.

Anyway, then one day the major said, Sergeant, you're going to Infantry OCS. Me? Yep.

Well, I'm so dumb, I'm so deaf that I can't even qualify in the artillery. What the heck would I want to go to Infantry OCS? I'm just not interested.

I'm sorry, the order's already been sent. So I ended up with four things. Thirty years old, the rest of the kids were 21, 22.

It was a rough summer. Now, in cash work, I shine. But in the field, I've had no Infantry experience, whatever.

These old guys were out of the Infantry. So they knew what they were doing. So we got through, and I ended up in the 71st Division at the end of school.

This was the summer of what? Forty-four. Forty-four, okay.

I ended up in the 71st Division. My first job, I was assigned as heavy weapons platoon leader in the rifle company. Where was the 71st Division?

Fort Benning. It was up there. To back up a little bit.

They came there in the summer of 44. The paratroopers ruled the roost down there. Oh, boy.

They didn't let anybody down. They didn't run that show off the streets. So here came this outfit from Colorado, the 71st Division.

It was a mule pack outfit. In the mountains there, the command in general didn't even have a jeep. So the first weekend that the 71st boys got to leave, they hadn't hit it yet.

During the time, the paratroopers were going to show them who ran the show. I think there were 11 paratroopers in the hospital, but no mule packers went. There were no proper civil paratroopers that day on.

Well, I was assigned as a heavy weapons platoon leader. So about the second or third day on the job, I was out with my platoon. The sergeant was running the show, and I was standing back in the old B&Is.

Like a good new lieutenant. And the battalion commander pulled up, the lieutenant, did I read in your record that you had some experience as a supply officer? Well, yes, a little bit.

As of now, you're by battalion supply officer. Did you report to Major So-and-so down at Ridgewood? I reported to Major Maynard, I believe his name was, and we talked a little bit.

He said, Lieutenant, what are your qualifications for a supply officer? Well, let's see. Two and two makes six, doesn't it?

That's what I was looking for. Because as a dead army supply, you sold everything you could get your hands on. In combat, if you steal it, you might cost somebody else's life.

Of course, I didn't say that. The American soldiers never steal anything, I understand. So I worked at that job for a while, and one day we were beginning to get hot until we got down to the end of our training.

Getting hot, I mean. Overseas training. One day, the Major was sitting there and I said, gosh, what in the heck do I do?

Well, Major, page 44, paragraph 16, subtitle A says, Do So-and-so, a PLM, Preparation Overseas Movement. He turned over and said, I thought I'd try it. He looked at me and I never thought about what I was getting into.

A couple days later, the same thing happened. In the third time it happened, he said, wait a minute, hold on, what did you do? I shipped about 50 units overseas when I was in the desert that year.

About one a week. Oh, as of this moment, you are shipping this regiment overseas. I never functioned with a couple, a few days as supplies.

Well, it turned out that Paul and the final field problems and so forth, they'd have to call some shavetail from a company, get some more active supplies, and he'd get things all

screwed up. And the Colonel would get mad. We got on the ship, I think we'd just been in France a couple days, or maybe we were on the way over.

I believe we were on the way over. Got a call one day to report to you. Tell you the commander.

Yes, sir. As of this moment, you are 2 and a half dozen. Well, what about supply?

What kind of so-and-so is going to be the supplier? Well, I went out there with not one day's practical experience as a rifle platoon leader. Fortunately, I had a platoon sergeant who'd been through one of the survivors of Kasserine Pass.

They want many of them. And he'd been through Anzio, and that was a little rough. Back to the States, and the poor bastard is going back to Europe again.

I found out that Sergeant McFarlane was a good joe. So I called him in. I told him, Sergeant, I have absolutely no...

I shouldn't be here because of so-and-so, and I've had no true experience of being. So I've been told what kind of guy you are. You're running this platoon.

I'm responsible. I'll pump for you, but you run it. But now, many of our squad leaders, can I say that to you?

So-and-so and so-and-so, but not so-and-so. Of course, he's our pastor, and he'll cut the crocks out of my feet. So I called in those other two, one at a time, and talked a little with them.

And we got along fine. Nobody in the platoon got killed. A couple got shot up once or twice.

I wasn't even... What happened? It wasn't my good luck.

It was just pure damn luck. For example, when we came into Reed, Austria, on buses that we picked up along the road, we came riding into town, all of a sudden, somebody jumped up out of the ditch and waved us for a stop. And about that time, we heard a machine gun fire, and cord coming in the bus on this side and over here.

And I'll swear to you, there was over 50 bullet holes in that bus, and not a soul got touched. There was... It turned out it was a bunch of hit-and-run youth, 14-year-old boys.

You know who we talked about? In the cemetery. And I'll always remember this Sergeant McFarland.

He was rounded, he said. There was one little boy wearing sergeant's stripes. He couldn't have been more than 14.

And Sergeant Mac was about 6'4", 240 pounds, an alabaster, a mean-looking bastard. He was a big pretty cat. And he told this little German boy, Sergeant Hardick or something, and he gave him some lip.

The sergeant turned red in the face, and I thought he was going to pop. All of a sudden, he smiled. He reached out and grabbed the kid, sat down on a tombstone, pulled his pants down, and he slammed him until his tail end was as red as that bitch.

And the little boy jumped up here awfully hard to not cry and to maintain his dignity. He jerked his pants back up and went running off. And the sergeant walked him.

It was a wonderful expression on his face. I said, Sergeant, why did you do that? He said, I couldn't hit the son of a bitch.

Anyway, then, at the end of the war, down in Austria, the colonel, not the battalion, but the regimental commander, who was, oh, he was no good at all. I'm not going to tell you. I'm not going to name his name.

But some of the dumb things that he ever did. What regiment was that? It was 66th Infantry.

66th Infantry. Now, that was a wartime regiment. 14th and the 9th were the oldest regular army regiments in the Army.

But 66th was a wartime regiment. The colonel called us all in. We were still down in Austria, near Steiger.

S-T-E-G-Y-E-R. One at a time, an interview. And all second lieutenants in this regiment, except for most of them, were not accepted.

He passed on five ponies. And the one fred that was common, he asked every one of those guys a certain question. Do you think you have to be an S.O. to be a good officer? Two of us said no. Me and five ponies. The rest of them gave him the answer they knew he wanted.

So he didn't get promoted. We moved back to Germany. In June, I believe it was, it was sent in that diary.

Before you get back into Germany, I remember you said the 66th, I think it was, liberated a concentration camp? Yeah. Where was that?

That was in Lombok, L-A-M-B-A-C-H. In Austria? Yeah.

Right near the city of Wales. In Lombok, right there together. It was just a couple miles out of Wales.

Do you remember the practitioner of the church? Charlotte Ann Prattner? Ann Prattner was born in Gumskircher Lager at that place.

Of course, there wasn't any concentration camp there. And she came to America when she was about five or six years old, before the war. When we moved back to Germany, to the village of Lauingen, L-A-U-I-N-G-E-N, on the Danube, north of Augsburg, I got a call one day to report to...

Oh, one of the most interesting experiences I had in the war. I got a call to the headquarters one day, while we were there at Laungen. They said, let's go back and get three-day supplies and be back here in 15 minutes.

What for? You and six men from the battalion are taking a trainload of Russians back to Russia. The Russian defeats, which are slave laborers.

So we took off. That was a joke. Six of us to guard 2,000.

We were supposed to be there in three days. We didn't know where we were going, but we were supposed to be there in three days. The thing I'll always remember is this one man.

You know, you can take 25 strangers and plunk them down in a room, and a couple hours later, one or two of them will be in the leadership. Don't ask me how it happens, but it usually does happen. One of the leaders of that 2,000 was a man in uniform.

He was not a soldier. He had taken that uniform off of a dead body somewhere in the prison camp. Well, that man and I sat there in that boxcar for four days.

Our legs hanged out of the boxcar talking. I didn't speak a word of his language. He didn't speak a word of my language.

How? I don't know. Strokes, gestures, smiles, frowns, pointing.

And I learned, and I'm sure this is correct, that he was from Siberia. He was a slave laborer from Siberia, and his family lived north of the Arctic Circle, made their living herding reindeer. And I think he understood my job as county agricultural agent.

I was jointly employed by the county agricultural college to work as a farmer's mechanic. And we talked for four days. Well, it took about seven days before we ended up in Erfurt, which was in the territory that was being turned back over to the Russians.

And over in that division, there would be a lot of them to the Russians after we'd moved in and taken over. But there was a fact. Did the DPs resist going back?

No, they were scared stiff. They didn't know whether they were going to be taken out and shot or sent to the salt mines of Siberia or wherever those places were. They had graffiti in an hour or two.

They had graffiti all over those cars to show what good citizens they were Anyway, we had 50 villages in Erfurt. Three days' supply of food. So we were getting kind of desperate.

It was just about the fourth day. And we were creeping along about 10 miles an hour, stopping every few miles for a little bit. And we noticed this morning this truck was stopping at this farm to pick up a bunch of milk.

Right along the side of the track, you know, 50 feet away or 100 feet away, we saw him pick up at four or five places. And we saw it pull up to what obviously was a dairy in this town. We stopped in the town.

The train commander came back and said, Listen, we're going to be here two or three hours. Don't let the people scatter. I said, Well, listen, I'm going to have to take a couple of men and go find some food for these babies.

So we took this Russian and had a pull-up. Genisevich. He took a picture of me.

We went up there. I told him, I said, We need milk for babies. He said, Eesh, neeks hoppin'.

I said, Neeks hoppin'. He said, Neeks hoppin'. I said, You're a damn liar.

We saw your truck, the truck sitting right there. We saw him stop at eight or ten farms coming in to get a load of milk. I said, Neeks hoppin'.

I said, Get our friend outside. We left the Russian sitting outside. Of course, this was territory that was going to be turned over to the Russians.

We brought him in. Oh, yeah, oh, yeah, neeks hoppin' milk. Neeks hoppin' milk.

Pale milk, or whatever the right word is. Just like that. They were scared stiff.

They had reason to be. That's what the Russians, the Germans think of the Russians as really horrible. But anyway, we were gone then for about ten days.

We didn't have a sign of a piece of paper to show that we were legitimate on that trip when we got back home.

[Speaker 2]
You turned these people over to the Army?

[Speaker 1]
No, no. We put them into a camp at Erfurt. And all American troops had pulled out of Erfurt except the MP company, about a hundred and fifty.

So the first thing we did when we got there, we said, Hey, that damn fellow in our outfit makes life so miserable. Take your three quarters. And the Russians were coming in in two days.

But they'll keep us for a while. We'll have some fun and get to know them. So the first thing I did was go down to the MP company and tell them who I am, what I've done there, that we won't stay three days.

Sure, fellas, you can come down here and eat with us. But we were staying in a... We went into a transit hotel and were staying in the 600, 700.

And we went down to eat dinner with the MPs. So one day, the third day, the next morning, they pulled out and the Russians came in. And we were part of that.

They were our buddies. But at lunch that day, the captain said, Lieutenant, I'm sorry to tell you, but you'll have to be on the freight train going west to the province. You guys have to be on it.

But if you're not, then I'll have to arrest you. So we headed back. I think several hundred ships back home.

But anyway... This was the Russian who said this to you? No, our MP captain.

Your MP captain. Said, well, you've got to be out of here before they show up in the morning. I'll have to take you in.

That's what he did. Not long after that, then, I got a call one day, report to Lieutenant O'Connor at division headquarters. Athletic officer.

Me? No, I get it cheap and go up to Augsburg, 50 miles away, and report to Lieutenant O'Connor. Yes.

You're now my sitting athletic officer. Me? No, I don't know where the athletes were.

I don't know, but Roy Long said, good man. So there was three of us working for him. They had me...

The first job I was given was to rebuild all the sports facilities in town. But here were the Germans with pockets full of money that had nothing to do with it. No jobs.

Their factories blown up and everything. So all these sports facilities, swimming pools and everything, were busted with bomb craters and all. So I was to rebuild them.

And I had a lot of fun. Of course, it was German labor. And I found out, well, if you don't try to bust them, get one of them to bust them.

You tell the boss man what you want him. Let him handle them entirely. Well, we had a lot of fun.

Our softball team, with my friend Roy Long as the coach, was the runner-up and looking champion. Our baseball team was the runner-up to the championship. And a fellow named Ewell Blackwell from Cincinnati Reds, later on with the Cincinnati Reds, was our star pitcher.

And in the playoffs, he was best three out of five. He won two games. But he pitched the fifth game, and his arm was just gone.

Then the football games started. I told little Connor, I want to play football. All right, well, I want to put you out there to run that athletics center.

Well, there was about 100 GIs out there. The football squad, the basketball squad, the baseball squad. They weren't doing a darn thing except fiddling around the sports.

And I found out right quick, I ain't bossing this bunch. So I just ran the place to hell with it. So I got to play at a couple games.

And then they came to rule the 36-man squad. I was the 37th man on the 36-man squad. Somebody would be injured, couldn't dress out, I'd get the dress out, and I got to play in a couple of games.

I'm telling you something I heard. One of the programs, somewhere we went to play, they referred to me as Stan Bartholomew. Stan Bartholomew, does that name mean anything to you?

He was blocking back in Tennessee in 38, 39, 40, when they were unscored all for two or three years. Played the Philadelphia Hills. Hills, huge.

That bothered the heck out of me. Being a star is a hard thing to explain to me on the third string. 25 years after the war, I bumped into Sam Kingsport one day, which is a darn lie.

I never did know he was up there until I tried to retire. But anyway, I tell those people this. Ask you, how come I was such a star?

How come I was on the third string? And his answer was, my God, after 25 years, how do you expect me to remember? Little details.

Oh, I know why. We didn't have a fourth string. Anyway, about two thirds of the way down through the football season, halfway down, I got a call one day to report to the division, division adjutant.

In the meantime, I'd gotten curious. Why in the hell didn't I get a promotion? All these jerks that came out here didn't give a damn about anything.

Goofed off on everything, got promoted, posted. I didn't get one. So I'd gone to the Inspector General, what do you call him, and talked to him.

And a couple weeks later, he called me back and he said, let me have a talk with you. I said, why? He said, during that period after the fourth period when you were battalion supervisor, the battalion commander raised your performance to some satisfactory.

What? Yeah. God.

Well, that just isn't so. I never did function as battalion supervisor. I was shipping the regiment overseas.

Now I know what happened. These guys, he'd come in for a problem and they'd goof up and blame it all on me. And let me go to my room for a few minutes and come back.

I went over and got some letters from the port of admission that goes, I took the regiment through the port and went on ahead to the advance party and took it all through the port. And I had letters from them saying, you're in better shape than anyone else in division and you're in better shape for your records and so forth. And I'd send the units to ship overseas.

Letter of commendation. On the very period of time that he raised me to unsatisfactory. I said, well, that's too bad.

I said, well, did anything get done about it? He said, no. Why?

There's only one person who can change that rating. And that's the colonel. Well, why can't he change it?

He went home and about a week after he got home he died of pneumonia. So you've had it. So I came out of the service still ashamed of it.

But I'm not bitter. I came out with reasonably good health. Didn't get blown up and all that.

Then I got the call one day through the state report. They actually called me in. And I walked in.

The lieutenant said, you are now the division recruiting officer. Who? Me?

Yes. Of course, I knew him because I'd been there in division headquarters for four months already, five months. And we all ate together and they were out of football practice and all that jazz.

I said, well, why in the heck did they call me? He said, well, Lieutenant O'Connor said you are no longer in the athletic office. I said, well, that's fine and so and so.

I've been out at the athletic center running that athletic center for the last two months. I haven't even been in the office. He said, well, it's too late.

You've already been called. General Roth wants to talk with you. So I go to the commanding general and he was out of football practice every day he had to practice.

I go, I want to know, General, why me? Because I can't, oh, you say my job is to talk to you guys and stay in the Army and I can't right at this moment. I'm so pissed off.

I can't think of any reason why anybody would want to stay in the Army. All due respect to you and your regular Army commission. I finally, he said, well, we needed an officer, a very responsible officer.

I went, you've got to write that. What do you mean? The last three jobs I've had anytime something went wrong they said, the Castle's responsible.

So I told General Roth, he said, now the Third Corps wants you to rig up a sound truck and travel around the division company to company, drive up and down the streets and blaring out good news about staying in the Army. General, do I have the right to say I don't want to do it? He said, yes, and I'll back you up because I believe in that kind of salesmanship.

He said, the first thing I want you to do is write a bulletin. And that was this one. I thought across my mind, can we joke that a little bit?

Well, go ahead, but let me see what it is before we have it printed. And that's what we came up with. It's a good piece.

Anyway, well, I like that one. Three years, whatever it is. No, no, that's not the one.

But this one here. If you list it for three years, you've got a bunk vacation home and you're in charge of theater. Anyway, Admiral General, can I still play football?

Do you think you can have a lab and play football? I believe I can. Well, if you can, fine.

Then I'll work at this until noon and go play football. So I've got football practice. Of course, they all knew that I was now a recruiting officer.

And some of them put private and knocked the hell out of me. And this is what we do with the recruiting officers, try to get me to stay in this man's office. One day, it was pouring down rain and mud was that deep and it was all over us and we were scrounging.

The general office was standing over there. Somebody knocked the hell out of me and I got up and drove him home. Come here.

Oh, yes, sir. Are you crazy? Why?

You've got a nice, warm office, dry office up there to conserve. What are you doing out here? Well, I guess I'll just be hit too many times on the head.

So that's pretty what it is. Then I went down to, at the end of the football season, we won the European Championship. Not me.

We won the European Championship. Of course, we killed a bear, but Paul shot him. That's the joke we used to have as boys.

We killed a bear. Of course, Paul shot him. Then Sam sent me down to Riviera to line up a game as a reward for the team for winning the championship.

And the game lined up. Some team down there. And he called me on radio, my telephone, said, Lieutenant, see, one of the reasons we won was we weren't hit by redeployment.

But the Army, it disintegrated because they wouldn't bring, don't send anybody back home, over here, but bring daddy back home. Don't send anybody over to take his place. A hundred miles away, the Russians were bringing in new divisions all the time.

We couldn't have slowed them down five minutes if they'd wanted to come to the Atlantic, to the North Sea. So, he said, all of a sudden, we lost half the football team. Gone home.

Including Coach. Including me. He said, and we decided not to come because we'd come down and get the hell beat out of us.

So, then I get back to Germany, and first of January, I go down to Biarritz, way down in the very southwest corner of France, next to Spain, to an Army university that I spent three months down.

[Speaker 2]
While I was there, What were you working on down there?

[Speaker 1]
Just studying. I took a course in soils, one in geology, preparation for marriage, and an agronomy seminar course. And, while we were there, the division broke up.

The 4th and the 5th Regiment were assigned to other divisions. The 6th and 6th came home, I guess. Not a one of us, there was a couple hundred of us down there from the 6th to 6th, and not a one of us got any orders of what to do.

So, I just went back to Augsburg. And, skipping around, I got assigned to the 14th Regiment toward Weinheim, right near Mannheim. And, of course, I had some friends over there.

And they said, well, you are ammunition officer. Ammunition officer? The shooting's over, man.

Yeah, but there's thousands of tons of ammunition lying out here in these woods, in this area. Your job is to locate it, catalog it, destroy it. Who, me?

Well, no, you won't have to train teams of German ordnance people who are doing that. So, I was assigned sergeant and a chief. We'd take them out.

I'd say, now, tomorrow, sergeant, we'll go block this patch of woods right here. There was an element of risk, because some of those ammo dumps out there were mine. So, we'd take off, get out there, we'd plot it down in the inventory, and about noon, we'd end up in a beer house, I guess.

Bus house? Bus house. And eat and drink beer, and just have to rush back home and come roaring up in a cloud of dust to the office of equipment.

Captain, we found a soldier right here in this patch of woods. I've got a superior array to get all I did out of that four weeks was 20 pounds. Drinking beer.

Nice way to spend the winter. And then, from there, I came on home. I went home in May.

I got married in July and went back to work at my old job in August.

[Speaker 2]
What sort of other things was the division doing in occupation duty besides sorting out ammunition?

[Speaker 1]
Well, I don't really know. We were just guarding the town, and I know in the little town of Lounge, we were trying to think of things to do to get the people to work. And one of the first things we did, it wasn't purely an operation, I don't know what the word is, their local brewery to get it back in operation.

Of course, we had a purpose. We wanted to be there to get maybe 100 people to work. And I remember, my company ended up in Oprah, Amagal, you know, the Passion Plague.

And one of the things they told me, and I went down there occasionally to spend a week in with them or something like that, and I fell in love with that town and gave them the pictures of it. One of the things they did was revile the Passion Plague. You know what they discovered?

A man who played the role of Christ in the 1940 Passion Plague was the chief Nazi in town. He was in Nuremberg Prison waiting to be revived. And so, nothing was done.

I don't think it was revived until 1950. Did you have much to do with German civilians? Well, I didn't, because in the job I had, I didn't have that much contact with them.

The only real contact I had was on that job rebuilding the sports facilities. And one little example, I don't mean this bragging, but this did happen, and I showed you the pictures over there here. One Sunday, we had about two or three thousand G.I.s standing around the sidelines watching the ball, football games. And that night, at the officers' club, Sam and I were sitting there with some of the other officers on the team, there was probably ten officers and the rest of them. Gosh, it would be wonderful to see the seats of people. That's to see what you can do about it.

Well, I happened to have with me someone who was the commander of an engineering company. And I got to talk with him, and he said, oh, way to luck, let's go back to our room, to my room. We'd go to his room, and he said, we just took over yesterday a big sawmill.

We don't have a job. So he wasn't happy. You know, the four pieces that the seats would sit on, the support pieces, the braces, and drew out sketches of each one of them and its size.

He said, now tomorrow at one o'clock, you have four trucks and twenty carpenters at this place, at the sawmill. I swear to you, the next Saturday, we'd seat at about 8,000. We, we built a stadium.

Bosh out there.

[Speaker 2]
You're responsible.

[Speaker 1]
I found out, I found out one thing. These, I went to the burgomaster, and I need twenty carpenters. Brammers, that's all.

Everything else was furnished. And, I'll have the trucks here in such and such a time to pick them up. He got out there, and I was getting nowhere.

And then I heard one of them, you know, says what to do. And I talked to him, and he spoke a little English. Like, you know what we want to do?

Yeah. All right, you get it done. And he busted.

And boy, when he started walking, it was like something started clicking. They are wonderful workers. Really wonderful workers.

They don't have, at that time, we didn't think they had too much imagination or individual initiative. But today, of course, quality wise, they're superior to us. Industrial workers, I don't think you really doubt about it.

Did you have much of a problem with fraternization policy? Everybody's got a problem. Well, during the actual shooting, yes.

It was forced, but after the shooting, the film was no longer a problem. You got to remember, there was about eight, seven, five or six million women of marriageable age with no man. There wasn't anything more than that.

I know I was telling my wife, and my wife-to-be, about this general, captain, he was actually a dentist or whatever it was. I was a dentist there at headquarters at Feinheim about a couple months before I came home, that he had this German girl living with him. And she was a dental technician and one of the most charming ladies I've ever met.

And Beth said, how could she be charming? She's living with a man she's not married to. I said, girl, you would have to be under circumstances to understand it.

She was a charming lady. No one else except him. But you got to remember, there was about five or six women that had no man and no place to get any.

One whole generation But I don't know what would happen to me if I was under those circumstances. Oh, I wouldn't break down like that. I don't know whether or not.

I think about some of the guys that broke down under the torture in Korea. I've never had the screws put on me. I don't know how much of it I can take.

So when I got back home, went back to the county. After I got back, I was the last county agent that came to come back and search. 150 of us.

Most of them were commissioned. And I was the last one to come back. And all the training schools, refresher schools, and all the tech had already had them all.

There's just one more that wandered around out there. He's not worth it. Well, at Marion Inn, I was a member of the Lions Club.

And we had about a month after I got back, they were speaking up on the experiences. And I felt like coming up in this way with all the horrible destruction that was finished for me, fucked, I still felt the social implications were much worse than the physical implications. What happened to the minds of men?

The concentration came to something when he walked in on that one. That's something. Yes, I believed it, and yet I didn't really believe it until I saw it.

You saw the pictures, how horrible those are. And when I show those to audiences, I've had some audiences say, why did you have to throw in horrible pictures like that? Because they're horrible.

And we must never forget man's infinity demand. Oh, boy, I'm getting fancy with that phrase now. Don't let it say it can't happen again because it has happened.

It's happening right now. Go ahead. And my God, look at what's happening in some of the countries of Africa.

And the flaming torch groups in Peru.

[Speaker 2]
Shining Path, yeah.

[Speaker 1]
Shining Path, yeah. Shining Path. Not long ago I was reading, St. Beth and I were in Ayacucho a few years ago with our daughter and her husband who were living down there. We spent a couple nights in Ayacucho. And the story in the paper not too long ago that they stopped a group of foreign men when the children on the way home from the market had killed 30 of them and left them lying there on the road. I don't know what the objective is.

So I've just about run out on that. I don't know.

[Speaker 2]
Did Germans who were around that concentration camp that you all liberated deny that they knew it was there?

[Speaker 1]
They denied it, but we knew they were lying. But they denied it up here because they didn't want to believe it. This lady that Beth and I visited in 1947, we were members of a group called the Friendship Force.

In 87 we went to Hamburg and we stayed a week in this lady's home. Of course, she was only about 10 years old at the time. And she said, as I understand it, those people who tried to voice an opposition to it ended up dead.

And I listened to a program yesterday and it just said that approximately 750,000 Germans were put to death by Hitler because they opposed it. So they were trapped in this endless system that they couldn't break out of. Oh, I remember as we were in that rat race across Germany, we'd come to a town and we'd search out the houses looking for weapons and for SS troopers, as it were.

Mr. Mergelmeister, there were noxious. Nine, eight, next stop, noxious. Next town, field, field, noxious.

Many noxious in the next town. We get over to the next town, nine, nine, this town, many noxious. SS troopers, but none in our town.

And I remember the shock. Came into the town of Neuhaus and there on the railroad across the trestle were about four poles that were hanging there on the neck. So I think they were poles and they didn't answer when we asked them what they was.

But I remember another shock that was...

[Speaker 2]
Who had hung them, do you know? The SS troopers. The SS?

[Speaker 1]

At the end. We had a number of cases guarded at Gestapo that we captured from their own people. We had to guard against it, protect it from their own people.

I remember in the early days of the war, Germany was reduced down as many as the trains were mule carts. And the Air Force had strafed us, five columns. And we came along and found dozens of horses with their guts blown open.

The dead soldiers lying there didn't bother us at all because they supposedly knew better but those poor horses didn't know any better. They didn't know what they were doing. They were just falling...

When you came back to Virginia, did you have the feeling that things had changed at home while you'd been gone? No, I don't know that I did. I'll tell you one thing that bothers me a little bit right now.

I didn't get into any bad fights, just a few skirmishes. The first day I found out I was cut out to be a lover instead of a hero. I didn't like that.

And the guy that said he goes into combat and is not scared, he's either crazy or a damn liar. Now, it bothers me a little bit that all this... I feel so sorry for the Vietnam veterans.

They're the only ones that have apparently had to fight a war. Of course, I'll go to my grave to visit the press and the media that causes that war. And you're about this good at that age then, but you may disagree with me and that's your privilege.

But that's why I think that thing, a different view of war, of Bill Hawkins, it's a good one. Somehow though, the fight in the communists in Vietnam was wrong. It's correct to fight in every war else, but not in Vietnam.

That's roughly what it says there. But we made a mistake. We didn't go in to win.

That's the mistake we made. And in combat, there is no order. Jesus, all your plans go haywire.

Because regardless of how good your plans are, there's somebody on the other side that's doing everything he can to disrupt them.

[Speaker 2]
He's got his own plans.

[Speaker 1]
So, stop him. It's a normal situation. Situation normal, all fouled up, holding the army.

We use a little different word than fouled. My best friend, this fellow, Roy Long, when we separated in the Christmas of 45, and I went down to be at Red's, and I didn't see him again until last year, he ended up in the foxholes at Korea. But we both agreed, you know, I wouldn't take, I wouldn't do it again for a million bucks unless Uncle Sam asked me.

And I wouldn't take a million dollars for the exchange. And I guess I'm over-separating things when I say this. If there's anything good in combat, it's this.

The veneer is scratched off when you find out what the man is underneath. Find out what the real man is underneath. And in a platoon, for example, when the pitch is down, the blowhard never lives up to it.

It's a little quiet guy that you never thought anything about or didn't even know was there, but it's the one that comes through for you. I mean, that's the generalization of the word. I don't know.

You know, a strange thing, too, maybe, I don't feel, I don't recall having any animosity towards a German soldier. The SS troopers and the Gestapo, that's another story now. But the German individual soldiers, he was just as scared and he was trapped in the system as part of it and had no control over his destiny.

But some of the things the Gestapo and SS troopers did is... That concentration camp we found, I think, did I tell you about coming into town the next day? The day after we had camped, we pulled in the wells and they come to Anderson Castle to pick up the tomb and clear those warehouses over there.

Simple order. Those warehouses covered about two blocks. High wall fence around it.

They were full of food, cereals. The canals ran under it, under the fences. Well, we went in and there was the SS and Gestapo, this gun security logger, was about two or three miles out of town.

They had pulled out and left that camp three or four days before we got there. The folks didn't have anything to eat for several days. Many of them, of course, were so near dead they found hundreds of dead bodies as you saw in that book.

Many of those folks were in town, the strongholders. The population were in their homes with their doors locked but they were scared and had a reason to be. Although they say they weren't Germans, they were Austrians, which is the truth of that too now.

Hitler fortunately took over Austria. Anyway, there were hundreds of those prisoners in those warehouses and they were wallowing in this stuff. They were indescribably filthy.

Now, no fault of their own. Suppose you were pinned up in Pemsk foot square and never got out. You'd be sleeping in your own crap.

No fault of theirs. Indescribably filthy. Well, they were just ruining the food that they touched with their bodies.

So we'd walk into a room maybe to be 50 feet long, one door on the men. I'd yell at them if I wasn't listening. I'd rab or hit them over with an automatic rifle.

I'd rab the cousins. He'd take his rifle and mow it around the wall above their heads. Well, in a closed room, an automatic rifle makes a little noise.

And we'd put a couple of men at the door and drive them out. Anything they had out of sight we didn't take away from them. But in boxes, no, we did.

And they couldn't understand. Now, there was everything there but Americans. There were no Americans in that group.

But you're treating us just like the ancestors who take their food away from us. And we tried to explain to them in our broken English that we were, you were ruining the food. We tried to save them.

Okay. During the night, the stronger the patients would dive under the fence in those canals and come up under the fence and get inside. So about every hour we would send them around each of the buildings and search them out and they'd find four or five or six people each time.

We'd push them outside. I walked up to one of my outposts about three o'clock in the morning. And this big old German boy from a farm in Minnesota named Kor.

Hey, Lieutenant, come here. Something funny to show you. And I walked up and there were three SS troopers around there dead.

They hadn't been there an hour before. Yeah, what is it? Said, there's Ruski marching these guys up here going.

That's the point. Broken English said, I've got these SS troopers. What do I do with them?

I'll shoot some of them. Bang, bang, bang. We stood there at their mouth and watched them walk off in the dark.

That story, we were so darn mad. You know, we'll find that camp and what happened there. That story got all over the division.

It seemed like in ten minutes. And I'll swear to you that the next few days that seemed to be the password. I'll shoot some of them.

Crude, cruel, the soldier's humor is usually the point. And the mood we were in, that's the way we felt. And I think I can truthfully say had we found that camp eight weeks before, we were only in on that last eight weeks.

If we'd have found that camp eight weeks before, we wouldn't have captured 150,000 German soldiers. We shot a hell of a lot of them on the spot. Because we were so darn mad about it.

But... How large a camp was it? About 18,000 details in that book, I think.

And we found hundreds of dead bodies lying around the woods. And there's some wonderful stories, you know. The griffins on the street.

We brought in a bunch of SS troopers. We're holding them for... trucks to haul them off the prison camp.

And we understand their intention, I swear. And there was hundreds of these prisoners lying around the sidewalks. Sitting around, lying around.

And... I am really more or less quoted with that. That the Gestapo, when they made a stand in detention, that they had that superior lure on their side to get it.

But two hours later, of course they were... Have you ever tried standing in detention for two hours? At 8 o'clock.

They were getting lucky. Getting a little uneasy, were they? Because they knew it was over.

And I think that also we can see in those griffins who were on the sidewalks, the opposite thing happening. Two things I'll always remember about that concentration. The first one is the smell.

The smell of death. And the other one is the fact that the eyes of those prisoners, they were blank. They were lying in there.

They were dead. And perhaps as they stood there and watched the SS troopers go down, that perhaps a little something began to show up in their eyes. I'd like to be a poet to be able to describe it.

Well, God help us all. We never have to do it again. And yet we've got a character in Iraq that's just as bad as Hitler was.

And I hope that something is done about it before both of them remain. We've got to stop it. We can't just let him get out of it.

Have you ever given in to a bully yet that he didn't ask for more than? It's a good thing I don't know that they have got me running the show because I'd really run him around. But in my old age now, in my superior wisdom, I have reduced the problems of the world to two simple little equations that you've heard.

The first one is everybody else ain't as smart as you and I are. And the second is we sit them down till we disagree and such we get along fine.