

Johnson, Frank R. Interview 8-23-90

[Speaker 2]

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, over. It's sound activated. This is Stan Tinsley speaking, 23rd day of August, 1990.

Speaking to Mr. Frank R. Johnson, 4307 McCampbell Lane, Fountain City, Knoxville, Tennessee. Mr. Johnson, when did you join the service?

[Speaker 1]

I was drafted in July of 1902. Went down to Fort Overcroft and played in the army band down there for about two weeks, which was an interesting experience, and if I'd been a real piccolo player, I could have probably been the colonel's driver. That was the first day I played in that band, then walked the colonel, and I didn't even bother to get on my feet.

I knew better, but he kind of took me by surprise, and he said, son, how long you been playing the piccolo? I said, I've been playing ever since I was in the series, which didn't tell him anything. The next question he asked me was, can you play the piccolo solo in the Stars and Stripes Forever?

Well, I couldn't, I wasn't that good of a piccolo player, but if I had been able to, I'd have had it made. Anyhow, that was an old regular army band, and I was going to cut it down to the old strength then. Of course, back up there, when the actual colonel left, the warrant officer came over, and, boy, he really meowed.

He said, the next time the colonel of the post comes in here, he says, you get on your feet, and you stand at attention. But I was a new soldier, and I had forgotten my ROTC, I guess. But anyhow, it was a regular army band, and they were going to cut it down to the old strength, and I just heard these old boys were going to get thrown out, and put on KP or whatever.

I heard them grumbling in the background, so I figured that wasn't the place I wanted to go. It wasn't the place I wanted to be. So I went on down to Camp Grant and got my basic training, and I was bound for Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, to join the 8th Evacuation Hospital to go overseas.

I was on my way overseas November 2nd, and I spent about three years overseas, but it was an interesting experience in that I had to be there. I can remember when we landed in Casablanca, the French battleship the Jean Bart was lying there, sort of halfway beached with a hole in the side over as big as a two-car garage, and that's the first time I'd ever seen a big battleship with a hole gone in it. But we got ashore, and there we were in the city of Casablanca, an evacuation hospital with no road equipment.

Somebody had stole all of our equipment, so we did what's normally done in the old army, is we went out and stole somebody else's, and we found some jeeps and some trucks and whatnot to make out with. But we were camped right in down Casablanca almost for a couple of weeks, and then they moved us up to the Anfa Hill behind the Anfa Hotel, and that's where Roosevelt and Churchill and Stalin and de Gaulle and who else was there, several of the high-ranking generals came for the Anfa conference, and we knew about it,

and of course we were confined to post there for two days when all the dignitaries were there, but I've often thought about that, that I knew Roosevelt was there and I knew Churchill was there, but they didn't know I was there.

[Speaker 2]

Did you end up in the hospital end of the thing, the medical unit?

[Speaker 1]

Well, in that I had pre-med in college, they just put me in the medical corps, I mean that was where I was paid, and then too I had typing experience, and that's how I wound up in the headquarters there, but that was good to have. I had a diary, but it's not of any great importance really.

[Speaker 2]

How old were you when you went into the service?

[Speaker 1]

I was 42, I was born in 1920, that made me about 22 years old, so here's what I've got, four pictures.

[Speaker 2]

We'll go over those.

[Speaker 1]

My diary must be stuck somewhere else. There's a lot of stuff here. Here's pictures I haven't even catalogued, I think this was somebody else's set that I got set up.

These were taken down at Camp Grant.

[Speaker 2]

Let's go along with this. You were in Casablanca.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, I was in Casablanca by about the 18th of November. And I spent Christmas overseas, 42. My wife sent me a beautiful Jules Jurgensen wristwatch, it was never heard of as a Jules Jurgensen, but there was an old boy there from Chicago that had worked in a drugstore, and they had a department, he said, man, that's a good Swiss watch, and it was a good watch, I wore it out.

Once I got home from the war, I didn't know what I had even.

[Speaker 2]

What was that, 19, Christmas of 42?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

You had people from all parts of the country in your unit there.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, we sure did, we had a bunch of Pennsylvania boys, we had some Polack boys, and I remember one old boy, Mort Barrow, he could play the violin, I mean, he was a concert pianist, but you wouldn't know what to look at him, he was a great big tough-looking Polack, you know, but man, he could make that violin talk. We found out that at a bar one night, and there was some guy there that had a violin, and he just sort of asked him to let him have it, you know, and he started playing, and he had everybody spellbound with his music. But I think that perhaps the funniest thing, we had one poor old Polack boy in our outfit that we'd been overseas 11 months and his wife had a baby, and he had a hard time figuring that one out, and I never did want to tell him, so I'll let that somebody else.

[Speaker 2]

I guess that happened more than once.

[Speaker 1]

It may have. We're not recording, are we?

[Speaker 2]

Tell me again what unit you were a part of.

[Speaker 1]

Well, I was in the 8th Evacuation Hospital, which was part of 5th Army, and we may have gone into Africa as part of 5th Army, or I don't really know, because when we really got with 5th Army was when we went up to Italy, but we pretty well served as a general hospital there at Casablanca.

[Speaker 2]

Okay. Okay. Let's see, where did you go now, into Italy after you left North Africa?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, we went all around. We went over on a British troop ship, and boy, was that ever filled. I'll tell you what, the first afternoon, we laid in the dirt there all day trying to get boarded, and finally they boarded us about 4 o'clock, and we hadn't had anything to eat, and we were thirsty, but we went through that British mess, and so help me, they handed everybody a tin can and a tin plate, and they dumped your food on the plate, and the coffee in the can, and when you got through, you went around and dipped that plate in a lukewarm bucket of water, and everybody wiped their plate with the same towel.

[Speaker 6]

Oh, my Lord.

[Speaker 1]

But, and so help me, when we hit the Berks of Larno, we, everybody had diarrhea. And boy, we dug those slit trenches, it looked like a big mole had been through there. But we got over it, but I never will forget that.

And we had to come off that boat down the side on a ladder with our packs on our backs. Well, they would just give us some training, that was the way we had to do it, but that's the way we did it, and I never will forget when we hit the beach there, there was a German

plane, it looked like a, I think it was a two-motor, it might have been a Junker, but it was down right there in the field close to us, and we had to be very cautious about land mines, because the Germans had left a few around, and in fact, we had some, we had a catapult here come in, but we weren't able to set up as in a hospital when we hit the beach there at Salerno, because our supply ship had been torpedoed about 20 miles off the coast. So we had to back down, and interestingly enough, there was about four guys in our motor pool that were on board that supply ship, and they went back on there supposedly to help some of the wounded off, but boy, there was a bunch of good-looking Navy sailors and everything else showed up around the motor pool a few days later, but those boys got the Silver Star, which they should have gotten, but I kept the orders for those Silver Stars, and General Clark came down to the camp up in Italy a little ways when this took place, but he came down to our camp one day and awarded those Silver Stars with some pomp and circumstance, and I remember that because we had a colonel in that, he was an old-timer and about the only thing we could get him out of was a general or another drink, but we also had a Roman Catholic chaplain there, Father Murph, and we used to say that Father Murph was always commuting with the spirits because he was drunk half the time, but that outfit was a drinking outfit, and we had a reputation for everybody getting drunk the night before we moved, and being of that nature you'd be set up and ready to go the next day and maybe move 90 miles, and we wouldn't move that far, we'd move 30 miles, we did move about 90 one time when they got on our train in order to pull back, but it was an interesting outfit because of course we had doctors and nurses and at least personnel, and we had seven nurses most of the time when we were on a push in New York, but it was a good, it was a crack outfit and it was very well respected because it was activated by the University of Virginia actually in World War I, reactivated in World War II, and it was a tough outfit.

[Speaker 2]

How long were you in Italy?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I was in Italy a little over two years, I went from Salerno to the Alps.

[Speaker 2]

Where were you when V-Day came?

[Speaker 1]

I was up there in northern Italy at Verona, yeah, I was at Verona, no, no, no, I was way on up there at Gara with 5th Army when V-Day came, and I had 74 points, so they didn't send me overseas, a lot of the guys in our outfit got sent off to Japan and they didn't ever get out there, they were on the boat about 50 some odd days and went out there and got close and turned around and came back, but they, guys like me that had that close to 75 points, they didn't bother us and of course I think they needed me there for the 5th Army, of course.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, sounds like it.

[Speaker 1]

I don't really know.

[Speaker 2]

Let's see, when did you get back to the States?

[Speaker 1]

I got back in late October, 1945.

[Speaker 2]

And when was the war in Europe over?

[Speaker 1]

The war in Europe was over in April, early April, 1945, yeah, when those little boys surrendered up there at the bunker.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, what did they have you doing between April and September?

[Speaker 1]

Well, we weren't doing a whole lot then because we were, well we still had a certain amount of paperwork to do and records to keep and then I know the German prison camps, the German prisoners that were born into that area kept the 5th Army personnel pretty busy keeping them and all that stuff, but a lot of it was just make work. We found something to do.

[Speaker 2]

You weren't actually in the so-called Army of Occupation where you were?

[Speaker 1]

I guess maybe there was, but I never had thought about that.

[Speaker 2]

What memories do you have of the men who served with you?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I've got a lot of memories. I think about my little buddy Johnny Horwath. He was a Pennsylvania coal miner and John was a good egg and he lost his life in an accident after the war was over.

We sent an ambulance and tailed down the road one night to do something and there was a pile of rock and just loose gravel on the side of the road and the ambulance kicked out and turned over and little John, I've always missed him. I never contacted his parents or anything and I've often wished that I had, but he was strictly a good friend and then there was a fellow from out about Denver and I remember him quite well and I was in Denver once in 1962 and I got a hold of Rush, his wife, and I was out there to a Kwan's convention and I asked him to come down and have dinner with me one night but he didn't show up so I didn't know whether Rush wanted to get him out or if he was. And there was a fellow by the name of Anderson who was one of the other manufacturers in Akron, Ohio. He was pretty well to do but he was just sort of a guy that was easy to get along with.

Of course most of these men were older than me and the fellow that I think most highly of though was our Master Sergeant that he got sent home when he turned 48 but like a daddy or an older brother to me and we have a successful person but he's 85 now and he has very

serious emphysema and so he got this oxygen equipment that he carries around and we had to go to a reunion this month at Charlottesville, Virginia and I had been looking forward to it but he called me and told me he just wasn't going to be able to go. He has a daughter out there that's at one of the colleges and I mean teaches at one of the colleges and her husband teaches at one of the colleges and they have a nice van and they were going to pick him up in the van but he just, well, he liked not to go because he couldn't and I just thought well I don't think I want to go and I called him.

I probably missed our last reunion. And my friend Horace Downing wasn't going to be there. It sort of took some of the zip out of it for me.

[Speaker 2]

What do you remember most about your overseas?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I remember that it got to be kind of routine and boring sometimes and of course I was lucky that I was in the headquarters where I had access and we, well we used to play a little bridge there. It was over in southern Kansas that taught us to play bridge and we'd have a good bridge game sometimes and we'd even rig this up a little photography place. We'd get the stuff out of the x-ray.

Of course we had x-ray equipment and they'd print our film for us and of course we'd do this on the QT but I guess some of the highlights that I remember is that we had a graded Casablanca there one night. Well it was New Year's day or New Year's morning 1943 and they had about six big bombers over and boy we threw up everything that the kitchen sink and I don't think we've hit anything yet. But that's the first time I'd ever seen an air raid because I sat right down on the docks and I was standing out there looking up and I was hearing all this stuff raining down and these open coal cars and I thought golly some of this stuff could not have been aired so I got under one of the cars but they'd catch those planes in the lights and you know those big lights and then that was above Naples. We were on the Volturno River and that was pretty hotly contested and the Germans raided Naples every so often and that was an interesting thing to see but I saw him hit one one night and he came down in a fiery circle and then one morning on up in northern Italy we heard all this machine gun fire and here comes these two spits after a two motor German plane and that plane's just flying along there as straight as anything and those spits are coming in at him bottom and top and all of a sudden they hit him and he starts spinning and he comes straight down and some of our boys were college students so apparently there was a woman on that plane or there was a man on there with his fingernails probably, I don't know what but I remember that quite vividly.

Of course we were pretty close to being straight at one time. We were right on the main road when we got above Naples, well actually we were above Naples and there was a big fine, beautiful big palace there and it's historically known that the palace is Caserta and we got in there, of course the Germans had gone through first and souvenirs and then the British had come right behind them and then we came along. They didn't leave us many souvenirs but we were down there one afternoon, had a truck and got up on the third floor of this place and here was all this china and crystal ware.

A lot of those guys didn't carry anything but that appealed to me because the crystal had Mussolini's crest etched on it and some of it went down. I've got a hundred pieces of it at home and it's a price souvenir and I refer to the fact that I liberated it but somehow we were carrying that stuff out and putting it on the six by six and this Italian official was jumping up and down and lo and behold one of our officers came down and called us and he says what are you guys doing and I said we're getting this for the officers mask and he says get all of it. But we had this captain's accident hand and I gave him a whole bunch of it so he'd censor the packages you know but I had two pieces broken and declared that the postman dropped the box on the side that she felt like that's where they got broke.

I had a lot of newspapers and I wrapped all those pieces in newspaper but I want you to see that. Let's just take a look at that right Let me see where that I want to find my diary I know where it is I think.

[Speaker 2]

Tell me about the part alongside that prisoner of war thing there. When was that what happened there?

[Speaker 1]

Well that would have been in about September of 1943 when we were fixing to go into Italy with 5th Army and we had come up from Casablanca on a troop train and we were 40 guys in that car but we cranked in there and we came through the Atlas Mountains and there was a lot of tunnels and of course that little steam engine was burning coal and he poured the black smoke back on us when we hit those tunnels and I think I'm the one that thought to put her gas mask on. I claim credit for it anyhow but we put her gas mask on that saved us tunnels. When we came on down to the Mediterranean Plains pretty close to Oran where we were going we pulled onto the siding and this German prison train came down the other track and they stopped right along our cars and we were within 2 feet of them swapping sea rations for souvenirs and it was an interesting experience because many of those Germans were well educated and spoke good English and this fellow I was talking to was he was an older man he probably wouldn't have met my father because I was only about 20 and we were talking about where we lived and he told me that he had been in the German consulate in London and he spoke perfect English and you could tell he had some culture about him because he talked but this old boy from Georgia sided up beside me and said we're on our way to Berlin. This German sort of laughed and said well we're on our way to New York.

I've always remembered that and that's one of my funny stories and there's a certain amount of humor about in the war even with all the serious and sad things you have. On another occasion this same fellow asked a dumb question or said something dumb as far as I'm concerned when the 5th Army tried to take Monte Cassino with a night attack. The 36th Division was bore the brunt of that attack and they were really, they experienced a lot of casualties but we were a 750 bed of back and that night they threw oh some 1500 casualties on our hospital and we had men just on stretchers outside the tents.

We had no place to put them but in the receiving tent where all the men are admitted to the hospital or it's the formality they go through all these walking and when it was around the edge of the tent and it was full and there were two German prisoners there and this same

old boy that had remarked that we were going to Berlin came in and asked this fellow that was working there in the tent, one Cookie Levant and Cookie was a Pennsylvania Dutchman that spoke German, spoke good German and this Red Holland says to Cookie says ask him who do you think is going to win the war. Cookie says to Red, hell they'll need to look around because there we were 1500 casualties and two German prisoners.

[Speaker 2]

Did y'all have any relationships with the civilians?

[Speaker 1]

Yes, quite often I was in, of course, I had another good friend that I forgot to think about, Alfonso Almodola, he was from Buffalo, New York, he was strictly an Italian, he may belong to the Mafia now for all I know, but Al got kept the outfits supplied with liquor and he would go out in the cities and buy liquor and sell it to the officers and nurses and enlisted men too. But he was a character, if there ever was one. I bet the civilians did y'all Oh yeah, yeah, Al would get us a meal out every now and then with some civilian family and we'd go eat with them and it was a good experience and the fact is got on up into Verona, well we were, yeah, we were at Verona and we went over to Verona one day and ate with this Italian family and they served us fried eel.

Hard time getting it down. Of course I ate snails one time in Casablanca. Didn't say that I'd done it, but of course Casablanca was strictly French and you've got the French atmosphere there.

[Speaker 2]

Well those Italian civilians were they reasonably American troops reasonably welcome?

[Speaker 1]

Yes, very much so. They were very friendly and of course there was a certain element of people there in the north that clung to Mussolini, but of course I remember we were at up there in northern Italy when they caught Mussolini and hung him up in that filling station by his heels with his mistress and I've got a picture postcard of that showing all those Italians hanging at the service station with the girls hanging right there with them all hanging by their heels and that's sort of a collector's item.

It's in this file somewhere.

[Speaker 2]

Did you all have any contact with allied troops, British or Australian? some.

[Speaker 1]

We had a British Hamlets Corps that stayed pretty close to us and I got well acquainted with a couple of those British boys and even had some correspondence with them and even got a postcard or two from their parents for a few years after the war and then we kind of lost out but I had about forgotten about my French family that I spent so much time with in Casablanca. The first Christmas that we were overseas was Christmas 42 and it was a little English boy that lived there in the neighborhood and I used to enjoy hearing him speak because he spoke the king's English and of course we were right camped right in the middle of a residential section and but he came over there one day before Christmas and said there

is a French family that would like to have two American soldiers come for Christmas dinner and Earl Johnson and I said let's grab this right quick they said perhaps they could speak some German and I said I've got enough German we can make out. So we grabbed that and we went down to their home and they were a nice couple people about my parents' age in their forties and they had an older boy and a younger boy and the older boy was about my age and we sat down at their table and I was getting very far with my German. Of course Mr. Eisenhower was a bright eyed little fellow I always remember him and every now and then we hit a word that we understood but just out of the clear blue sky this older lad sitting next to me says I haven't had English in this school for a year and I thought golly you speak a lot better English than I do German. So but we ate Sunday dinner at those folks and it was a delightful experience and she fixed us a seven course meal every Sunday and that was and food wasn't too easy to get there.

[Speaker 4]
Of course

[Speaker 1]
we were stealing everything we could out of the mess and taking them down there and helping them as much as we could but it wasn't a whole lot of stuff that we could get our hands on but we always had a good meal and had a good conversation but one time Mr. Eastar had been in the French Army and he had this nice looking French Army cap and his tunic and so I put his tunic on and put his cap on and we got a photograph of him in his uniform and I sent the thing home and Dick was here and one of our army buddies came along and asked Dick where I was and Dick says Frank's in the French Foreign Legion and showed him that picture and after the war we had him going for a long time but it was a rather course I had him cop him everything and I've got a picture of that somewhere. I don't know where it is.

[Speaker 2]
How was the mail service?

[Speaker 1]
It was good. I was mail clerked for a week or so and that was a good experience. A regular mail clerk something happened to him but that was when we were in Casablanca and I had a bicycle and I could ride down to the office in the morning and stay gone until that afternoon and came back for the mail.

So I looked around Casablanca and had some experience but mail was pretty good and of course that was something everybody looked forward to with mail but I think one of the most interesting things that I did when I was mail clerk they devaluated the Frank and everybody was out buying up you know a lot of us had the GI money and we were out buying up the Franks and exchanging them two for one so which we could double our money and there was a time or two when I took eighteen to twenty thousand dollars down there to the post office and sent it home on

[Speaker 6]
money orders you

[Speaker 1]

know and I didn't have a whole lot of it myself but some of those boys gambled and they had

[Speaker 5]
a lot of money

[Speaker 1]
and when they devalued that Frank a lot of them wrote a brief on it.

[Speaker 2]
You mean when you sent home that much in American money? Eighteen to twenty thousand?

[Speaker 1]
Yeah those boys they had that much they gained that much money from their gambling debts and what not I mean their gambling wings and what not cause see they could forever whatever Franks I can't remember what a Frank was worth against a dollar I think it was maybe four Franks per dollar or something like that but anyhow when they devalued it doubled it and so for every American dollar we had to exchange it for a lot more Franks and then we'd turn it around and send it home for whatever it was worth. So how it worked I mean it's kind of hazing me now but I remember that there was an opportunity to make a lot of money but I think about the funniest thing that I remember and cut off here on money I've almost forgotten this.

In February of 1943 Life Magazine published a certain several pages of the occupational currency along with pictures of American currency and there was a twenty dollar bill pictured in that Life Magazine and one of our guys cut that twenty dollar bill out and took it downtown and passed it on an Arab merchant and now that's first that's that's about the only time that a G.I. got ahead of one of those Arabs.

Boy about two or three hours later here he came with half the Casablanca police force looking for that guy. Nobody I don't know who it was to this day did it but that was one and I've often remembered that and thought about it.

[Speaker 2]
You know I talked about that anti-aircraft fire over Casablanca you know later on the allies and the Americans primarily had paratroopers dropped.

[Speaker 1]
Yeah.

[Speaker 2]
And the Navy shot a hundred and forty four American ships down airplanes down that night.

[Speaker 1]
Yeah.

[Speaker 2]
They learned someplace along the line to hit them because they sure did clean the Americans out.

[Speaker 1]

That's something mate.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah I guess they were just told to when in doubt shoot.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah well you noticed.

[Speaker 2]

There had been a German air raid. Yeah. You know and they didn't and these of course came in from the Iraqians and they didn't take any chances.

[Speaker 1]

That's up there on the English coast I guess wasn't it.

[Speaker 2]

This was at Casablanca. Oh it was. Yeah.

Oh yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Well I wasn't aware of that but I know that the Germans used when we got up there and we laid around there for a few weeks and they used to raid in there every night or so and that was it was interesting to watch them fill that attack up and spot those planes but it only didn't knock one down.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah they were a trigger happening. I flew from the Azores into Casablanca on my way over and boy they we were supposed to play a certain flare you know.

[Speaker 6]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

I don't know who they were. Well the flare didn't work. And the first thing I knew was boy there were tracers on both sides of me.

Flag flag flag. Get down and get out in a hurry.

[Speaker 1]

Me though. Well you know I think about that ship that was lost out there that his boy that worked for the general went down on the Indianapolis I believe it was running with no orders and it was almost at the end of the war and somehow the Japs sank in and that should have never happened. I've got I've read the book on I've got quite a bit of file on it.

It was Indianapolis I believe but it was this fellow he photographed and he was an officer on that ship and he went down with him.

[Speaker 2]

Did you ever wonder what you were doing in the service and why you were over there?

[Speaker 1]

No. I don't guess I really did. I just never thought much about it.

I was always pretty busy and didn't get why I got down in the dumps a time or two. Never thought much about it.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have plans for after the war?

[Speaker 1]

No, not really. I wish looking back on it I wish I had done a little different but I was I was I was engaged when I went overseas and I was anxious to come home and get married and that thing. I wish I had gone back to school but I didn't and Now they'd say you stayed.

Yeah. But Oh I I fared alright. We didn't have to start the installation business and we made we made comfortable living at it.

I think that if I had my life to live I probably would have been a high school history teacher but it's too late for that now.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have any feelings about the people who were draft aged before the service?

[Speaker 1]

No, I never gave that much thought really. I had a couple of friends that were not drafted. One of them was well they were close and I never felt bad about it because one of them had well he had knocked his eye out with a paper clip one night but he was better with his mind he was better off than me here in the fence service and the other fellow was was four F because of the physical condition so I think he had one of those fevers as a youth that caused him to maybe have a weak heart or something

[Speaker 2]

yeah a

[Speaker 1]

rheumatic fever is what I was trying to think about but no I never did think much about that and I don't know I guess it might have been time to do that I thought well how come I'm here in the sky but I really didn't think much about it I didn't know I hadn't thought about that no it didn't bother me

[Speaker 2]

how did the war affect you

[Speaker 3]

did it

[Speaker 2]

change

[Speaker 1]

well it

[Speaker 3]

probably aged me a little and it probably a

[Speaker 1]

I don't know that it changed me a whole lot I've always been sort of a happy-go-lucky person and I kept that and it did

[Speaker 2]

it change the country

[Speaker 1]

I don't really know it may have there was a we were pretty well united in World War II of course it was Lincoln Nelson that had the last good war the only thing that I guess agreed to me was that it sort of being where I was and seeing what I saw as far as men die and men being killed I guess yeah I came back to Boston I forgot about it we departed from New York and that was an interesting experience going down the Hudson River there and seeing all the big boats and everything but we came back to Boston and didn't get to see much of town because they no sooner got us off that ship than they got us on a troop train we were coming down through the New York and Pennsylvania and Camp Atterbury now there were some German prisoners there at the camp I remember them quite well and they seemed to be faring pretty good but they were also good English family but I didn't bother me much but I just wanted to get home

[Speaker 2]

yeah

[Speaker 1]

it would be about October 19th

[Speaker 2]

where did you leave from overseas to come back I

[Speaker 1]

left from New York for month

[Speaker 3]

I believe it was

[Speaker 2]

how did you miss it now

[Speaker 1]

well I was new in the outfit and nobody knew me and I'd only been in that outfit about two weeks and of course some of them knew me but the officers didn't know me too well and they had me on the roster there one night full guard duty well I despised full guard duty I

didn't want to do it I had to do KC as guard duty but I thought well I'm going to go down there and when they call my name I'm just not going to answer it and I think maybe they'll call the super numerator well they called my name twice when I didn't answer twice well they called the super numerator that's the

[Speaker 3]

last time I ever had to worry about guard duty

[Speaker 2]

well let me see how I'm doing up through

[Speaker 1]

82 all of those towns were pretty well bombed out we went through a lot of them that really were bombed out and I remember the first time I smelled dead flesh we went through a little town that we moved up from Salerno we went through a little town of Vipaglio it was Seacoast town and the Navy had shelled that little town off the mouth and it was level but we went through there and you could smell the dead flesh and once you ever smell dead flesh you'll never forget the smell

[Speaker 2]

I've always heard that

[Speaker 1]

of course I smelled the first ranger battalion when we got up there cause they got wiped out and they were buried in shallow graves right alongside the road that's our first ranger battalion but that was a sort of tragedy that their rifles were stuck in the ground and were hanging on them in these shallow graves and I'll remember that always

[Speaker 2]

this is the last question here I don't know if it makes a lot of sense or not what could we have done better during the war I don't

[Speaker 1]

know that I've got a real quick answer for that question I think one thing I wish we hadn't have done was belt down those two big old cannons in front of Knox County courthouse and go let's have a cemetery Admiral Dewey brought those things or had them brought back from Manila Bay and that was something that should have been kept for its historical value because I've often thought that those fine old cannons might have been one of those big tanks that went running by me one time threw dust all over me I didn't know they were there I didn't they were there I didn't know they were there I know it's on a little marker and I know it's the one that got the picture but I can't find the given date and I'll get to that some day there at the at the concerto or the big concerto was this little opera house right in the palace and it was a nice opera and the Scala opera group came down there and put Rigoletto on one, and the word came through the outfit there that anybody wanted to go to the opera, they could get on the second section and go down there. Well, I thought, well, I'll just go down to the opera, so I went down to the opera, and there I was sitting in Mark Clark's box on a gasoline can.

There's very few people that have enjoyed Rigoletto sitting in a gasoline can. One of those five-gallon gasoline cans, you know, but that's about the only seat they had, but I'll never forget that. One day, when I was in Camp Grant, they ran a picture of our outfit taken up in northern Italy.

I think I've got a picture of the hotel, but I'm not sure. Here's another picture that we put two frames together. That's when we were right below Florence.

Well, I remember we were on a retreat one afternoon and heard this landmine go off, and there was a swimming hole down the creek from where we were. This little Italian had gotten into it. They brought him up front here, and one of his legs was just hanging by a tendon and just swinging around, you know.

Made me sick. Here's a picture of three Knoxvilleians. That's John Moore and Frank Johnson somewhere in Italy.

John Moore was with the cash register company. He married them. Who did John Moore marry?

Yeah, Mary Lee Morris. Did you ever know Mary Lee Morris up there at Knoxville High School? Oh, thank you so much.

[Speaker 2]

That's not the name sort of thing.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, she lived out there on Fairfax Avenue. Her daddy was with the tire company.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, yeah. Mary Lee Morris. I didn't know her.

I knew her dad.

[Speaker 1]

Morris?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, yeah. Is any of this material that you want to leave up there prominently, or do you want it all back?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I don't know how to answer that. I might want that book back. Okay.

The pictures of things. Would they be where we could look at them if we wanted to sometime?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, all you have to do is call up there and tell them that they're coming.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Will they be in the special collections area?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

I'm into there quite often.

[Speaker 2]

I enjoy this.

[Speaker 1]

Now, you're talking about the old library. Yeah, that's where I feel at home. At noon, I have a hard time finding where I'm at.

[Speaker 2]

Well, I've got these photographed albums to be returned. Okay, okay. I think it'll, I think it'll work better to photograph albums to be returned, back books to be returned.

This one is paper.

[Speaker 1]

I read that you're left-handed. I'm left-handed, too. We make out, though, don't we?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, one way or the other.

[Speaker 3]

This one is, um, I had a trip to Switzerland, too, that I've got right here.

[Speaker 2]

You might consider, uh, leaving this thing, particularly some of this stuff in his diary, to the university. He can give it his right arm to get his hands on, then.

[Speaker 3]

Well, let's just put it over there, then. I haven't looked at it in a couple of days, and it's just, I don't know that my kids care anything about it.

[Speaker 2]

You want, you want to put the diary permanently?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, let's just leave it over there.

[Speaker 2]

Okay.

[Speaker 1]

I saw a diary. I was in a Civil War soldier. It was written down in Chattanooga, and it belonged to an old, old lady, and she was almost seen off, and I saw it, and, uh, I wish, I wish time would have ended, I guess.

It probably got thrown out in the trash when she died, and it was a big treasure, because this old boy had been in Washington when Lincoln was assassinated, and had, I bet, had notes of seeing Lincoln's funeral procession going down to the train, or something like that, you know? I had a picture of the, of the, it's back on the Ansel Hill, if I can find that. There's the hotel.

Oh, yeah. There's the Ansel Hill. You might as well take that one, too, here.

You want to take this photo?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Okay. Now, here's, here's when de Gaulle was there in Casablanca, and my French friends made these pictures for me. There's a picture of de Gaulle, and there's other pictures here.

There's a, there's a, a Muslim outfit that they used to march to a weird little, uh, drum and, uh, pipe, uh, tomb, you know? Yeah, boy, those, those French officers used to, boy, if they got out in front of me, they'd, they'd hit them right in the face with their fist, you know? They would?

Yeah, they were mean to them. Here's my French family. I've got to find that, that picture.

I don't know where it is. It's, uh, I lost that office in, uh, what's, uh, this adjutant was named King Cough, and, uh, he was a, he was a sharp looking guy, but he, he had a very, uh, well, he just, uh, he just wasn't at ease around anybody, because I think he was comfortable around anybody, didn't have any reason, but, uh, his name was King Cough, and, uh, he was a nice looking officer, but he was walking guard duty up there on Anthony Hill, and he was an officer of the day, you know?

And this old boy could throw his voice, and we were in the mess tent there, and we were about 30 ways, 30 feet away from him when he came up there, and this old boy'd say, hey, King Cough, and he'd be looking down this way.

[Speaker 4]

Had him going crazy.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I surely am.

[Speaker 1]

Here's an interesting picture. Here's some, here's some Italian desert equipment that they used when they were fighting the Ethiopians, and, uh, I remember seeing this type of equipment in the, uh, newsreels before I went off to the war.

[Speaker 2]

Let's see that picture you got there.

[Speaker 1]

That's the, the three knocks video.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Picture of two Italians, I, they were, I mean, they were police officers or soldiers, one of the carbonaries, I think they called it. The break ground, it concerned where the Royal Italian Air Force School was.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, the, uh, oh, the Royal Italian Air Force.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, that's where they were concerned. That's where I got this, all this crystal work.

[Speaker 2]

Was that thing, uh, had it been in operation?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, yeah, they, that, they operated out of the palace, that was the headquarters. Fact is, there was a, was a, was a, uh, a, uh, old plane hanging up there, it was a pretty good size Italian bomber, and, uh, and then a, I believe it was a three, may have been a tri-wing, uh, a plane like the Red Baron flew in was, I believe it was one of them hanging up there. They couldn't get it, they couldn't send it over for seven years.

Here's a picture of a little German cemetery just below Monaco, you know, down there. He had taken a picture of it. Went to the front one day, had no business up there.

But, uh, I snapped these pictures, you know, and some big old artillery sergeant came up out of nowhere, and he says, don't you know they're, they're looking right down our throat over there? And about that time, here came a German plane out from behind the mount, you know, and, and another kid was there with me, I don't know where he came from, but we, we got down alongside a concrete bridge here. Fact is, we tried to get in it, but he scraped that rope.

He did? Yeah, I sure did. But this little German cemetery was right there below Monte Cassino, and that's a, that's a, that was sort of a rare picture.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Really. I saw, I saw one pair of legs sticking up out of the dirt when we were moving up. I, I don't know whether they were German or, or Italian, but they were.

[Speaker 4]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

They, they, they shelled that area pretty hard. Horses? And the Germans were pulling their artillery with horses up during the mountain.

I never saw so many dead horses along the way. I mean, uh, horses, bunches of them. Pictures of Rome.

Pictures shot from the top of St. Peter's. You weren't, you weren't supposed to take the camera in there. Oh, was I wrong?

Not really, but I had this little camera, I could carry it in my, I could carry it out of my pocket, and that's a good picture taken with a camera that small. But, so help me, after I got home, I saw this picture that was supposed to be an exclusive picture, made in 1945. I had that boy meet by a year, but he didn't know I made this in 1944.

This is, this is in the, in the, uh, Parthenon, not the Parthenon, but the Rotunda, which is quite a famous building there, and that's not a bad picture. Here's some, here's some German artillery that, that I've pictured. There's an, there's an eight there.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

That was a, that was a beautiful gun, that 88.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, it must have been.

[Speaker 1]

That thing could put the fear of God in you, I understand. But, they were rebuilding these guns just across the way from us, and I went over and took these pictures. And, uh, I think these are some that they've outed in the X-ray.

That's what you're going to develop to use.

[Speaker 2]

There was a booth, and a bunch of little fellows were talking about properties in the Middle East, and one thing and another.

[Speaker 4]

Um, the radar, people were talking about one thing and another, especially the Air Force.

[Speaker 2]

You can have all the training in the world. And I said, so you've been shot at. When somebody tries to kill you, I said, you know, that's when your brains turn to crap, when I shoot them.

[Speaker 3]
Really, really.

[Speaker 2]
You know, I said, we're getting a shooting war over there, we're going to take some terrible losses until we get, get bloodied a few times. And those troops, you know, get, just like it was in North Africa, you get wiped out, you know, for a while. So you understand what's going on, and that's all fine.

[Speaker 1]
Here's an interesting picture that I made in Florence, when I was in Florence. My brother and his wife made a trip, a couple of years ago, and they sent me this postcard. And the picture's still in it, I had it already pictured.

Of course, there's a pretty print, but I hate to admit how I got that.

[Speaker 3]
It was nauseating. Oh, I guess it's all right, I was talking on the phone the whole time. I really got mugged up at night.

[Speaker 2]
Yeah, those things happen.

[Speaker 1]
Yeah. In wartime, especially. We had it rolled up, you know, and I just didn't know what I had.

Here it looks like I might have been drunk when it's just that deep in the water. Trying to get a shot of the Ponte Vecchio there in Florence. I got some pretty good shots of that.

Yeah, you've got some nice ones. Well, I got on top of that dude. That's sort of a merry feeling to walk up there.

I'm glad it is. And feel that. Feel that length.

Think one more, this ain't about to fall right on your neck. Here's a good shot of Parabooth Luce, when she missed the dust. Time and again, I meant to send that woman a copy of those shots, because she was a beautiful somebody.

Yeah, she was a beautiful somebody. And I never got around to it, and then just a year or so ago, she's dead. This was in a little church across the way from where we were one time.

That's where I shot all these little kids. They were somewhere along the way.

[Speaker 5]
This was Headquarters Street. It was raining up right now. It was a muddy day.

[Speaker 2]
You know, I had a couple rolls of 127 color film that I used over there, and it's still pretty good today. It's amazing how well those colors have held up.

[Speaker 1]

I had two rolls of slack film. Is that right? When I was in Northern Italy, I've got a few pictures in Northern Italy, and I've got quite a few pictures in Switzerland that are in real good shape.

But I just never did get into slack photography too much. I started to do what I showed the other day. I'm working on Sanders' raid.

When he raided through here during the Civil War, it was quite a... And I thought, well, I'm going to put all this on slide. I'm going to go up here in Kentucky and trace this around as close as I can.

Of course, part of it you can't get over now, because there's no road down there. But I photographed the tracks from almost the North City all the way into Jefferson City. I've done that on slides, but I don't know if I'm going to get into slides again or not.

Here's General Truscott.

[Speaker 2]

What kind of a camera are you using?

[Speaker 1]

I just use that little Canon Instamatic. That's hard to beat. But this Kodak Venom was a good little camera.

It just shot eight frames at 828. But you could pull that little thing up and it was about so big you could stick it right in your pocket. Here's Colonel Drash.

[Speaker 2]

I had a little old German camera I picked up someplace. And it turned me out. It made excellent pictures.

I had a pretty good little lens.

[Speaker 1]

There's Northern Italy. We were 44.

[Speaker 2]

We got back and we drove to Miami on our honeymoon. I had that camera in the glove compartment. I went upstairs and I said, uh-oh, I better go get that camera.

And it was gone.

[Speaker 1]

How about that?

[Speaker 2]

I mean, I hadn't been away from it 15 minutes. Mr. Dog Tag?

[Speaker 1]

No. I found that Dog Tag in Northern Italy. We went up back where we camped one time and there was a plane that crashed up there and I found this tag.

I've never followed up on it, but I'll do that someday. Charles Hill? The old boy may have lost his life in that crash.

In that whole big display of pictures you'll find some dead Germans. There's one old German there that's brought out alongside the pathway. He's got a data matcher there and it's pretty close to his hand.

Of course, his skull, I mean, his skin's pretty well parched off of him. He's getting to be a skeleton almost. I saw him.

Here's that plane right here. I found that tag close to where that plane crashed and that was in the back of where we camped one time. Of course, there's our headquarters section.

There's a lot of pretty good types, too. There I am on a peak in the mountain somewhere in Northern Italy. There's a big tank that was abandoned along the way.

Here are German prisoners coming down the road there. We were on them. There's one of those big howitzers.

Him with the big track vehicle. Let's see now. The hotel picture, you got it, didn't you?

Well, you're going to take this album here, too, aren't you?

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I'm going to take it.

[Speaker 1]

If you ever have them, I'll just take it.

[Speaker 2]

I'll take the whole thing and then I'll return everything except your diary.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, you keep the diary.

[Speaker 2]

I need to get you a sign.

[Speaker 1]

All right, I'll do that. Now, this is below Florence. We were alongside the river there, below Florence.

That was one of the main highways there. What about this dog tag? Do you reckon that he'd like to have that?

Yeah, he might like to have that.

[Speaker 2]

Let's hand that along.

[Speaker 1]

Let's see. Now, this picture here, do you want it?

[Speaker 2]

I'm just going to put it in here. Yeah, okay, let's put it there.

[Speaker 1]

There's a whole pack of those pictures here that were taken to the out northern end then. These are grapevines that were on the hillside there above where we were camping. Oh, here's the Mussolini picture.

Oh, yeah. I'm sure he'd seen that if he hadn't. I think I typed a message on there.

I can't remember what it said. I actually saw that station in later days, but I didn't get to see him hanging up there like that. They wiped him out.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

I sent that to Dick, and now I know why I did. Dick, you'll recognize the Ducey and the Smiths in this picture. Why don't we just put them all back in this box?

Okay, all right. And then you'll have everything. Everything but my first letter.

Two or three boxes. I think we've about covered the waterfront today, don't you? Well, as much as I like to talk, I enjoy things like this.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, I've learned and really enjoyed talking to everybody.

[Speaker 1]

You know, he's one of the most popular professors over there.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I like him.

[Speaker 1]

Well, I got to hear him speak one time to the...

[Speaker 2]

One, two, three, four, five...