

Clark, James L. Interview 8-14-91

[Speaker 2]

Testing, testing, testing, one, two, three, testing.

[Speaker 1]

There's a fire in St. Louis.

[Speaker 2]

I'm just going to start it now.

[Speaker 1]

James Lawrence Clark.

[Speaker 2]

And you were telling me about some of your important records being lost.

[Speaker 1]

Records that pertain to the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean some 22 times. I was involved in riding army ships along with either one medic or a contingent of medics to take care of troops on the way to the front in Europe and to bring prisoners of war back to the United States.

[Speaker 2]

And you say these records that you had were lost then?

[Speaker 1]

The records concerning the above were lost in a fire some years ago at the record depot in St. Louis, Missouri. See I crossed Atlantic 22 times and this would be interesting to find out the dates you know but I know about the years but I don't know about the dates.

[Speaker 2]

Well, I do have some questions here that I'm supposed to ask so we can just go down these questions and then anytime you want to elaborate on any of your answers just go ahead because this is nothing formal but I think it's interesting what you said about your records and it is too bad that that you don't have them. First, when did you join the service?

[Speaker 1]

I went into the service 10 December 1940 prior to a year prior to Pearl Harbor.

[Speaker 2]

Did you volunteer? I'm sure you did.

[Speaker 1]

I volunteered.

[Speaker 2]

And what first what branch of the service did you join and why did you go into that particular branch?

[Speaker 1]

I joined the U.S. Army Medical Department. I was interested in that particular phase of the Army and I was sent to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia from Fort Oglethorpe. I was sent to Fort Jackson, South Carolina where I was almost immediately put to work in the hospital.

Basic training came at intervals. There were times that I would have some time off. The basic training was was done in those in those intervals.

It took four or five months to get all the basic training in.

[Speaker 2]

Had you had some medical training before you joined?

[Speaker 1]

None, whatever.

[Speaker 2]

You just decided that you wanted to go into the medical college?

[Speaker 1]

Yes.

[Speaker 2]

And were you an officer or enlisted person?

[Speaker 1]

I was an enlisted person from private to first sergeant. Went in as a private and eventually on down the road. We'll get to that later.

I was first sergeant, promoted to first sergeant.

[Speaker 2]

And what do you remember most about leaving your your home and how old were you and was anyone else in your family in the service at that time?

[Speaker 1]

I was 22 years old at the time I entered the service and I was a country boy having been reared in the rural area of Lincoln County, Tennessee, worked on a farm. This was real exciting to me because I had rarely ever been over 50 miles from home before I entered the service.

[Speaker 2]

What happened when you first left? Did you you left right from here and where did you go then?

[Speaker 1]

From Fayetteville, Tennessee. I left from Fayetteville, Tennessee and went to Fort Oglethorpe. I remember it was in December of 1940.

And I suppose one thing that I remember, of course I was a young recruit and I was scared of everything probably, the man that came through the barracks at night firing the coal stove probably probably was the most exciting thing I had for the first few days. I had to get used to that and then after that of course we began some processing and a few days later we were shipped out and sent to Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

[Speaker 2]

Now that's where you had your training then. Could you talk about the places where you trained and where you went after that and well we talked about the you're not being anywhere in the country before that but describe your your training now. Was it realistic and helpful?

[Speaker 1]

The training for the job that I was doing at Fort Jackson, South Carolina was considered on-the-job training. At that time they were real scarce as far as medical people were concerned and they had a hospital full of patients and I was put to work immediately in the hospital and this was on on the job training. Of course I was under the direction of a nurse or doctor doing this training.

I spent some two and a half years at Fort Jackson and then one day we received some orders. I suppose there was 12 to 15 medics from the Fort Jackson hospital were sent to Camp Butner, North Carolina. This was a brand new base.

We were some of the first troops there and the first barrack we were in was way out in the woods and mosquitoes almost ate us up. After that because I'd had the basic training at Fort Jackson and when they got the hospital finished this was in the process when we when we went there the hospital was finished shortly after our arrival there and then we were sent to the hospital and began work in the hospital. I was assigned to the operating room where we're doing 12 to 15 surgeries every day and I got some very good experience under the direction of the operating room nurse.

[Speaker 2]

Now when you went in of course that was before the war. Who were the patients then?

[Speaker 1]

This was before the draft actually got underway in a big big fashion. People were coming into the army all the time and we're talking about somewhere around 1944 now and men were being sent overseas.

[Speaker 2]

1944 that was during the their war but when you first went in though like 1940 was before the war.

[Speaker 1]

Okay now what?

[Speaker 2]

I wanted to know who were the patients back in 1940.

[Speaker 1]

Well Fort Jackson, South Carolina was an old established fort and uh regular army people were already stationed there and working at the post before they start accepting draftees.

[Speaker 2]

And we talked about your your duties and was that what what you expected?

[Speaker 1]

Yes when I became and really became involved in it it was exactly what I expected and I liked it very much. Now we stayed at Fort uh well Camp Butner some two years all the time that I was there I was working in the operating room. Then came orders for us to leave Camp Butner.

We boarded a train headed north. None of us knew where we were supposed to go. A few miles after we left Virginia the sergeant in charge opened the orders and told us we were going to New York City.

And so we went to New York City and were immediately for uh put aboard two enlisted men per ship. These ships were carrying supplies and troops overseas, equipment and bringing prisoners of war or patients back to the United States.

[Speaker 2]

And how long did you stay out aboard the ship?

[Speaker 1]

I was assigned during the well two or three I served aboard seven different different ships. I have pictures of all these ships except one. Four of them I believe were C4s and the others were Liberty ships.

[Speaker 2]

So you were not on a hospital ship then?

[Speaker 1]

No hospital no hospital ship. They're all army transports carrying troops and equipment overseas.

[Speaker 2]

And did you stay on the ship all the time then or did you get off with the troops and go with them?

[Speaker 1]

No for two or three years we made trips to and from the European theater of operation taking equipment soldiers and supplies and bringing patients or uh prisoners of war back to the United States.

[Speaker 2]

Now when when you were out on the ocean were you heavily guarded in convoys or how would that go?

[Speaker 1]

We traveled we traveled in sometimes as much as 100 ships and of course as they say the convoy is only as fast as the as the slowest ship. We had destroyer escorts around the convoy they were our protection and they were very busy during the trip seeing that German U-boats didn't interfere with the convoy.

[Speaker 2]
Was it scary?

[Speaker 1]
It was it was scary.

[Speaker 2]
Did you have any close calls?

[Speaker 1]
We actually didn't have any real close calls. On one occasion after we'd gone into the Mediterranean Sea headed for Naples we had an air raid German planes and I've never heard so many shots being fired in my life. The air was full of uh let's see what did they call them tracers we could see where the tracers went up to uh shoot they were as they were shooting at the airplanes.

No ship in our convoy was hit but I understand one or two German planes were shot down.

[Speaker 2]
Wow were there people uh from other parts of the country in the unit that that you were serving in? I'm sure there were and and how did they seem to be different from you?

[Speaker 1]
Well I suppose we had uh people from during all these trips that I made back and forth I suppose there were people on there from every state and it was quite interesting to to get to know people from New York City. I'd never been in New York City before but uh people in New York City were considerably different from us. I was had a different background from them.

I was raised in the country and they were raised in the big city.

[Speaker 2]
Did you hear any comments about having a southern accent?

[Speaker 1]
Yes I've been accused many times of being a damn rebel but of course uh during lighter times that we were talking aboard ship when there was nothing else to do the civil war quite often became a subject and of course the the uh Yankees were very boastful about having won the civil war. Of course we didn't figure that way.

[Speaker 2]
I bet you knew more about the civil war than they did though.

[Speaker 1]

I'm sure I did. I admit some people well one boy in particular I've met from uh New York City that had never seen a chicken and this was this was rather comical they'd never they'd never seen a cow they had no idea where milk came from.

[Speaker 2]

I'm sure you had a lot of interesting experiences like that. Can you think of some more right now or maybe some will come up later?

[Speaker 1]

Well aboard ship as I said before the occasion there are as much as 100 100 ships in the convoy there were doctors in the convoy but not a doctor on every ship so on the the small ships that I was the freighters we had two medics I was with one other medic and we took care of the the illnesses and the medical care of all the troop and the crew and I remember several occasions where a crew member might be cut by one reason or another while he's working on deck and of course we we had a dispensary down in the in the ship and we took the the patient down in the emergency room and sewed up his wound because we were not doctors at all but we had we had some good experiences I I wouldn't I wouldn't take anything for the experiences riding those ships it was it was it was real exciting of course now this is after the war I was involved with taking displaced persons out of Europe in the reign of the United States, South America, Australia I had the pleasure of being on every continent except one that was Antarctica and this was quite was quite exciting to me I'd even today I'd like to be able to go to Antarctica and and just set foot on it to say that I've been on every continent.

[Speaker 2]

Exactly what do you mean by displaced persons?

[Speaker 1]

They were well for instance Jews in Europe were people that the Germans of course tried to kill all of them and they certainly didn't do it and people that were made homeless by the war were called displaced persons and they went to several countries including the United States, Australia, and South America.

[Speaker 2]

Was that the was it the United States taking them to these places you furnished it United States furnished the transportation and handled all their transfers accepted countries that already accepted the VPs and it's a matter for us just to load them up and take them to the different countries.

[Speaker 1]

So you I'm sure you got acquainted with a lot of different languages and people and customs speaking there may be a few words of German but we had so many different languages there wasn't much way in such a short period of time that I could do much learning I suppose of foreign languages.

[Speaker 2]

What about the food for those people on the ships did they get any of their native type of food?

[Speaker 1]

The food provided for the displaced persons on the ship was food that had been initially bought for the crew members and the troops so they got a variety of food now it wouldn't necessarily be food that they'd been used to in their in their their own countries.

[Speaker 2]

Were they going to a country of their choice or were they just taken someplace?

[Speaker 1]

They were going to their country of their choice they had a choice of going to different countries and they lots of them all it could come to the United States because they preferred the United States over the others. The English speaking and the standard of living of course was better here than most anywhere else and a lot of them came to the United States.

[Speaker 2]

Then what do you remember most about the time that you were overseas I guess you were on the on the sea most of the time weren't you?

[Speaker 1]

I was aboard ship more than I was on land we would take seven to ten days from New York to Europe and we would unload our troops equipment or whatever we had aboard and within three or four days we were headed back to the United States. Our most enjoyable pleasant I suppose things we did while we were there was to go ashore and buy souvenirs and eat some of the the food that we'd never eaten before but we'd buy souvenirs and that sort of thing and come back to the ship.

[Speaker 2]

Well when you were bringing these people we're all well you say displaced persons and then you were bringing prisoners back also you you weren't were you bringing injured people?

[Speaker 1]

No the prisoners of war were not injured people they were half all we did was take care of little small medical problems but they were they were able-bodied people.

[Speaker 2]

Where did you bring the prisoners of war?

[Speaker 1]

Okay we had one shipload that went to New Orleans Port of Embarkation in New Orleans, Newport News Virginia, New York City, Boston, Massachusetts. Those were the three ports four ports.

[Speaker 2]

And how were these people treated these prisoners on the ship were they confined in any way?

[Speaker 1]

The prisoners the German prisoners had to be confined to certain areas otherwise it wouldn't be possible to guard them but they were treated as well as our own people aboard

ship and of course a lot of these prisoners were hungry and we fed them they were they were proud of the food that they were able to get on ship but they were they were treated very well not they were never abused in any way.

[Speaker 2]

Did you get to be friendly with them any of them in certain ones?

[Speaker 1]

I never met a German prisoner of war that I really got to know we weren't on ship on board ship long enough to find out much about them we treated a few of them on minor cuts and bruises and that sort of thing but I did get acquainted one time with a German doctor and I can't remember his name he had a Polish name and I can't remember but he was a real nice person I believe he went to South America put him off in South America.

[Speaker 2]

How many prisoners would you have on a on a ship at one time?

[Speaker 1]

The Liberty ships I believe were equipped to carry some thousand to fifteen hundred prisoners of war. We'd take the certain amount of the same amount of troops over and bring the same amount of prisoners of war back to the United States. The larger ships the C4s would probably carry about three thousand prisoners of war.

[Speaker 2]

Well since you were on the ship most of the time did you ever have any opportunity to meet civilians when you got off of the ship well I'm sure you did if you had liberty and all and what were your impressions of that?

[Speaker 1]

We had a civilian crew they were merchant marine now I met met several of them one man that I have kept up over kept up with over the years is a man who lives in Cody, Wyoming Albert Vanderpool and his wife he married after he got off the ship and they have visited us well they visited us here on two different occasions in Louisburg. That was one friend I'd met another he was a civilian an army person that I knew real well Tom Dockery he lives in New Jersey and he's been down to see us a couple of times. Another friend in the army from Minnesota he and his wife and two children have visited us here since since we got out of service so you make friends that you keep up with and that's a lot of fun trying to think if there's any more merchant marine.

Now I have a navy a navy friend now the guns on the ship were manned by navy personnel United States Navy. I met one young man from Massachusetts Normandy Christian he and I still correspond now he's never been able to make it out we haven't been able to visit but he still he lives in in what do you think of the name well Arizona he lives in Arizona and we correspond and talk on the phone occasionally to each other.

[Speaker 2]

Did you have well let's see one of the questions here did you have any contact with any allied troops and I think we've been talking of course about prisoners but any troops of allied nations or what?

[Speaker 1]

We would see them maybe on the dock helping unload or something like that but we rarely associated closely enough to become friends but we saw a lot of allied troops yes.

[Speaker 2]

And did you ever get home on leave?

[Speaker 1]

Yes between trips we'd get home from anywhere from three to seven days and then go back to the ship and go back across again but we had ample leave. One thing that happened when I was riding the ship was 1945 my mother passed away and I didn't know about it for three months that was the most shocking thing I guess that ever had happened to me but of course during wartime there's no way to send a telegram we couldn't get into that the enemy would pick it up anyway you know and so they didn't even try to get in touch with me and I got back in New York while having lots of mail and all the friends in Lincoln County that I'd known had written me talking about the mother she died in 1945.

[Speaker 2]

Did you get to come home then after you found out about that?

[Speaker 1]

Yes I came home for a few days right.

[Speaker 2]

Um what well when you did come home aside from the time that you're that you came home after your mother died were you did you feel like a celebrity when you got back here and how were you treated?

[Speaker 1]

During World War II a soldier was somewhat of a celebrity and when you came home on leave you were you were treated royally I suppose you'd say and of course we appreciated that because we were doing a job that we really didn't want to do but we knew it had to be done so yes we we enjoyed the folks back home when we came home on leave.

[Speaker 2]

Were there many others of your friends that went into the service people from right around here that you knew?

[Speaker 1]

One man from he was living in Pulaski at the time Russell E. Young who now lives in Nashville Garland E. Lane who was born and raised in Fayetteville he was another one that I knew in service and we have visited since we've been out of service and let's see if there's anyone else they are the only two that I can think of offhand that are that are close by and we still visit and talk to on the phone occasionally.

[Speaker 2]

Well this is um one of the questions here it says did you have any feelings about the people of draft age who were not in the service?

[Speaker 1]

Well that uh not being in the service we we call them a lot of them draft dodgers there was not not a real good feeling toward people that were draft dodgers and tried to keep from going to war you know quite a few went to Canada and didn't have to serve but there wasn't a very good feeling towards the people that were draft dodgers

[Speaker 2]

and of course you signed up long before the war started but why was it that you did that?

[Speaker 1]

Uh well I suppose we can go back to the volunteer state we've lived up to the name from way on back and I was among the first people that left Fayetteville to go into service in 1940.

[Speaker 2]

Did your family approve of your leaving at that time when there wasn't any war going on?

[Speaker 1]

Yes they were they were willing to to let me go into service I went in at age 22.

[Speaker 2]

Well what what was going on right at that time did did you really think that there was going to be a war?

[Speaker 1]

At the time I went in no one was really sure as to what was going to happen as far as the world was concerned and I'd put in a year uh from December the 10th 1940 till Pearl Harbor was bombed I had a year of service and then we had already signed release papers to get out and of course they they scrapped they scrapped the papers and we stayed in four years 11 months and 15 days before the thing was over.

[Speaker 2]

And then of course you stayed on after that?

[Speaker 1]

I stayed on in yes.

[Speaker 2]

And how long were you in?

[Speaker 1]

Almost 12 years. I would have stayed in for 20 but I got an injury in Korea and I couldn't perform duty as I should so I came out with a disability.

[Speaker 2]

But you could have left though you didn't have to stay here the 12 years?

[Speaker 1]

No no I could have left anytime and I wanted to yeah after the war was over.

[Speaker 2]

And this is another question uh what did you plan to do after the war was over of course you stayed in but did you have any other plans for the time when you might get out?

[Speaker 1]

At the time that I was in service I didn't think about uh doing anything else I enjoyed the service I had a lot of good times there a lot of excitement uh after I came out as I said I would have preferred to stay in but then I had to get out and start looking for something to do and that first job I had after getting out of the service was in the bookkeeping department of an oil company in Lewisburg and I stayed there almost 10 years.

The office closed and moved to Columbia and I got out then and got into hospital nursing home administration. I took the state exam for nursing home administrator and passed it and I was hospital administrator and nursing home administrator in Kentucky and Tennessee.

[Speaker 2]

Um how how did the war affect you and how did it change you and and do you think it changed the country of course this was this was a long time ago now we're talking about isn't it? 50 years almost.

[Speaker 1]

Yes how did it affect me well the time that I spent in the service had certainly made me a much wiser person I when I went in I knew very little of what was going on in the world and when I came out I was pretty well educated on what was going on in the world. As far as what it affected me I I don't think it had any ill effects on me other than the injury I got so I said I enjoyed the service and I would have probably stayed 20 or maybe even more than 20 years if I hadn't have gotten the uh injury.

[Speaker 2]

Do you think it changed the country?

[Speaker 1]

It changed the country from the from year 1940 to 19 and uh let's say 50. During the war this country of course was geared up for war and every plant that could be they could find a place to build a plant they were making supplies for the war building planes and tanks and medical supplies and all that stuff. I think we had more women working at that time than we'd ever had before.

I think that's where women first really got out into the world and proved to themselves that they they could do many jobs just as good as a man could.

[Speaker 2]

How was it coming back? I understand that a lot of the young men and women too who came from small towns found it difficult to come back to a small town after being in the larger cities and and did you have any problem with that?

[Speaker 1]

I didn't have any trouble of adjusting after I came out of service. I had come from a small town or small community even though I had visited New York City and Boston and New

Orleans, Charleston, South Carolina and many other cities but I think it made me appreciate the small city even more.

[Speaker 2]

And you you're married I know you're I met your wife here and did you marry were you married during the time of the war?

[Speaker 1]

I married uh 1952. I was practically ready to get out of uh Hot Springs, Arkansas Naval Navy Army Navy General Hospital there. I was working there and I married just a short while before I got out of the army in 1952 and have been married since since then.

We have we have three sons one adopted son and two of our own two of them live here in Lewisburg and one our oldest son lives in Nashville.

[Speaker 2]

Now going back to the war um the final question here what could we have done better during the war from your observation?

[Speaker 1]

What could we have done better?

[Speaker 2]

Take your time maybe would like to stop it? It came off the top of my head but um now I forgot. Did you ever feel like there was uh maybe a lot of duplication in efforts that you saw on this year?

[Speaker 1]

I can't remember any.

[Speaker 2]

Um well I I can't think of anything either that that would pertain to that.

[Speaker 1]

Having sailed the seas and crossed Atlantic some 22 times it uh I would have very gladly stayed aboard ship and probably joined the merchant marine but never did get around to doing it but uh I still enjoy ship and would like to sail on it's how it got into my blood.

[Speaker 2]

And all your trips then were on the Atlantic?

[Speaker 1]

Well after the war the shooting war had stopped then we were taking these displaced persons to Australia, South America, United States. So we got into the Pacific and the Indian Ocean too in that direction.

[Speaker 2]

Where were you at the time the well the European war ended and then the Japanese war ended? Can you remember some experiences maybe on those days that you had how you found out?

[Speaker 1]

I was at Fort Jackson in South Carolina when uh it would be Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor and uh Europe. I was in service but I was at so many different camps I can't remember which one I was at when the the European war broke out.

[Speaker 2]

What about the end of the of the war VE day and VJ day?

[Speaker 1]

I was in uh New York. There was a lot of excitement going on then they'd heard some announcement that the war was going to be over and then they would retract it and this went on for a day or two. We were visiting in New York City but then it uh it came to be a reality and uh there was one big party in New York City on the road.

People all over the place the soldiers were mingling with the civilians you know and everyone having having a big time.

[Speaker 2]

And you were right down there in the crowd?

[Speaker 1]

I was with them enjoying every minute of it because we were glad it's over.

[Speaker 2]

What about the VJ day then? What happened? Where were you then?

[Speaker 1]

What was the date on VJ?

[Speaker 2]

Oh it would have been uh August uh sometime in August wasn't it?

[Speaker 1]

44. 45.

[Speaker 2]

I think it's just about this yeah because they just talking about that dropping the bombs on Japan I think it's toward the end of August maybe the first part of September.

[Speaker 1]

I can't remember where I was in 45. As I said I was in so many different places it's hard to it's hard to remember dates of all of them but I don't remember where I was in August of 1945.

[Speaker 2]

Well that's a long time back to remember uh-huh. Did you have um oh well you said that you couldn't get any letters about your mother or anything but what about mail did you receive mail all the time you were gone at certain times?

[Speaker 1]

We were we were able to get mail sometimes it was delayed for maybe a week or something like that but this was when we had V-mail. We'd write the letter and send it and it would put on a little a little tape you might say and that cut the size of what they were trying to do was cut down the amount of things that had to be sent overseas and this was a very small letter once once they uh they took a picture of it I believe and uh that made a very small small letter and we got plenty we got plenty of mail but we weren't ever short of mail because it might as I said seven to ten days late but that that wasn't long.

[Speaker 2]

Was any of it censored were things cut out words cut out?

[Speaker 1]

We did uh get a letter occasionally they would have something cut out of it censored which we didn't realize we were saying anything that we shouldn't but uh some were censored yes.

[Speaker 2]

When would you get your mail then when you get when the ship would come in like to New York or someplace?

[Speaker 1]

That was a big event when you get into New York bags of mail would be waiting for us and they'd go ashore and and get the mail and come back and pass it out and of course there's a lot of excitement then everybody reading their letters from home and girlfriends and wives and all this sort of thing.

[Speaker 2]

What were your quarters like on the on the ship the various ships you arrived?

[Speaker 1]

Yes the various ships quarters were were adequate although they were not as roomy as one would expect if you were on shore but uh quarters were were comfortable. Of course we occasionally people get get seasick from the rocking and rolling of the ship. I was seasick one day going out of New York but it was never seasick again I suppose that was that was enough I'd had enough no more seasickness so just one day.

[Speaker 2]

What else would you like to tell me? I know there's lots of things that I'll put in there.

[Speaker 1]

We were stationed in Texas, El Paso, Texas 226 general hospital and we were training with that unit. They had originally thought that the unit would go overseas.

[Speaker 2]

In what year was this?

[Speaker 1]

This was 1946 but troops were being sent home every day and it reached the point that the hospital would not be needed over there so they dismantled us and sent us to different places. I was sent from Texas to Fort Devens, Massachusetts where I joined an element of

the third infantry division. We were there several weeks in training and they put the regiment on board ship on board the train and we went from Massachusetts to California and that that was some trip that if you've you've never lived till you ride a troop train from Massachusetts to California.

I remember when they had a mess all on on board and several cars don't remember how many but they were all loaded with with troops and gear and they would serve a meal. They'd come through with your with your coffee maybe and maybe when the meal was halved through they'd come through with the cream and sugar and it went this way for the whole meal. The things you're supposed to get together it might be 30 minutes or 40 minutes before you got there you got the rest of it but that was quite an experience traveling from Massachusetts to California on a train.

We stayed in California a few days two or three weeks I believe and then we were put aboard ship and headed toward Korea. We were we were put off ship at uh in Japan, southern Japan a little town of Beppu B-E-P-P-U and uh we stayed there a couple of months training to be ready to go over to Korea. We were there during the monsoon season and I don't think I've ever seen as much rain fall in my life.

It floods day in day out of course that was something the Japanese needed every year because it filled up their rice paddies so they could sit out rice but I've never seen so much rain. Our clothes mildewed, our shoes mildewed, everything we had practically mildewed during that time. In uh September I believe we boarded the ship for Korea.

This was elements of the 3rd Infantry Division. We went to Wonsan. This town had already been blown to bits there was not much left standing.

Troops had bombarded and had headed north. We were put ashore at Wonsan and started north and uh we traveled several days and later on well November I believe it was November we became a part of the what they call the Chosin Reservoir what am I trying to say the Reservoir Engagement. Our most problems we had in in Korea was the the cold weather severely cold 25 to 30 degrees below zero.

Of course we'd been in some cold climates but nothing that exceeded that. The Chinese and Korean troops had cotton uniforms also wore cotton shoes and they're more casual I guess among the North Korean and Chinese troops as regards to weather than we than we had among our own people. Equipment such as uh weapons that were supposed to recall didn't recall they froze up.

The M1 rifle I saw several M1 rifles that would not work at all they were just as if you'd welded them together and they wouldn't work at all but the cold weather was the the biggest biggest problem there and in December of 1950 shortly before that all these Chinese troops had become involved in the in the war there. General MacArthur didn't think that they would come across but they did. 120,000 Chinese against 15,000 Americans.

Of course there was an awful lot of Chinese killed and wounded and of course our country lost an awful lot of good men there. The war itself and the cold weather that went with it. We evacuated North Korea December the 24th 1950.

Behind us we could see the engineers blowing up buildings that they'd left standing and smokestacks we could see them coming down so we we barely made our way out before the Chinese came in behind us. So that's sort of that's sort of the end of the story.

[Speaker 2]

Well that's just about the end of South Carolina.

[Speaker 1]

I was promoted to technician fourth grade when I was transferred spent some time at Camp Butler, North Carolina. I was promoted to technician third grade and uh duty at in Texas 226 hospital I was promoted to sergeant first class. That unit disbanded and I went to to Virginia again and I was promoted to first sergeant.

There was a new ship about to about ready to leave for Europe. I was promoted to first sergeant to take care of a contingent of troops of 12 people. In the meantime before the ship left I had an emergency telegram from home that my sister had passed away.

I of course had to come home the orders making me first sergeant were rescinded and another sergeant was promoted to first sergeant as the ship had to go.

[Speaker 2]

We're going to talk about the kinds of ships you were on we're talking but now about the C-4.

[Speaker 1]

The C-4 ship that I rode many times across the Atlantic was a cargo type ship carried some 3,000 troops. The stack was aft that means on the back end of the ship. They were faster ships than the cargo ships the victory the victory ships we call them.

These were very much very much smaller they carried the liberty ship was a much smaller ship than the C-4. In fact they would carry some 2,000 1,500 2,000 troops and cargo of tanks and ammunition vehicles and that sort of thing. The liberty ship was a much slower ship than the C-4.

The C-4 was considerably faster than the liberty and of course carried more troops personnel and equipment. I served aboard seven different ships.

[Speaker 2]

Do you remember the names of the ships?

[Speaker 1]

I have pictures of all the ships except one that I traveled on during during the war and after the war. I served aboard seven in all and I have six pictures all the ships which I will which I will show.

[Speaker 2]

Are you thinking now about the names?

[Speaker 1]

The ships that I served aboard are as follows the Marine Robin, the Andrew Furuseth, the Henry Groves Connor, the General C.H. Muir, General George Howes, S.S. George W. Woodard, and S.S. Benjamin Huntington.

[Speaker 2]

Tell me why these were navy ships were they not?

[Speaker 1]

They had navy personnel but were not navy ships.

[Speaker 2]

All right then why why did they not use navy personnel instead of you people on those particular ships?

[Speaker 1]

I think the reason that army personnel was used aboard the ship was because the navy at that time didn't have enough men to man all the guns. See they manned the guns on these ships and they didn't have enough people to man their guns and do some other job so they had to stick strictly to manning the guns and let someone else handle the medical personnel the sick the people that were sick and ill.

[Speaker 2]

And that was all you did you didn't have to do anything aboard ship or any duties? Well I don't know whether you told me this but how long would it take you to go across say leaving New York and going wherever you were going?

[Speaker 1]

Leaving New York aboard a liberty ship would take from seven to ten days from New York to Germany and that was uh the name of the place where we embarked Brimmer Brimmerhaven Germany is where we went most of the time. Now on the C-4 type ship it would take less than seven days to go from New York to Germany. The trips carrying displaced persons from Germany to South America Australia took approximately two weeks.

[Speaker 2]

Two weeks?

[Speaker 1]

Approximately two weeks.

[Speaker 2]

And what did you do all the time on board? You weren't always taking care of sick people but what else what was the routine the ship's routine?

[Speaker 1]

There wasn't a lot of things that the medical people could do now the uh the civilian crew members they were merchant marine they had jobs they had a job that they did all time. The navy personnel of course had jobs that took up more time than our job every day. There wasn't much for us to do when the medical end of it was taken care of we were we were not doing anything.

I did a lot of reading and played cards. Now I'm not one that cares much about cards at all but when it became so boring that I had to play cards we'd play hearts. But uh other than that the medical the medical people didn't have much to do.

We had a few records to keep and a few supplies to keep uh handy that sort of thing. But uh our jobs did not require full-time full-time work so we had we had a lot of leisure. Of course we got with the crew members when they were off we'd get with crew members and and talk.

[Speaker 2]

Well I keep thinking of of people sleeping in hammocks. Did you sleep in hammocks or did you have bunks or what?

[Speaker 1]

Hammocks were not used very much. You had your your hammock for more or less when you uh got ashore. I don't think I saw anybody sleeping in a hammock when I was on ship.

We had beds that were bolted to the floor the deck as you should say and uh they had sides on them keep you from falling out and during rough seas quite often you'd get thrown out of the bed regardless of how much uh protection you had around you and we've had several injuries from people that got injured by maybe falling on deck couldn't stand up due to seas high seas.

[Speaker 2]

Because you were there in that it was the North Atlantic wasn't it and that's the about the roughest uh part I'm sure.

[Speaker 1]

The North Atlantic I believe is the has some of the worst weather I've ever seen aboard ship. It was really rough.

[Speaker 2]

You did it at all different different times of the year too.

[Speaker 1]

Yes our trips to Europe were all different times of the year of course the uh summer and spring months were fairly calm but winter months crossing the Atlantic and into also in the North Sea were very very harsh.

[Speaker 2]

Were there any uh women on board nurses?

[Speaker 1]

On the C4s that I traveled on we had a contingent of 12 medical people and we'd have a doctor and two or three registered nurses. The Liberty ships only had two enlisted men. Of course we had doctors in the convoy if we had a problem we could radio the convoy where they had a doctor and find out what we needed to do but the Liberty only carried two medical people enlisted men.

[Speaker 2]

And the registered nurses were women? Right right. And they were just two women on this whole ship full?

[Speaker 1]

I believe we had three.

[Speaker 2]

Well three on the whole ship of about what a thousand people?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah the crew would make about a thousand people but of course if you're loaded well you had uh three thousand something like that on the C4. Pretty good size city you might say yeah. During the time that I was in the states and not riding a ship I was stationed at several different places New York, Newport News, New Orleans.

On several occasions we had hospital trains that would pick up patients that had come from overseas would say for example in New York City. Then we medics had been riding the ships would take these patients to different places in the United States. One quick mission we took one load of troops patients to Battle Creek, Michigan.

One to West Virginia and one to Northington General Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama or Tuscumbia, Alabama.

[Speaker 2]

And this was during the war that you did this? Yeah this was in addition to your sea sea duty.

[Speaker 1]

The patients in from Europe we'd take them off the ship in New York or whatever port we happened to be at and put them on hospital trains and take them to the different hospitals that they'd been assigned to. This this was interesting work and I enjoyed it a lot.

[Speaker 2]

All right if you give me your name and then your address and your your telephone number.

[Speaker 1]

My name James L Clark 1182 Gupton G-U-P-T-O-N Gupton Road Cullioa C-U-L-L-E-O-K-A Cullioa, Tennessee 38451 telephone number 615-359-5444. Don't look for me at this address. I live in Marshall County near Lewisburg, Tennessee and I'm in the Lewisburg telephone directory.

[Speaker 2]

Casting.