

Nelson, Lindsey Interview 2-4-86

Following is a talk given by Lindsey Nelson to the East Tennessee Historical Society on February 4th, 1986, recorded by Charles Johnson of the Department of History, University of Tennessee. Paton's *The Mighty Endeavor* by Charles P. Macdonald, *Adolph Hitler* by John Tobin, *The Great Man Winston Churchill* by Robert Payne, *At Dawn We Slept* by Gordon Fryantz, *Mountbatten* by Philip Ziegler, *A Time for Trumpets* by Charles Macdonald, *The Last Lion, Winston Churchill*, by William Manchester, *Summit at Tehran* by Keith Eubank, *The Pacific War*, John Costello, and *Stalin* by Alex de Jonge. That's 18 of the hundreds of them available, which cover various points of view with regard to World War II.

Now, television's Archie Bunker called it WWII, The Big One, and it was a big one, all right. It was a big drama played on a world stage among the players Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin, Emperor Hirohito and Benito Mussolini. And you could spend this night, this week, this month, this year, or this lifetime discussing any one of them.

Or you could talk in detail about George Catlett Marshall, about Douglas MacArthur, about Chester Nimitz, George S. Paton, Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, Hal Arnold, Thuy Spatz, Viscount Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery of Alameda, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, Le Grand Charles de Gaulle, Henri Giraud, Admiral Yamamoto, and a great many more. We then tonight will touch just the high spots as we'll talk about North Africa and Sicily and Italy, D-Day in Normandy and Paris, the Battle of the Bulge, the Bridge of Remagen, and the link-up with the Russians at the Elbe River to end the war in Europe. And we'll speak of several events.

The cryptologists who broke the codes of Germany and Japan, and that made it possible, of course, for us to get a great deal of information that, generally speaking, we didn't know we were getting at that time. It was done with a machine that was the forerunner of the computer culture, with which we are unundated precedent. The rockets, first the V-1, then the supersonic V-2, which heralded the coming of the age of rocketry, which enabled us to put a man on the moon in post-war achievement.

Planes that flew without propellers and revolutionized commercial travel around the globe with the coming of the jet engine. And the atomic bomb, which changed our very conception of our existence and our chances of continuing to exist. These are some of the things that we'll touch on tonight as we take a long view of World War II.

I'm reminded of the Harry Lyons piece in *The Fury Man* when he says, in 100 years of bloody war, Italy produced the Renaissance. In 100 years of peace, Switzerland produced the cuckoo clock. The last good war is a title that is not original with me.

I have taken the liberty of borrowing that title to apply to these remarks because it's so ethical. The last good war means simply that it was the last war fought by the United States in which the participants in battle could feel that they had the complete support of the home front, that the people at home were proud of them. That, of course, was World War II.

Afterward, we had Korea, a police action, a limited conflict that we felt lucky to get out of, and we had Vietnam, the most unpopular war our country was ever in. The reaction on the

home front was one of complete frustration. Many citizens elected to ignore the war in Vietnam, and when our soldiers came home, to pretend that we didn't know where they'd been.

It has taken us a lot of years to get around to assuming our position of responsibility by admitting that our people in Vietnam had been exactly where we had sent them. For my part, I know that when I would hear that we were embarking on a policy of declining the bomb in Hanoi, I would think back to my days of serving in an infantry division in World War II, and my thought was, okay, if I'm up there on the foxhole, and I'm not going to get the complete support of my country with every weapon that's available to them, fine. Don't bomb Hanoi, but time out.

Let me get out of here. Where to begin with the story of the war? Well, I remember reading in 1938 a story in Collier's Magazine, written by an author named Ernest Hemingway, and he pointed out that in order for a democracy to fight a war, they had first to propagandize the populace. The very nature of a democracy assures the individual that he does not have to risk his life, that he shouldn't risk his life, unless there's a specific reason, a clear reason for it.

Europe was at war. Adolf Hitler had Germany on the march. Japan had expansionist ideas in the Far East, but the United States was protected.

There was a great big Atlantic Ocean on one side, and there was a great big Pacific Ocean on the other side, and the most popular attitude in our country was one of isolationism. We were not threatened. Why should we give any thought to war? For what? Surely any elected official who proposed the policy of going to war would be immediately banished from office.

Well, it's the summer of 1939. The University of Tennessee football team was getting ready for another big season. In 1938, they'd gone undefeated, untied, then shut out Oklahoma 70 to nothing in the Iron Bowl.

The only Tennessee team that ever won them all had then won the bowl game at the end of the season. The coach was a Westwater named Major Robert Nealon. He had once been an aide to General Douglas MacArthur, and MacArthur was superintendent of the United States Military Academy.

In 1935, Nealon had been ordered to the Army to Panama. During the year when he was gone, Tennessee had had a losing football season. People in Knoxville pleaded with Nealon to resign from the Army and come home to coaching the volunteer football team.

The life of a professional soldier was not much of a life in 1935. There was widespread unemployment and an economic depression. Congress was not about to give much financial support to the military.

Besides, America was not going to war. What did they need with a big army? So Nealon had resigned from his army, and he'd come back to Knoxville. After all, promotions were difficult to come by.

Nealon had been a Major since 1926. It was difficult to advance in the Army. Just ask Major Omar Bradley, or ask Major Dwight Eisenhower.

In 1939, the New York Yankees, led by a fellow named Joe DiMaggio, were the darlings of the baseball world. The big show on Broadway was Hells Apart. The headline movie was The Wizard of Oz, starring a young lady named Judy Garland.

Houses in a Washington suburb were priced for \$6,250 each. Payments were as low as \$29 a month. A 1939 Plymouth with very low mileage was going for \$625.

In August, a non-aggression pact was signed by Germany with Russia. Just another of those European things, far on the other side of that big Atlantic Ocean, of no concern to the USA. A representative of the U.S. Marine Corps said that we should have a policy of neutrality strong enough to keep us out of war unless we were fighting for the defense of our homeland or the Bill of Rights.

On the next Friday, the 1st of September, before daylight, our nation learned of the Nazi blitzkrieg of Poland. President Roosevelt was informed by telephone, and he was awakened in his bedroom. It's come at last, he said.

God help us all. Three days later, Great Britain and France had declared war. They declared war on Germany, and World War II had begun.

The United States was not in. Russia was not in. Tennessee followed the fortunes of the football bombs.

They would go undefeated, untied, and unscored on during the regular season. The last major college football team to do that, and they would go to the Rose Bowl and lose there to Southern Cal. Some of us at UT were enrolled in the advanced ROTC course.

In graduation, we'd be commissioned officers in the Army Reserves. That wasn't why we were taking the ROTC course. That was because we got a little cash settlement at the end of each quarter, and that took care of my associate expenses, and so we were willing to take the Army training, provided they paid us a little bit for it.

And, of course, the war in Europe kept on expanding and expanding. By the time we came back to the University for our senior year, the 1940-41 succession, there was little doubt of where we were headed. The nation was moving toward a civilian draft.

After the 1940 football season had ended, Major Nealon was recalled to active duty in the Army. We knew that when we graduated in June, we'd be ordered immediately into the Army, and we were. There were the Carolina Maneuvers.

They ended the first week in December. I was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and I took a train to Washington, D.C., for a football game to be played between the Washington Redskins and the Philadelphia Eagles. I had classmates on each team.

With the Redskins, Ed Seifert. With the Eagles, Bob Suffred, Sam Bartholomew, Burr West. That Sunday afternoon of December 7, 1941, it was cold there at Griffith Stadium.

We waited for the kickoff. I was seated on the Eagles' bench. On the rooftop, the Public Address Officer, a fellow named Frank Blair, would check his notes.

In later years, he would be a famous television newscaster on the Today Show. In the stands, a young Naval officer settled into his seat. His name was John F. Kennedy.

In Europe, Hitler had turned on Russia and was in the process of what looked to be a speedy conquest of the Soviet. The United States was in negotiation with Japan. And then suddenly, the word came.

Japanese planes had attacked Pearl Harbor in Honolulu and wiped out the Pacific Fleet. The next day, the United States declared war on Japan. And then the U.S. waited for what it was sure would be further developments from the European powers.

It didn't come until December 11. And on that day, both Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. On the morning of December 7, efforts had been made to reach the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, George Marshall.

He was on horseback riding, riding a sorrel with the name of Prepare. Marshall told two subsequent boards of inquiry that he did not remember where he was on Saturday night, December 6. That was out of character and would have made Marshall, if true, the only Army man I'd ever heard of who doesn't know where he was on the night of December 6. But information that's recently been released points out that actually, Marshall probably was at the White House on the night before. This came about by the fact that Jimmy Stallman, once the publisher of the Nashville Ballot, was a good friend of Frank Knox, who was the Secretary of Navy.

They were both newspaper publishers. And shortly after Pearl Harbor, Frank Knox went over to inspect and see what the damage was. And he came back and he told Jimmy Stallman that on the night of the 6th, he had been at the White House with George Marshall, with Henry Stimson, and with President Roosevelt, waiting to find out where Japan was going to strike.

He said they knew that Japan would strike. They didn't know where. They rather thought the Philippines.

And so, it would likely good seem to be that Marshall simply could not admit to having been at the White House without indicting a number of other people, which is why he insisted throughout his lifetime to say he didn't remember where he was on the night of December 6. It would be well to point out the thing that history, as we know, is a living, growing thing. And history changes from time to time in accordance with our expanding knowledge of the past events. The people most apt to deny that are the members of the original cast in any instance.

Ask a soldier or a sailor about any battle that he was in, and he'll be certain that what he thought at that time, what he believed to be true, was the way it was. After all, he knows. He was there.

But maybe, just maybe, he didn't know all of what was going on. And that is what we encounter here. In recent years, documents have become available to us, documents that were secret for 40 years, so that some beliefs that we held for 40 years about some details of World War II have been shown to have been in error.

We've learned, for instance, that cryptologists broke the radio codes of both Germany and Japan. They were known by the code names of Ultra and Magic. It was done with what was the forerunner of the computer.

We now know that we had detailed information about many enemy deployments that we generally did not know about then. We credited some officers with having had amazing powers to analyze the actions of the enemy. This wasn't true.

Some of those officers had been furnished with details. As an example, the battle which shot Field Marshal Montgomery to the fore was that at El Alamein in Africa, when the British defeated Rommel. It was the first major German defeat of the war.

So, it was a turning point. We now know that Montgomery had been furnished with the complete German order of battle, that he had exact details of Rommel's battle plan. When Rommel had transmitted the report to Hitler containing this information in detail, it had been intercepted and decoded.

When Montgomery had a meeting of his staff before the battle of El Alamein, he had said, My intuition tells me that the Germans will do thus and so, and accordingly, dearest, what we will do. And they did. And it was a major victory for Britain, and Montgomery became famous.

ULTRA had a big hand in that. Of course, only two or three people knew that there was an ULTRA intercept. As a matter of fact, in that case, Montgomery had insisted that nobody else be informed, so that no one else would know that he had the information.

Among the British at that time, only Churchill, in addition to Montgomery, knew that they had that information. This was not known until years after the war. So in taking a careful look at history, what we're facing today is we're learning things that we didn't know.

We did know that before Pearl Harbor, the United States had been fighting a sort of undeclared war on the side of Britain against Hitler. There had even been a high-level conference between Churchill and Roosevelt and their staffs in Newfoundland to map out a battle plan. This, despite the fact that the United States was not at war.

One major decision had been reached. If the United States went to war against Germany and Japan at the same time, they would pursue a policy of Germany first. They would, along with Britain, pursue a policy of fighting an aggressive, offensive war against Germany and a defensive war against Japan.

After Germany had been defeated, then the full force would be turned on Japan. Those who had a primary interest in the Pacific were not particularly fond of that decision. But when information that was furnished by the magic intercepts permitted the United States to score

a major naval victory at Midway, only six months after Pearl Harbor, things looked brighter in that area.

In retrospect, it would seem that the decision to fight Germany first was a fortuitous one for the United States. If they had elected to fight Japan first, it is entirely possible that Germany would have been able to develop the atom bomb in the extra time that they would have been afforded, and that might very well have changed the outcome of the war. However, we are now in the World War II, and my remarks from here forward will be directed to the war in North Africa and Europe, since that is the war in which I was personally engaged.

And one should always remember that the most important part of any war is the part that you yourself are in. I used to listen to the 9 o'clock news on the BBC in London during the war years, and they would detail a bombing raid on Berlin and so many hundreds of thousands of pounds of bombs had been dropped. And they'd finish up saying, and only one of our aircraft is missing.

And I thought, well, that's all right, but if you happen to be in that aircraft, it's the most important thing that happened in this war. I spent the entire war as a staff officer. I was not a combat soldier, and I always like to get that disclaimer in.

I was with the 9th Infantry Division, which was a regular army division. I was ordered right from school here in Knoxville to the 9th Infantry Division, and I stayed with it until the end of the war. And I beg your indulgence as I simply recall that a young fellow coming over to Knoxville from his hometown in Columbia, Tennessee, graduating from the university just in time to get into the Army, yet he's getting into a big war, is going to have some unlikely experiences and meet some very unlikely people.

I worked in the 9th Division in Fulbright, North Carolina that summer in 1941. The commanding general was General Jacob L. Devers. Jakey Devers would be, Mary said, the commanding general of the European Theater before Eisenhower.

Commanding general of the 6th Army Group, commanding general of all Army ground forces. The regimental commander to whom I reported at the 47th entry was Alexander M. Sandy Patch. General Patch would become commanding general of the 7th United States Army and the assault commander on the invasion of Southern France.

The guiding commander of the 34th Field Artillery was William C. Westmoreland, who would be a U.S. Field Commander in Vietnam and U.S. Army Chief of Staff as a four-star general. I was in the presence of Franklin Roosevelt as he reviewed the United States troops in Morocco following the Casablanca Conference in 1943. I was in charge of war correspondence as they covered the visit of General Eisenhower and Prime Minister Churchill in Southern England shortly before D-Day 1944.

As the 9th Division trained to be a part of the first United States land offensive of the war, that in North Africa, great many distinguished visitors came from Washington to Fort Bragg for tourist inspection. I was assigned as a conducting officer, which means that I was a guide for the distinguished visitors, showing them the various stages of training around the post. That assignment permitted me to meet some legendary military figures.

Included in my guests were General Sir Thomas Blaney of the Australian Army, Sir John Dill, Chief of the British Imperial General Staff, Lloyd Louis Mountbatten at that time, Chief of the British Combined Operations and as such, Chief of the Commandos, later Supreme Commander in Southeast Asia and the last British Viceroy in India, General George C. Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Frank Knox, Henry Stimson, and a fellow named George S. Patton, Jr. In November 1942 then, in the first American land offensive of the war, the landings in North Africa, the Western Task Force commanded by Patton landed at three points on the Atlantic side of Morocco, the Central Task Force at Oran, the Eastern Task Force at Algiers. There were all sorts of intriguing little sidelights. For instance, the 1st Infantry Division and the 1st Army Division landing near Oran had trouble with their shortwave communication with their radio traffic because it was garbled with the shortwave broadcast of a football game.

The game between Army and Notre Dame kept treading into the attempts to keep up communication between the ships and the soldiers who were landing. American units were not very well organized at that time. They ate and canned sea rations.

They sang bawdy Army songs as soldiers do, like one that was entitled, Violate Me in Violet Time. They wondered how they happened to be in a place that sounded so exotic, Casablanca, Algiers. It was actually so filthy, they never could find Ingrid Bergman, or Humphrey Bogart, or Penny Lamar, or Peggy Lamothe.

General Eisenhower was in command from his headquarters located in the caves at Gibraltar. We now know that Ultra was operative at that time, that a great deal of the information about the German dispositions was available. It was not always properly evaluated, however, and one such error resulted in a German victory at Kasserine Pass.

The British G-2 had misinformed Eisenhower about the information that he had, and after that debacle, which resulted in the relief of American II Corps Commander Lloyd Friedendal, Eisenhower requested and got the relief of the British G-2, and George S. Patton, Jr. was placed in command of the II Corps. In planning sessions of the British and the Americans, the United States had urged the landing directly across the Channel in France as the first U.S. battle. The British had held out for North Africa.

In light of the sometimes confusing performance of the green U.S. troops, it now seems fortunate that their first battle contact was not against the veteran German troops that were defending in France, but against the troops in North Africa. I remember coming back one day to our command post, and I'd been bouncing around in a jeep. Of course, that would do strange things to the kidneys if you bounced around there long enough.

When I got to our command post, I was headed to the latrine block, which was just a canvass out there to be used for that purpose, and it was equipped with a slip trench and then what we called the throne, which was the use of general officers, and I went barreling in there, and as I ducked in, my face was about that far from three silver stars located on his helmet, and I froze because I was a young officer, and I knew a great deal, I thought, about military courtesy, but nobody had ever told me what to do when you meet a three-star general in a latrine. I didn't know whether to tie my ties, if I fly, pass, or retreat. He didn't say anything.

He was just sitting there. I was just standing there. He didn't make any attempt to introduce himself.

He didn't have to. I knew who he was. He was George S. Patton, Jr. Finally, I ducked on over and passed him, and on the way back out, I couldn't resist just tipping my helmet.

Then I just ran like hell, because if he hadn't pulled me across and jumped out at me, I would have been far away. But since then, people have said to me at various times, Did you ever meet General Patton, Jr.? I said, Yes, we met. As a matter of fact, we met several.

I'll just jump a little bit ahead to keep the train of the Patton narration going. Patton, of course, got himself into trouble in Sicily when he slapped two soldiers in a hospital. He slapped them both, and when word finally got out, Eisenhower ordered him to apologize to every soldier in Sicily.

And he did. I must say, that one to whom an apology was directed, it was hard to recognize. Because what Patton said, mostly, was, If I did anything, and he didn't say he did, he said, If I did anything to offend any of you during the battle, it was just because I love you all so much.

That was his Eisenhower order of apology. But he was left in Sicily. When we went up north to get ready for Operation Overlord, which was the invasion of Normandy, Patton was left, because Patton was a very unpopular man.

And it was said at the time, if Eisenhower had given him a command, they would have fired at Eisenhower. And they probably would, because the parents of the United States all across this country were up in arms. And of course, not only that, that's a court martial offense he had committed.

Slapping an enlisted man is a court martial offense, and Eisenhower knew that. So he was just trying to save him. So they left him in Sicily, and his total command was a company of MPs.

And there was a war correspondent named Tom Henry, who had been the first science editor of the Washington Star. And Tom had stayed down a while, and then had come up to England, and I was having dinner with Tom. And I said, What is George S. Patton Jr. doing? He said, Well, it's very interesting.

He's got his command post in the throne room of the palace, and he's praying in public about twice a day. Patton was a very strange fellow. And he said, I was there the other day, and he looked at me and said, Tom, what do you know about Jackson Valley Campaign? I said, I know he had one, that's all.

He said, Tom, what do you think about reincarnation? He said, I said, I don't know much about that either. He said, you know, I just reread the details of the Stonewall Jackson Valley Campaign, and I found that it parallels almost exactly the tactics in my Sicilian campaign. And I wondered if I might be the reincarnation of Stonewall Jackson.

And Tom said, I'd forget to look through the door. So, about that time, I went into London one day, and went over to First Army Group, which was just the headquarters, and said to a

major I knew there, Where is George S. Patton Jr.? He said, Back in the United States. We were getting ready for the invasion.

He hadn't been around there at all. He said, He's back in the United States, and has no command. I said, Fine.

So I went out and got in the command car. It was a rainy day in London, and I went to speed down with my driver at the first stoplight. And I turned like this, and there was a sedan pulled out of here, and there's a guy in the backseat.

He has an overseas cap, but no insignia. He has a short coat and no insignia. And I am that far from George S. Patton Jr. And I said to my driver, Would you stop at the first bar down here for a minute and let me get popped up a little bit? So I went in and got a double disguise, and went back to First Army Group, and said, Where did you say George Patton was? He said, In the United States.

I said, Two blocks down this street at the first stoplight. They started laughing. They said, Well, it's not about the age.

He's here, but he's incognito. He's in his theater. I was interested when the movie Patton came out some years ago.

They have the scenes of his being incognito in England, which he was at that time. And of course, his army did not become operative until August 1st. And when he came over with his headquarters before that, of course, he was making all sorts of noise.

At this time, Omar Bradley was commanding the first United States Army. And one day at a press conference, at 3rd Avenue, Patton waved a \$1,000 bill and said, I'll bet \$1,000 I beat Bradley in Paris. Don Whitehead was a senior Associated Press correspondent on the conference.

That night at Bradley's conference, he said, Are you aware that General Patton is betting \$1,000 he beats you in Paris? Bradley said, Well, that's typical of George. He hasn't read the entire order. If he did, he'd know that the same order that creates his Third Army and makes it operative makes me the commanding general of 12th Army Group and his immediate superior.

I'll send him to Marseille if I want to. That was the general attitude about that night. But we jumped a little ahead of the war in Africa simply because of the fact that Patton first became our biggest figure there.

And in a war, you have to have heroes. The home front needs heroes. And you will create them one way or the other.

And no such individual as the one depicted in the motion picture ever really existed. But we created a hero. And George Patton did not resist the role for one moment.

And he became commanding general of the 2nd Corps. And then Bradley finished up in North Africa. And Patton went on to become the commanding general of the 7th Army in Sicily.

And then the slapping incident occurred. And we went up north and got ready for D-Day while the other troops went to Italy and fought the bitter Italian campaign. Now, as we got ready for Overlord, which was the invasion of Normandy, the beach areas were Utah, Omaha, Juneau, Gold, and Silver.

And if you were ever on one of them, you'll never forget those names. I went in in Utah. And we had all of our vehicles waterproof so that the exhaust would go 6 feet in the air so you could come off the landing pad.

And you could drive with the driver actually underwater, deep underwater, as long as you kept that exhaust up there. So our instructions to our driver were, France is there. Don't take any turns.

Because France is right there. Don't turn left or right and go run up and down it. And we thought we'd be all right if we didn't run into a shell, though.

And so that was the invasion. We didn't know that we had been told through the intercell about the German dispositions. And what they were, which enabled us to take Carentan, which was the town between Omaha and Utah Beach.

Those were the things we were just finding out these days. The breakout of Normandy came along the San Roperio Road. And we were going to bomb on a smoke line.

And the smoke drifted so that we bombed our own troops. And it resulted in hundreds of our own men being killed, including Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair, who was commanding general of all United States ground forces. Then on August 1st, 3rd Army commanded by Patton became operational.

And it made that mad dash across France. And Patton became the star of the show. Meanwhile, the invasion of southern France was being readied by a combined American and French force, commanded by Lieutenant General Sandy Patch, who would command the 7th Army.

And on August 25th, Allied forces began the liberation of Paris. It began before Bradley and Eisenhower had intended. The French underground made an early move and was exposed, and they had to have help and ask for it.

Eisenhower said that when he could not resist the chance to visit Paris a few days later, that most of the invading forces had been swallowed up into the beer halls and brothels of the city. I think he was right, because like Eisenhower, I had been unable to resist the urge to visit Paris too. And perhaps famed war correspondent Ernie Powell put it best, when he looked down from the balcony of the Grand Hotel, down upon a mad scene in the Rue Scribes, where soldiers were inundated with pretty ladies dispensing kisses and embraces and red wine.

And Powell said, any soldier who sleeps alone at night is an exhibitionist. Press headquarters were set up in the Hotel Scribes. War correspondent Don Mited, who lived in Knoxville before and after the war, was the senior Associated Press correspondent on the continent, and he was credited with having filed the first story from a liberated Paris.

I was held over a few days by the attraction to Paris. Which I ranked slightly ahead of those I'd encountered in Sicily. So one day I heard the announcement on the loudspeaker in the press room, that the liberation of Belgium had begun, when the 9th Infantry Division had crossed the border near Momine.

In the company of Cy Peterman, the correspondent for the Philadelphia Inquirer, I hastened to join the 9th Division. Being of a serious and dedicated nature, I was convinced that even a wandering soldier should try at all times to be in the same country as his division. Germany, of course, had already counted with buzz bombs, pilotless aircraft aimed at London, and with B-2 rockets, which were supersonic.

In September, when we crossed into Germany, Hitler had made a radio speech in which he said, if we did not retreat across the border and get off the German soil, he was going to unleash some mighty secret weapons. Well, I was a counter-revolutionary. About five minutes yards across the border, my attitude was, okay, let's go.

Let's get out of here. He's going to unleash all sorts of secret weapons. Let's go.

Of course, what he had in mind was the atomic bomb, because they were making great strides, and we were attempting to find out just to what extent Germany was progressing in its effort to make an atomic bomb. The army persisted until December 16th, when Germany launched a counterattack, which became known as the Battle of the Bulge. Now, we now know that the Allies had intercepted enough information to have known that the German counterattack was coming, but they just refused to believe it.

The Germans did achieve complete surprise, and for days there was mass confusion. One German tactic involved the formation of a unit commanded by Colonel Otto Skorzeny, and the word went out that they wanted all men who spoke English, especially all men who spoke the American idiom, to report, and they wanted all men who had captured any American uniforms, vehicles, and so forth. And the idea was they were going to have the American lines infiltrated by German soldiers wearing American uniforms and speaking like Americans, and that the effect would be one to cause all sorts of rumors, and panic, and that sort of thing.

Well, they achieved that. There were rumors, and there was panic, believe me. We changed all our passwords to something that would be known only by a real down-home American.

I remember a password one night with Dizzy Dean, another password was what two teams played in the World Series last year. We were going to that sort of thing to try to be sure that we were able to find out whether or not these were real American soldiers around us or not, because it got so humid with the guy next to you. You didn't know whether he was a German or an American.

Well, since the war, when you found out, they didn't reply to Scorsese's request. They only had a hundred reply. Only a hundred soldiers replied, and of them, only ten spoke American.

So there were only ten of those soldiers winding around. We thought that there were about a thousand, and so they did achieve what they had hoped to achieve. Of course, the most

memorable incident of that type of period, when Tony McCullough was surrounded at Bastogne, and the German commander demanded his surrender, and his reply was, nuts.

Of course, the interesting thing was, the German commander had no idea what nuts meant, so he said, well, I said, just nuts. Well, in March, plans were being made for a massive crossing of the Rhine, and then one afternoon, troops of the 9th Army Division found the Ludendorff Railway Bridge still intact. Attempts to blow it failed, and troops scampered across.

For months, Field Marshal Montgomery had been making elaborate plans for his crossing up north, and Bradley jubilantly informed Eisenhower, of course, that we had a bridge across the last natural barrier to Germany, and Eisenhower sounded a little disappointed. Certainly Montgomery was disappointed. Bradley said, well, what do you want me to do, give it back to them? Well, Eisenhower authorized Bradley to build up the bridge yet, which is why that very night, which is a very dark night, I found myself in a jeep in the town of Vermont.

Well, the interesting thing about that was, I've never been in Vermont before, and I didn't know which streets led to the bridge. You know, if you drop into Knoxville, and somebody says, meet me at the Henry Street Bridge, if you've never been there before, you may have a little time to find me at the street bridge. Well, they said, across the bridge at Vermont.

I didn't know where the bridge at Vermont was, so I wandered around there for a long, because it was generally shelling all the time. Westmoreland showed up. Westmoreland lay down on his stomach, on the hood of his jeep, and went across the bridge, giving voice signals to his driver, with the turn left or right, and he went across.

I had what I thought was a better idea. I said to my driver, let's get the hell out of here. Back on the hill, and stayed back on the hill until daylight, when we went across.

And then I piled into the first cellar that I came to. The rest of the house had been bombed away. And a big, good-looking war correspondent came in that night, threw his bedrolls under the steps, and he said, I'm Howard Cowan from the Associated Press.

I said, yes. He said, my boss John Whitehead said, go to Remagen and find Nelson. I said, you found him.

He ain't got no plans to leave this cellar, believe me. I stayed there for quite a while. This was the only time during the war, the only time in history, that a V2 was ever used as a tactical weapon.

V2s, of course, had been used on London. They were supersonic. But 11 of them were fired, tactically, at the bridgehead, because Hitler was so intent on driving the Americans back across the Rhine.

None of those V2s actually hit the bridge. The closest man was about 300 yards away and the farthest landed in Cologne. So the control wasn't that good.

Howard and I, Cowan and I, we're in the place where they put us down. And suddenly the pictures started falling off the wall and there was dust and everything. And then we heard the first time we'd ever been involved with a supersonic weapon.

We didn't know about that. I have news since then, of course, that the only time in the history of warfare that a V2 was ever used as a tactical weapon, I was on the target, which is not the place you want to be. Well, Eisenhower authorized Bradley to build up the bridgehead.

And he continued to do that. And we broke out of there, of course, to get close to the end of the war. And we knew that we were getting close to the end of the war.

We knew it was coming fairly soon because we knew that sooner or later we were going to link up with the Russians. And we were getting all sorts of reports about the position of the Russians. And finally, I decided I would go up one day to the 60th infantry, which is one of our regiments.

And they were up on the Elbe River about 50 miles from Berlin. And on the way up there, every small town, I came to be one to surrender to them. The Germans were intent on surrendering to the Allies instead of waiting there for Russia to show up.

Well, I wasn't interested in taking any surrenders. But in every small town, they had piled all the weapons into town in a big car here and had the white sheets out the windows and they were ready to give up. Well, I got up to the bombed-out bridge across the Elbe.

I got on my jeep. I took about three steps and there was a shot just behind me. So I started yelling, I said, Amerikanski, Amerikanski, Amerikanski.

I didn't know what that meant, but I thought it was American. So then I saw an American soldier who stuck his head up. And he was a fellow I knew named Russ Smedley from Denton, Texas.

Russ and I had been together since 4th grade. So he called me down and he had linked up with the Russians. So he's there with a half-dozen Russians.

And so he said, come on now, we're going to cross the river. And we went over to the Russian commander and met him and spent the better part of that day. I got back to the 9th Division headquarters and filed a story down at the 1st Army Press Camp.

And early the next morning, I was shaken awake by Bill Hines and the New York Sun and Chris Cunningham of the United Press. They said, we've heard you know where the Russians are. I said, I don't know where they are.

So we went over, we went back across the bridge. This time we went right down to a Russian platoon. And we were being very nice to them and they were being very nice to us.

We were toasting everybody, everything that moved, and so it was getting later in the day and we decided we'd spend the night. And so they built a big campfire and we just kept toasting everybody, having food. So finally they brought out a balalaika and they started playing on the balalaika and dancing.

And then they suddenly stopped and they turned to us, we three. And Bill Hines said, do you want us to entertain them? He said, I wrote the words to pay for dogs. Doggy Dog was a Mills Brothers song.

He was very popular at the time. I said, just come in, do you know Big Dog? He said, no, I don't know. Okay, so we started out, we three.

I'm going to buy a Big Dog that I can call my own. And we were up there bobbing and weaving and cursing all night. And suddenly we noticed that the Russians were getting here.

And they were standing very still. And then it dawned on us. They thought maybe this was a national anthem.

And they might have played Hip Hop Roots last season. The Russians and the Americans standing at attention while three swapping Americans saying Big Dog. That's how we got off in our relationship with the Russians.

I went back the next day and I hadn't had much sleep. And I laid down and I said to the sergeant, don't wake me up on any occasion. For about 30 minutes somebody was shaking me.

And I'm ready to read that sergeant off and I look up and it's Westmoreland. And he said, we're about to have the official link up of the Russian and American armies and I want you in charge of integrity. Westy said, no, I've been up there for two days already.

And just to make a long story short, we did go back up there and a newsroom guy came and got me and said, did you walk around sitting home one night with a foreign language producer I knew in Los Angeles? He said, where were you at the end of the war? I said, I was at Yale for about 50 miles from Berlin. He said, have you watched the Mike Douglas show this week? I said, no. He said, he's been dedicating it to the end of World War II and they had a newsreel shot the other night and I said to my wife, I'm a sportscaster and you've got some film that I want to have a look at.

He said, fine, come down here if it's what you think it is, you can have it. So I went down, he gave me the film, I took it to CBS, they made some blowups of stills and I have them on my wall. I'm not sure if you love them.

It's the Russians and Americans meeting up at the end of World War II. Information which has become available in the past 40 years that President Joseph Stalin knew what his aims were every moment. In fact, I got it in the mail today from Maryland County on Stalin.

He foresaw no great difficulty in the ultimate victory over Germany and his hope was that Britain and the United States would fail, leaving Russia free to occupy most of Europe. Stalin pushed for the second front in the invasion of Normandy. The Soviet attacks on Britain caused great delight in Russian military service.

Alex de Jonge concludes, had it not been for the remarkable success of overlords in Normandy invasion, the Iron Curtain would have traced its way down the coastline of France. The most significant achievement of Britain and American arms in World War II was

not the defeat of Germany but the containment of the Soviet Union. In 1945, President Truman mentioned to Stalin that the U.S. had successfully tested the atomic bomb.

Truman says in his autobiography, Stalin didn't know what I was talking about. Truman was wrong. Stalin knew exactly what he was talking about.

He knew all about it. After the U.S. had used the atomic bomb in Japan, the U.S. was in a state with weak nerves but it cannot decide the outcome of the war. Atomic bombs are far from efficient for that.

Of course, exclusive possession of the bomb's secrets creates a threat but against it, at least two remedies exist. One, the secret cannot long remain a secret and two, the secret must be kept. Well, history has told us that a woman was the cause of it all.

General Pershing was the chief of staff and it seemed that MacArthur and Pershing had the bad fortune to fall in love with the same lady and MacArthur married her at his first wife. So the senior chief of staff, Pershing, where, of course, he stayed for years and years and years. We have learned of the close relationship between George Patton and his niece, Jean Gordon, of her suicide a few weeks after Patton's death.

We've learned of the relationship between General Eisenhower and his British aide, Kay Summersley, and of General Marshall and Queen Frederica of Greece. We can document a great many of such liaisons to no purpose except to make the simple point that attractions between men and women are not suspended by the boundaries of a combat zone, and one who suspects that they are has not been there. It's an important part of history.

Looking back more than 40 years, our historical conception of World War II will bear a just figure in this. Many Americans believed that the biggest factor in the war was the American production capacity, that the war was won on the American production line, turning out airplanes and tanks. Production was a big factor, but the Allies never did have enough landing craft.

The biggest strategic decisions were made on the basis of available landing craft. If there had been more landing craft, some of the decisions about landings would have been different. Reviewing the amount of information that was available because of the breaking of the Japanese code, there are some who contended that McCarthy was the best-informed general in the history of warfare.

In any case, he insisted that he be permitted to return to the Philippines, and he did, although there are those who thought then and think now that there was no absolute necessity of that move. And then came the very late entry of Russia into the war against Japan with our insistence on Saudi allies, the use of the atomic bomb, and the end of World War II. The process of bringing all of that to a close is still going on.

When we think back to that war and of the many who lost their lives, we may be reminded of the lines that were written by Joseph Conrad as an epitaph to the soldiers who were killed overseas in France in the First World War. Conrad wrote, Here dead we lie, because we did not choose to live and shame the land from whence we sprung. Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose, but young men think it is, and we will.

We may recall that MacArthur didn't come home until after he was relieved by President Truman during the Korean War, and he was hailed as a conquering hero. He addressed a joint session of Congress, and this is how MacArthur closed that speech that day. I am closing my 52 years of military service.

When I joined the Army, even before the turn of the century, it was the fulfillment of all my boyish hopes and dreams. The world has turned over many times since I took the oath on the plane at West Point, and the hopes and dreams have long since vanished. But I still remember the refrain of one of the most popular barrack ballads of that day, which proclaimed most proudly that, Old soldiers never die, they just fade away.

And like the soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away. An old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty. Goodbye.

And there was another dry hour, certainly in Congress and maybe across this nation that afternoon. He lived a comparatively quiet post-war life, and when he made his final visit to his beloved West Point, here is the way that he closed that speech, which has become a military classic. The shadows are lengthening for me.

The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished, tall and tense. They have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were.

Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears, encroached and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. I listen vainly but with thirsty ear for the witching melody of faint bugles blowing reveille, of far drums beating the long roll. In my dreams, I hear again the crash of guns, the rattle of musketry, the strange mournful mutter of the battlefield.

But in the evening of my memory, I always come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes in my ears, duty, honor, country. Today marks my final roll call with you, but I want you to know that when I cross the river, my last conscious thoughts will be of the Corps and the Corps and the Corps.

So, I bid you farewell. That day, MacArthur, of course, was getting a rousing reception by the Corps. And Mrs. MacArthur, Jean of Muppet Square, Tennessee, was standing with General Westmoreland, who was the superintendent.

And as MacArthur walked by, he gave Jean a big wink. And West, he said to her later, what was that all about? He said, I've been the audience for the last 30 days. He's practiced that every night.

So, those are some of my memories of World War II. The thing that I'm curious of was best expressed, I think, by James Jones. James Jones, who had been in the Army before he wrote From Here to Eternity.

And passed away several years ago. The lady usually lived on Long Island. And he had written the text for a volume called WWII.

And he wrote an epilogue. And he used to come down to Bobby Van Bar and Grill in Southampton. And he'd have a half a dozen drinks.

And he'd start to quote that epilogue, and he'd start to cry. And I don't know how many nights I've sat there with James Jones and tears steaming down his face. As he'd say, pass and review.

How many times they had heard the long, drawn out, faint field command. Passed on the long length of the vast parade ground. Fading as the guidon moved out front.

And so, it did. Meaning World War II. Leaving behind a whole generation of men who would walk into history looking backwards.

With their backs to the side. Peering forever over their shoulders at their own ever lengthening shadows trailing across the earth. None of them would ever really get over it.

Thank you.