

Bopp, William F. Interview 8-8-87

[Speaker 2]

William Bopp, B-O-P-P, 57 West Gradewell Avenue, Maple Shade, New Jersey. Interview conducted by Dr. Charles Johnson, University of Tennessee Department of History, August 8, 1987, at Cherry Hill, New Jersey. This interview is at a reunion of Company A, 7th Armored Infantry Battalion, 8th Armored Division.

[Speaker 1]

Of course, you're interviewing Bill Bopp, a native Philadelphian, probably a fifth-generation Philadelphian, and our family had a military background, dating back to General Washington, Yale. He was an ancestral uncle, and his first lieutenant, Charles Darra, he had an Irish name, D-A-R-R-A-U-G-H. You can eliminate the U, pick an earlier pronunciation, or spelling of it.

Now, he served with Washington, the Second Army, American Army, and he eventually was in the encampment at Valley Forge. After the war, we don't know what the situation was that brought him into this, but he boarded a ship to China, and while they were going through, en route there, I don't know what route they were taking, but they were going through the Mediterranean, where he died, and was buried at sea. And his mother, Lydia Darra, was an Irish woman, born woman, from Dublin, Ireland, born in 1729, married a William Darra, who was a schoolteacher.

And, of course, in those days, private schools was a thing, no such thing as a public school, especially in the United States. So, shortly after they were married in Dublin, they had a Friends Society ceremony, and they had witnesses that numbered 56 people, those are the names I have.

[Speaker 2]

You've done a fair amount of work on this.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. So, they migrated, I don't know what year, to Philadelphia. Now, she was a strict Quaker, a very, very honest, extremely honest person.

Her word was gospel truth, and she was a great confidant. And it was said in the history books that she was a result of the increase of the census in Philadelphia. Now, I didn't grab the meaning of that right away, and I wonder what her business was.

Her husband, of course, living with her, remained a schoolteacher, was adept at shorthand writing. I didn't know that they had back then. And this has a big play in the story.

So, I found out that she was a midwife. Yeah, a midwife. And she had quite a reputation.

She lived on South 2nd Street, 177 South 2nd, at what was known as the Locksley Home. And there's much that can be said, but we'll bypass that for now. But General Howe, Sir William Howe, who lived across the street, and who, as a passing note, was known to be a homosexual, used to plan his meetings, military meetings, in her large room that she had to accommodate them in her home.

And she had devised a means of listening in, eavesdropping. And she had this large closet with paper-thin wool. And when they would go in there at night, after they felt everyone was asleep, she would listen to what they were doing and how they were going to plan their next attack on Washington's army.

And she was concerned because her son was there. And many times, all the time, really, she wrote the notes through her husband's expertise of shorthand writing and hid those in the large mouton buttons on the young boy's coat, who was my ancestral grandfather at about 14 years of age. And he would travel about 12 miles north and meet a Colonel Craig, who was a liaison officer, to a Colonel Boudinot, at last Boudinot, who later married a New Jersey governor's daughter.

And he himself was wounded and became a general eventually. But he was Washington's next-in-command officer. And he would intercept these messages and take them directly to Washington, oh, directly to his brother, who was adept at reading shorthand, that he would turn, translate into the word.

And so on this one occasion, I want to bring this to a conclusion as part of it, but I know you were interested in it as a historian. And on this one occasion, she heard the plan of attack that was to annihilate the entire Second Army of Washington in the Chestnut Hill area of Philadelphia. And he enumerated his equipment, so many gun carriers, carriages, boats, even included boats, what kind of weapons they had, how many men, and their plan of attack.

And this was a very important meeting in which a Major Barrington first talked to her. He says, we have a very important meeting coming up, and if any of your family's not asleep, there's trouble. She didn't tell her husband about this or any member of her family.

This was very important. So he says, everyone, make sure everyone's asleep in their home. And they come over rather late in the evening there.

And so she got the full plan of attack, all the information, and she wrote it down herself in longhand, concealed it in the sewing kit, which she placed in her carrying bag. Then she took an empty sack, which was often the case, of walking 12 miles north to Frankfurt section of Philadelphia, where there was a flour mill. And her excuse was she was going up in December of 1777 to purchase 25 pounds of flour, the flour of Gristmull.

And she walked up, got her past the center gate, and said she was visiting, going for flour, and visiting relatives who were keeping part of her family. And they passed her by, knew Mrs. Darragh quite well, and they said it's all right. So she went to flour mill, dropped the sack off, intercepted Colonel Craig, traveled to the Sunrise Inn, which is west about five miles, and she said, I cannot talk to you.

She made him dismount and walk with her. This was dead of winter, a thin, little, tiny lady with a bushel full of courage.

[Speaker 2]

Who had her son in the Army?

[Speaker 1]

Yes. And she met Colonel Boudinot, and he said, Mrs. Darragh, I never met you before. He says, but your reputation is well known, and also your son's.

And he says, what do you have? She says, I have very, very important information. And he says, it really means the survival of your Army.

He took her in a tavern, a private room, and she disclosed all the information, gave the written information. And as a result of this, they were ready for this plan of attack. She hurried home that night, and her entire trip, I guess, probably took in close to 20 miles, 24 miles.

She wasn't really dressed for the trip. Didn't have the clothes, I don't think. Keep her warm.

Her heart kept her warm, I guess. She made it back. Her husband still didn't know what happened.

They knew she had left the house. And she stood by, sat by her front window the next day in the evening. She saw all the military equipment leave, all the men, and she probably slept maybe a few hours.

And when they came back, they were a very bedriggered group. And Major Barrington came to her home. And they were, the British were well beaten.

The losses were many times out of the Americans. There were losses on both sides. But the Army was safe.

There was 13,000 men involved in the American Army. And she never told the story to anyone. Until later years, shortly before her death, she had a confident woman, a woman of confidence.

It was a color clipper. And then the story came out after her death. And in the city of Philadelphia right now, by note, there was a school named after her and also a street in Philadelphia.

And she's now buried in the same cemetery as Benjamin Franklin in an unmarked grave. She first was buried in the Friends Cemetery and the Friends Meeting House at the 3rd and Market Street in Philadelphia was then moved to 4th and Arch. So the building was going to be placed over where her grave site was.

It was what was considered to be her remains was taken and put in the southeast corner by the Franklin Cemetery. And so somehow the Prince Society knew that she was active in military work. And they sent her a letter of auspiciation.

Tough word for me. And one also for her son for being in the military. But she and her family were all allowed to be buried in the Friends Cemetery.

She had nine children. Three died in infancy. Five were never married.

One married and was married to three different men, being a widow in each case, never had children. And only one son out of nine children had children. And that was my grandfather, several times removed.

Yeah. So we had this military history, for which I was quite proud. And then, of course, there were other wars.

The Civil War, I had two great grandfathers. One was a personal lieutenant there and one was a private. And George Darragh, who was like a great-grandson of Lydia, was in Pennsylvania for both.

My great-grandfathers were in Pennsylvania units. Now the one was a first lieutenant, Henry Augustus Fopp von Hohenau. His mother was Princess Louise von Hohenau in Germany.

And he had four brothers. And his dad was a teacher of foreign languages, Franz Fopp, who had married Princess Louise, was adept in foreign languages and majoring in teaching of Sanskrit. And he also raised pedigree horses, which he now has today as the Olympus Honors, and trained for war.

So my grandfather was over long before the Civil War to get away from the oppression of the government over there. His mother had been ostracized by her family because she married a foreigner, although he himself was accepted by his grandparents. And many times, an eyewitness to this occasion was a woman in Helmsburg who knew my dad as a little boy who came from the same province and said, I saw your grandfather and his brothers, four brothers, taken by the royal carriage back to the palace to visit their grandparents.

Now Henry came over. I don't know her first name, but he married into a well-known Philadelphia-American family. The Schlesingers were Jewish.

And the name never got publicized amongst our family circle because of the Jewishness. So my great-grandmother Schlesinger Bopp von Hohenlohe was a Jewish, which gives me Irish, German, Pennsylvania Dutch, and Jewish blood.

[Speaker 2]

You've got a fairly mixed background, don't you?

[Speaker 1]

So a genealogical study of that could be found in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania books.

[Speaker 2]

So when...

[Speaker 1]

So with that background, we had the Civil War. Nobody in our family was in the Spanish-American War. Several members were in the World War I.

And I had one particular uncle, which I was very proud of, my Uncle Rufus K. Hillbock. And now at this point, you're wondering if our family had riches.

We had rubies and bags at home because of our royal background and whatnot. Such was not the case. My great grandfather, who had his horse shot...

His horse, by the way, was sent over by his father from Germany. It was an all-white steed. His name was Billy, and he had a gold heart on his breast.

And he was shot from under my grandfather Gettysburg, General Sheridan. And what happened to him or where he's buried right now, I can't say. The family felt more or less ostracized, this man, because they were married into a Jewish family.

He had a son, a daughter. They attended the Balls in Philadelphia. She was almost like a debutante, Aunt Carrie Hill.

And I knew her as a child, and she had given me a picture of my grandfather, great-grandfather, as an officer, that he had painted himself. He was a fresco painter. He painted fresco walls in many cathedrals in Germany before he came to the United States.

He was an artist to some extent, great extent. And now his son, Frank, was my grandfather, the parent of my own father, William. Now, my grandmother, Bob, and my grandfather, Frank, Bob, the gentleman died long before I was born.

He was 37 years of age. He was a paper hanger by trade. He died in 1897, is buried in Northwood Cemetery of Frankfurt, Philadelphia, northeast section.

He died of tuberculosis. He left a woman with six children, honeyless, living in poverty. He was put in a pauper's grave by a friend who owned this gravesite.

My grandmother, a staunch Irish background with Dara blood in her, probably inherited from her great-grandmother, great-grandmother Dara, carried the family through on some tough occasions. My own dad, got as far as the fourth grade, was a machinist in the heavy-distance sawmills in Tycone section of Philadelphia. And his youngest brother, of whom we were all proud, the only one who made a name for himself, came back from World War I, was interested in medicine, finished his grade school education, his high school education, graduated from Temple University and started the medical school at Temple University.

And the depression years forced him out of school. And to make money, he resorted to digging ditches for 25 cents an hour to help him make enough money to fulfill his education, which he didn't realize until a second marriage took place in his life. A woman who was a physical ed teacher who realized the value of an education.

And she put him through school. It was impossible for him to go back to the same medical school because it wasn't the practice of them to take those who had dropped out. And he went to various schools in South Carolina and I think a school in Missouri finally finished and ended up as a chief doctor at the mental hospital in the state of Ohio.

Rufus was kind of a special man to me. He showed me how to fight my way through when I, at the time, I went overseas, ready to go overseas. He sort of bolstered my morale.

He told me how strong we were and how weak they were. We used to enjoy these stories quite a lot. My own dad was probably the most patriotic man to face this earth.

But he was a cripple as a result of an infant fall from a coach. And he couldn't bend his left leg. His kneecap had been removed by reason of saving his life in the Episcopal Hospital of Philadelphia through the insistence of his mother.

And he was also quite hard of hearing. And if we were watching a Memorial Day parade in Frankfurt, where I was born and raised, I lived until the year, I was born May 16, 1918, and I lived there until I got married August 30, 1940. And we would be watching a Memorial Day parade, which were quite long in those days, and now we're shortly into World War I.

When that American flag came by, the Lord helped me. If you were standing in front of my dad, he didn't take your hat off. You would not only lose your hat, you'd lose your head.

He was about five foot eight. He weighed about 210 pounds, and he worked in a steel mill all his life, so I don't have to give his measurements of his biceps. He was a loving person.

He'd do anything for me. He made sure I got to the excursions to Wildwood, New Jersey, because we're a dollar round trip on the train. He made sure we always sat on the third car of the train, because the senders would pass over your head at that point.

And don't ever sit at the end of the train, because the senders come in the window, and make sure you brush your seat. And when you get to the line, take note of where all the drunks were laying on the seat, and I'd go around and watch all the dimes and nickels that had fallen out of their pocket while they're lying there, and that gave me spending money after I got there. We would have to take the ferry boat over from Philly over, this is just a dotted story, and sometimes we'd get down with our old banana basket and a potato burlap bag, and we're equipping ourselves for bringing crabs back, which we do crabbing.

And we come back, we get on the ferry boat back from Camden, New Jersey, the Philadelphia shoreline, where we get the elevated train that takes home, and we'd be on the ferry boat sometimes, and the crabs would be crawling out of the basket, going around. It was funny to watch us going after crabs, there were places we could pick them up, put them back in the basket, where the others would escape, you know. And it was quite a happy occasion to look back on now.

And so, this life went on until I became into where I got married. I gave you the date to Eleanor Torslow, who was Polish, both her parents came from Poland. She had five brothers, one worked his way through school by Stephen Durant Weekend's rank.

He had gotten an athletic scholarship from Morristown High School to Ursinus College, then he got a scholastic scholarship to the University of Penn, where he graduated from law school, and on his first attempt passed the bar exam, and got married. And when he came back from his honeymoon, this is kind of a legion story of my own life, conscription was born prior to the drafting, prior to Pearl Harbor, we had a conscription period, where unmarried men, or men without children, who weren't enlistees, or volunteers, were conscripted by virtue of a lottery drawing, and I was not eligible at the time, because I just got married about three months before the deadline, and Frank, he delayed his marriage because of the schooling. When he came off his honeymoon, he was grabbed by the United States Army, he became Private Francis Rodney Torslow, sent to Fort Dix, given a broom handle, and this is

the way they start their training, and he was with one of the younger Rockefeller sons, who was also a private. I don't know which one it was, it wasn't Nelson, I believe it was another one that became the governor of West Virginia, I think, and he was, so then, in the meantime, I had gotten a job after my marriage, no children in sight, one full year, plus two months, I started with the Philadelphia Transportation Company, working on the trolley cars, much could be said about the trolley cars, but I'll eliminate that, but while I was working on the trolley cars, this one Sunday morning, which none of us will ever forget, they always say, remember Pearl Harbor, we always say, where were you when Pearl Harbor hit? Well, where was I? I was on a two-man trolley car, I was westbound with Gerard Avenue in Philadelphia, I was headed from the Frankfurt Arsenal to the 63rd and Gerard Avenue, they were pulling into a transfer point, known as Front Gerard, where the Marcus Street Frankfurt elevated trains run, and a gentleman came aboard our trolley car one Sunday morning, perhaps around 11 o'clock, earlier than that, on December the 7th, 1941, excitedly declared Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese.

Well, this was very alarming news, it had to be clarified in my instance later as to exactly where Pearl Harbor was located, I didn't realize at that time, it was in the Hawaiian Islands area, and that it meant much to me by the time I read the evening papers, and I began to think how I stood, militarily speaking, what would happen now, and Franklin Roosevelt will never forget his radio talks, they were terrific, everybody had their ears marked by the radio, of course television wasn't in the picture, and we had our Atwater Kent, we had a deluxe model that had an outside speaker, sat on top of it, I was, in those days, an Atwater Kent radio cost \$120, my dad was making perhaps \$25 a week as a machinist in a steel mill, and we bought the Atwater Kent on the basis of paying a dollar and a quarter a week, and by the time the radio was paid, we replaced the tubes a few times at least, but this is great, and this was our means of communicating with each other around the country at that time, and so I gave this thought of the military, a lot of thought in fact, and the government set up deferment policy that if you were in a defense situated business or trade that you were deferred, and put in various classifications as to the importance of that defense job you were holding, and mine wasn't a strict defense job, it was in transportation, and the only restrictions that prevailed at that time were that women could not work surface operation vehicles, nor could black people, you know, it's not that I'm an advocate, whether or not they worked at that time didn't bother me, I never gave it much thought, it wasn't soon after that I gave it much thought, but I had been raised in a neighborhood that was precisely 50 percent white and 50 percent black, and I had no problems that word segregation meant nothing to me because we practiced it, and we had no need to use the word, and I never became familiar with the word, nor did I know what desegregation meant, prefixes were entirely foreign to me, I was not an English class student of any renown, so where am I now, but my classification had varied over the next two years, I had sought an enlistment into the navy and the coast guard, both of which refused me on the basis of my being too thin, too light, as I speak to you now, I'm about 205 pounds, I weighed 129 pounds then, and I wore a rest tight glass, now I could have cheated, take my glasses off and pass the eye test very easily, but I had always worn them, had worn them for years, so on the basis of that, so they said how about the marine, well the marines wouldn't touch me, and so I said how about the army, I said well the army will have to call me, and as you'll find later, they did not disappoint me, coming into, let's see, we'll have to talk maybe around March I suppose, that became a time of decision for me, it looked like I would be refused by the military under any

condition, my wife and I had been married, I'm talking of March of 1943, it looked like, like I said, I wouldn't be taken into the military, I was on a defense related job, so, and we hadn't had any children by choice at that time, although I didn't practice any strict means of birth control, I was a protestant actually practicing the rhythm system, which was extremely dangerous, it worked out for our behalf, this is a fact, so one night in November I would take it, or perhaps April, maybe I should change that too, my wife and I were together, as a man and a woman would naturally be when we're thinking of childbirth, and she obviously conceived, and I had to change the date back to April, because on November 17th, 1943, a son and daughter were born as twins prematurely, perhaps six, seven weeks, so that places in April maybe, and that looked very rosy as far as the children were concerned, I was working night work at that time, we moved back to Jersey from Philadelphia where we had had an apartment, and because of war situation we wouldn't be prepared for anything that might come up, any crises, and we didn't want to be stuck, and then with my wife being pregnant, and she was having slight problems after the fifth month, we had an extremely fine obstetrician in Canada, Dr. Edmund C. Hesser, who went to, by coincidence went to medical school with my uncle, and he was a genius in the delivery room, and he was attached to the Kahneman Hospital in Philadelphia, and this is where my wife was going to be headed, so on one day her condition became somewhat precarious, birth wasn't due for maybe two more months, and she had quite a swelling because of the carrying situation, she gained 43 pounds, and she was now developing a peronepneus type of poisoning, affecting the urinary tracts and things of that sort, she was taken in the hospital, kept there, and prematurely during this period when she was receiving blood transfusions, moments between life and death, the army was seeking me, and the conditions as of that moment were very questionable as to whether I would be drafted, she gave birth to the twins, the girl was born first, the boy was not positioned because of the expertise of the doctor, who Edmund C. Hesser made it at midnight from Audubon, New Jersey, and he was at the hospital, and he manipulated the boy so he'd be born 45 minutes later, just before midnight, and five days later I honored the greetings of the United States government to present myself at the United States Army at 32nd and Marcus streets in Philadelphia at nine o'clock in the morning to be examined for the service. I told my doctor, or my wife's doctor, Hesser, and he was very upset, and he says your wife could die at this point, don't tell her anything, and the boy had a slight birth defect where two fingers on each hand were webbed together, as a three-year-old they were fixed, and outside of that we had two beautiful healthy children, and two very normal children, and my wife again was going under transfusions the day I was examined, she wondered why I was delayed, and it was about two days later I had to tell her because my calling period was coming up in three weeks, the doctor wanted me to get an extension, I said no, don't bother, the thing that disturbed me was I was making a decision to, in effect, by matter of principle of looking back at my family background, which I mentioned earlier for this reason, and I want to carry on, there was no body going in World War II for my family, my dad was the only one of his mother's six children who had a son, two sons, my older brother and myself, Charles is my brother, he was six years and a half older than me, and I was the only one, and he carried on the family name, and I was the only one who could go into the military service, and I wanted to do this, but I had a responsibility with my family, but the government decided for me, I took my examination test, my wife learned of this, we got her back home after a three-week period or so, just before I was to leave, I had a 10-day extension came through, carried me over the first of the year, and one of the children was not heavy enough to be brought home, it was a girl, the boy weighed

five pounds, six ounces, and my daughter weighed four pounds, eleven ounces, and her weight had dropped right after birth, which is normal, and was brought up so she could be brought home shortly before I was to leave home for the military. We were established as a family in my wife's parents' home, and without them, I don't know where I'd be right now, or right then, as far as the finances and things go, my job as a transportation operator, paid adequate for a man with my educational background, I felt privileged, and I felt I held a good job, really, for what I was doing, and we were well paid, so, but to have that paid, you know, dropped off, and cut off, it meant much.

My dad, father-in-law was a stevedore foreman who made good money, and they were very family-oriented people, and my own dad, of course, was very much interested in our children, and did what he could to help out, and so I had that secure feeling when I left home that she was being cared for.

[Speaker 2]

By people who cared for her?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, yeah, and cared for her, and this was very important, very important, so having been married now the past three years, it made me feel like an old married man who was going into service, and as I took inventory of those about me, I realized that they were in like positions, they were men of my age, and there was young boys just out of high school. They were those who started their formal education, and this hurt them very much, of course. I'd taken the Army entrance exam, and apparently I seemed to do all right, and I didn't learn my score at the time.

I didn't inquire about it, which I just spoke to you later about, and this isn't all important, but it put me into a special Army training school in Fort Raleigh, Kansas. The Fort Raleigh, Kansas was the elite of the camps. We knew this chopper now, and when I got out there, there was Oleg Cassini, who was married to the movie star.

His name has left me, and they were since divorced. There was the boxing champion of the world, Joe Lewis, out there. I never saw him.

He was out there in the physical ed training, and there was Mickey Rooney, and I can't think of Oleg Cassini's wife at that time, a beautiful girl. She was actually expecting a child, and he was rather an awkward person. He was, of course, a clothing designer, you know, renowned, and he didn't know whether, if you saluted him, he wouldn't know whether he turned his salute left-handed or right-handed, but he did know his women's headlines rather well, and it was a school that there was a fellow named, a gentleman named Boswick.

He was a world champion polo player. Now, these people who came from the society circles of the country, mainly from the east, who had, like, ponies, this was a horse cavalry school, basically, and these people became officers, and they were allowed to bring their own steeds out there, and at that time, there was a man who just made brigadier general named Eisenhower, had a pony there that was almost a boyhood pet of his, and I had to tell this now because it's related to a type of duty you had.

When you went to Fort Riley, you pulled three kinds of duty. You had the usual KP duty, and you had guard duty, and you also had stable duty. Now, the stable duty had a special aroma to it, and it was a very important duty, and they stressed that when you went in there at night and looked over those horses on your night run, you were on it for three hours.

For two hours, you'd be on an hour, and you had to go through these stables and check each stall and make sure all the boards were right, there were no splinters showing, the horses were quiet, nothing there to disturb them. You were trained how to cover their head in case of a fire, mountain to the corral, and then the great part of that job was as daybreak came, all the horses were put in the corral, and you had the privilege of going in with pitchforks and shovels and cleaning out all these nice stalls that left you with a special aroma, see, that I spoke of, and what happened here, you of course couldn't wait to get back to the barracks at the morning, that duty conclusion, and take a shower and whatnot, and then you'd go at night, you'd go up to USO Club, and you'd be writing letters at home, and then the band would start playing, and you'd seek out a dancing partner, and after the first 30 seconds, the girl would be on your shoulder, and she'd be sniffing the air, and she says, were you on stable duty today? And she would seek another partner, so we decided every time you had stable duty, you might as well forget about going to USO Club to dance with the girls, who were really very congenial, but after all, you know, you can't expect them to put up with this much, so I attended armorer school there under a Lieutenant Kovacic, and we had a Sergeant Baker, who was a Kansan, who was a sergeant, tech sergeant, and he was an armorer expert.

An armorer, of course, is a man who tends to weapons, military weapons, anything from the .45 caliber pistol through your M1 Grand Rifle to the .30 caliber carbine. We studied the various machine guns, the Thompson submachine gun. We had what we called the grease gun, the .45 caliber grease gun. It was a cyclic rate of fire was rather subdued compared to a normal machine gun. You could type them just like two shots, three shots at random, and then we had the three types of .30 caliber machine guns and the .50 caliber machine gun, and we had the 37 millimeter cannon, and these are the weapons we covered in armor school over a 13-week period, and there were approximately 30 students, and so I often wondered why they had selected me for this school because of the fact I had never owned a weapon in private life.

I had never fired a weapon in private life outside of a BB gun, shooting at milk bottles and tin cans, and but I was in a position to serve the armies, to serve the country, to serve my family, and to bring honor to all of these places, folks, country, and I made the best of it, and I did the best I could, and of course graduated from the school becoming acquainted with all the cyclic functioning, the disassembling of the weapons, repair weapons, the firing of the weapons, becoming expertise in all of these, and at the conclusion of our basic training period of which ended in the middle of May of 1943 for me, I received a 15-day furlough, enabled me to go home for the first time then to see the children who were quite developed at that point, surprisingly to me, you know, and it was a warm feeling I had, and then I had to look forward to the sad feeling of leaving them again and going down now to South Camp Pope, Louisiana, arriving there June the 1st, 1944.

Now, in a personal history, I said this had to be one of the darkest days of my life that I'd gone from a camp that was would be considered the sublime going to the ridiculous, which

would be Camp Pope. The humidity, the heat of June the 1st in Leesville, Louisiana, was absolutely devastating. I'm a summer person, but I can't take the extreme heat, and I don't mind the cold too much if I'm not working out into it for too many hours, so I had become quite a physical specimen when I was at Fort Raleigh.

I'd mentioned I was about 130 pounds when I went into service. I'd gone up to something like 165 pounds. I couldn't walk around the block without getting out of breath when I went to Fort Raleigh.

When I left Fort Raleigh, I could run five miles and not lose a breath, and I was, in other words, I was in good shape. Army puts you in good shape. Yeah, I was in very good shape, and the training, when we went through physical, did calisthenics, I put my heart and soul into it, you know, and the food out there was great.

We had good chefs, and they got plenty of food at Fort Raleigh. Now, I was entering into a newer place, and it was just at the other end of the spectrum, so to speak. Well, one of the fellows had purchased a Life magazine for June of 1944, at which time I entered Leesville, Louisiana, and the featured article was venereal diseases, and they were rating the various cities and towns across the United States, and Leesville was the most likely spot in the entire United States where you could pick up syphilis, and that was very encouraging news to me.

Not that I had any thoughts of going out and seeking prostitutes or anything. I don't realize it. I didn't realize there were many prostitutes around, but the Native girls probably were the culprits, and this was our first visit to Fort Raleigh, and I found out that they had just come off maneuvers, and they were back in camp, living a garrison life, and they were going to renew their training with new personnel.

Now, when speaking of June the 1st, 1944, we're coming very close to a very important day, meaning the entrance into the Normandy beachhead across the English Channel when we first got into the European continent, and I was sent into a company, a 7th Armored Infantry Battalion, commanded by a Colonel Arthur D. Poiner, and he's a 1939 graduate of West Point. He came from the state of Washington, and in our battalion were a thousand men, roughly speaking, give or take 20 to 30.

We were three companies whose names were A, B, and C. We had a Headquarters Company. We had a C Company.

Each of the line companies, such as A, B, and C, had 242 men total personnel, made up of several squads of 12 men to a squad, each squad riding in their own personnel carrier known as a half track, driven by a technician, 5th grade, a T-5, known as T-5 Corporal, and the squad, platoon, or the Company A platoon would be led by a 2nd or 1st Lieutenant. The Company Commander was a Captain, platoon leaders were 2nd Lieutenants, Tech Sergeants were the platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeants were squad leaders, Buck Sergeants were assistant squad leaders, and you had your T-5 driver, and your riflemen, watermen, machine gunmen, heavy, light, and you had your infantry company. Five line companies, service company, and headquarters company.

Headquarters Company consisted of personnel from battalion headquarters, technicians, INR squads, or later known as suicide squads, intelligence squads, reconnaissance squads,

and there you had your battalion. A Company consisted of an unusual group of men at this point. The younger draftees were trained as divisions, most of you were all consistently the same age people, and they would go overseas, and some went into Africa and whatnot, like there was a 7th Armored Division went over, and practically that whole 7th Armored Division consisted of men who were trained in the 8th Armored Division.

Then when they went, this left a big vacancy, then replacements would be sent in, and the 8th Armored Division was again trained for combat, not knowing whether they go to, now this was division sometimes would go to the South Pacific, Australia, places like that, of course the European battlefield as far as Americans were concerned hadn't opened up quite, you know, at that point, and so this happened on, I think, two occasions. So the ones who were never sent out had been in training for like two years, and they were so fed up with bivouacs and 25-mile marches and going through rifle, you know, the rifle range tests, shooting at the target, you know, and it was kind of a demoralized outfit, and then the men coming in, they came in from Fort Raleigh, I had several going down with me from Fort Raleigh, Kansas, and they, the 8th Armored Division, and there were many came from the Army Special Training Corps who were fellows who were in the various universities taking special courses, some came from the Air Force, they were surplus personnel now considered in non-essential positions, and they were fodder for the replacement category, and of course this took in many of the friends that you met here, McDonald and those, I can name a whole bunch of them.

So we got together, and we started getting acquainted, and the fellows, there was a special camaraderie in this group. Those who were the old-timers finally took us under their wing. They looked at us when we first came in with a gun, and we returned it.

But we got to know each other. So I was placed in Company A, and I became a bunkmate of a fireman from Milwaukee, a Bob Eilman, and he was quite a nice guy, and I learned about his family, and on the other side was a fellow from Connecticut, and I learned a little bit about his family. He was a young fellow, and then I learned about this fellow and that fellow, and then we saw that we did have some who were a little detrimental to our cause, but we all got along real good.

So then we were being prepared for the third time as a division for a combat.

[Speaker 2]

Q. What was your job in the company?

[Speaker 1]

A. So my, at that point, I had no special job, and after I was there in Company A, a short time, for some reason, they shipped me across the field to Headquarters Company, and they put me in the INR Suicide Squad, and I wasn't adept at getting on a jeep radio and say over and out. That meant nothing to me.

I didn't seek to command anybody. I didn't seek to be a man of authority. I just wanted to be GI Joe.

I was very happy with that, and I wanted to make sure I learned to protect myself for future reasons, and so while I was over there, it was interesting because I had a family picture sent

to me of my wife and the two kids. She was holding one in each arm, and she had a frame. It was like a five-by-seven, and the lieutenant who was head of our squad, he came by one day, and he stopped so suddenly, he almost fell, and he says, Private Bob, is that your family?

I said, yes, sir, and he looked an awful long time. He picked up the picture, and he himself was a married man without children, and he asked how old they were, and I gave him the background such as I explained here, how they were born and so forth, and he says, well, it's a fine family, and that was it. So about maybe about two weeks later, I was transferred back to A Company.

Well, the Normandy invasion took place in the meantime, and what rumor had gone around that we were headed for the South Pacific, which we truly were, and we were given tropical clothing, in fact, and getting extensive training, and movies that were showing serials of the training films relating to South Pacific and the mosquitoes, the malaria, and so on, how you combat these things. So then the Battle of the Bulge came up while we got that far, and things didn't look good over there for us, and they decided all at once we were going to be leaving South Hanford for the European Theater of Operations, and we wouldn't take part in the Battle of the Bulge per se, but we'd be in the cleanup operation the way it was shown to us. So we're getting now into October, and I was called to the commanding command post of our company, and our company commander was Richard Volk.

Richard Volk was German-born, an extremely nice man, extremely good leader, an old soldier, and he had a lot of compassion about him, and there was no reason to believe that he was anything but American, although we were aware that he had a mother and father living in Germany, and how or why he migrated to the United States, he'd been over for years, he had no accent whatsoever, German accent, married an American woman, had, I believe, a child at that point, he was our company commander.

I liked him very much, so no reason not to like him, and he called me in, he says, we have word that your dad is taking a hospital with a cancer and will be operated on. He says, we're going to send you home with emergency furlough, and this is very interesting, that Red Cross would handle these situations and provide money, if money was available in that particular chapter, it was well-funded, see, or it wasn't being drained by problems, such would happen in a big city like Philadelphia. So I was called in, and then the Red Cross officer came in and interceded for me, and gave me a check for \$50, which at that time covered my transportation by train to Philadelphia and back, and I said, well, I'll see if they get this money back, but I didn't know how I was ever going to pay it with my small paycheck.

My wife was receiving an allotment of \$100 a month for her, she and her two children, so now you realize how dependent we were on her parents, who were providing probably three times that for their upkeep, because when she was home, when I left home, we had something like 24 bottles of Similac preparation in the refrigerator at all times, and we'd buy Similac by the case, and the druggist was very nice and would give it to me at discount. So I got home and saw my dad, and he was going through an operation, and of course the techniques for such an operation was cancer of the rectum, and it was in a bad spot, but they hadn't made much progress in combating this through surgery in that particular area, and my uncle, his brother, the doctor, consulted with a surgeon, and my uncle told me that it didn't look good.

So I had to go back to camp, and I was back at camp, and just a week or so, on the 25th of October, I received the telegram that I was expecting about my dad's death, and I had taken a check back, my wife, somehow, and where she got the money, she says, take this \$50 check back with you and give it to the Red Cross and pay for it. So I had done this, like I was about to do, I really had to check and give it to them, I had it in my hand, and I got called, and the Red Cross called me again, and says, we'll give you the \$50 to go home. I said, I have a check here, by the way, I want to give to you, and I said, now I want you to take it, and if you want to make, all right, and you want to make out another check for me to go home, all right, but take this now.

They were reluctant to do this, my assistants, they took it. So I now received another \$50, so I had come home and attended the funeral, and went right back, and I didn't have \$50 to take back this time, and I didn't see the Red Cross officer to tell them that what my intentions would be, but in my heart, I said I would repay this, and the years after I returned, I kept my promise, I'll put it that way, and it was only a very short time, we, I guess that was now, yeah, I was hardly back in about three days, and we were shipping out, going up to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, by way of the train, and there a short time, and I know by your tapes, probably you know much about the Samaria, the HMS Samaria, a troop ship which accommodated our battalion in its entirety, I believe, and Company A was learning a new experience, the English were quite good to us, among my friends was Manny Cramp, a Jewish fellow who came down for Fort Raleigh with me, and who lived in New Jersey, and he was in the appliance business, in private life, and he was very much interested in the dice games that took place on the board ship, you hear much about those?

[Speaker 2]

Not yet, go ahead.

[Speaker 1]

So we were on approximately, I think, 11 day journey, you may have heard it otherwise, 11 days it took us, on a zigzag course, going south through the Gulf Stream, and the weather was quite good, warm, for this time of year at sea, but not too rough, only on about two occasions, I'm not adept at deep sea fishing, the last time I got seasick, I was crabbing in New Jersey about 25 feet offshore in Aruba, and if I ride a furry boat that shakes a little bit, I might get a little seasick, crossing the Delaware, and I'm not exaggerating, I'm very touchy with that sort of thing, but we were aboard a ship, and we had our experience of seasickness, but we occupied ourselves with dice games, poker games, everybody seemed to have some money, I didn't have much personally, but some of the fellas had quite a bankroll, and then they were, again, I use the word adept so much, you'll have to forgive me, but rolling the dice, and I'm not adept, I should say luck perhaps, who knows when seven's going to come up, the right occasion or the wrong occasion, for some it came up at the right occasion, and I remember Sergeant Potacary, who made 17 straight passes, and he was a Chicago fellow, who was killed in action, unfortunately, our first week, and the crap games in Crete were very large, and the pots at times were 100, 200 dollars, and then the games, see the game locations, I'll put it, decreased, as the money started to end up in fewer hands, and so one of the fellas who was quite lucky was Matty Cramp, and he, money meant nothing to us at this point, we thought, well, we got money, you're going to spend it, the first chance you get, because you never get a chance to spend it on the way back, if you're coming back,

which was the question mark, and Matty was very good to me, and we, through a great volume, found an English sailor board, who had access to the mess hall, who furnished us with nice meat sandwiches, meat that wasn't mutton, mutton which we saw much out in Orange Marmalade, which was in abundance, we had good bread for some reason, good hard crusted baked bread, that was good, and we slept in hammocks, it was a stretched neck type hammock I had, I think they had the solid canvas ones also, one on top of the other, and that kind of helped me to combat my seasickness, because being on the hammock kind of ruled the boat, and then by laying on my back, that kind of kept me quiet, and then when I want to go upstairs, if I didn't go upstairs, if I tried to sit upright down below deck, that's when it would hit me, I'd run up steps and get up as fast as I could, and then I'd be all right, get into the activity of things, walking around, jumping with the fellas, one little experience we had coming over about mid-ocean I guess, it was one of those chilly mornings, and for some reason, I don't know why we weren't going anywhere outside the ship, they got us up for a four o'clock short arm inspection, I don't know how far I could go with short arm explaining that, but this is when you you're completely undressed, and your genitals are examined very carefully, they want to make sure that your last pass in New York didn't pay ill dividends, and our sole clothing for this inspection was putting on a GI raincoat, a GI raincoat wasn't the kind that you'd find in Macy's men's department, it was a, we didn't have plastic in those days, it was kind of rubberized fabric with a very rubberized lining, and if you put one of those on the rainy day over a uniform, you would just create moisture, you know, but to put it on this cold morning when we went up on top deck, and this cold morning, four o'clock in the morning, and the wind blowing, and standing there, we felt absolutely ridiculous, and the medics felt likewise, well that's, it was one of our experiences, we did get into our Port of Deportation in the channel there, and I'm trying to think exactly the name of that particular area where we came in, it's in here, and we were heading for the Tidworth Barracks, and we had no idea where they were, but it was a train ride of short duration, it was a tent city, and we became quite comfortable here, the weather in England was typical English weather, as we read about often, being much rain, overcast, cool, getting into the winter time, and our tent city, of course, didn't have paved streets or pavements, it was dirt, and we set up a series of wooden planks for walkways, wooden pavements, or whatever we had, which would actually accommodate a single person going in one direction, so that if you came against someone coming the opposite direction, one of you would have to condescend to be a gentleman, and on one occasion, I remember, I had just come from the shower that we had improvised, it was quite adequate, in a Quonset hut, where we had good hot water fired by, boiler fired by soft coal, and I was coming back to my tent, which was a probably a walking distance of a food city block, and a half or so, and I was being encountered by a Major Shiggin, a West Point graduate, one of our battalion officers, and as I was about to put my foot off the walkway, he says, stop, and he got up and stepped in the mud, and insisted I pass him, he's a West Point man, a real gentleman, I think, and I told him I would give him an extra salute, which he brought a smile to his face, but he was a man you could, one of the officers that you could talk to, and at this point too, we found an atmosphere of relaxation between the enlisted man and the officer now, the officer in garrison in the United States, you held in awe a little bit, he might be even a younger man, but see you catered to the point of respecting the, of course, the grade, and this is what they said, when you salute an officer, you're not saluting the man, you're saluting his insignia, his, what he stands for, who he is, he's the United States Army officer, whether Lieutenant or

Brigadier General, whatever, and the man himself may not be to your liking, but this, you overlook, and it's very true.

Now, shortly before we had left the States, I want to go back just a second to Lieutenant Volk, nothing was ever said about Lieutenant Volk, his German background, aboard ship, he actually gave us lessons in German, and he wanted us in the worst way to learn German expressions, and, but he was relieved of his command, just before we left the States, and was replaced by Captain Joseph Sill Finley, Irish to the core, fine man, but I kind of leaned towards Volk, but we always felt, because of Volk's German background, Volk spelled V-O-L-K, that they felt there might be a question mark when we got on German soil, this was to be proven so wrong, so wrong.

I could get ahead of my story, it wouldn't hurt, but when we finally reached combat later, Lieutenant Volk was the fiercest, most aggressive fighter, who expressed a deep hate for the German cause, not for the German soldier, not as we could, although we said we hated the German soldier, he was shooting at us, sure, we wouldn't like anybody shooting at us, regardless of who he was, but the German, what they had done, what we had learned, what we learned to be the truth and all, and he was concerned with his own parents, and he had earned, in five days of combat, aside from getting frozen feet and such fatigue, he earned a silver star. He was never promoted beyond a captain again, and later was involved with doing work, I'm trying to think of the word, but he got into the military government after the hostilities had ceased, and because of his ability to speak fluently and write fluently, the German language he was used, and he left, actually, the division.

I met him later, and we had quite a chat, but our military setup in England at Tidworth was very unusual, the tents were lined up very nicely, we had good chow facilities, of course, we're using our mess kits extensively now, on occasion, as a part of our training, we were being served K-rations, C-rations, to become familiar how to prepare them, this was just before preparatory to actually going into combat, we were getting our vehicles ready, they were being crated and shipped to us from across the channel, and then what we did, we utilized the wood crates to great advantage, not only for firewood, not only to refurbish our walkways, but we actually put wooden floors in our tents, to some extent we had walls put up to where the curvature of the tent came down, giving us added protection against the cold of the early winter weather coming, and we had a very home-like atmosphere, and then the vehicles themselves, we had quite a lot to do in running those, preparing the guns, getting the ammunition aboard, knowing the right place to put all these things so they could be grabbed very fast, and how not to do anything to malfunction the guns, and then we came upon an idea that perhaps we didn't have as many vehicles as we'd like to have, and we had already secreted the board through some mean of disguise, or we kind of changed the orders that we had in regard to the equipment, we'd add a figure here and a figure there, and we would add perhaps, we added an ammunition carrier to which we weren't entitled, but we put it on ourself on the order sheet, and we didn't realize that we were using a duplicate copy, that someone else from the ordnance would have the original copy, which wouldn't have the information we were putting on, and it was the experience of hijacking one or two jeeps, and in one case I think they thought they were going to get an army tank, and I don't know what they thought a rifle platoon was going to do with an army tank, but one occasion we tried to actually stole a jeep from the military police in Tidworth, England, and so what we did when we got them, there was nothing they could do, we got

them aboard, and there was nothing to do, and we got the other side but unloaded them, and there was no place to put them except in our hands and drive them away, and this is what happened. Some of this equipment, fortunately too, was sent to Liverpool, which was a different area from where we came in, and so that gave us a good alibi, saying the orders had been changed from the other port of embarkation and so on.

Technicalities had come into it, that's what it was, and then the stolen vehicles, they were taken up to our company area from the town, and we had a team of workers there with paint cans who immediately painted off the former numbers and the units that were painted on the vehicles, and then placed our own company A, a former division, put serial numbers that meant nothing, changed them around, mixed HLOs and such like that. It worked out rather well, I think somebody used paint dryer also.

And so this was something else, and so of course we went across the channel, the carriers, equipment carriers taking us across, we were quite crowded with the excess equipment we had. Furniture, we needed some furniture for our tents, we'd like to have a chair, we'd like to have a table. We stole these, we'd go into the pubs and we'd start mock fights, and enough to get the bartender running out or something, and then after they disappeared, a couple chairs and tables would disappear, and we'd have them back in Porto Vecchio and back in the camp area.

So word got around that somebody was stealing furniture at Tidworth. Now this word got to battalion headquarters. Well, A Company was only one company in the battalion, but the colonel, when he heard about this, he says, GD says, there's only one company would do this, and that's A Company, Finley's outfit.

He said, I know, that's where they are. He says, B Company, no problem, C Company, no trouble. Service Company, very quiet headquarters, we know where they are.

Who knows where A Company is? Well, we gained a reputation by now as being the gambling-est, cursing-est, drinking-est, sexiest company in the whole division. Company A, the goof-offs we got dubbed, and we were proud of it.

We were proud of it. Not that we were all involved individually with all these four vices, but we did have one man. We called him Benny Marr, and we nicknamed him Stud.

Well, it wasn't that he was so, what do you say, prolific with the women, but perhaps it was perversion that he had, physically speaking, he may have been called Stud. We'll put it that way. So we had all kinds of names.

Our own captain was known as Jim Mill Joe, who came from New York City. His wife, Rita, was a model, good-looking woman. And Joe himself, he was a real down-to-earth Irish fellow, first class.

He'd gamble on anything. He would gamble. He would come out the rifle range with a company.

He would take on Major Wolf from the battalion headquarters in five hours a shot, and Major Wolf always beat him. Joe would be happy anywhere as long as he had a bottle within reach. And he had his preferences, which we learned of later.

I learned after the war, where I visited Joe, and he was in the advertising department of the Good Housekeeping magazine. He had a rather good job. And I went up to visit him, and after the war, first time I'd seen him, he'd been taken off the battlefield and wounded.

And we got chatting. So he says, well, look, he was in his office when he was speaking to me. It was getting near the lunch hour, and he asked me to meet him across the street in the Aberdeen Hotel.

And he says meet. So he didn't ask me to meet him in the dining room because that would be out of character. He had me meet him in the Wellington Bar.

And I relate this story to his. I'll put it on here. And so I went over, preceded him, and the bartender inquired about my presence, and I told him the gentleman I was to meet who was very familiar to the bartender.

And so in time, Joe came over, and we fellowshiped together at the bar, which was, for me at that time, a very unfamiliar experience. During the Army days, I'll confess that I was not foreign to any liquid content or any alcoholic content of liquid, we'll put it that way. And so when I came to the bar, I settled for a scotch and water for one of the selection.

And Joe ordered a large glass of gin. Well, when he said gin, I could only think back on his nickname, Jim Mill Joe. And the bartender brought out a sizable glass that I thought would satisfy any normal human being, but Joe wasn't a normal human being.

He wanted an extra large glass, and it was accommodated by the bartender and re-accommodated and re-accommodated. And he wasn't about to go back to the office that afternoon to conclude his business there. He was going his way home to take a nap, I'm sure.

We had a nice time. And I only saw him on one other occasion, and that was in New York, a New York reunion of the 8th Army Division, and it was somewhere in the 1960s. And we were at the Sheridan Hotel, and our executive director, Henry B.

Rothenberg, an attorney of Chicago, was the director of the division association, asked me to be hospitable towards Joe Finley and Ian McLaughlin, that's a scotch spelling, M-A-C-L-A-C-H-L-A-N. And the two of them were there. I didn't have a personal relationship with Ian.

He came, he was of our battalion, and the brief period I was with the headquarters company back in the States, he was a company commander of the headquarters company. And I was in for kind of a surprise in meeting these two men, and we were in the hospitality suite of the division headquarters at the Sheridan Hotel, and when I was asked to be hospitable to them, as a former president of the association, we sought out the bar in the hospitality suite. And so we were there, we drank to past occasions a few, several times.

And Joe, I think he felt his need to go, to leave, for fear his wife would be looking for him. She kept a close eye on him, and she didn't want him around us, because she knew of his weakness, I guess, for alcohol. I could see through that.

And so that left me with Ian McLaughlin. And we got talking, and so after a few drinks, he'd been a major, I'd been a corporal. Our relationship was on a one-to-one basis now, and this was typical of all Company A occasions.

Whether Major General John Matthew Devine was there, he was my dad. He was no longer my commanding general, and, or if I was with Private Wheeler, who was still the same, and so on.

[Speaker 2]

Was Flynn badly wounded?

[Speaker 1]

He was wounded in the leg, somehow. No, it wasn't too badly. He didn't lose a leg or anything.

In fact, he wasn't, he had a slight limp. And when he was being carried off the Siegfried line, he says, well, fellas, I hate to leave you, but boy, when they get me back out, I'm sure going to have a drink. Which was typical of Joe.

[Speaker 2]

He was hurt early then?

[Speaker 1]

Yes, yeah, about the sixth day of the week we were there in Munich, Sinsburg, Germany. Our, yeah, our objective there was Trier, Germany, which is that old, old city of Germany. One of the old cities that's not in Bavaria, you see.

And they have buildings date back to the 13th century, I believe, in Trier. We never did see it. Quite a large city.

And I wasn't a student of geography on that occasion to know exactly what Trier was. It could have been a small town to me. I didn't realize it's such a large city.

And this was it. We never did, you know, achieve that objective as a company. We achieved our objective as going under the baptism of fire and learning real quick what combat was, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

People said it was, it was a surprise in a lot of ways and also very cold.

[Speaker 1]

Extremely cold, yeah. That's why I said, one of the comments that 10 below zero was average temperature right then. And we learned later they referred to that as one of the colder winters of Germany when they do become very, very cold.

So getting back to Ian McLaughlin, we had in relationship with Ian McLaughlin, another fellow officer whose name I'll elaborate on later was Grover Herman. I mentioned to you about Mr. Herman. And Ian McLaughlin told me he worked for the Martin Marietta Corporation.

I didn't tell you this. And so I said, yes, Mack, Mack we referred to, of course. I said, yes, Mack, I heard something about Mr. Herman. I said, I want to know more about this. And he said, I said, what was the story with Grover? I said, I didn't know he came from such a rich background, his dad being quite wealthy.

And he said, yeah, he says he told us that any of the officers who survived the war with him would have very good jobs at the worst conclusion. He would see to it. And so I said, well, I said, now I know Mr. Grover Herman is still living, the father. And I says, I know he's a very wealthy man having, I just learned at that time that he just gave three and a half million dollars to Northwestern University to build a library with his son's name as a memorial for his son to graduate also from Northwestern, I believe. And I said, the man must be very wealthy. Now, this is back in the 60s.

I'm talking to him. He says, yes, he is. He said, up until that time, he has given over 40 million dollars to charities.

Now, I'm going back 20 some years there. And he says he's a very humble type man. And he doesn't seek the limelight in any way.

In fact, he seeks to avoid it. And he says that he has an office in Chicago that has nothing to do, a very large office there, has nothing to do but take care of his personal business. And I said, what's your job?

He says, well, he gave me a business card that said director of public or a director of industrial relations, office on Park Avenue, New York City. And I took it from that card. He held a rather fine position.

And I learned later he held a very fine position. And I said, well, you took it, you did seek Mr. Hermes. He said, yes.

He said, I saw him mainly to tell him about Grover being killed in action. And he also consoled me. He said, quoting McLachlan, he consoled me, he said, regarding bringing his body back or not.

And I told him to leave it right where it was in Luxembourg. So this is what's happened there. So he has pictures of the graves.

The father has, and all his son's belongings and mess kits and everything was sent back to him. So later years, I had, of course, written to Mr. Hermes to tell him what we all thought of him as an enlisted man, thought of his son as an officer, was a captain, and who died on only the third day in combat. And he was leading his men into a forward war position, we'll put it that way.

And in doing so, he exposed himself to a sniper who killed him instantly by a single shot in his head. And this is when all the dreams of the officers of the 7th Battalion, Joe Finley told

me later, he said, boys, when he dies, there went my dream of a good job. He said, boy, he was an ace of a guy.

He meant what he said. And of course, it would have been a fact that he would have been heard in his father's position as chairman of the board of the Martin Marietta Corporation, I'm sure. And I would have invited him to our reunion.

Everything on the house, this way it would have been, I know. And so now I went off my track. But getting back to Tidworth, we had many experiences there.

And we were able to go in town, purchase little cursing lamps, which we used to write, the light of which we used to write our letters home. Our letters were being rather severely censored. And they were very careful what we wrote.

And if we weren't careful, Captain Finley was very efficient in reading letters. And he also delegated this authority down through the platoon leaders, the lieutenants, and even the first sergeant we understood was reading some of the letters and censoring them. And because of the volume of letters that was going out, we were at this point positioning ourselves to get all the news home because we knew there would be very soon a chance we'd never be writing anything for a long while.

And we proved this to be right. So I was a very prolific letter writer. And Finley commented to me over there, he says, Hey, but, Bob, what do you got, a mimeograph machine in your tent?

And, but what I found out too, that these officers who were censoring my letters, were censoring them, and at the same time, getting the gist of the letter, learning of my feelings towards my family, and what they meant to me. And I'm sure they got this feeling from other letters. But my family, in some respects, was unique to one officer in particular there, Lieutenant Morty Hammerschmidt, who also came from a wealthy family, we learned, Chicago.

And so I think this letter was the means of me being put into a position where I was kept off a hotspot many times. I traveled with the company headquarters platoon. And then as soon as we would get a billet on occasion, whether it was in the combat zone or a rest area, then I would actually do get into clerical work while the rest were cleaning up the wetland.

Of course, I was cleaning up too, but I was helping with mail, I was helping with citation writing. And I was also doing billeting work. If we were about to come off a combat zone area, I'd be sent back to a town.

I'd be given a jeep. Of course, I'd be given a map and a flashlight. And it was up to me to find this town.

And fortunately in Europe, as we traveled about, this is interesting, World War II through Germany, they kind of goofed up, the Germans did. They left all their signs intact. And when they said a certain town, they pointed to a certain direction and gave the kilometer distance.

They were accurate. We never was deceived. Very orderly people.

Yes. And for the intelligence of the German people, their high command and all, they did these stupid things also. And I could never figure that out.

And this was very helpful to me. Except on one occasion, they must have removed the sign that said...