

**A Veterans Oral History**  
Heritage Education Commission  
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Moorhead, MN

**Clark Christianson**  
Narrator

**Unknown**  
Interviewer

**CC:** Clark Christianson and I'm just thinking about some of my experiences in World War II. I was out in California working at Benicia Arsenal when my buddy and I were drafted. And the first time, we were turned down because of various disorders; and the second time we were both drafted and we came back home. I was registered in Fargo, he was registered at Fergus; so I transferred to Fergus and was drafted from there. We went to Fort Snelling, came home together, and went on the same train together leaving Fort Snelling when we got back. But his half went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and my half went to Camp Robinson, Arkansas. And I never saw him again until after the war was over.

I took my basic training in Camp Robinson, Arkansas, Branch Immaterial, which simply means that they don't know where to put you; they send you there and give you a basic infantry training. I had a little carpenter experience, so I guess that's why they sent me to the Special Service Engineers; and I wound up in Company E, 333rd Engineers. We were at Marion, Ohio, when I joined the outfit; and about the only thing I can remember, we were working at a Quartermaster Depot, mostly putting in railroad crossings. But my company got called to Columbus, Ohio, to put in a [unclear] stand for the Air Force.

I signed up as a truck driver. And we used Air Force trucks, Oshkosh 7.5 ton trucks; great, big, real nice trucks. And we were hauling cinders for this [unclear] stand. The trucks had a two-yard box on them, and we filled it with cinders. I don't think it was 500 pounds on them, but that's the way we did it. We used those trucks. And later on, I noticed on the way back to camp, back to Marion, I saw a listing and I was listed as a truck driver, light and good. And I'd never driven even a jeep at that time ... so much for the Army list stuff.

Anyway from Marion, Ohio, we went to Yuma, Arizona, in December of '42; and we were around there, oh, about eight-nine months. I was in Yuma for six months. We went on [unclear] maneuvers; and I was between Banning and Beaumont, California for a couple of months. And I asked for a leave to go home.

No, I didn't want to go home. I wanted to go to Washington, where my folks were. And my girlfriend was going to meet us and we were going to get married at my folk's place. I asked for a leave about two weeks ahead of time; and my commanding officer said, "That's fine." He says, "I'll fix it right up." And I went to town and called my girlfriend, and told her I'll meet her out at Everett, Washington. I got back to camp, and my furlough was lying on the desk but it wasn't signed yet. I went out and looked at the bulletin board and all furloughs were cancelled.

From there we went to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, where the outfit was activated. Then there we had a refitting, of course. When we got done with more training and the refitting why we got 10 days leave and that's when I went home and I got married on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1943. We were together for two-and-a-half days; and after that, I didn't see my wife for two years and three months. I was overseas two years and two months of that.

So I went out of New York, and I can't remember the name of the ship; but we were in convoy and it took us 11 days to get to Liverpool. From Liverpool we took a train and went down to Ludgershall and – no, that wasn't the first. We were in Ludgershall for a day or two. Then we went to Crawley Copse, which is about five miles out of Winchester, England.

A gardener told us that the Crawley Copse was where the Germans took their aiming point for bombing of Southampton. He said he'd seen a lot of Germans go over and he'd seen the Spitfires take out a lot of them. They lost all the Spitfires but he said there wasn't any Germans left either when they got done.

There I did carpenter work in Ludgershall. I can't even remember the name of the town, so I can't spit it out right now. That's where I lost my finger in a saw. I was sawing with a powered Skil saw, and I slipped on the ice and I got my hand in where it's not supposed to be and I lost a finger. It didn't bother me much but they kept me in the hospital quite a while.

From there we went to Wales. We were in Wales for about two to three months; from there went to Cherbourg, France. And we went into Cherbourg the day it fell. My company went in the day after it fell. I take that back. First Battalion went in the day it fell. Anyway, I was on the mine

squad for about six months, picking up mines around Cherbourg. Whenever we weren't on the mine squad then we worked down on the docks, and we rebuilt the port of Cherbourg. It used to be the biggest passenger port in the world, before airplanes. Now the ferries don't even run in there.

I worked on the docks doing carpenter work. And while I was there I got taken over to a pile driver and the first day I fired the pile driver. Never fired an engine like that before in my life, and nobody else had either. There were five of us and another guy operated the first day and the next day we traded positions. About the fourth or fifth day the guy in charge of the whole works, who had operated a [unclear] in the oil fields, he got sick, so I took over. I was on that floating pile driver for about three weeks and doing everything.

And [unclear] a little bit after that lieutenant called me in and says, "Got to send you up to the quarry to do some demolition." I said, "I'm not a demolition man." Well he said, "You're on the mine squad aren't you?" So okay, I can blow up dynamite as well as anybody else. I was up to the quarry just keeping the crusher going, breaking the stuff up enough so we could get it over to the crusher and in the crusher while they were getting ready for a big blast up on top. I was up there for three-four weeks working with one Frenchman.

After that my company went to a little town of Bricquebec. We were there for, oh, I guess a month. Then we went to Le Havre for about three weeks, building up the cigarette camps. We went to Germany to build railroad bridges in support of Patton's Third Army. And we built a lot of [unclear] under each rail. They were temporary bridges – but I always thought it was 70 – 83 bridges in 79 days, but I guess it was a fewer than that. It was about 79 bridges in 77 days. We built a lot bridges and I was in charge of two bridges, but mostly I ran a train.

We picked up a yard engine, and we'd have to haul the material down. We'd find the material in some German factory, and then we'd have to lay out a route. We had a German [unclear] that we used to find the stuff and lay out a route. Then we'd go out with our own speeder (?) and a few pieces of rail and blocked it up enough to run a train over. Wherever we found the material, the I-beams, we'd haul them down to the bridge.

After that we were in Mering, Germany, when the war ended. We had two bridges left to finish and we finished those. Then we went up to Starnberg Lake for a few days. We were supposed to be up there for eight weeks and then go to Japan. So they told us. Well our colonel couldn't bear to see us sitting around so he found us a job down by Reims. And my company

wound up at Suippes, which is a battleground of World War I. Anyway, we were pretty close to the little railroad car that Pershing signed the Peace Treaty in after World War I. It's out of Reims about 20 miles, I would say.

While I was there we build up the city camps to go home. And I did everything. I did carpenter work and I poured a lot of concrete. And mostly it was tent camps, but we built up a [unclear] or two, a Butler hangar and poured a concrete floor in it and that was our dance floor and also our recreation halls.

And while I was there, let's see, well about the only thing that's out of usual, I got called out to clear the right-of-way for a 30,000-volt highline. It was five miles of old line and eight miles of new line. And I wanted to cut down some trees. The lieutenant said we can't do that in France. And trees weren't worth anything. So I cleared the right-of-away and then I got called out and lieutenant called me in again. He said, "Now you can go cut down those trees you wanted to cut down." And I kind of blew my stack so I had quite an argument with the officer and there's a little more coming to that.

Anyway we cut the trees down. Then he gave me the job of – maybe it was punishment, I don't know – but he gave me the job of being boss from the American crew that worked with the French crew. So I had a French crew of six Frenchmen. None of them spoke English. One of them spoke fluent German and he was real good as an interpreter. My interpreter was supposed to be one of my truck drivers and he had a little high school French, and he was worthless. I'd see the French engineer, who spoke pretty good English. I'd see him maybe once a week or once every two weeks.

The Frenchman told us what to do and we did most of the work with our crew on most of the line. The five miles of old line we used the old wire and we just put on big insulators. And on the eight miles we used everything we had. We had A-frame poles, anything we could get. When it came to putting the wire on, they had solid aluminum wire you had to be real careful. Even the Frenchmen weren't allowed to carry a pair of pliers up a pole on the new wire. They used real long aluminum wire wrap to wrap them to the insulators; and then they covered that with an aluminum sheath straps; and they covered them over with that.

I don't know what happened to that line or how long they used it; but, anyway, it worked at the time. It was the big insulators that made a big difference. After that I really don't remember. I think that was the last odd job I had but I did everything in the service besides carpenter work.

**Interviewer:** Can you go back to just before you got to Starnberg Lake, you went through Munich and Camp Dachau. Dachau [unclear] and comment?

**CC:** Yes, while we were at Munich, we visited Dachau which had been liberated, I'd say, a week before we were there. We went just for a visit, one day. And I've got pictures of the graves and the carts that the Germans used to haul the bodies out to the grave. I understand when our troops went into Dachau they found 3,000 bodies waiting to be cremated. The crematorium was shut down. Either they were short of gas, or they knew we were coming, so they shut them down on purpose. I really don't know. Anyway they say that our troops found 3,000 bodies. And when we visited, they were still hauling the bodies out. So I'd seen the bodies lying around in Dachau. I got quite a picture of the grave.

**Interviewer:** Could you comment on what the local Germans did during the clean-up operation at Dachau?

**CC:** I suppose, the military made the German civilians in Dachau, who claimed they didn't know anything about the camp and you could smell it, you know, way downwind for many miles. They said they didn't know anything about the camp; so what they did for punishment, I guess, they made them haul the bodies out. They'd have their little wagons and maybe one horse, maybe two; and sometimes a horse and a cow, sometimes a couple of cows – no oxen that I saw – but they'd hook them up just like horses. And maybe they'd pull them by hand.

They hauled five or six or seven bodies on a cart and they'd haul them out and put them in the grave that the Americans had bulldozed out and then the Americans bulldozed shut up the hole. When I saw the grave, I suppose there was 50 feet exposed. And the bodies were laying, I'd say, about five deep and two across. It didn't really smell as bad as you thought it would because they were all skin and bones; that's all there was.

**Interviewer:** You had some experience on the Seigfried Line?

**CC:** No, we just went through that's all.

**Interviewer:** Tell us what that looked like from your experience.

**CC:** A whole bunch of concrete, I don't know, barricades, I guess. Looked like dragon's teeth, mostly.

**Interviewer:** Do you think it stopped tanks?

**CC:** That's what it was for to stop tanks. I don't know if it stopped them or not.

**Interviewer:** You set up the display in, I think, Reims; or helped set up the display in Reims. Could you comment on the weaponry that you saw there or worked with?

**CC:** Yes, I was called out to Reims, I think it was in the city hall to set up. I was in charge of the swing shift; and I remember being outside was a V-2 rocket, a V-1 rocket, a German miniature sub, and I really can't remember what else. I really don't know what they put inside. I know we built walls; that's all we did. And just what it wound up as, I don't remember – never knew.

**Interviewer:** You had experience with the V-1s when you were coming across the Channel?

**CC:** We heard the V-1s go over us. They were bombing England, and that's what they were sending over to London. We went out of Plymouth, I think, and landed on Utah Beach. We went across on an English ship.

**Interviewer:** How do they sound?

**CC:** Oh, "flup-bup" is all I can remember.

**Interviewer:** A very strange sound. And then you also worked with the captured German 88s?

**CC:** Yes, when we first got into Cherbourg, the First Sergeant told me I had one day more experience in mines and booby traps than anybody else. So he asked if I'd go on a mine squad. I picked my partner and two guys from each company formed a regimental mine squad and we picked up mines around Cherbourg. For about the six months we were there picking up mines.

My friend, just from my company, and I got called out to deactivate a German 88. It was in a field of four 88s, and we just deactivated one. And we didn't find too much. We found the breech was full of TNT and the fuse had gone out. It was a timed fuse on it that had gone out. Then we found one hand grenade hanging down behind an angle iron over the German 88. We just deactivated it and they were going to send it into Ordnance, send it back to the States and Ordnance was going to look at it and see why it worked so good. German 88 was a real good – I don't know much about artillery.

**Interviewer:** Could you talk a little bit about living conditions? You talked about your travel, your movement through Europe. Talk about what it was like to live in a war situation.

**CC:** We were in tents almost all the time. I'll take that back. In England we were in tents almost all the time or in Romney huts a little while. In Wales we were in ix-man tents. And in Cherbourg my company was billeted in an old, Catholic schoolhouse, right across from the Catholic Church and where the rest of the companies were.

The only thing that I know about it was I was acquainted down on the docks and in the quarry and then on the mine squad. We ran the town of Cherbourg. We had the water points. We ran the electric station and we ran the town, you might say. I never had anything to do with other companies.

Then all the way through Germany, we were in tents most of the time. We had a hotel for a few days in Mering, Germany. When we got back to France, then we were in tents again. So I did most of my living in tents.

**Interviewer:** What about the food?

**CC:** Yes, the food was company mess all the time regardless. I used to go up and see one of the Frenchmen that built the highline and we'd always have dinner up there. I think it was on Sundays, we used go up there. And she served chicken and once in while it was rabbit. Hare, I suppose, would be the proper name. Anyway she was a real good cook. She was homely as a mud fence but she was a good cook. That's about all I can say about that. I don't even remember being in a restaurant, but I must have been in Paris but I don't remember.

**Interviewer:** Could you comment on mail from your wife when you got married, your family and how it came through?

**CC:** Mail come through pretty good, as I remember. It came a little bit in bunches, of course; but as I remember, it was pretty good. And I wrote home a lot.

**Interviewer:** Have you wanted to go back to visit Germany or France?

**CC:** Oh, yes, I would have liked to gone back. I didn't think I could make it. I couldn't afford it either. Last year they had a ship that went out of Plymouth, I think, out of one of the English ports. And it was supposed to spend two days in Cherbourg and that would be at the docks that we rebuilt.

Anyway I couldn't go but they were going to stay two days in Cherbourg and visit the landing points ... Omaha Beach and Utah Beach. I never went on that trip but I would have liked to go.

**Interviewer:** Talk a little bit about your return to the United States and how you got back with your wife and family.

**CC:** I came back and I had to meet my wife and a girlfriend that she'd known for years. They had been best friends that stood up for each other when they were married. She stood up for us when we were married, and my wife stood up for them when, when she got married. I never met her husband, but he went over to Europe, too, a little later than I did. I don't remember just which outfit he was in, but I had the records one time when I transferred, before we went home.

We transferred into two or three different outfits. And the last one we that we transferred into, I knew he was in the same outfit. He'd been transferred into it, too. So I asked at the orderly desk if anybody knew this guy. "Yeah, he's playing cards in a tent right up here." So we came back on the same boat together. And the boat was [unclear] the 2<sup>nd</sup> and was a converted troop ship out of an old [unclear] passenger liner. And it took us 11 days to get out of La Havre. It took us 11 days to get back to New York, but that trip was fine.

The ship rode real good. It pitched a little but it didn't bother us any. We were in the middle of the ship and we were about 500 miles out of New York, and it was quite a breeze and all of a sudden the engines stopped. We sat there for a couple hours and that was the first time the ship rolled, that I know of. And it rolled enough so a lot of mess kits and stuff come down off of the overhead pipes, you know. We were running around ... dust and newspapers and dirt, but before that it rode nice. It wasn't long enough for anybody to get sick or anything like that.

Then we got into New York, and I don't remember how long. We landed in New York on Thanksgiving Day of '45. Then we went to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. And I rode with another guy I had just met. He offered me a ride into Minneapolis. He was riding with his sister and brother-in-law, and somehow or another, the other guy that a friend of mine did go with him. He took the train back to Minneapolis and we were supposed to meet our wives in a certain hotel.

The guy that I was riding with got lost. He was going the wrong way on highway whatever it is and he wound up down in Iowa before he quit. So we spent part of a night in Iowa in a hotel room, and then we went and got back



to Minneapolis the next day. And they were wondering where I was, you know. I should have got there the night before.

**Interviewer:** Your brother was also in the service, can you talk about that, too?

**CC:** My brother was a carpenter and he was working at Everett, Washington, in the shipyards. And he had two kids at the time. He shouldn't have been called at all; but when I went overseas all of a sudden he just quit his job. And, of course, they drafted him right away. They sent him overseas. I'd been overseas since October of '43 and he come over, I think, in December of '44. He was in Paris for a while and then in Belgium, doing much the same as we were. I think it was a general engineers outfit that he was in.

So I got to see him in Paris one day. That's all I saw him overseas. And he got back just a day or two after I did.

**Interviewer:** Talk a little bit about your experience with the Germans, the people, if you can recall any conversations over there.

**CC:** The main thing I remember about the Germans was in Cherbourg. The regiment had 5,000 prisoners of war working for us. And we fed them well and we had enough. We had so few privates and PFCs in our outfit – we were all noncom. We had so few privates and PFCs that we didn't have enough for guards, so all of the noncoms were guards. I didn't work as much with them as some of them did, because I was out on the mine squad. But when I did have time off there, I'd be working down on the docks; and then I'd work with the German prisoners. We were never afraid because our prisoners were happy to be out of it. Like I say, they were well fed, and they'd had a rough time in the army. They didn't even want to go back Germany, at least not before the war was over.

So being a guard of prisoners and also being a foreman of the crew, I had to show them what to do. And how do you do that from being a guard and being 10 feet away from them? I'd been down underneath the docks with my pistol sticking up their face and never thought a thing about it, you know. We raided a prison camp on Christmas Eve, just when the Battle of the Bulge started. We got some sort of a message that they expected saboteurs to land on the beach, so I remember being out on a patrol. Then we raided the German prison camps. They were in pup tents. All we found was a couple of radios and a knife or two. We didn't find any firearm, but they really had filth and mice. So that's all. We never did find any saboteurs, at least not that I ever heard of.

**And the other experience that I had with German civilians was when we got to Mering, Germany. Before that we'd have the railroad battalion come up behind us. They'd be up to the bridge that was blown out. We had a bridge on each side of each company. They couldn't get to the other bridges and we'd be picking up our own yard engine.**

**In Mering, Germany, we found two steam engines, regular locomotives. They had an engineer, a fireman, a mechanic and they were available to us. Every morning that mechanic would have one of the engines fired up, ready to go. We had about 20 miles to one bridge and the other bridge was practically in town. We finished the one bridge and we had this train do all our riding. And those Germans, they were older fellows, of course. I don't think they'd ever been in the army, they'd just been on the railroad all their lives. They were real nice to get along with. They'd do anything for us. And I think we visited in the home of one of them.**

**Interviewer:** Did you have any experiences with the French people?

**CC:** I worked at the quarry doing demolition with one Frenchman. He and I got to be pretty good friends. I guess I was in his home once but I don't really remember. I think he was married. I don't think he had a family. Later on when we got back to France, then I had those six Frenchmen, and I'd take them home. They'd stay with us during the week. They'd find their own way to work Monday morning and they'd stay with us during the week. We'd haul them back and forth with the rest of the crew. And then on Friday nights, I'd take them home. I remember it was 125 miles round trip to take them all home. And, of course, stop at every place and have a drink.

**One of Frenchmen invited several of us, not necessarily our crew, but friends of mine and we'd go up and visit on a Sunday. We'd get up there about noon and she'd always have dinner for us. Then they'd have a dance in the village in the afternoon and we'd go in to that and then go home. So that's the only Frenchmen that I really got acquainted with.**

**Otherwise, I think, as a general rule, most GIs liked the Germans better than they did the French.**

**Interviewer:** Did you have occasion to meet any of the American generals in Europe?

**CC:** No.

**Interviewer:** Never saw them coming or never had [unclear]

**CC:** Well, I'll take that back. In England, I got a real sore throat and I was sleepy. I went on sick call. The doctor gave me two aspirins, marked me "duty," said I didn't have no fever, and I just told him, "You mark me whatever you please," but I says, "I'm going back to bed." And I went back to bed. And the First Sergeant knew me well enough so he backed me up, and the captain backed me up, too. And that's about the only general I ever met. I was lying in bed when they had a general inspection. And I lay in bed during the general inspection. But that's really the only time I remember talking to anything over a major, I guess.

**Interviewer:** You were one of the few soldiers that I've seen that was pretty good at taking pictures. How did you develop them and how did you get them home?

**CC:** I don't remember whether we developed them over there or ... maybe I sent the film home, I don't really remember. We must have had them developed in France, I don't know.

**Interviewer:** What did you notice about the countryside in Germany and France, anything unusual – roads?

**CC:** In France I don't remember seeing much unusual except the Maginot Line, I was down on that. You can't see much of that above the ground. Germany, especially up at Starnberg Lake, not too far out of Munich, and that was pretty. Of course, we were there in the latter part of May, just after the war ended.

**Interviewer:** You were going to Japan after you finished?

**CC:** That's what they told us.

**Interviewer:** What were your thoughts about fighting in that theatre?

**CC:** They didn't say anything about sending us home for 90 days or anything like that. It was just a rumor that we were scheduled to go to Japan. I don't know if we'd gone right from Germany, or if we'd gone back to the States first, or what.

**Interviewer:** It's just something you worried about?

**CC:** One of our lieutenants asked me if I'd re-up, and he said I'd be joining Headquarters Company. I'd go back to Germany in charge of all the [unclear] equipment. So what they were going to do, I don't know. Where

**they went in Germany, I don't know. Never heard anything more about the outfit, but I understand they went back to France.**

**Interviewer:** Did you make it to Berchtesgaden when you were in that part of Germany?

**CC:** No.

**Interviewer:** Did you know a lot of the stories with General Patton and what was going on in ...

**CC:** Oh, some, yes. That was when we built – in support of Patton's Third Army – the railroad bridges. We'd hear a little bit about it, but not much.

**Interviewer:** Did you do an allotment for your wife when you were in the service?

**CC:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Did you have a lot of worry about her or was the family taking care of her?

**CC:** She was only five miles from home in Fergus Falls. She worked at the state hospital. It was the state hospital in those days. And she was working in the doctors' kitchen, so I didn't worry much about her. But my folks were out in Everett, Washington, so I never saw my folks all the time. When I came home, I came home to Fergus. I only had two leaves [unclear] half a year.

I don't know if that's interesting or not, but we got married on the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month. So I applied for that 22/28, you know. We paid 22 and the government met it at 28 and sent your wife \$50 from the government. We got it for a whole month because we got married on the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month. The 21<sup>st</sup> of the month I made staff.

And at that time, the top three graders – the staffs and the techs and the master sergeants – got a dollar and a quarter a day, and that's what you got ... period. No funding for any kids or anything like that, that I can remember. Just a dollar and a quarter a day and [unclear]. I didn't have no kids, so I'd be money ahead taking that. I couldn't take that \$50 anymore, so I had to take the dollar and a quarter a day. So I got a dollar and a quarter a day for the eight-nine days of the month, besides already getting the \$50. When I got overseas, we'd been in England and we'd been in Wales and we'd been in France and we'd been in Germany and we went back to France. And I walked in the orderly room one day, and the clerk says, "Hey," he said, "you got some more money coming." And I said, "What happened now?"

**“Well,” he said, “somebody was looking up the blue (?) laws and he found out that in Great Britain, instead of a dollar and a quarter a day, it’s two dollars a day. He didn’t know what to do, so he wrote in to the head finance office, and they said, ‘Pay the man.’ Well,” he said, “if they paid him, they got to pay you guys.” The only stipulation was we hadn’t got busted, so we’re still a top three grader and we were still.**

**In the meantime they’d changed the rules, so you could take that 22/28 and if you had one kid, you got so much for the kid, so you’d make money if you had one kid. You’d make money going that way. It was a few of us in the company who still didn’t have any kids so we’d still draw the dollar and a quarter. About eight of us, I think, in the company that got 75 cents a day for every day we’d been in Great Britain. So that was kind of a bonus.**

**Interviewer:** When you got home, you didn’t stay in the Reserves?

**CC:** No.

**Interviewer:** You immediately got working in civilian life?

**CC:** Yes, I started working for Pete Bensmiller (sp?) in Fargo as a carpenter. I worked for him, I suppose, about a year; maybe less than that, and then he made me a foreman.

**Interviewer:** Why don’t you talk a little bit about what kind of records you have. I noticed you’ve got your discharge papers and your unit history.

**CC:** I have quite a unit history, I kind of like that book, and I’ve got a few pictures, and then I’ve got my discharge papers, and that’s about it.

**And I rescued an accordion on the Maginot Line and I traded it off for another accordion that came out of Germany and that’s the smallest and sharpest accordion I’ve ever seen. A little tulo (?). I brought that home and I also rescued a pair of binoculars, but I can’t remember exactly where I found them ... a pair of 7 x 50.**

**Interviewer:** In hindsight, what was probably the most dangerous thing you were involved in?

**CC:** Oh, mine squad.

**Interviewer:** Mine squad, did you lose anybody?

**CC:** No, never lost a man on the mine squad. The Germans were very methodical, they figured they'd come back to the Cherbourg peninsula. And my regimental squad, I would say, picked up 90% of the mines that were picked up around Cherbourg and that was the second heaviest mine area of World War II. I understand it was a little heavier up along Le Havre. I didn't do any mine work up there.

Like I said, the Germans were very methodical. Sometimes we'd even have the plan of the minefield, where they got them from I don't know, but [unclear] they got it someplace. Anyway most of the time if you found three mines you could find the rest of them; because they were laid in a pattern.

Another lucky thing for us, they were planned minefields, and the Germans were figuring on being back themselves. They had a little bit of problem with animals and stuff ... the "Bouncing Bettys." We never found a single one with a tripwire on it. They were always pressure. And very few of the Teller mines, the big anti-tank mines, very few of those were booby-trapped; and I didn't find any with tripwires but some of them were booby-trapped.

And I missed one of the big experiences that I think I should tell here. My company was sent up to Bricquebec, which is about on the other side of the peninsula from Cherbourg. But the colonel come up one night and told us about the rest of the mine squad, the experience they'd had. They were in a minefield fairly close into Cherbourg and they were close enough so they were going to go back to camp for the noon meal. And they were far enough from any buildings where they were pulling mines. We used to hook a rope on them and pull them. If they blew up, they blew up; and if they didn't, why we'd pick them up.

Anyway come noon and the trucks were all down. In France the roads are way down where they washed out and then the hedgerow is way up pretty high and then the field is kind of halfway in between. Well these 11, 12 men that were left on the mine squad – the two of us were gone – but they were all out on the field and the last of the trucks come to go home for noon, take them home for noon lunch; and the last man out of the minefield had a rope hooked on to a mine. And when he went over the hedgerow, why he just grabbed the rope and pulled it with him and the whole field blew up. The whole field blew up.

They figured that was the only mistake the Germans ever made – they booby-trapped the pile of them. They used to set three-four in a stack, you know, and figured we'd take the top one off and miss the last one. But they never booby-trapped those mines. It was a single mine that they booby-trapped; so the whole field blew up, anyway, [unclear] from the one mine.

**There wasn't a man in the field and five minutes before there was 12 guys out there, so that was just plain luck.**

**Interviewer:** Yes. You went in with several friends from your hometown?

**CC:** No, not really. I knew a few of them slightly from Fergus Falls. As far as I know, Thibodeaux (?) and I were the only ones from Battle Lake country, in that bunch.

**Interviewer:** You entered the service from Fort Snelling?

**CC:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And then come back through Camp McCoy?

**CC:** Camp McCoy.

**Interviewer:** Are you a member of the VFW?

**CC:** Yes, lifetime member.

**Interviewer:** Active with them?

**CC:** No, I don't go to the VFW very much. I'm active with the Sons of Norway and that's about it.

**Interviewer:** That keeps you busy?

**CC:** That and church.

**Interviewer:** Any other comments you want to make?

**CC:** Not that I can't think of.

**Interviewer:** Okay, let's terminate.