

A Veterans Oral History
Chester Vosberg (World War II)
[11/2011]

Heritage Education Commission
www.heritageed.com
Moorhead, MN

In 2000, Bev Paulson, Heritage Education Commission member, developed a plan to record Veterans' oral histories, starting with WW II Veterans. Bev made a significant personal donation to start our Veterans' oral history project which was supplemented by other concerned individuals, we have recorded 65 oral histories of WWII veterans plus a few Korean War and Vietnam War Veteran. The project is ongoing.

The transcription project began in 2013 and has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota through the Minnesota Historical Society from the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund.

Interviewee: Chester Vosberg (CV) (World War II)
Interviewer: Stephanie Manesis (SM)
Recording Length: 2:08:53min
Transcribed by: Andrea Rootham, 2014
Proofread by: Vicki Koterba, 2014
Date: 5/20/2014
Transcript checked by: Jane Cumber, 2014
Spelling or other corrections may be sent to: info@heritageed.com

Transcript

SM: This is November 28, 2011. I'm interviewing Mr. Chester Vosberg in Fargo, North Dakota. The interviewer is Stephanie Manesis. All right, Mr. Vosberg, could you tell me a little bit about where were you born and your family growing up?

CV: **I was born at Lisbon, North Dakota. That was on the family farm and I went to high school. I graduated from high school in Lisbon High School and, otherwise, I was just – I had no other occupation other than farm work prior to my entering the Army.**

SM: And can you tell the listeners where Lisbon is in North Dakota?

CV: **Well it's, in fact, it's 76 miles southwest of here.**

SM: Okay and how big was Lisbon when you were raised, approximately?

CV: **About 2,000.**

SM: About 2,000 people?

CV: **And it remains the same.**

SM: It remains the same? Okay. Did you have brothers and sisters?

CV: **I had five brothers, and an infant sister that passed away there.**

SM: I'm sorry to hear that. How old was your sister when she passed away?

CV: **Oh, just – she was an infant.**

SM: Okay, all right, so with all of your brothers, did all of you work on the farm?

CV: **Yes, on our own farm or the neighbor's farms.**

SM: And what year were you born?

CV: **Nineteen-seventeen, March 27, 1917.**

SM: Okay. So tell me about the war, were you drafted or did you enlist in the war?

CV: **I enlisted. I enlisted in March 1941 for one year. I was – I and a lot of other young fellows of my category, didn't have much to do; and so, we had a chance to enlist in the Army for one year. But, of course, then Pearl Harbor came along and it was four years before we had a chance to get out.**

SM: Now so you enlisted in the Army, is that what you said?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: In March of 1941, did you think that the United States would join the war?

CV: **Oh, no, no idea. I knew, I guess, looking back on it that there was some rumblings of some kind but I don't think I knew enough about the world situation then, to think that we were going to get in any trouble.**

SM: Why did you decide to enlist in the Army?

CV: **Because there was not – the only other job, around where I was, was farm work. And I figured I had enough of that and I knew – I had no other qualifications. I just, I just hadn't been away from Lisbon to get any idea what the rest of the world was like.**

SM: So when you enlisted, you had been working on the farm in Lisbon on your father's farm?

CV: **Well, on neighbors' farms.**

SM: So did you have to go, where did you have to go to actually enlist?

CV: **Right in Lisbon.**

SM: In Lisbon, they had an Army office?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: So tell me what happened after you enlisted?

CV: **Well, I and our other buddies went to Fort Warren, Wyoming. That's where our basic training was and that's where we started our military career.**

SM: Did you enlist with some of your friends from high school?

CV: **I don't think they were from high school. They were just neighbor friends.**

SM: Okay and so what was the name of it in Wyoming? Fort . . .

CV: **Fort Warren.**

SM: Fort Warren?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: So how long were you in boot camp?

CV: **Well, we were in boot camp for – back in those days I think the training was a lot different than it is today. And I don't recall that we were in boot camp maybe about a couple months, maybe.**

SM: And then where did you go?

CV: **Well, then I, during this period – during 1941 and during the summer, we went on maneuvers to Fort Lewis, Washington; in the Fort Lewis, Washington, area. And then we returned to Fort Warren, Wyoming, and were there at the time of Pearl Harbor, which was December 7, 1941. And then, late December 1941, then we were ordered back to the Fort Lewis, Washington, area. And we thought sure we were headed for the Pacific someplace, but we were on guard duty along the coast and for several months.**

SM: And what did you do in guard duty?

CV: **Oh, we just, we just – look, we expected to have Japanese coming in off the coast. We were young guys. We didn't really know or have any idea what might be happening. We were just doing what we were told to.**

SM: Was the guard duty pretty boring day-in, day-out?

CV: **Oh, yes. We were on, we were on – four hours on and eight hours off. And we had that for three-four months, I guess.**

SM: Now during the summer of 1941, you were in, you said Fort Lewis, Washington?

CV: **Well, yes, yes.**

SM: Did you have – was there any sense that the United States might be actually making plans to enter the war before Pearl Harbor? Did you have any sense of that at all?

CV: **No, no, none, whatsoever.**

SM: Okay, so then after Pearl Harbor, you are in Fort Lewis again on guard duty for about three months, you said?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: And then what was your next step from there?

CV: **Then our – I was in the field artillery unit and they were reorganizing the troops at that time. And they took part of us from the field artillery unit and made us into a tank destroyer unit, which was supposed to be a special thing of some type. And shortly after we were organized into that, we were then sent to Fort Hood or Camp Hood, Texas. At that time, that was a training center for this new type operation that they had started. So we then went to get our training at Camp Hood, Texas.**

SM: And what kind of things were they teaching you as a tank destroyer unit?

CV: **Well, we had, we had then what was, at that time, the first time we had a 75 mm cannon, and it was towed behind the truck. And, of course, our duty was just what they said, a tank destroyer. We were – that was going to be our mission to take on a tank destroyer. Then, later on, when we were down at that camp – I keep referring it to as Fort Hood, because it’s Fort Hood now; but at that time, it was just a spot in the desert. And then, we got what was termed “half-tracks,” which was the same type of a weapon, 75 mm mounted on a half-track, and so that was what we trained with “___+.”**

SM: So, in other words, your training was meant so that you could actually destroy other tanks, is that it, with the cannons?

CV: **“___” yeah.**

SM: And what was the second one that you mentioned, the cannons and the . . .

CV: Well, “___+”

SM: . . . let’s see, the 75 mm cannons and also, what was the second artillery air fire that you mentioned?

CV: **Well, the second one I mentioned was this 75 mm weapon that we had that was then mounted on a half-track.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **So then, we were self-propelled, so to speak.**

SM: And what does that mean, a half-track, Mr. Vosberg?

CV: **Well, it was – the front wheels were like an ordinary vehicle, and then the rear wheels, the rear area was a track like you have on a caterpillar, and that’s why it’s called half-track.**

SM: Okay, so you were supposed to be able to shoot the cannons from a half-track, is what you’re being trained for?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: How long were you down in Texas?

CV: **Well, we were in Texas – (5 sec) now we’re into the early part of ’42, 1942. We were in Texas then until late ’42.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **That’s when we went overseas.**

SM: And where were you sent to first, in ’42?

CV: **After Camp Hood then we went to – we were assigned to Fort Dix, New Jersey, and that was our stepping-off stone.**

SM: Okay and from there did you take off for Africa?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: Did you directly to Africa?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: And where did you go to in Africa?

CV: **Casablanca.**

SM: Okay. Can you tell me more about what happened when you got to Casablanca?

CV: **Well, see we, we left, we left Camp Hood on the 24th of December, so we were onboard a train Christmas Day, and we got there probably the 26th or 27th. And then we boarded our ship, I think it was on about the 7th or 8th of January, that or the 9th, 1943 rather.**

SM: From Fort Dickson?

CV: **Fort Dix.**

SM: Fort Dix, I mean, yup.

CV: **Fort Dix, New Jersey.**

SM: Um hum.

CV: **And then we spent, I think it was – I was looking over some notes to me – I think it was about 14 days we were on the ship, and we finally landed at Casablanca. But, to give things as a perspective, the Allies had actually invaded Africa in November of '42, I believe it was, I think. So, they were inland a ways when we came. And, of course, we were bombed several times while we were on – out in the holding area, waiting to get in to land. And finally our turn came and so we went overboard on a rope ladder down into some landing crafts. And then we got almost to the beach and then we had to – this “___+.” We waded through water, probably up to our knees, to get onto the beach. And then we got into an assembly area then. And we were there actually for several days; and during that period, we were waiting and did receive our mechanized equipment that were on other ships. And so they were unloaded and we finally got them into our encampment and we got them ready to go. And we got organized to go.**

SM: Okay, so tell me a little bit about your 14-day trip over on the boat, on the ship?

CV: **Very, very – not very exciting. And we had – the Navy had us – they had all kinds of ball-pein hammers. Do you know what a ball-pein hammer is?**

SM: Yep.

CV: **And we chipped paint off of the decks of the, of the ships. And, of course, they repainted them. But that was most of our duties.**

SM: They wanted you to chip paint off so it could be repainted?

CV: **We did, yeah.**

SM: Wow. Were there a lot of fellows who were seasick?

CV: **Oh, there were, there were a few; but there wasn't that many, I don't think.**

SM: So when your ship came into harbor, is that when you were in harbor that you were bombed a few times?

CV: **Oh, yes.**

SM: By other ships?

CV: **By – no, by enemy aircraft.**

SM: Okay, enemy aircraft. Did your ship sustain any damage?

CV: **Not to my knowledge.**

SM: Okay, so that was your first real experience with war, is when you were on the ship?

CV: **Yes, yes.**

SM: Can you tell me how you dealt with the stress of that, or how you felt about it?

CV: **I don't, I don't recall that I was overly worried about it. You know, I just don't – I just can't explain what kind of feelings I may have had at that time. I don't, I don't think I was that frightened. But I'm sure I must have been.**

SM: So when you got into the landing craft, you obviously had your own personal gun on you, correct?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: But you didn't have any of the mechanized . . .

CV: **No.**

SM: . . . equipment until that came later on?

CV: **That's right.**

SM: So when you got into the landing craft, was there any threat to you from the Axis side, at all – to get into the assembly line where you assembled?

CV: **Well, we were, we were bombed a few times. But nothing real close to us, but then you never knew where one was going to drop.**

SM: Okay, so tell me, once you got your mechanized artillery fire and weapons that you needed, what happened after that?

CV: **Well, we did, we did some training that was common to military back in those days; and then we struck out on our, on our "___." But I always say, we played cat and mouse on the deserts there. We – you know, there was a lot of sand dunes and other places where enemy could be hiding and, of course, our job was to get them out of there and move on.**

SM: And which direction were you going from Casablanca at that point?

CV: **We were going north. We followed the coast. Of course, Casablanca was French Morocco and Algeria was just the next province, I guess you'd call it, up the coast; and then the final one was Tunisia. And we never did, we never did get real far inland, I don't think, as I recall. We were hugging the coast most of the time.**

SM: And so did you move into Algeria?

CV: Oh sure.

SM: Eventually?

CV: Yes.

SM: Do you know approximately what month that would have been?

CV: Well, let's see, we got there in January, and I think it would have probably been March, early March.

SM: How prepared were you for the desert conditions?

CV: It was different, of course. So much sand, of course, and there was heat. Hot and we had to be very careful with our water supply and we just, we just survived the heat, that was still a problem.

SM: How hot do you think it got in Fahrenheit there in the winter?

CV: Oh, during the winter? (5 sec) I'm thinking it must have been a lot of 80-degree days.

SM: Okay, all right. And how often did you come upon enemy fire?

CV: We were – our unit was recognized after our whole campaign now, besides Africa and wherever we had been. We had over 400 days of combat during our – “___” of course, that was until 1945.

SM: So between January of 1943 and April of '45, or August of . . .

CV: VE-Day [Victory in Europe Day] was May 9th, I think, wasn't it?

SM: Um hum.

CV: Forty-five.

SM: So you had 400 days of combat?

CV: Yes.

SM: Wow.

CV: Our first, our first real test in Africa was at a place called “Faïd Pass.” And that was as the word implies, it was a pass going into the mountains. And our – the people that had gone ahead of us, had gotten to this Faïd Pass and, apparently, they acted like they were back in maneuvers, back in the States. They got their vehicles all lined up and had everything just right. And then the Germans, who were up in the mountains then, opened fire on them and wiped out their vehicles. So when we came along then, there was just all kinds of burnt-out vehicles and, well, burnt-out vehicles. And I assume they lost a lot of personnel. And we moved on through that and eventually removed the Germans from the pass.

SM: So you were under artillery fire from the Germans when you got to the pass?

CV: Oh yes, yeah.

SM: Was that your most heaviest time of combat during Africa?

CV: It is hard to say because we, you know, we had some other skirmishes that were pretty heavy, but this challenge was our first experience, of course. And, so we were kind of lost as to what to do other than to return fire. And we couldn't, we couldn't actually see somebody, just like back to shoot at them, we had to go by gun flashes and areas where we suspected people were, you know. We just kept shooting.

SM: So were all of you traveling in half-tracks or in tanks?

CV: Well, I guess, I guess I should back off just a little bit. We – shortly after we got to Casablanca, they took our half-tracks away and gave us a new, a new tank, so to speak. Basically, it looked a lot like our, you know, like the routine tank, other than ours was a 76 mm. It was just a larger, little larger weapon, larger projectile. And then a normal tank, of course, has a cover on it and ours did not. Ours had an open turret. So we just stood and looked out, did our, did our directions that way. And so, we had this new weapon that we – it was really a good one and we used it a lot.

SM: So how many tanks would be traveling together, typically?

CV: We had, we had, we had three platoons in a company and each platoon had four tanks, so that would be tank destroyers, so that would be 16 tanks in our company. And then we had, we had three companies in a battalion, so we could have as high as 36 tanks moving, hopefully, in one direction.

SM: Okay and how many men on each tank would you have, typically?

CV: Five.

SM: Five men and were they all open turrets?

CV: Oh, yes. Well, let's see. We had a driver, an assistant driver and we had, what we call a "loader," the guy that slammed the cartridge – the projectile into the breach. And then we had the gunner, and then there was a tank commander.

SM: And is it that what you were, was the tank commander?

CV: Yes, yes.

SM: Okay, so at what point had you been promoted to tank commander.

CV: Oh, shortly after – well, when we got to Africa.

SM: Okay.

CV: I was, I was – I really had no more knowledge than anybody else did. We were all green heads and somehow or another, I became a tank commander.

SM: So as tank commander, you would tell the gunner when to go ahead and let fire?

CV: Yeah, yeah.

SM: Okay, so when you were in Texas training under the – being a destroyer of tanks, were you primarily doing the gunning position, or what position were you primarily in?

CV: Oh, I think, I think we rotated.

SM: In all four positions, besides the commander?

CV: Yes.

SM: Okay. So you became the tank commander. How did you feel about being in such a position of responsibility with no actual on-hands-on training?

CV: **Well, I don't know. I just looked upon it as a job that had to be done and somehow or another I got through with it okay. I eventually became, then I became platoon commander, which meant that I had four tanks to look after. So I don't know; I just, I just, somehow, was able to get into the way things were supposed to be done and I think I did all right.**

SM: I bet you did.

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: As tank commander, did you always have the same four men with you, assuming nothing happened to them?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: And why was your decision to put you in tanks without – with just open turrets?

CV: **I have no idea. That was the, was the – this vehicle we had trained – that was a new concept to the Army; and it was, and it was, that was what we were doing. To do what the title of the tank was, a tank destroyer. That was something new, as far as the Army was concerned, and they had never had that before. And, of course, they had all kinds of tanks but they had a smaller weapon. And, of course, they were – totally enclosed and we were just, we were just – had a bigger vehicle to do business with.**

SM: Now didn't you feel awfully vulnerable, though, not being enclosed when you were in the midst of fire?

CV: **I can't, I can't remember us – I can't remember being that shook up about it. Naturally, you ducked down as much as you could. But I don't know, I didn't think that we were that – we had – a lot times, you know – we used high-explosive projectiles. And there were high-explosive projectiles coming in to us. And, of course, they would shatter up in the sky there a ways. And, of course, you always had the problem of some of that stuff coming down on you, you know. And ours was the same way going out. The advantage we had was with the open turret was that you could see all around you, you know. Where an ordinary tank, they were locked into this thing with a hood over it. Not locked but they were in there. And so all they had was a little periscope to search the area with, where we had our eyes but out in the open.**

SM: That makes sense. Okay, when you arrived at Faïd Pass, you said it was?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: How many tanks on your side were there, when you arrived?

CV: **Well, I suppose we had our whole battalion, and so there would have been about 36 tanks.**

SM: Your whole battalion? Okay, so now were you actually kind of down and below on the bottom of a pass where there were mountains on both sides?

CV: Yes.

SM: So were there Germans on both sides?

CV: As I recall, there was, yeah. But there was rocks and cliffs, you know.

SM: And they were shooting at you with both cannons and with machine guns and rifles, I'm assuming?

CV: Well, of course, we weren't that excited about the machine guns and the rifles because we were out of their range.

SM: Okay.

CV: So until we got real close, you know, but then they had vacated the premises by the time we – when we got up there.

SM: When you say “up there,” you mean up to the top of the mountain or . . .

CV: Well, we never did go to the top of the mountains. We were on the valley below but we were shooting up at the top of the mountains, you know, wherever there was a suspicion that there might be somebody holed up in there, we'd fire a couple of rounds in there.

SM: And then, you're saying after a certain point in time, the Germans left because they realized they couldn't – they weren't a match for you? How far is the range for machine guns and rifles?

CV: Oh, gee. Oh, I guess a couple hundred yards, probably.

SM: Okay and they were much farther away from you than that?

CV: Oh, yes, yeah.

SM: And when you came upon the scene of the other tanks that had been destroyed, were there any men that needed to get medical care?

CV: Not – it was just a burnt-out area. There was nothing there.

SM: Okay. So you don't know if any men survived and left in further tanks or not?

CV: No, no. I'm sure there were casualties; I'm sure there were casualties.

SM: Tell me after you went through Faïd Pass, what happened?

CV: Well, we just, we just kept moving up the coastline, of course, through – out of French Morocco into Algeria, and on up the coast. You know, that really wasn't that long a campaign. We didn't get involved in it until, as I say, I think it was March – in March and the African Campaign was over with, something like May the 9th.

It was – I'll never forget that day. It was Mother's Day. The 9th – it'd be on the 8th then, the 8th of May. They were making one last big push to capture Tunis. And so, during the day we had – “__+” was around, fired a lot of shells and late in the afternoon, our tanks – we ran out of ammunition. And so, I thought well, you know, our work was done for the period; but they wanted, they wanted everybody to –

regardless of whether you had ammunition or not – to make a show of force to make the final push. So we were in that final push.

And along about, oh it was dusk, I guess, or a little later, then our tank, our tank got hit. And it just came in – a shell came in right back of the turret where I was standing and none of us got hurt. But, of course, our tank was disabled and we bailed out of the tank, and landed into a little ditch; and there was a German laying there, with his hands up in the air, wanting to surrender. And we didn't have any weapons then because we had just jumped out, you know. So I beat it back to the tank and it was smoking, but it wasn't blazing. And there was a – they had a fire extinguisher system on it. So I reached over the turret and pulled that and then I got a weapon out of the – that we had fastened alongside of the turret right where I stood. We had a carbine, so I got that. So we had one weapon and we went back to the ditch and there we were, practically all night. Everything moved on, of course, and we were left there, by ourselves.

And finally, towards morning, one of our rear echelon people came to our aid and took us back to the rear echelon to the camp. And, of course, then that would be the morning of the 9th. And sometime during that morning, then the word came that the Germans had surrendered. And – but we could still, there was still a unit up there ahead of someplace that was still – apparently didn't have – hadn't gotten the word. So they – one of our, one of our lieutenants got in what they called a "light tank," which was really a bus kind of vehicle with a machine gun on it and tied a white flag onto the aerial of the radio. And they went up to this encampment that were still fighting and gave the word that the Germans had surrendered. So then all firing ceased and then along, as I remember that was probably mid-morning, and then along about noon or mid-afternoon, then the Germans just came streaming by the hundreds down and surrendered. And, of course, they surrendered to us, so everybody else was around there. And they had a – apparently had a prison camp set up someplace or were setting one up, because all of these German prisoners had to go someplace and we were taking care of them.

SM: Okay, so tell me, that's a very – thank you for sharing that. When you were in the ditch with the German, did you spend the whole night in the ditch with the German?

CV: Yes.

SM: And so he was just basically there being – surrendering with you guys?

CV: Yes, it just so happened that one of our crewmembers spoke very fluent German. So, he told us that the war was going – he told us the war was going to be over with that night. Somehow or another, I don't know what position he held or how he arrived at it, but he was there and he seemed to know that this was going to be over with. And sure enough, during the night then we would see just all kinds of explosions off in the distance. And, of course, it was the Germans blowing up their ammunition dumps and destroying their vehicles and anything that we could possibly use.

SM: So the German man in the ditch already knew that the war was coming to a close, at least in the African front?

CV: Yes, yes.

SM: He knew that. So that now in the next morning when you took off, where did you take him that morning?

CV: **I don't, I don't recall. We just, we just handed him off to somebody else. Well, apparently, they took him to a prison camp, I suppose. I imagine they – he, being a single individual there and one of the early ones, I imagined – I just imagined they wanted to interrogate him a little bit. I don't know. I never did know what happened to him.**

SM: And when the lieutenant, you said, went ahead with the white flag to forewarn the other people that they had already surrendered, the Germans . . .

CV: Yes.

SM: . . . how many tanks, do you know how many tanks were up in front of the American or Allied tanks?

CV: No idea.

SM: Okay. Now were you in the city of Tunis at this point?

CV: **No, we never did get into – we just got into the outskirts of Tunis.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **We never did get into the heart of it.**

SM: Okay. So when you were on the tank – you guys did not then, obviously, have your own rifle slung across you?

CV: **No, no, no, no.**

SM: And did you have individual rifles in the tank, if you needed them?

CV: Yes, yes.

SM: And so, when you said you grabbed a carbine, is that a type of rifle?

CV: Yes. It's a rifle. Yeah.

SM: Okay. So that – so when you were in the ditch it just one rifle, your three or four camaraderie and then the German man?

CV: Yes.

SM: Okay and then you later got back into another tank for show of force or that was earlier before your tank was – that was earlier before your tank was disabled, correct?

CV: Yes.

SM: Okay. so after the next morning when you got out of the ditch, were you on foot at that point, or somebody came and got you in a vehicle?

CV: **Well, they came and got us in a vehicle. They had, they had, they had what was – every unit had what was called a “tank retriever,” which was almost another tank, really. But it was, it was geared up to where they could hook onto another tank and pull you, so they – they were salvaging our tank also.**

SM: So now, you said that there were four tanks in each unit, is that correct?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: And so they would also have a tank retriever like – was another vehicle but it wasn't a tank?

CV: **Yes. That – that was in the headquarters.**

SM: In the headquarters, so it wasn't necessarily going along with each unit?

CV: **Oh, no, no, no, huh um.**

SM: Got it. But it would come out to save – get men that had tanks that were disabled?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: And – or to take disabled tanks somewhere else to be repaired? Is that correct?

CV: **That's right.**

SM: Okay. tell me about your reaction when you saw that there was a German in the ditch.

CV: **I guess I couldn't tell you. I – we were just dumb-founded to see somebody with his arms up, wanting to surrender, and we had no idea where he came from or what he was doing there.**

SM: And when you ran back to get a rifle, were you concerned that he might have been armed?

CV: **I don't think I was at that time because the other guys would have been watching over him.**

SM: Okay, all right. So just explain one more time. So the next morning then the – what did you call the vehicle that would pick up?

CV: **Retriever.**

SM: The retriever came along and got you guys and your tank, is that correct?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: So you just got back into the tank and you were pulled?

CV: **Well, yes. We were pulled back to our main headquarters.**

SM: And your main headquarters were on the outskirts of Tunis?

CV: **Well, it was – no. It was – well, yes, it would have been. But it was – you know, when I talk about our main headquarters, it was our rear echelon. Every unit always had a rear echelon that follows you. And they had these retrievers, and the cooks, the cooks and the cook wagons, and ammunition trunks and any other supplies that was needed.**

SM: And so they were always in the rear?

CV: **Oh yeah.**

SM: And so (5 sec) I have to think of a question I had, Mr. Vosberg. Hold on. Okay, so when you got into the – I'm sorry, tell me the name of the vehicle again that came and got you.

CV: Retriever.

SM: When you got on the retriever, then they took you to the rear echelon where all the vehicles were at that point. What did you think about what the German told you about the war being over the next day when you didn't know that was actually the case? Did you have any faith or belief in what he said?

CV: Well, when I look back on it. Not at the time, I don't think we did. But when I look back on it, and think of all of the explosions we'd seen on the horizons and what not, that we come to realize that he must have had some idea of what was going on.

SM: Did you know if he was an officer or not?

CV: No, I don't know about that.

SM: Okay. So tell me what happened on May 9th, after the Germans surrendered, what happened?

CV: Well, of course, we were virtually celebrating, you know. And it was such a relief to be – not to be under a constant strain anymore. And, I don't know, we were, we were just jubilant.

SM: Did you actually go into town to celebrate?

CV: Oh no, no, no, no, no.

SM: You were still on the outskirts of town?

CV: Oh, yes, yeah, no. We were still in our own little compound, you know.

SM: Okay and how long were you celebrating for?

CV: When I say celebrating, I don't mean celebrating like we do today. It was just sitting around and probably playing cards or something, and not having the strain of worrying of something going to come in at you. The big part was having a hot meal, you know. The kitchen was able to cook up a meal and we'd been living on what they call "C-rations" or "K-rations" before, which was, which was okay but they were – it was a can, it was a canned thing.

SM: Was that the first time you had your hot meal from leaving Casablanca?

CV: Oh no. Some places along the line, we could get a hot meal once in a while.

SM: But it was a rarity?

CV: Oh yeah.

SM: How long were you at the compound before you moved again?

CV: I suppose we were in that – we remained in that area a month or more. And then, of course, we had to prepare for going to Italy, and we had some more training to do. But I can remember, I can remember us going over – going out to the seashore and wading around in the sea. So we were very close to the Caribbean - it would be Mediterranean Sea.

SM: So were you close enough to go daily, if you had time off?

CV: Oh, I don't think, I don't think we were that, I don't think we were that close. As I remember, we would take – they would take a bunch of us out in a truck.

SM: And so, during that month time-frame, did you know, in the very beginning, that you were going to Italy, or was it unclear as to what your future held for you?

CV: Oh, I don't think we had any idea where we were going.

SM: Did you have hopes that you would return back to the States?

CV: Oh, yes. We, you know, we thought the war was over with, you know; and actually it was just beginning.

SM: Okay that makes sense. So, obviously, in your small world because the Germans surrendered, you thought that the war was over with?

CV: Yeah.

SM: And when did it become clear that the war was not over with and you guys might have another tour of duty?

CV: Oh, I don't – I think it was probably within a month or two. You know, when we were doing more training; and, of course, they were, of course, trying to orient us a little bit on the, (4 sec) what Italy might be like. And keeping us posted on the (5 sec) the war in Germany, anyway, you know, so. So we pretty much, I guess you know, after a month or so, I think we probably just pretty much realized that we weren't going home right then.

SM: How did you feel at that point when you realized that?

CV: Oh, I guess, I guess, – you know – I was, (4 sec) I was thinking of my parents a lot, because at that time, there was four of us from our family that was in the military, all overseas in danger's way. And there they were, just by themselves, out on the farm. And I'm sure they must have been worried all the time. And we didn't have, we didn't have the means of corresponding like they have today and all those things. And I'm not saying that that's such a great thing; but, you know, our means of corresponding was what they had – what they called "V-mail," which was a little skinny sheet of paper that you could write your message on and address it, and give us "___+" and they'd see that it was flown back to the United States.

SM: How big was a V-mail? About how much room was on there?

CV: Oh, it was, it was, it wasn't a half – it wasn't an 8x11, but it must have been probably 8x6. It was folded over.

SM: Okay.

CV: You wrote the message in there and folded it, and addressed it, no postage necessary, of course.

SM: So you had just the inside of that 8-inch by 6-inch piece of paper to write on?

CV: You didn't have that much to write about, really, 'cause you weren't s'pose to tell about your experiences.

SM: Because everything was censored?

CV: Yeah.

SM: How often did you get a chance to write to your family?

CV: Oh, you could write – I guess I made it – tried to make it a point to write once a week, maybe. But a lot of times I couldn't, of course, but I tried to keep in touch with them.

SM: So tell me out of your brothers, which brother was the one that stayed home to help out on the farm?

CV: It was the oldest. It was the oldest – my oldest brother.

SM: And did he stay home because he chose to or because he couldn't go into the military?

CV: Well, he got married and then he started his own farm and so he was exempt, deferred, yeah.

SM: When you, so if you have your farm, you're exempt from going into the military?

CV: Well, yes. Yeah. At that time, at that time, farm was an important thing; farming was an important thing in our nation. That was one of the, one of the categories that were – I wouldn't say exempt, but you could defer. And so Walt had gotten – well he'd gotten married for one thing and then he had his farm and then had a, had a child, so he had a lot of deferments.

SM: So was Walt's farm right next to your parent's farm?

CV: Well, three or four miles, I guess.

SM: So your father was by himself doing farming?

CV: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SM: Now your three brothers, all of them were single when they joined the military?

CV: Yes.

SM: And in those days there was no maximum number of siblings that could go in, correct?

CV: No, no, there was – as far as I knew, I think there was some stipulation that two members of a family weren't supposed to serve in the same unit. I think there was something to that effect. But there was, you know, there was a story of some Navy group, I think they were from Iowa or probably, where three brothers were on this ship, were all killed, but otherwise I wasn't aware of anything.

SM: And your three brothers, you enlisted. Did any of your brothers enlist or were they all drafted?

CV: They were all drafted.

SM: And did they all make it out of World War II?

CV: Yes.

SM: Okay. I'm going to come back and ask you some questions a little bit later about your brothers, okay?

CV: Okay.

SM: I'm glad that they all made it. Going back to the V-mail, because you were always on the move in the desert, how often could you actually receive letters from your family?

CV: **Oh, see that would be, I don't know, mail call was an awful, awful important thing. I think that there probably was somebody getting some mail every week, really. You know, somebody in our, in our group was getting mail from somebody. Not meaning that, like me, for example, would be getting a letter every week or something like that. But some of our comrades were getting some mail.**

SM: In just your platoon, you're saying?

CV: **Yeah or our company, our company, yeah.**

SM: Okay, so do you remember ever receiving any letters between March and May when you were actually on the move in the desert?

CV: **No, I don't really, I don't really remember. Yeah.**

SM: Okay, so you are now in June, moving into July. At this point you're aware of the fact that you're going to Italy?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: What did you know at that time about how German – Germany was doing in the war and what was going on in the European front?

CV: **Well, we had, you know, we had the “Stars and Stripes” magazine. And, of course, I don't recall that they ever gave much negative reporting. I think it was, (6 sec) I think it was kind of a uplifting magazine that was trying to keep you feeling good about the advances that we were making, you know. And again, you know, that was a whole new world to us, and we didn't or at least I didn't, and I'm sure the majority of us didn't realize where all of these countries were.**

And – but I think of what's happening today, we knew that just on the other side of the mountains in Africa, that General Rommel was being pushed back up through Libya, and what not, and I never even realized where Libya was, you know. I never heard of it. And so, for geography purposes, I guess you know, most of us just never realized what the world was like. No idea.

SM: Which makes sense.

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: What was your most memorable experience in Africa besides your tank getting hit? What was the second most memorable experience?

CV: (4 sec) **I guess being part of it. Just (4 sec) hearing of the, of the Germans surrendering.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **But, I can remember that just being a real uplifting thing, you know. We just got all blossomed out.**

SM: Especially when you also thought it was the end of the war, as well.

CV: **Yes, yeah.**

SM: When you came across Germans in the desert, was it often just a few tanks sometimes, where you'd have a skirmish with a few tanks at a time?

CV: **Yes, yeah.**

SM: Did you hear anything about Rommel at all when you were in Tunis, or did you hear about him later on?

CV: **No, no, we, you know, we got the "Stars and Stripes" fairly often. I s'pose every couple of weeks or something like that. And they, you know – so we were aware of the British chasing Rommel up in Egypt and Libya.**

SM: Now, when you were in the compound, was it only Americans that were there?

CV: **Oh yes, yeah.**

SM: Okay, did you ever come across any British at all, or French?

CV: **Yeah, (5 sec) I think, I think, as I recall, one time the British were going to get some of the equipment like we had, so we were to train them, which we did. You know, we had this type of deal.**

SM: When you were at the compound, you helped train some of the British?

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: Tell me about when you guys left Tunis to go for Italy, to go to Italy?

CV: **(4 sec) Well, we – (4 sec) I think, I think, if I'm not mis – I can't remember the ports that we left from. I was thinking it was Algiers but I could be mistaken. That would be down the coast quite a ways. We must have been, we must have left from some port just outside of Tunis or "___ +".**

SM: Did you go to Sicily first?

CV: **No, we didn't go to Sicily.**

SM: Where did you go?

CV: **We landed at Salerno. That's right.**

SM: Okay. So how was the boat ride?

CV: **It was – we were on a, we were on a British ship, and they were famous for their mutton stew. And that's what we lived on, and so we were glad to get off of there.**

SM: You didn't like the mutton stew?

CV: **Oh no.**

SM: I've never had mutton stew. Is it really bad or what?

CV: **Well, I suppose if it was made, if it was made right it would be okay, but that wasn't.**

SM: Okay, so how long were you on the ship?

CV: **Oh, I think, I think we must have been on there three, four days. And, in fact, when we got to Salerno, it was similar to what it was at Casablanca. We couldn't get into**

the unloading area, so it was an extra day or so. And, again, we had to go over to the side of the ship on a rope ladder and into the landing crafts, and then into Salerno.

SM: Now, were there British troops on the ship with, or was it only Americans?

CV: **No, well there was British – I don't think they – there were British employees. I don't recall there being any actual British soldiers. Oh I'm sure that, you know, it was a, it was a British ship; so I suppose their crew was all British on there.**

SM: So you got into Salerno. You were out at bay for a little while before you could actually go into the port, and then what happened once you got onto the landing crafts?

CV: **Well then we, again, we had to go into the beach and had to wade in a little ways, you know. Then our equipment – we didn't have to wait very long. The next day or so, our equipment came and then we unloaded the ship, of course. So we were ready to do business again.**

SM: Back with your tanks?

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: Now this was in July of 1943?

CV: **Well, no. It would be the invasion of Hitler in Salerno was – (4 sec) I don't think I'm mixed up on my dates. I think the invasion of Italy of Salerno was in September.**

SM: September of 1943?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: Okay, so you got your equipment from the other ship?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: But you weren't in skirmishes right away?

CV: **Not right away.**

SM: Okay, so tell me, what happened after you got your tanks?

CV: **Well then, of course, then we were reorganized, so to speak. And we had a mission to accomplish. And in a couple of days we were in business, so to speak.**

SM: Right – were you in artillery fire right in Salerno or around Salerno?

CV: **Around Salerno, yes, but after that. See we came in a day or two after the actual invasion so they were in a ways, again, before we arrived.**

SM: Into the countryside, you mean?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: Or into the countryside.

CV: **Yes.**

SM: So you joined the other troops that were in the countryside?

CV: Yeah.

SM: And how long were you in Salerno area?

CV: Very, very short time, a day or two. And then we were moving up towards Naples and at Cassino. I'm sure you have heard of Cassino, Monte Cassino? And so we spent a lot of time there trying to, trying to advance where we could.

SM: So how long were you in Naples, were you passing through Naples?

CV: Oh, passing through, really.

SM: Okay, so tell me more about Monte Cassino.

CV: Well, there was a city, a village of Cassino; and right above us on a mountain peak was an abbey and that was called Monte Cassino. And we were under the impression, and I'm sure we were right, that the Germans were using that as an observation point. And we were prohibited from firing on the abbey on account of it being a religious operation; and so we were, we were stymied there for a long time. And we always had the feeling that they knew what we were doing down below. Because – and, I guess, that's another event that I'll never forget.

That this fighter-bomber came over and he was just diving down, you know, and I thought, "Isn't he ever going to pull out?" You know. And he got real close to the abbey and he dropped his bomb. And, of course, then we opened fire, too, and pretty much demolished that and then we were able to move on north, because their observation point was destroyed.

SM: So it was an American bomber pilot or British?

CV: Oh yes.

SM: It was American?

CV: Yeah.

SM: Who destroyed the abbey?

CV: Well, he was one of the first ones and then there were several bombers came in afterwards.

SM: Okay, do you have any idea if they intentionally bombed the abbey, or . . .

CV: Oh, I'm sure they did.

SM: Okay, so they probably had some sort of intelligence that said that there was Germans up there?

CV: Yeah.

SM: So how many days between when you got to Monte Cassino, approximately, and the abbey was bombed?

CV: Oh, I'm sure we were there a couple a weeks or more.

SM: Were there skirmishes going on every day?

CV: Oh yes, yes.

SM: And where were the Germans at that point, besides in the abbey?

CV: **Well, they were, they were in the village of Cassino, also, see. They – we had tried to go through the village a time or two but they were always able to attack us from the sides, you know, so we just had to withdraw two or three times.**

SM: And was it mostly Italians, or Italians and Germans that you were fighting, did you know?

CV: **Oh, I don't think there were many Italians. I think they were mostly Germans.**

SM: At that point?

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: Okay. So once the abbey was bombed, then it gave you guys the ability to move forward.

CV: **Right.**

SM: Where did you go after that?

CV: **Well, we worked, we worked then our way up to – well, see we spent most of the winter – that would have been in '44, again – the end of '44. And we spent most of the winter trying to move north. And we were pretty much stymied because the spring broke out and we finally got to moving. Because we went into – we got into Rome on June the 4th, I think it was. That was D-Day. We had gotten into Rome like this afternoon and we kind of made – made our camps around there. And, of course, the natives were greeting us with wine and all kinds of stuff. And the next morning when we were to move out, there was just a real uproar. And we thought that the Germans were counter-attacking but it was the Italians that got the word that it came over that it was D-Day, the invasion of Normandy. That's what they were shouting about and that's the first we knew about it. We were – as we were entering into Rome.**

SM: Now the Italians officially surrendered in what month?

CV: **I couldn't tell you.**

SM: It was officially, wasn't it in 1943, but there were still skirmishes into 1944, correct?

CV: **I suppose. Yes.**

SM: So when you came into Rome and there was all of this, was it a celebration or what was it?

CV: **Oh, yes, it was a celebration. They were . . .**

SM: So they were celebrating for the Allied troops?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: And that's when you found out about D-Day?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: Tell me more about what you found out about D-Day in June of 1944.

CV: (4 sec) **Well again, I guess, we got the impression that the war was going to be over with, I think – but we were able to, we were able to move north of Rome then, relatively easy, I guess. So it was not, it wasn't a cakewalk, but it was easier than what we had been having. And so we were able to – we got up as far as Florence and that was as far as we went, initially, before we came back. And then we went into southern France.**

SM: So this is the second time that you thought the war was over with?

CV: **Yes, yeah. We had every reason to believe it, you know.**

SM: And how long did you say you stayed in Rome, approximately?

CV: **Oh, just (4 sec) under 24 hours.**

SM: Okay and then when you – so when you left Rome, you still thought the war was almost over?

CV: **Yes, because we seemed to have an easier going. The Germans were not resisting as much. They were, they were pulling out and going north. And so, I don't, I don't know – I don't think they were trying to – I don't know whether they were trying to get back to their homeland or – Mussolini was still alive. So they were trying to get up into his territory in northern Italy but I don't remember exactly what the situation was. But we got as far as Florence. And then, we came back to Naples and boarded the landing crafts and went into southern France.**

SM: So between Rome and Florence, do you know how approximately how many days it took you to move between Rome and Florence?

CV: **Oh, we left June the 4th and (9 sec) I imagine it was a month to six weeks or more.**

SM: Did you come across very much German resistance, at all, in that . . .

CV: **Oh, there was – it was always, it was always resistance, but not – not the die-hard that it had been up until Rome.**

SM: Okay. What was your most memorable experience in Italy?

CV: (4 sec) **I guess, just the fact that I'm getting into Rome. We'd always heard about Rome, and I was a country boy, and I didn't know anything about it.**

SM: What did you think of Rome?

CV: **Well, what little I seen of it. It was just a bunch of enjoyable people. They all wanted to, they wanted to know if – everybody had a relative in Chicago or New York or something, and they wanted to know if you knew them, you know.**

SM: So you came across some Italians that spoke English?

CV: **Oh, yes, yeah. There was a lot of them.**

SM: Were any of the men in your company, at all, of Italian descent that spoke Italian?

CV: **Yes, there were a couple.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: Tell me more about the bombing of Monte Cassino. What do you remember about it?

CV: Well, as I stated earlier, this single bomber, dive-bomber, came. And he just kept coming down and down and down and I thought, you know, “Is he going to crash into that place?” He dropped his bomb and took off; and then shortly after that, several bombers came and they just pulverized the place.

SM: And at this point, were you convinced that there was Germans up in the abbey?

CV: Oh, we all – yes. We were always was convinced that that they had a lookout or an observation point there.

SM: Do you think that there was any monks living in the abbey at the time?

CV: I’ve read some stuff afterwards that there were some monks and some nuns up there that survived. (4 sec) As I understand it, they have rebuilt it. I don’t know if that’s true or not, but I think they rebuilt it.

SM: And what was the town of Monte Cassino like, at that time?

CV: It was just a little, it was just a little country village, really. It wasn’t no big city, no big deal.

SM: Did you come across any Italians in your day-to-day existence there? Not troops, but just regular everyday Italians?

CV: Oh, yes. There would be always some and that happened wherever you were. You wondered why these people were wandering through the area, as it was very dangerous, you know. But they had to live so they were scrounging and moving about their business. They forgave about the war.

SM: What was your impression of how the people were doing, economically, in that town?

CV: I just, I just wouldn’t have a – I just wouldn’t have a . . . I’m sure they must have had a tough time. I don’t know. We did, we did a lot of business, so to speak. We got wine. We had a lot of, a lot of wine. And, as I remember, we ate rabbits quite often, just in our own crew. And so we had negotiate for them. Either negotiate or just take it from them. And then, most of the time, we negotiated. We were, we were fair with them. Well, you know, everybody wanted cigarettes; and we had all kinds of cigarettes, so we could trade cigarettes.

SM: So you would trade a lot of cigarettes with the Italian civilians for rabbit?

CV: And wine.

SM: And wine.

CV: Yeah.

SM: And how were your interactions with the Italians?

CV: Well, those kind of people, we got along okay with them. I don’t, you know, I don’t think the Italians were really wanting to fight. I don’t think they were interested in the war. The Germans were, of course. But I don’t think the Italians, as a whole, wanted to fight very much. So that was a – that was a known fact. They just, they just gave up.

SM: Could you just describe to me a little bit more about what the sentiment was, of the Italian people, when you came to Rome on June 6th?

CV: **They were, they were just so happy. In fact, we had saved – we got into Rome in the evening. And so we (4 sec) I guess, would say that we bivouacked there overnight. And the next morning we were preparing to move on north. And there was all of this uprising. People were shouting and hauling out wine and just were so happy. And then we discovered that they had, somebody had a radio and had heard that the invasion of Normandy went on. That was what all the excitement was about. And, of course, we were happy, too.**

SM: So they were celebrating more D-Day than they were the arrival of your troops?

CV: **Oh, I would think, I would think that it was probably about 50/50.**

SM: Okay and at this point, did you think that the war was pretty much coming to a close?

CV: **Oh, yes, we always thought, well that's – you know, it won't be long now. But it didn't turn out that way.**

SM: Okay, so tell me about what – did you have any one-on-one interactions with any Italians in Rome?

CV: **Oh, certainly. We drank plenty of their wine and, of course, we had a lot of cigarettes, so we could pass out some cigarettes. And, of course, they always – there was any number of people that had kinfolk in Chicago. And, I remember this, they always wanted to know whether we happened to know them there in Chicago. But, they were just joyful people.**

SM: Did very many of them speak English?

CV: **No.**

SM: So, it was very limited conversations?

CV: **Oh, yes, yes. That way.**

SM: Okay and you said you had a couple of Italian-Americans that were in your company?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: And did they speak some Italian?

CV: **Oh, yes, yeah, yeah. They were interpreters.**

SM: Okay, so how long were you in Rome then?

CV: **Oh, just about 24 hours, I suppose.**

SM: Okay, tell me about your campaign going north in Italy.

CV: **Well, it was a very slow operation, of course. The Germans were pretty well fortified along the way. And so we just didn't make much, we didn't make much ground. I can't, I can't remember. We got up as far as Florence, as far as we went after we left Rome. Got as far as Florence and then, we came back a ways towards Naples, I believe. And that's when we boarded the landing crafts to go to Marseilles.**

SM: And at that point, when you were on the landing craft to go to Marseilles, did you have any idea of what was in store for you in France?

CV: **No, no, I don't remember. We just, we just knew that there was going to be more combat. But, really, we down in the lower echelon, of course, had no knowledge of what was – the big picture was.**

SM: Now, were you a platoon commander at this point?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: When did you become a platoon commander?

CV: **Oh, it was someplace – someplace after – after we left Rome. Our platoon leader was wounded and, then, I just stepped into his place.**

SM: And did he eventually make it out okay?

CV: **Oh, yes, yeah.**

SM: Did he come back to fight with you?

CV: **He came back with us, yes.**

SM: He did. So you became the platoon leader.

CV: **Yes.**

SM: And how many men were in your platoon, approximately?

CV: **Well, there would be five in each tank. And let's see, we had, we had four tanks in a platoon and there were three platoons; so there'd be 12 tanks, so I think there were 60 men.**

SM: Sixty men?

CV: **We weren't always up to full complement, of course.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **There'd be around 50, I guess.**

SM: So you were in charge of that number of men?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: How did you feel about having that new position?

CV: **I guess I never gave it any thought. It was just – I always looked upon it as something that needed to be done. And we did it.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **I never did, I never gave it any second thought. Of course, I was always happy when I was promoted but, I guess, I didn't strive for any – didn't have any goal about getting how far up in the ranks. I eventually became the first sergeant of the company, which was the top sergeant of the company.**

SM: So after platoon leader, what's the next one, staff sergeant or . . .

CV: **Well, platoon leader, I was the staff sergeant, then I went up to a first sergeant.**

SM: Okay and when did that happen?

CV: **Oh, gosh. I don't remember exactly when that was. The coast there without too much trouble.**

SM: And where did you first encounter resistance from the Germans?

CV: **Oh gee, I don't really know. It was just a very few days after we landed in Marseilles, and I don't remember exactly when that was.**

SM: Okay and so, did you have a lot of resistance when you were in the southern part of France?

CV: **Yes, just annoying – annoying resistance. We didn't have that. It was no big pitched battle, I know.**

SM: So how would you describe annoying resistance?

CV: **Somebody's taking a pot shot at you if you're out in the – and you're not being able to return the fire, simply because we didn't know where it came from.**

SM: So did the fighting become more in terms of battles? Was that more when you got closer to the Belgium-German border?

CV: **Yes, yes.**

SM: Okay, so it was up closer in kind of the northeast corner of France?

CV: **Yes, it would have been, yes.**

SM: So tell me more about what happened then.

CV: **Well, it was just a day-to-day operation. And we were, we were supporting infantry, so there was a mixture of us all the time. And it was just the objective, of course, of gaining some ground.**

SM: So now, if my memory serves me right, when the Battle of the Bulge was going on in Belgium, you guys were in northeast France, is that correct?

CV: **Yes, yes.**

SM: So can you tell me a little bit, strategically, about how that was working? Were you trying to keep the Germans occupied down there from going into Belgium or . . .

CV: **Well, I think we were. We were – this was in the wintertime. And, of course, we were kind of stymied as far as movement was concerned. But this was – (4 sec) well, we were not gaining, we were not gaining much ground, that's for sure. But we did a lot of what we called "indirect firing," in which we guessed somebody was up there in a certain spot and we poured some shells in there.**

SM: Did you know about the Battle of the Bulge was actually happening in the same time, or were you not aware of, at the time?

CV: **I don't think, I don't think we were really, really aware of it. No.**

SM: Tell me about the conditions during the winter. Were you guys – did you have winter clothing?

CV: Oh yes, we had winter clothing, yeah. But it was, (4 sec) you know, we had, we had no chance to shower, for example. One thing that I can remember is that there was a lot of trench foot, which meant that we needed clean socks and that's, that was one of the things that came up with our rations, periodically, was a bunch of new socks to, well, keep our feet dry and keep them from being infected.

SM: So trench foot is basically an infection that you would get from wet, cold feet?

CV: Yes, yes, yes.

SM: How many men would get that?

CV: Oh, there was – I don't, I don't recall our specific group having more than a half a dozen or so. But the people that were really affected were the infantry people, because they were on foot all the time. And if their feet got wet, they had no choice. There was nothing they could do about it. Where we were in a tank and we -- our feet was not so active. We weren't as apt to be wet, but we stayed in our tank.

SM: Now, could the trench foot take people out of, out of combat, it was so serious?

CV: Oh yes, yes. They would go back to the – what we called the rear echelon where the medics were and they would, they would treat them for that. But they were able to come back. I don't remember how long it would take to treat somebody on it but they would eventually come back to the unit.

SM: And so, do you remember, approximately, was it in January or February that you moved into German – where you crossed the German line – of '45?

CV: (4 sec) Oh, I'm sure it probably was in – (4 sec) let's see, it was over with in '45. It was over with in May, wasn't it?

SM: Forty-five.

CV: So, I suppose it was probably January that we got into Germany.

SM: Now, with it just being all the terrain looking the same, were you aware of the fact that you were actually into Germany. Would the higher-ups tell you that you had made it into Germany?

CV: Oh yes, yes. We would – we would be given a routine map of some kind, just not one that – it was not like a road map for us to go a certain way. But it was kind of, more of a map of telling us what we accomplished where we were at. So we didn't, we didn't have – the company commander, of course, had a map of the whole area, and where we were at. But we, in the lower ranks, would not know that.

SM: Now did you, as a platoon commander, did you lose any men of your platoon when you were in the French-German side fighting?

CV: Yes, we lost – one of our tank commanders was lost. “____+” he panicked. We were under, we were under fire. And we don't know for sure, but he apparently panicked, and he jumped out of the tank and, of course, he was shot then. And we had a (3 sec) we lost a couple of guys from our tanks, from our tanks, our group of tanks, you know, that had gotten into some bad firepower and tried to escape from the tank, which was a bad idea; and they got mowed down.

SM: So leaving the tank was always dangerous, unless it was ready to go off into fire?

CV: **Yes, yes, that was the safest place, is in the tank.**

SM: Is in the tank and you still had no turrets on your tanks at this point?

CV: **No.**

SM: But could you duck down?

CV: **Oh, sure, sure.**

SM: Okay, so you could duck down into the tank?

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: How did you deal with losing some men in your platoon?

CV: **Well, boy that's a hard – you know, it was a sad day, naturally. But there was not a thing we could do about it. And, of course, we welcomed the new replacement. But I just – we lost somebody, it was just one of those, one of those things that was expected, overall, you know. And we just carried on.**

SM: And tell me about the replacements. My understanding is that in World War II, a lot of times the men in a company or platoon, for example, would be nervous about a replacement because they didn't know if they could really count on them?

CV: **Well, I guess that was true to some respect, but we have to stop and think that some of these replacements (4 sec) 60 days earlier they were civilians, you know. And, of course, they had no choice in where they were going to come. I don't think we ever had any problem with questioning their capabilities.**

SM: Did you have any memorable days when you were fighting in France or along the German border, at all?

CV: **Not really, it was just one day was the same as the next. It was a “ ___+”.**

SM: Were you in artillery fire almost every day when you were by the German border?

CV: **Oh, I think during – yes. During that, during that winter we were, we were under fire an awful lot.**

SM: And when did things start to ease up for you?

CV: **Well, I guess it must have been – probably was in early May then, when we started gaining some ground capturing a lot of prisoners, and not meeting as much resistance as we had in days past.**

SM: So, do you remember when you were in the German – so you were in the German border, maybe January-February time-frame? Does that sound about right?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: And then between February and May, were you just moving into Germany?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: Do you remember any memorable experiences about that?

CV: (7 sec) Well, I remember us crossing a, crossing a river, and I should know the river but I don't. It might have been the Rhine, it possibly was. But engineers had put a floating bridge across and, of course, we crossed it further into Germany on the, on the – I can't remember the name of that bridge that they made. “___+” we were able to cross.

SM: Did you have to wait at the river for a while, to go over? Or were you able to go over immediately?

CV: Oh, no. It was a, it was a wait-and-see attitude there, for a while.

SM: To see if you were under any kind of fire? Were you under fire trying to cross the river?

CV: Well, we weren't. Actually, the Germans were just on the other side of the river. And they were, they were – their objective was to keep us from establishing a foothold on the other side of the river, of course. So that was naturally a lot of fire going on.

SM: Now, my understanding is, towards the end of the war and at about that time, the Germans were using a lot of older men and young boys to fight. Were you aware of this or was it because there . . .

CV: I don't think we were. I think we were just involved with what you might call a “normal military manner.”

SM: Okay, so do you remember the day that you heard that Hitler died?

CV: No.

SM: Okay, so May 8th you were in Austria?

CV: Yes.

SM: And so, tell me a little bit more about Austria.

CV: Well, it was just a, it's just a beautiful country, just a beautiful country, mountains and snow caps, of course. And the villages were – were the true Austrian style, I guess you would call it, you know. They were – I don't recall any large city. There were several small cities that we went through. And their– their family houses were – I don't know how to describe it, but they were the more of the mountain type, you know. We've seen any number of pictures of the Austrian Alps and their communities up there. So it was, as I recall, if I were to go back there now, I'd say it was a very beautiful place.

SM: Were there any other Allied troops there besides Americans, where you were?

CV: No.

SM: And how did the Austrians respond to having you there?

CV: As I recall, they– they were very friendly because we were friendly to them. And we – I guess, I guess I, I guess I could see their feelings about us because we were at that point, on the system we were, we were able to put out our perimeter guards. And then the rest of us could relax. And, of course, we were relaxed in their farmhouses; slept in their beds and, of course, we gave them – we had all kinds of coffee and cigarettes. So, you know, we gave some to them and, you know, had them. I don't

know. We had this German lad that we had in our outfit. He got very involved with – I don't know if that's the term to use – but with a family that – where we occupied their household. And they had – in fact, they had three daughters, I think. And these guys communicated back and forth. And even after the war, this – our friend's name was Grunhuffer (sp?) – corresponded with those people over there. And they had pretty much of an annual newsletter that went back and forth. So they were friends of ours, friendly.

SM: So he kept in contact on a yearly basis with this Austrian family?

CV: **Yes, he did. He's been deceased a few years now, so I don't have any –(6 sec) but I remember the people as being quite friendly, you know. And I think they were, they were anti-Nazi. In fact, one guy tipped us and I probably told you this, tipped us off that one of the Nazi members there had a car that was stored under a bunch of hay in their barn. And so, we brought the car out and painted it Army green and put a star on it. And we used it to tool around the – this now was, this now was probably after the war. After the – and so we used it to tool around the neighborhood with. And when we got our – our whole unit – I and four other guys – and I can't believe, to this day, that they left just us to guard all of our equipment and turn it over to some replacements that were going to take it and go to the war in the Pacific.**

So the five of us, for a few days, we were just there all by ourselves as far as the military was concerned. And there was time for us before the other group came. And we took this car down to the Bürgermeister and traded it to him for five loaves of bread, five bottles of cognac, and ten hard-boiled eggs. And then we went down and got onto a boxcar, 40 & 8 boxcar, and rode it down to Marseilles, and that's where we departed to go back to the United States.

SM: So in other words your whole platoon left earlier . . .

CV: **Oh yeah, yeah.**

SM: . . . and, when you say your unit, you mean just your team, in your tank team?

CV: **No, no, our whole unit.**

SM: And tell me, again, what the whole unit – your whole unit means all of your company?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: So your whole company left, except for the five men that were on your tank?

CV: **No, well there were five of us, not necessarily from our tank.**

SM: Okay, which five were left behind?

CV: **Well, I was the first sergeant, at that time.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **So that was the master sergeant of the group. And then we had a couple of maintenance men. And then, I guess, just a couple of other guys for guard duty or something.**

SM: And how long were you there by yourselves, the five of you?

CV: Oh, I would guess a couple weeks.

SM: So you would have had – let’s see if my math is right. You would have had 36 tanks there?

CV: (4 sec) **I suppose, yeah.**

SM: So that’s quite a bit of equipment to leave you guys with, wasn’t it?

CV: **I can’t believe, to this day, why they would – why there wasn’t a whole bunch of officers left there, you know, to look after things, but no, they only just left it. I was the head honcho.**

SM: How did you feel being the head honcho for those couple of weeks?

CV: **Oh, I just – we were happy, we were living comfortably.**

SM: Now, when your company moved into – what town was this in, where you last were in Austria?

CV: **It seemed like it was “Roydie,” “Roadie,” “Radie” or something.**

SM: Okay, after you came into Austria, where would the civilians go when you took over their homes?

CV: **We were, we were pretty liberal with them. Most of them stayed right there.**

SM: So a lot of them would stay in the same homes you would be in?

CV: **We didn’t, we didn’t – we weren’t in a cleaning-out escapade of any type. We just, we just moved in with them, really, is what happened.**

SM: Tell me about when you – so you got on just a regular – when you say you got on a train to go back to Marseilles, the five of you, it was just a regular passenger train?

CV: **Oh no, it’s a boxcar.**

SM: That’s what you said it was. So what does that mean?

CV: **Forty and eight. Didn’t you ever hear of the 40 & 8?**

SM: No.

CV: **That was the, was the transportation that was used in Germany and France, and all there was boxcars. And when we got to 40 & 8, a boxcar was supposed to hold 40 people or 8 horses. And that’s where they got the 40 & 8. We just got on the boxcar.**

SM: What else was in the boxcar with you?

CV: **Nothing.**

SM: Nothing, it was empty?

CV: **Just us. As we went along, we picked up a couple of guys here and there, and we just, (5 sec) just looked out the doors.**

SM: Were you able to stop along the way to go to the bathroom and get food?

CV: Oh, yes, yeah. In fact, in fact, I think it was an organized route of some type. Because I can remember, we stopped a couple of different places and everybody got off the train, and went through – they had a food place set up so we got something to eat. So I guess, it must have been semi-organized train trip of some kind. But, anyway, we wound up at Marseilles.

SM: And how long was the ship from Marseilles back to the States?

CV: Oh, I imagine it was a couple weeks.

SM: And where did you go to after that?

CV: Then I – well we landed in New York; I guess, we were in one of the harbors there. Then I went to, from there then, I went to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. That's where we, from the Midwest, were sent to be discharged.

SM: Okay.

CV: So I was discharged at Fort McCoy – Camp McCoy. It's Fort McCoy now, but Camp McCoy at that time, and came back to Lisbon. And what month would that have been in?

SM: And what month would that have been in?

CV: October.

SM: October of 1945?

CV: Yeah, it took us quite a while to get out of Marseilles.

SM: Did it?

CV: Because there was, at that time, at that time the railroad people were on strike. And so they were wanting any military men that had railroad experience, they wanted them back in the States. So they had top priority of getting back to the States. So I suppose we hung around Marseilles for a month or so, probably just waiting for transportation. But anyway, I wound up at Camp McCoy, and was discharged there in October. And I came home to Lisbon and I was just home for a week or 10 days, I guess. And I re-enlisted in the Army.

SM: So tell me about your homecoming to Lisbon. Was anybody waiting for you to – did you take a train to Lisbon? Was there a train?

CV: No. Three or four of us rented a cab from Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, to Lisbon; and we were all from Lisbon, so that's how we got to Lisbon.

SM: So there were three or four men from Lisbon in your company or in your battalion?

CV: Battalion.

SM: In your battalion and so you rented a cab?

CV: Yeah.

SM: Seriously?

CV: Yes.

SM: Do you remember how much it cost to take a cab?

CV: **No idea.**

SM: So you rented a cab from McCoy, Fort McCoy . . .

CV: **Wisconsin.**

SM: . . . to Lisbon?

CV: **Lisbon.**

SM: And that would have been about an eight- or nine-hour drive, ten-hour drive?

CV: **Oh, it would have been eight hours, anyway. Yeah, it would have been about eight hours.**

SM: Were your parents expecting you?

CV: **Well, yes and no. I think I was pretty good on keeping them posted as to what was happening to me. And so I'm sure that they would expect me to come in any day, which I did. And I remember my mother, the first meal I had at home – my dad did his own butchering. And he wasn't much of a butcher but he got the job done. And we always had pork chops that were so thick, and they were just delicious. And my mother had prepared – she must have known.**

I don't know how this happened but, anyway, for our first meal at home, I remember was pork chops and we had glorified rice. And she had saved, and I never told her this, but we used to eat in our tank when we'd get rations, it was hard to have individuals. A lot of times we got a bunch of stuff. And I can remember that, several times, throwing a #10 can of fruit cocktail on our tank. And so, I was so tired of fruit cocktail; and so my mother had during the years there, she had gotten a can of fruit cocktail and was saving it, so when I came home she opened that can of fruit cocktail. I never did tell her, you know.

SM: That must have been a pretty divine dinner besides the fruit cocktail?

CV: **It was, yeah, yeah. Yeah, it was a good dinner.**

SM: Now tell me about your brothers. Were they in World War II?

CV: **Yes they were. One of them, one of them, one of them was – well, in fact, I ran into one of them in Italy. So I seen him in Italy. And then there that was – oh, he was in some communications unit and – (6 sec) oh, south of Florida, in some of those islands there. And then my youngest brother was in the, he was in the Navy and he went to the Pacific Theater.**

SM: Did he make it back alive?

CV: **Oh, yes. We all got back, yeah.**

SM: All four of you did?

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: Now there were five boys, weren't there, in your family?

CV: **Well, yeah. My oldest brother was on the farm.**

SM: On the farm?

CV: **Married and had a child.**

SM: Okay, so all four of you made it back alive, which was pretty amazing?

CV: **Yes, yeah.**

SM: And tell me about when you ran into your brother in Italy.

CV: **Well, I guess – I really don't know how, I don't really know how it came about, except I knew what unit he was in. And we met, we met in, I suppose it was Naples, probably. And we didn't spend that much time together. We didn't have that much time. But what do you do? We went to the bar and had a few drinks. I remember he got a hair cut from some Italian but, otherwise, we didn't spend that much time together. We didn't have that much time, really.**

SM: Now this is when you first arrived in Naples, or when you came back to Naples after being up in Florence?

CV: **No, I think this would have been when we first got to Naples.**

SM: And when you say unit, do you mean battalion, or what do you mean when you say unit?

CV: **Well, I think primarily of our company.**

SM: Your company?

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: So he was in the same battalion but a different company?

CV: **No.**

SM: No.

CV: **He was in a different type of a unit altogether.**

SM: And how were you able to communicate with him, that you knew he was in Italy?

CV: **I don't honestly know. I suppose through our parents, probably. You know I told them – somehow I was able to tell them. Well, they knew what unit I was in but I don't think you could tell where you were, exactly where you were at. But, of course, we had our unit address. And then Marv, of course, when he corresponded home had a unit address also. So I guess, probably, my folks gave Marv's unit to me and they gave my unit to Marv. So I was able to track him down, in that respect.**

SM: Going back to World War II, what would you say was your most memorable experience in World War II, if you could think of all the things that we talked about or something that we did not talk about? What was the most memorable experience?

CV: **Oh, I think, I think probably going into Rome was a, was a high point. Even though we didn't have much activity there, didn't get involved that much. But there's just the idea of it and we'd all heard of Rome but never had any idea of being there, you know. And so I guess, when I look back, that was one of the exciting experiences. (4 sec) And after we had gone beyond Rome a ways we had a break in action. And some of – well, that's when our lieutenant got shot. He was in the hospital in Rome.**

And so four or five us got a jeep and went back to Rome to visit him. And so that was kind of an exciting time, you know. Think we drank a lot of wine, again.

SM: How many days off did you have off?

CV: **Oh, just a couple.**

SM: Couple days?

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: And how far north were you up?

CV: **Oh, I don't think we were about – we probably weren't 75 to 100 miles, or something like that.**

SM: And how did the lieutenant end up doing?

CV: **Fine, he came back to us.**

SM: He did? What was his name?

CV: **Adler Bratland (sp?).**

SM: Okay, so that must have been a pretty exciting experience to take a few days off from action and go to Rome.

CV: **Yes, it was. Yeah.**

SM: And did you see the Vatican in Rome, or anything?

CV: **Oh, yes. We went to, we went to the Vatican. I was not, I was not that – oh, I don't know, excited about it or something. Some of the other guys were Catholics, you know, and they, of course, were really thrilled about that. But, of course, I was, too; but I mean, I couldn't do some of the things that they did. But it was interesting to have seen the Vatican.**

SM: And you were raised Lutheran, I suppose?

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: Okay. All right, any other experiences you want to share with me?

CV: **I guess, I guess that incident of the automobile and of us getting back to Marseilles would be a highlight.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **And I don't think I really did anything – I was just getting along.**

SM: And what do you – would you love for people to know, about World War II, that didn't serve in World War II, especially young people today?

CV: **I guess, somehow or another, get them to realize what a dangerous situation we were in; (4 sec) and our attempt to try to, you know, accomplish and do something about it. It was not, it was not an easy – I don't know – it didn't bother me that much. But it was not an easy time, I'm sure, for a lot of them; a lot of those young fellows that were drafted that wanted no part of the Army, but yet they had to. There was so much cruel stuff going on since then, too. Hitler was probably a little passive**

compared with some of the activities that are going on now. I don't know. It's a tragic thing.

SM: Did you, speaking of Hitler, did you know anything about the concentration camps when you were there in Germany or in Europe or all?

CV: **We liberated a concentration camp. And I don't really remember which one it was, and I don't remember exactly where it was. But I can remember us driving our tank. It was, it was a barbed wire enclosure like you see in the pictures of it. And I remember driving our tank right through the gates and knocking down the posts, you know. And the German guards, of course, flew. They moved on, and one of our guys – wasn't in my tank, but one of the, one of our tanks – one of our guys found his brother there. And that was an emotional incident, you know. And he was so, so thin and (4 sec) so sickly, I guess, is the term, that he was being evacuated to a hospital in England. And they took his brother that was in our outfit, they took him and had him accompany him over to Europe. They were the Johnson brothers from down around Wyndmere area I heard, of course, in North Dakota.**

SM: What was it called, the name of the town?

CV: **Wyndmere.**

SM: Wyndmere?

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: Okay, so why was this brother in a – what was it, a POW camp or . . .

CV: **Yes, POW camp.**

SM: Oh, it was a POW camp.

CV: **Yeah.**

SM: Okay.

CV: **You said concentration camp. No, it was a POW camp.**

SM: It was a POW camp and how many POWs were there, about?

CV: **Oh, I have no idea. It was a lot of them.**

SM: That must have been a pretty amazing feeling?

CV: **It was.**

SM: Did you know in advance that you were coming upon a POW camp, or you just came upon it?

CV: **We just came upon it.**

SM: And was this after May 8th or . . .

CV: **Oh, no, no, no, no. This would have been, this would have been (4 sec) early '45, I suppose.**

SM: So you actually – and you were able to get all the POWs out?

CV: Well, I have no idea. We broke down the barricades. And there was a, there was a little village over – over on the horizon. Not – I guess, I'd probably say a mile away or something like that. And I remember these POWs streaming out of the camp and heading towards that village up there. Now, what happened when they got up there, I don't know about.

SM: How long were you there, at the POW camp?

CV: Oh, we were just there a short period. We had – see we had, in the tank outfit, we always had a big box or a couple of boxes strapped onto the back of the tank where we kept extra rations and extra cigarettes and things; so, of course, we handed those out. But I don't know whatever developed after that.

SM: And what about the concentration camps? Did you guys know anything about what was happening to the Jews by the Germans?

CV: Oh, I think we probably heard about it but I – you know, I can't remember, during the war, having that much information.

SM: What about when you were in Austria, did you hear anything in Austria about it?

CV: No, not really.

SM: When did you find out about what went on with the concentration camps?

CV: Oh, I think, I think we got the news after the war, probably.

SM: When you got back to the States?

CV: Yeah.

SM: Were there any other kind of wild times that you didn't tell me, or funny things that happened?

CV: In North Africa, you know, we were, we were all issued or given, whatever you want to call it, two mattress covers. And the theory was that you were to stuff those with straw or hay and use them for beds, you know. But we always thought well that's what they were used for. But they were simply body bags. We were carrying our own body bags. We used to, when we were out on our break, after that the campaign, of course; we had a period there that we were just goofing off, so to speak. And we would get in a jeep and take those mattress covers and drive out into the desert and wave one of those, you know. And somebody would come out of the woods, or out of the sand, and we'd sell them to the natives for I think it was \$20, and so we did a lot of that. We weren't supposed to, of course, but we did.

SM: And if you had been caught doing that, what would have happened to you?

CV: Oh, I don't know what would have happened. For some reason we were all smokers and drinkers; every place we went, we drank wine.

SM: That was pretty common in the 1940s, wasn't it?

CV: Yeah.

SM: To smoke?

CV: Oh yes. Well, you know, we were – every time we got rations we got a package of cigarettes.

SM: And how often did you get rations?

CV: Daily.

SM: Daily and you got a package of cigarettes every day?

CV: Yeah.

SM: Wow, were there any guys that didn't smoke?

CV: Well, there were some. And I didn't, I didn't smoke that much. I gave most of mine away.

SM: Do you remember how much they paid you in the military, in World War II?

CV: Yeah, when I went in, it was \$21 a month.

SM: Okay.

CV: And . . .

SM: Did you ever have moments when you came across Germans and you were not in a battle, that you would just go past them and not fight each other, like in North Africa?

CV: Well, if they were surrendering, of course, we just let them through our lines.

SM: Okay.

CV: That happened more than once.

SM: And if they were surrendering and you let them through the lines, did you make sure they didn't have any weapons on them?

CV: Well, they generally – well yes, we made – we didn't pat them down or anything like that, but they didn't have rifles and pistols that were, that were visible. (4 sec) No, I – that never happened in Africa, as far as I was concerned. But I can think of an instance towards the end of the war in Germany, I suppose it was, where our bombers were – I think, I think they were bombing those oil fields at “___” or some such thing as that. And on their way back, of course, they were flying low and some of them get crippled up, you know, and the crew would bail out; which we'd see their parachutes.

And, in a couple of instances, I can remember this, that a paratrooper landed amongst a group of Germans. And it wasn't long before they were waving the white flag, and he brought a whole bunch of German soldiers with him to surrender. He wanted to come back to our lines, of course, but then he brought a bunch of German prisoners with him, is what he did. They were, they were just waiting for somebody to help them surrender to the American troops. We heard a lot of that.

SM: So he was just by himself as a paratrooper?

CV: Oh, yeah.

SM: And he was bailing out of an airplane, landed amongst a bunch of Germans who were waiting to surrender?

CV: Yes.

SM: And he just brought the lot of them back to the lines?

CV: Yeah.

SM: And out of what – where was this out of do you think?

CV: It was towards the end of the war but in Germany, I suppose, is where it was.

SM: And you heard a lot of stories like this where solo?

CV: I seen it you know, in a half a dozen instances.

SM: How close were you to the paratrooper when he came down?

CV: Oh, (5 sec) five, six blocks, I suppose, or something like that.

SM: And so, did you actually see him come down in his, in his parachute?

CV: Yep.

SM: And what else did you witness?

CV: Well then, shortly after that, there was a white flag came up. Apparently these Germans were in a, in a excavation of some type, or bunker of some kind. And, of course, they were, they were waiting to, waiting to surrender, I think, but didn't know how to go about it. I'm guessing that's what they were doing. But, anyway, they – the one group, I remember, would – it must have been 15-20 of them that came up with this paratrooper.

SM: And this is right out in front of you?

CV: Oh yeah, right, yeah.

SM: Weren't you surprised?

CV: Well, I was surprised. In fact, I was – we knew – I knew that they were, well about five or six blocks, maybe a little further than that. I knew, I knew that there was bunch of troops there. But I was trying to – we were, we were in a wooded area. And I was trying to make up my mind whether we wanted to blast them out of there or what we'd do, you know. And while we were trying to make up our mind, apparently, these paratroopers came in. So we could have, we could have really raised havoc with them by firing into their compound. I'm glad we didn't do it.

SM: (5 sec) Why are you glad you didn't?

CV: Well, boy that was – they was our enemy, but I don't know. I thought we were taking an unfair advantage over them. They didn't have any other tank and have any big weapons and that was just murdering them, really. And I didn't care about that aspect of it. I was much happier when they surrendered.

SM: (4 sec) And how many of you were in the woods? How many tanks were in the woods when you were deciding what to do?

CV: About four of us.

SM: Four tanks and do you remember what month this was, approximately?

CV: No, no, I don't.

SM: Was it cold out or was it springtime?

CV: Oh, I'm thinking it was, you know, it must have been towards the end of the war.

SM: Okay.

CV: So it must have been springtime.

SM: And was it just one paratrooper that came out of the airplane or was there another one?

CV: There was, there was two or three of them scattered around, but this guy here was right out in front of us.

SM: And he was the only one that brought in these 15 or 20 German soldiers? And you saw this happen more than once?

CV: Oh, yes. You know, they was – they were – you know, you heard many stories of Germans wanting to surrender but they wanted to surrender to us, not to the Russians. I'm sure they were pretty rough with them. (4 sec) I think, I think – I have no, I have no knowledge of this; but I just always felt that probably we were pretty good to the POWs that we had.

SM: Do you have any sense of how far away the Russians were when you were in Germany towards the end?

CV: No, no.

SM: But did you, at that time, did you understand that the Russians would have treated them worse, or you understood this later on?

CV: Oh, no, no. We always heard that.

SM: You heard that they would treat them poorly?

CV: Yeah, if they were going to surrender, they wanted to surrender to us, rather than the Russians.

SM: How many POW – how many times did you think you had POWs come in front of your tanks to surrender? How often did that happen? Like a dozen times during the course of the war, or more than that, or less than that?

CV: No, no, less than that. Half a dozen times probably.

SM: Half a dozen times.

CV: That's about it, I guess.

SM: Thank you very, very much. You've been most wonderful and I appreciate all your time.

CV: That's no problem. I'm happy to do it.

SM: Thank you.

CV: I've never had, I've never had an opportunity, I guess, or whatever you want to call it. I never talked about World War II. (4 sec) We didn't – in fact, when we used to have, when we used to have these reunions, we never talked – I very seldom ever

talked about the rough times that we had. It was always wild things like the, like that car, this and that, or something like that, that we would talk about.