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Interview with Clem Raith

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Interviewer: Esther Mallard (EM)
Interviewee: Clem Raith (CR)
Date: 1989

EM: Will you tell me where you were born or something about your parents?

CR: All right I was born in Smithton, Pennsylvania, which is a small coal-mining town in western Pennsylvania on May 5th 1922. At that time my father was working in the only other industry besides the coal mine within Smithton, which was a brewery.

EM: just a minute (she adjusts the mic)

CR: ... Commanding General Ronald Reed and he just died this past year.

EM: Was he a Raith also or was this on your mother's side?

CR: No his name- it was on my mother's side. My father had no family other than his father, who died when I was about five years old.

EM: What was your mother's family name?

CR: My mother's family name was Bourbon (sp?) and my mother had come to this country from Alsace-Lorraine which is the country between France and Germany.

EM: Keeps getting swapped back and forth, it used to be-

CR: in 1901 I believe. And she married my father in 1920.

EM: Is Raith a Welsh name or German?

CR: No, it is German. My grandfather had come to this country on my father's side from Bavaria actually and my father was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

EM: Were there many Welsh in Smithton and the coal mining area?

CR: No. At that time, all of the town in the Mananda Hill Valley where mostly ethnic town; in other words, Smithton was more or less a German-Austrian town.

EM: I see.

CR: The next town up the road would be Croatian, the town down the road would be Slavic and Polish and you know you didn't move from one town...

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EM: They tend to congregate, people of the same cultural background, ethnic background.

CR: That's right, and of course a lot of them were first generation people that had come over here. So it usually; the way my mother came over here, her sister- my mother was the youngest of nine children- her sister, who had been here, was the oldest of the nine children. There was twenty years difference in their age. And her sister sent her \$100 to pay her passage from wherever she was in Alsace there and she came from a town right outside of Strasburg.

EM: Did your mother speak French or German?

CR: My mother spoke German.

EM: German.

CR: But not pure German. Now my father was educated in Pittsburgh and at the time that he was going to school, they taught both German and English.

EM: In the public schools.

CR: Right, and Pittsburgh at that time had all ethnic neighborhoods too. I mean you had the Italian neighborhood, the Irish neighborhood, the German and so forth and so on. He was raised a German Catholic. That was different than an Irish Catholic, a Polish Catholic. I mean they had...

EM: Did they tend to belong to the same church, the German Catholic?

CR: All to the same church and then the Irish-

EM: Had their own Catholic church.

CR: Oh yeah. Very very different, I mean they wouldn't interchange or have any connection with one another at all.

EM: Lived in the same neighborhoods, tended to live in the same neighborhoods?

CR: No. There were more or less lines too and in those days of course very segregated. I mean Pittsburgh- a black person wouldn't have thought of moving in to an Irish community or a German community. I can remember them telling stories about Smithton at one of the times before John L. Lewis became powerful in the '30s when they had some problems in the mines. In Smithton they brought in two black families to work in

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mines. And of course all of the houses were owned by the coal company. Nobody owned a house. They paid rent and it was deducted from your pay.

EM: Like the textile mills of the South. They have similar...

CR: Right. And in fact they even had wooden money. You got paid so much money in American money and then so much in wooden money that you had to spend at the company store. But anyhow, they brought in these two black families and the first night they were there, a group of people went and told them they better leave or they'd dynamite 'em out because dynamite was something that was very prevalent in the coal field. I mean everybody took a little bit home just in case they had stumps to blow out or something like that. It was a...

EM: Do you remember any Jewish families in the Smithton area?

CR: No.

EM: None at all. You don't remember anybody even among the merchants.

CR: My first experience, other than Jewish merchants, after we moved to Pittsburgh- I guess I was about probably a junior in high school before I ever knew anybody that I knew was Jewish. Of course they were again very segregated, I mean they- and to this day there is still a section in Pittsburgh that's predominately Jewish. We moved to Pittsburgh, I guess probably around 1928, '29, right at the crash because as I mentioned my father worked in a brewery and that was during prohibition, so that they were one of the few places that was licensed to make beer and I of course I don't know why or anything but I do know-

EM: Where it was sold, you don't know where it was sold?

CR: No, I don't know anything about that because he was just a laborer. He had no position of any importance in the hierarchy of the thing. And as I said it, that brewery was owned by a man called Stoney Jones and the beer was Stoney's Gold Crown beer.

EM: Is it still made there? Is it still in production?

CR: It was the last time- you know I've been away for near thirty-five years, but when we first came south, why, they were still in operation. It was a local beer; they didn't compete on any kind of national market. But as I told you, he was the grandfather of Shelly Jones, who is current Broadway and Hollywood movie star. And she went to high school with my cousin who is; he went to Connellsville (?) High School and from Connellsville High School and got an appointment to West Point, which was unheard-of because the West Point big cities. He served his time in the army as a general's aid,

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in Japan; came back and went to the University of Pittsburgh medical school. Then went back into the army to serve his internship and specialized in neurosurgery and ended up being the commanding general of Walter Reed until- I guess he died last August, I believe.

EM: But was still actively engaged in the service?

CR: Oh he was still- he was a Lieutenant General when he got out of the army. And he had been quite successful with his career, but he was another small town boy that started out and never looked back.

EM: Did you go to Catholic school in Pittsburgh or did you go to public school?

CR: I went through Catholic school through the eighth grade and then I went to public school. And I graduated in a class with three hundred and sixty people and the first two hundred students of that class had all gone to Catholic grade school. At that time, the discipline in the Catholic schools was terrific. I mean there was no such thing as recess or art. You went to school and you kept reading, writing and whatever.

EM: You didn't talk back, you didn't talk back.

CR: We didn't talk at all. You didn't chew gum. We had no uniforms to wear, but you were required to wear a tie and at times we wore knickers and long socks. They were very strict. It was a no nonsense deal. Of course when we got to high school, we had all developed pretty good study habits. We were able to pick things up in a lot less time. By the time I was a sophomore in high school, I was working five days a week after school and Saturdays and Sundays. I had to get my schoolwork done in between and I managed to do well enough in school that I wasn't ashamed of myself.

EM: Did you take a college prep course?

CR: Mmm-hmm and of course after I graduated from high school and started to work, but then I started going to community tech at night and that went on for a couple of years, of course I graduated from high school in 1940 and Pearl Harbor was in 1941. And I was working, by that time, I had worked myself up to where I was an apprentice toolmaker in the shop that I'd bargained for which was a forerunner, which later became Rockwell.

EM: What was it called?

CR: Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company

EM: Equitable Meter

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CR: And it was a company that was founded by George Westinghouse- he was the Westinghouse of Westinghouse.

EM: The great man.

CR: The great man and the electric man- he's the same man. But he had a developed this what started out as a vapor meter to measure gas. And through- again I'm not familiar with this- but around 1926 he either sold or lost that business to the Mellon interests. And they hired Colonel Rockwell who was the president of the Temkin Detroit Axle Company to come to Pittsburgh and run this meter company that they'd just bought with the option, I guess for him, to buy out...

EM: How did the Mellons, excuse me, but how did the Mellons make all their money, what was the source of their wealth?

CR: Banking.

EM: Banking

CR: Andrew Mellon, of course, was Secretary of Treasurer under Hoover or somebody.

EM: Harding or Coolidge.

CR: Somebody back then. But that is the- and the Mellon family- all were tremendously- even I guess by today's standards they're wealthy.

EM: Did they, did they originate it Pittsburgh or was it Philadelphia, was it in Philadelphia?

CR: No, I think it was Pittsburgh. Rockefeller was born in Philadelphia and New York. Mellon's in Pittsburgh. You know Pittsburgh had a lot of wealthy families because we had all the robber-barons, the Fricks' (?) and the Jones' and the Lotten's (?) and the people who founded U.S. Steel and the Al Core (?) people again- that was Mellon- the only company in America-

EM: I didn't realize that.

CR: That was Mellon. Gulf Oil was Mellon. They were a very powerful bunch of people; still are.

EM: But you think the original source of their wealth was in banking.

CR: Banking, mmm-hmm.

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EM: And it's Carnegie Mellon now instead of Carnegie ...

CR: That's right- Carnegie Mellon. And of course he's a gambler, but very demanding school. I took all of the math courses. I was working towards a mechanical engineering degree.

EM: Was it primarily an engineering type school? There was a tremendous emphasis on that then.

CR: At that time they really had two schools. They had an engineering school and a drama school and that was about it.

EM: They still have an outstanding drama school, don't they? And I'm sure engineering as well.

CR: Mmm-hmm, I'm sure. They lost out- I guess at one time they were considered- Carnegie Tech and M.I.T. were the two top engineering schools in the country. But after WW2 they chose to stay in the undergraduate field, where M.I.T. and Cal Tech and people like that went into the graduate work and of course that's where all the foundation running was scored for all the research and everything. So, they are considered today a good school, but nowhere near ranking with probably Cal Tech, Rice, Duke, some of the schools that have really gone heavy in the post-graduate work. But, as I say about end late 1942, why, by then most of my friends had either enlisted or been drafted and I had had a couple of deferments because of the work I was doing because at that time we had stopped making meters. We were making twenty-millimeter shells and we were making seventy five-millimeter shells and we were making ... for ... bomb site and we were making all of the main oxygen regulators that were used on these flights where they had go above twelve thousand feet. It was considered one of the essential industries and as I say, I had a couple of deferments, but I was young and I just decided the next time I got a notice that my deferment was up I didn't tell them about. I just went and told them one day I got to go take an examination- I'm going home. "Oh no, we'll get you outta it, just wait."

EM: You wanted to go?

CR: Yeah. It was one of those things, as I say, I was twenty and I just wanted to see what it was like. I had never been any further away from Pittsburgh because Smithton was seventy miles away and I'd been to Philadelphia once and that was 300 miles and that was the furthest I'd ever been away before.

EM: There was a great spirit of patriotism abroad in America at that time. Don't you think so?

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CR: Oh sure. I know there was and I think that people my age still have a different feeling about patriotism than some of the young people today. Fortunately even with Vietnam and Korea we have not seen a country that was mobilized the way this country was in World War II, you know, we had fifteen million people in the service in World War II and there was rationing and restrictions on travel and there were a lot of things you couldn't get where we here during the Korean War and during the Vietnam War, the people in the United States, that unless they had someone over there really wanted them...

EM: In the field.

CR: And I sometimes think that's why they give the Vietnam War a bad war, but golly, the fellas that were over there, they were doing what they were told to do. I had a hard time saying that they should be considered any less than the veteran of World War I or World War II or Korean War. They did what they were told to do. And they served their country. And you know the war we were in, there no lines drawn. They were dust and they were sand. And our job was to go where they were and nobody said how to do it or you had to not do this or not do that. Now, I was in the invasion of several towns in France and Germany and we'd get instructions to not to blow up the Cathedral or something unless they were- there was an absolute necessity and we weren't supposed to blow up banks and hospitals and museums, but again it was just this is what we want you to do and nobody's there watching what you did- we had it our own way. We didn't have to worry that there was going to be somebody looking over our shoulders of the outfit.

EM: Let's go back now to the year of induction. When were you actually inducted in the service?

CR: In Fort Meade, Maryland.

EM: And when would that have been, late '43 or maybe '42?

CR: It was in early '43 and I stayed at Fort Meade and I was supposed to have taken all the tests and of course they assured me that I would get into something that I could use some of this skill that I had developed. And at that time my- back when all the bad news started coming in from Africa that we had lost so many combat troops there- and the air force was starting to lose a lot of people, so they just emptied the induction centers out and formed new infantry divisions. So, I went from Fort Meade, Maryland to Camp Blanding, Florida and was just there a short time and was sent as part of the cavalry to form the 63rd infantry division at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi.

EM: Was that Camp Van Doren, d-o-r-e-n?

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CR: Van Dorn, d-o-r-n

EM: Dorn

CR: After the confederate general in the Civil War. He was from Mississippi. It was two words. But anyhow, we formed the 63rd Infantry Division there and we stayed there the whole time that we were in the states and I got to be a section leader which was a staff sergeant over a group of three sixty-millimeter mortars and a rifle company. We were a line company.

EM: Was it at Camp Van Dorn that you had your training?

CR: Mmm-hmm.

EM: This is where you trained.

CR: This was just really- we went in there and built the camp, you know, it was a bunch of old cotton farms and we built tar-paper barracks-

EM: I see, so it was just being constructed?

CR: -did our training in the swamps around there. Camp Van Dorn was located fifty miles from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, fifty miles from McComb, Mississippi and fifty miles from Natchez, Mississippi. And when we got to where we can go on pass, they were the closest towns we had to go to. Let's see, well we got our training there. And then we left there and went to Camp Shanks, New York.

EM: Where's that? Where is that located?

CR: I'm not sure exactly, Esther, but it's in the New York City area because...

EM: Oh, I see.

CR: I think it's in New Jersey really, because we used to- we were there a lot a week and I used to go to New York everyday and we had to take a ferry. So, I guess it might've been in New Jersey, but anyhow, very close to New York City because we, we could get into downtown Manhattan in a half hour from camp. And then we loaded on a convoy there and went the North Atlantic route to Europe.

EM: Were you attacked at all? Were the ships in the convoy attacked at all?

CR: We lost three troop ships right off the Azores because we went to North Atlantic and then went south because we- they found later we were headed for the Mediterranean. And

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of course the invasion by then, at Normandy had happened and off the Azores we were attacked by German dive-bombers and submarines. They hit the ships on both sides of us. They were both troop ships. Of course we never stopped. We just kept right on going and the destroyer escort try to pick up-

EM: To pick them up.

CR: We heard that the 66th Division I think lost two-thirds of their division on the way over. These are things that I don't remember how I found it out- it was just something I've heard. Then we went through the Straits of Gibraltar and that was a scary experience because you had to go through there one ship at a time and they had these...

EM: mines and all...

CR: ...well they had these people on little rowboats that would open up these nets just to enough for one ship to get in one section. And then they'd close them and we'd move on and so we went through there, as I say, one at a time...

EM: Underwater nets- you're talking about underwater nets.

CR: Well they were all the way to the top.

EM: You could see them.

CR: They say the people in these little rowboats that they were- they didn't have motors on 'em really. They just rode and they would open the net just wide enough so that we could get through them. Our particular ship went through at night.

EM: That was a favorite site for submarine activity, wasn't it?

CR: Well, in the ship that we were on with the converted coastal standards, it was not a big ship at all. In fact, it was the sister ship of the Morro Castle, which was the boat that burnt off the coast of New Jersey about 1938- a pleasure boat that ran from New York to Cuba. People were going to Cuba to gamble. So, that's the size that it was. Gosh, it's much smaller than any of these cruise ships that you take to the Bahamas nowadays. In the north Atlantic, many a time, I could see the waves that were higher than the boat- you know we just slammed around and our compartment was E-deck, which was three decks below the water line. But I was fortunate- I was the ... sergeant for the troops on this ship going over.

EM: What does that mean?

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CR: That I was in charge of the discipline, the military discipline for the troops only, not for the ships company, but if we had to arrest anybody, there was a little brig on the ship and you put them in there. But the brig was on the top deck, it wasn't bad at all. When I discovered that I told my people that we weren't arresting anybody 'cause I wanted to stay there. *(Esther laughs)* and I did, I think I-

EM: There's less tendency to seasickness if you're up above?

CR: Well that confinement down below because they were just like pipe racks, you know, and just about enough for- I think they were five high in our particular compartment. And if somebody on the top bunk threw up, why four people below got it. And the latrines were just off the sleeping quarters with no doors or anything and they weren't conventional latrines. It just had a six-inch pipe with seats welded on it. It got overpowering at times to say the least and when that ship was rocking and bouncing around, why it was real messy. And the food was cooked with steam. They had a big steam kettle and they put everything in that and turned the steam on it- it was terrible. We were ready to fight when we got off of that ship, I think. *(Esther laughs)*

EM: How long did the trip take to get to Gibraltar?

CR: I think we were eleven days.

EM: But you did a lot of zigzagging.

CR: A lot of zigzagging and very slow, really- very, very slow. Those destroyer escorts were fast enough that they would circle as far as you could see and you could see the number on it so you'd know that it was the same ship but it'd be coming the other way so you'd know it circled the whole convoy and we were still just bouncing along about seven or eight miles an hour.

EM: Did you have to pick up, especially the destroyers, did you have to refuel anywhere along the way or did they have enough they could just.....?

CR: No. Now maybe the destroyer escorts did, but if they did I didn't know about it. We had fuel to go. After we got through Gibraltar and regrouped, then we were in the Mediterranean and of course there was a- the Italian navy that I'd be concerned about, but I guess we weren't too concerned about that. But then we picked up air cover- we'd been in time from Africa, so that we had the P-47's and the P-51's. Most of the daylight hours, why, they were someplace around. We got to Marseille and that's where we landed, in Marseille and Marseille was secured but that was it. So our first combat really was right outside of Marseille. The Germans had just moved out to the city and dug in but we started there and sort of went up the, I'd say the eastern side of France. That was one of

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the first places we hit before we went to Dijon and then Nancy, Epinal, maybe not in that order, but anyhow.....

EM: Did you have any interchange with French citizens along the way?

CR: Not with French citizens, but with the French First Army. Well, I guess some of the French people, but you know, we were new and we were thrown into combat right away, because the Third Army- we were in the Seventh Army- and the Third Army, of course, was north of us and then the First-

EM: That was Patton's- the Fourth?

CR: Yeah. But they were in the center of France and, as I say, we had to come up- actually we went up the route that sort of bordered France and Switzerland. I remember in 1944 around Christmas time, which was in The Battle of the Bulge ... We by that time were at the Rhine River and we could see Switzerland and Germany and we were in France. We were the southern most troops of the American army. And then of course, when The Battle of the Bulge came-

EM: Before you move on, I'd like to ask you a question about the French. How did they get organized, were these free French that were just lying low? That was the Vichy- under Vichy- the control of the Vichy government at that time, wasn't it?

CR: Well, of course you know, every town you captured immediately there were a bunch of people running around with armbands and saying-

EM: I see. Proclaiming themselves.

CR: -that they were the French underground. We really never, I guess you'd say cooperated with them on any kind of activity, now we didn't interfere what they were doing with the civilian people. They didn't bother too much with German treasurers that was our worry, to worry about them. They were more or less involved with their own thing. So that really until we sought the French First Army, which was De Gaulle's group. Now they were-

EM: They had been in exile.

CR: Yeah. They were a military group and they were equipped with American equipment and they had a lot of *Senegalese*, which were...

EM: You're saying Senegalese, s-e-n-g-a-l-e-s-e, Senegalese, okay I got you.

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CR: Yeah, these were the Africans who all had the cuts on their faces, you know, they, I guess the jobs sometimes by the mark of a warrior was you had these two gashes across your face and two down your face, because I remember hitching a ride on a- I just stopped a truck, I was going, I think our division headquarters, rather than walk I just stopped a truck and got in. I asked the guy if he was going to Marseille and he says yeah. I didn't pay attention to him; we were going down this winding road, down a mountain, going like a hundred miles an hour. And I says, "Hey"- he was black- "Hey fella, slow down." And he looked over and he just grinned and he had these big marks and he couldn't talk English and I couldn't talk French, but he just kept it all the way to the floor all the way to- I don't think he knew there was a brake on the truck.

EM: And probably an old rattly truck too.

CR: No, it was an American truck.

EM: Oh, it was American equipment? I see.

CR: One of our ... but they had all the equipment, and they were terrific fighters. Later on, we happened to be right beside them and we were pushing further north into France and Germany and into Saar Valley. They were- we were the end company that connect with the French and I can remember they told us one night to make sure and tie a handkerchief through our jacket because this Senegalese patrol was going through and that we wouldn't see them or hear them but they were pretty mean people. I had seen many of them with strings of ear. They cut off ears of people that they kill and then they'd make sort of a necklace of it. We lost two people that night because they didn't bother to tie anything. I was up most of that night and if there was anybody there, I never saw or heard anybody, but we were in foxholes. So they were mean people, but they charge just like these things you see in the movies, no regard to self-preservation at all- a rebel (?), just screaming, yelling and go get 'em.

EM: Were they dressed in French army uniforms?

CR: Pretty much the same as ours. They were the o.d. uniforms and we were wearing the same things. Their helmets were just a little bit different. Some of them had the same that we had.

EM: Did you acquire any food from the people as you went through or were you eating pretty much-

CR: Not in France so much, but when we actually got into the Saar there and on into Germany, why, we lived off the land a lot because the only food we got from our own troops were k-rations, which at that time were the boxes that looked like the Cracker Jack boxes. So we liberated a lot of food, a lot of booze, naturally, because you couldn't drink

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the water. That was for sure. The water was terrible. They just did not have good sanitary practices. We drank a lot of wine and champagne and their champagne, either I don't remember or it didn't seem to bother us like it might now if I drank champagne. I don't even like champagne.

EM: Alcohol content was very low. Is that what you're telling me?

CR: Yeah, that's right, and the wine the same way. Of course now, if you got some of their liquor, like their brandy or cognac, they were strong.

EM: What about foods, what kind of foods did you get?

CR: Well, especially in the small towns, most of these people had- the way their farms were set up at that time, people all lived in the village, nobody lived in a farmhouse and then they went out everyday to work their fields or whatever they drove their cattle out or sheep or goats or whatever they had. So they were self-sustaining and they had these smoker cabinets. They smoked a lot of meat because they didn't have refrigeration and things of that sort and I guess we didn't either at that time. But they had these smoker cabinets and of course they had these bakeries that would bake these big loaves of dark bread. So we ate well. Because most of the time when the American troops would come in the people would either go out in the street after the shooting was down or they would leave before the shooting started. And either way, of course, it was a house-to-house deal with us. We probably captured fifty percent of our treasures that were people hiding in rooms.

EM: These were soldiers that you're talking about that you were capturing, not civilians?

CR: We didn't go after civilians. That was up to either the local underground or something because we couldn't tell the good guys from the bad guys.

EM: Let me ask you this question. It's something that I've never heard discussed about in Europe. I've heard that, you know when the Russians came through, they said, "hide all the women," and that was oftentimes true of German soldiers going into Russia or Russians certainly had no fondness with the Germans. But I never heard anything about American soldiers raping as they went. Was there any evidence of this? Did you have strict rules about this?

CR: I'm sure there was, but in my own experience and with the people around me, anyone that was so implied found somebody that was willing enough or either food or...

EM: Barter.

CR: any reason so that...

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EM: You don't think they were forcive? There were very few forcible ones.

CR: And that was one thing that I guess if we paid any attention to- and we didn't pay too much attention to anything that came that way- but we did not mistreat the civilian population. Many towns would surrender, and a town, you know, troops, the Germans would move out and rather than shelling them, why, we would just go through the town. If it was clean, that was it. But I can remember one town and this was in probably the latter part of the war that the Burgomeister and everyone had come out and-

EM: The Burgomeister was the mayor of- essentially what we would call- ?

CR: The mayor. -and told us that it was a town with no German soldiers there and that they surrendered and at that time we were a battalion. We were attacking as a battalion and we had battery one-five-five soft propelled guns to support us. And this is the biggest piece of artillery that we had for troop support at that time. The eight-inch gun, of course, I think that sort were further back, but these one-five-five s.p. guns were new; we hadn't seen them in the states. (Doorbell rings) Excuse me.

EM: Certainly.

CR: Cleaning lady. We haven't been able to get anybody during the day- so we just- she comes once a week and dusts. Well anyhow. Oh, I was talking about the commander of this battery of artillery. He told the Burgomaster through an interpreter, he said, "We're gonna send troops there," but he says, "If there's any shots at all, he says, "I'm gonna pull the troops back and level your town." And we started down into the town and they opened up on us with machine-guns. And so we pulled back and we leveled that town. So, I don't know how many civilians were in the town, but I know that group of people that came out to surrender, they were there anyhow. And it was a kind of a game. We killed a lot of people. They killed a lot of us. In my company that went overseas, we had a hundred and eighty combat troops; six came back.

EM: Well you were the driving wedge sort of once you got into the-

CR: Well, we were front line troops. I think I spent 110 days at one stretch never under-never out of the range of small arms fire.

EM: You were enduring that and there were others around you. What was your reaction to that kind of day-by-day intensity? Was that a- did that prove to be a great problem? Did you, what means did you have of coping with that?

CR: I've often wondered about that Esther, because you know I probably was never healthier in all my life. And I think I slept- in winter of '44, I slept in a house maybe five

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nights that whole winter, the rest of the time I'd be in a foxhole underground or in the snow because we were in the mountains. We had snow. We had snow ten feet deep that we would just dig a tunnel and walk through the tunnel.

EM: What about your garb that they supplied you for that? Were you adequately clothed for that kind of- ?

CR: Well, we had feet problems and then during, I guess about in December, they took away our overcoats and we got the field jackets with the liners because at night you couldn't tell the difference between the Germans or the Americans because they both wore the long coat and after that, why, if we saw a silhouette and we couldn't see between their legs we shot. In fact, we killed our regimental commander because he still wore the long trench coat and he was out and we didn't know it, out in our area on some sort of observation type mission and one of the guys couldn't see between his legs so he shot him, you know. And what's your feelings? I don't know. I think you're in state of suspended animation.

EM: Was there much drinking among the troops? Were you supplied with- ?

CR: No, we were too scared.

EM: Oh. Did you have allotments of beer or alcohol?

CR: Two bottles of beer, whenever we got it, but nobody- I mean we got- we had enough that anybody that wanted alcohol could get it, but I don't know, it was a case I guess that you didn't want to be in a position that you couldn't perform at your maximum because you didn't really worry about the other guy- you were worried about yourself. And you know, the adrenaline is flowing because you're constantly afraid. An artillery shell doesn't give you any warning; you know, it comes in and if hits in the right place-

EM: There's not a whining sound?

CR: Oh yeah, you hear it coming but what do you do? How far can you run?

EM: It's not- it's too late by the time you hear it.

CR: And the same way now with bullets now. I've always said the one bullet I didn't hear was the one that hit me because many a time they're crackin' over my head then you'd hear the shot coming from over here, but you'd already heard the bullet go over your head because it travels faster than sound.

EM: Did you encounter many civilian snipers?

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CR: Women.

EM: Women, too. Fighting.

CR: We had some rules about snipers. I mean, if they gave up and they still had ammunition, why, we took them prisoners, but if they were out of ammunition, it didn't count. And women, if they were snipers, they were ...

EM: I didn't realize that women had been taken- they were taken to prison, huddled together with prisoners just like in the war. I've never seen any, I guess, when you see German prisons pictured in these newsreels; they always appear to be men.

CR: Well, of course, a lot of the newsreels really get big groups where you'd pick out five here and ten here, that doesn't make a good picture.

EM: Individuals, I see. Now what, disposal would you make of these people? Obviously you couldn't carry them along with you.

CR: We would get them- our nearest collection point or center point that we had, were what we called the battalion headquarters. There were three infantry companies in a battalion and we would just be responsible to get them back as far as the battalion. They had to take care of them from there. Went back to regiment then- to the division.

EM: Because they would've been a burden for you all obviously.

CR: Oh we didn't mess with them too much. We got rid of them in a hurry. Because it wasn't the prisoners as much as it took away from the few people we had to do the fighting to guard the prisoners. And we never-

EM: Did you ever- excuse me. Go ahead.

CR: We were never at full strength after our first battle. We'd get replacements, but we'd move and I know I used to get replacements until they were there a week or two I never bothered to learn their names because we'd lose a lot the next day.

EM: Did that bother you more afterwards? When you were in the middle of it, it was a matter of survival, but later on- ?

CR: It would bother me every time that the company would get together however informally or just the in-sergeants would get together. They'd say so and so's gone and so and so's gone; guys that you'd been with for a year or two years; people you didn't know. Hell, you were pretty used to seeing dead people, both the German and our own, so that you couldn't stop to mull over it too long.

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EM: Did you have any preparation for existing in those kinds of temperatures before you got there? Did anybody sit down and tell you how to protect you feet and your hands?

CR: No, I started to tell you about it. I told you about the jackets but- well we had knew about what we were supposed to do from getting frostbitten toes is change socks everyday. And I guess the whole time or the whole winter, I never was without a pair of socks pinned to my underwear.

EM: To dry them out.

CR: Dry them out.

EM: By the heat of your body.

CR: And but they issued what they called a shoepack, which replaced the boot. It was fine. It had a liner in it. You could keep your feet warm, but they were terrible to walk in any distance and you couldn't hardly run in them. They were like fishing boots or something. And so we started throwing them away in a hurry. Because even though we took the boots, we didn't give up our boots. We carried them around our neck and that was very fortunate because when we had to move- I don't want to get out of your context- but during the battle of the bulge, when Patton pulled out of Central France, the Seventh army had to move and cover the area. So we walked day and night for three days. And every once in a while a bunch of tucks come along and we'd hop on and ride for an hour or two and sleep, but then it put us out and we keep walking and we walked from that area that I was telling you about in Switzerland, France and Germany- we walked all the way to the Saar Valley, probably fifty miles of riding, maybe did the rest walking and we did it in three days because we were in Sarreguemines by new year.

EM: In where?

CR: Sarreguemines which is right, it's north of Strasburg and right below Saarbrucken and this was the- Saarbrucken was the industrial city of the Saar valley. I saw Saarbrucken get bombed by 8th air force at night and they lost 300 planes that night. So you can imagine how many planes there would have been.

EM: And how devastated the town must have been.

CR: Well, when we got to Saarbrucken it was pretty well beat up, but it was a heavy German source of their mechanical stuff they needed. We crossed the Saar River then and then they chased us back and we had to go back again and then we crossed it again and the first town- one of the few small towns I remember- was called Bubigen (Bobingen?) and it was still-

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EM: Do you remember how to spell that?

CR: I think it's b-u-b-i-g-e-n. Bubigen. But their sole claim to existence must have been they had a brick factory with a huge smokestack and they had- our information had been that we would be able to capture this town with little or no resistance, so they sent our company which was a weapons platoon and three rifle platoons to capture the town. We lost one whole platoon captured and they pinned the rest of us down and we were there several hours and finally we got some air support because the Germans were using that smokestack as a guide for their artillery and we were just blowing the hell out of it. And the first pieces (?) that suddenly came over put a bomb right down the middle of that smokestack 'cause it blew it to pieces. At that point, why, we were able to move out. We didn't see those fellas and that was probably in January and we-

(End of side A)

CR: ...he was in that camp so we got those guys out there.

EM: I see. Were those primarily American prisoners or were they allied?

CR: It was all American.

EM: All American. Were there any flyers in there?

CR: Could've been, again it's-

EM: What size prison camp?

CR: Oh, they probably had three or four thousand anyhow. It was a stockade kind of a thing. And they hadn't been mistreated or anything. Of course then when we got over into Germany we got into some of the concentration camps, that was a different story.

EM: I imagine there was a lot of jubilation when you all arrived, wasn't there?

CR: From everybody, not only the ... And of course by then we had become quite an outfit because we had the German motorcycles and we had the Mercedes... Half the guys were carrying German submachine guns and- because we found that our weapons weren't really good for any talent fighting. The ... rifle was great but it only fired eight shots and we had to reload it, meanwhile these machine pistols, they'd fire fifty and fire a lot faster too. And most people- myself included- weren't great marksmen, we counted on either the volume or the fear to do the job rather any great accuracy. So, I guess then we got

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through the Saar Valley and then we pushed on due east again. I keep trying- I keep remembering we were going east because as you come back towards us it's west.

EM: Yeah, I know.

CR: Then one of the first towns after we crossed the Rhine, we crossed the Rhine as the lead of the Seventh Army. And again, another SNAFU because we had these big boats, invading type, landing craft and they assured us that there were no Germans right across the river-

EM: Who is they now? Is this from the headquarters radioing in information?

CR: Headquarters. It would come down from battalion; you know we'd go to a briefing at battalion, and they'd say, ok – because we had no lieutenants, it was all sergeants, and they'd tell us, “Now you're not going to have any resistance here so here's what you gotta do.” And I was fortunate, I was in the first boat across- they blew the next one out of the water. We got on the bank there and spread out and got dug in and asked for help. It was too late at night, they said you have to stay there 'til in the morning. So we spent the night, just a handful of us and the whole damn German army on that side of the Rhine, but then the next morning, well we got artillery support and everything else working with us.

EM: How far was the Rhine at that point? Was that a fairly narrow point?

CR: No, I would say probably three quarters of a mile at least. Seemed to me like longer.

EM: 'Cause it widens as it comes in.

CR: You know they run a different way in Europe, some of them. Some run North and South, some run South and North.

EM: I didn't know that.

CR: And I don't remember which way the Rhine was. Then the next place we got to of any note was Heidelberg. And we were the first troops in to Heidelberg.

EM: Now Heidelberg was not bombed really was it?

CR: No, no.

EM: And Oxford and Cambridge in England were not. They were not bombed.

CR: No. And Heidelberg was a beautiful city. I can remember that even now.

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EM: The castles?

CR: The castles and they had a huge military hospital there that was either on a river or surge of lake, but that had these real picturesque bridges on it and of course the Germans, when they left, they just left the hospital - all the patients and everything. Really Heidelberg was just a case of invading it and securing it. They cut- we kept getting radio commands to "push on, push on," and every once in a while we'd fire a couple of rounds and say we were meeting resistance because, man it was nice. (Esther laughs) We weren't in too big a hurry. You know the idea always was to get the infantry in and out to occupy the high ground and then the rear echelon troops would move into the houses and we'd sleep in fox holes.

EM: Heidelberg is kind of an operetta kind of town- a medieval town.

CR: Yeah. You know the University, and the breweries and everything.

EM: A lot of charm- The river.

CR: As I say- of course the whole Rhine The conservation, you know the forest where every dead limb was picked up and it just- we had one firefight in one of those forests where they had taken and made earth dugouts so that we couldn't tell that from the regular topography, and that was a heck of a time getting them out of there. It just looked like the regular woods. When they cut their firewood, you know, they cut it about a foot long and then split it into about two inch squares. Their woodpiles are just a thing of beauty. Of course the German people are by nature clean and neat- old farmhouses that God knows how old they were. And I went into a church in one of those little towns and the cornerstone had thirteen something on it and that makes you realize history goes before us. The thing about this church, it was a very small church, smaller than anything probably in Statesboro. It had a very high ceiling that had been painted with the cherubs and the angels and all that. Of course I got a chance to see the cathedral at Nancy and at Dijon and they were big cathedrals, they were huge- but no pews in them. They just had a chair that you'd turn- if you wanted to kneel you'd turn the chair around and knelt with your arms resting on the flat part that was on the back of the chair. But a huge place and I think the cathedral in Dijon must be as big as St. Patrick's in New York. It was huge.

(Interruption of tape)

CR: ... I mean the people that started it never finished it. But after Heidelberg things started to move pretty good. We- at that point-

EM: How long did you stay in Heidelberg?

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CR: Just one night.

EM: Oh I see.

CR: The next step I guess was the Siegfried Line. We had- that was the only well planned maneuver that I saw work the way they said it was going to.

EM: You mean worked on your part?

CR: Our part.

EM: What did the Siegfried Line look like? I have heard about the Siegfried Line all my life.

CR: Well of course they had some huge concrete pillars that were called the “Dragon’s Teeth”, and then the barbed wire, and then long sloping fields leading to all the pillboxes. No vegetation, just grass, you know. We were pulled out of the line and they took our company and made two combat groups out of us, about eighty apiece in each group. They had an imitation of the area we were supposed to attack on the Siegfried Line. One group was gonna get this pillbox, and one group was gonna get this pillbox and we were going to do it at a certain time and they assured us that if we did that, that we would get all the help in the world. That’s exactly what happened. I was with one group, and the signal was that at four o’clock in the morning we were supposed to be at those pillboxes- we had to crawl through those Dragon Teeth.

EM: Everything is on foot.

CR: Oh yeah, this was one man at the time type of thing. Crawl through, crawl under the barbed wire, we’d gotten up around the pillbox-

EM: So everything was handguns.

CR: Oh yeah, we were carrying rifles and machine guns. What we were to do is that when we surrounded the pill box- we were supposed to do that by four o’clock in the morning and we started like at midnight- then at four o’clock if you were in position, each group leader was supposed to fire a phosphorous grenade, which was just a big flash, and that’s what happened and of course when the phosphorous grenade went off we went into the pillboxes. And then the only way to get in was how they got out. We used hand grenades and we used Bangalore torpedoes and we used saddle charges.

EM: How big- when you talk about pillboxes, what size- can you give me some relative size so that I can compare it to –

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CR: Well they were underground but I would say that beside the gunning plate- it was an eighty eight millimeter gun, and each room beside the gunning plate was probably an area as big as this downstairs where the troops were running the radio and things of that sort. But as I say, we didn't try to go in there, we just blew everything out. We put- they had slots that they'd roll hand grenades down and you couldn't put anything back up because they were down sloped, you know, so they could roll them down. But you put Bangalore torpedoes in them which is a pipe bomb about five foot long and we just blew all of that stuff up so by the time we actually went into the pillboxes, they either- the people were either dead or so shell-shocked from all the explosions and concussions that we didn't have much trouble.

EM: Was the assault on the other pillboxes as successful as yours?

CR: The same. Well the grenades went off at the same time and when those grenades went off, we heard the darndest noise we'd ever heard thinking of all these engines starting up and it was the 10th Armored Division and they hit those dragon's teeth with special tanks.

EM: Well they were following you all.

CR: Yep. But see we were told they were gonna be there but we were very skeptical, doubting. We didn't believe nobody or nothing. But they had special tanks that had bulldozer blades on them, that hit those dragon's teeth and just tore them out of there. It was just racing through there.

EM: How far apart were those pillboxes? Roughly. As far as a football field?

CR: Half a mile.

EM: Oh half a mile apart?

CR: Well you know they had the eighty eight millimeter cannons, which traversed quite a field of fire. That armored division came through and that night we were seventy miles behind the lines. It was seventy miles there.

EM: Now you weren't moving on foot though, were you?

CR: We stayed there. I mean that was our job.

EM: Oh you stayed- security.

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CR: Oh it was secured at that point. The armament went ahead but they were firing the ninety-millimeter gun on those tanks and individual motorcycles. That was when we were really ...

EM: Where could you place that as far as the month was concerned? Was that the spring?

CR: It was probably in March.

EM: March? Of '45.

CR: March – February, March of '45. Because about then was when the Germans started to run out of gas. We would capture some of their armor that the commanders would be crying – Young German soldiers with tears in their eyes. Just out of gas. They didn't 'Cause their tanks were far superior to ours.

EM: What was the general attitude, you talked about some of them were weeping because they had no gas, but how would you characterize the German forces that you saw? Did they seem subdued or hostile?

CR: Well, no no. There wasn't much arrogance. Some of the officers and of course the S.S. were bad. They were really bad, but the volkstrum – I would say put a G.I. uniform on them and you couldn't tell them from us. They were captured and they were scared and afraid.

EM: And tired and hungry probably.

CR: And they knew that their homes were being bombed, you know, it's one thing to They didn't know what was happening and they could see that they were losing. Hitler told them there would never be Americans on German soil and here we were; that we'd never bomb their cities and there their cities were in rubble. Hamburg- there are two Hamburgs I think in Germany, one on the coast and in the south of Germany with a big river marshalling yard.

EM: Are you saying "Marshalling Yard"?

CR: Yeah. Many, many tracks and equipment and that had been bombed by the Eighth Air Force and the British and just- the bombs were so severe that I saw locomotives piled three on top one another, you know, just from the concussion of the bomb. They had completely devastated that whole town because again, the bombing wasn't all that accurate so they came close, but they did blow up the railroad yard but the hit a lot of the town too but that's they way it was as I said. There's a sign, you asked me you know what do you feel. Well it's hard to dig 40 years later to say Hi, I said I was healthy, but

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probably so psyched out that I couldn't gotten a bug if it would've tried. And I think that basically most of the people were that way. We had a few heroes and they usually- these were guys that wanted to cut Germans' ears off and everything else. They usually ended up in battle, I tell you, after the first couple of skirmishes where they found out that the other side shoots back. Most of us were just afraid but nobody would run because nobody else would ... Lets see the mass appeal of war, I guess, is that as long as somebody is gonna get up first and say, "let's go," and somebody looks to start running and somebody else says, "don't do it," you stay together and you go forward. And I really don't think there's that much difference between the German average soldier and the American soldiers. As I said, now the SS that was a different thing. They had been brainwashed to the point where they thought they were the only ones and that they were far superior.

EM: Far superior, elite, really elite group.

CR: Because we- well, in fact the day I got shot the last time, why, that was an SS group that we were up against. This was in April.

EM: When was the first time you got shot?

CR: When I got a piece of shrapnel in December, in my foot and a piece of a hand grenade in my eye.

EM: Were you hospitalized?

CR: Just to go back and get it patched up and then go back.

EM: Have you had any problems from those injuries?

CR: The only one is my eye It's there. But we were outside of Nuremberg, we were in the woods ready to start moving toward Nuremberg when we ran into this SS group and we had just had a tremendous bombardment of the German mortar called the "Screaming Mimis" and this was a mortar shell that made a noise that every one of 'em sounded like it was coming right on top of you. It could hit 100 yards away but the sound came right at you. It was the- one of the most demoralizing things that I think that I-

EM: Screaming Mimis?

CR: Screaming Mimis.

EM: Mimi.

CR: Mmm-hmm, and we had just through one of those and were starting to move forward

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and we ran into this group of SS infantry- motorized infantry. We got into a firefight. I started to cross the field and never made it.

EM: That's when you were hit in the arm?

CR: Mmm-hmm. 'Cause I didn't know I had been hit, you know, but I was running and the next thing I remember the ground. It knocked me down.

EM: Oh you passed out?

CR: No, unh-unh.

Man: Not passed out, it just knocked him down.

EM: I see.

CR: I was reaching for my- I was carrying a sub-machinegun and I reached for it and my right hand reached for it, my left didn't and I looked to my left- my left arm was laying at some weird angle beside me and blood all over the place and that's when I realized that I'd been hit.

EM: Well, did you stay there and wait for a medic

CR: There was machinegun fire right over my hand. So I took my arm and stuck it in my jacket with the two buttons on it and rolled over to use my heels and my- the back of my helmet, pushing myself back into a little ditch, so that I could get on my knees and crawl out of the line of small arms fire. And then I got back into this woods a little farther and came on a couple of more guys, one of 'em put a tourniquet on it and he said, "We can't get out of this," he said, "-out of here, the Germans are in back of us," and so we gathered up some machineguns and hand grenades and we went back and there were only about six or seven of us. We had to fight our way back to our jeeps, because every infantry company had two jeeps, and-

EM: You didn't have any medics about at that time?

CR: Well, there were medics with us but they were taking care of the ones that couldn't move.

EM: I see. So whoever put the tourniquet on your arm was just your buddy- just another guy.

CR: Just another guy, mmm-hmm. And when we got back close to the jeeps because one of the jeeps belonged to me- my driver, well he saw me, he just picked me up and put me

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in the jeep and just took off to the aid station. Well, I got to the aid station, and of course I'd come in and out of there after that. I remember being taken back to the first aid to stop the bleeding with sulfur.

EM: Were you bleeding pretty heavily? With sawdust did you say?

CR: Sulfur.

EM: Oh, sulfur.

CR: I had big two big holes- I had a-

EM: How bout shades of the civil war? (Laughs)

CR: I had a big gaping hole about two and a half inches in diameter in the front of my arm and a bullet hole here and the whole bottom of my other arm was gone and I had a big whole there. You know I was bleeding pretty bad. And then from the aid station they carried us to an airfield that was- there were C-47's flying in gasoline in these five gallon cans for the different vehicles that we had and they were taking wounded out. So they loaded me on a stretcher onto one of those planes that flew Marines, which at that time was ... headquarters because it went from the aid station to a field that was still in Germany because that's where they put the first cast on my arm. That's when they told me I was going to lose my arm because they said, "There's just no way we can save that arm unless your arteries aren't cut and we can't do that here." I guess I pitched an awful fuss, and there was a doctor came over and he said, "Let me see what I can do." And he did something ... because I wouldn't let them put me to sleep unless they assured me they weren't going to take my arm off. When I woke up I didn't even open my eyes. I yelled and a nurse came by and said, "What's the matter?" I said, "Where's my arm?" She said, "It's there." I could feel something wet on it and she took my hand and I had a big cast all over my body and all over my arm and she took this hand in this one- couldn't open my eye at all. That hospital was

EM: This is the field hospital?

CR: Yeah, it was just tents and cots, regular cots and tents. But that's where the best doctors were. I mean it was like M.A.S.H. that you see on TV.

EM: Yeah, that's what I was thinking about when you mentioned the tents.

CR: But the hospital was straight because I can remember the nurse coming by, she said, "Now don't worry about this," and she just took another mattress and put it on top of me, and I noticed that did this for a few people and I asked her afterward, "Why?" She said, "The rest of them are German prisoners," she says, "There are only three Americans

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in here,” (laughs) and she said, “You’re one of them.” So I got- I was only there a day or two I guess and then we got back to the airfield to Rheims because it was in Rheims- I was in the hospital there.

EM: Was that a French hospital? You were just commandeered or- ?

CR: It was a brick building that had been- I don’t know if it was a school or what, there about four or five beds in this particular room that I was in, regular hospital beds. As I say, at that time, that was supreme headquarters command. And that’s where they told us Roosevelt had died. I remember that.

EM: That was in April.

CR: About the 13th or 14th of April that he died because it really didn’t bother any of us too much we were all so banged up and hurt that it didn’t make a big impression, but then I was flown from there to England because I had lost so much blood and needed newer surgery and they felt the better surgeons were in England, that to come back to the states, why, they had too many people that- you know, they’d sent their best over. And with my wound being all busted up and the nerves being cut and everything, somebody made the decision I would go to England. I ended up in Bedford, England at a- it had been an Air Force hospital but it converted it to a general hospital, and the neurosurgeon at that particular hospital was a fellow from New York. His name was Keen (?) and he was the ... or the head of the hospital. He was a general and he wasn’t supposed to operate but he did. And he did the surgery- the neurosurgery on my arm. That operation took eleven hours because they used electric wires to try to find where the nerves were cut so they’d know on which side they were working. I was awake that whole time in the operating room. They had a big sheet up so that I couldn’t see.

EM: They just used a local anesthesia?

CR: Mmm-hmm, but that was eleven hours and that was the third operation I had. I had one more after that. Now back in the states, one of the-

EM: How long were you in bed for?

CR: Well, that was from the middle of April say ‘til, the latter part of June. See I had, before they did the neurosurgery they had to do some orthopedic surgery because I had no bone between my shoulder and my elbow, so they had to reconstruct something there to hang everything on to. Then we left England. I think we left England, I think maybe on the fourth of July because I remember it was a pretty festive occasion- we were coming home. The war in Europe ended- it ended the eighth of May, I got shot the eighth of April. I’ll never forget and it ended the eighth of May. But anyhow, we were coming home on a hospital ship- a huge, big black ship and of course I still had the body cast on,

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the whole left side down below my waist and so I got one on the top deck, you know, beautiful cabin.

EM: better going back than it was-

CR: They gave you anything they thought you wanted. It was just a- it was a slow trip. It took about ten or twelve days.

EM: And you didn't have to fear of being shot at that time- torpedoed.

CR: Well, of course the captain was ..., but they weren't in the Atlantic. And of course at night with it all lit up, you know. The Atlantic was like a lily pond

EM: Smooth crossing, hunh?

CR: Never a bump, you know?

EM: Yeah.

CR: It came into Charleston on a Saturday morning and I guess we were the first hospital ship to come in there maybe since the war had ended or something, but anyhow they had the fireboats out spraying water and the bridge across the harbor traffic was stopped and everybody was waving. Of course all of us who could, they got out on deck so that we could see everybody and it was great, it really was. I ended up at Stark General Hospital there.

EM: Where?

CR: Stark in Charleston

EM: Oh in Charleston a naval hospital

CR: It was a military hospital.

EM: Just Stark Hospital, okay.

CR: It was a huge place I know that and of course I had no clothes. I had a pair of pajama bottoms and a bathrobe and I think I had a pair of shoes, but that was enough that I- I was never allowed to walk any place, but I was officially being transported because of the body cast- I always had to use a stretcher. It's just like getting off the ship- I told the stretcher bearers to "just set it down and I'll get down and you can pick it up" I know at Stark I got around with just the bathrobe and pajama bottoms. You know you've grown up a lot by then. You weren't afraid to ask or to do anything and if somebody

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said, "that's against the rules," you did it anyhow if it's what you wanted to do. But they interviewed me and they said that I had to go to a neurosurgery center and that there were two, there was one in Salt Lake City and one in Atlantic City, New Jersey. And I said, well I've been in the army long enough to know that if I say Atlantic City I'll end up in Salt Lake City guaranteed So I did and I was there a week and one day they posted a note and said, "These people will leave here such-and-such a time to be picked up and go to Atlantic City." They loaded us on a hospital car-

EM: Were you still in a cast at this time?

CR: Now this was, you know, getting towards the end of July.

EM: They put the cast on in April.

CR: Well I'd had it taken off to do surgery then put it back on, but it was always the same feeling and sure enough they loaded us on this hospital car- four nurses and three or four doctors- started up the coast and ended up in an old station in Atlantic City within the iron fence- 'cause I was in Atlantic City about ten years later. I stayed there or I looked at the station, it was the same at that point, but then I was taken from the train station to a hospital there, which was Thomas England General Hospital, but it was made up of three hotels. It was the Treymore and the Claremont-

(Interruption of interview)

CR: ...the third hotel was Hadden Home. That's where I was quartered and I had an ocean front room and a private bath and that was sort of the end of the war for me because I stayed there from late July until November and I went before the medical review board and they asked me if there was anything more they could do for me and I said, "Let me go home." They did. Have you got any questions?

EM: When did they take the cast off? How long

CR: Oh they took- that was the first thing they did at Atlantic City. They asked me what they could do and I said, "Take the damn cast off," and then when they took the cast off they said, "Now what else?" "Give me some clothes and I want to go home," and they said, "Well we can do that too," so they asked me if I needed any money. And I said no, I didn't need any money. And I was home during- when the Japanese surrendered in August.

EM: Were you having any therapy- any kind of physical therapy to regain use of that arm or- ?

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CR: Well, all during the time that I had the cast off, I had a banjo type wire across the end of the cast where my fingers were. And then I had little slings for each finger, and everyday I had to take and bend my fingers a hundred times to keep them from getting stiff because the nerves would not move- the fingers would not move on their own. I had to move them. I had to look at them and move them. And I did that very faithfully because while I was in England, there was a fellow who had nerve injury to his arm and they had told him to do this. And he had done it and his hand was already stiff so that was enough incentive to me to keep on, trying to keep-

EM: nerves that take over that function if you exercise that?

CR: Nerves that are cut will not heal, they grow back.

EM: Oh, I see.

CR: You just have to keep-

EM: -keep that limber until-

CR: I had, well, I still have a certain numbness and you can see my hands aren't the same, because the crazy bone nerve doesn't come through there because I don't have a crazy bone. It comes through here. So it took years and as I say I still have a tingling in those two little fingers. I think I do quite well with it because I was completely left handed. I did everything in this world left handed-

EM: Were you really?

CR: -except write. Going back to my parochial school days, you did not write with your left hand. You wrote right handed no matter what.

EM: The nuns saw that you wrote with your right hand. Well what about now- obviously you do your little lead soldiers. Do you use your right hand for that or do you use your left hand?

CR: Both. Now driving a nail or something like that I've got to use my left hand. I can't throw a ball overhand because my shoulder won't allow it, but I throw it underhand left-handed. I have no accuracy with my right hand and all of my- David, my son, uses my tools in the workshop every once and a while and he says "Dad, damn it you got everything set up to do it left-handed." And I do, I have my guides on the machines and everything on the sides that are comfortable to me. I guess I have no regrets. It was an experience that I wouldn't take anything for and you couldn't get me to do it for anything again.

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EM: Did you use your G.I. bill to go on to school after the- ?

CR: No, of course I'd been married by then.

EM: You married when you came back?

CR: No, I married before-

EM: You were married before you left.

CR: Mmm-hmm. We were married in 1943. So, I just felt I had lost, you know, three years of my life and needed to get on with it. So I went back to school but I never got a degree, but in the meantime I went back to Rockwell, which by 1945 it was Rockwell and they were looking to try and bolster up their young people that had been depleted by the war and they offered an engineering training program under- not the G.I. bill- well, G.I. bill or being that I was disabled I could go under what they called Public Law Sixteen which gave us a little more money. And so I went into that program and worked in engineering doing drafting work and experimental work, just everything to get experience and knowledge. And from there they had an opening in their- they were- Rockwell was very new and they were just groping on how to organize a lot of things. And they had bought several foundries and they wanted these foundries to produce castings for their plants that use casting. And one of the foundries was in Manassa, Pennsylvania which was about 40 miles from Pittsburgh and they wanted this plant to produce castings for a factory in Brooklyn, New York; Pluntonio (?) Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and one other destination- I don't remember where it went, but they were looking for someone who had some machining experience, who understood castings and who had some mechanical ability and understanding. And my name fell through the sieve someplace and the general purchasing agent, who was Colonel Rutler's (?) son-in-law talked to me and asked me if I'd be interested in coordinating the activities from all these places and I said I'd like to try it. Well, at that time Rockwell in Pittsburgh had a thousand employees and they were buying like, a thousand tons of casting a month. So it was quite a job and quite a promotion for me. Of course that ended my training phase then and I went from there to being in charge of the purchasing department in Pittsburgh and stayed there always thinking that some day I was going to go south because one of the things I didn't mention was that Jane and I enjoyed the little bit of time we were together in Mississippi. It was a small town that was near the camp Centreville, Mississippi. Not Centerville, C-E-N-T-R-E. And people were nice and gosh it was very primitive. They still had the high sidewalks with the mule racks- hitching racks- but I said, I told her, I said, "Someday we're going to live in the south." She says, "Fine," so when Rockwell decided to sort of downsize their Pittsburgh operation they offered me the opportunity to come to Statesboro or go to Barberton, Ohio, which was a huge plant, but I would've been at the same job that I'd have gotten in Statesboro. Then there would've been more money to go to Ohio, but we chose to come to Statesboro and we've been here ever since.

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EM: Were all your children born? You had two boys and a girl.

CR: Mmm-hmm. Two of them were born in Pittsburgh and one of them was born in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Dennis was born in Ligonier and Marsha and David were born in Pittsburgh, but they grew up here. I think Dennis was in- when Ree (?) Wood was his first teacher and that was sixth grade at Marvin Pittman and the others of course were behind him. We've been here and had several opportunities later on to leave because I had had some nice opportunities and offers from other companies, but either the kids were in high school or the kids were in college or- and then after a while we decided it wasn't worth thinking about doing at the time. We liked it and we were settled and we were happy with what we had.

EM: Do you have any reunions with your army buddies now?

CR: I'm not a reunion goer. They have them and I've gotten notices- it's the same way I've never been to a class reunion, I just- I don't know. I've traveled the world over and I've made friends and you know people for a while but I really don't know what I would have to say to somebody I haven't seen for forty years. And we still hear from a lot of the people that we worked with, especially the people from overseas. When they come, why, they'll call and ask us to go to dinner or something- and some of the folks on the west coast 'cause I was real close with them out there.

EM: Did you travel to Europe a lot when you were- ?

CR: No, I mostly went the other way. I went to Japan, China, Hong Kong, Mexico, Canada, Middle East, but not Europe.

EM: Not Europe much. Well, you had seen that.

CR: Pardon?

EM: You had seen a lot of that already anyway.

CR: Well, I've often thought I'd like to take a trip. Jane would like see England, but whether we ever do or not, I don't know, but if she gets well enough and she wants to go then we'll go. We've got some very old friends in England that have bought- after they retired they bought one of these old Manor houses and restored it. They keep saying they've got plenty of room. That would- that's what I would like to do, just to go as a tourist, I don't know. We've been so fortunate that going the first time to so many places when we've been able to go together and to know somebody there that takes their personal time and shows you the- and it's so much better than the tour. I know we've seen San Francisco and Los Angeles that way and I don't think a tour could do it really-

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EM: -The way someone who really knows the town could.

CR: Well, in San Francisco we had the first time we went out there together with one group, you know, one night we had cocktails at the top of the Mark (?) and dinner in Saint France (?) and rode the cable car down to Buena Vista and ... We stayed at Fisherman's Wharf. Then another group took us to see the Golden Gate Bridge and Norwood (?) and all the other stuff. So, we got to see everything. It was a good life and I enjoyed it.

EM: It is a good life.

CR: Oh yeah. We've just been doing things differently now, that's all.

EM: Yes. Do you still have family in Pennsylvania?

CR: No. My wife had a sister there and she died a year and a half ago. My brother is the only other relative we have and he lives with us here, you know.

EM: I see.

CR: So that's all there is of us other than the children and the grandchildren and they're all around here some place.

EM: You're very fortunate, aren't you, that they chose to remain here with you where you are.

CR: That's good and bad you know, you hear all problems in life, as well as all the good ones. We get a call and so-and-so is sick, so the next day you call and say, "Well how's so-and-so doing?" "Well he went to school today," and you're worried about it.

EM: Yeah. (Laughs) Grandchildren are fun, aren't they? Is there anything else you would like to say now about your military service?

CR: Not unless you got any questions you might like to ask. I don't know if this interests anybody or not-

(End of interview)