

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
LESTER H. DORO
Weapons Sergeant, 107th Engineers, World War II.

1996

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Doro, Lester H., (1918 -), Oral History Interview, 1996.

User copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 60 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 60 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

ABSTRACT

Lester Doro, an Appleton, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as a combat engineer with 107th Engineers in the European theater. Originally enlisting in Company D, 127th Regiment, 32nd Division, he talks about serving in the Wisconsin National Guard and the Louisiana Maneuvers. Doro describes volunteering with his brother for combat engineer training, trip overseas to Coleraine (Northern Ireland) where he stayed in converted castles, assignment to the weapons squadron, and training with explosives in England. He relates his involvement at Slapton Sands (England), D-Day invasion where his unit built bridges for tanks to cross, and the difficulty caused by hedgerow fighting. He touches upon combat fatigue, fatalism among infantrymen, and moving through Belgium. Doro describes the Battle of the Bulge, hearing tanks in the distance, being under artillery fire, night fighting techniques, retreat, and learning that some of his friends were captured or killed. Doro provides a brief discussion on the feelings toward taking German prisoners after troops learned of the Malmedy Massacre. He comments on duty in Czechoslovakia, the Russian Army, and discharge from the Army and Wisconsin National Guard. Doro also touches upon his return home, effects of the war on his life, opinion of combat movies, and membership in the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Biographical Sketch

Doro (b. September 22, 1918) served as a combat engineer with the 107th Engineers during World War II. He participated in D-Day landings and the Battle of the Bulge. He was honorably discharged from service and returned to Wisconsin.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1996.

Transcribed by Nathan King, 2003.

Transcript edited by Abigail Miller, 2003.

Interview Transcript

Doro: Well, OK. Are you –

Mark: Yeah.

Doro: You want to know the first – a little background?

Mark: Well, why don't we start by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised?

Doro: Ok. Ok. I'll start it out here by saying that my name is Lester H. Doro

Mark: Mm-hmm.

Doro: And my Army serial number was 20-646-506. My rank was Sergeant. And I don't know if you know this but, this is a National Guard and all states have a prefix.

Mark: Uh-huh.

Doro: Like 20 would indicate, I think Wisconsin-Michigan. So, if you know the prefixes of these army serial numbers, then you will know just about where the people come from.

Mark: Yeah.

Doro: Ok, I was born in Appleton, Wisconsin. And, uh, I was a member of the Company D 127th Infantry, 32nd Division.

Mark: And you joined that when?

Doro: I joined that sometime about, oh, September 1940.

Mark: And for what reason?

Doro: I just, uh – [chuckles] – just wanted to – we got money for drilling, you know.

Mark: And in the 32nd Division, what did you do? They eventually went to the Pacific and you didn't. So how did you get out of the 32nd Division and into a different division?

Doro: Ok, I'll explain that.

Mark: Mm-hmm.

Doro: In October, 1940, the National Guard was inducted into federal service for training. And so our National Guard company, we left by train and we went to Camp Beauregard,

Louisiana. And after five or six months in Beauregard, we went to a new camp called Camp Livingston –

Mark: Uh-huh.

Doro: - that's near Monroe, Louisiana. Ok. Now [coughs], at this time, the Army was starting to make up what they called "triangular divisions."

Mark: Right.

Doro: And so after Pearl Harbor, the engineers were asking for infantry people to transfer to the engineers. Some of that was because certain groups of engineers were going to be turned into what they called combat engineers. So anyway my brother was selected – my brother Harvey. He wound up as a colonel in the Aleutian Islands, but he was a staff sergeant at that time. So anyway, I volunteered to go along with them. And then our company, the 107th Engineers – we traveled by train to Fort Dix, New Jersey. And, anyway, during that time, my brother had a chance to go to OCS, so he took off for OCS candidate school. And, uh, we were there just maybe, uh, oh, I'd say we were there three or four months.

Mark: Doing what?

Doro: Oh, doing hardly nothing.

Mark: Mm.

Doro: But anyways, then we were shipped over to Ireland. And we landed in Belfast, North Ireland. And our unit was – we marched through a little town in Ireland near Belfast called Coleraine. No, I don't think we marched. I think we went by truck. And we were billeted there in the castle. And our stay in Ireland – we were in different towns. We were at Ballyclare, Cookstown, Moneymore, Belfast, and Hollywood.

Mark: Mm-hmm. I suspect you were training this whole time for an invasion in Europe?

Doro: Uh, oh yeah. Yeah. We were then formed into combat engineers, and we were issued a lot of weapons, you know. We had machine guns, and we also had halftracks.

Mark: Say, this might be a good place to have you tell me exactly what it is a combat engineer does. I mean, in a combat situation, what was your mission?

Doro: Well our mission is generally to work with the infantry.

Mark: Uh-huh.

Doro: Sometimes we are infantry. Like, in some cases like the battle for St. Ló. When that was attacked, we were used as infantry.

- Mark: Mm-hmm.
- Doro: So we have our machine guns and our bazookas. And when we worked as infantry – sometimes we were a few blocks behind ‘em, and sometimes we were a few blocks ahead of ‘em. Especially when we’re put in – crossing rivers.
- Mark: Yeah, that’s where I’d imagine that the engineers would come in – to build the bridges and to clear the roads and that sort of thing.
- Doro: Uh, yeah. There’s these, uh – so we were really extra trained. We were trained as engineers but – now in the combat engineers, is usually a battalion. It’d be companies – A Company, B Company, and C Company. And then plus your headquarters and drivers and guys like that.
- Mark: Uh-huh.
- Doro: And then the fourth squad – there’s – of every platoon, see – three platoons in the company – first, second, and third platoon. Now each squad, each one of those platoons has the fourth squad, and that is the weapons platoon.
- Mark: And that was you.
- Doro: Yeah. I was a weapons sergeant. And most of us weapons sergeants were fellas from the infantry, whereas a lot of the engineers were not very well trained on – some of them knew nothing of machine guns and mortars and that stuff.
- Mark: Uh-huh.
- Doro: So we were sort of the weapons people with the knowledge, you know, for combat and stuff like that.
- Mark: Right. Um, as we discussed, you were doing some training while you were in England [Ireland], but I imagine there had to be some time when you got off the post, and got to travel around. Would that be true?
- Doro: Uh, yeah, well, let’s see – from Ireland then we went across the Irish Sea and went to England.
- Mark: Uh-huh.
- Doro: We were in the area known as Cornwall and Newquay, Wadebridge. That’s where we were doing our invasion training.
- Mark: Yeah.

- Doro: And there we would actually blow up pillboxes and we would set up machine guns and - .30 calibers and .50 calibers, and oh, the bazookas. But I could never hit nothing with that bazooka. But I had one guy [chuckles] – one guy with glasses in my squad, and he was good.
- Mark: And you trained how often?
- Doro: I always made sure he had his glasses.
- Mark: I bet he had to. And you trained how often? Every day?
- Doro: Oh yeah, every day. And then while we were training there, a thing happened that was not published much, and it was called Operation Tiger.
- Mark: Uh-huh.
- Doro: Where an infantry division was out there and the German – three German E-boats came in, and they killed and drowned about 8 or 900 soldiers.
- Mark: Yeah, I'm familiar with the incident. And you were – when this happened you were where?
- Doro: That was on the – near the Slapton Sands.
- Mark: Right. That was the amphibious training base there.
- Doro: Yeah.
- Mark: And so –
- Doro: Yeah, all around that part of England there was – we were training and the rangers were training there – the 1st and 5th Rangers – and a little ways there was the – I don't know if it was the 1st or the 29th Division was training nearby, too.
- Mark: Uh-huh.
- Doro: And, uh, anyway – we were training there, and then, uh, like I say – pillboxes. But there's one thing they neglected on our training, and that was how to fight in hedgerows.
- Mark: Yeah.
- Doro: We were really – the Germans had all the advantage.
- Mark: Mm-hmm.

- Doro: Well anyway, we're one of the lucky ones that were make the invasion, and our unit came in from D-Day, June 6th to June 8th. And part of our unit went in with the Rangers.
- Mark: Uh-huh.
- Doro: And, of course, there was a hell of a confusion there, and, uh - Anyway, we came in a little area known as Vierville [he pronounced it Very-ville]. Vierville-sur-mer.
- Mark: Mm-hmm.
- Doro: Now the "sur-mer," all that means is "by the sea."
- Mark: Yeah.
- Doro: Now, you've got a pretty good knowledge of that already! OK, then we went from there. We were dug in there a couple of days, maybe - oh we got a mile or two from the beach. Then we moved to a area near Isigny [sur-mer?]. That's - we would go in and we made a, like a right turn. And the 29th was movin' to Isigny, and there we put the - a bridge over - there was a blown out bridge just a couple miles out of Isigny there is the Vier (??) River. And the infantry could get across, but they needed tanks to get over there. So we had to get - there wasn't - most of the Krauts were cleared out. There was, uh, some snipers, and there was a few oddball, uh, in there. But it wasn't too bad. We got that bridge across.
- Mark: Mm-hmm. Now, is this a pre-fabricated bridge? Or - what's it made of? I'm sort of curious about the logistics and -
- Doro: Uh, this one we but a Bailey over. Now, a Bailey bridge - it's kind of simple. It's sections that are built up. And it's like it's on rollers, see? So what they do is they build about two-thirds is back on land, and then we get a tank or a bulldozer and it pushes the bridge. And then you push it so far, and then you keep adding weight to the back. And you keep pushing it and adding parts on. And - you understand? You've got the weight - about two thirds is back on land on rollers, and one third is the part moving over the opening. And that's pushed and pushed. Actually we could put one of them over in maybe two, three hours.
- Mark: Yeah, I was gonna ask how long it took you to do this.
- Doro: Well we got a column of tanks snortin' away behind us. They're all ready to go. They're waiting for that bridge to get over. And then we went into another swampy area where we put up - had to fix a bridge to get the -
- Mark: If you could just excuse me for a second - [pauses for a moment]. I'm sorry. If you could continue -

- Doro: And then we went into an area near Le Camp. That was in the flooded area of Normandy, and uh – [tape cuts out, then resumes after repeating] And there we had to fix another – sort of what you call a causeway bridge. And we had to get the 29th heavy equipment over. The artillery, the big guns. Then from there we went to what's known as the Cerisy Forest where we took over a part of the front line there. And we were not in the forest, but we were maybe a half a mile in front of it. And there we were fighting – we were getting attacked by German infantry. And then at that time, we were preparing for what was called Operation Cobra. That was the attack on St. Lô.
- Mark: Yeah. Now, this is all pretty slow-going, I imagine. These events that you told me about – these took about a week, if I'm not mistaken.
- Doro: Oh yeah. We were in that forest about a week. And of course we had a patrol send out units up ahead, just to keep, uh – at that time we were with the 2nd Division. They [the uniforms?] have the Indian heads on 'em. And on our – the 2nd Division and the 29th. The 29th Division deserve a lot of praise because they were really the first ones that attacked into Normandy Beach. And that company was really decimated. And there was a story about some really big general come up and asked a G.I. from the 29th Division, he says, "Where are your units located?" And he said, "One regiment is attacking, one regiment is getting' refurbished, and we got one regiment in the cemetery." And that was about right, too, because if you've ever read that – they got the biggest brunt of the whole invasion.
- Mark: Yeah. Now, the Normandy invasion was your first exposure to combat. I'm interested in your reaction to it. Was it something you were trained properly for? Were you shocked? Were you afraid? What was going through your mind during this time?
- Doro: Oh yeah, we were trained! Except, I said, we were not trained on hedgerows.
- Mark: Right.
- Doro: Oh yeah, we were scared! And, man, we were – sometimes we didn't know the difference between a shell coming in or a shell going out. So we hit the dirt on every one of 'em.
- Mark: I suspect you learned after a while, though.
- Doro: After a while, you get smarter, and you know what's dangerous. And then you learn how to follow the ground and use ditches, and, you know. And, yeah, everybody's scared. Now, if you're not scared, there's something wrong with you. But you couldn't – as a sergeant you could not be panicky, either. You still had to have a little logic and you had to kind of have a little example for the rest of the guys. But that doesn't mean you weren't scared.
- Mark: Yeah. Having been an NCO, to keep these guys in line, or to keep them from running away from a battlefield – as a leader, what do you do?

Doro: Well, you calm ‘em down. And there was a lot of times the guys [chuckles] just wanted to ease off and move back, you know, get back and find a nice deep ditch and stuff. But usually they were, uh, pretty good, you know. I had one of my men shoot himself through the foot. And, well, I tell you, in some ways maybe it was my own fault because I should have saw that he was – you know, he wouldn’t talk, and he was pretty scared. Perhaps I should have found someplace and some way to send him back, maybe to the rear with the kitchen or something like that for a while. I didn’t realize he was that bad, you know. And a lot of times, you know, some guys got a limit that they can stand. It doesn’t mean that they’re a coward, but maybe their mind can just go so far.

Mark: Yeah. So is there much of that – at the time it was called “combat exhaustion?”

Doro: Oh, yeah. There was – even our captain was relieved, not because - he was just getting the shakes. And several lieutenants were brought in, and three days later they were sent back out. Uh, that’s – you know, second lieutenants, especially if they have very poor – very little training – and just because they put, you know, those bars on doesn’t make them combat people. And we had lieutenants that were sent out. And sometime you should read the – about the 90th Division that first came into combat, you know, about – I don’t know – June 10th or 12th. They were relieving the colonels and even one of the generals. He got into a ditch, and they couldn’t get him out. He had the shakes, and they had to relieve him and a couple of colonels, and a bunch of lieutenants. And that’s – it’s on the 90th Division. I think you can get it from the War Department.

Mark: Huh. I’ll have to look it up.

Doro: Yeah. And then you’ll find out that – but there’s – I know one of my platoon sergeants, you know. He had to go out – when we were at St. Lô – he had to go out and get two of his men in from a patrol that were – that stepped on mines. And he was pretty shaken up. And he said to me, he says, “You know, Doro,” he says – he says, “I’ve got about enough of that.” He says, “I wish somebody would just shoot me between the eyes and be done with it.” So, it wears on a guy. So, anyway, it’s – then in my case, after a while, I got to a point where I said, well, “I’m sick of being this scared. This is going to go on for a long time. I’m just going to take a different attitude,” you know. Either you’re going to get shot or not, so you’ve no use worrying about it all the time.

Mark: And that worked for you.

Doro: Yeah. It worked pretty good. So I figured, well, if you’re gonna – and I noticed guys that were real careful, that would never expose theirselves. First thing you know, they step on a mine, and boom, they’re gone. So, after a while, you get tired of being scared and you kind of switch. And I think that’s when you become a combat soldier, is when you take a different rationale on the whole situation.

Mark: So there was the Normandy invasion, and then you went across Europe, after the breakthrough, and you started going through France.

- Doro: Yeah, I've got a map here of where we traveled. [paper rustling] Just a second.
- Mark: Yeah.
- Doro: OK, we went from. Yeah, then we went from St. Ló into the city of Vire, V-I-R-E. The same as the river. And then we went to a place called Domfront. Then we went through Sées, Versailles, St. George's. We went through Paris. We had only about four hours in Paris. And we went to Chateau. We went through Reims. Next, we went through San Quentin – [emphazising pronunciation] San Quentin, really – Brüggén, and then we were – and then from there we were getting into Belgium and Luxembourg.
- Mark: Right.
- Doro: And, uh – then we went to Wallendorf, where we were blowin' up pillboxes in Wallendorf.. And that's right to the German-Belgian border.
- Mark: Yeah. Now, between say, Paris, and the Siegfried Line, was there much combat at all?
- Doro: Uh, not too much. We were traveling fast, and we were with the infantry, and sometimes we were with an armored column. And about then, they were getting this pretty good thing lined up, where we'd have a spotter plane and sometimes a couple – three or four fighter planes up above. And then in our column, in a jeep we would have an air officer, and he was in contact with either the Piper Cub or the fighter planes – P-47s or whatever they were using. P-51s, P-47s. And as our column was advance, we were going pretty fast. And the Piper Cub would call back that there's two or three 88s around the next bend waiting for us. And [chuckles] I was by the jeep listening one time, and they called up to the P-47s, and these fellas came down, you know, and I didn't actually see the bombs – I could hear 'em, see the smoke come up – and the fighter pilot says, "OK! You can go ahead! We got 'em." And then the column would advance. There was a lot of places that we went through towns so fast that some of these Germans in these towns didn't even know it – they were prisoners – but we went right by 'em.
- Mark: Was the countryside pretty beat up, or - ?
- Doro: Oh yeah. Like, these towns that – well, the towns that resisted, they were knocked all to hell, you know. Now, there was a bad situation on the St. Ló, let's say, highway, where they were planning this big attack, and they called for a big air drop – big, heavy bombers.
- Mark: Uh-huh.
- Doro: And the bombers screwed up, and they dropped – they were supposed to keep their bombs on one side of the highway, and on the other side of the highway were our troops. And they killed and injured about 900 of our fellas because their bombing was way off. I think you can find information on that, too, about the bombers.

- Mark: I'm familiar with the incident, yeah. So, you were driving through France, and all of a sudden you come smack up against the Siegfried Line?
- Doro: Yeah, we went into the Siegfried Line, I think with the 4th Armored. And some of the Krauts had been driven back, and we went in there, and we were blowing up pillboxes so they couldn't come back in and occupy 'em.
- Mark: Yeah.
- Doro: And then of course, there's some places they'd have these dragon's teeth. You know, they're a big concrete – pyramidal concrete posts, you know.
- Mark: Right.
- Doro: They were shaped like a pyramid. And they were there to stop tanks, but actually if you blow out about four, five of 'em – or six wide – that that's the end of the whole defense.
- Mark: Mm-hmm. And so once you got to the Siegfried Line, this was a much more static affair, then?
- Doro: Uh, yeah. We were all around the Siegfried Line there, then we finally wound up – wound up in a little place not in the town but we were near a place called Belingen. And Belingen was, I don't know, about three miles behind us. And then we were in the area of Belingen, Malmedy, and Eupen. So we were in Belingen when we were attacked by the German offensive, you know, the Ardennes offensive.
- Mark: Right. Why don't you just describe your experiences during the Ardennes offensive.
- Doro: Well, I'll tell ya. I think – I believe it was, I don't know, December 15th or 16th, around that. It was night time. Now where we have – some of this stuff I learned later on, just – dates, you know. Actually, when you're in combat, you don't even know what day it is. You don't [laughs] know the date or anything like that. And sometimes you don't even know – you go through towns at night – you don't even know the towns. After a while, you can back track them in the battalion journals. Anyway, at – it was about, oh, I'd say about 11 o'clock, and I had just finished making the rounds of our machine gun posts. And we had a valley below us. And we had about four, five machine guns along this. Each gun was maybe a couple blocks apart. So I had to go and check the posts and to make sure, you know, nobody was sleeping, and stuff like that. And I had come back, and about three days before we just had a new lieutenant come in. He was a real nice guy, just a brand new second louie [as in lieutenant], but he had no combat, and really didn't know much about what was going on. So about 11 or 12 o'clock, I heard a lot of – I could hear clunking way back through the woods. Now, this area is all wooded. This is heavy forest. And there's little road trails like fire lanes and trails going through there. And I said to the lieutenant, I said, "You know, are we sending up some armor someplace? It sounds like tanks way the hell back there." It was maybe five, six miles.

But the forest, that sound comes through. And he says, “I don’t know,” he says. And I says, “Well, let’s tell the captain, anyway.” He was a new captain, too. He was from – sort of a desk jockey. And anyway, he said, “I don’t know of anything. It must be our tanks.” And then, later on, we went and told him again, we could hear them. And I made the suggestion that, I said, “Now, we’ve got about a hundred mines. We can put some mines down in the valley.” “Well,” he said, “don’t worry about that,” he said. So anyway, we start to see a lot of flares going up. There was white flares, and there was green flares. Those fellas were getting a little closer to us. And, anyway, then the captain said, “We gotta move out. I just got orders, we gotta move out.” And so anyway, he was really, really nervous. So what he did was he sent all the trucks out with our mines. We had extra machine guns and bazookas. And he got that column going, and he said to the lieutenant, “Tell the men to dig in.” You know, it was kind of a joke because that ground was frozen and hard, you know. You’d need an air hammer. And so anyway the lieutenant was getting pretty mad at him, and made a few remarks – choice remarks – about the captain. And, oh, it was about 4, 5 o’clock, we started getting artillery shells hittin’ – artillery shells started coming in. So that was the first warning of the attack. And anyway we found an area back about – oh, a block or two where we had kind of a lump ground that we could get behind, and we started settin’ up machine guns, and bringing machine guns in there. And we had to send out for – to get the – some of the – we needed some of the bazookas, and more ammo. And things were quite – pretty hectic then.

Anyway, pretty soon, way over on the left, we see a German tank. He was blasting away. And some of our – like the first platoon that was over on our left – they were mostly wiped out. Those that weren’t wiped out – there was another platoon that was wiped out. And they were firing at whatever Krauts were following the tanks. The tanks would come and when they’d come to a machine gun position, they would do a spin, and that would kind of grind in the guns and the men, and everything. Not always, but some places where they knew a machine gun was there, they were doing a double turn. We didn’t know it at the time, but we were being attacked by units of Kampf Group Piper. This was the Colonel Piper that was involved in the Malmedy massacre. Now, the massacre was not really at Malmedy, it was at a little place nearby called Baugnez – B-a-g-n-e-x, something like that. So we fought as long as we could, and then we started moving back. Move back, and then fight a little while, and then move back, and move back. And we were delaying them – all we could do was delay them. We didn’t have any tanks, or anything. We just had guns and bazookas. And then we were out – I think I sent you a paper on that area, on that battle.

Mark: Right. I’ve got it right here.

Doro: Yeah. And behind us about – oh, maybe a mile back from us – was an opening in the forest where we had a Piper Cub field for scout planes. And the Germans overran that little airport, and they caught three of them planes. Now, somehow they got some pilots, and they flew these American planes off, these Piper Cubs. And then later on when the weather would be a little decent, these Germans were flying these Piper Cubs, coming down and kind of scoutin’. So they way they did that – fixed that – is they said on a

certain day between 9 and 3 o'clock – any planes flying were to be shot down. So when these Germans came flying over, they figured – you know – most of them were shot down. To our rear was a couple of ammo dumps and gasoline dumps. And the best we could do was delay 'em. Where we saw German troops, you know, that were not with tanks, why there we could fire on 'em and shoot as many as we can, and then move back. Because once the tanks got up to us, then we were done for.

Mark: Mm-hmm.

Doro: It was a lot of bad things going on. One of the faults that I was – a division called the 106th Golden Bears [actually Golden Lions], and they were green troops right from the states. And I remember a couple trucks of them going down the road there near us, and, oh, they were really cocky. They were hollerin' at us, "Hey, where's the Germans?" Heh. And anyway, this whole division was – they surrendered. Two regiments surrendered. I think it was the 422nd and the 423rd Regiments. And they opened up a gap where the Krauts came through. And there's one – one unit that fought pretty hard there was the 14th Cavalry. And on our right was the 99th Division – I think they called it "Checkerboard." But anyway, this California bunch, they really broke and took off like a bunch of – of course, they were green, you know. They were almost from the states. And I don't know what training they had, but their general was relieved, and some of their officers were relieved. There was a general running that by the name of Alan Jones. And, uh, he took off in an ambulance. They say he faked a heart attack and took off. So, anyway, there's a lot of – there was a lot of fierce fighting, and there the – where you had green combat troops. They kind of just took off. And not – we were not – we weren't heroes, but we had enough combat that we knew enough how to fight a little while and take cover.

Mark: Mm-hmm. And you were able to hold off the Germans, but you couldn't hold them off completely.

Doro: Oh, we couldn't hold them off completely because they had too much armor.

Mark: Yeah. And so what happened, finally? What finally gave way? And then – what happened? I mean, you weren't captured or anything, were you?

Doro: No, but a lot of my friends were captured or killed. There was – I know our first platoon was captured or killed. And another company, one of our other companies – they had, oh 30, 40 guys captured. And one of my friends – a guy by the name of Roger Phillips – he was captured with a couple guys but they later on escaped and got back. The Germans had 'em in a cellar. And then after the fighting in the bulge, then we went through Aachen. Well, first we went through Euchen – Euchen, that's Belgium. Aachen, that's German – German. Then we had the mission to build a combat bridge over the Rhine River. Now -

Mark: That must have been a formidable task.

Doro: Well, yeah, it was. Because, you've probably heard of the Remagen Bridge?

Mark: Right. Uh huh.

Doro: OK, they were getting some troops across there. And then we went downriver. We went to a place called [Bad] Hönningen. That's east of Aachen. And we began putting across a floating bridge, you know, a pontoon bridge. And it was the 254 Combat Engineers, but we had help from other engineers. There was a group of engineers, and when – that was called the Victor Bridge. "Victor" was the code on that project. And I believe there was another bridge that went up besides ours. I don't know what company put – what units put that up. But anyway, we were at a place – we put it up at a place called Hönningen. Oh, there's something that occurred to me I should tell you that's interesting.

Mark: Yeah.

Doro: While we were on the line there at Bolingen, sometimes I'll make an early check on the guns, and there was a woman would be walking down in the valley. And she'd have two, three cows, and she was kind of red-haired gal with – she wore them big rubber boots. You know, the long switch, you know, and she was lapping those cows through that valley. And anyway, every morning she would come through with her cows, and then when the cows would poop, she had a little rake, you know, she would kind of rake that around. And then one afternoon, one of the gunners coaxed her up into the gun pit, see? And, heh, she was up there having a little fun with the machine gunners. And they got to know her pretty good, and she spoke little bit of English, not much. And now this area we were in, that was partly Belgian and partly Germans. Now, there was a lot of German sympathizers along that that were rooting for the Germans. And then of course there were some Belgians there that were for the Americans. The Belgians were attacked also, you know. And I got suspicious of that gal, and I picked her up one morning and I let her come up the hill, and I put her in my jeep, and I took her to the CIC – that's the Counter-Intelligence Corps. While they were – [chuckles] – I don't know how good they were, but I just thought it was funny. So they questioned her for an hour or two, and apparently they thought she was OK. So the next day, she was back down there with her cows again. Well, it was after the German attack – during the German attack, one of our guys said he saw that same gal in a German halftrack coming through the woods showing them the trails. So I'm not sure, but I'll believe that girl was looking for mines in that valley. You know, making the daily – she was making the daily patrol. And if any mines were discovered, she'd contact the Germans and tell them that's a bad place to go through. So, anyway, I caught a spy, but they let her go.

Mark: [laughs] Hmm.

Doro: But she was no beauty.

Mark: [chuckles].

- Doro: Anyway, we put the bridge over, and that was the longest combat bridge ever built. It was 1370 yards. That's – there's quite a bit of current.
- Mark: Yeah, I bet.
- Doro: Then from there, we went into Germany. We went to Bad Bellingen, and we went through castles. Bad Kösen, Welden, and then we wound up in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. We wound up at the bury. The bury had been bombed but the Czechs would roll out a barrel of beer anytime the guys wanted some beer. So we finally had made it to - And of course near Pilsen, of course there, we met quite a few Russians. They were Russian Army that we met quite a few – I don't know where they came from, but there were maybe 5, 600 running around there. The Russians were either bummin' cigarettes or they were bummin' gasoline. And they had a – there was a lot of women in that Russian Army. They're short and powerful – real wide-shouldered women. There really some tough lookin' cookies in that Russian Army. And nobody wanted to get smart with them.
- Mark: I bet not. So the war ended in Europe, anyway. You were in Czechoslovakia.
- Doro: Yeah.
- Mark: Was there any talk of going to the Pacific at this time, or for you was the war pretty much over?
- Doro: Well, it was over for me because I was wounded twice and I had a lot of points. And then all the fellas with high points, we were the first ones to leave. So we were only in Pilsen maybe two weeks, and then we got orders that we'd have to go home. We'd not "have to," we were glad to go home.
- Mark: Yeah.
- Doro: But then we had to travel all the way through Germany and France – we went back to Le Havre, France. And then we got on the boats and we wound up in Hampton Roads, Virginia. Then we – some of us had to get on the train, and we traveled to Fort Sheridan in Chicago. That's where we were mustered out. And then later on, of course, we got a discharge from the State of Wisconsin, too, because we were National Guard. So we got two discharges.
- Mark: And the war was over by this time.
- Doro: Well, the war was still goin' on in Japan. A lot of guys left Europe and went to Japan. And anyway, it was a hell of a trip.
- Mark: Um, I've got a couple questions about the post-war years, if you still have a few minutes.
- Doro: Yeah, go ahead.

- Mark: I was just curious as to how you planned to get your life back on track after your discharge. What did you want to do? Did you want to go to college? Get a job? And how did you go about doing it?
- Doro: I was going to go to college on the G.I. Bill.
- Mark: Mm-hmm.
- Doro: Then what happened was I went back in the Guard and I had just about completed my course for officer commission. Then I worked at a lot of different jobs. When I first came out, you know, I got a job as a demolition man in the quarry because I was pretty good on demolition work and knew explosives. I worked in that quarry for about three or four months in a little place called Menasha. But anyway, I didn't like that job because crumbling up dynamite I was getting headaches all the time – I'd get headaches every day. Dynamite will do that, you know. So I went and worked for a watermarking firm called the J.J. Plank Company. That was pretty good work. That was specialized work, and what we – you ever see a piece of paper and you see the bond in the paper?
- Mark: Yeah.
- Doro: Anybody Wisconsin knows paper. OK, we made these rolls that put the watermark in there. After that, I took the notion that I wanted to be a photo engraver. So I started taking courses and my wife was working, I was working. I started taking courses in photo engraving. And then I enjoyed that work. And then after a couple years, I developed a photo engraving process – it's known as the Doro process. And then I received a patent from that – I had two patents. And I – oh, we had some connections – we had one part of our operation was similar to something used by North American Aviation. So we got into a mutual agreement so that they could use our process if they wanted to do chemical milling, and we could use part of their for the photo engraving. And anyway I was in photo engraving, and I liked that field pretty well, and I had a little shop in Appleton, there. I built a building – little building there – and I did photo engraving. And then we – after that my wife died. She had breast cancer. I had three children. So anyway after that I decided I wanted to go out to the west and start over – start new. That's how I got out into Portland, Oregon.
- Mark: Um, with your photo engraving business there – did you use any sort of veterans loans to get those started, or did you finance it all by yourself?
- Doro: Well, I had a man – I called him – we had to build a special machine. So I had a friend that was one of the chief engineers at Kimberly-Clark and he was Bernard Smith, a very smart engineer. And then he helped finance the process, too, and he became a stockholder, you know, for his part in designing the machine, and helping the costs of the phototype. And anyway, we didn't get rich on that machine because at that time there was a changeover in the printing business. Everything was going to lithography, which was cheaper than the photoengraved plates.

[tape cuts out momentarily]

Mark: - I was in graduate school.

Doro: Oh, what –

Mark: I was in the service, and then I went to college, and then I went to graduate school when I got this job here.

Doro: Oh, what branch were you in?

Mark: Air Force.

Doro: Oh, lucky Air Force!

Mark: Yeah – It wasn't a combat period. No great stories here.

Doro: Well, it's OK. You know, a guy goes where they put you. You just don't have any choice.

Mark: Yeah.

Doro: I would have rather went to the – maybe something like the quartermaster.

Mark: Yeah, in fact I wanted to get into photography, and they put me into the medical field. Lord knows why they did that.

Doro: Well, that's OK, you know. Same as my brother, you know. They sent him to the Aleutian Islands, and what the hell can you do? It don't make any difference. You served your country.

Mark: Yeah.

Doro: It's a lot better than Bill Clinton.

Mark: [laughs] I have four and a half years more than him, I guess.

Doro: Yeah.

Mark: I've just got two more areas that I want to ask you some questions about, and I'm not even sure how much they will apply to you, so this might not take too long. First of all, I wanted to ask about medical readjustments back to civilian life. You mentioned you got a couple of purple hearts –

Doro: Yeah.

Mark: And I was wondering if you had any service-connected medical problems, and if you had contact with the VA medical system, and that sort of thing.

Doro: Oh, I'll tell you, I did have a little hang-up when I got home. I had a little hang-up about Krauts. And in my relatives, there was a couple of families that were real German through and through. They were real German sympathizers. And they were still talking – it was too bad – they thought that it was such a shame that Germany's been destroyed and all that sad stuff, you know. And I never could cope with them, really. I just didn't want too much to do with them, because if they had been where I was and saw what the Germans done, why, they would have a different opinion.

Mark: Was this something that you kept to yourself, or did you tell them what you thought?

Doro: No, but I would sometimes make a few choice remarks about what I thought about 'em. But you know, oh, yeah, I didn't – well, now it happens today. When I come out here and I worked with Continental Can as a tool and die maker, you know, because I understand working with metals and that. And one of my friends is a German – his name is Gunther. He was captured during the war. He was captured outside of Paris. And so him and I talk about things once in a while. And there was – you see, there was a lot of these S.S. troops that really could – would never change. A lot of those guys were – if they didn't want to give up, well, they were just killed. Because, especially during the Bulge, they were passing the word around, "No prisoners," and after we learned about this Malmady massacre where they were, you know, shooting down prisoners. So then we took the same attitude. Sometimes two or three Krauts – maybe they'd kill two or three of our guys and then put up their hands and think, "Well, now, we're going to go and have a nice time." But not always. Sometimes they'd just cut 'em down. Because, I know one time in Normandy, I was riding shotgun with a .50 for the lieutenant on the jeep, and I just happened to look in the field, and I didn't really see nothin' but I swung the .50 that way, and eight hands come up out of nowhere. Four Krauts. Well, I had just passed three or four dead soldiers on the road, laying on the road. They were either 29th Division or they were Rangers, and for a while there I was tempted to hold down the triggers and just chop 'em down.

Mark: What stopped you?

Doro: I don't know. I just didn't. Anyway, sometimes, you know, it's – the Germans will fight and fight, and when they've killed a bunch of guys, they'll stick up their hands and come out. And maybe they killed three, four of your fellas. And now they're gonna have gravy going on a nice – going to a nice barracks in either Canada or the United States, and they have – sit out the war. But anyway, I was tempted to hold down the triggers for a while, but I didn't.

Mark: Um, sometimes combat soldiers when they come back, they have nightmares and that sort of thing for a while after the war. Did you ever have that experience?

Doro: No, I never had no nightmares. I enjoyed watching combat movies.

- Mark: Oh, is that right?
- Doro: Sure. A lot of it is kind of phony, you know.
- Mark: I was gonna ask you what you thought about them.
- Doro: Well, you see, when you are in combat, you know, the guys are not joking and laughing and all that stuff like in the movies, you know. You know, all laughing and joking and all that. Everything was pretty serious. And some of the guys, you know, they've got that kind of a – they get kind of a thick stare in their eyes. Sometimes you talk to 'em and they don't even hear you. But in the movies, you know, they're all constantly joking and laughing. Well, we'd do that too maybe after the battle, but when there's actual fighting goin' on, everybody is dead serious, because it's scary. Actually, you know, when you see guys getting killed and shot, it's – but I never had any nightmares, really. When I got home, I went on a three month binge.
- Mark: Drinking binge, you mean?
- Doro: Yeah, I was drinking. Booze and women and I had one hell of a time. And after that, I settled down and went to work.
- Mark: You think that was war-related? Your binge?
- Doro: I think s- I think it was maybe a way – you just wanted to relax. You know, it was just nice to lay down and sleep and feel secure. Whereas where you're up in the lines, you really don't sleep good. And you're always thinking maybe some Kraut's going to throw a hand grenade in your foxhole. You know, German patrols come out at night and go pokin' around your lines. And there was one old combat sergeant who had talked to me about – when we were in this particular line. He was from the 2nd Division. And he said "When they come probing in there at night," he said, "Don't fire your guns." He said, "Get a bunch of hand grenades." And we'd throw hand grenades. We'd sail 'em out in the field there. There was a high, grassy field ahead of us. And so we'd throw about 15, 20 grenades out there. Well, the grenades explode and they don't really know where they're coming from. But what they're really doing is probing the lines for your machine guns, and then a few hours later, they go back, and the German mortars will come in – the German 88s and the mortars. And they've got you pretty well pinpointed. Another thing we learned was to not use tracers in the machine guns.
- Mark: Why's that?
- Doro: We took all our tracers out because they kind of – they point right to where you are. And, no, I settled down and went to work, and I never had any nightmares.

- Mark: I've just got one last bit of – one last group of questions that I'm not even sure apply to you, and that involved veterans organizations and reunions and that sort of thing. Have you ever joined one of the big veterans' groups like the American Legion or the VFW?
- Doro: Uh, I joined the American Legion once, but right now I belong to the Military Order of the Purple Heart. That's the Portland chapter. And this is all combat guys. And some of them have been wounded once or twice. Some guys got hands missing, some got a leg missing, and they've all been there. So that we have kind of a – we can all sort of relate to each other. Now, I was never wounded that really serious. I first got a mortar that kind of massacred my right hand, and they put, I don't know, maybe ten stitches in there, wrapped it up, and I went back to the guns. And another time I got some shrapnel in my leg. Some hit my knee. That give me a bad leg, but they patched me up and I stayed in action. I was kind of hopin' for a nice clean bed in England. And of course we got so dirty. And when we came on the beach we were wearing what they called impregnated fatigues over our regular clothes. These were kind of a stiff – and they were just miserable to wear. First chance we got, we got rid of 'em. We had gas masks, but after a couple of days, we chucked 'em. We got rid of 'em.
- One time, I had a squad out in the field, and a German – I think it was a 109 [Messerschmitt, fighter plane] – he came real low, right over the treetops, and I was sitting on top of a hedgerow, and I looked at him and he looked at me. But I watched him. He went down about a mile, and he turned around. And I hollered to the guys, "Down the holes!" And he came back with his old guns a-choppin'. But he didn't hit nothin'. He was actually firing too late, because when his guns started firin' he was already shootin' in the next field. Very poor shot.
- Mark: And a good thing for you.
- Doro: Well, then another time, I see a – usually stationed near us we had a couple of these units of multiple .50s. That's four .50 calibers mounted, and they travel in unison, off of one trigger. And these are multiple .50s, all these four guns converge at about 150 yards, something like that. And I see them bring down a German Messerschmitt. And this German's plane was smoking, and he was in trouble. And he comes down – he got down to about 50 feet, and he decided to bail out with his chute. When he came out of that plane, he was just flying almost as fast as that airplane. And the chute didn't open, but it caught on a kind of a tree trunk. Whack! It must have snapped his neck, because he was dead when we got over there. And of course, all the guys look for souvenirs, and looking for his Luger. And I brought back four pistols, and a German sniper rifle – the Mauser.
- Mark: How'd you get that stuff home?
- Doro: They mailed it free. We just put it in a box, and an officer would look at it and sign it as a souvenir of war, and they shipped it home free. I had a lot of junk when I got home.
- Mark: Those are pretty much all the questions I had. Is there anything you'd like to add?

- Doro: Oh, no. There's a lot of things I can think of, but – there was one incident near – out of Bolingen where some recon sergeant came over to our bivouac and said, "Hey, there's a whole company of Krauts down in that valley," he said, "and it looks like they're getting ready to eat," he says. "Now I can't monkey around," he says, "I'm on recon, but," he said, "I though I'd tell you about 'em." So the lieutenant and I, we scurried around, and we got about 7, 8 guys and we started heading for that area. We knew where it was. Down in the valley there was like a nice grassy patch, and these Krauts had stopped there, and they were going to have their lunch because one of their trucks had this trailer behind it with that smoking kitchen stove. Anyway, we had three machine guns and one .50, and we had to crawl through the cabbage patch for about a block or two. And then we got up to the edge of the woods, and there was all of the Krauts down there. I don't know if they were green troops or what, but they failed to put out any outposts, you know. They were down there like a bunch of – I don't know if they were green troops. Anyway, we set up the guns, and we cut loose on 'em. And I remember telling one machine gunner the "Range: 200 yards. Immediate front." And he set up and, I said to the lieutenant, I said, "We're ready." And he said, "Cut loose." So we cut loose on them. Oh, there was about, I would say maybe, oh 45, 50 Krauts down there. And they really got chopped up pretty bad. But then we heard – down the road we heard a tank rattle. And so anyway, we poured a few thousand rounds into 'em, then we hauled our guns and took off. We didn't want to tackle any tanks.
- Mark: Yeah. Was this in Normandy, or Belgium, or where was this? Do you remember?
- Doro: It was in Belgium. Anyway, we moved out of there and we didn't – as I say, we didn't want to tangle with any Panzers. But we thought that was a pretty bunch of stupid Germans. I don't know if they were just greenhorns, but to assemble down there and have no outposts, you know what I mean. There was nobody, and they were just what you call sitting ducks. And if there's anything else I can tell you, just ask.
- Mark: Well, I thank you for taking some time out of your day.
- Doro: Oh, I have nothing to do anyway right now.
- Mark: [laughs]
- Doro: I do a lot of – I'm doing a lot of research myself right now.
- Mark: On what?
- Doro: Mostly on Normandy. I've got – oh, I've got maybe about 150, 200 maps, you know that are 11 by 14s, you know.
- Mark: Oh, I remember you telling me that. I remember now.
- Doro: They've all been blown up by Xerox machines.

Mark: Yeah.

Doro: So if you ever need a map on a particular area, why, just give me a buzz and I'll send you the map.

Mark: Well, I've got your name and address and telephone number right here, so that's not a problem.

Doro: Yeah.

Mark: Well, again – thanks for taking the time out of your day. I appreciate it. Again, if you want a copy of the tape, let me know. Otherwise, I'll send you a transcript when the thing is finally done.

Doro: Yeah, I'll just proofread it for you.

Mark: Yeah, not a problem.

Doro: Yeah.

Mark: Sure, bye.

Doro: Buh-bye.

[end of recording]