

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
MILO G. FLATEN
Scout/Infantryman, United States Army, WWII
1994

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Flaten, Milo G., (1925-). Oral History Interview, 1994.

User Copy: 3 sound cassettes (ca. 225 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Recordings: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 225 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Abstract

Flaten, a Milwaukee, Wis. native, discusses his World War II service with Company E, 116th Regiment, 29th Infantry Division focusing on his experiences during the Normandy Campaign. He talks about his decision to enlist, fear he might not pass the physical exam, his first experience drinking, and training with an Italian regiment in New Jersey. Stationed at Camp Blanding (Florida), Flaten provides a sketch of types of people in the military, his activities at camp, ways he made money, his trip overseas, and training in England for the D-Day invasion. Flaten comments on the relationship between officers and enlisted men, KP duty, discipline during training, and his thoughts about battle preparation. He provides an extremely detailed account of D-Day including morale aboard the landing craft, running down the landing ramp, wading ashore under heavy fire, and heavy combat in France on the days following the invasion. Flaten describes hedgerow fighting, life in a foxhole, effectiveness of German artillery, constant need for replacements, first shower in the field, and the battle for St. Lô. Also talked about is the strength of SS troops, being hit with shrapnel, and being held prisoner by Germans for several days. After being wounded a second time, he was transferred to MP duty in Paris, and comments on monitoring prostitution with the morals squadron, playing with the Glenn Miller Band, and feelings of guilt about serving in Paris while his old unit was fighting. Flaten returned to his unit and touches upon duty at the Elbe River, meeting Russian troops, and his feelings upon return to the United States. Also discussed is using the GI Bill to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison, joining the ROTC, attitudes of WWII veterans toward the ROTC, service in the Korean War, and his opinion of post-traumatic stress disorders.

Biographical Sketch

Flaten enlisted in the Army in 1943. After training in the United States he was sent to England. As a scout during the Normandy Invasion, he has been credited as the first soldier on the beaches of France.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1994.

Transcribed by Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs staff, n.d.

Transcription edited by Adam Solm, 2003.

Mark: Ok, my name is Mark Van Ells. I'm the archivist at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. The date is June the third, 1994 and this is the first of what I hope are many oral history interviews conducted here at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum of Wisconsin veterans—and here's our first one. Your name please.

Milo: Milo Flaten, Milo G. Flatten.

Mark: F-L-A-T-E-N?

Milo: F-L-A-T-E-N.

Mark: And you're a veteran of which war?

Milo: World War II.

Mark: Okay. Company E, 116th Infantry, 29th Infantry Division?

Milo: Correct.

Mark: You were born in 1925?

Milo: That's right.

Mark: Where at?

Milo: Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Mark: How long did you live in Minneapolis?

Milo: I lived in Minneapolis until I was a junior in high school at which time my father--was a practicing attorney in Minneapolis and his office was located right overlooking Nicollet Park which is pronounced—Nicollet [nick-o-let] in Minneapolis which is pronounced Nicollet [nick-o-lay] every place else--where I could look out of the window and I was about ten feet away from the wall and I got to know all the left fielders, including Ted Williams and so forth--that probably accounts for my obsession with baseball. Anyway, we moved to--I also was on the Wisconsin baseball team--anyway, we moved to Milwaukee in the summer of '42, that would be, yes. I went to Shorewood High School, which was a good high school, and then I knew I was going to go into the Army, and when I got to be 18, was May 7th, and I went down to the local draft board, as I was instructed to do, and registered. And they said, "Well, you'll have two weeks, you'll be inducted." I think they said, "You'll take a physical and then you will be given two weeks to get your affairs in order." And I said, "Well, I haven't graduated from high school." And they said, "When do you graduate from high school?" And I said, "Well, I graduate

on June 6th, 1943.” And they said “Well, we’ll give you a deferment.” So they gave me a high school deferment to finish out the month. And I went in the Army on June 6th and on June 7th--they didn't give me the two weeks because they had already given me a deferment--on June 7th I was inducted in the Army. I was inducted at the Buffalo Street Induction Center in Milwaukee and got on a train for Rockford where Camp Grant was and was in the company of a bunch of inmates from Green Bay Reformatory--

Mark: Real inmates?

Milo: Yeah, and there were these men standing around with these snap brim hats and overcoats and I noticed one of them opened up his coat and he had a revolver or something--and they were actually guards--and these guys were telling--they stripped us all naked and they put me in with this bunch because we had inmates from the Green Bay Reformatory because I presume they were people who were about to be released or something, anyway, and most of them by the way were white, that just occurred to me, I have clients up in Green Bay now and that place is just about 70% Black. But anyway, because I was slated to be inducted in the Army right away and not to get the customary two weeks they put me in with these prisoners--I pieced two and two together--they made us strip naked and they wrote a number on our chest in mercurochrome and then we walked around this huge warehouse--it was not on the ground floor--went from stations, they had a number on the posts, they had a doctor sitting at a card table with a number, number 21, that meant you had to examine your ears, and then you'd go to number 22 and that meant he's was going to examine your eyes and so forth. Then we passed the physical and I was terrified of not passing the physical because at one time I was told I had a heart murmur and I didn't know what that meant and I told the doctor and he said, “Your heart seems fine to me, son.” I said, “Don't I have a heart murmur?” He said, “Well, you do but it's functional one,” which I didn't know what that meant, still don't. Anyway, then--

Mark: To interrupt you for a second. That was important for you, to pass the physical?

Milo: Oh, yeah.

Mark: Like you wanted to be--

Milo: I wanted to be inducted and I was dreadfully afraid of not passing my physical. I was terribly anxious to go in the Army.

Mark: What sort of apprehensions did you have? What sort of fears?

Milo: I was afraid they might find something. I knew I was in good shape and I said somewhere along the line I'd heard I had a heart murmur and I was afraid that might disqualify me. And then I thought perhaps they might find me psychologically—something that I didn't know about--because I knew I was in good physical condition, but I didn't have any

problem. I think we put on our clothes and we were put in another room that probably had a flag on the wall and about 200 of us raised our hands, and repeat after me, and whatever the oath of office was, and--

Mark: And, you were in.

Milo: And I was in.

Mark: So, your induction physical then took place at Camp Grant?

Milo: No, our induction was on Buffalo Street in Milwaukee--that was on the south of Wisconsin Avenue, I think it was about five blocks south of Wisconsin Avenue. In a warehouse district. The other day I drove past that big warehouse and its still there. It's a warehouse again now.

Mark: So, after the physical you went to Camp Grant?

Milo: Yep, we went to Camp Grant which was a medical training center but it was also an induction center for Milwaukee and as I recall, well the Milwaukee Selective Service Examining Station was for all of Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan, anyway, then we went, there were some non-prisoners too, after we were sworn in the guards left. Then we changed trains, it was such a long trip from Milwaukee to Rockford, that we change trains at Beloit and I sat in the train. And in the train there was a little smoking room at one end of the thing with a bunch of these guys from Green Bay and they all left the train and went into this liquor store and bought pints of whiskey, and they said, "Have a drink kid," and I said, I was a lot younger than they were. They were in their 20's and I said, "I'd never had a drink before, I've drank beer but not--" to make a long story short, when we got to Camp Grant I was sick as a dog and prior to my induction, towards the end of my senior year they had offered, the military had come to the high school and offered courses in V-5 and V-7 or something like that, those were Navy course to become Navy pilots and was a college training course, because they wanted to keep certain, some people in college so that when the war was over they wouldn't have a country full of dumbbells, non-educated people. So, it was in the interest of the country, they had an Army specialized training course, I was a little bit nearsighted so I couldn't go into the Navy, and I had passed the test with flying colors and was given a little card from the Adjutant General, I remember I carried it around, a guy name Julio, that was the Adjutant General of the Army, wrote me a letter saying, "Show this and you'll go to college, show this at your induction station," and ya had to have, ya had to pass this qualification test and it was a lengthy thing, the test took all day, and I passed it and with no problem, then I got to Camp Grant and took the Army General Classification Test--the IQ test again, and about every two minutes I'd go outside this mess hall, where they had the test, and throw up and I would just get back in and they would say, "Now turn to the next section," so as a consequence I flunked the IQ test that would even give

me a minimal--that would even let me in the Army, I think you had to have 100-110 or something, the Army in its characteristic way said, "There is something wrong, in one hand this guy is a genius from his high school test, this Army General Classification Test, and this other one he is barely literate," so instead of doing anything about it they just kept me there, at Camp Grant, everyone else went off to various places and I think I spent two or three weeks there. And I got dressed up in my khakis and went home on weekends, back to Milwaukee, it was kind of exciting to see, going home in uniform, and then finally they got around to giving me another IQ test, and--

Mark: You did better I assume?

Milo: Well, they didn't, no they sent me to Ft. Hamilton, Brooklyn, which was the 113th Infantry, composed of New York and New Jersey National Guard, and they were all Italian, and I stood about a foot taller than everybody and I was the only guy in the unit who's name didn't end in I, A, or O. Then I got to be friends with two guys named, Eddie Lasioni and Johnny Lataraca, and Lansioni was from, I don't know how he got in that unit, was from Wadeka, Illinois, and he could, they all could speak Italian, and he translated for me, they say things in Italian, and half the time I didn't know what they were talking about, we were out on Long Island walking the beach with a BAR and a dog, I had never seen a gun, much less fire one, I guess I had fired 22's and stuff, and that went on for a couple weeks and finally the Company I was in, we were in an empty lot out the in--these guys would break into the cottages and steal stuff and the dog, the dog's name was Rex, he didn't like me, well it wasn't that he did like me he liked to go swimming, he was a Doberman Pincher, and he like to go out on the surf and swim and I didn't let him, so I'd make him heal, because that's what they told me to do, just a few weeks in the Army, the dog would bite me where the top of my pants would fit into leggings, and I'd come back and my pants would be in shreds and they'd say, "Flaten, what the hell are you doing out there? Your pants are always torn," well it was the damn dog, anyway, after I was there about three weeks, they decided they duty was too tough, they word went out that we were going to have a strike [laughs]. This is the Army, and they, we didn't go down to the kennels to get the dogs, they had some sort of a court martial thing and they were going to send everyone to prison, Eastern Coastal Penal Colony at Camp Upton, New York, including me, and I didn't know anything about it. I went to the chaplain and I said, "I don't know what all this is about, half the time they are not even talking English" and he is they guy that got me another IQ test, and got me transferred to Deland, Florida, John W. Stetson University and I came in with my barracks bags and set it on the floor of this college campus where there was a first sergeant, and he said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I'm ready to go to college." He said, "Well, they have closed down the program they don't have it anymore," I said, "Well how come they sent me here," and he said, "Well, the Army is a little slow about picking up on the information, the newspapers had known about it for weeks." So, I went to class, we had to march to class, and I had no idea, it was the middle of the semester, and we'd go marching from class to class but this Deland, Florida had class rooms with two doors, so I learned get in and sit near the

back door and then I could go out the back door when they took role, and then I could sneak out and go watch the girls play tennis. Finally, the semester ended and everybody was shipped out to various places and they shipped me to the nearest place, which was Camp Blanding, Florida, just up the road from Deland between St. Augustine and Jacksonville, that was an infantry replacement training center and it was on--I heard and I think it was probably correct, that it was an old farm belonging to Claude Pepper, who later became a Congressman, or a Senator, maybe a vice-president, but I remember there was a couple of slight raises of about 5 feet elevation, it was flat as a pancake and we had to attack a hill and it would be Pepper Hill and Pepper Farm, everything was Pepper. So, if it wasn't Claude Pepper it was some relative of his. But, Camp Blanding was a huge camp, IRTC Infantry Replacement Training Center.

Mark: This is what they call the "Repple Depple," is that right?

Milo: No, this was an Infantry Replacement Training Center and we trained we had 17 weeks of basic training I think we hung around a--it might have been a few days before we started our cycle, throughout the post there were hundreds of training battalions, they were over strength infantry battalions. Our squads were 12 men each instead of 9, we had four squad to a company instead of three, we were a bigger group, we were a company, I remember I was in C Company in the 190th Training Battalion and they had training cycles constantly going on at this camp. Some of them were in the first week, some of the in their second and so forth, and so it was a very efficient use of the training time and the terrain and the ranges and so forth, so that when one unit was in the first week of their training cycle they wouldn't be interfering with the people who were on the firing range and so forth, or the mortar range or the machine gun range. It took 17 weeks of training it was great training and it was through training we fired everything, we fired rifles, we were trained to be riflemen, some guys, I think--. No, we were all trained to do everything, we could fire machine guns, mortars, 60's, we could fire all the weapons but I don't think we were assigned, they don't have advanced individual training like they do now, where they give you a specialized thing. But we were all MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) Number 745, later, that's an infantry assignment for even when I was a platoon sergeant, a tech sergeant, sergeant first cClass, that was a 745, we had an armed rifleman leader or something. Later on, we all use to joke, "We'll be glad when we get home and 745 means quarter to eight." We took intensive training and the officers, the training was conducted by Non-com's, corporals and sergeants and officers, lieutenants, the company commander was a captain, and the battalion commander was a light colonel, and it was a regular Infantry Battalion but instead of the whole work being shipped off at the end of the training cycle they just took in a new batch of privates. After completing 17 weeks of training, as I said we fired everything and I later on appreciated how good the training was, because I had to fire everything, you shot what you shot, water-cooled machine guns, 81 mortars and so forth. Then they still didn't know what to do about that ASTP assignment after I finished basic training, so they kept me around a couple of weeks, but that wasn't very important, and then, the most intense thing I can

remember about basic training outside of the fact the we went from Camp Grant with a bunch of guys from Dickson, Illinois, that's where Ronald Reagan is born, farmers mostly, they weren't to literate, they hadn't gone to far in school, I had attended Shorewood High School and I would bet that 90% of the kids that I had gone to school with were destined to go to college and had taken college training. I had just gone to my 50th anniversary, recently, and they gave us some figures, like 90% of the graduates from Shorewood High School go to college and its the best high school in the state. And they have more kids go and more successful graduates in college than any other school in the state. So, it was kind of a shock to me to see all these guys, my size, healthy white kids, once again I never saw a Black guy, but they all had really thick southern accents, you wouldn't think Illinois would have such thick southern accents but they did. They were very rural, it was a different environment entirely. The main thing I remember about basic training, outside of the training itself, was that I was always broke. Our pay was \$50 a month and the company commander or someone was trying to make a name for himself, this is what I'm looking back on I think that's why he did it, he insisted that everyone in the company buy a war bond. Not, they had various dimensions of war bonds, they call them a \$25 war bond cost \$17.50 and at the end of five years or eight years, whatever the period was, the thing would mature and you would get \$25. He insisted that everyone buy a fifty dollar war bond, well that meant \$37.50 of your pay was deducted, and you only drew \$50. Of course there was no taxes they were withholding then, but, so that left you \$12.50, then you had to pay \$7.00 for a PX coupon book a month and that cost \$5.00 for laundry or some amount, anyway I was left a about a dollar and a half at the end of the month to go, that was my spending money or the whole time, of course, some of the PX coupons you could get pop, and beer and stuff, but I didn't drink very much and I don't think very many of those kids did. I don't know why we didn't but beer made me sick. And besides, they said it was near beer, it was 3-2 or something like that, later on I worked in a brewery, at Blatz Brewery, and I found out that when they make a shipment of beer they just put a different label on the cans. [Laughs]

Mark: Oh, is that right? [Laughs]

Milo: All beer is about 3-2 I guess. But, anyway I didn't, so on weekends, in order to get any money just to go to a movie, it cost a dime to go to a movie, that was the only entertainment they had, I couldn't go to town and I'd hear these guys talking about going to town, town was Jacksonville, it cost fifty cents to go on the bus, probably 25-30 miles, I think, I didn't have any money and I was lonesome, on weekends everybody would go off to town someplace and I couldn't so I learned that I could make money by washing guys, stand guard for them, I got weekend guard, I'll give you \$2.00 to stand my weekend guard. So, I would stand his weekend guard for him. K.P., "I have K.P. this weekend will you take my K.P.?" I'd get paid for that and then I did washing, I would wash their leggings, and the rifle belt or web equipment and they wanted me to use strong GI soap on them so they would get white and they would looked seasoned, bleached out, they wouldn't look like green horns. We had, by the way, our field jackets were tan, they

weren't green, the green ones didn't come in until after Christmas, we could tell the greenhorns, when we get the replacements with the green jackets. Our leggings were tan, we didn't have boots we just had high topped shoes, and that way I could get enough money to go to town, just ordinary spending money, to get a candy, you know you can't be entirely broke.

Mark: And so you eventually did get to town?

Milo: Oh yeah, one time I went to town and somebody talked me into getting in on a poker game someplace. You go to a USO, the bus left, the bus would go around the post and at every service station would stop. You'd go to the nearest service station, not a service station a service club, they call them, the recreation hall where they had a little library and they'd hold dances and stuff like that, visitors could go there. You would go to the nearest service club and the bus would stop and pick up a batch of soldiers go around the post until it stopped at all the service clubs, then the bus would stop at the gate, you would have to get a pass first from your company, and in order to get your pass you had to learn the first ten general orders, when the first sergeant was there he was signing your pass he'd say, "What is the first general order?" and I'd always say, "Take charge of this post and all government property in view." He never asked me the second one so I never learned it, I think its "walk my post in a military manner, keeping on the alert" or something like that. I never learned the ones from three to ten because they only asked you the first two. But, I got enough money and it cost .50 cents and then I lost it all playing poker, in the USO before I even got on the streets or went to a movie or did anything. Jacksonville was filled with sailors and marines because there was two, there was a huge Jacksonville Naval Air Station, that is still there and then there was a marine post. There was more sailors and marines than there was soldiers, and there was 100,000 troops at Camp Blanding. So, you didn't see anyone that wasn't in uniform. Then I didn't have fifty cents to get back to Camp Blanding, so I walked up and down the streets, there wasn't much to see after a while. So I went back to my upper bunk at the USO and they gave you free coffee and donuts so I wasn't hungry, I was filled with donuts and spent Saturday night. And they said we had to back at the post at midnight on Sunday. So, on Sunday they said, I was getting pretty sick of donuts, and they said, "Who wants a free meal?" I jumped out of that bed in the USO and said, "I do." Well, you had to go attend vesper services, and I thought, "Oh, Christ I have to go to some Baptist church and sing some 'Holy roller' songs," but I'll get fed anyway. And I still didn't know how I was going to get back to the post, we I got to this church and it was in the basement recreation hall of this church, and there was a room full of the best looking women you have ever seen in your life, about 200 of them, and we couldn't get enough guys to fill the bus and I was going there just to get something to eat, boy that's when I learned the best place to find women is in church, they were understandably, they were as lonesome for guys as we were for them. I met a girl who's father was the editor and publisher of the St. Augustine Herald, and she gave me fifty cents to get home. But after that, I'll get back to the post, back to Camp Blanding, you get on these buses they stop at all these service clubs and

you had to have a pass and they would stop at the gate and there was, they gate would be for vehicles and then there would be a pedestrian gate along side of it, and an MP would stand there and the bus, empty bus, would drive through the gate and then you would show your pass to the MP and then get back on the bus again and you'd drive off to Jacksonville. Well, after that weekend the bus would come, you'd get off the bus go through the gate and everyone would get back on the bus except Milo G. Flaten, because there was a great big LaSalle with a blonde sitting at the wheel and her father was the editor of the paper and he had rationed gasoline stickers *all* over his windows, you could hardly see out of the window because there were so many stickers because of his-- apparently, priority for being a newspaper publisher, after that I didn't, all my problems were over, unfortunately, I left Camp Blanding, that was in our Bivouac Phase and I remember one time, I went down to St. Augustine and visited her, but then we went to Camp Grant, Illinois, I mean Fort Meade, Illinois, that was called "Ripple Dipple #1"

Mark: I see.

Milo: Then I assume there was a "Ripple Dipple #2" in the United States also, I'm not sure about that, but that was Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, and it was also called the Port of Embarkation, we took off from New York. I spent a couple of nights in New York and cab drivers had all kinds of stories to tell you. They told us first that about the history, I had to revise my history, Abe Lincoln was a queer and Jeff Davis was too. They were fighting about it, about each other and that is why the Civil War took place. The reason Joe DeMaggio, Joe and Eleanor Roosevelt both had VD and that is why Joe had a sore heel, because he had syphilis in the heel, all those exclusive stories the cab drivers were telling us about. The cab driver said, "Where are you stationed?" I said, "I'm at Camp Kilmer." "Oh, your going on the Queen Elizabeth on Wednesday," I thought it was in the same category as Eleanor Roosevelt having VD, that it was just a bunch of B.S., but Wednesday they got us on trucks and we went and loaded up on the Queen Elizabeth. We were told we were triple loaded and I have no reason to think that we weren't there was 30,000 people on one boat. And we went without a convoy, we were told we were going without a convoy because no Navy vessel could keep up with us. They said we were zig-zagging, but I don't know if we were or not. I never did get, I was three of four decks below the sea, I was still with Johnny Lataraca and Eddie Lasioni, and oh those guys I had met, I forgot to tell you, I had met those guys in 113th Infantry when I first went into the Army, because they didn't know what to do with me, they sent me to Ft. Hamilton I thought I was going to Brooklyn College or something, but they still had that low IQ score, but I met this guy who translated for me and became friends with these guys, Lasioni and Lataraca, and one time we went home to Newark to Mama Lataraca and he said, I was a big guy, I was bigger than they were, he said "My mother 'mama' doesn't trust non-italians, so you can't be Milo Flaten you be Milo Flatten [said with Italian accent]," and I was there and Mama Lataraca greeted me. She was about 4 feet 4, and Johnny Lataraca had a big hawk nose and--face, I think he was a professional criminal or something, but he was a good guy, he got killed later on. But, they tried to fix

me up with Rosa, their little sister—and she was an ugly one—but Mama Lataraca said, “Milo Flattena,” she said, “That’s a prima Italian name,” they thought that was marvelous. They fed me pizza pie for the first time in my life, first and only time I had pizza pie, it was a thick variety, and it wasn’t very good, it was all tomatoes and stuff, I wasn’t much of an eater then anyway, I don’t think it was until, when did the pizza pie come on the market, ten years ago maybe, and I never had one since.

Mark: As long as I can remember.

Milo: Well, anyway that’s incidental. Then I got shipped to Basic Training after they had this mutiny and I told the Chaplain that I wasn’t one of the mutineers, and they shipped me to Basic Training. After that I got, they shipped me to Stetson University, and then to Basic training. Then finally we ended up at Camp Kilmer. In a barracks I could hear these to voices that sounded familiar, I went up and the was Lataraca and Lancioni, they had been someplace, Camp Upton, Penal Colony, or something.

Mark: They had been there.

Milo: Yeah, they put them away and then they separated them. They were shipping overseas as Infantry Replacement just as I was. So I was with them and we got on the Queen Elizabeth, at least they weren’t farmers, I was so sick of talking to those farmers from Dixon, Illinois, none of them were too bright, I mean well-educated but they were very cunning, they new the ins and outs. They taught me a lot of things. We were on the third deck below, the Promenade Deck, and they had all these cabins divided up into little cabins and this one, I don’t think it had a porthole in it, I slept in the shower, there were three of us in three bunks in the bathtub. It took us five days to get over and we landed in Gairlock, Scotland on the Firth of Clyde, how I remember that I don’t know and--

Mark: Did you worry about getting sunk while you were in the boat?

Milo: No, it didn’t occur to me.

Mark: I would think that would be my first thought.

Milo: The thought crossed my mind, speaking of submarines, I saw--when I went over to Daytona Beach where the WAC Training Center was, I didn’t have any money so I didn’t get to know any WACs, I didn’t get to know any of the girls until I went to Church, but, I was walking along the beach and they had races on the sand, they didn’t have the Daytona Speed Center like they do now, but they had some races with vehicles. I was walking along there and they had a grand stand, and I didn’t have any money, so I was looking at the ocean watching the, it was on the Atlantic Ocean, and I was thinking about things, I was going to go over that ocean or maybe to the Pacific, I was with a guy from Dixon and he had a girl, he was the ugliest looking little mutt, and he had a girl, at everyplace he

went he had a girl, and he'd pay my way because I didn't have any money, and then I had to be the look-out while he was screwing this girl, I remember he had this one girl in Jacksonville and she was very articulate, I mean outspoken, she'd scream and I was in this park and the MP's would be along and I'd have to sit on the bench while he was screwing this girl and then she'd say, "God Damn, honey, you sure can fuck," and I would look around me hoping that somebody wouldn't hear [laughs]. But anyway I was glad to find those guys, and of course they got into the crap games. Anyway we were back on the Queen Elizabeth, those two guys from Chicago and Brooklyn, they new what they were doing they immediately got into the crap game, and won a lot of money and then gave me some. They kind of adopted me because I was the only non-Italian in that unit. Anyway, [coughs] they won some money, we got off the boat, the ship, the Queen Elizabeth and they got us on a train and we traveled and traveled and traveled it seemed like it took two days of traveling on the train although that's all kind of hazy and we got off and they put us in the 29th Division training battalion replacement battalion. I'm not sure which it was the Training Battalion or—they only had on battalion.

Mark: This was where?

Milo: In Cornwall, Tavastock, in Tavastock, by this time, this was in April, and they had evacuated the Englishmen from a lot of the towns and we stayed in houses--English houses, English house, thatched roofs and stuff like that, and we were careful that we didn't break things, didn't put cigarette butts on tables and stuff, we were very careful, we appreciated the fact that they had to leave there homes. Which was kind of a surprise to me because teenagers don't give a shit about anything except themselves. As we got closer to combat the more I found that people were considerate of each other. I remember everyone was trying to beat everyone else out of something and if there was a chance to steal a good blanket off your bed they would do it and stuff like that, the closer we got the more considerate, the more human they were, not considerate, they just acted more human. Anyway, we trained in the moors it was the same old stuff, the platoon and the attack, the company and the attack on a fortified position, all of the stuff we had in basic training over and over again on the moors and I thought of--up and down the moors and I saw a little of England and for some reason we went to Bornemouth, which was a delightful little town, a resort. And on weekends we had extremely difficult training it was just like basic training again and they had--the unit had been in existence for the purpose of D-Day, they had been, they told me from the time they set foot in Ireland that was there mission, it was to reclaim France. No one made any bones about it. The division's slogan was 29 Let's Go. Everything we did we had to holler 29 Let's Go. It was headed by a Major-General Charles Gerhardt who we called "Chin-strap Charlie" 'cause we were the only unit in the Army that had to wear our chin-straps because the rumor was, when you got a concussion from an artillery shell the concussion would get inside your helmet and break your neck if you had your chin-strap on, but it was a bunch of crap, but I appreciated the fact that he made us wear our chin-strap, because in the movies you always saw the guys with the chin-strap hanging down, but when you ran the

chin-strap kept the helmet on your head. He was a nut about that.

Mark: He was tough I hear.

Milo: He was terribly tough, and the people were dropping out of training like flies, that's why they had a replacement battalion right there just as though we were taking casualties. We were in this replacement battalion which was a training battalion, it was both, we did the basic training stuff. And then one day, I think it was in May, they shoved me into the E Company, the 2nd Battalion of the 116th. And that training wasn't as rigorous. I think it was almost immediate, in fact they weren't training at all they would go on the road marches but they weren't doing this platoon and the attack and all that stuff, which we had done so many times. They shipped us, well, they put us in Newque. Newque is the word for dock or loading dock, like in a dock for a boat, in English. I guess its in our English too. There was a town called Torque, and a town called Newque, you can imagine what words were made up, "You're going out to get a little Newque," what they meant was you were going to this quaint little village. Land's End, when we were on guard, they said that was the closest place to the German soldiers you're going to get, and they put me on guard and I didn't go to sleep all night, because I was in the basement of this house at Land's End. We trained at Slapton Sands, which I was told later that it was because it was a beach that resembled Normandy, that was the Army amphibious training center. We didn't have any Higgins boats, we had old English garbage barges or something. I don't know they were barges. They would give us a couple days and we would go out on the English Channel for an hour and then we would come back. But they had an actual mock up on an big empty lot, they had a land version [End Tape 1 Side A] of what the barges, various types, the LSD, every landing craft in the Army's inventory, or the Navy's inventory. They showed us how to load and where to stand in the boat, and when I had been in basic training or even in high school gym, they always made us--in physical education and in basic--they would line you up according to height and I was tall so I was always the first guy, so in basic training I was the squad leader because I was the first guy and when we do this problem, "Flaten you do this" and you do the squad I was a squad leader almost all the time and I carried the guide-on when we marched, to the range and places like that, because I was the tallest guy not because I had any particular leadership quality. It came in handy after we hit the beach because I knew what to do I knew how to get this desperate bunch of guys from different units, the 5th Ranger, the 1st Division, and the 29th, lined up and we examined how much ammunition we had and redistributed the ammunition and went about getting weapons and so forth and organize that group to get up that hill. It was just because I was the tallest guy, because I had these squad leader duties in Basic Training [unintelligible]. We left Cornwall, around--I can't remember when it was, I would presume it was about the first week in May or something like that, and we diddled around near South Hampton and they told us this was the marshalling area and we were making a secret out of it--

Mark: For the actual invasion?

Milo: For the invasion of France. They had a barbed wire fence a big, just a fence like they have around a play ground, what do they call that?

Mark: I don't know.

Milo: Like a playground fence only it had barbed wire across the top. They had M.P's outside or some kind of guard, they had an MP bands on, I don't know whether they were actual MP's or 29th Division MPs what, what ever it was, it was to keep guys from going to town. I don't think anyone would tell, because we were all involved in the invasion we didn't want to get our ship sunk. It was very boring, then we did nothing but close-order drill, up and down, by the right flag, by the left flag, up and down and around. And I said "Anybody know how to get training as a barber?" I said, "I'd do anything to get out of marching," because there wasn't any real estate to do any training so we kept marching around in this marching area. So I said I was a barber--I was trained as a barber, so they'd get an orange crate and a sheet and they gave me some clippers, and I started clipping hair with scissors and stuff. Of course, I didn't realize there was anything to it, just simply awful, and finally I said, "You don't want to look like that do ya?" And they shaved all the guys heads completely off of hair, and then he left and I started working on the next guy and pretty soon the company commander came along and he said "Flaten, did you shave this man's head?" And I said, "Yes," and he said, "You sit down," he made me sit on the box and the guy shaved my head. That isn't a very significant thing to say except that later on when we made the invasion I, the first thing I took off was my helmet, because we had to swim to shore, the helmet must have weighed 8-10 pounds, I don't know, but that was that big white head, shorn of hair, it was like a bulls eye. But, anyway we got on this ship and I can't remember, that's pretty hazy memory, the ship was called the Thomas Jefferson.

Mark: Your getting to the actual invasion? Ok, I want to go back--

Milo: Yeah. Let's get into this actual question and answer thing, What was I doing before the war? You know that. I don't remember when Germany invaded Poland. The attack on Pearl Harbor, my folks had been looking at a house, a farm house. My dad practiced law in Minneapolis, near Hudson, Wisconsin, just 17 miles from St. Paul. We were out in the country and there was no hills and I was cross country skiing for the first time and I came in, got in the car, we went into Hudson to buy some groceries, and my dad came out of the grocery store and he held a newspaper up in front of the side windows on that Sunday and it said "War!" that was the headline, I remember that day.

Mark: And what did you think? I mean did you think you were going to become involved with this war?

Milo: I said, "How could we be in war when they bombed Pearl Harbor, which is in Hawaii?" I

didn't know where Pearl Harbor was but I thought, "What the hell, does Hawaii got to do with us?" My dad said, "Well, that's part of the United States." "Okay." So then the next day, that was a Sunday, I think it was the next day, they got the whole high school, I was a junior in high school, and Roosevelt gave his talk about the day that would go down in infamy. I can remember being in the auditorium, we were in the auditorium every week, but I remember that particular one because it wasn't at four o'clock or whenever they usually had it. Then we went back to class and there was absolutely no change of anything and I thought, "That was the most remote thing, why the hell were they giving us that talk," but I was grateful to get out of class to hear the President speak. Then, I told you about my entry into the military service, induction, interview, and physical. I told you that, they just had various stations, and they asked you a couple questions and they had you fill out a questionnaire, they filled out the questionnaire whether you ever had the usual childhood diseases, because there were a lot of guys who weren't to literate. And I probably would have stumbled on some of those words too. I told you about regionalism, literacy, I remember one guy, they took all his teeth out--

Mark: The Army did?

Milo: Yeah, they, he had infected teeth, they took every God Damn tooth out of his mouth. Characterize my military term. Very good, trained at Camp Blanding, it didn't have a terrain similar to Europe it was very flat sandy easy to dig fox holes.

Mark: I'm sure. Is that when you're training. There was no shortage of proper equipment to use, because some of the stories of the people that were inducted much earlier than you they were practicing with brooms sticks and all those sorts of things, you had all the equipment you needed?

Milo: Had all the equipment we needed. It was, they were talking as they were issuing it to us, it has come at last. So, we were some of the first to get the stuff, so that everybody had, all of us had brand new rifles, because it took about 3 days to clean the cosmoline off of them, that's very heavy grease and it gets inside the thing. It was before we learned how to take our rifles apart, so we didn't know how to break them open and we had to clean them in kerosene, it was a tough job. And we had--the machine guns, we didn't have enough of those, but when we'd go on the machine gun range we didn't have a unit full of machine, you know the regular basic Table of Organization and Equipment of machine guns but they had them on them on the range, they belonged to the post, and mortars and stuff liked that. Tanks, we didn't do any training on the tanks.

Mark: Did you do amphibious training at all? At Camp Blanding.

Milo: No. We did a river crossing, yeah. We did river crossing but we didn't do any landings or things like that. Bridges, pontoon bridges, but none of the barges or amphibious training at all.

Mark: What was discipline like in Basic Training?

Milo: It was very strict. It was very strict. They hollered at you a lot, and after 17 weeks, though, you got to know the NCO's and the Officers and they had likes and dislikes. I got along very well with the NCO's and the Officer, but I think one of the reasons was because I was always designated as a squad leader or a leader in Basic Training. I was kind of a go between. The lieutenants weren't a hell of a lot older than me but they were more of my educational level they were all kids that had been to college I guess, so I had more in common with them. But, I remember one time I said something and I had a protracted long time of permanent K.P. in the Officer's mess. Oh, after I finished Basic Training they were still screwing around with this college thing and everyone shipped off the Rapido River as replacements and Italy was where everybody was going and everyone knew that and I ended going on D-Day, that was because they were still holding me back because of this, I don't know maybe it was because I was still only 18, I don't know, but for some reason this college training program. They made me a dog robber, which meant I was suppose to be a guy who would clean up the Officer's barracks, shine there shoes that were left on the bed, pick up the Whiskey bottles and the beer cans and stuff like that, and those poor Officers, the Junior Officers, they were working just as hard as the trainees, so there wasn't any mess, there was nothing. They weren't doing any drinking of beer, they would just go to bed and fall asleep just like the EM. So that was probably the best job in the Army, you were suppose to clean up some place that wasn't even dirty and I said nothing doing. I said, I was prideful, "You ain't gonna make me be some officers slave," so they said "Okay, we'll give you a job." They made me a K.P. in the Officer's mess and that was really awful, that was cleaning, they made me the worst job of all, cleaning the grease trap, it stunk like crazy, we had wood stoves, and I had to clean the stoves. Cleaning the stoves was awful, we burned coal, they did the cooking on the stoves and so forth, they didn't have gas, we had electricity of course, but we didn't have gas. Camp Blanding was the coldest winter I ever put in, in my life.

Mark: Camp Blanding, Florida was?

Milo: Camp Blanding, Florida, it was cold and they didn't have any way of heating, we lived in huts, the 12 man huts, squad huts. They didn't have any windows, just shutters that slapped down and flaps, they had little stoves at each end, in the barracks it was warm enough we could get those things red-hot, we had one at each end, but out in the field, and we had heavy wool clothing, we trained in dungarees, by the way, but we had those heavy Army wool overcoats, everybody wore those and we were still just freezing our ass off. It was a extra cold winter, I think, if you look back the winter `43-44 was a cold one. Saw ice several times. In combat we wore wool, we wore OD's, but in training we wore fatigues--

Mark: I've got a note hear about enlisted/officer relationships, you touched on this a little bit--

Milo: It was very, there was a distinct space between the officer and they lived different places they never socialized with us, some of them were good trainers and they joked with us and would, you know got to know us, and it was a very father/son relationship, it was. There was always lecturing and they were good guys, of course they had manuals, and they had committees, we were over strength in basic training in trainees and we were also over strength in officers. And they would have a machine gun committee in the battalion and officer from each Company would be on that committee and they would be in charge of the machine gun training and then they would have the rifle range committee and so forth. But, it was a very distance stand-offish relationship we never, we sired everybody, we saluted everybody and we had, oh, we had a beer party a couple of times, you know where we got to telling jokes and talking to them, but the rest of the time was very stand-offish and formal. Even though they weren't looking back on it, they weren't a hell of a lot older than we were. But, the same with the NCO's, we didn't get to know them very well, after my Basic Training was over and I was a permanent K.P. I got to know the Mess Sergeant, and finally I was promoted to Dining Room Orderly after I had been there for three, four weeks, because I knew how to write and the Officers Mess, they ate in the regular mess Hall just like everyone else did, but instead of going in and getting 'splat' whatever they had to offer on this tray, these were company size Mess Halls, the Officers had their choice of two things, sometimes even as many as three, and they'd have stew, and I then I'd put, I had to write, I was one of the guys that could write, I'd write the menu on the blackboard so they could figure out what to ask for as the food was being splattered on the trays, for stew I would put down "braised beef," "tenderloin tips," and stuff like that. The mess Sergeant thought that was just great so he promoted me to dining room Orderly from K.P. He gave me a white coat and I was to write out the menu on the blackboard and the dining room was to be cleaned by the K.P., it was to be mopped and scrubbed. I was to line up the various condiments so, we had picnic tables, and all the vinegar bottles and salt and pepper and ketchup and everything, sugar, and salt tablets. They always had salt tablets for everyone, it was very hot in Camp Blanding during the summertime. Anyway, then he was called the 'Duke of Fontana' he was on marijuana, I didn't realize at the time what it was, but he was high all the time, and he was from Fontana, California and he didn't want any one to call him Sergeant Fortunato, he was called the "Duke of Fontana" and he'd come in, when I was the Dining Room Orderly, and when he would come in the mess hall, well he was just a Sergeant, but he wanted me to holler, "Make way for the Duke," that was one of my jobs [laughter]. Then he made sure he would have a new K.P., six or eight or ten according to the alphabetical roster would come on each day, because its a terrible day, you'd have to get up a 5:00 a.m. or 4:00 a.m. and go until midnight, work your ass off in cleaning pots and pans and so forth. And a new crew would come on, I was the permanent one, a new crew of enlisted men would come on, privates, trainees, I'd had to take, I was suppose to get 2 bucks from each one of them and then his 2 bucks get into a Class A uniform and drive to Jacksonville and bet on the dog races, and then he'd, we'd paid off whoever, they, the first thing they did at K.P. at 5 a.m. in the morning, pitch dark outside, looking over the

Jacksonville Harold as to which dog they wanted to race in that nights race, that afternoons race. I'd take the bus I didn't have my white coat, I'd bring the money back and they' give the guy the money that won the dog races, but he took a skim of 10%. It was a terrible, it seemed like it was a long time, but that's another thing that doesn't really, that's just an individual story. We were back over in the marshaling area, me with me shaved head and we got on this troop carrier, called the Thomas Jefferson, on I believe it was the 4th of June and we got out by the Isle of White, they told us that was a big thing, Isle White was probably as big as Dane County, well no it wasn't that big, all of Europe was the size of Dane County, anyway, we sat there and they said it was too rough, we went up the coast a ways and then we came back. I said, "Is that the Isle of White? That's the Isle of White." We were really packed in the thing, and they told us what they we would do and by that time we had trained on at least one amphibious landing, but it was on a river or a lake or something, or in the Harbor, anyway, it wasn't in a lot of waves or anything, but we knew how to stand in those boats, and they had several on dry land and we trained on how to get in those and then we and some of those, getting in and out of the thing, we had to have an amphibious training before we took off, a little bit, most of it was procedures because we never had any heavy surf, but we had 1 or 2 whole days of amphibious training, just 2 days...

Mark: At Slapton Sands?

Milo: At Slapton Sands. I think that was called the U.S. Army Amphibious Training Center.

Mark: Yeah. Now there was a horrible incident that happened there, or something, you weren't aware of that at all?

Milo: No, I was just aware of that hearing it on T.V. just recently. But they did, I can remember when all the sudden they tightened up the security about letting guys go on passes and stuff, I didn't hear about that. We heard about Dieppe, but we didn't hear that they had a lot of casualties. I read it in the English paper, by they way I was put in the 116th Infantry which is a, and the 29th Division was from Baltimore, so the American newspapers they distributed to us once in a while, was the Baltimore Sun. I didn't, even just the replacements that came in from the casualties in training had removed a good half or 60% of the people were not from Baltimore anymore, or Maryland.

Mark: What happened to these?

Milo: Beats the hell out of me. Now looking back on it I suppose some of them got thinking I'd better get my ass out of here, and tell them about my flat feet or something, or I'm going to be shooting, people are going to be shooting at me, I don't know what they had. They went to the hospital with heat exhaustion and stuff, I don't know, it wasn't very warm. For some reason they had casualties, they didn't have lots of them but they'd lose on a force march, Charlie Gerhardt made us march, we all blamed him. You know, we would

think nothing of going on a 40 mile forced field march, with a field pack on a forced march, 120 steps a minute carrying rifles and the whole thing, in the rain and a lot of guys would get infected and blisters, I don't know what they were, what they, they had enough so they brought a whole 100-150 of us as replacements and they had just been doing training, and they had, they took some of the men from the 29th and gave them Ranger training, was like the rangers on cliff training. They were an elite bunch from our division, the 29th Rangers were considered, nobody ever heard of them, I don't think anyone has heard of them since then, but they were the ones that scaled the cliffs and stuff, with the, I think the 5th Ranger battalion needed some beefing up, because there was only bastard battalion and it didn't have a headquarters. Anyway, we had the 29th Rangers and we didn't have much contact with the British people because they had been evacuated from there. Just, on weekend pass we would say hello to people, they were very friendly and very nice, they would give us directions and stuff like that, just like Americans, talked, some of them talked differently.

Mark: Was this your first trip overseas, by the way?

Milo: Mine? Oh yeah, I had never been out of Wisconsin I don't think. Well, when I was a little kid my folks took me up to Canada one time, I was five years old. But I had never been out of Wisconsin.

Mark: So, its June the 4th, and--

Milo: On a trip across the channel, it was as dull as a bell.

Mark: Did you know the invasion was going to be now, I mean were you aware--

Milo: Oh, one time, I wasn't on this exercise and it might have been the one you were talking about. But old-timers are always trying to talk to the new guys, they sent them out there and they said, "This is it we are making the invasion," and they came back to camp and it was just a rehearsal, but they didn't tell anybody, I mean they gave everybody there full load of ammunition and the guys were doing all the stuff you had to do. So, we were betting on whether we would go back to, back to our marshaling area, we knew we were going sooner or later, but we figured they'd take three times at bat, because the Army has to overkill everything so we thought we would have three fairs at it, but we weren't to sure whether when they were coming. Then we had the storm so they said we were not going because of the storm, we said, "Ah, we know, it's just another reason to go back," they kept saying we were going to do it tomorrow, they said, "Don't forget," and they issued maps and they told me, because I had high school French, they gave me a map, they gave all the officers maps, and the platoon sergeant but they didn't give anybody else, but they gave me one because I was a scout and I could read French and they had an extra one—extra map. I stuck that inside my shirt, then we got up on June 6th, and Jesus, there, and not the way we had been looking, there was nothing but ocean on that side, and

we could see France, we could see the land mass, we couldn't see much of it but you'd see, it was dawn. I don't know if it was dawn when we first came up, we went up and ate breakfast and then went back down and came back up and then it was getting light out, and the motors went off on the ship. Everything got quiet and you had been listening to this god damn motor for three days you could hear [sound of motor] and all the sudden there is quiet and that added to the apprehension, at least to mine.

Mark: Was there much conversation between the guys on the ship?

Milo: Not much, I mean not as much as, there were still some wise-guys, you know, they were telling jokes and stuff, but it was, it had sombered down somewhat. We had a lot of hand shaking, we didn't think any of us would get wounded, in those days after awhile our most fervent wish was for a million dollar wound. Then we were just hoping we would make the invasion and then they would send us home again because we did such a good job. So, we ate, for some reason I can remember it was an awful breakfast, they gave us breakfast of baked beans and frankfurters which is the same thing they gave us for supper the night before. It's pretty hazy in there, I remember going over the side of the rail and I remember it was so quiet that my leather sling on my rifle was creaking and my leggings and all this junk was hitting the rail as we went down the Jacob's Ladder, keeping your hands on the up and down ropes so nobody would step on your hands, that was part of our training in the empty lot at Tavestock, or at Slapton Sands, and then we got on these boats which were hanging half-way down between the deck and the water, maybe 20 feet down maybe 40 feet high, then they let us down, I don't think they knew how to do it very well, because we went down in a big splat and a big bump and knock some guys down when they hit the water. Then the waves started coming over and we went around and around and around--and we started taking on water and they wanted us to bail, and they had pumps and water was sloshing around on the bottom and we were taking, they wanted us to bail, and that meant you had to take the helmets off and then you had to take the camouflage net off and take the helmet inner out--

Mark: That's no easy task.

Milo: You couldn't bail with a helmet. Not to many guys did, some guys did it that were on the rail, on the side. I was up in front and they made us stay right up in front. Jesus, that was kind of cramped, 30 men in a boat. I don't think they were suppose to put that many men, but we were suppose to just go right into shore. I don't know whether or not, what is an LCVP, they organized us into 30 men boat teams. I don't know what a LCVP is, we had Coast Guard crew by the way, not Navy. They told us the Coast Guard were great because they had been making landings in the Pacific and that it was, they were veterans at this, "Don't worry these guys are cool cats" and stuff.

Mark: What did you end up thinking of that?

Milo: So, I talked to one of the NCO's that was kind of giving orders on the landing craft, I said, "Where have you been before?" he said, "I've been at a lighthouse in Manitowoc, Wisconsin" I said, "So much for the seasoned veteran." It was broken promise after another, that's why I quite playing golf, all there is, is eighteen disappointments when you play golf, just like the Army, one disappointment after another. We thought we were going to go home after the invasion, they even told us that, we were going to go back to the United States and march down 5th Avenue, and all this other stuff, it was just a bunch shit. And anyway—

Mark: So, on these landing crafts, I mean, there are stories of course about all of the sea sickness, and that sort of thing, was that true?

Milo: There were guys that were sea sick, yeah. I think most guys were sea sick, I don't get sea sick for some reason. Since then I have done some parachute jumping in the Reserves, you know I was in the old 84th Division, which used to be airborne, and those guys would get sick on those C-47's up at Ft. Benning and I never got sick. And my, I've been on cruises where other people have gotten sea sick, I never did. On the way home from the Army one time, we came home, it took us 5 days to go over and 36 to come back because we lost a rudder on the way home. We came home on a Liberty ship and it was in a typhoon or hurricane and another guy from San Antonio, Texas, his name was Davy Crocket, and he claimed he was a very articulate guy, he said he was a direct descendent of *the* Davy Crocket and he was from the right town, anyway, he and I were the only two guys that weren't sick and we were on the fan tail of that trip and huge waves would come and then it would go down under water and we'd hang onto the rail and the water would be over our head and then we would go way up again, we thought that was the most fun, everybody else was below, and I never got sick. The sailors on the ship, the merchant men, were sick, everybody but me and Crocket, he was--

Mark: Very fortunate--

Milo: Anyway, I didn't get sick, and besides that I was worried about being the first guy, they literally told me, when they gave me that map, they said, "Your going to lead 5 million men across Europe and conquer, retake Europe." I kind of laughed, we were all laughing about that, and we were all kind of joking. I said, "What are you giving me a map for, I'm just a private?" They said, "Because you're going to lead the entire American Army across Europe and win the war," and you know something, they were right.

Mark: Not too far off.

Milo: They weren't too far off, I ended up on the Elbe River meeting the Russians.

Mark: Oh, did you get that far?

Milo: Your God Damn right. That's why I could tell you about the Russians.

Mark: Well, that's going to be interesting.

Milo: By then I was a Platoon Sergeant and we had a guy that went off with the Russians and we couldn't find him. I remember I had to testify in the Court Martial, and he deserted to the Russians, his name was Blue English, but that's another story. So we were getting into this landing craft and we, I don't know how they, we were going along in a V and I don't know whether they couldn't keep up with our Higgins boat or what, but our Higgins boat was leading a V, although there were all kinds, you couldn't see too high but you could see, when you would get up on a high way, Christ, you could see them all the way down, going out in circle, or coming in or something. there were lots of boats, it was getting lighter out. We were told H-hour was 6:00, I've heard on T.V. since, that it was 6:30, but it was 6:00 I remember that for some reason. We were suppose to land at 6:01, shit--

Mark: Exactly?

Milo: Yeah, I guess so. I don't know what time it was. We hit something, we were getting kind of close, we started, there were some yellow flares, we had, I don't understand how, I read later, that the engineers put flares in the water, it was daylight and they were yellow flares, it wasn't real light out, it was kind of cloudy, so you could see the flares and that was suppose to be the IP or the LD, which in Army parlance, I've been in the Army for 36 years, after I got commission I stayed in the Reserves and I graduate the Command and General Staff College--the initial point on the land and the departure sometimes, are exactly the same point. That's what it was there, and they told us that and they told us what our tactics were and what we were suppose to do and some of that stuff I can't remember whether its because I had taken so much training and given so much training since then that I knew, but my recollection was that we were suppose to come in and cross the line of departure at such and such an hour, I had no control over that, and when we crossed the LD we'd start getting over head fire. Up to this point was quiet, very quiet, none of--the only thing you hear is the motors for these, [put, put, put] from these Higgins boats, and they were kind of outboard motors, and I wonder if they were--I think they were inboard/outboard, I don't know I didn't pay much attention.

Mark: There was enough going on then.

Milo: Yeah, I was thinking about, then bullets started hitting that ramp, right at the bottom of the ramp, what we were suppose to do, was the ramp was suppose to go down and then the lieutenant was suppose to say, "Scouts out," which they do everything, whether its the platoon in the attack, the division in the attack, the first thing after they give the word go, is, "Scouts out," then the scouts are suppose to go out a designated length, on flat ground your suppose to go out 500 yard, the second scout is suppose to go out half-way, and I

remember these words from the manual, "Proceed boldly and aggressively," well you look back on it and your suppose to go until you get somebody shoot at you, you're suppose to make a target out of yourself. Then you were suppose to turn around, hold your rifle over your head, which meant enemy in sight. Then you were suppose to get down on the ground and start firing and the second scout was suppose to come up and they were suppose to build up on you until you had a skirmish line until the entire platoon, or squad, whatever it was, was on line and then we would get up and fire and maneuver and continue the attack, only together, that's was an attack march. Well, they used the same tactics as I recall, for a lack of something better, somebody had to be first, that's what I kept thinking, "Somebody had to be first, why does it have to be me? Why can't it be--" I had friends who were flying airplane, and I had friends that were driving trucks, I see these Black guys driving trucks and working in garages, say Why can't I do that. But it was me, they told me it was because I had superior education and knew how to talk French, that might have been a grain of truth, but not much.

But, I felt like Nancy Kerrigan, "Why, me?" [Laughs] Really, I didn't know, why me, I kept saying thaty--of all the people in the world you know, I'm the first guy that I was convinced and as I saw that V, I thought, "Those guys weren't shitten' I am going to be the first guy." Why me? But I had, I wasn't resentful of my fellows, you know Black guys working in the garage, or my friends flying airplanes or working in a Quartermaster sales or something like that, but they had all been exposed to the same crap-shoot that I was and that's what, I was resigned to my fate, that's why I said I wasn't mad at those guys in the rear, I was just resentful, not even resentful, I said I was just a fate designated me, as long as they exposed themselves to the same crap-shoot that I did, because fate made then a fighter pilot. That's what I didn't like about the president because he refused to expose himself, if he had just exposed himself to the Military, and gone on to be a supply officer in an Officers Club, well it wouldn't of been so bad, that's why I didn't vote for him. Could you imagine that poor bastard over there now, someone has to represent his country, its his job he knows how to do his duty, I imagine he must feel kind of embarrassed now, maybe not. He's and Arkansas guy and we had a lot of Arkansas guy on the landing craft. By then we were starting to get spread out, and for some reason we had a lot of Arkansas guys in that training replacement battalion, because I remember after we got going there was a Company Commander's radio man was named "Arkie" and because I was always the first scout, Arkie and I were always around Captain Steward and he told us what to do, "You go there," I was always the first guy, but anyway, Ark got killed, I can't remember what his name, Barnes, as I said this is just like a cathartic to me I'm remembering things I'd never thought about before. Anyway, he was a brave guy, he was a runner in addition to a radio man and he would go from foxhole to foxhole bringing messages from the old man, but that was in the land. Oh, when we passed the LD that where all the sudden KABOOM, you could see these shells going over and I mean they were twenty eight inch guns, that's two feet, and you could see the God Damn things, some times when the--would go, you'd see the dark, like when you can see the rain coming out of a cloud, you can't really see it but you can see the dark stuff, and that's the

way it looked, everything, as soon as our LSD, LCVP or whatever, I probably new once, vehicle personal there wasn't much room for a jeep to go, anyway, they started shooting and they really, we had tracers, rockets, you name it, they were blasting away, I didn't see to many of the places where the shells were landing, but I figure they were--

Mark: They had to go somewhere.

Milo: Yeah, they were doing their best, we were told that we were being supported our overhead fire was being fired by a World War I destroyer called a Shaw. S-H-A-W, George Bernard Shaw, and we had a sailor who was an FO, Forward Observer, and he had dungarees on, he was the only guy that didn't have OD's on and then we hit something and I said, we kept our heads down, I would guess I have no idea how far we were from shore, because we had our heads down and all the sudden they started shooting back, you could hear the bullets hitting and then [imitates noise of bullet] then they would ricochet, like I saw in the cowboy movies. That made you think twice, that's the ramp I'm going to go down in a few minutes. But it wasn't a steady tattoo just an occasional one, then all the sudden we hit something,

Mark: The ship did?

Milo: You could feel it, it was right under my feet, the front of the boat hit something, and they got on the PA system and they were giving orders on the PA system, this guy who had been a lighthouse tender in Manitowoc before he was the Chief Petty Officer, they didn't have any officers by the way, they were just enlisted men running the boat, the landing craft at least I didn't see any officers. They knew what they were doing, and they let the ramp down and they said, "Infantry prepare to depart," well they were playing records, elevator music on the God Damn thing after, as we were going along, "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree," and all those songs, they only had two records, "In the Mood" and "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree."

Mark: That's kind of a strange mental picture.

Milo: They were trying to make us cheerful I guess.

Mark: Didn't work?

Milo: Well, I kept thinking, "What the hell do they keep playing that God Damn record for," but it was for the entertainment of the sailors, they had been on this thing and this was just another job for them, I guess. They had been training for weeks at a time. We never had any of that training. We hit something, we heard a noise, "Infantry prepare to depart," and I thought to myself, "What a formal thing, instead of just saying get ready we're going to lower the ramp, Infantry prepare to depart, the ramp is down," I looked at the ramp and it wasn't down it was still sitting there. Then the ramp all the sudden went down,

fast. Then I heard, "Scouts out," which is what I had been waiting for and I went right out into, ten feet over my head, I estimate it was ten feet, I finally hit bottom, [End Tape 1 Side B] but it was slow going down because air got in my helmet and held me up, so I had taken, in the Boy Scouts, I had taken life saving merit badge and swimming merit badge and I was in the high school swimming team so I could swim like a God damn fish, and the first thing I remembered from life saving, is when you are underwater and you are trying to save your life you hold your hands up and try to get rid of your clothes, so my helmet went off, my pack went off, my gas mask went off, my grenade went off, everything and I couldn't, I got up on the surface, got some air, couldn't get my shoes off because my leggings were over my laces, but there I was with my shaven head, I kept think, "The son of a bitches on the hill can see that, that God damn Captain Steward made them shave my head and they will see it just like a bulls eye." I'm floating in the water, my rifle floated, being wooden stock, everything on it was wooded, except the barrel and the receiver, so it wasn't very heavy, I kept my rifle belt on because I felt if I had a rifle, but I got rid of the bandoliers and the heavy grenades and stuff, after a while I picked this stuff up and I can't remember where I got it, I was so God Damned scared, I can't remember where I got a helmet, I must of taken a helmet off of a guy, one of the first guy I thought had a head wound and I didn't want to get one off of him, he wasn't hit under the helmet. I started to swim.

Mark: Towards shore?

Milo: This is, yeah, it was so wavy you, the guys were drowning, I'm sure they were drowning, those guys, a lot of guys couldn't swim. You took swimming training in the pool showing you how to jump off, and that amphibious stuff, they couldn't swim. Have you ever been on a surf in the ocean?

Mark: Only in Florida.

Milo: Yeah, in Florida.

Mark: Not in Normandy.

Milo: Well, you get out in the ocean 5 or 10 feet and the undertow starts getting you and the waves, if it is any kind of a surf, you really have to fight to stay in control, well with all of that stuff going, they didn't have this training that I had about how to get rid of my clothes and stuff, in order to get a life saving merit badge you had to know all that stuff, canoeing merit badge, anyway, I got up and I'm say well what can I do all I can do is what they told me to do, is to go out and let them build as skirmishes, and my first objective was the shingle and the shingle was a bunch of stones, gravel, it was suppose to be the high water mark, and the beach was real steep, I had never been on a beach like that, it was like going up hill, if you stayed down I don't think those "krauts" could see you. But once the guys that were being hit with small arms, people who were moving, I finally got in the

shore, the shore was hard pack sand, and I kept looking back and I couldn't see anybody, I saw what I thought was my, anyway I thought, "Well, I'll just advance until they build the skirmishers," then I spotted a hedgerow which is beams welded together, they might of been railroad rail, I don't know they were some kind of metal, and I hid under there for awhile, then the other unit, a bunch of strangers came up along the sand where I was, and a couple of them got hit I might of gotten some equipment from them, I don't know. They were from the 1st Division, we later found out we landed in the 1st Division, we were suppose to land on Easy Green and we landed on Easy Red.

So, then I saw a guy I knew named Hersch, he had been back in England with us and was kind of a buddy of mine, he knew how to swim and he was a big strong tough guy, and he had a BAR, I betcha that son of a bitch swam with that BAR, they were the stock was plastic, it wasn't wood, so the BAR wouldn't be very easy, it had bipod and he had two belts of ammunition, BAR ammunition and those 20 rounds per clip, magazine. I can see how the Jews won Golan Heights if they were all as tough as this Jew. Oh, he was big, he was strong and he was tough. He came up and he said something like, "Fancy meeting you here," or something, and then we got up to the, we knew that we were exposed every time we would get on the hard sand, it was easy to run on, and so we would run for awhile and then we'd drop, and then we run for awhile and then we'd drop, and we got up to this shingle, and I think there was about another 50 yards of mud, that, it wasn't soupy mud, it was hard flat mud, but you could tell it was kind of damp. There was a little wall, we were told we would see a sea wall, and so we said, "Well, let's get up to the wall," and we got up there and other guys were doing things, and this god awful artillery was coming in and there were shells coming in, and I don't know why we didn't get hit, because some of them were close. Pretty soon this sailor, he could swim, he lost his radio, but he was a funny little guy, and with his dungarees on, and we got to this thing and then a couple more guys, we were just laying there, we didn't know what to do, nobody told us what to do and there wasn't anybody there and, because I had been the tall guy in basic training I was the squad leader and I kind of automatically said, "Well, let's see, we got nineteen guys here," there was a couple of Rangers, there was a couple of , most of them were from the first Division, and Hersch from my Company, and a couple of guys who's faces I recognized, the were from F Company I suppose, and I said, "Well, everybody get," and they were all along, and there wasn't a problem with lining them up because they were all on this wall, see, lying on the ground, the wall was only two, three feet high, "How may clips have you got, how much ammunition have you got, I haven't got any, I have my bandoliers," then we took and we figured it out and I wrote it down on a piece of paper, I think I did, anyway, we kept track of how much ammunition there was and we redistributed it so that everybody had about the same amount, and I said, "Well, we are going to have to go up," they told us that we were going to get counterattacked so we got as much room as we could. That's what inspired me, I wasn't anxious to get shot at, but I figured if we were going to get counterattacked we have a little bit of breathing room, it will act as a sponge, or a spring, so then a Lieutenant came up from the 2nd Division and he was worthless, he was saying, "Oh my God, Oh my God, this is terrible," I suppose he

was demoting the fact that things weren't going as planned and Hersch told him to shut up, then Hersch went off and found a bandolier or a torpedo for us, he had one, I can't remember, he was a bandolier man because the lieutenant had to show him how the igniter it, I never knew how to. But the idea was that a big pipe full of dynamite and you put it inside and there was a concertina wire which is rolled up wire laying in rolls about six feet high and then they had double apron fence, like a farmers fence, with a sign that said, "*Achtung, minen,*" and then you had to get through that in order to get over to a road, there was a little ditch and then there was a road, and we were, after we got the ammunition redistributed and the lieutenant quieted down, tried to get everybody a gun and it, there were people too far away to pick up a gun, I wasn't all that anxious to get them. But I wanted to make them feel more secure I guess.

Anyway, Hersch went across the road with that bandolier, and laid it in there and was about to ignite, pulled the igniter and got hit right in the head, he was dead, a little yell out of him, and then he was laying there on the pipe, I didn't know whether he had pulled it or not, but it didn't go off. Then the lieutenant, who was the 2nd Lieutenant, who was doing all the moaning, he ran across the road pulled Hersch off the end of the pipe and I think he even asked, he determined he was dead, and pulled that igniter and ran back in the ditch, behind the wall, that's the last I ever saw of him, but he did one brave thing, he had enough guts, he had more guts than I did to go across that road, because the bullets were hitting that road, it was a cobblestone road and they, you could see sparks and stuff. Mortars, the German a little more, I don't know what the hell, they had a version like our 60, they'd hit our concrete and it wouldn't touch it, wouldn't bounce and wouldn't make a hole. So then we went across the road, with Hersch laying there the guys were a little reluctant so I thought, "What the hell, I'll go first," I went across the road into that ditch, that trench, the Germans had dug a trench and the Germans had just been there, because there was a newspaper, German Newspaper sitting there, in the trench and a part of a, it looked like a sandwich, it was a zig-zag trench, it had barbed wire and all the stuff like you see in the movies, and all of them said, "*Achtung, Minen,*" with a skull and crossbones, I didn't know what *Achtung, Mienen* meant, but I found out later it meant, "Look out, mines," the barbed wire came with signs on it, so that even if you didn't have them you thought there were, you'd tip toe everyplace you went, after awhile you just ignored them. Everybody got in that trench, and the sailor, we kept telling the sailor, I suspect they had some kind of a no-gyroscope or something on this WWI destroyer, because I think they very firing, he called them 25-pounders, whatever a 25-pounder is, that's how big the shell was, sometimes would hit the beach and sometimes would go off to Paris or someplace, I think when the waves went up the gun went, well anyway he had wig-wag, he had a semaphore and he was trying to semaphore, that wasn't doing any good, because they said, whether they were getting his message or, the semaphore came back, they kept sending him a message, they kept sending him a message--and I said, "What the hell are they saying." He said, "Give yourself up to the nearest Americans, in English," anyway, so a WP round came in, White Phosphorous, and caught the marsh, there was Amish grass and cattails, caught that grass on fire, real heavy smoke, and we

put our gas masks on for the first and only time I had ever worn a gas mask, I didn't have an apple or candy bar in my gas mask container, and we still had those old long ones, with a tan case, later on we got ones with a green case, in a small compartment, but this was one that had a big L-shaped thing.

Mark: What did you mean about the apples and candy bars--

Milo: After a while when we realized we were not going to be gassed guys would either throw away their gas masks or they'd put what was left over from their K-rations, it was a handy place to carry stuff, they'd always make sure you had your gas mask, well if you wanted an apple or something you could go in your gas mask and put it, and of course those were always full of crumbs and stuff. But, anyway, my gas mask worked and we started up the God Damn hill, and the hill, we knew there was a road in a dip, a gully and that was where the vehicles were going to go up and we were going to, we were told we would have to get more ammunition at the top of the hill and the trucks would go up. The hill was very steep so steep that we had to sling our rifles and use our hands to get us up the hill. Have you ever been to Camp McCoy? There are hills there that are that steep and sometimes you have to go from little tree to little tree to get yourself up, most the time you could hold your rifle in your hand. We made it up to the top of the hill and this was hours and hours, this isn't just a half an hour this is maybe in the afternoon by then. We were getting more guys and we had Captain show up from the 1st Division and he was a Company Commander and he had lots of guys from his Company, apparently we were on his territory and he was from Green Bay and he was an old guy, he was 30 years old, he kept calling everybody son, but he was kind of a vernacular grandfather of the guys even though he was 30 years old. He agreed that we ought to take as much territory as possible, so he'd say, "Flaten, you take your men," I was a private, "And you go out in that field and we'll go next," and we went four or five fields, we were getting shot at, somewhat and we would see all kinds of tracers going hither and that, artillery was coming in, but we weren't getting any direct fire like we were getting later on when we got over near St. Lo. Then as we got to the brow of the hill there was a big funny looking bush and we decided no to, we weren't sure if that was some kind of camouflage, we said, "To hell with it, let's not bother it let's just get in-line as far as we can get in-line," both if us decided that's what we should do, or he decided and I agreed, he was eleven years older than I was, I don't know maybe more than that, so then we got, there was a whole bunch of shooting and noise back a quarter mile from the vicinity of this big bush/tree thing that we thought, so he took some guys that he knew by name and me, and we went down, we snuck down the sunken road and over hedge row back to where that big bush was and that field was one big field that covered the whole top of the hill, it didn't have hedge rows breaking it up and sure enough it was a great big concrete gun emplacement it was about ten times the size of this room but it didn't have a cover on it, it had a big gun in there, great big ass gun and it was bolted to the floor with nuts, lug nuts they were as big as your fist, and then there was a little door where the crew apparently lived in the concrete wall, and the gun emplacement was as deep as this room, ten feet deep. It had a

stairway going down it. But that is what that thing was, it was a camouflage net and then they dumped bushes on top of it, but it was quite conspicuous, it had different color green.

Anyway, we went over there, we couldn't figure out what all the hollering and yelling was and there was some GIs on the other side coming up the hill and there was a bunch of shooting we couldn't tell what, we didn't see what they were shooting at. All the sudden some "Krauts" came out of that doorway with white pieces of cloth in their hands, handkerchiefs or whatever they were, six or eight of them and surrendered and then we didn't know what to do with the gun and we didn't know what to do with the "krauts" and one of the guys that came back with us was this sailor that kind of stuck with me, and he kept asking questions, you know, and I didn't know the answers but he kept asking like I was his mom. So, we tied these Germans hand together and sent them down the hill with the sailor, we got rid of the "krauts," we didn't know what to do with the prisoners they said send them back to the POW point back at regimental headquarters, regimental headquarters was still out in the boat, I would assume, it was just E and F Company on the hill plus whatever these outfits were, I think it was the 2nd Battalion of the 16th too.

Then the rangers, I don't know where the hell they came from, and we weren't talking mostly about TO and E's then we were just trying to move along as best as we could. I had, either had one with me or someone had one, we had a thermite grenade which is where heat, we had taken training at Camp Blanding, they had such an intense heat that they would burn through concrete, they were suppose to be where you could set a bee hive, what you were suppose to do was to wear a whole in the concrete and then put a bee hive, which is a shape charge, it looked like a bee hive, it had legs, and because of the shape of the bottom it made an implosion instead of an explosion and would drive a hole in concrete, some how or other, but it had to had a start, and we used the thermite grenades for the start, we wanted to get that gun out of action, Christ that gun was overlooking the harbor, that might have been the one that was shooting at the boat, I presume it was. I remember I had to stand on a box and the mussel wasn't elevated, but I remember I had to stand on a box and I had to take the thermite grenade I was afraid I'd drop it, Christ you couldn't stand within 10 yards of it or it would burn you up, I had to pull the pin just like a regular smoke grenade and stood on top of the box because this captain told me to put the grenade, that's where I got it, he had the grenade, he said, we put the gun out of commission and so we weren't sure, we just barely reached it, we had 8 second, all grenades had 8 second fuses, it was laying there and it wouldn't go down, it must have gotten caught on the rifling or something and I had let the handle go so I reached up and jumped and showed it down I could hear it going down the barrel, so then in 8 seconds you could see the smoke coming out of there and it apparently got enough oxygen because it burned and heated up the receiver of that gun, whatever they call it, the receiver on a cannon, red-hot, we figured it must have gotten hot enough so that must of ruined the inside of that gun and we got the sailor down the hill with the "krauts" so we went back up and resumed the attack or whatever they call it. And we were suppose to go

to, my unit was suppose to take Vierville, there was a little town called Vierville, and then there was another town near there that our battalion was suppose to take San Laurent, it wasn't Saint it was S-A-N, Saint Laurent, these little town were nothing more than a conglomeration of about three or four farm house and a church, all the farmers, by the way, were groups of farms together, they shared, sometimes they'd share barns and stuff, there were no isolated farmhouses, in Wisconsin or anyplace in America you see farm houses off by the selves and a barn, these were all little chateau and if it had a church and a wine store, then they called it a town otherwise, these little groups, they'd have two, three houses and then their fields would radiate from their houses and they had the cattle live on the first floor and they live don't he second. They all wore wooden shoes by the way, just like Hans Brinker, these French men were all wearing wooden shoes I mean the ones I saw, we didn't see any French men for a long time, if we did it would be some old guy that was too stubborn to leave. There wasn't anybody around in the battlefields.

Mark: I'm sure.

Milo: Not one swinging dick, you'd never see, if you saw someone it was very surprising and of course that's the reason the infantry never got any credit for anything because no reporter would never be up there where it was dangerous and you can't blame them. Especially in those hedge rows, you never knew where you were, you were inside of this hedge row and all you could see was the inside of the hedge row, but I did have that map, which that Captain Johnson didn't have, oh Jesus Christ it's 1:00 and you haven't gotten lunch yet.

Mark: I'm fine. How are you?

Milo: I'm fine I have to go to the can, I have to take a leak.

Mark: You want to take a break?

Milo: Sure let's take a break.

Mark: Because what's her name is suppose to stop by.

Milo: There isn't that much to tell, we went three or four fields in, we never got the counterattack, Johnson, Captain Johnson, my vernacular Company Commander, I felt like he was my commander, he got us food, he got us our first hot food and I think I can't remember what day it was, D+2, D+3 a runner came up to the first hedge row where we were and said, "You're suppose to go back to that sunken road and a guy will take you back to your unit," and we got down to that sunken road, maybe 250 feet back from the front hedge row and there was a lieutenant from our battalion and, "Good to see ya, come on you guys," whatever guys were left, there was nobody from my company, nobody in that group and there was some guys I recognized, just their faces, from F Company, and

he had about forty, fifty guys already there. "Come on let's go," and we all double-timed down the road and we started recognizing battalion officers the battalion commander, he was busy on the radio phone and things were going, but we knew that we were back to our unit. And then they said, "Okay now, if your from E Company, your units up there, you," and they had some replacements by then, I don't know where they found them, sent us up to where they told us. "You go up this sunken road to hedgerows and you'll run into them" and Captain Steward didn't get hit then, he was still there, he was from New Mexico, and got up there and of course he said, "Flaten, where have you been?" and that was the end of that, from then on I consider that, oh, we went in and took, that night we took, Vierville.

Mark: This was the first real town you came across?

Milo: Yeah. It was another conglomery, it had a couple streets in it and it had a big church and of course every church saw, we were sure the Germans were up there using it for an observation post.

Mark: And this is about how far inland?

Milo: A mile? You never knew where you were because all you could see was the inside of the hedge rows, and they had it flooded up there too, part of it was under the water and it was the Seine River, did you know that? The Seine River apparently empties out, the mouth of the Seine River is the Normandy.

Mark: No, I didn't know that.

Milo: It the Vire, I'm sorry, V-I-R-E.

Mark: Yeah, the Seine comes out at Le Havre, Le Havre, I don't know how to pronounce it,

Milo: Oh, the Havre, yeah, I'm sorry it was the Vire River, yeah that's because we were in Vierville and yeah, everything was Vire, that must of been the name of the province or something, that was the river they had flooded. But from then on, after I rejoined with E Company again there was Captain Steward and a cook that I knew, maybe ten guys at the most twenty, but I figure there was twenty guys that survived from the company including me, and we had to add replacements and they were strange faces, they must have come in on D-1 or something like that as replacements, I'm not sure about that. But, I was still the private and sharing a fox hole with another guy and we were still, pretty soon we started to get sleepy, tired, hungry so then they said, "Tonight you can stay in your hole one guy awake and he has to look out over the hedge row and the other guy could sleep."

The guy that slept used the raincoat, we didn't have packs, we just had raincoats because our battalion commander, correctly, thought packs would get in the way. So we kept our

rations inside of our shirt and a raincoat on our belt and we and field jackets, the light color tan, field jackets. When we slept in the fox hole, the guy who was awake his raincoat would be on the bottom, and the guy who's asleep would pull his rain coat on top, that's all we ever had, we never had a tent, that was, we slept in hole, never had any blankets, never had any tents.

Mark: It seems hard for me to imagine that you could sleep in a middle of a combat situation at all.

Milo: Seems hard for me too. Oh, and some times we would sleep together, they'd say, "Every other hole," and we would sleep like Z's two guys in a hole just like I sleep with my wife. We never thought anything of it, it was to keep each other warm it would get cold at night, although as the end of June it would get dark so damn late it didn't get dark until 11:00 at night, we were so far north, you know up by the land of the midnight sun, I never realized that until I was there. But that's it for the beach.

Mark: Okay.

Mark: Last part.

Milo: How did I feel when I hit the beach? I thought we were going to build the skirmisher and take the military maneuvers that we had been trained in, and it didn't turn out to be that way because I believe that most of the people drown on our boat, drowned or had been hit, I didn't see them, I just saw one other guy, in my 30 person boat, you notice I am using politically correct terms, there were no women there and there were no blacks there were just W.A.S.P.'s, White Anglo Saxon Protestants, mostly from the south in my boat, and that was unlike the war in Vietnam where the Blacks did all the fighting, but we had as we hit the beach, it wasn't we it was me, but my experience in the hedgerows of Normandy was, I have so many things to say I don't know to start.

Hedgerows were 6 or 8 foot earthen walls that had grass on them and the were about four feet wide, sometimes they were only four feet tall, sometimes they were eight feet tall. We had bushes growing on them trees growing on them and they all had pricker on them so the cattle couldn't get over the top and they were used as a substitute for barbed wire fences, there was a lot of apples, the territory looked just like Western Dane County, except for the hedgerows.

Mark: That's your action shot for you.

Katy Sai¹: Okay one more sentence then I will be done.

Milo: The territory looked just like the territory in Western Dane County, around Marksville, in fact there was a town called Martinville and there was a town called Martinville in

Normandy just in the outskirts of St. Ló, that I wonder if it wasn't named after that town, because of the position of the church and the road and everything, and I asked an old catholic priest who lived in that town at one time, when I was traveling over there, where the town had gotten its name, and he said, "I don't know I think it was named after some French town," so it could have very well of been that town of Martinville in Western Dane County is named after the little village just outside of St. Ló. As a matter of fact we went from the village of St. Ló into a patrol into St. Ló, once again I was the first guy into St. Ló.

Katy Sai: Okay.

Milo: It was intact the buildings the building hadn't been shelled or been bombed.

Katy Sai: Can we interrupt?

Mark: Sure.

Katy Sai: Can we steal you away now?

Mark: You can take him upstairs.

[End of Interview for June 3, 1994. The interview resumes on June 17, 1994.]

Mark: Part II: Interview with Milo Flaten, the date today is June 17, 1994. As we left off in the hedgerows, so Mr. Flaten why don't you just go on.

Milo: When we had achieved the top of the hill overlooking the beach by the 2nd, they, we had gone back, they had sent us back to our units with the 29th Division, we had landed and gone up the hill with a conglomerate of soldiers from the 29th the 1st and I think it was the 5th Rangers or the 2nd Rangers I'm not sure which, we had a bunch of guys that had gathered at the sea wall and then we attack up the hill through the smoke. After they sent us back to our units, we went into another attack and they had some replacements and, maybe one hundred replacements, there was only, when I got back to my unit, there was only fourteen guys left, for the first two-hundred six, or whatever it was, and then they gave us about one hundred replacements and we organized them into squads and went into and attack Isigny, it was a pretty good size town, I-S-I-G-N-Y, and we went in there and then either a tank or a self propelled eighty-eight some how got in, either was moved in or was in a basement of a house on the other side of the square, which would be the east side of the square, I guess the farthest away from the ocean, shooting.

There was a big square with a monument in it, I can't remember what the monument was and a little fountain, and then while that, whether it was a self-propeller, or a dug-in, or and eighty-eight, it was an eighty-eight, I remember that because I could see the muscle

break, was shooting out of the basement window, then it got quiet, and we had went through all of the house on that side of the square and I won't go into as much detail about every town because its a repeat of every town. Pretty soon this guy came out with a high hat, like Abe Lincoln use to where, he was the big shot, he was the mayor, an old guy about, I don't know, about seventy-seventy five and a bunch of people and they had flowers and champagne, I was still worried about that big gun going off, then a bunch of French men came up, the FFI I guess they were, and which was probably one of the few times I saw FFI, and there was kind of a flurry of activity and below and behold there was Charles DeGaulle, I don't know who he landed with but there was a big tall son of a bitch with one of those flat hats and the bill sticking out, I mean big and tall, like 6'5", or 6'6", really tall guy, and I'm wondering about this 88, I can't remember what happened I know we didn't get killed, I think they just told we had to move out. He was ready to give a speech and the towns people started to gather, but we had to continue on out, that was the 3rd day.

Mark: D-Day plus 3?

Milo: I think, yeah. Then we hit some swamps and stuff across the Vire River, I think it was the Vire River.

Mark: Yeah, I've got an order of battle here and this gives a brief little sketch, yeah here is Isigny, I think you pronounce it.

Milo: We pronounced it Isigny, because I think they had regimental headquarters was finally established there because we kept going back to Isigny, guys would go back for maps, or prisoners, I don't know. Then we went into hedgerows and the artillery started getting terrible--

Mark: Why don't you explain what a hedgerow is and what it's like to fight--

Milo: A hedgerow is a berm or an earthen wall ranging in height from three feet to eight feet, with about three-four feet thick sometime, sometime s as little as a foot thick, but all of them had bushes growing on top of them with thorns, at least as a scout I thought they all had thorns, because my helmet, the net on my helmet would catch on those thorns as I tried to go through, they had a gate, I think those were trees or high bushes with thorns, I believe, I have no reason to know why, but they had a lot of cows and I think it was to keep the cattle in those field, because they would get scratched on those stickers and stuff, at any rate at each corner, they usually had a gate, there would be a hole cut in the hedge row and then there would be a gate to allow the cattle to get in and out and the farmers, after a while I saw that's what they do, they would drive their cattle in there in the morning after milking and at night they'd take them out. But, Germans always had the hedgerow gate covered because that's the way most guys would go through so when we would attack as a scout I would go over the middle of the hedge row because I didn't want

to get shot, although you'd go over many of those and it was hot, the weather was getting hot, during the daytime, after awhile you would go through the gate and hope you wouldn't.

But the artillery started getting thicker and more precise and then we got up into, between the beach and St. Ló, we had terrible casualties and we had terrible fire fight and fire fights I meant we fired our rifles, I've read books by people who said that analyzing warfare that American soldiers didn't fire their rifles, but we fired our rifles, we kept these bandoliers, we had 6-7 bandolier plus our rifle belt, which had 10 clips in with 8 bullets per clip and the one in your receiver. The reason we kept so many bandoliers was because we had these fire fights, what we would do was we would come to a hedgerow, sometimes there weren't Germans behind everyone of them and when there were well we would get out, I would go first across the hedge row and my job was to go to the next hedge row and look out and see if there was any Germans there or in the one beyond, the second scout would go over the top of the hedgerow and wait there until I got to the next hedgerow and then I would signal all clear or holler at him if it was close enough, then I would go on, it was repeated, to go from hedge row to hedge row. The idea was that if we ran into any Germans then they would build up on a line with us and then we would all attack or cross the top but what actually happened was the, and it happened many time, I don't know how many times, seemed like a lot of times, maybe it was only five or ten times, but I'd get out there and get in about 2/3 a way of the field, maybe about 150 yards long and nothing would happen and then the scout would go over and they'd shoot at him, and for some reason they didn't shoot at the first scout, the only thing I could figure out was as a surprise, so after I became a squad leader I still lead my squad because I felt the casualties were less for the first guy across than for anybody, maybe it had been a coincidence, I'd like to talk to some other scouts, actually there probably were no other scouts to speak of, because there were such casualties in those hedge rows I'd like to find that out though, that's always been my theory.

At any rate, I'll give you a single story example, I was out about two thirds of the way on this hedgerow, I can't remember if this was before or after St. Ló, anyway a guy named Nelson from Worthington, Minnesota, there weren't too many mid-westerners so I always remember those guys, and as he came through he same hole that I cut with my bayonet in the bushes and he came through that, and I was 100 yards ahead of him, BANG!, the "krauts" shot at him, they open up with several machine guns and stuff and hit him, he was hollering he was wounded and I'm out there two thirds of the way out to the hedge row and then, that day we has H Company, FOR, we had a Forward Observer from H Company Mortars and they had been catching hell from the battalion Commander because the mortars hadn't been used and as I was talking to a mortar platoon sergeant he told me that, and so BANG!, BANG!, BANG! and bunch of mortars started dropping in on that hedge row where those machine guns were and they were coming on my side of the hedge row too and I didn't know what the hell to do and they, so there was a German foxhole and I jumped in the German foxhole, it was better than no foxhole, [End Tape 2

Side A] and then I laid there on the bottom while they were bumping around with those H Company mortars, I presume they were H Company, then I got set up in the hole and I'm thinking, "What in the hell am I going to do now?" I could hear the Germans on the other side of the hedgerow and I am about one-hundred fifty yards back to the other hedge row and Nelson is still laying there, then all the sudden I could hear the "krauts" fire and the medics, two medics had come out to get Nelson who was wounded, and I knew they were medics because I knew the guys, but I couldn't see, they had white arm bands with red crosses on them, but they were so dirty from laying in the foxholes and stuff, the "krauts" couldn't see it, they ran back and Nelson was still yelling and hollering and next, about, it seemed like a long time later, but I think they went back to battalion, back to Aid station and got their white flag with a red cross on it and they carried that out across and I could hear the "krauts" saying, "Nicht Schiessen," don't shoot. And then they hauled Nelson out, then I got thinking, well, now what am I going to do, I haven't even got Nelson on my side of the fence, and these guys they don't ever build up on you like they are suppose to they just leave you lay out there and you usually wait until dark, but at least they know that your out there and they keep an eye out for you and they don't shoot you when you come back.

So, I'm out there and in this particular occasion I said, "Well," and it was Captain Steward, he was the guy that gave me the maps, he hadn't been hit yet and in fact I don't think he got it until September or October and I think he got it and then came back from the hospital when we were way up into Germany, at any rate, he was from New Mexico, he was always giving me hell about something and he was, and especially when I would go out across the hedgerow and lay there until dark and then go back, he'd say, "Well, what did you see? How many were there?" and he would have various questions about what to expect, I'd say, "I'd don't know I was just laying there pretending I was dead," in the wheat field usually the grass would cover me and I wasn't about to be moving, those Germans would see me, if they could see me at all. Anyway, I said, "I don't think I can make it, I've got a long way to go, I'm not sure I can make it back," but just in case I make it back, so I stood up on the parapet of the foxhole I was in stuck my head through the bushes because I could hear them talking down the hedgerow, maybe fifteen yards away, and my net caught on a branch and I worked my way across and shook my head and crossed the hedgerow and there was a German about an inch away from my face, who was, he was just a surprised as I was, and that guy was a sentinel or something, he didn't have anybody to talk to or I would have heard him, so then I pulled back dropped back into the hole and the "krauts" are hollering at me. And I presume they were asking me to surrender and I wasn't, I was too scared to do anything, because all the sudden the potato masher started coming over the top of the hill, over the hedgerow and they were so stupid, well the potato mashers I later found out were very touchy, they had a little string with a ring on it that would set it off on the wooden handle and sometimes they would exploded in their hands, they were very touchy and I presume that was because the Czech munitions maker was screwing them up making them, I'm not sure about that. Anyway, I went back into the hole and they would throw the things, and they wouldn't throw them

just over the top of the hedgerow, they would throw them out in the field so they landed a long way from me, then when the potato mashers were done, then these jerks over with H Company started firing mortars again and then I said, "Well, I'll never get out." Then all of a sudden either a mortar round or a potato masher landed in my hole because I remember I was blown out of my hole and I was bleeding from every aperture in my body, my ass hole, my ears, my nose, eyes and oh, and I reached down in the hole to get my rifle, I said, "I'm out of the hole," I've been trying to get up enough nerve to get out of the hole all day, and I went to see my rifle and it was all blown to pieces a shell of whatever it was hit my rifle, which was leaning up against the side of the foxhole, I didn't get hit but one little place in the back of my hand, my arm with a piece of, I don't know what it was, but I was concerned about the fact that I was bleeding out of my ears and stuff, nose, so I got up and ran like hell that one-hundred fifty yards and climbed over the top of, ran right through the gate, I wasn't sure if whether I was wounded or not, and opened the gate and nobody shot at me, and quick hit the ground. I was so out of breath and there was Captain Steward, standing right there and he said, "Flaten, where the hell have you been?" and I told him and he says, "Oh, I heard there was a guy out there," and he says, "You don't look so good, you better get down to the aid station," so I went back two hedgerows and there was a jeep with a stretcher on it and I got on the stretcher and went back to battalion and, where the aid station was, Dr. Creese—I don't know whether he spells his name C-R-E-E-S-E, he was a good soldier, he got killed, he didn't get killed until we got up into Germany. Anyway he took a look at me and said that I had a concussion from whatever the explosion was and that's--then a great big blanket seized my body and momentarily strangled it and that caused all the blood vessels and stuff to break but he didn't think I was, I think I had broke--ruptured and eardrum because I couldn't hear so good after that and I can't hear very well to this day, where I have aids in both ears. At any rate, then we went back to collecting company, which is the regimental aid station. There they take you--no they went to the aid station at regiment and then they went in jeeps to collecting company, which was the division place where the division wounded would be collected and then they took me to the 13th Evacuation Hospital which was about, I don't know five, ten miles behind the line. It seemed like a long way. I laid on the stretcher which was on the ground with a little nubbin on there which held you about two inches off the ground with a bunch of wounded. There was a guy named Damon from our company laying in the next stretcher he had been hit the day before, I remember, Damon was from Minnesota, he was another mid-westerner so I remember him, and he died during the night. They didn't think there was very much wrong with me, and there wasn't cause I was walking around there and finally the doctor at the evacuation hospital, I can't remember whether it was the evacuation hospital or the collection company, he said, "We are going to send you back to your unit, and we are going to give you a test," and he made me run down to the end of the field, climb over the hedgerow, climb back and then run back and spit in the coffee can he was holding. And there was no blood in my spit so he said, "Okay you're ready to go back to your unit," and I went back to my unit. I can't remember if Captain Steward asked me where I was but I presume he did. And then we got into the valley where St. Ló was, and we took a little,

or a good size patrol with a tank and they, this guy, the assistant division commander, General Coata, I think his name was, he came up and a bunch of engineers and a bunch of unfit soldiers, guys that hadn't been in combat and he took a squad from my company, my squad the squad I was in, we went into St. Ló that night about dark. The town was in good shape and it was, I mean relatively speaking, because the next time I went in there it was just pulverized, it didn't even have a whole brick, and they had some good size buildings, churches especially and we screwed around in there for a couple of days and then we were told to get out. The tank we had with us had good communications, and they were going to somehow, I'm not sure what they were going to do, I guess they were going to have us pull back and then they were going to blast the Germans out. The Germans were on the other side of town. Anyway we pulled back from there and then the Germans took over the whole town again and they were there for another two weeks, I think, and in the mean time we had pulled back into Martinville, and we stayed in Martinville in the most intense artillery I could ever imagine later on I read that they had thirteen battalions of German artillery lined up hub to hub, just firing for affect on us and we kept digging and going farther and farther, where we were at--. At Martinville was a big thick hedgerow fortunately so we kept burrowing into the hedgerow so we had kind of like a tunnel growing under. Every time a shell would land we'd dig another, well it wouldn't be every time they would come, it was so loud and so intense and so continuous that it was just, the earth shook just constantly, we'd have can of K-ration cheese sitting on the parapet of your hole or your cleaning equipment for cleaning your rifle, or something sitting, you'd empty your pockets on the parapet of your hole, because it was your bedroom after all, and the stuff, the earth would shake so bad all the stuff would fall of the parapet into your hole, and the dirt that you would line up on parapet and your branches and all that stuff would all fall in your hole, and that was continuous. I bet you that went on for three or four days, guys were getting hit all the time we wouldn't we couldn't hear anything, we were just--all you could see were the four walls of the hedgerow maybe, your world was maybe 50 yards or 75 yards square. All of the vegetation had been knocked off all of the bushes on the tops of the hedgerows all the holes, the grain had been flattened, cows maybe 35-40 dead cows and they'd stink and of course the bodies stunk and we, they tried to evacuate our dead guys but there were dead Germans and they kept them, they didn't deliberately keep them there but they had priorities. The grave registration people would come in and they'd come up to get the bodies, grave registration were like engineers or anybody that would come up to give you some support would always met you half way and then drop, like the engineers they'd say they'd mine something, what they would do is bring the mines up to about two hedgerows up and then you had to lay the mines or anything else. But the medic and the graze registration guys around St. Ló, it was the only time I ever saw them, they would come up and get the bodies. But they wouldn't pick up the "krauts" and they stunk, the cows, that smell it was just like a the craters made the field and hedgerows and stuff would be like the surface of the moon. All the vegetation gone. Then we'd move, and then they would move back to the battalion and somebody else would come in and then they'd move right back into our old holes again and then we would try to attack and then they'd drive us

back, they that was forty times worse than the beach. I can remember lots of stuff about the beach, because I saw all kinds of movies and stuff recently and all this other stuff is kind of jumble into a hazy thing. Then one day they pulled us back and they gave us a shower, I hadn't taken a shower for a month or so, and the shower would be a truck a big semi, you would get into the trailer of the semi and they'd tell you, they'd explain what you were going to do, they'd line up and they'd say, "Stand under a shower, the shower didn't have any water on it, they are going to turn on the shower for one minute and you get yourself all wet and then after the minute is up you soap yourself all over, and then after your ready we'll give you a warning and then we will turn it on for three minutes while you wash the soap off of ya." And so we did that, I'm not sure if those are accurate but I think that's what they did. Then we went back, we were probably in battalion reserve or regimental reserve which means, well I know we couldn't of been more than a half a mile from the front hedgerow, and cause an occasional round would come in and I could hear the stuff was still going, they had the front hedgerow zeroed in and they took us back about two or three more fields one night and we had, they said they were going to have a USO show the only USO show that I ever saw that got up that close, was a back of a truck with Dinah Shore and we were all sitting in this field on our helmets and it was raining, and we didn't want to sit in the mud, which is what, that's the infantryman's chair as soon as you would stop for a second you'd put the helmet down and sit on it. We sat in this field and it was starting to rain and she came out on the tailgate of this truck and the rain was getting her hair all screwed up and her makeup was running all over her face and she said "I'll stay here as long as you guys will." She didn't know that, she thought we were going to go back to some tents or something like that. She didn't know that where we were, we were just taking a bath. That's all we were doing. I'll say that for her. She stuck it out, landed over in the next field and once again she said "I'll stick around as long as you guys will." And sang songs. I admired her for that. And there was a guy with a little piano playing. Then, I can't remember. We got our usual contingent of replacements again. One day they told us they're going to bomb St. Lo and they said strategic bombers, B-17's. Then after that they're going to bomb the shit out of St. Ló and we could move in there and take it. So we're in the rear and we're so far back that I remember there was a 240, and I don't imagine those 240's they were big guns. It had its muzzle, moved in during the night and this muzzle was--we were in tents too. That's how far back we were. That was the height of luxury, we were in a tent. The muzzle of the 240 went off either in the next field or its gun was right over my hole, I know, concussion from the 240 going off flattened my tent and then I was deaf again for a long time. Either that day the weather cleared up or it was a sunny day and all of a sudden you could hear this droning of airplanes. You couldn't see any. You'd look up in the sky and it was a clear day, you couldn't see them but you could hear this sound of thousands of engines and I think the earth shook from those too. You could sort of feel the whole place tremble and you'd look up, when you can see rain coming out of a sky, that's what you could see. And you could see the little blimp, blimp, blimp like twinkle stars up in the sky which was the sun shining on the fuselages of these planes but you couldn't see the planes unless you got binoculars. And none of us had binoculars.

But then it looked like actual rain coming out of these planes and this was from horizon to horizon, the air was filled with these airplanes and the stuff that looked like rain that was coming out of these clouds was bombs and the first one landed behind us. I mean we had come from West to East anyway, boom, boom, boom, but it was a long way behind us. It wasn't in our particular hedgerow and we found out later that they had bombed it. Actually, General McNair, head of army ground forces, had been killed at 35th Division Headquarters. Our unit, they'd start us off and they'd tell us what our general attack would be each day. Our lieutenants, we had a lot of lieutenants. The lieutenants were magnificent soldiers, second lieutenants. And they would only last a couple of weeks because they had to get up and check and go back for meetings and stuff. They weren't in the hole very long so they'd get hit more than anybody. But they'd tell us what we're going to do, generally, and they said that we're going to attack, they'd bomb with these strategic bombers and then we'd move in. Well, they got out of the trucks.

They'd always tell us each day, or each attack anyway, probably once every ten days, that we're part of the 19th corps. We were always part of the 19th corps. We landed on the beaches in the 19th corps and the 19th corps consisted of the 29th, 30th and 2nd Armored. This time when we were around St. Lo the 35th was in there somehow and I can remember that was Harry Truman's World War I division. How I remember that, I don't know. Anyway, either the 35th or another 3rd battalion from our unit took St. Ló and I think they did bomb some of it because when I came, when we came through there in trucks, and it was really. I'd never seen a town as pulverized as that. I've seen a lot of them, too. It was really, it was just, there wasn't anything whole. They drove us past General Halzie's, we had a--Major Howe from 3rd battalion, had died and our division commander was some kind of a show boat so he hauled his body in there and put the casket in there with a flag on it. I remember driving past this flag and saying, "What the hell" then they told us that story and I said, "What kind of bullshit is that?" It was like going to the movies. Then, I don't know how far we got outside of St. Ló. Once they were no longer in fixed positions, then we started attacking them. Sometimes we'd go down a road, we'd walk for two or three days and we wouldn't run into any Germans at all. All of a sudden they'd put up some kind of resistance or they'd have a fire fight. These fire fights, why we used the ammunition, it was unique in warfare that I'd ever read about is the Germans would start shooting everything they had in rifles in the next hedgerow and then we would shoot everything we had cause we thought they were trying to get us to hold our heads down a while and they were getting ready to attack, which is sometimes true. And we would do the same thing before we would attack. Everybody fires as fast and as furiously as you can. One guy would go up and fire a clip, eight rounds, boom, boom, boom. Then he'd get down and put another clip in and you'd get up, two men to a hole. And we'd go through literally tons of ammunition. They used to bring ammunition to us in boxes, usually they wouldn't do that, break it down in companies and hand you bandoliers by hand. A bandolier is a cloth thing with six or eight clips in it in little cardboard container. And they brought up, in these boxes with the metal pealed

back. They had a wooden box, you'd take the screws off and then you'd peel it back like a sardine can and there'd be these bandoliers and the supply sergeant would lay a bandolier at each hedgerow line and then you'd pick them up and pass them on down, one bandolier at a time to the guys in the next hedgerow and they would, and then we started getting short of ammunition. And so we, I remember one night each company had a machine gun up there and there was a hell of a fire fight. We were surrounded, they said we were surrounded. Couldn't get us up any water and they couldn't get any rations, there was apples to eat so there wasn't anybody that was starving. It would have tasted too good to eat. And the H Company guys were firing their burke guns and stuff so they brought this machine gun up, this water cooled machine gun up and starting firing up and down the hedgerow with their tracer bullets. On a machine gun belt, it's either every 3rd or 4th round is a tracer. It helps the machine gunner know what he's shooting at, I think it's every 3rd round. And, bonk, a mortar got him and I remember I was sitting there looking at this guy's machine gun. One guy's feeding--you know, it's just like the movies. The guy's feeding the thing and the other guy's firing and then they both got hit and so there the machine gun is still sitting on top of the hedgerow right near the gate where the Germans could see it. Then we're running out of ammunition and there's no more bandoliers to pass out so they told us we were surrounded on this hill. And I was the guy that was the closest to the machine gun so I got up and they were firing mortars quite often. A lot of small arms. Just--on both sides. You never saw a god damn soul. I'm sure the Germans never saw any of us either and every once in a while the bushes, the leaves would go, you know a bullet went through there. And I crawled down, it was a short hedgerow, maybe three feet high, and I was laying down there. I reached up and hooked the receiver and then dragged the gun out, dragged the belt of bullets out and there was two cans but they were firing so you didn't want to get up too far. But I dragged that can out and one bullet hooked on the can and I went through and I had to take place. They kept, every hole was surrounded by clips, empty clips. Pass your clips down, I'll get you some. I had a squad then and I want to make sure they had enough to fire so I'd go down, they'd hand me a bunch of clips a guy named Phillips handed me a bunch of these clips and I'd pull the bullets out of the machine gun, they're .30 caliber bullets. Make sure we didn't put the tracer rounds in because the tracers had paint on them and the rifles were so hot the paint would melt and then they'd gum up your chamber and then the shell casing wouldn't eject, it would stick on that wet paint. And the APs, armored piercing round, that's right, every 4th or 5th round as an armor piercing round. Had black paint on it. We didn't want, we wanted to make sure, so I'd take the bullets out of there and I was laying there on top of the ground, filling these things and I could hear a "boomp" which would be a mortar round and then "boomp." They must have seen that machine gun because the thing kept landing right near and I felt that day I was impervious because they must have had an equivalent of a .60 mortar because it wasn't much of a mortar.

It didn't, it would go boom and right after, and I kept filling these clips and passing them down. I was fixated on that. To empty out all those bullets that were usable from that

machine gun belt and I did. Later on they gave me some kind of a medal for that. And then, we were continually firing which goes against the grain of all infantry journals and stuff that say we didn't fire much. In Korea they used to encourage people to fire more but then we got up and walking down the roads and we'd come to a place of resistance and we'd drop back. I was still the scout going down even though I was a squad leader, I'd go out maybe 500 yards the next second scout 250 yards and the main body walking on either side of the road would be back another 250 yards then when you'd get fired on I'd either hit the ditch or do something. I'd get stuck out there. And then we had an FO [Forward Observer] who would fire, to point out, sometimes you could see a puff of smoke from a rifle and then the artillery guy would come in or I'd run back to where the main body was. We'd spread out on hedgerows on both sides of the road and they'd put a round or two in there of artillery then we'd get going again. That went on for days. Then we heard that the war was just about over, the 3rd Army, we were part of the 3rd Army, we never knew what part of the Army we were in, whether we were in the 3rd Army or the 1st Army except that once in a while we'd get stuff signed--

Mark: This book says 1st Army.

Milo: Well, we got in Nebraska, I think we were in the 3rd Army. I know we were in the 3rd Army. We'd go back and forth, switch back and forth. Sometimes the chow, we'd get more meat I remember, in the 1st Army. Maybe it was my imagination. But they said that General Patton had taken, The Stars and Stripes said they had taken Brest which was a large sea port and we'd be able to supply the troops, that we'd be, you know, home in a couple of weeks but we were going to have to go up and that's when we found out, that's where we learned the armor would go and they wouldn't go into a town, they'd just bypass the town, rumble through it, wouldn't take. The Germans just stay in the town and the tanks would still be there when we got there. When we started going up the coast of France I remember St. Milo, Morley, the towns like that, up the Brittany peninsula, I remember they kept moving us around in the trucks though. Then our corps consisted of the 2nd Division, the 8th Division and the 29th Division and we went up the Brittany peninsula. I remember the town of Rennes, a big town. That was the first big city I ever, must have been 50,000-60,000, and they always told us what corps we were in and we didn't have any armor. We didn't have the 2nd Armored. The 2nd Armored was chasing the Germans across France and they were getting up into Paris and that way. They said we would spend about a week flushing the Germans out of the submarine pens so they could use that as a seaport. It was France's second largest seaport. We got up there in the field, it seems to me, they had bigger fields and the hedgerows weren't as numerous.

But they still had hedgerows but they weren't, the fields were bigger. And then we ran into, we were marching down the road and they said it would be just a short time. We got up into a place called St. Renaan and not only were there Germans but they came back over the hedgerow with bayonets, the whole bit and they had these funny little hats. They were the paratroopers. We found out it was the 2nd SS Paratroopers. When we run into

an SS unit, they were tougher than shit. Run into a paratroop unit, they're tough. When you combine them, these guys were tough and we started getting terrible casualties again. More small arms casualties, more--like cowboys and Indians up there. And there, but there was plenty of mortars and tanks and machine guns and they had a lot of coastal artillery that they were turning down there. We got, they had big forts. I don't know whose, I think they were old French forts or something. And we got into a town, I was going to try and go faster but I tell you, I got captured. We were in a town on the outskirts of Brest called, I think it was called Racouverance, a suburb. I think the boundary line between Brest itself and Recouverance which was a river and they had a peninsula that stuck out into the Brittany Harbor of Brest like a finger and on one side of the, and ships landed on both sides of the finger but they had a tunnel going through and they had railroad cars hauled by donkeys back and forth so you could unload a ship without having to take it all the way up back to the top and they could load and unload ships that way even though they were divided by this peninsula of land. And we had taken, they sent me out on a patrol, my squad. I think by then I might have been a platoon sergeant, I was a tech sergeant. We got to a thing called the Great Wall of Brest and we would see this wall. It looked like the Great Wall of China. But it had trees growing on it, it was about 1/4 of a block wide and it had, you could see tunnels every once in a while. And it had roads going up the side to get up to the top of it. And I guess that had been some old Roman or French fortification. And I was supposed to go up and see if we could take that wall which was a combination of a wall and a hill.

All of a sudden from one of these holes a white flag stuck out and Christ, we had more goddamn Germans that I ever saw in my life all wanting to surrender. So I took the three man patrol and was sent out, actually it was the regimental commander had come down and said he wanted, he had heard that I was a reliable patrol, squad leader and he wanted me to go up. He gave me the orders to do exactly what I was supposed to do. I went out there and I came back with at least two hundred prisoners. If they wanted to throw rocks at us they could have killed us, you know, but they wanted to give up. I think I got a medal for that because the regimental commander was up looking at it. I did lots of things that were a lot more valorous than that but he had to be. I think I got a silver star one time because our company commander got hit. He was out in Holland walking around when he should have been laying down and I dragged his ass back to the aid station because it was him being rescued. I had done it a million times for other guys.

But anyway, so they had, they thought this is it, they were ready to collapse. Literally thousands of these guys. Later on I read that they were cooks and quartermasters and some were navy guys and they all were, they didn't have a white or blue uniform like, in the German forces, the navy and the army and everybody all wore the same uniform. I don't know who these guys were but they weren't so tough and we thought god if those SS, those paratroopers. Those were the ones driving us crazy and we had these terrible casualties. So he said well now I brought in all those prisoners and he was excited about that. He came back down, the regimental commander came back down, "Flaten the

regimental commander wants to see you.” This time we'd asked for volunteers to go on patrol. “Take a patrol and go into town and see how far you can go and we think, we can hear a machine gun but we think they've got one of our heavy machine guns shooting down this street,” a boulevard. It was a main street. There was a guy named Schaefer, a cook, and he wasn't--it was a dumb thing to, he wanted to go. He wanted to get. He was a boozier. He was from Milwaukee and I think he died of alcoholism. But, anyway, he thought he'd find some wine or something so he volunteered to go on the patrol. A guy named Ritter, who was either a squad leader or platoon sergeant. There was two sergeants and this cook went into this town to see how far we could go and there was no shooting or anything. There was this boulevard and there was a great big five hundred-pound bomb crater, I mean a huge crater that was over your head. We'd had a lot of air cover. P47's, we had British Typhoons and then we had big bombers. We had Lancasters and stuff would be in the air. We found out later it was because we were sticking out right over the air fields and they'd ask those guys, after they'd come back, those Air Force guys, if they'd want to help out the guys at Brest because we didn't have any artillery to speak of and we had no armor.

We ran into these SS paratroops. I think that's what they do because they came by and they didn't have very good formations. One time I looked up in the air and I saw a fighter plane, I can't remember what kind it was, and a bomber hit head on, a Lancaster. And I've never seen anything like that in my life. There were all kinds of planes flying around there and I think they were giving them their choice. They could get a load up with bombs and come over and they didn't have it too well coordinated. Anyway, cause we didn't have any tanks, but they finally sent in some tanks. They sent us some British tanks with those big eggbeaters on the front that were supposed to hit the mines. We got on top of this wall and then we, I'm trying to think of the time sequence. No, it was after, before we came to that wall, we had taken a little town right outside, that was I think called St. Renaan but I remember I had to guide on the church steeple and we always figured there was a crowd on the church steeple, got into this town where I said right on the edge of Racouverance, and the, got into this bomb crater. And the idea when you get into a bomb crater or any hole, one guy looks out each way. You do that instinctively. Each guy establishes security. You look this way, you look this way and you protect your others, your buddy's ass that way. And Schaefer was looking down the street the way I was and all of a sudden I heard this voice say, "hands up," and it was a “Kraut” with a machine gun, with a Schmeiser, and we had to put our hands up and drop our rifles and he took us down the street to a big stairway and we climbed down into, about ten flights of stairs, down into this tunnel and then they questioned us and then they fed us. They fed us sour kraut. And the next day, Ritter and I, and they had a bunch of other American prisoners there, not a bunch of them, twenty of them, and got us up with a pick and shovel to fill in bomb craters so they could move vehicles around. The streets were narrow and they had holes in them and the trucks, especially the ones that were pulled by horses, and we were in this field and we were still on the outskirts of town kind of because there was a big park or something. A bunch of trees. And this P47 came down, there's always two of

them. One would, I'm not sure, one would protect the other one's ass. And strafed because they couldn't tell we were Americans that were just filling the bomb craters. [End Tape 2 Side B] And they had a "Kraut" with a gun and two guards. One guard went with, twenty guys went in the ditch on one side with the Kraut. And Ritter and I and the "Kraut" guard went into the other ditch. Ritter takes a shovel and hit the "Kraut" in the head and knocked his head right in two like a pineapple, with the edge of the shovel. Then we had to run. We ran into this big copse of bushes, trees and stuff. It was a park. It was an overgrown park. And we hid there and fortunately the planes kept coming down and coming down and coming down one after another and we hid there until after it was dark and we decided we were going to go back to our unit. I knew the way because I was guiding on that church and so we went back and I remember where the, there were about three fields before the church, three hedgerows. And it was dark and we didn't want the Germans to see us and we didn't know where they were. We didn't know where--was but I knew where it was at one time. We got over this field and they were sending out patrols so we knew that they--but each day they'd give you a password and a countersign. And that changed every twenty four hours. First thing in the morning they'd tell you what the password was and the countersign. And I had been either two or three days up there with those Germans, I think probably two, and got across this field and I said I think we're getting close. All of a sudden you could hear this guy say, "Halt, who goes there?" and pull the machine gun back. You have to load it twice. You have to pull the bolt back twice to get the round out and the second one was to put it in the chamber, I think. Anyway, then he gave the password. Later on I talked to him and he said he was expecting F Company patrol and so Ritter and I didn't know what to say.

Ritter could talk German by the way. He was from Pittsburgh, he got killed in Belgium. He had the password and the password, for example, would be "calvadose" and the countersign would be "cocktail" so you'd have to give both. He hollered out the password and mumbled something like "this is the last time I'm going to tell you" and you could hear the bolt go back a second time and you knew machine gun bullets were coming and I said "I don't know what it is today but I know what it was two days ago." And the voice said, "Ah shit, it's Flaten." It was my unit. I got captured, spent two days in a subway tunnel down there and filling in roads. Ritter killed a guard and we came back and it was our unit still sitting there in the same spot. Later on, that became important that I was captured. Then, well that's about all. We finally took, after very intense house-to-house thing, we finally, some of the Germans of the 2nd SS paratroops went back to Germany, I understand by submarine, and they said we had captured this German General Ramke. I read that in the paper, I guess. Anyway, I wasn't in on that. I sat over in the next hedgerow, it was either F Company or 2nd Platoon. We only had two platoons, we never had three platoons because we were always short of guys. But they captured some German general and then we went back to St. Renaan actually and sat there for a day or two and then there were some girls in town. Anyway, no shooting, no nothing. The war had gone literally hundreds of miles from us. Then one day they told us, we went in to Rennes, got on a train, these 40 and 8 things, forty men in eight boxcars, eight cattle.

And we drove on the train into Paris. We saw the Eiffel Tower and all that stuff.

Mark: Was that exciting?

Milo: Huh?

Mark: Was that exciting?

Milo: Well, it was kind of exciting except we were in the railroad yards out in the outskirts of town and they said it was Paris. It was just a bunch of warehouses and stuff. We never did get off the train. Although, and then we saw as we were sitting in the doorway of this boxcar, we saw the Eiffel Tower off in the distance. They drove us, I can't remember how far, then got on the trucks and then we were up into Germany again. And they put us in a town called Tevern in a defensive position. That was the first German town we had occupied and we stayed in houses not--we never went in any French houses but we went into the German houses and stayed there and slept on beds. We had guys out on the edge of town in foxholes and stuff. There it was just exactly the opposite of hedgerows.

It was just flat, as flat as this table and you, there was nary a hill or anything. You could see a tree or a bunch of trees that would be the next town. I think there was a town called Gielendorf or Gilsendorf or something like that, and we, I know I was platoon sergeant then because I took a platoon of replacement they were at the marginal line then. There was all kinds of pillboxes along there and we went from Tevern maybe a mile across this open field at night. On Friday the 13th, I remember, of October, 1944 and I went out there and everybody got killed except me and the platoon guide. There were no one wounded. We had gotten into a final protective line and the main body, I had sent out a guy named, I can't remember what his name was. He was from Columbus, Ohio and his dad owned a restaurant there and I called him up about a year ago.

Anyway, he was the platoon guide and I wanted him, it was pitch dark and he was experience and I wanted him to go out as the first scout and then I would go out. We had the whole platoon and I would go out, act as a second scout and then, the other squad leaders, yeah, this flat ground. They set up, the Germans set up a flare and I think, DeVictor his name was. DeVictor hit a "Kraut" on outpost and he started hollering. The flare went up and they opened up the FPL and the two machine gun, final protective line is, I presume they use the same, they cross each other shooting at interlocking bands of steel and caught my whole platoon. Mostly replacements. Guys who had, hardly even knew their names. Killed every one of them except Rick DeVictor and I had been inside of that crossfire. And it was pitch dark. They shot a bunch of flares and we were just laying there. They didn't counter attack or anything. We finally went back to our unit. We didn't blow any holes in the pillboxes although I can remember a couple flares going up and the first platoon, I think they sent a whole company out because I remember a second platoon, the lieutenant from Owensboro, Kentucky was, I saw him set a bee hive

on top of the pillbox when one of those flares went off. But there was only two of us left in that first platoon so there was no sense in--we were rendered ineffective. It was kind of a stalemate there. We didn't move until, I think these dates are getting better because then I was a platoon sergeant, in fact I think I was company commander then. I think after that lieutenant from Owensboro got killed then I was, because I had come back to the battalion, they'd have a meeting of all company commanders. There'd be captains and stuff and I was a sergeant. We were expecting replacements and our replacements they said were getting fewer and farther between because they thought we had the war won and they were sending the replacements over to the Pacific and we took Bettendorf, Geilenkirchen, I can't remember all the names of those towns. Sometimes they'd start out and they'd say, "Ok, you're going to attack across this field to the next town." Sometimes there'd be resistance, sometimes there wouldn't. Sometimes the town would be just a crossroads.

Mark: These are German towns now?

Milo: Yes, these are German towns. I remember one time we got on a bus and we all got on the bus. I said, "What the hell?" We were visible. We might as well go as fast as we can. We got on a goddamn bus. We had a guy, B airman on the roof, I remember. Sometimes electricity--they had these big overhead were these steel towers and the electricity would still be on because some guy would somehow get--I heard a radio and it was a radio the guy had gotten out of a German house and somehow hooked up into that tower. It was a line that went perpendicular to, you know, it went from the German's side to our side and the electric power was still on. The Germans were generating power for us. Then they'd put up one hell of a fight, they they'd, you know, every once in a while they'd take us back and they'd move us around and we kept going from one army to another and I remember going into such towns. Sometimes we'd be in reserve and sometimes we wouldn't, but it wasn't nearly as intense as the war was. We were just going from one town to another and then we'd, when we went across that.

The first place we went, I guess I got that mixed up. In September when we had that raid, then we stayed in a defensive position until November 16 and they said we were going to attack to the Roer River and we went across Siersdorff. We had terrible casualties and the Roer River and we finally ended up at Julich, a town on the other side of the river was all battered and it was beaten up. One of those times I got hit and went back and they transferred me, sent me back with the replacements that went to the 175th so then I was no longer in the 116th. I was in the 175th. We attacked out of the 175th up across Siersdorff, Bettendorff, Julich then we stayed there, I think we took--we had awful casualties with machine guns. It was getting hilly and there was German pillboxes and stuff until sometime in December I think. Anyway, we finally, we rehearsed crossing the river and we, those in regimental reserve and they had engineers that were supposed to put the pontoons down then we put boards across that so we could get vehicles across. All the engineers did was bring the stuff up and we had to do it. Anyway, one day we

went across the Roer River. We had one hell of a fight for Julich and as I recall Professor what's his name, Matt Kaufman, or you did. Upstairs, I saw a picture of Life magazine crossing a pontoon bridge with a guy laying on there. It was a guy named Avery from my platoon. That was my platoon going, crossing the bridge there. Then I got hit in the head and was sent back to England. Then I was in the hospital back in a town that we had been in before, right near the Christ Church in Bornham. Anyway, we went into that, I was there and I spent Christmas in England. All head injury, I was in a ward with guys with eyes missing, shot through the head.

Mark: What had happened to you?

Milo: I had a chunk in the back of my head, a piece of shrapnel which I still bear. It's about the size of a quarter and they said to me, a doctor said to me that he'd have to put a plate in my head but the shrapnel was in exactly the same spot as a plate and hair had started to grow over it again. I also, I went to, I was evacuated then to the Evac Hospital and then a general hospital in Liege, Belgium and the guys who were most seriously wounded they put on an airplane and they flew us back to England. The first time I'd ever been in an airplane. At Liege they, on a hill not in town but I don't know. Liege apparently has two hills or at least anyway the town was on another hill maybe 1/2 a mile 1/4 mile away and a river ran in between and we used to watch these buzz bombs go over. Everyday we were laying there in this hospital and they'd take us outside and we'd watch, we could watch the buzz bombs go over. I had this head injury but I could still sit up and stuff and they wanted me to stay still. I had a shrapnel hunk in the back of my head. And then the buzz bomb engine would go off and we could see all this. It was just like going to a movie. See a buzz bomb and all of a sudden you'd hear the engine go off and then it would drop. Kaboom! Then they had B-2's. We could hear them [makes airplane noise]. It sounded like a jet airplane going over. Couldn't see those. Then it would stop and we'd wait about 3 seconds or 10 seconds and Kaboom! They were blasting Liege and, anyway, I got on a plane and I can't remember getting on the plane and I can't remember too much about the hospital except that it was near Christ Church and then pretty soon we got on, they decided I was fit to go back because hair and cartilage had grown over this hunk of shrapnel which was still in my head and put me back on a boat in a replacement depot and because I was a Tech Sergeant I was in charge of a packet, I remember that.

Mark: What's a packet?

Milo: A packet is a whole ship full of maybe 200-300 replacements and they organized--replacement depots were organized instead of companies and platoons they were organized into packets. How I remember that I'll never know. But we went to repo depot in towns about 25 miles south of Paris. We went across the channel at, what was the name of that place where they thought, the Germans thought they were going--the closest place to England. Calais.

Mark: Calais, yeah.

Milo: We landed in Calais and took a train to this repo depot south of Paris and then we went to, and they gave us passes to go to Paris at night. And then one day they said, we were getting ready, more and more guys were being shipped up to the front by trains. Casualties were still coming. It was wintertime 'cause I remember I spent Christmas Eve in England with an English family that took another staff sergeant and I into their house and gave us plumb pudding and all that stuff. Then they said has anybody ever been captured who hasn't talked to Army Intelligence and I said no, I hadn't talked to Army Intelligence. I didn't even admit it to my company commander until about two days ago, I mean two days afterwards. I thought it was kind of disgraceful to get captured so they said "You have to go to G2." I'd never heard of anything, everything was always S2, S3 and all that stuff. But G2, this was probably in Paris, I don't know. SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force], Supreme Headquarters G2. And this guy, a major or somebody questioned me about my experience as a prisoner. Then they said that I had, because I had been wounded 2 or 3 times they had a policy that they weren't going to send guys back up to the fighting units that had been wounded so they put me in the MP's in Paris.

Mark: Was that an interesting job?

Milo: It was an interesting--but I was a Tech Sergeant. Now Tech Sergeant is a high ranking non-com. MP's don't have any casualties especially when they're back at SHAEF Headquarters. Those guys some of them had been in the Army 40 years and had never gone beyond corporal and here I was a 19 year old Tech Sergeant in charge of an MP platoon and it was in traffic and fortunately my French I had in high school, I could read these French maps and what the traffic would do was I'd take a truck and sit up in front with the driver and we'd go to some main intersection like Place de Concorde and the Champs Elysees and we'd drop off a guy to direct traffic for two hours and we'd have two hours on, two hours off or four hours off and two hours on. And we'd take them all around these places and we'd pick up the old driver, I mean the old MP and that got to be a pain in the ass. So then I was, then they asked my if I wanted to be in Morals Squad which was another, in the most immoral town in the world. There was 13,000 registered whores and how many, maybe 100,000 free-lancers and they all knew me because their lifeblood was depended, by this time the town was just lousy with soldiers.

Mark: Uh hum. I was just going to ask about that.

Milo: And they had, and I'd see these guys with camouflage nets on their hats and I'd feel conscience stricken you know back there getting all the stuff. And I was living in a hotel called the Petite Palace which is where they had some peace conference there, either the Korean War or the Vietnamese War, I remember reading in the paper, the Petite Palace.

And I was living there with the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Our platoon was, our MP battalion was. And I got to know those guys because I had been a, I had played in a high school dance band and so I got to know Jerry Gray, Ray McKinley, Peanuts Huckle, and a guy named Red Nichols, Bobby Nichols, who was not the "Red Nichols." And every night we'd go out after they'd play, they'd play a show in the theater on the Champs Elysees, I can't remember what the name of it is. A big movie theater, on the stage they'd play and then there'd be a movie and then they'd play, they had to play two shows. Then they'd go out at night and they'd take me with them. We went up to the Monte Marte and I knew all of these places and I was, and all these whores knew me as Sergeant Milo because I was, their livelihood was dependent on my keeping the place open. They couldn't close all these restaurants. The restaurants were whorehouses you see. Every restaurant was a whorehouse with few exceptions. And they had girls available in every one of these bars and if a guy got in a fight or if a guy got venereal disease we'd close them down otherwise we just left them going. Whether they were going to be closed down or not was depended on my recommendation so they--I really knew a lot of these madams and heard about this place called the Hot Club in Paris up in Monte Marte and that was Jangle Reinhart was a guy I'd never heard of before but he was playing there. I got to know him. In fact I even started living upstairs at his place because I was too far to walk all the way down to the Petite Palace and I had all these trucks.

I was getting drunk with power calling these people on telephones and so forth. Didn't realize what a high ranking guy a Tech Sergeant is and the MPs. And then one day at the Petite Palace I was really getting sick of MPs, I was getting sick of Paris. I was getting very conscience stricken. I'd read in the paper where my unit was and all that stuff. And so a guy named Trigger Albert was a guy who played the bass with the Glenn Miller Band, he married a girl in England and his wife had a baby and he went back to England on compassionate leave and they were short a bass player and I, when we were up at the Hot Club we, this was this bar up in the Monte Marte. Bobby Nichols and Peanuts Huckle and McKinley and I would go in, Ray McKinley is a drummer, we'd and he was kind of the NCO in charge. He was a Tech Sergeant, too so he and I kind of bummed around together. They'd, we'd play and I would sit in, I played string bass and I'd sit in with them. And so when Albert went back to England they said "hey we know a guy in the MPs down on the second floor who could play the bass. He plays bass with us every night up at the Hot Club up in the Monte Marte." So I played with the Glenn Miller Band for a week on the stage. Then they kept asking for volunteers to go up in, the guys kept saying "maybe the war's going to be over and we haven't done anything." So one time I volunteered and went, they shipped me back and they shipped me back to the 175th again. First they put me in another division.

They mixed the guys coming back from the hospital with the volunteers with the replacements from the States. There weren't too many replacements from the States. They sent me over with a, I can't remember. I never got past division headquarters and then they sent me back to the 175th and they were back in Holland again. No, they

weren't back in Holland again. They had crossed the Ruhr River and were in Munchengladbach, which was the largest German city that had been taken and we lived in Munchengladbach and then the war just kind of twiddled down and we'd go from one town to another. Each town would get progressively bigger. I can't remember when we, we didn't cross the Rhine River in, under fire. But we took a lot of big towns. Castle. And finally after the--Minden I thought was the nicest town in Germany. And I recognize some of these towns like where Gerta was born and raised and all these. I had taken music and I recognized some of these towns. They were moving us all over in trucks. And then--oh, I forgot to tell you. One day they said because we were a veteran unit and we had been in the Army Reserve and had landed on the beach they were going to send us up to the Elbe River to meet the Russians. So we got on trucks and we went up on the Elbe River. And the Elbe River was in flood stage. Apparently the Germans had let a dam or something go. It was really fast moving, high water and on the other side of the river was supposed to be the Russians. Any day now. We heard from them, "Don't go across the river." And we were just sitting around in these farmhouses and I remember for exercise the guys would take a machine gun and shoot a machine gun at a thatched-roof barn across the river and the tracers would catch it on fire and then we'd sit there and watch the thing burn down. And there was no Germans, no nothing there. And then the guys found some boats in the basements of these houses and started going across the river. And I had a very unruly bunch. In the first squad was a guy named Blue English from New Orleans and he went over there and he defected to the Russians eventually. He went over and got drunk and he came back and he said there's Russians over there. No, pretty soon the Germans started coming in. They started giving up. And they were, we were not, we were supposed to shoot at the Germans, not allow them to come over on our side of the river. We wanted them to get captured by the Russians. And they didn't want to get captured by the Russians. They wanted to get captured by us. So they'd swim across and Christ, you'd watch them drown in the river and they'd have these old boats and boards and everything and, you know, we wouldn't shoot at them or anything but they'd come across.

Finally, one day they put up a pontoon bridge. A big vehicle pontoon bridge and the Germans started streaming across there. And we were told this was a rocket V2 unit and that they wanted to capture them. They wanted to make sure we had all the scientists and stuff. And later on I read Werner Von Braun when he came across the river, he was in that bunch of guys. I didn't get to know Werner but all those rocket scientists came across and they were, we had trucks for them to transport. I couldn't figure out, here all these other "Krauts," they practically told us to shove them in the water when they'd swim across and then all of a sudden they put up a bridge and they were coming over in trucks and all that stuff I found out, well they told us why; it was all these rocket scientists. Then they kept the bridge up and pretty soon thousands and thousands of these Krauts were coming across that bridge.

Mark: Were they just soldiers? Or were they civilians, too?

Milo: Soldiers and civilians, but mostly soldiers. I can't remember. I've seen so many civilians going back and forth but they were soldiers and we had, we'd bring them back and they had, I remember they said that they're not going to tell these guys. We weren't allowed, we weren't supposed to go across the bridge but we had that platoon and these guys found some boats and they'd go across over there. I went over there one day trying to find English and I wanted to see the Russians, too. English came back and he said, "There's Russians over there."

Mark: And they were about how far do you think? A couple of miles?

Milo: No. Hell, no. They were, he said just over the dike on the other side of the river. And I went over there and we got on top of the dike and there was bushes growing on the dike. All the rivers had dikes on them. And there were these guys walking along and they had, some of them had German coats on, some of them--they were the goddamnest looking Russians you ever saw. Some of them had uniforms. Some of them didn't have any uniforms; they had boots, wooden shoes like in the Rhineland plain. And they had, sometimes they had guns that were machine guns. And we went down there and talked to them and I think it was a week or so, we kept going back and forth and they'd give us vodka and we'd give them schnapps and we had a good time with them. And they were looking, they were trying to keep the Germans from going across the bridge. They didn't pay much attention to them. Once in a while they, the Germans would come in a big convertible. It would be a bunch of high-ranking officers and we'd take pistols off of them. I had a gunny sack, or a barracks bag, and we'd go across the bridge and get a barracks bag and every officer--officers carried pistols--we'd take the pistol off of them. Then one day they took us off, out of there up to some, I can't remember where we were going. Eventually, we went up to Bramman. We were the constabulary for the Bramman Enclave. Our division was there as an occupation army to provide security for Bremen which was the largest port in Europe and that was dependent upon our supplies and we were first in Bremerhaven and then in Kreyvelt and then in Bloominthall and then in Bramman.

When we first went into Bramman, it was all smashed beyond recognition because they had bombed the seaport. The only thing, our unit went down into the Hacha Beck Beer, I see it's in the market in Madison now. B-E-C-K. They had big 700 gallon cauldrons, drums of beer and everybody had a 5 gallon can of beer next to his bed. We were living in the Rathskeller of that place; it hadn't been bombed out. But we went up into the suburbs and I can't remember too much about, well, mostly putting out guys and guard rosters. That's when I started playing in the regimental band again. And finally in, on Christmas Eve they sent us home. We got on a boat and went home to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey where I'd taken off from. We had a typhoon and we were on a liberty ship and the only two guys. I never got seasick on landing craft. I remember I didn't get seasick. On this thing it would go up in the air and then it would go down and we were

on the fantail and then the waves would go over the whole thing and we'd hang on to the rail. We thought that was jolly good fun. It was real warm water. It must have been out in the Azores. We finally got fitted up with a new rudder and we landed in New York. Got back to New York and there was a sign, every place you'd see was "Welcome Home. Well Done." Every place. And all the boats, we had this troop ship, they'd let us all up on the, you know, we could smoke, we didn't have, we had lights on and all that stuff. As we came in the New York harbor all the boats and all the fireboats would shoot up their water and people would stand on the tops of buildings and wave and all that stuff.

Mark: How did you feel at this time, coming home?

Milo: Oh, very proud. Then we went to Camp Kilmer. And I remember an officer said, "Get your platoon out" and then he said, "Men, this might be the last formation you'll ever stand." And it turned out it was the last formation we ever stood. And we went to, shipped us to Fort Sheridan and was, I called up my folks who were living in Milwaukee and told them I'm home and can you come down and get me, otherwise I'll take the inner-urban. No, they said they'd come down and get me. That was when I went in the Fred Harvey. They had a Fred Harvey thing at the railroad station there and I had, they had, when you were discharged they gave you a new uniform and they gave you one blanket and, if you wanted one, and a coat, a field jacket, a complete set of clothes. Overcoat and all that stuff. And they sewed your ribbons on. They didn't have the kind that were with the--I had a chest full of ribbons and the combat infantry badge and all that stuff on my. And I went in, I felt I was really, and they gave you a blouse. I hadn't seen a blouse since I left Camp. Went into this Fred Harvey, I was going to have a beer.

Mark: I don't understand what a Fred Harvey is.

Milo: Fred Harvey is a, like McDonalds, only it was, they were places that had restaurants at railroad stations and then after they built I90 and the Chicago Freeway they'd have this. Ever go to Chicago on the Northwest Tollway? They have that bridge where there's a McDonalds over it now? That was a Fred Harvey. They had these all over the country. They had Fred Harveys which were kind of like bus stations. They were like mass transit. Well, another one was Howard Johnsons used to have on the freeways and railroad stations and stuff. You'd either have a Fred Harvey or a Howard Johnsons. Went into a Fred Harvey 'cause everybody said they were going to get a cold beer and I--

Mark: Was that Fort Sheridan?

Milo: No. This was right near Highwood, outside of Fort Sheridan. There was a Fred Harvey. Walked in there, said "I'll have a beer" and he asked for my ID card 'cause I wasn't yet 21 and I thought, here I was a--hero with all these ribbons sewn on my uniform and he wouldn't serve me because I wasn't yet 21. But the reason that I went home early or was able to home, when we left Bremerhaven they counted your points and the guys who'd had small points, had

just come overseas, they made them stay in Germany and the rest of them went home with the unit. And I had lots of points because I had all these campaigns, I'd been in either four or five campaigns; Rhineland, Central Europe, then I got five for Normandy, Normandy was one, Brittany maybe was another one. I don't know. But they gave me, I think I had five campaigns and an invasion. That's six, that's thirty points right there. You got a point for every month in the Army and I had something like twenty-seven months or something like that. Then they gave you a point for every medal and I had all these Purple Hearts and I had Bronze, two Bronze Stars, a Silver Star and I think they gave you one for the combat infantry badge. Anyway, I had lots of points so it was these old guys that were being discharged who had been in the Army, you know, since 1941-42 were getting out, and me. That was, as I said, I wasn't yet, I still had, I think I had one hundred thirty-five points. And eighty-five was the one that would get you out. I was so triumphant in my going to show the world what a hero I was and the guy refused to serve me a beer at the Fred Harvey. But they gave you a complete uniform, told me that they'd send us to the VA where they looked at your MOS number, your Military Occupational Specialty Number which was still 745 and I remember saying all of us who had infantry rifle MOS numbers said we all yearned for the day when 745 would mean "quarter to eight" instead of infantry rifle. And he looked up my MOS number in a book and the corresponding job was walrus hunter. He said, "You're qualified to be a walrus hunter" And I thought, well, you know, that was silly. I thought he'd tell me I'd be a truck driver or something. Later on I ran into a walrus hunter and he said you should have taken it, it's a good job. He made over \$100,000 a year and it was, he retired at age 40 or something like that. Really a marvelous job. My folks came up to get me in their 1937 Plymouth.

Mark: Fort Sheridan. Is that Virginia?

Milo: No, no. Fort Sheridan is right outside of Chicago.

Mark: Oh, Chicago.

Milo: Chicago, almost at the, it's the last thing before the Wisconsin boundary. It's still there. I think they're breaking it up though. The only thing of any significance after that is I went to collect my 5220 Club. They give you, you were eligible for one year of \$20, was that a week? 52 weeks in a year? Yeah, you'd get \$20 and I'd go down on Plankinton Street in Milwaukee and stand in line and have to make up places where I'd looked for a job. I'd say, I'd looked in the phone book and say I looked at such and such furniture store. Finally they found me a job. At Globe Union which is now Johnson Control making Globe batteries and Globe Union roller skates. I was a messenger because I knew how to skate. I could, I'm sure they had those different messages that you put in a tube and they go--but that's not, that's after I got to be a civilian. Then I went to the University and joined the ROTC but you don't want to hear about that.

Mark: Sure I'm interested in that.

Milo: Well I--

Mark: What I'm curious about, did you use the GI Bill educational?

Milo: I used the GI Bill and they said if you, they gave me \$50 a month. [End Tape 3 Side A] I could have gotten, I think my hearing was bad so I could have gotten in the \$75 as a disabled veteran but I found out you got either \$35 or \$40 a month if you joined the ROTC. The first two years was the basic corps and every student had to take that and the second 2 years was the advanced corps and you could joint, that was voluntary and you got \$35 or \$40 a month for that. Veterans are automatically admitted to that so I somehow got past the hearing test and joined the Infantry ROTC and got, and would have to, I got more intense military science and tactics for 2 years I went 5 days a week. It's more than they do at West Point. I took intense, very intensive classroom and we did a little marching too. And of course, at the parade they had the big review, I was the Adjutant because I knew how to give commands. You know I had been a platoon sergeant. And then I went to school and studied--

Mark: Were you studying Law by this time?

Milo: I started to study Law and then I turned, went and played professional baseball.

Mark: Oh, is that right?

Milo: Was on the baseball team and then I went out to join the White Sox organization and we had Aberdeen, South Dakota and then that summer I was traded to Columbus, Georgia in the Southern League and the next year I was promoted to Colorado Springs in the Rocky Mountain League and up there where the air is very light the ball started going out faster than they were going, than I threw them in so I decided I better go to Law school.

Mark: You were a pitcher?

Milo: I was a pitcher, a right-handed pitcher. And went back to Law school in Madison and I couldn't go back on the baseball team because I had been professional. Then I joined, after I got my ROTC commission I had joined the Infantry because that's what I had been in for three years and I figured I wouldn't have to study as hard so I said, okay, now I'll try another commission now. They said you can't do that. So they put me in the reserves, or I went down on Charter Street across from the Hamilton Supply Company between Regent and Spring Street down there up on the second floor and joined the ROT--or the 84th Division. And at that time it was an Airborne division and then we had a lot of faculty members on the, from the, that were in that unit 'cause they got a day's pay and then they started giving you uniforms and they made us go to Fort Benning for summer camp and learn how to jump out of an airplane and then they gave us trucks and, I mean, rifles and machine guns and build an armory out on South Park Street and the next thing I

know I'm over in Korea.

Mark: Oh, I didn't know about that. 1950?

Milo: 1952? Pork Chop Hill. I only was there two 2 weeks before I got hit and came back. And then I stayed in the reserves for, I think I had, Army time and Reserve time, I had 36 years in the Army and got to be a full Colonel with a, I had been a--the last 10 years I had been assigned to the Selective Service system, maybe it was the last 15 years, where we worked directly under General Louis B. Hershey and had, our chain of command went from General Hershey to us. And we, in the Reserves would spend our time demobile--well, when there's a war on we would give exercises and then train in how to demobilize and when there was peace on we learned how to mobilize. We'd crank up the draft. And then after awhile when the Vietnamese War was going on, I even spent time in the Vietnamese War. I spent 120 days.

Mark: Where at?

Milo: In Washington, D.C. 1725 F Street where General Hershey had me help with Archibald Cox. I was a lawyer and I had to help with briefing in a case that was going to be argued before the United States Supreme Court. Gutenecht. I remember the name of the case. The Solicitor was Archibald Cox, Solicitor General. And, yeah, I lived at Watergate, at the Watergate Hotel.

Mark: Is that right?

Milo: And that was kind of fun. 120 days and Dick Cates was out there with that Watergate stuff, trying to teach the Senate how to impeach the President. And, yeah, and then finally, after a while. I had a mobilization designation as Deputy Director of Selective Service. I would have been mobilized as a Major General.

Mark: That's up there.

Milo: Yeah. And, but that's the end of my Army career.

Mark: Okay. I just have a couple more questions.

Milo: Okay.

Mark: Now, while you were in school here in Madison, did you join any veterans clubs on campus? I understand there were quite a few. Were you active in that sort of thing?

Milo: No. I, everyone looked, all the veterans looked down the end of their noses at the veterans clubs like the American Legion. While I was in Milwaukee I joined the

American Legion because my dad had been a Legionnaire and they had the Cudworth Post was a post in Milwaukee overlooking the lake and it was really brand new, fancy place and they had good meals and it was a neat place to go so I joined then but I never rejoined any--

Mark: I see.

Milo: One time I joined the Military Order of Purple Hearts, but that was long after I got out of school. We, all of us veterans, especially looked down the end of our noses at the ROTC and here I was a veteran--

Mark: But you joined it anyway.

Milo: And I put that uniform on and I was living in the batch, an apartment house on Iota Court and I'd catch a razzing from those guys that were GIs, veterans themselves.

Mark: And there were quite a few of them around that neighborhood, I assume.

Milo: Oh, there was nothing else practically. And, yeah, we were living in an apartment. The freshmen were all living in dorms cause they couldn't get in, you know, apartment were for upper graduates. And to this day I get teased by guys I see about being in the ROTC. I'd have to go, once a week you'd have to wear your uniform. That was when I'd really catch it. Then we had a couple on the 100th anniversary of the State of Wisconsin, that would be 1849?

Mark: 1949 then, yeah.

Milo: We had a parade that started on Park Street, we marched up State Street and around the Square and we had, it was a huge parade. It lasted all day. And our ROTC unit was one of the units and all the guys, I was tending bar at the Log Cabin and all those veterans decided to wait until my ROTC unit, they stood on, the Log Cabin was a tavern across the street from the Pub Tavern which is still there. It was literally a log cabin, and they stood on top of the thing and had eggs and all, about fifteen guys, stood up there and threw eggs at my unit as we went up State Street in this parade. I understand the guys from small towns would belong to veterans organizations 'cause that's where the clubhouse was, social activities. Everybody stayed as far away from those, we had nothing but disdain and treated them with humor 'cause we thought they were just old guys that belonged to those.

Mark: Now there's the American Veterans Committee. Do you remember them at all?

Milo: I remember the name, but I didn't belong to it. I can't remember, they were active politically or something like that.

Mark: Right.

Milo: No.

Mark: And I've been able to find no--as you know, I'm writing my dissertation on Milwaukee after World War II.

Milo: Oh, are you? No, I didn't know that.

Mark: Oh, I thought I mentioned that. So I'm looking for some antidotes and things like that. I'm wondering what post-war Milwaukee was like when you, like you're driving up Highway 41 or whatever it was at the time.

Milo: Well, it was just like it was before the war. It was just exactly the same. I do remember, I was living on Park Place at the time and I do remember they had a carnival at the lake front which was a precursor of this thing they have now--

Mark: Summerfest?

Milo: Summerfest. A carnival rides and all that stuff, I don't think they had so much music. I remember I went down there and played Bingo and won a battery that had, I mean a flashlight that had 8 batteries in it. But in the course of that one time they had a German Buzz Bomb, a B1 and every once in awhile they'd start up the engine. It didn't take off or anything, on the lake front and I came home one night and all of a sudden I heard that engine, the first night, and I ran and woke up my folks and said, 'There's a B1 coming.' Don't give me that stuff, nobody else, all the lights on and everything. And about every, during the daytime, about every hour that ER-ER-ER, that very distinctive motor and so that next day I read, I picked up the paper and they said that they had a, they were featuring a German Buzz Bomb. But I can't remember any, there was, I can't think of anything. My mother had worked at Globe Union during the war when I was in high school. I remember I had to make my own lunch when I came home for lunch. They were making, as I said, they got me, the VA finally got me a job. I was going to Milwaukee State Teachers College and was filled with guys, guys my age. 21 years old, 22. And--

Mark: There were vets?

Milo: All vets. I don't know of anybody that wasn't a vet. They kept their mouths shut if they were. We went to, it was all one building except for the field house and we were, all I was doing was trying to get my \$50. I didn't care if I was going for a degree or anything else. Went to class and I took, you had to take gym and that was at the Baker Field House. That was the only other building besides the single building that still is the

Administration Building there on Downer Avenue.

Mark: Milwaukee State Teachers College. Is that UW Milwaukee today?

Milo: Yes. The main Administration Building, or the old building, that was it. Milwaukee State Teachers College and Downer College, girls college, was right across Hampshire Street on the east side on Downer and Hampshire and the other side of Hampshire Street was Downer and Kenwood was the MSTC, Milwaukee State Teachers College. And nobody had any cars, nobody had, we took the bus. And I had a lot of buddies. I got out, they had, I had two or three friends who had been in the Air Force, they had never gone overseas and they discharged them right away and they were going to Marquette so I took a bus down there, a bus every day down to 13th and Marquette and when those guys would get out of class then we'd go over to the Ardmore Hotel and drink beer in the Ardmore Hotel bar. As I said, in the summer I got a job working for Globe Union and they had no communications to speak of, they were making transistors for radios and sparkplugs, Allstate sparkplugs for the Sears Roebuck Company. Because I could roller skate I was a messenger, ran around the plant delivering messages and stuff, orders. And there was, I had to take, we all took buses wherever we went 'cause there was kind of a shortage of automobiles. Actually, there weren't any, they took away rationing but there still wasn't any, there wasn't any hardware. Automobiles and refrigerators and stuff were all in short supply and everybody's refrigerators were breaking down.

Mark: So, most of your friends at this time were all vets, too? Everyone went to the war at one time.

Milo: Yeah. I can't remember anyone who wasn't one although, when I went to my high school reunion, my 50th reunion at Shorewood High School last year, the guy who was in charge of the reunion or was the master of ceremonies, I remember he was one guy who didn't go in the Army. Everybody felt so sorry for him. Tommy Emerson. There was, that was a funny conglomerate. I think there was 1,300 graduates at Shorewood High School. Only two were from Madison, only two were lawyers. I mean these were a class that almost 100% went to college. The head of the Michigan Medical School and stuff like that. Rehnquist, Chief Justice Rehnquist.

Mark: Oh, is that right?

Milo: Yeah. He was the other lawyer besides me. But I never, most of, we all went our separate ways, we had graduated from high school. But we had, there were. I'm just trying to think what was different than it is now. We had street cars and trackless trolleys but then they finally abolished the street cars and just kept the trackless trolleys. I used to watch the Packers playing at State Fair Park over where they have the automobile races now.

Mark: After Vietnam, there was a lot of attention in the media played to psychological effects of war and that sort of thing. Do you experience any such thing or do you know people who did? What's your--on that?

Milo: No, and I've often wondered about that because every time you'd pick up a paper there's some guy that's got some kind of a post hostilities syndrome. One reason that I thought of while somebody asked me the same question about the D-Day stuff and the more I think about it the more I think it's true. We were all men, no women. We were all white; Blacks were not allowed to fight. By the way, there was no protests that they weren't allowed to get killed and wounded. In fact, I've never heard yet to this day of anyone who ever was upset about that. But I would presume because we were all white men we had, most of us had families to return to. Most of us had hometowns. A more stable life and that maybe have affected people psychologically. That's not to say that the guys in World War II didn't have battle fatigue. God, I've seen all kinds of guys go, break down and start to cry and they weren't running away. They had, battle fatigue was very common.

Mark: In combat?

Milo: In combat. Especially in that area before St. Ló were we had this terrible artillery. We'd see 2 or 3 guys a day would leave because they couldn't, they'd start shaking all over and screaming and crying. But I never saw anybody after the war, in Milwaukee or any other place. In school, when I came to school here. I never saw anybody who had any after effects. Some guys, you know, I can't remember, a couple of guys had been wounded but, or had trench foot or something like that and they had, they got \$25 a month more. But I can't remember none of them, there wasn't any concerted action or anything like that. Now it could be that they didn't have places for those guys to go. When I was going to school here, all they had was the student infirmary and you'd have to be half dead before they'd hospitalize, before they'd do anything for you. And maybe there was people going in there that had some kind of post hostility neurosis or something, but I never heard about it. Well, I don't know. Then they'd go to the Veterans Hospital. They had, now that I think about it, I'd read about guys in Veterans Hospital once in awhile. But we didn't have anything to do with them. Maybe all the guys that were classmates of mine were well-adjusted people. But I can't recall anyone in Milwaukee.

Mark: Is there anything you'd like to add, 'cause I'm about finished.

Milo: Nope. Nothing I can add. I'll think of a lot of stuff afterwards.

Mark: I'm sure. That's already three tapes you've filled up. That should be enough. Thank you.

Milo: You're welcome. And then what I wanted to add was that while I had taken part in the Invasion of Normandy and people had started asking me questions now for about a year

as we were leading up to this 50th anniversary, I remembered more and more things and people would tell me another incident or an instance and then I would remember more and more things so I have a very keen memory of small details of that particular, single day and then this other stuff that I was just talking about this last hours or two I have big gaps in my memory. I can't, there's lots, only isolated instances have occurred to me. That's all. I wanted to add that because the tail end of this thing was very sketchy.

Mark: No, it was just fine.

¹..A reporter for Madison's WISC-TV, Sai came to interview Flaten for a television interview.