

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JOHN GILL
Medic, Army, World War II
2002

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Gill, John, (1925-). Oral History Interview, 2002.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 87 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 87 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 87 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

John Gill, a Dubuque, Iowa native, discusses his service as a medic with the 2nd Infantry Division, 38th Regiment in Europe during World War II. Gill talks about being drafted soon after graduating high school, basic training at Camp Grant (Illinois), assignment to the Medical Corp, and being shipped overseas on the *Queen Mary*. He describes joining the 2nd Infantry Division, 38th Regiment, Company C in South Wales and additional physical training to be a stretcher-bearer. He speaks of sailing into Bristol Channel to join the D-Day landing and having somebody's helmet fall on his head while getting off the boat at Omaha Beach. Gill recalls being dressed for a gas attack and seeing signs warning of mines. Assigned as a 3rd Battalion medic after landing, he describes carrying wounded to the aid station and the difficulty caused by hedgerows. He reflects on his squad's first casualty, squad leader Sydney Harris who was killed by a shell, and on his first cold, wet night in the field. After the Germans pulled back, he recalls taking the Forest of Cerisy and expecting an armored attack that did not come. Gill describes the food, mostly K-rations and also some food the Germans left behind, and reports that nights were particularly hard on litter-bearers because they did not carry blankets. He describes the attack on hill 192 outside Saint-Lô (France), seeing bombers fly overhead, digging foxholes, the tough 3rd German Parachute Division, and fear that the fighting would turn into stalemate trench warfare. Gill portrays several particular instances of carrying wounded men off the battlefield, states that many died on the stretcher, and describes using sulfanilamide, penicillin, and different methods to stop bleeding. He declares he thought the German soldiers were better trained than the fresh recruits from the States. Sent to Vire (France), he recalls many people being wounded by shells there and describes being wounded in the buttocks and back after a shell exploded on the aid station. Gill declares he thought he was going to die. He discusses being operated on at the station hospital to remove shrapnel, developing pleurisy in the lungs that required draining, being evacuated to Saint Albans (England) where he could hear London being buzz-bombed, and shipping back to the States. Gill states that of the original forty medics in his unit, only eight were not killed or wounded, and he talks about combat exhaustion. After receiving a medical discharge, he reports getting sixty percent disability and using the G.I. Bill to attend the University of Wisconsin. He reveals that in 1992 a piece of shrapnel was discovered in his heart. Gill addresses his work after the

war in a family clothing shop and later as a fourth-grade teacher. He mentions being a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the 2nd Infantry Division Association.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2002.
Transcribed by Elizabeth Hackett, 2009.
Corrected by Channing Welch, 2009.
Corrections typed in by Katy Marty, 2009.
Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2009.

Interview Transcript:

James: 2002. Where were you born, sir?

Gill: Dubuque, Iowa.

James: When was that?

Gill: May 4, 1925.

James: 1925, Dubuque.

Gill: Yeah.

James: So I'm—what were you doing on the day that you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Gill: I remember coming out of the Parkway Theatre up on the Square—I had been to a movie.

James: Oh, what were you doing in Madison here? How did you get to Madison?

Gill: Well, I came from Dubuque when I was six years old. So, I—

James: Your folks moved to Madison.

Gill: Yeah. My dad had a clothing store in Dubuque and one in Madison. It was at the time of the Depression in 1929. And the one in Madison was doing better than the one in Dubuque, and he therefore moved here.

James: What was the clothing store?

Gill: Gill's Menswear.

James: Gill's Menswear. Where was that?

Gill: Well, the one in Madison was down on State Street—in the block of the Orpheum Theatre. And I ran it for about twelve years until 1967.

James: He ran it there.

Gill: Yeah, my dad started it in 1929, and he retired about 1952. And then I kept it for—until about 1967.

James: Oh, I see.

Gill: And then I went back to school and became a teacher.

James: What about—so when you came out of the Parkway Theatre, and people were talking, or there was an extra out, a newspaper extra—

Gill: Yeah.

James: Shouting.

Gill: Yeah, it was on the news.

James: That was a Sunday.

Gill: It was a Sunday, yeah. But I remember it very well, because it was kind of an impressive thing, and I was a sophomore in high school at the time.

James: Where? What high school?

Gill: At Edgewood.

James: Edgewood?

Gill: In Madison, Wisconsin.

James: (laughs) Yes, I know. I grew up in that area.

Gill: Oh, uh huh. So and I remember at the time everybody thought the war was going to be over right away, within a couple months, two or three months at the most.

James: Why was that?

Gill: Well, they didn't think the Japanese were very good soldiers, and we were so much bigger than they were and—

James: Even though we had no knowledge at all what kind of (??) soldiers they were (??).

Gill: Yeah, and the other thing that people didn't realize, how far away it was and what a—how difficult it would be to fight them, and as it turned out, it was very, very difficult.

James: So, when did you get your first call from the military?

Gill: I graduated from school in 1943, in June, and I got drafted in August of 1943. At that time, everybody was drafted, within about two or three months after you got out of high school. Either that, or you could enlist, but—

- James: Where did they send you?
- Gill: They sent me to Camp Grant, to a reception center there, where they take incoming troops. Because I wore glasses, they put me in what was called “limited service” at the time, and they put me in the Medical Corps.
- James: Got some training then?
- Gill: And I stayed there until March of 1944. And it was at that time that we left Camp Grant where we had completed basic training. We didn’t have a whole lot of training, but, ah, kind of basic --
- James: Basic lasted what, about eight weeks?
- Gill: Well, for some reason, it was— let’s see, September, October, November, December, January, February—
- James: That’s a long basic training.
- Gill: Yeah, yeah.
- James: They must have had some special training for—
- Gill: Yeah, yeah.
- James: For medical training of some kind.
- Gill: I—they didn’t give us very extensive medical training—how to give shots, and how to do pretty much basic things, set bones, and things like that—and march, and I guess got acclimated to the Army, rather than anything special, and I think it was, they were just holding troops in wait, to send them. Finally in March went overseas on the *Queen Mary*.
- James: March of ’44.
- Gill: Of ’44.
- James: 03/44 to your—
- Gill: Yeah, and at that time there were 18,000 troops on the *Queen Mary*.
- James: Well, what was your outfit by that time?
- Gill: Well, I was—I went over as a replacement. So I wasn’t—

- James: Repo depot in England (??) ?
- Gill: Yeah, I wasn't really connected to anything at all. It wasn't until about April of 1944 that I joined the 2nd Infantry Division which was in South Wales and was getting ready for the landing in Europe. And I was real excited about it because it's the only thing that had been in the paper for about six months, was about the Second Front and about the invasion. So the fact that I was going to be there (laughs) was exciting to an eighteen year old.
- James: How did you enjoy Wales?
- Gill: I liked Wales. The beaches were beautiful, and I remember going in to the little town of Tenby, which was right on the coast and it was a tourist town. And the beach was, I would say, at least a block and a half wide when the tide was out. And I've been back there a couple of times to see it, and it's still about the same, a little tourist town. It had been taken over pretty much by the Army at the time. Most of the British civilians had to leave. England was very, very crowded at the time. They had problems finding a place to put everybody.
- James: Where did they put you?
- Gill: Well, we lived in a Quonset hut, --
- James: You and how many?
- Gill: Well, the unit of the 2nd Division that I was assigned to was the Company C which had about a hundred men.
- James: Of what regiment?
- Gill: Of the 38th Regiment, and there was approximately a hundred men all together, and that included the litter bearers, the battalion aid station, the collecting station.
- James: Was Company C a medical unit only?
- Gill: It was a medical unit only, just strictly medics.
- James: You had physicians? Nurses?
- Gill: Yeah, we had two doctors. And we didn't have any nurses, at all.
- James: Two MD's correct?

- Gill: Yeah, and it was all pretty new to me. A lot of the guys that were there had been in there for three or four years, some even five years, in Texas, and then they went to Ireland with them, and then South Wales. And they had airborne training, and they had training at Camp McCoy in the cold weather. So the Second Division was a very highly trained division, at the time, and a very old one, too.
- James: Yes, I know that.
- Gill: Yeah, and there were a lot of Mexicans in it because they had been at Sam Houston, in Texas for a long time and I might add that they were very good soldiers.
- James: They were?
- Gill: Mexicans. Yeah.
- James: What was your specific task here? What did they teach you how to do? What were you ready to do?
- Gill: When I joined the division we had very extensive marches and training—crawling under machine guns and having explosives go off around us and kind of running us ragged. I was in pretty good shape because I was just eighteen years old, and I could take it pretty good, but some of the older guys—it was pretty hard on them. And we had long marches, too.
- James: Those aren't medical—that's not medical training.
- Gill: Well— [laughs] that was what we did. What I was training to be was a stretcher-bearer, and it was basically—
- James: Oh, gonna need your legs.
- Gill: To pick up people that had been wounded. We didn't spent a lot of time really taking care of them. We did stop the bleeding if we could and put sulfanilamide on them and gave them morphine. But the thing that I noticed with almost all of the wounded, even those that were really severe, is that they didn't suffer any pain or didn't complain of any pain. I just remember one guy that we picked up later that was really in pain.
- James: So and you were in Wales until you moved over to Normandy on the 9th of June?
- Gill: Yeah, yeah.
- James: Is that right?

Gill: We left Swansea in South Wales the 3rd of June, and we sailed into Bristol Channel. I remember very, very close to the coast, and there was a destroyer on one side of us, and I—we were on a boat that was, that held about 3,000 men, probably the regiment I would say, it was like one of those Liberty ships, that type of thing, and we got over to, off the coast of Normandy on the 8th of June, and we were supposed to get off that night. In fact they started to unload the boat and they got some of the guys off, and then they told us, “Well, you’re not going to get off ‘til morning.” So, they got us up at 5 o’clock in the morning. I remember the exact time, and—

James: Which beach was this?

Gill: This was off of Omaha Beach. And I remember getting off the boat at 10 o’clock, and when I climbed down the net somebody’s helmet fell off from up above and hit me in the head [laughs]. And I later got a cerebrospinal fluid leak in my upper nose there, and they thought it was from this helmet hitting me because it really banged me pretty hard. But then the leak didn’t start until many, many years later. But I had to have surgery on the—on it.

James: On what?

Gill: On this—from the helmet hitting me in the forehead.

James: It split your skull?

Gill: Well, that—they could only think of, they said, “Well, did you ever have any blows to your head?” And I told them about, -- This was much later,

James: This was later.

Gill: Yeah.

James: But the one at the time didn’t—

Gill: It just –

James: Didn’t cut your skin?

Gill: It just stunned me. It was like getting a good bang on the head. And we climbed down these rope ladders and came in to Omaha Beach there and we had, we were dressed for a gas attack. We had underwear on that had been treated as heavy wool underwear, and over that we had fatigue—we

had Army ODs which were wool, and they had been treated, and over that, fatigues which had been treated, so—

James: That sounds like an itchy arrangement.

Gill: We could just about stand up by our clothes. And—

James: They're like they were starched, is that right?

Gill: Yeah, yeah, it was heavy. And we carried a gas mask, too, and I remember when we got off these little boats, the landing craft, we waded in water up to about our waist. It wasn't much deeper than that. And the first thing we do, we took off was the gas mask. I remember at the time there was what they called a "shingle". It was loose stones that we piled up for, oh, seven or eight feet high and you'd kind of step on them and slide right down. Evidently in the future they bulldozed those to make it easier to —

James: They had the same problem in Iwo Jima.

Gill: Land stuff. Did they?

James: That [unintelligible] was the problem there.

Gill: Yeah. But we didn't waste any time on the beach. It was quiet. There wasn't any firing. We heard some explosions, and we heard that the engineers were blowing up mines. And we quickly went up a path that was marked with white tape, and it said, "Achtung! [Attention] Mines" on either side, and they said to stay in that path and don't go walking off, [laughs] which we didn't. And we walked inland on this road toward this little town of Trévières. I didn't know what we were doing at the time because we never—nobody ever told us except "Follow the guy in front of you." And they—there were forty stretcher-bearers that were—

James: In your group?

Gill: In our group, that we were all together. And that we went off to the side of a field, and they divided us, and they said, "You twelve, go with the 3rd Battalion, you twelve, go with the Second, and you twelve, go with the 1st." For the rest of the War, I was a 3rd Battalion medic. Which meant that when they attacked, we went with them. If they were in reserve, we were normally held in reserve. But we were really owned by the 3rd Battalion of the 38th Regiment.

James: You kept that 3rd Battalion designation for your entire experience?

Gill: Yeah. Right up to the very end I was a 3rd Battalion medic, and—

- James: So, once you get yourself oriented here on the beach and you found a place to set up a tent, or what?
- Gill: No, we--the idea was for the 38th Regiment to attack the little town of Trévières at 12 o'clock. And this—
- James: The day after you arrived?
- Gill: No, right the very day we landed.
- James: So when you landed you just kept on moving inland.
- Gill: Yeah, we went directly into combat, and I remember following the infantry. That's what they'd said, "Just stay behind these guys, follow them. When they get wounded, pick them up, and take them to the aid station."
- James: Where would that be?
- Gill: Well, the aid station was, at that particular time, was on the beach. But normally, it would be as close to the front as they could get it. And it was a very difficult place to find if you—after you picked up casualties, because of the hedgerows and the trees and a new place and that it was --
- James: Did you get lost easily?
- Gill: Oh, very, very easily. (laughs) We spent—
- James: Every last path looked the same as every other path.
- Gill: Yeah. It would take a long time. If you pick up one casualty and carry him a block or two, that's a lot of weight plus going over a hedgerow every seventy-five feet or 100 feet or so, and that took a long time.
- James: You didn't go down the road?
- Gill: Well, in some places we could use sunken roads. Sunken—the roads were sunk into the ground from centuries of use from medieval times. And they were used by anybody that—if the road was going in the right direction, except that the roads always didn't go in the direction that you wanted to go. But when they did, we did use them because they gave a lot of cover. If you're--
- James: Save lots of time, too.

- Gill: Yeah, and you're down in the sunken road, you got high banks on either side, which meant that a shell couldn't hit you as easy. And you could possibly use the jeep there from the battalion aid station.
- James: Did you have one guy that was on the other end of your stretcher all the time, one guy?
- Gill: We had four all together, but we varied among the twelve of us. Sometimes, like three days after we landed, a fellow that was my squad leader at that time, Sydney Harris, got killed. So that meant that we got shifted around and got a replacement, and got a different squad leader. He was, I remember, his socks were all wet because we had to go across this little river just before Trévières, and I had a dry pair with me, and he asked me if he could wear them. And then he had my socks on when he got—when he got killed. Sydney Harris, he was the first one to—to get—
- James: In your battalion?
- Gill: Uh, the first one in our group of medics that was killed in that group of forty, that I was in.
- James: From an artillery shell?
- Gill: Yeah, he was climbing over a hedgerow, and he was kind of up in the air when the shell hit. And I could see it had put a big hole in his back, and when I saw him, he was turning white, he—
- James: Didn't have enough blood.
- Gill: Yeah, he was losing his blood, and he died shortly, but—the first night that we were there, I remember he—we had one wounded soldier that we couldn't get back to the aid station because it got too dark, and he a fellow had a broken leg or a bone sticking out. I remember Harris was the one that set the leg. He was about five or ten years older than the rest of us, and seemed to know (laughs) more about what he was doing than the rest of us did. But he—
- James: He splinted the leg?
- Gill: Yeah, yeah, he—I remember pulling—we helped him pull it out straight, and we somehow got some branches or something to -- wrap around and tape it. At—in Normandy there at that time, it got dark at 11 o'clock because they were on double daylight saving time. And normally the fighting would stop at 11 o'clock because nobody could see, and they didn't walk around too much (laughs). It -- just everything came to a halt.

James: Where were your accommodations then in the field?

Gill: Well, we had—

James: Inside a (??) foxholes?

Gill: Well, we had just walked—we were in about five miles from Omaha Beach, and we were just in front of Trévières, just outside of it, which was the objective. And there was a little hedgerow there, and I remember the four of us who were four stretcher-bearers and this one wounded soldier, and we had been crossing this little river which was about eight feet wide during the day. We made many trips across the river and took them, our casualties—back to where the jeep was, which was the at the base of a hill, and the jeep took them back to Omaha Beach there. But anyway, we went to sleep that night soaking wet, from crossing this little river. Our clothes were wet. The temperature was about sixty degrees, and it was cold. When you're wet like that -- I remember lying there and looking at the sky, and the Germans were bombing the ships in front of Omaha Beach there. And you could see these tracers going up everywhere, all over the place. It was like a giant Fourth of July affair. And I went to sleep, wondering, "What the heck am I in here?" [laughs]

James: Didn't look like Dubuque.

Gill: No, no, no. It was rather frightening to see wounded, and all of a sudden, to be taken into an area of fighting. The fighting by comparison was light compared to what was to come, but at the time (laughs) —

James: Well, the first time everything was pretty magnified much (??).

Gill: It was pretty scary, but later it got—there was no comparison to the battles and the shellings and the stuff that occurred when we got farther in. Then I remember waking up the first morning that we were there, and it was—our shells were falling on the Germans, and they were pulling back. They must have pulled back, eight or ten miles, and there was a forest back there called the Cerisy Forest, and they thought the Germans were going to defend it, but they didn't.

James: This was how far from Vire?

Gill: This was—well, from Trévières, it was about ten miles. The Forest of Cerisy. But it was a very thick forest. I remember going through it after the war. And they were surprised that the Germans didn't defend it, except I think they didn't have enough troops there at the time, and, had the Germans been able to bring up their armored divisions, they could have easily pushed the Americans back in to the sea. In fact, we had--on the 12th of June, they said, "Dig your foxhole behind a tree, because we

expect an armored attack.” So another fellow and I, we dug down into the ground, and there were too many roots (laughs) where the tree was so we couldn’t get down more than a couple inches. So we finally just gave up and just slept on the ground behind the tree. But we didn’t have an armored attack It turned out to be a false alarm. But I guess that was—they were expecting if the Germans brought up their armored divisions that it would be on the third day because they figured that it would take that long for them to get there, but the thing that really stopped them was the Air Force, the fighter planes.

James: I understand. That doesn’t involve you.

Gill: No.

James: See

Gill: Okay.

James: We know the histories -- But we don’t know your experience.

Gill: Yeah.

James: Tell me how you ate.

Gill: We ate, --

James: C-rations only?

Gill: Normally we had K-rations, which were like about the size of a Cracker Jack, and they were colored blue and white, which surprised me. I thought they’d be colored like green camouflage, but they were blue and white. And we normally would get two or three of those in the morning. Somebody would bring them up and hand them to you, we stick them inside our field—our fatigues, and—

James: Took three?

Gill: Yeah. One for breakfast, one for lunch, and one for supper.

James: Even though they’re all the same.

Gill: And, yeah, they were pretty much the same, and for the most part that was what we ate. We couldn’t really carry much with us in the way of blankets or anything else. We had water and a shovel, one of these little shovels, which was the most important thing over there, to dig foxholes with.

- James: Where did you get your water?
- Gill: And—usually from the farmyards, farm houses.
- James: You had a pump?
- Gill: Yeah. Normally something like that. But we couldn't carry any blankets, because when we were carrying a stretcher, we just didn't—it was too hard to carry anything besides that. So, the nights were a problem. It was cold in Normandy. Not—when you say sixty degrees or so, it doesn't sound cold, but when you're [laughing] lying out there with no blankets or anything at all, it's cool. So—that was a problem, trying to stay somewhat warm. Later on we got, if things slowed down enough, we got C-rations which were a little bigger, and more extensive. And they had more to them. But for the most part, it was K-rations then, and we used to see German food, too, that they left behind. They had cheese in tubes, and they had different ideas than we had, or had ever seen before. And I remember that was one of the things that we thought was—
- James: Was it good food?
- Gill: Yeah, it tasted okay. But the food for the most part wasn't (laughs) *too* good, but we weren't thinking too much about the food, either, for the most part.
- James: Did you know what was going on behind you? Did somebody come by to tell you, "Now, this is what we're trying to do here," [unintelligible]?
- Gill: We—I was with the 3rd Battalion on the 16th of June, and at that time, I didn't know what was going on, except the infantry were attacking this hill—
- James: Who would bring you the report then?
- Gill: Well, the infantry might tell us.
- James: Might tell your sergeant?
- Gill: Tell us, yeah, or just tell us directly if --
- James: Did you have a lieutenant that you could—?
- Gill: No, no. Nobody told us.
- James: Oh, I see.

- Gill: And I guess part of the idea was in not telling people was that they didn't want you to be captured and give away—
- James: Spill the beans?
- Gill: The information. So when we attacked hill 192 it turned out later to have been a big battle with 1,200 casualties, but at the time --
- James: Nobody told you that "This is an important hill."
- Gill: No, we were just attacking this hill, and the 23rd Regiment was on the left side. I was in the 38th, in the center, and the 9th was on the right.
- James: That was the extent of your knowledge of what—
- Gill: Yeah. And the 3rd Battalion got to the top of the hill, and I was with them at the time because I was the 3rd Battalion medic, and it's in the book there. And I said, "What's that firing off to there, what is that bombing over to the right there?" And the infantry said, "Well, that's Saint-Lô over there, about five or six miles over from there." But that's the first I knew, and at that time I didn't know it was Hill 192. We were just out in—
- James: Just another hill.
- Gill: Just another place in Normandy there. And it was part of the pieces that fit together later, but at that time it didn't.
- James: You were out in your unit; your battalion hadn't come under fire at that time?
- Gill: Yeah, they did. In fact, they were using engineers at the time, at 12 o'clock midnight. They used the 2nd Engineer Battalion as infantry, and they would—I remember hearing those guys complaining. They said, "We don't have any rifles." And they told them, "Well, pick them off the ground, and take them from the wounded and use them." But they were really griping, because normally they're not used as infantry, they're used as engineers.
- James: They couldn't defend themselves.
- Gill: But they still couldn't. In spite of that they couldn't hang on to that. But if they would have hung on to the position at the top of Hill 192, it was starting to get out of the hedgerow country. And we had to retrieve—we came back down the hill, and we sat down at the base of the hill for, oh, the next attack was the 11th of July. So we were there from the 16th of June until the 11th of July.

- James: Oh my, two weeks. No, three weeks.
- Gill: Yeah, and they had the 3rd German Parachute Division had been brought over from Brittany, and they were on—they were on Hill 192, and those guys were really tough. They didn't (laughs) they didn't move an inch at all. And it was at this time that a stalemate kind of began to take place. They thought it was going to be like the First World War trench warfare: no movement, maybe 100 yards in two to three days. And one of the things that hurt a lot, too, and again, I didn't know at the time, was that there was a bad storm in the Channel around the 19th of June. And it destroyed a lot of the supplies that were there. Of course, we never heard of that. This was all stuff that I found out later. Part of the pieces—
- James: So when you're sitting on top of that hill that you—did your group have to repulse the German attack?
- Gill: They did, but one of the reasons that they had to retreat was that the 9th and the 23rd on either side did not keep up, but the 38th, they never got up into the positions they were supposed to be to support them.
- James: So you were sort of out-exposed then.
- Gill: Yeah, because of that, I didn't know it at the time. I just knew that we were pulling back, and—
- James: Straighten out the line.
- Gill: Yeah, straighten out the line, and for that reason the--
- James: So did you -- by this time, had you done a lot of carrying?
- Gill: Yeah, yeah, we had—it's easier to talk about it in generalities than all those particular incidences. But, I remember, in one instance, we had two litter squads. We picked up two German wounded, and we were carrying them back to the aid station and up this little hill, and we were shelled. I remember we had to drop them at least four or five times, drop—just drop the stretcher and hit the ground ourselves. I remember another time, we were carrying a casualty, and we got fired upon by a machine gun, and the bullets went between us the four of us and took the buttons off one guy's field jacket, on the side here, without hitting any of us. And I remember another time, we were walking in a sunken road, we didn't have a casualty with us, but there were three infantrymen in front of us, and they ran into one of these "Bouncing Betty" mines that bounce up in the air and then explode. The three of them got wounded—not seriously—but they did get wounded. We had to put bandages on them, but we were right back of

them about 100 feet. If they wouldn't have been there, we probably would have set it off, but we didn't. And I remember --

James: Did you take them back?

Gill: I think they were able to walk by themselves. I don't think it was real serious wounds. Normally anybody that could walk, we would let them walk because we usually had somebody that was very seriously wounded that had to be carried. And getting back to Hill 192—I remember that we didn't have to take part in that battle on the 11th of July, the attack, because our battalion was held in reserve. But we got called out late in the afternoon to help with the casualties, to pick some guys up, and we picked up a fellow with a bad neck wound. I remember that. He was bleeding pretty bad. We didn't know whether we should try to move him or not. Finally decided to attempt to move him, which we did, and he bled to death, and he died shortly within--

James: Couldn't stop the bleeding?

Gill: We couldn't get the bleeding to—

James: Where was he bleeding from?

Gill: From his neck. He had a very bad neck wound. And—

James: You couldn't find the artery to press on it?

Gill: We couldn't, for some reason, couldn't get it to stop

James: Oh, really? That's a shame.

Gill: Yeah, I don't remember if it was an artery, or exactly what it was, but I do know that he died within a short time.

James: Well, I'm sure it's an artery. You usually can't die; bleed to death from a cut vein. The vein will collapse. But arteries, they can keep going quite a ways if they're not cut out completely. If you cut it completely, it might shrink down. If they did it so it's only partially cut, they can bleed forever, until you're gone. That's too bad.

Gill: But we had many die on our stretchers before we could carry them very far.

James: You had many die on the stretcher?

Gill: Yeah, yeah, because some of the wounds were really serious. There were big chest wounds that you could just look right into their chest, and some were wounds where their leg had been; their foot had been blown off, this type of thing.

James: You could stop the bleeding on those extremities, couldn't you?

Gill: Yeah, yeah.

James: Gosh.

Gill: Yeah.

James: So, you kept moving towards the south, then.

Gill: Well, we kept moving south all the time, but we made so little headway that it seemed like, "Well, gee, we never –" You'd see the signs pointing toward Paris, and we thought, "well, gee, we're never going to get there." Here we are, we'd been here for several weeks, and we've only gone about twenty-five miles in that length of time. And it was because of the hedgerows, the infantry just could not make any headway at all.

James: So then the break-out came, and then you started moving faster.

Gill: Yeah. Well, the break-out came—there was a heavy bombing on the 25th of July to the right of Saint-Lô and I remember seeing that, seeing all the planes coming over and listening to the – it sounded, like a buffalo stampede, the bombs coming down. And—

James: You were away from that?

Gill: I was over about three or four miles, over to the left. I was on one side of Saint-Lô, and this—the bombing was on the other side. But with so many planes in the air, you could see them just five or six miles away. So you could see all the airplanes there. And that was the one—one of the things that the infantry told us was going to happen. They said, "Well, there is going to be this tremendous bombing, and then they're going to send one tank after another and just keep on going as fast as they can without stopping. And if one gets knocked out, they'll just shove it to the side and then keep on going." But that's one of the few times that we were told what was going to go on. And this was on the 25th, and on the 26th we started this big attack towards Saint-Jean-des-Baisants. And this is where we had the heaviest casualties of the time that we were there. The 38th Regiment lost, had 500 killed in that two-month period. Probably for every one killed, they figured five wounded. So they went through an awful lot of men there, and part of it is that I don't think they were trained

as well as the Germans. Most of them, the guys that were over there were, had been civilians a year before like me and we weren't—we didn't have the experiences that the Germans did. They were much, much better soldiers, man for man, except they didn't –

James: Far more experienced.

Gill: Have as many men as we did, and—

James: So how did you—what was your personal experience during that heavy time?

Gill: Well—

James: Was it a lot more casualties to carry and that sort of thing?

Gill: I guess I could go to the last day that I was there on August 4th and I remember the night before we had a night march because the Germans were pulling back, but they were pulling back and fighting in the daytime. And we—I can still see the—our infantry going down the sides of the hedgerows until we came to a hedgerow that bisected across. And everybody stopped there, and we stopped, too. And I remember being really tired, because of the night-march. We had been up the night before quite a bit. So I feel asleep in the sun there. It was the 4th of August. And the—one of the company commanders woke us up, or woke our squad leader up, and he woke us up. And he said, "There's some wounded down in this, at the bottom of this hill." And, he said, "We want you guys to go down and see how they are." And I remember some things that happened. One was that an infantryman was walking around, and his gun went off, and the bullet went between the legs of somebody that was on the ground. And I remember a rifleman climbing over the hedgerow that we were behind and he had left his gun because he was really scared. And this company commander sent him back to get his gun to find it. And the infantry said that there's one of our guys is wounded, he's just partway down the hill, and will you check him out, would you go down there. And so we climbed over the hedgerow, and we went down to see about these wounded that were at the bottom of the hill. And we found this one guy, and he was dead. We found no marks on him at all, but he was dead, so we don't know what he died from, but we got a way back to the infantry that he wasn't alive. And we got down to the bottom of the hill, and there was a little creek down there. We found this one fellow that had been shot in the neck. It wasn't a real serious wound, but he needed to be carried, and another fellow that had sprained his ankle. And we started back up the hill, and it had been quiet with no firing, nothing going on at this time when we had gone down there. The Germans were on one side, and our troops were on the other, and we were at the bottom of the hill. And as we came up,

our troops started to fire. They started their attack, and they were firing their machine guns, and they were firing artillery from way in the back there. And it was the most noise I think I have ever heard in my life because we were right in between the two. And there was an old shack that we went into. I don't know why we went into it, because the walls were paper-thin. But we took the two casualties in there with us, and the rest of us went in there. And we waited until the—our infantry came down the hill. They came down and attacked them. After they did that, they had some casualties, too, and we picked those guys up, too. And we stayed there evacuating those that had been wounded in this battle. And after we got the last of them back to the aid station, we were told to join K Company, which was in Vire—or had gone to the town of Durox, which was about four miles away. And when we got to Vire, there was no fighting—no activity at all. The Germans had moved out and evacuated the town. And we went right through the town, which was rather small, but it was an important town, because there was—it had many roads going through it and it had been bombed on D-Day, killing many, many French civilians. And we found K Company, and we were digging a foxhole for the night, which is what we always do. Whenever we stop for the night the first thing you do is dig a foxhole so you have some protection. Then they said the Germans were starten' to shell the town, and they got a call for medics. So we got told to go back into the town and take care of the wounded that were there. When we got back to the town we found wounded all over the place. It was just full of people that had been hit by the shelling.

James: Second Division?

Gill: Yeah. They were Second—they were, evidently, they were supply troops that were going through. They were guys with—setting up telephones, and it was a lot of people going through the town.

James: Who were in (??) your division right (??)?

Gill: Yeah, who were in the division. And I remember we kind of—we had a jeep there that went back to the aid station. We were on a road, so it made it pretty easy to evacuate people. We'd load up the jeep and send it back, and load it up again, and we kept doing that for a long time. And I remember making two trips back in the jeep, because there were some guys that were bleeding real bad, and I went back to try and stop the bleeding and to keep 'em from falling off the jeep.

James: Usually you'd stop that with a pressure dressing? Is that the way you treated that?

Gill: Yeah, yeah, if we could. A lot of times you couldn't. The wounds were—

- James: You had sulfa with you and you could put that—
- Gill: Yeah, we had sulfanilamide, and we had penicillin. Those were the two things that we carried.
- James: You mean injectable or powder?
- Gill: Well, the sulfanilamide was powder the penicillin was an injection if I remember right. We used the sulfanilamide more.
- James: Yeah, I would think so.
- Gill: Yeah. Yeah, but --
- James: And what about the morphine, that was in a small syrette?
- Gill: Yeah, that was small, but we didn't have to use morphine very much, because most of them didn't complain of pain. And I guess the biggest thing with us was to get them back as soon as we could. When you have so many—
- James: How far back was your aid station by this time from Vire?
- Gill: Well, it was probably half a mile on the road, but with the jeep it didn't take long. You'd just go down the hill and up the hill.
- James: That was just on the other side of Vire then.
- Gill: Yeah, yeah. And I remember getting back there, and they had so many wounded you could hardly find a place to set them down in the field.
- James: [unintelligible] there, the aid station was in tents, right?
- Gill: No, the aid station was just the jeep and the medical chests, and that was it.
- James: On the ground.
- Gill: They dug a foxhole, yeah. Normally they never used a tent.
- James: So they're just spread out on the ground carefully?
- Gill: Yeah, yeah. Things were just laid out there. After one of these trips back—I remember it was two trips exactly that I took—we were loading it up again, and we heard a shell coming real close. Then I heard this big explosion and felt blood running down my leg, and I had been hit in the fanny. I was so happy (laughs) to be still alive that I—

- James: You didn't notice that you had been hit?
- Gill: I didn't. I was hit in the back, too, but I didn't know it at the time. I felt the concussion of the shell. I—it was hard to breath, but I was knocked out. But I could feel the blood running. I had a big wound in my fanny. It was about six or eight inches long and not real deep but maybe a half-inch. But it took a long [**End of Tape One, Side A** ca. 45 min.] time before it healed up enough to even use stitches on it. So I've got a big scar back there. It wasn't until I got back to the station hospital, they took off my jacket, and they said, "You got another wound in your back." This was the one that had gone into my lung and also pierced into my heart.
- James: You had no chest pain at that time?
- Gill: No.
- James: Huh.
- Gill: No, except it was hard—I had a little difficulty breathing, and I thought it was—
- James: You must have had some bleeding in there.
- Gill: Yeah, I thought it was a concussion of the shell because the shell had lit pretty close.
- James: Where did you go now when you finally became a casualty? How did they get you back?
- Gill: They sent me back to the collecting station. And that's where—That was probably about three or four miles back. The first stop was the battalion aid station. Then an ambulance came to the battalion aid station and took people back to what was called the collecting station.
- James: That was close to the beach?
- Gill: That was maybe four miles back from the battalion aid station. Then farther back from the collecting station was a clearing station.
- James: Nobody had treated you about it (??) yet?
- Gill: No, no they just basically filled out dog-tags or the --
- James: So they really hadn't examined you very much?

- Gill: No, no, they hadn't. But they did operate on me that night when I got back to the--
- James: The receiving station?
- Gill: At the station hospital. [**Approx. 15 sec. Break in Recording**]
They really didn't move the MASH units very much, because it was a lot of work and a rather extensive thing to move. The collecting station they could move within a matter of a few hours and the battalion aid station they could move that very quickly. One of the things that—one of the worst casualties that I saw August 4th, the day that I got wounded, was a fellow that ran up to us, and his jaw had just been blown off, and you could just see the shreds of his cheek. I don't know how he was still able to stand. It must have just happened seconds before. We just kind of put a compress on his face, so the other infantry wouldn't see him, but he was doing terrible.
- James: So when did they start—when did they examine you, and start doing something for you?
- Gill: Ah, well, I was operated on –
- James: That night?
- Gill: That night. They operated on me. I remember—
- James: At this MASH unit.
- Gill: Yeah. That's –
- James: Okay.
- Gill: They took the surgery, or they took a piece of shrapnel out about the size of my little finger out of my back.
- James: Did they x-ray your chest?
- Gill: I think they did at the time.
- James: So you knew that there was still shrapnel inside of you?
- Gill: I didn't, no.
- James: Well, then you must not have had x-rays (??) of your chest.
- Gill: When they took out that one little piece, I thought that was it.

James: Right. So they didn't x-ray it because they would have seen it.

Gill: I don't know if that little piece would've shown up that was in my heart.

James: Oh, yeah.

Gill: It would have, huh?

James: (laughs) Lead is –

Gill: Oh.

James: Yeah.

Gill: Then maybe they didn't.

James: Just as easily as you have(??) -- they had found it later.

Gill: Do it. Yeah.

James: Yeah, whatever. So as far as you knew, you just had that one piece of shrapnel, and then that was it.

Gill: Yeah, but I had been hit in three different places: in the back, in the fanny, and two places, in the -- one that real serious fanny wound and then a lighter fanny wound and then in the back.

James: Now they sewed up your buttocks wound, did you say?

Gill: Well, not for, it was about two or three weeks. It was a long time before it—

James: Well, they didn't want any infection, you see if it settles in. They wanted to (??) make sure you had good drainage. They put a drain in there and just pack it probably.

Gill: I remember getting these—they said I had pleurisy in my lungs. They stuck a needle in to drain out the—

James: It was blood.

Gill: The pleurisy. It was blood. But anyway, I remember that was really—

James: A bullet went through your lungs, you see.

Gill: That was really painful to have happen.

- James: Which part, you mean draining the blood?
- Gill: Well, draining the blood out of my lungs, I think that was the most painful of the whole deal. I didn't actually feel a lot of pain from the wounds, from the wound in the fanny. And—at the time five other guys got hit by the same shell that I did, medics that were with me who were kind of close together
- James: So after they've got all this wound stabilized and your chest drained -- they drain that on the same time they—
- Gill: No, that came later, back in England. They flew me out on a C-47. I guess it would hold about twelve stretchers.
- James: The next day?
- Gill: I think it was two or three days, but the one thing that I remember after being wounded I woke up, and I was lying down on the ground on a stretcher. They had -- the war tent was rolled up, and the sun was coming in, and I was still alive, and I felt pretty good. (laughs) Because I thought that I was going to die.
- James: Oh, you did?
- Gill: I really did. In fact, I used to pray—
- James: How did you decide that?
- Gill: Well, I used to pray to God to save my life. And the last five days, I said, "God, if you want my life, take it." I did I thought— we were losing so many and I had so many close calls that I thought --
- James: Up until the time you were hit.
- Gill: Yeah, that I thought, "Well, gee, you know, how long can you go before—"
" (laughs)
- James: It's your turn.
- Gill: Before something happens to you. When you got somebody shooting at you, and mines going off, and shells falling on top of you and --
- James: It's just a matter of time.
- Gill: Yeah, yeah, and like I told you, out of the forty medics, there was eight left, when—

- James: After five days?
- Gill: No, after the two months I was there. I mean from during the period from the 9th of June until the 4th of August that we had eight left of the forty that, original that we landed with. We got replacements, but—
- James: Of the stretcher-bearers.
- Gill: Yeah. But I wrote down everybody's name so I know exactly who and what happened there, every person, at the time.
- James: Did most of them survive, or were a lot of them killed?
- Gill: Well, there were about five or six killed, and the rest were either combat exhaustion or wounded. There was probably twelve or fifteen wounded and the rest were—a lot of them were combat exhaustion. Some guys really went to pieces. But, ah --
- James: Was that a surprise, when some of those guys—
- Gill: It was. This Sergeant Thompson, he was a great big strong guy and I thought, well, gee. He went just absolutely—
- James: He couldn't—how did you notice that, I mean—
- Gill: Well, they took him away, and he was kind of talking to himself, and so on. Some guys just couldn't take it.
- James: But that's the way it manifests, just (??) sort of --
- Gill: Yeah, yeah. They kind of almost refuse to—
- James: Couldn't converse with anybody.
- Gill: They always refuse to do their duties. Say, "I'm not going, you can't make me. You know, I'm not going to go --
- James: They just stop.
- Gill: Go back to the front." Yeah, yeah, because every time— well, whenever there was battle, you always knew the infantry were always going to confession, [laughs] to the priest's house there, and getting themselves --
- James: [unintelligible]

- Gill: for death, because they knew what was coming. When there wasn't fighting on, there weren't a lot of casualties. But in the patrolling and stuff like that, there'd be a few, but whenever there was an attack of any kind, there'd be *tremendous* casualties because the Germans were in defensive positions, and it was very difficult with the hedgerows and stuff to—
- James: For people on the attack who, of course—
- Gill: To get them out.
- James: Were exposed, you see. So the attackers always had the tougher—
- Gill: And the Germans were—they knew how to fight better [laughs] than we did.
- James: Well, they – my God (??) they had five years of experience on you.
- Gill: You probably heard about the tanks that they—when they first used the tanks, the tanks would go up the hedgerow, and then they'd shoot the bottom out. Finally they got the idea of putting teeth in the tanks, so they wouldn't—
- James: So when you got back, they flew you back to England then.
- Gill: Yeah.
- James: While you had an open wound on your buttocks -- And a closed wound on your chest.
- Gill: I went back to this little town of Saint Albans where there was a hospital, and that was about sixteen miles from London. And when we were there we would get these buzz bombs every night because they were bombing London at the time, and we used to get the ones that came over toward London. So almost every night, we would get buzz-bombed. In fact, somebody wrote in a paper, "Would the RAFs please stop shooting the buzz bombs down over the hospital?" [laughs] But it was tame by comparison. Compared with Normandy, it was nothing to me. I wasn't—
- James: You were quite delighted to be away from there.
- Gill: Yeah, yeah. I guess the biggest thing about being wounded and about anybody that was over there that got wounded, if they were still alive, they felt pretty good. I had kind of a million-dollar wound because I didn't lose my legs or arms or anything like that.
- James: Did you know the war was over for you?

Gill: Well, I didn't –

James: Did you think about it, or did someone tell you, or what?

Gill: The doctors in the hospital, they didn't tell me right away that, "You're going to be sent back home." But then they came around one day and said, "We're going to send you back to the States."

James: But you didn't know up until then.

Gill: I didn't know up until then whether I was going to go back or not. I knew I was seriously wounded because my fanny was still wide open.

James: Well, you said, yeah, they've got to secondarily close that.

Gill: Yeah.

James: So you couldn't go back to duty like that.

Gill: No, no and then I had the chest wound, too, which they probably thought was more serious than the fanny, the fact that I had the shrapnel in my lung.

James: Yeah, right.

Gill: I'll show you where—

James: No, no. Don't do it now. (Gill laughs) Don't do it now.

Gill: Oh, Okay, okay. It's --

James: It'll spoil the recordings here.

Gill: Alright.

James: So anyway.

Gill: So I was happy when they said that they were sending me back and I went back on a hospital ship, the Charles A. Stafford. It had the big American red cross on it, and it was lit up. It had been called the Siboney when it was a passenger ship.

James: Where did you go?

Gill: We went from, I think it was, Liverpool to Charleston. Charleston.

James: Oh, South Carolina.

Gill: We came in – yeah.

James: Charleston—West Virginia?

Gill: South Carolina.

James: South Carolina.

Gill: Then they sent me over to Memphis General Hospital, in Tennessee. Yeah, Memphis. Then I got a medical discharge in February.

James: Tell me about your buttocks wound now. When did they clear that up?

Gill: Well, I just remember it was a long time before it grew close enough to sew it.

James: About a month?

Gill: Yeah, yeah it seemed like a long time.

James: That's standard.

Gill: Yeah, before it was, because it was—

James: And what about your breathing by this time?

Gill: I did have a little trouble breathing because my lungs were kind of full of this pleurisy or whatever.

James: Blood. Didn't they drain that out?

Gill: Well, they stuck this long needle in me. It was really painful. They evidently drained out the fluid. I know I had to have it done more than once.

James: Oh, I'm sure.

Gill: I don't remember how many times, but I think the fact that I was young at the time—I had just turned nineteen—and I was in pretty good health, helped me out a lot. Probably now, it would have killed me.(laughs)

James: When did you have the x-ray taken so that you knew that there was something still in there?

- Gill: Well, in 19 – 1992 I went in --
- James: Oh, wait a minute. You didn't know during—
- Gill: I didn't know the shrapnel was in my heart. It wasn't until 1992 that they—Dr. Morledge did an angiogram on me, and he got real excited. He saw this piece of shrapnel in my heart. (James laughs) He called the TV station, and he called the *Capital Times*, and I ended up on two TV programs the next day, plus the front sheet of the *Capital Times*. but he got—he thought it was really something.
- James: How long did you have trouble breathing? How long did that last (??) ? All that summer?
- Gill: I don't think it was real bad at any time, the breathing part. And I guess—
- James: So from Tennessee, how long were you there?
- Gill: I was in Memphis, Tennessee, let's see, we came in there, I think it was November. I got discharged, it was February from Percy General Hospital in Michigan. I was scheduled to get discharged in December, except the Battle of the Bulge came along, and they held up all discharges for that reason.
- James: Wanted to see if they were gonna change their mind and send you back.
- Gill: Yeah, yeah. Well, they thought, well, even though these guys are wounded they could still do something, probably. With a lot of the infantry units – I had a friend, Jim Flad, whose dad is the architect in town, who was wounded twice in Normandy. The wounds weren't serious, and he went on from Normandy to Aachen and was killed there. He was in the 1st Infantry Division so that was the policy at the time. If you didn't have a serious wound, that you – went back to your unit. In fact, he wrote a letter to his – we were classmates at Edgewood, Jim Flad – and he wrote a letter home to his parents. He said he heard that John Gill had been wounded and was in England. He said, "I got the letter," an he said, "I wish that I was there, too." You know, he was in the 1st Infantry Division that landed on D-Day, and when I was at Camp Grant he came through there as a recruit at the time. But he was only nineteen years old, and I've got --
- James: Joe's brother.
- Gill: Joe Flad?
- James: His brother.

- Gill: Yeah. Did—you knew?
- James: He was a friend of mine.
- Gill: You knew Joe. Yeah. Yeah, Joe was on a LST, one of those—
- James: In the Navy.
- Gill: Landing craft, yeah. But I guess it hit the family really hard. In fact, there's a letter that I have there from somebody that was with Jim Flad. It said that they—a whole bunch of them were killed by the same shell there, the same mission in Aachen.
- James: So after you were in Percy General in Michigan?
- Gill: Yeah.
- James: What did they do for you there?
- Gill: Well, I was in pretty good shape by the time I was in Percy, and I was just waiting to get a medical discharge, and that's what they gave me.
- James: Did they give you a disability?
- Gill: Yeah.
- James: What percent?
- Gill: At that time—I never applied for any at all, and they—I got a letter from the government saying that, "You've been awarded eighty percent disability." I didn't know who had done it or anything, but it turned out the VFW had put my name in, and then they cut it back to sixty percent, which I still get. I got—this leg is shorter, because of this wound here, my leg on the right side.
- James: From the buttocks wound?
- Gill: Yeah, because it cut the muscle a little bit. My wife says I walk funny [laughs] because of that, but it's a little – you know, it's enough, took enough of the muscle out of there evidently to—
- James: So after Percy, then you were sent home.
- Gill: Yeah, I was sent home. So I was only in service about nineteen months, all together. I had kind of a fast career. (laughs)
- James: Right, then besides your Purple Heart, did you get any other decorations?

- Gill: No.
- James: Did your—
- Gill: The fellow that I was with on these other things got the Bronze Star, the squad leader.
- James: Your unit most have got a unit citation.
- Gill: Yeah, they got Distinguished Unit Citations. We got that type of thing. They had—if you look in the book there, there's approximately 11,000 wounded and 3000 killed during the entire campaign.
- James: Just for the 2nd Division?
- Gill: Yeah, yeah.
- James: Did you – and when you got back home, what did you do?
- Gill: Well, I went to work for my dad helping him in the clothing store for awhile. And then I with the GI Bill – I got out in, let's see, it was February of '44 and I went back to the UW at the following fall. That would have been in 1945 under the GI Bill. All my friends were going to school at the time, and I guess somewhat because of that reason, I did too.
- James: Okay. What did you take in college?
- Gill: I got a degree in economics at the time, and I graduated in 1949.
- James: Now, after that, with that you took your economics back to the clothing store, or did you do something –
- Gill: Well, I -- no, I guess my dad needed help, and he was older. I stayed and worked for him. Then when he retired I bought the business from him, and I worked at it for twelve years. Then most of our business went out to the shopping areas. I thought, well, I'll go back to school, and get a teacher's certificate. So I went back to school for a year. I taught elementary for about seventeen years, at Leopold School, in Arbor Hills.
- James: What did you teach?
- Gill: Fourth grade and I retired in 1987.
- James: After – this is after the clothing store.

- Gill: Yeah, after the clothing store. I liked teaching. I taught CCD which was a kind of Sunday School, and I had experience at it, and I had friends who were teachers, and I thought, well, gee it'd be nice to have the summer off and Christmas and stuff. And I liked teaching, too, so --
- James: You retired in '87.
- Gill: '87, yeah, from teaching. I've been retired ever since. Not doin(??) much.
- James: Did you join any veterans organizations?
- Gill: I belong to the VFW. That's the only one that I joined. And the --
- James: Where is there a chapter around here?
- Gill: It's over on the south side there. They've got a little--
- James: Park Street?
- Gill: Yeah, they've got a little bar
- James: On Park Street.
- Gill: and clubhouse there. Yeah.
- James: Is that a pretty active unit?
- Gill: Yeah, they're fairly active. And I joined the Second Infantry Division, and they have meetings, and I joined the Wisconsin-Minnesota 2nd Division Unit. But the one thing that I find now, when you go to many of these reunions, is there are not very many veterans from the Second World War. It's many that were in the Korean War because the 2nd Division took part in that war, too. In fact, they had over 7,000 killed in Korea.
- James: Well, what did they do about this piece of shrapnel in your heart?
- Gill: The piece is still in there. Dr. Morledge said, "It won't ever bother you." And I've been active all my life. I've played tennis and swam. Not so much now because I'm older but I used to after I got out of service. It never seemed to bother me much. In fact, the shrapnel in my heart, I didn't know it was there. Evidently, it's in a muscle, but Dr. Morledge I could have bled to death if it had gone to one of my arteries in there.
- James: Oh, yes! Hit you in the aorta, and you'd never left the field.
- Gill: You could have quietly bled to death without any—

- James: Not quietly, but you would have bled to death.
- Gill: Yeah, yeah, if I had known that at the time, I would have been scared to death, you know. But it would have—I would have been dead within a matter of a few minutes if it had hit the artery.
- James: Did you know Charlie Larkin?
- Gill: Yeah, he was a year ahead of me at Edgewood. Yeah.
- James: He and I eat lunch together with a bunch of other people every Tuesday. I'll see him—I'll mention you.
- Gill: Yeah, we were on the football team together. Yeah, he's a nice guy. I see him every so often, run into him.
- James: I see him, as I say, every Tuesday.
- Gill: What's the occasion?
- James: Well, it's a group that's been eating lunch together for thirty years.
- Gill: Well, that's pretty good. I don't what kind of a doctor he was. Was he general—?
- James: He was a general practitioner, and then he went and became an internal medicine.
- Gill: Yeah.
- James: The he later in his career became a psychiatrist.
- Gill: Oh.
- James: He practiced mostly in California.
- Gill: Yeah. Yeah I knew –
- James: Then he came back to Madison when he retired he came back to Madison.
- Gill: And he was living out there part of the time, was he, and part of the time here?
- James: No, he was full time –
- Gill: Full time. Oh.

- James: In California, yeah, near San Diego.
- Gill: Oh. What brought him back here?
- James: His wife died. He found another lady to marry, and she had a house here in Madison. And he had strong feelings for Madison -- Like so many of us do.
- Gill: Yeah, it's hard to leave, isn't it? Even though I hate the winters, I wouldn't want to move out of Madison.
- James: None of us would.
- Gill: Yeah, friends are here, memories are here. I think those are hard things to give up when you go someplace else. But we're going down to Florida in March for two weeks, and we were down in New Orleans in November for two weeks. We try to get out.
- James: Where did you stay in New Orleans?
- Gill: We stayed in the little town of Slidell. We had a time-share there. So we were close to—we were just across Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans.
- James: I used to live in New Orleans.
- Gill: Oh. Then we were near the beaches, there, too. So it was a nice spot. Quite a busy place, isn't it? Especially last night. Really something.
- James: Sure is. Well, I think I've run out of questions. Do you keep track of some of your stretcher-bearers? Are they still around?
- Gill: The only one that—after I got out of service, I didn't know where any of them went, because I never took down anybody's address. This one, Vantejo (??), this Mexican-American, who lives in Victoria, Texas, he didn't join the Second Division Association until about ten years ago. That was the first time that I had known that he was still alive because the last time I saw him was in Vir. He helped put me on the jeep, to—
- James: Take you out.
- Gill: Take – and he never got hit. He got in a culvert he said, when that shell came. It never hit him. But he got into Germany later on, and he was with a friend, and he said that he asked the friend what the password was for that night. The friend said that, “Just a minute, I'll go—” He took one step and stepped on a mine, this friend, and it blew up and killed that fellow and wounded him. But he—like I was telling you—they made a company

aid man out of him, because there wasn't enough stretcher-bearers. I don't know what they did for stretcher-bearers after we -- because there were five of us that got wounded by this one shell. We were pretty much the core on the gore list, what was left of them. But then the other thing that I heard, was that the town of Vire didn't fall until August 6, two days later. And I also heard through reading books that the British were supposed to take it. They were just to our left and that originally that they were going to come into Vire, then all of a sudden the—I don't know how we ended up there, but I can remember being at Coulonces in this little valley, and the next thing we were in Vire. Evidently what they did when the infantry was attacking was we would keep going, which is good (??). They must of have had a pull out. I think it was the 29th Division that they said captured it on August 6, two days later.

James: All right.

Gill: So that I was even wondering, was I there on August 4? (both laugh).

James: Okay.

Gill: But things happen so quickly.

James: But you were there.

Gill: Yeah. (unintelligible)

James: Okay. Thank you.

Gill: Yeah.

James: I'll take my stuff here.

Gill: Yeah, that explains this map a little bit, and you can take that picture you've got too if you want.

James: Yeah, I'd like that.

Gill: Yeah.

James: That's good. Have to fold this up.

Gill: Yeah. Do you want me to roll it?

James: That'd probably be better. If I roll it it won't get all messed up.

Gill: Yeah. I got -- I've been meaning to work on this stuff to get it organized a little better --

James: They all say that.

Gill: Then I've got it.

James: "I've been gonna do this for twelve years," you know. Oh, careful! You're still attached.

Gill: Oh, that's right. I was gonna get a rubber band.

James: Sure, that's fine, but not with this on.

Gill: Yeah, put it around. You know, the one thing that I enjoyed about reading—

[End of Interview]