

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
FRANCIS P. GRAVES
U. S. Army, World War II
U. S. Army, Korean War

2006

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Graves, Francis P., (b.1923). Oral History Interview, 2006.

User copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 110 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 110 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Francis P. Graves, a Los Angeles native, describes his experiences in Italy and France as an Army field artillery officer and a general's aide during World War II as well as his time as an Army officer during the Korean War. Graves discusses attending Culver Military Academy (Indiana), a Senior ROTC unit, and his commission at age nineteen. He mentions training at Fort Bragg (North Carolina), artillery officers basic training at Fort Sill (Oklahoma), and transferring to a unit at Camp Livingston (Louisiana). He expresses feeling overwhelmed as both headquarters battery commander and youngest guy in his unit. Graves speaks of his assignment to the 193rd Field Artillery Regiment, their assignment as school troops, the guns they used, and his family's connections to General Patton. He describes shipping out to Oran (Algeria) as a replacement officer on the *Hillary A. Herbert*: the heat, bad food, crowded sleeping space, and his learning to play bridge. He talks about the USO in Algiers, and he describes flying to Naples (Italy) and meeting General Patton. Graves discusses training as 39th Field Artillery, C Battery's troop quartermaster officer with DUKWs and LSTs for the amphibious landing at Anzio. He declares that not moving immediately from Anzio to Rome was a mistake, and he talks about being a forward observer for artillery supporting the 15th Infantry on the beachhead for four months. He speaks of having an observation post knocked down from under him and having a German bomb with a delayed fuse drop right next to him while sleeping. Graves mentions that the German anti-aircraft units would move every night making the dawn patrol dangerous. He analyzes some weapon innovations: a robot that would pull a primer cord across a mine field, sledges made out of steel torpedo cases so troops could be somewhat protected while pulled by tanks, a provisional artillery battalion of machine guns, and proximity fuses. Graves reveals how he got sick from drinking so much wine and milk given by welcoming farmers while on a tense mission. He talks about capturing cities in southern France. He relates the dumbest thing he did—sneaking behind German lines to retrieve some German prisoners and seeing a German tank and troops pass right by the spot where he was hiding. Graves describes a mortar round blowing up a nearby tree, getting shrapnel in his shoulder, and being given a lot of morphine and sodium pentothal. He recalls seeing Madeline Carol, a British actress, on the hospital train to Marseilles, and he details nearly getting into a bar fight with some French and being escorted around town by a Goum sergeant. Graves tells of riding in a locomotive back to his unit in Strasbourg and mentions he became convinced there was a God at the battle at Colmar. He illustrates being sent as forward observer to a green unit and feeling guilty for avoiding going on a patrol that sustained casualties. He portrays his nervousness after having tank fire hit a house he was staying in and requesting a transfer. Graves describes getting orders to be an aide to General

Patton, characterizes the other two aides, Charley Codman and Al Stiller, and recalls what he knew about the Hammelburg raid. He talks about getting a pass to Paris, General Patton's love of the American soldier, and meeting important people who came to see Patton. He describes, after the war ended, trying to visit a German girl but instead crashing the old L4 airplane he had borrowed. Graves speaks of having an expedited return home, graduating from Pomona College, getting a Regular Army commission as second lieutenant, though he'd been a captain during active duty, and being assigned to MacArthur's headquarters and the First Cavalry Division, 82nd Field Artillery in occupied Japan. He describes being sent to relieve the underprepared 24th Division in Korea. Graves declares that without the officers' World War II experience, the lack of people and preparedness would have really put the U.S. in trouble. He characterizes General Hobart Gay as a good guy and the Republic of Korea as having a mix of experienced and alarmingly green divisions. He recalls the artillery having a hard time until the Army started to triple the basic load of ammunition and guns. Graves expresses pride at being commander of the first unit in his battalion to be integrated. He talks about taking Seoul and going up the Yalu River, and he recalls the exhausting work of aggressive patrolling by day and shooting illuminating rounds over the infantry by night. He describes his anger at, instead of being congratulated for his hard work, being reprimanded by a brigadier general for allowing troops to sleep in Korean houses and a resulting bad efficiency report that caused him to be passed over for promotion. Graves mentions the failure of marrying anti-aircraft artillery and field artillery at the Field Artillery Advanced Course, his Civilian Component duty teaching at the University of San Francisco and Alameda High School, and meeting his wife.

Biographical Sketch:

Francis Graves (1923-) served in the Army during World War II and the Korean War. He currently resides in Bayfield, Wisconsin.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2006.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2006.

Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2008.

Interview Transcript:

John: This is John Driscoll, and today is August 29, 2006. And this is an oral history interview with Francis Graves, a veteran of the United States Army in both World War II, and in the Korean War. And we are at Francis's home in Bayfield, Wisconsin. And, Francis, thanks an awful lot for agreeing to the interview. Why don't we start at the very beginning? When and where were you born?

Francis: I was born in Los Angeles, California, in the Good Samaritan Hospital, on the 14th of May, 1923. And my mother was Catherine Banning Graves, and my father was Francis P. Graves, also. They were native-born Californians, as were half of their parents. So, we were genuine Californians. And there is a connection with my military career there, because General George Smith Patton, Jr., was born also in California.

John: Oh, okay.

Francis: And his family, and my mother's family, particularly, were pretty close. As a matter of fact, her mother and General Patton's wife's mother were sisters. So I had a sister, who was eighteen months younger, and a brother who was five years younger than I am. That was our family.

John: Where in California? Oh, you said Los Angeles.

Francis: We live in the Los Angeles area, but we moved from several different places.

John: Okay.

Francis: And the family, as I said, was a native Californian family, and it was kind of lived in the tradition of the old Spanish families. And, at one time, when I was very young, we had a greater family compound in which we lived, and my cousins lived. My great uncle, who owned the place. And then my grandmother. So there was four or five families in there, and so all the cousins were more like brothers and sisters.

John: Oh, that's great. Yeah.

Francis: So, it was, at that time, of course, Los Angeles was very small, compared to what it is now. And I remember it when it was less than a million people. It was a nice place to live. Nice place to grow up. So, I guess—

John: How about schooling?

Francis: Oh, I went to elementary school in the Pasadena area. And then high school, I think my father thought I was a bit of a mama's boy, and he decided I should go to military school

John: Oh, oh.

Francis: He had a friend who had went to Culver Military Academy, in Indiana.

John: Oh, yeah. I've heard of it.

Francis: And he thought that was a good place for me. And later my brother went there, and also a cousin. So, that begins my military career. At Culver Military Academy.

John: About when was that?

Francis: I graduated from Culver in 1942. I guess I went there in about '37 or '38.

John: Okay.

Francis: And it was a hardship for my father because he had just come through the Depression, and he had lost practically everything he owned. So they scrimped and saved to send me there. And it was a great experience for me.

John: Did he have a military background?

Francis: No, he served in the Navy in World War I, and he had some duty on submarines in those days.

John: Oh, wow. Oh.

Francis: And he was transferred to a destroyer. He was on a submarine that got rammed in San Diego Harbor, and a lot of the people were -- I think it was rammed after he left it. And so, you know, he was lucky. And he served on a destroyer named the *Medford*.

John: *Medford*. Okay.

Francis: *Mugford*.

John: *Mugford*. Okay.

Francis: And he had very poor eyesight. And in order to get into the Navy, he stole an eye

chart from the doctor. Or maybe his friend, the doctor, gave it to him. He memorized it. So he was in the Navy. But he couldn't see well, so they made him a yeoman. So that was the military background in our family.

John: What was Culver like?

Francis: Culver was a very scary place for me when I went there. It was a beautiful school. I guess it has grown a lot since then. They had a Senior ROTC unit, which played an important part in my life. And it had three branches of the service, infantry unit, and a cavalry unit, horse cavalry. And then they had an artillery unit, which, at that time, was horse artillery.

John: Okay.

Francis: So I thought the artillery was the interesting one, so I went to the artillery one, that part of the school. And, they put me back. I guess my academics weren't good enough, so they put me back one year. So I went there five years, or almost five years. And I found it to be a challenge, and they had quite an advanced hazing system. That was both scary, and fun, too. And it was, they had great instructors. Many of the instructors were former military people.

John: I see.

Francis: And I enjoyed my time there, after I got used to it. I graduated in 1942, and the war had been on. And, being a Senior ROTC unit, and not many high schools had them. But it was a Senior ROTC unit, so people were eligible for commissioning out of high school

John: Oh, wow.

Francis: And so, there was four or five of us out of that class that were commissioned. In fact, one of the people, his name was Harmon, who graduated with me and was commissioned, was commissioned on his eighteenth birthday. Which is what you had to be in order to be an officer. So, he was the youngest officer in the Army. I think I was nineteen. It was a pretty heady experience for a nineteen-year-old. But it was a terrible thing. It was a terrible thing. High school kids to go in the Army and perform, you know, the duties of an officer. It was really, one time you were proud that you had the commission, but the next time you wondered what the hell do you do now? So, I soon decided that the only thing I could do was to find out, since the sergeants who were instructors there, in ROTC, were such good guys, I decided the best thing I could do was find a sergeant to tell me what I had to do, and where I had to go, and what I had to do. Which was a very smart thing for me to do. In fact, it was the only thing I could have done. So, I don't know that brains

made it possible. The first place they sent us was to a kind of an orientation training course, at Fort Bragg. And that was, they had a bunch of ROTC graduates. Most of them were college people, not just the high school. And the thing that was there, they tried to turn us into some kind of military. Close order drill, marching, basic training sort of thing. The same kind of thing the enlisted people went through, but a much faster course. The marching part, that was no problem for those of us who were from the military. So we had a little leg up there. So that was a fun thing, and it got us to California, to the Army. Then, as I was in artillery, commissioned as an artillery officer, I was sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. This must have been, went in the service in June, of '42. This must have been, maybe, July or August. Or maybe later, to Fort Sill. To the artillery officers basic training course. And that was really a challenge, the study load, the homework load, and the study load was something that I hadn't experienced in high school. It was a real challenge, but I managed to struggle through it, and passed the course. And felt better about myself. I started to know something about what I was supposed to do.

John: That helps.

Francis: But, I tell you, this putting high school kids in the Army as officers, that was a terrible thing to do to them. But it is a measure of how badly the Army needed people, and especially these people who could become officers. So, that was kind of a tough thing, but we managed to muddle through it.

John: Okay.

Francis: After Fort Sill, I was assigned to, in those days, they still had the square divisions. And I was assigned to the 193rd Field Artillery Regiment. Which had two battalions, and was a part of the 28th Division, which was the Pennsylvania National Guard. And they sent me, I think I was the only one that was sent down there, to, at that time the unit was in Camp Livingston, Louisiana. And I don't know where Camp Livingston was. And nobody seems to have remembered where it was. But it was someplace in a pike forest, someplace. And we weren't there very long. And the National Guard unit was kind of route ordered unit. They were recently transferred from civilians. Everybody knew everybody, except me. So I took a lot of ribbing. But, shortly after we go there, I think it was three or four weeks, we loaded our equipment on the train and got on the train, and went up to Fort Bragg again. And we arrived at Fort Bragg, and we were in the new cantonment area. Where they built those old World War II fast-built barracks. And at that time they were going to a triangular division. And so they split the regiment into two battalions. And I stayed in the 193rd, which was the First Battalion. And another one was the 359th, I believe, if I can remember right. All of a sudden, we were going modern. But there was kind of a terrible shortage of officers. And I

was nineteen, and I was assigned. There was not enough officers, and I was assigned the battery commander, the headquarters battery commander, of the 193rd Field Artillery Battalion. I was the youngest guy in the unit. All these National Guard people. And by that time they had some draftees in there. But the first sergeant, I think his name was Rappino, he was the next youngest guy. So we had something in common. But he was a tough guy. So, we struggled along there. And finally got by. Most of our training was long road marches. And physical stuff. To toughen us all up. Then, I was trying to think about this. Then we, that unit, got assigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, as school troops. And the school troops at Fort Sill, there was all kinds of OCS training, and officer training, and training people. The school troops fired artillery in the training courses for these students. And that was a marvelous thing for us, because hardly anybody, you know, ammunition was short, but we got as much shooting, firing, as we needed to. We learned a lot.

John: I'll bet.

Francis: And that was a great experience. And somewhere, I may be reversing a couple of things.

John: That's okay.

Francis: Because it might have been that I went to the 193rd before I went to Fort Sill. But then I was back there, and eventually, I was assigned to A Battery, of the 193rd. And it was in the school troops. And we were active. We were doing good stuff. And somewhere along there, I learned the Army wasn't as fun, and romantic. It took some work to do. I was really kind of lost. But, it soon dawned on me, that I was expected to do things, and nobody would tell me what to do. So I just took it upon myself doing the stuff that I thought needed to be done.

John: Best you can.

Francis: And that was a big lesson for me.

John: What kind of guns?

Francis: At that time, we had, that unit had 105 howitzers. Which were new. I think the unit originally had 75 millimeter, French 75s. So, but shooting 105s was a big deal for us. It was a learning experience. So, but I wasn't very happy there, because I didn't like the unit, and the war was going on, and I thought, maybe, you know, am I going to miss the war? And so, I said, I reversed myself. I mentioned General Patton. My father and General Patton had been close friends. They were both sailors, and my father had sailed to Hawaii with him. On General Patton=s

boat, when he was assigned to Hawaii. And, later, he sailed back with him, from Hawaii. So they were close. So, General Patton knew about me. And, now, I don't know exactly what happened, but somehow, he knew where I was, and he either felt I shouldn't spend my life at Fort Sill, that I could be in the war, or my father told him that I was anxious. And, anyway, I got orders to report for overseas shipment, to Camp Stoneman. Anyway, it was at Newport News, Virginia.

John: Okay.

Francis: And so, I went down there, with a lot of other casual officers, replacement officers. And we were there for a while, and getting ready to ship, we had been processed, and so forth. And all of a sudden, we got orders, and we were told to get down to the docks. And we were loaded on a Liberty ship, the *Hillary A. Herbert*.

John: Okay.

Francis: Which was a freighter, but they had prepared the hold, that is under the superstructure of the ship, for troops. And they had the bunks six, or seven, high.

John: Yeah, I am very familiar with that.

Francis: And it was a miserable place. Hot. And then they had the troop mess down there, in a part of the hold, and the only thing they could possibly cook were phony eggs, you know, ersatz eggs. It was miserable. We got to sea and people were getting seasick. And you were in bad trouble if you were in the bottom bunk. So, several other of the casual officers and I decide, the hell with this. And we started looking around. And on the fantail, there was a lot of room on the fantail, under the, they had a gun, an antisubmarine gun. And there was kind of a shelter there. So we scrounged up some folding cots. And we got them tied down there. I guess there was four or five of us that slept back there. And we didn't have any troop duties, or anything. We were just passengers. So, nobody minded, particularly, because we weren't shunning any work. And we spent the whole voyage, which I think was forty-nine days, back there. And we ate better than they did, because it was a civilian merchant marine crew. And they were raiding the cargo, and they would sell us stuff. Food. That was good. Good for us, but not good for the people who were supposed to get the cargo. So we had a good time back there, and got to be good friends. And that is where I learned to play bridge. We would spend most of our time playing bridge. So, that was a good trip. That was a huge convoy. And it was escorted from beginning by blimps, and we got, the Germans were still running around in submarines. And we got to Gibraltar, and we heard things were tense. But as far as I know, we never got raided by anybody. We got to Gibraltar. And my ship, and another ship that had these casual, replacement people on board

coming over, were supposed to go into Oran. But the whole convoy went past Oran, and then somebody discovered that we were supposed to go to Oran, where there was a big replacement center. You know, in North Africa. Algiers. And so, they detached us from this convoy, and told us to get to Oran. Well, the problem was that the Germans had a lot of airplanes flying around. That was a pretty tense time. We, everybody ordered us, to take our carbines and go on deck, and they issued ammunition. So, in case we got raided by airplanes, everybody could shoot at them. With carbines. Yeah, that was a little bit hairy. But we got in to Oran, Africa. And without any problems. And then we went to the replacement center. And there, we, as casual officers, were put in charge of the replacement enlisted men. And they had stuff for us to do. We had to go on marches across the desert. That was an interesting experience.

John: I'll bet.

Francis: The biggest danger there was scorpions. You had to dump your boots out before you got into them in the morning. But it was a bad experience. Of course, there wasn't much discipline, because we didn't have any authority over those soldiers. They weren't assigned to any units. Some of them were rebellious. So we got through that as best we could. Then, I got orders to go to Italy. And I was assigned to the Third Infantry Division. And I had air priority, but low priority. I believe this was something that General Patton had something to do with. And so we got to, from Oran, we got to Algiers. Algiers, and I got bumped off. That was about late, well, early December, of 1943.

John: Okay.

Francis: And, here I was, a lonely replacement officer in Algeria, in Algiers. Without knowing anybody. And they gave me a billet, some private house. So I started to explore things, and I found this really nice place off the, you know, the USO [United Service Organizations].

John: Oh, okay.

Francis: They had a really nice USO, and they took good care of us there. And, well, I was exploring and exploring around. Bumped into a naval lieutenant commander, who was doing some exploring around. And he was a naval gunfire director. That was his job. So we had, I was an artilleryman. So we had something in common. So, anyway, we palled around, and he turned out to be an SOB. He turned out to be a homosexual. That was my first contact with any of those people. So, I had to handle that. But, anyway, Algeria was a fascinating city. And it was a fun experience to be there. It was sort of fortunate that I was there at Christmas time, because of the party at the USO.

John: Yeah. Sure.

Francis: So, then I got my orders again, and we went to swing from Algeria to Sicily, where they refueled. And that was good, because Mount, what is the one in Sicily?

John: Stromboli, and Etna.

Francis: Yeah, the one in Sicily was, the volcano was erupting. You could see the lava flowing down the mountain side.

John: Wow. Once in a life time.

Francis: Yeah. So then we went to Naples. And I went to a replacement center in Naples, which I knew I was going to the Third Division. It might have been a Third Division replacement center. That was a terrible place. It was in a big, huge parking lot, and it was muddy, and it was raining. It was a miserable place. And, at that time, I got a call saying that, ordered to get in a Jeep, and I was to go to meet General Patton.

John: Oh, wow.

Francis: I don't know where it was, but we went quite a ways, and met him there. He, of course, knew who I was, and I knew who he was. But I don't think I had ever met him before. It was sort of an awesome experience.

John: I'll bet.

Francis: That was after the Sicily campaign, and he was on ice, because of the slapping incident.

John: Yes, I remember that.

Francis: But he was very gracious to me. And I guess we talked for about twenty minutes, or a half hour, and then he sent me back. And, you know, he gave me little pep talk. I was going to a good division, and so forth. So, then we were sent to our units, and I was assigned to the 39th Field Artillery, C Battery. And it was on the Casino Line, at that time. And it was the last time they were, three or four days after I was there, that was New Years Day I got there. And a few days later we were pulled out and sent back to just north of Naples. Cittivechia, or I forget what the name of the place was, where there is a big bowl. Actually a volcano bowl. And that was a cantonment area for troops. And we were in there training for the

amphibious landing that was going to happen at Anzio.

John: Okay.

Francis: And so, we spent several weeks training. We'd load our howitzers on DUKWs, and they would put them off LSTs [Landing Ship, Tanks], and we would practice going ashore. Sometimes they put us off, one time there were big seas, and we lost a couple DUKWs, we lost a couple guns. They sank. But, to go through all those problems was routine for most people. We got replacements. The guns we got were better than the guns we had because they had been to a lot of war, before. Anyway, so we were then sent down to load on the LSTs. Now, I was the newest guy in the battalion, I guess, and I got the messy job that nobody wanted, which is known as the Troop CQM. Troop quartermaster officer. And his job is to load the LSTs. And they give you a pattern of loading so that the first things that come off are the fighting units, and the last things that come off are the support parts, of the battalion.

John: Let me flip this.

Francis: Okay.

[End of Side A of Tape 1.]

John: You were the troop quartermaster?

Francis: Yeah, the troop quartermaster, and I had to load that LST. And, you know, it was, we had, they gave us a pattern of the ship's lower deck, and upper deck, and then they showed the priority units that had to come off first, so they had to go on last. So you had to stick little patterns in the thing. That was quiet a job, but the Navy knew what they were doing, so it wasn't all me that did it. So we loaded the ship. And then the whole division loaded, also, but some of them, the infantry units, went on the bigger ships. They didn't have equipment. So we went up to Anzio, and made the landing at Anzio. And that was, I should have looked up when the date was. But it was in January, late January, I think. Maybe the last of January. And I'll never forget it. Our LST went up on its proper beach. And that was exciting, because all these other LSTs were coming up on the beach. And I was up there on the deck watching it. And all of a sudden, these German airplanes came by, and they were strafing, and dropping little bombs. And, of course, every ship in the harbor was shooting at them. And that was exciting to me until I discovered that this stuff raining down were all the shell fragments.

John: If it goes up, it's got to come down.

Francis: It happened to be dangerous place, I decided, so I quickly got under cover. And I noticed that everybody else was, nobody else was standing out there. So that was my first big lesson. But we got unloaded, the ship was unloaded. And I was released and went to my unit, which I found with ease. It wasn't hard to find. And so then we started moving inland. And there was no resistance at all, outside of the German air force. And so we got to these places. But we were very slow making, filling our positions. Not only our division, but the other divisions, the 45th Division was there. That was the Oklahoma National Guard. And the 36th Division, which is the Texas National Guard. And, I think, the First Armored Division came ashore about the same time we did. That composed, comprised the VI U.S. Corps. The other people that landed at Anzio were British, a British corps, and I forget what their divisions were. But they were on the north side of the beach head. We were on the south side of the beach head. So, we consolidated the position on the beach head, and then stayed there. We could have, I think, we could have probably gone to Rome without any big resistance. But we stayed there and allowed them to build up their defenses around it. And the idea was, some people blame Churchill for the idea. The idea was that the Casino Line would collapse as soon as we landed behind it. But it didn't collapse. The Germans were smarter than people think. So they built up defenses around us. So we spent four miserable months on the beach head. And they were on the hills surrounding the beach head, and looking down at us. And shooting at us with all kinds of artillery. Air planes. So, it was a very dangerous place, and even the nurses in the hospital were taking casualties because there was no place, the hospitals were next to ammunition dumps, or strategic things. You know, it was not very fun. And I was a forward observer for the artillery, which our battalion supported the 15th Infantry. And the 15th Infantry is further identified by that is the unit that Audie Murphy was in.

John: Oh, okay. All right.

Francis: Yeah. I think he was in the First Battalion, and C Battery, my battery, supported the Third Battalion. Of this regiment. So, what we would do is, we had two forward observers in the battery. One would be up with the infantry for four days. And it was really bad living conditions. And then he would come back and I would go up for four days. And so, because we were pretty active all the time, those four days, night and day we could be shooting, or ducking. So, anyway, that was my first initiation to combat. And that was really a tough battle. They talk about the casualties that we have lost in the Iraq War, we would lose that many people in a day in Anzio. I mean, it is ridiculous at wringing our hands at what is happening over there now. So, my first actual combat experience was, I had never been up to the infantry battalion headquarters before. And the liaison officer, each artillery unit has a liaison officer with a battalion, and a forward observer who does the firing, and the liaison officer does the coordination between the forward

observer and the infantry and the artillery. So, he was an experienced guy, and he took me up there. And he said, "Do what I do." And about that time we were being shot at by the German artillery. So I did what he did. He would run for a while, and I'd run behind him. And he'd hit the ground, and I'd hit the ground. That was my initiation. We got into battalion headquarters, and I got introduced around. And I guess they thought I was kind of green, and I was. But, anyway, that was my introduction. So, from then on, I was a forward observer.

The worst day, I guess, one of my worst days I ever spent in combat was February 29th, when they had this huge counter-attack, and they tried to drive us back into the sea. And I was with, I think it was, K Company of the infantry. I'm not sure which company it was. And there was a nice sturdy German, I mean, Italian farm house that we were in. And then that day, tank fire, and artillery fire, they proceeded to knock that house down from under us. That is where I had my observation post, up on the second floor. And they totally knocked it down. The house didn't exist any more, except the back wall, and there was no place to go. But I spent half a day under a tank trying to direct artillery fire from under a tank that was behind this wall. So they knocked down that wall, and they seen the tank, and they knocked the tank out. But it was a bad day.

So, that continued on, and one of the times that the, our -- we had times when we would take the units out of the line and let them rest and recuperate, and get clean clothes, and fed up, and they came with movies and stuff like that. The 45th Infantry Division did the same thing. They were on our left, and they, let's see, how did they go? Their infantry regiment, whichever it was, was brought back to rest, and it was replaced with our unit, our 15th Infantry. And so, as a forward observer, I was to shoot, to direct fire for their artillery battalion, which was back there. And, in order to do that, they gave me the radio operator and the forward observer crew from the 45th. Well, they had built a little observation post on a little knoll, that was dug in with a roof on top. And it was a pretty good place. But, in order to get to it, you had to crawl on your belly, so they didn't see you. And, at night, you would pull back, and they built an igloo out of ammunition cases filled with dirt, and then piled dirt over it. And it was really muddy. Anzio area was a marsh area. And it was muddy. And so, at night, when things are quieting down, this radio operator and I would get back in this igloo and try to sleep. Try to sleep. And one of the very scary experiences I had, all the time this was going on, the Germans would strafe the harbor and try to knock out our ships, and so forth, with their airplanes. And they had a flight pattern that would come right over us. And then the airplanes would come in, and the anti-aircraft would go up. And they would turn off and try again. And I could almost hear the pilot say, "The hell with this. I'm not going to try it again." So he, right over us, he released his bomb.

John: Oh, wow.

Francis: It was practically right over us. Anyway, you could hear it coming down. And I was sure it was going to come into our igloo, there. But it hit close by, with a sort of dull thud. It had a delayed fuse, or something. And it built a big crater in which our igloo tipped into. Just completely collapsed. That is how close it was.

John: Oh, my God.

Francis: So, that was another scary time. And then, when they started in, after the beach head settled down, they started to rotate the forward observers back to the air section. They would go up flying in the F-4s, which are J3 Cub sixty-five horse power engines, and give us a rest. Back in the air section they had showers, and stuff like that. So, I did a lot of that. I liked that, because you could see the whole beach head. It was good to shoot artillery from. The only problem, the only one that was a little scary, was the dawn patrol. Because at night, the Germans would move their anti-aircraft units around, and try to shoot down Cubs. So the first Cub up there was the one that got shot at, and, once you knew where they were shooting from, then you could identify where it was, and everybody knew not to fool around there. But, that was a scary part. But, then we built up, and built up. It was very interesting, to break out of there, it was a huge problem. Because they had built up great defenses. And so the divisions, I guess all the divisions, but our division particularly had a lot of innovative devices to break out of there. One of the things was a device that would explode across a mine field. A lot of talk about robots, but they created, their shops built these little tractors with a washing machine engine in it, or something like that. And they could point it across a mine field, and it would pull a harness behind it with primer cord. And it would go across the mine field, and then they could detonate this primer cord, and that would theoretically blow up their mines. And another thing they did, they went to the Navy and they got steel cases that torpedoes come in. And they cut them longitudinally. Well, they were just big enough for a man to lie down in. And they would make kind of a sledge, with about six of these things together, two in tandem, and four trailing. And they'd hook it to a tank and then the squad could lie down in these cases and they would be somewhat protected from the snipers, or machine gun fire, or so forth.

John: Oh, yeah. I've never heard of that.

Francis: Another thing they did was they created a field artillery, I mean, an artillery attack battalion of .30 caliber machine guns. They had four batteries of a twenty-five guns each. A hundred guns were in there. And I was assigned to that. This was just before the break-out. And I had one of the batteries. And Anzio, all these marshes had been drained by Mussolini, there was a network of canals. And we dug in along the banks of the canals, and we surveyed each one of our machine

guns in to where we knew exactly where it was on there. And that was a huge. And it had to be done at night, because we didn't want them to see us doing it at daytime. And then the biggest job, we took all our ammunition and we took all the tracers out of, and replaced the tracer rounds with regular rounds, and then we would fire those guns as artillery pieces, in direct fire. They would have a target and they would know where the target was, and they could identify it, and they could give us an azimuth and an elevation to shoot so you could hit it.

John: That is something.

Francis: So, when we broke out, that was a very busy two or three days. When we ran out of ammunition, we weren't mobile at all. So after the break-out, they were disbanding the unit, but it was a provisional machine gun battalion, which was very interesting, and very educational for me.

John: Sure.

Francis: And also very lucky for me, because the fellow, I was supposed to be the forward observer with the Third Battalion of the 15th Infantry when it jumped out. And a fellow by the name of Barney Pine took my place, and he was killed in that. So, there but for the grace of God, went I. So. Anyway, we broke out of Anzio, and the German line pretty well collapsed, and we got to Rome. That was kind of fun. Going up. There were sporadic fights, but, and, that was still my time in the air section, when we went to Rome. And a friend of mine, who was a pilot, we got to be friends. So, it was kind of boring, so we decided, let's go to Rome. So we got into his air plane, and we put-putted up to Rome. And there was a big soccer field. And all these little liaison planes were landed there. In the soccer field. So we landed in the soccer field, and everybody had the same idea as we did. So we were wandering around, well before it was liberated. The Germans were all gone, and they treated us like kings. You know. So, in a way, we were there, spectators, as the liberating troops. Interesting. That was fun.

John: That's great.

Francis: And, Rome, of course, was an open city. And then after Rome, we didn't go on up north. We were pulled back out. To train for the landing in southern France. Normandy had happened in June, and we landed, I think it was August 9th. In southern France. Now, that was a different war. The war was pretty intense and pretty dangerous in Italy but when we went to southern France, we expected another big thing like Normandy. We knew how bad it was in Normandy. But we went ashore, there was nobody shooting at us. But there was a lot of mines on the beaches. But, once people get their feet blown off, they learned to walk in the footsteps of the guy ahead of us. And then one of the things that happened. I was a

casualty, but not from enemy action. I had my forward observer crew, and had a radio operator, named Adams. He was a red-headed kid. And I had a Jeep driver named Burns. He was an Indian, from Oklahoma. And another guy named Gonzales, he was from Arizona. And I forget who the other people were. We had the Jeep, and that was our troop. And so, of course, we went ashore walking but we picked the Jeeps up shortly. So, I had a secondary mission, and my mission was to shoot the Navy until our artillery got on shore. The naval ships were in support of us then. So they would give me, a little mountain to climb, a hill, a steep hill, a mound that overlooked Ste. Tropez. And that was my observation post, and I was up there, and I had regulars that I could contact the Navy, and so forth. But to get there, the infantry went one way, and they didn't go my way, so I had to go across the country to get to my observation post. And we didn't know where the Germans were. And, you know, it was kind of scary to be out there by ourselves. And there was a long line of vineyards that we had to cross through. And we'd go sneaking along behind these vines, wondering if anybody was going to shoot at us. And these French people on these farms would see us, and they'd come running around. Say the welcome, and giving us wine, you know. Stuff to eat. So we allowed ourselves to be entertained, but we still had this mission. So that must have happened four or five times, and, so by the time we got to the end of that base of the hill, we were pretty well wine'd up, you know. You can't insult them. So, the last farm house, they must have been teetotalers, because they didn't bring out wine, they brought out milk. So we drank the damned milk. And then we climb this hill and got up the hill, and our observation post, and we were all just sick as dogs. I mean, talk about exhaustion and tension and the wine and the milk, we were all heaving our stomachs up. But it was funny. That is how I became a casualty. The only real bad thing about that landing was the air corps had dropped the parachutists that were supposed to support us in the ocean, and they lost a lot of people.

John: Oh, that's tragic.

Francis: So, anyway, after that beach head was hit, all we did, the artillery came ashore. The VI U. S. Corps was part of the First French Army. And then we started cutting off the towns after Ste. Tropez, I don't know. Wound up cutting off Marseilles, I am drawing a blank on the other towns. Anyway, the southern France cities. So we would be ordered to cut them off, and there was some real fighting with the Germans. But once the fighting was over, then the French would enter the cities triumphantly. They got all the glory. We did all the work. Which was, you know, really rankled us. And then, so, once that was all done, we started north, and we went up the Rhone Valley. And there was huge artillery, the Germans were retreating down this narrow valley, by the river, and they had this huge convoy, which was destroyed by artillery fire. I mean, this was a massacre. I didn't participate. I saw it. Happened I wasn't directing any fire. But, it was a

terrible massacre. It was a real slaughter. And then we continued north, and we went up and there was a series of resistance, which were quite sharp. Little, heavy fights and then they'd give way, and we'd go on. And we'd hit another one. And we had, L Company of the 15th Infantry, was commanded by a young captain who had come from my home town. I didn't know him, but he owned the gas station in my home town, El Hambre, California. And he was commanding the company. His strategy was, go as fast forward as you can until they surround you, and you can fight your way out. He was a pretty aggressive guy. He was a fun guy to be with, but very dangerous. So, I was with them, and we had got way ahead. And we got, we were way behind the German lines and we were sort of in a perimeter. And this big farm house. Maybe it was a kind of an inn, or something like that, by a farm house. And in the middle of not a German armored car, but German, like Jeeps, and like Volkswagens. And they got up to where we were and then there was a small arms fight. You know, I will always remember, I was waiting for the infantry to say something, the lieutenant I was with to give me some kind of order. I said, "When do we start shooting?" He said, "Right now." So we start shooting at these poor guys. And then these tanks that continued coming, we thought they were German, that was for sure. But it turned out they were American tanks coming up the road. So that was another scary time.

John: Yeah. Yeah.

Francis: And, so, we went on, and on, and on. And it got kind of boring. And this was probably the dumbest thing I ever did, we were at some place, on the edge of some town. We had taken it, and there was no resistance in front of it. But we knew that the German units were not too far ahead. But they weren't doing anything. And we were waiting for the rest of the division to catch up with us, for our division to catch up. And it was hot, and it was boring. And somebody, a French guy, probably a FFI guy, came up to the infantry and said, "You know, we got about fourteen or fifteen German prisoners in a house up here. And we want to get rid of them. Can you come and get them?" The infantry said, "Hell, no, I'm not going to do that. It would mean me going through the lines, and up there." And so, I said, "Well, I'll come up and get them." So, I got my forward observer crew, except for the Jeep driver, and we went up there. And we had a few, couple of infantrymen to go with us. And the infantry had captured a German truck, so they said, "When we get close enough, we'll send the truck there for you." So we went sneaking up there. He took us up to this house. It turned out there were several, fourteen or fifteen German prisoners in there. So we were ready to walk back out with them, and, oh, we did take my Jeep. Because I remember the Jeep was parked behind some bushes and there was this building up on a little hill, and the road, there was a cut in the road. And the building was up on a little hill. And they were in the basement. So, I had been up there, and I came out, and I looked down, and then I saw the Jeep driver, and the wireman, Gonzales. I didn't mention

Gonzales before. Gonzales. They were quickly dropping behind our Jeep, and behind some bushes. And Gonzales was kind of a reckless young guy, so he had an M1 rifle, and he was starting to get ready. And all of a sudden I see, through the driveway, a cut, this German gun, the muzzle break on the tank, it started to come by, and it got longer and longer, and finally there was this tank with a bunch of Germans sitting on top. And there was a couple of more vehicles with Germans in them. And they went right by, underneath where our Jeep was, and never even saw it.

John: Oh, man.

Francis: So, I decided right then and there that I had done the dumbest thing that I could possibly do. So, the thing, after they had gone, I sent the Jeep going back along the highway, and they would get that truck. And I said, "We are going to walk out, and escort these prisoners out." And so, we got toward our lines and the truck came and met us with our Jeep. So then we piled all these Germans in this truck, and then I said, "Now, if we go back toward our lines with this German truck -

[End of Side B of Tape 1]

John: You were going back with the prisoners, bringing them into our lines.

Francis: Oh, yeah, but we got back inside our lines without any problem, except the infantry people were looking at us as if we were crazy. As I said, I didn't tell my bosses about that, because they would have been mad as hell, probably. Taking even discipline action. Because we were not doing what we were supposed to be doing. But it was useful, and humorous, I think, in boredom. We went on to northern parts of France, we went to Vessensan (?), and Epinal, and places like that. And we had some really hard fights. As I started to say, it is hard work being an artillery observer with infantry. Because you are either moving with them, walking with them, or following them in the Jeep if you think it is safe. And you don't get much rest, because you would have to shoot artillery, and so forth. So one of the things that we always tried to do at night, was find a good farm house with good beds, if we could find a farm house with soft beds and that would be a God-send, you didn't have to sleep on the ground.

John: I can imagine.

Francis: Okay, we got up north, and we got in a big fight near a town called Rambervillers. And I was back with the Third Battalion of the 15th Infantry, and I was with, I think it was I Company. And it was in reserve. This was in a forest. And there was no place for me to go shoot, anyway. I think the whole battalion was in reserve. At least, I Company was in reserve, and I was with them. And the Germans had dug a

slit trench in this area. And I was sitting in this slit trench, with my legs in the trench. And the company commander was sitting with me. We were smoking and talking. And the company exec, we were on either side of him. And we were just talking, and joking around, And all of a sudden there is an explosion in the tree above us. It was a German mortar round that hit the tree, and it blew up in the tree, and it just blew all these fragments around. And the company commander looked around. First of all, I felt a blow on my shoulder. It practically knocked me into the trench. It was really a hard blow, like somebody hit me with a baseball bat. And I'll never forget the company commander, whose name I almost, well, it doesn't make any difference. He said, "Well, gee, you know, did anybody get hurt?" And it looked like nobody got hit. And that was a big relief to everybody. Except I said, "I think I got hit." And they said, "What?" So I had a hole in my jacket, and I looked, and I had a hole in my shoulder. It wasn't bleeding much. It was just a hole. But it was a beauty. I was kind of numb. So the question was, "What do I do now?" They said, "You got to go back to the aid station and get that taken care of." So that is what I did. I went back to the infantry aid station, but by that time, they had a lot of casualties that the infantry was taking, and they were too busy. So, I had my Jeep not far from there, so we got in the Jeep and went back to artillery. And our battalion surgeon looked at it, and he said, "Hell, you got to go to the hospital. This is pretty bad. There is a fragment lodged up against the bone." So he gave me a shot of morphine. And put me in an ambulance, and I went to the collection center for the wounded. And every time you got to a collection center, they gave you a shot of morphine. So, we went back to the hospital, the general hospital, yeah, I think it was in Dijon. And I was feeling better and better.

John: With the morphine.

Francis: And, so, the walking wounded, like me, were sitting on benches while the operating ones were ready to go in. And some orderly came along and gave us all another shot of morphine. And that was the last straw. I found myself laughing, on my back, lying on the floor. I guess I had just fallen off the bench. So, I was really drunk as six hundred dollars. And it was fun. So, then, I went and got operated on, and they gave me sodium pentothal. And removed this little fragment. It was about big as this.

John: Yeah. They don't have to be very big.

Francis: And, but it really hit hard. And it turned out the surgical nurse was a girl who was engaged to a friend of mine, a guy I had gone over with on the *Hillary Herman* with, and he had got shot in Anzio. And he had been shot with a fragment that ripped through his rectum. And so, when I went from Anzio down to Naples on R&R, I went to see him, but he was by that time, he was recovering. And he had

met this girl and they were engaged. So the three of us went out. There was a big Allied officers club there and the people were having a good time. And the only thing that made that whole evening look quite unique was because he carried a big box of Kotex under his arm, to treat his wound. So, he was very proud of it. He recovered fully. They put him back through channels. Well, anyway, so this girl was the surgical nurse when I was in the hospital, was taking this fragment out of my shoulder. And so we renewed old acquaintances. One of the things they said about sodium pentothal is it makes you do things, crazy things. She said I was talking, I was doing a lot of cursing, obscene language while I was being operated on. I don't think it was true. Anyway, we had a good time. It was kind of like old times. Then I got, after being in the hospital for a few days, they sent us back to 11th Hospital, which was in Marseilles. Put us on the hospital train. And on that hospital train was, one of the girls working on the hospital train was Madeline Carol. Do you remember her?

John: I remember the name.

Francis: British actress. Beautiful.

John: Okay. Sure. All right.

Francis: She was on that train. So we got down to Marseilles, in the convalescent hospital, and the people in my ward were not really seriously wounded. They were like me, million dollar wound. And so we were having this one guy that had seven holes in his back, and things like that. Arms in slings, and walking on crutches, and things like that. So, we got passes out of the hospital, and we blew the town of Marseilles, and got into trouble various ways.

John: Yes. Yes.

Francis: And one of the more interesting things that happened to us in Marseilles was we were in some sleazy bar, in a sleazy building, and it was an upstairs bar. And there was a bunch of French, not soldiers, but FFI [French Forces of the Interior]. And the FFI were two kinds. There were the kinds that were French, for Free France, and they were good guys, and then there were Communist units, and they were bad guys. And I don't know what these guys were, but they saw these three wounded Americans up there drinking too much, and they started to lean on us. And I don't think we would have done very well in a fight. But there was a Goum sergeant. Goums were Africans, Arabs from French Morocco.

John: Oh, okay, sure.

Francis: And the French used them a lot. And this guy was a tough guy. And I don't know

what he said to these guys, in French, but he let them know, and they backed way off. And he took us, and sort of herded us around to the same places. Nice guy. He didn't like the French at all.

John: I can imagine.

Francis: He said, as long as they were in Africa, fighting, or places that weren't in France, they, the French would treat them badly, but, immediately, when they came to France, the French evidently didn't want them messing around with French women, so they brought the Goum women with them. And they treated them awfully bad. I had seen it, where these Goums were mule trains, and carrying freight to the front for the French, in the snow with no gloves on. They were treated very badly. But he didn't like the French at all. Anyway, after say a month or so at Marseilles, the put us back on the train, but this time it was forty-and-eight cars.

John: Oh, yeah.

Francis: And that was a miserable trip, because by that time it was getting cold. And there was some snow. And the car that was assigned to me with a bunch of replacement medical people, who were coming to the medical people, it was a forth-and-eight car. We were right next to the locomotive. And it was kind of miserable, because I think that they did burn coal, so we had a lot of cinders, and it was dirty. And it was cold. And I just said, that I didn't like this at all. At one of the stops, I walked up to the locomotive, and they had this French engineer and fireman, but they were supervised by the Americans' engineering department. So they said, "Why don't you come up and ride with us?" So I rode a lot of that trip up in this locomotive puffing away, where it was warm. It was fun. So we got back to my unit, and by that time it was in Strasbourg. Right on the Rhine. And the Germans were on one side of the Rhine and we were on the other side of the Rhine, and nobody was doing much. But it was, wait a minute, in Strasbourg, right on the front line and after I got back, well, they give us a little leave, R&R, and the Army had taken over a big club, a hotel-like club. And it was a kind of officers' rest camp, and the unique thing was right on the front lines, and so, I had spent some time there, and so, the unit was also in Strasbourg. And I had a beautiful OP, observation post. It was in a big power house. And walk into the building, the power house, and go in the elevator, and press the button for the top floor, and I would sit there with my telescope, and watch the Germans across the Rhine, and, of course, we would never shoot at them, because they would shoot back.

John: Yeah. Yeah.

Francis: So, after, that was fun duty in Strasbourg. It was a beautiful city, and lots of things

to see. And not much activity. But then that was about the time the Battle of the Bulge.

John: Okay, around Christmas.

Francis: Yeah. So, just before. And, so, we were sent, the Germans, when they made the penetration up around Bastogne, they also made a penetration around Colmar.

John: Oh, I didn't know that.

Francis: And it was a tank, and it was designed to draw our troops away. So we got sent down to Colmar. And that was quite a little battle. And that is probably where I realized that there was God. I think I got convinced of it there, because of, you know, all the things that happened. And so, after Colmar, what happened? Oh, after Colmar, we went back, landed a little stint, I was a liaison officer between a French parachute unit in the Vosges Mountains. And I couldn't speak any French, and they didn't speak any English. They were sitting there. I don't know what I could have done to help them. But, then, our division was pulled out of line. There was a brand new U. S. division, and I can't remember the, I probably could remember the number of that division. It was brand new. They were so new, that the troops were still carrying two pairs of shoes in their packs. I mean, that was the sign of someone just got off the boat. And I was sent up there as a forward observer, to support them. And our artillery was supporting them. And they were so green, it was scary. And this was in snow, and the battalion commander of this unit wanted to send out a reconnaissance patrol, and he told me to go with the reconnaissance patrol. When our artillery forward observer section has the heavy radios, break down into two parts, and in order to stop, use them, you had to stop and set them up, screw the battery pack in the thing. It was really a cumbersome operation. And it was snow, hip deep. And I said, no, I am not going to go out there. I didn't trust the small reconnaissance patrol. If it had been a heavy combat patrol, or something, it might have been different. But I didn't trust him. And he got quite angry. And I said, "If you don't, I've been ordered never to go on patrol by our battalion commander, and secondly, if you don't believe me, you can call him." And he didn't do it. So, I didn't go out there, and the patrol got shot up pretty bad.

John: Oh, wow. Oh.

Francis: And so I really had a guilty conscience about not going. And later on, I don't know exactly the sequence of events, but we were in another place, in a town, pulled out of the line. We weren't active, and I had my forward observer crew in a little house, in this town. Nice little house, we had beds and stuff like that. But the Germans, there was a church steeple in the town, and the Germans obviously

thought there was somebody observing. And they would shoot at that church steeple. So, every time they would, with a tank or something, every time they would miss the church steeple, they would hit our house. So, by this time, I was really getting my guilty conscience about not going out on that patrol. And I said, this is what I get. I am going to get killed here sitting here, because I really got nervous, and upset. And I had been a forward observer since Anzio, in early '43. A whole year. Up there with the infantry. And I went back, and I told my battalion commander I want a change of job. This is getting to me. And I felt bad about that, too. But they moved me. They transferred me Headquarters Battery, and I became the communication officer for the battalion. Or, assistant communication officer, I forget which. But, shortly thereafter, the battalion commander came to me and said, "How would you like to be a general's aide?" And I said, "I don't think I would like it." He said, "Well, you have an opportunity here." And I said, "No, I think I would like to stay with this unit." And he said, okay. And about a week later, he said, "Guess what, you got orders to Third Army Headquarters. You are going to be a general's aide, and you are going to be an aide to General Patton."

John: Oh, my God!

Francis: So, that was a shock to me. I knew him by reputation. My unit was my home, you know. I was happy there. But, I got transferred to Third Army Headquarters. And that was, I went there in early April, of '45. And, oh, yeah, we went through, and Christmas in the Vosges Mountains was really something.

John: It was the coldest winter in a hundred years.

Francis: Yeah. And something very interesting happened there. We got proximity fuses, for the first time. Do you know what they are?

John: Yep.

Francis: And the people, the military people, who were guarding that batch of fuses in the factory when they were manufactured, came all the way across the ocean and delivered them to us. That is how secret they were. So, that made the artillery a lot more effective. So, that was something that I will always remember. So, when I got to the Third Army, it was in Frankfurt. I remember, the war ended May 9th, in Europe, and I was there. About the first of April. Patton had known that I had been wounded, and he had known that, I guess he knew that I had been transferred out of the battery. He told my father, "He has had enough." By letter. And so, he transferred me there. So, he had three aides. He had a lieutenant colonel, Charley Codman, who was the social, political aide. Codman had been a prisoner of war, interned in Switzerland in World War I. He was a flyer. So he'd been in -- spent a

lot of time and he spoke French and he spoke German. And so he was kind of, in fact, Patton picked him up because he was a French-speaker. He liked him, and made him his aide there. So, he had been with Patton all this time. Good guy. And he was a, in civilian life, he was a wine dealer in Massachusetts. So he spent a lot of time in Europe, buying wine and knowing people. He knew everybody. So, he was a good guy for Patton. He advised General Patton about social things, about political things. He knew everybody. He also had a little guy named Al Stiller, who, at that time, when I went there, was a major. Al Stiller was an old man. He'd met Patton in the Pancho Villa.

John: Oh, on the border?

Francis: Yeah. When they went down there. Patton was kind of a rump aide to General Pershing down there. And Al Stiller was the first first sergeant of the first truck company in the Army.

John: Oh, yeah?

Francis: Yeah. So they met and became friends ever since then. When this war started, he asked Al if he would come back in the service. He was an old guy, and they made him a second lieutenant. He was an aide. He was a major when I was there. And I went there as a first lieutenant. And Al kind of took care of the general when he was in harm's way (dogs barking) and but when I went there, Al was a prisoner of war, because I don't know if you remember about the Hammelburg raid.

John: No.

Francis: There was a prisoner of war camp in Hammelburg, and General Patton sent a task force to relieve this prisoner of war camp, because he knew that his son-in-law, Johnny Waters, Colonel Waters, was a prisoner there. He sent Al Stiller along to try and get Johnny Waters out. He had been wounded. Waters had been wounded. But the thing that happened, the people who sent the task force sent less troops than they should have. And so the task force was all captured, too. So they were all prisoners. So, anyway, when I went there, Al was still a prisoner. But they raised it, and went to war, and he came back. And so, then my experience with General Patton started. And I was in awe and scared of him at first, but he turned out to be a wonderful guy. And he was a guy that loved American soldiers, and he thought the world of the American soldier, and he had some great stories. And one of the great stories was that when he was in Frankfurt, he was driving through the streets of Frankfurt in his Jeep, and there was a couple of American sergeants talking to some girls. And, you know, we passed a regulation that American soldiers will not fraternize with German women.

John: Okay.

Francis: And so, Patton didn't believe in that order, but he had to enforce it. So he stopped his Jeep and he called those sergeants over, and he said, "There is a no fraternization law. What are you doing talking to these women?" And this sergeant said, "Sir, or General, these ladies are Russians and we are learning the language."

John: That's why he made sergeant.

Francis: That was just the kind of answer that Patton would love. And he told that story over and over again. He thought it was the funniest thing. Of course, he didn't do anything to them. Then the Third Army moved, and made several moves, until the end of the war. At the end of the war we were at Regensburg, the headquarters was in Regensburg. Which was the Ratisbon, you know, the home, that is where Napoleon captured the Ratisbon. That poem about that messenger that came and delivered a message to Napoleon, that the Ratisbon had fallen, and he staggered and fell off his horse, and Napoleon said, "Son, you are wounded." And he says, "No, sir, I am dead." And he dropped dead at his feet. Remember that poem?

John: No, I didn't hear that. That is quite a story.

Francis: Anyway, so, it was a great experience being with General Patton. Oh, I forgot to tell you, one of the things he did after I was wounded, when I got back to my unit, I think we were still in Strasbourg, I got ordered to go to Third Army Headquarters, to see him. I think he was wanting to size me up and see what had happened to me. So, I got my, they gave me a driver and a Jeep, and we went up to his headquarters, which, at that time, was in Nancy. And I spent an hour or two with him. Had my picture taken with him. Which I have a copy of. And then he said, "Have you been to Paris?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Well, why don't you take a few days. I'll give you a pass to Paris." The driver and I went to Paris and spent about four or five days. Had a good time. Then went back. But I think at that time he was looking me over to see if he wanted to get me up to Third Army Headquarters. Evidently, I didn't make too bad an impression. So, anyway, that was my World War II experience. General Patton was a wonderful guy. The movie was a caricature of him. It was sort of good, sort of true, but too much a caricature. He loved the American soldier. He was very sensitive to the people he was talking to, and very solicitous of them. And it was a great experience for me, if for no other reason than the people who came to see him. I got to meet them. Marlene Dietrich was there. Secretary of War Stimson, and Assistant Secretary of War McCloy, I think. And a lot of big shots. And, of course, all the generals were there. And Jack Benny, and Larry Adler. I don't know if you remember Larry Adler. He was a harmonica player. Great guy. I had breakfast one day, this was

after the war was over, with Jack Benny.

[End of Side A of Tape 2.]

John: Okay. Go ahead. This is fantastic.

Francis: Well, to make a long story short, General Patton asked me what I wanted to do with my life. And I said, "Well, I want to stay in the Army." And he said, "Well, okay. You can't stay in the Army unless, I mean, there is no point unless you get a college degree."

John: Okay.

Francis: So, he arranged for me, I had enough points to go home anyway, but he arranged for me, sort of expedited my return home. As a matter of fact, he assigned me temporary aide to General Muller, who was the G-4 of the Third Army, the supply officer. And we flew across the Atlantic to Washington, at which I was then released. And I went home to California, and got discharged. And I went to, got enrolled at Pomona College. And, that is in Clairmont, California. And because I had this military service, I had a lot of credits. So I went through Pomona College in about three years, three-plus years.

John: Oh, wow.

Francis: And when I graduated, I was eligible for a Regular Army commission. So I went back in with a Regular Army commission. By that time, Patton had promoted me to captain, but I got a Regular Army commission as a second lieutenant. I was still a captain in the, you know, active duty, but that is okay. But a regular commission. So, I got assigned immediately to overseas, and I was sent to Japan. When I got to MacArthur's headquarters, when I got to Tokyo, they saw that I had been a general's aide. And they sent me up to MacArthur's headquarters, and asked me if I wanted to be a general's aide, to some minor general. And I said no, I wanted to be assigned to a unit, so I was assigned to the First Cavalry Division. And I was assigned to the 82nd Field Artillery Battalion, which is the medium battalion, with 155 howitzers, the battalion of the First Cavalry Division. They call it a cavalry division, but it was really an infantry division. But it was on occupation duty in Japan, and the units on occupation duty had been reduced in strength. The infantry regiments only had two battalions, and the artillery batteries only had two batteries.

John: Okay.

Francis: Which was all right for occupation, but all of a sudden the communists started

kicking over the traces in Korea, and we were sent. You know, it was good duty in Japan, but all of a sudden we were told we were going to Korea. So we went over there understrength, and the first unit to go over there was the 24th Infantry Division. And I think the next one was the 25th, then the First Cavalry closed in. We went, our -- we were landed on the west coast, the east coast of Korea. And we were told to go up and relieve the 24th Division. And they had been in a hell of a battle up there. Matter of fact, one of our battery commanders—I was a S-4 of the battalion, which in an artillery unit is also he commands the service battery—So one of our firing battery commanders went into this position. There were three 155 howitzers. And he said, “What battery is this?” And the guy says, “Battery, hell, this is the whole battalion. That’s all that’s left of it.” So they really had taken a beating. So, there we were in Korea, understrength, and there in the first several, well, right away, they assigned every unit a platoon of National Police for security. We didn’t have enough people. And that was a pretty scary war. Mostly because we weren’t prepared to do anything. If it hadn’t been for the fact that the officers, most of the officers, and a good part of the non-commissioned officers, hadn’t been in World War II, we would have been really in trouble.

John: Let me take a minute and call my son. They’ll head back this way. Okay, how long were you in Korea, overall?

Francis: I think we got there in July of ‘50, and I came home maybe August or September of ‘51. I don’t know exactly.

John: And you were in the early parts?

Francis: Oh, yeah. One of the interesting things, though, that I just told you was that the First Cavalry Division was commanded by General Hobart Gay. General Hobart Gay was the chief of staff of the Third Army when I was there. So I had known him. He was a good guy. But, anyway, we went to Korea and we activated our C Battery, and the infantry unit, the cavalry regiments, activated their third battalions, of course. And we got in pretty tough fighting. It was really dry mouth time. Because of the fact that our allies were Republic of Korea divisions. Some of them were old and had experience, and some of them were really green. They didn’t know anything. So the First Cavalry Division was in the corps in the front, remember the Pusan Perimeter?

John: Okay.

Francis: Taegu. And we had a good ROK division on our right, and a new one on our left. You know, it was really hairy for a while. But, anyway, we got through that. And after MacArthur made the landing at Inchon, we linked up, the First Cavalry Division task force of tanks went up there and linked up with them. And the North

Koreans were really tough. But artillery units took a lot of bearing in Korea because we went over there with the basic load of ammunition, small arms ammunition, that we used in Europe. But they liked to attack the artillery units and artillery units can defend themselves as long as they had enough ammunition, but when they ran out, then they were helpless.

John: Yeah.

Francis: Yeah. So, one of the early things they did was to triple our basic load of ammunition, and numbers of machine guns we had, and things like that. So, it was a scary time. And my unit was pretty lucky. I think we only lost one officer in the whole thing.

John: That's remarkable.

Francis: One of the things that happened that I am very proud of, the Army was integrated while we were in Korea. And my battalion commander called me up one day. I had been transferred from Services Battery commander, S-4, to commanding A Battery. And the battalion commander called me up one day and said, "We are taking some black replacements. And you are the only non-Southern battery commander I have. Will you take them?" I said, "Sure." They were really good guys. They did a great job, and they were well prepared. And they made an impression right away on our white troops, and there was never a problem. But I was very proud of that, being the first unit in our battalion that was integrated.

John: Yeah. Certainly. That was a hard thing for the whole Army to do. Yeah.

Francis: So, we went up to Seoul, and took Seoul, and one of the things I will never forget is our, we had, my battery was in position in a park in which there was an ancient, ancient building. It was a museum. It was four hundred years old, or something. And it was a precious thing, and nobody wanted it to get shot up. But we were right there by it. And then we went north, and we got up to the Yalu River. I didn't, but the infantry units got to the Yalu River when the Chinese came in. And they came through us just like water through a sieve. And I think it was the 7th Cavalry Regiment that, I'm not sure which it was. I'm getting too old to remember all the details. But one of our cavalry regiments the Chinese went through and they just kept going. They didn't do so much damage. One day they were there, and the next day the regiment wasn't there. Three days later, they were all formed again. So, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. So we started out retreat back to Seoul. And it was a terrible thing. It wasn't a terrible thing, it was, we had all these trucks sliding up on the road and trying to get out, various people on our trucks. We had all kinds of people from different units trying to get out. I was leading my unit out, I guess, in a Jeep, and when the traffic would stop, you know,

I would wonder what was going on. Somebody maybe went to sleep, or something like that. So I would walk up and find out if I could do anything. And I would go back to the Jeep. And it happened like that for a long time. So I was tired, and I went to get in my Jeep, and I went to sleep. And all of a sudden, I felt this big blow on my back. And looked up, and there was General Gay.

John: Oh.

Francis: He said, "Frankie, how the hell are you?" And I had a little experience with him in Germany after the war was over. General Patton's co-pilot of his C-47 airplane was a guy by the name of Howard Rice, and Howard flew C-47s, and he and I had met a girl. We weren't supposed to fraternize, but a German girl who lived near where General Patton lived. And so we decided we would go borrow a Cub for the artillery section. And we did. And it was an old beat-up L4. And he had never flown an L4 before. But we managed to get it in the air and we went up to the Alp, to this town where this girl lived. And we started circling around. And it doesn't have enough power to, it stalled, and he hit the wing on the hill, and that spun the airplane around and it wiped out everything, everything was wiped out except the passenger compartment. So, Howard says, all the Germans came out with their scythes to cut the grass around there to preserve their hay. And he says, "You go get some help and I'll stay here with the airplane, whatever is left of it." So I had to walk about, I guess it was about six kilometers, or something, to where General Patton lived. And General Patton, at that time, was in the States on a victory tour. So I walked in the house. I was disheveled, I had blisters on my feet, I had the wrong shoes to be walking out in. And so General Gay was in his room, with his door open, and he was in the bathroom shaving. And he saw me in the mirror. And he says, "Okay, Frankie, what did you do now?" So I told him, and I thought certainly wrecking an Army airplane, we were going to get into trouble. So I told him. And he said, "Well, did Howard get hurt? Did anybody get hurt?" And I said, "No." He said, "Well, get Howard and have him stay for lunch." So, that was the kind of guy General Gay was. And, of course, it turned out they were going to survey that airplane anyway. They were going to get rid of it. It was an old wreck. So, we didn't get in any trouble. But, in Korea, we got, we got, after we retreated from the Yalu River, we got into a stable line. Remember the famous Hamburger Hill.

John: Yes. Yes.

Francis: That part of it. And our division, the tactic was, in the night they would pull back, and the infantry would be in a big battalion redoubt area. And in the day time, they would go aggressive patrolling. And the artillery units would follow them up there, and support them as they went up into the area. It was just a killing expedition, to kill the enemy. And so, my battery was one from the medium

battalion, that was a general support for this push every daytime. So, every day just before dawn, we would march-order the unit, hook them up to our tractors, and start heading up behind the infantry. And in the night time, we would be spending all our time shooting star shells, illuminating rounds, over the infantry positions so they could see who was sneaking up on them. It was exhausting work, and it went on for a week or two. And this is where I made a terrible mistake. And a big lesson for my life. The first day that the aggressive patrolling stopped, I was back in the battery. And they had passed a regulation that says that American soldiers were not to sleep in Korean houses because there was a typhus thing going on. And so, I was up there, feeling very proud of the job we had done on these patrols. And the division artillery commander by the name of Heinz, brigadier general, came into the area. I really believed he was coming in to compliment us on the job we did. But, instead, he says, "I see that you have people sleeping in the gook houses." And I didn't really know that they did. I said, "Is that so, sir?" And he said, "Graves, when are you going to start obeying my orders?" Well, that is like saying, "When are you going to stop beating your wife," you know. So, he says something that really pissed me off. Like, "Do I have to take disciplinary action against you?" And I said, "I hope not, sir." And I was madder than hell. And I let him know that I was mad. And I let him know that I thought he was a horse's ass. And as a consequence of that little confrontation, I had a very bad efficiency report.

John: Sure, that's how he'd get even.

Francis: And it was bad enough that when I got back to the States. Went back to the States, and I went to Civilian Component duty. I had year at the University of San Francisco teaching, and a year at Alameda High School teaching. I had been to the Field Artillery Advanced Course before I went to the Civilian Component duty. And then, at that time, they thought that the artillery should be married. And they tried to marry the anti-aircraft artillery with the field artillery, which is completely different units, different missions. Didn't work. And I was pissed off. And I got assigned to the Air Defense Command around Buffalo, New York. And it was a miserable duty. Here I was with the anti-aircraft people. I was the S-2, the group intelligence officer. Of that group. Which I could do, but I wasn't an anti-aircraft artilleryman. And during that time, I learned that I was passed over for promotion to major. And the reason was the bad efficiency report I got from General Heinz.

John: I am going to have to cut this. This is a remarkable story.

Francis: Long story -- the good thing about that was I met my wife, who was a school teacher in the next town.

John: Well, there was a great ending to that.

Francis: Shortly after that, we decided that we would get out of the Army.

[End of Interview]