

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

CALVIN H. HEWITT

Army, Radio Operator, Headquarters Battery, World War II

1995

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**Hewitt, Calvin H.**, (b.1924-). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 70 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 70 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Calvin Hewitt, a Chicago native, speaks of his experience in an Army headquarters battalion in Germany and France during World War II and discusses his service as a County Veterans Service Officer in Kenosha County (Wisconsin) from 1958 to 1987. Hewitt talks about attending college for two quarters at the University of Chicago before volunteering for the draft, his induction at Fort Sheridan (Illinois), two and a half months of Air Force basic training in St. Petersburg (Florida), and transferring to the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. He describes getting a reasonably high Army General Classification Test (AGCT) score and taking pre-engineering courses in the Army Special Training Program, and he talks about the unofficial sports played by people in the ASTP. He describes another transfer to the 670<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion and training in radio operation, fire control section. He portrays his huge appetite during the trip overseas, and mentions landing in England, waiting for equipment to arrive, and his S-2 position supporting a battalion firing into the Ruhr Pocket (Germany). He describes his biggest scare—hearing a carefully positioned C-ration can rattle while on late-night guard duty and discovering the sound was only from a cat. He tells of running errands between observation posts without seeing any enemy but the next day's errand runners being killed. He relates how some guys would play ongoing games of bridge despite moving frequently and mentions he started pipe smoking and read a lot. He names many locations he moved through and he remembers no particular excitement the day the war officially ended. He describes being taught how to drive by his Captain while working as a radio operator. He details walking into a tavern full of German soldiers after the war and describes the devastation and surrender flags in German towns. He recounts taking German language classes at a University set up in Biarritz and staying in a fancy hotel. He describes taking a train while sick with the flu. He talks about currency control and spending most of his money on food. He depicts his homecoming: coming into New York Harbor, having a stranger pay for his soda, taking the train to Camp McCoy (Wisconsin), riding the streetcar for free, and not seeing any celebration. He remembers staying with his grandfather in Michigan and using the GI bill to attend Beloit college (Wisconsin) where he met his wife Marjorie, who'd been a WAVE. He discusses getting hired as a County Veterans Service Officer in Kenosha County (Wisconsin) and how his work changed over the years. He describes seeing the change over in personnel from World War I to World War II to Vietnam veterans, claiming that World War I veterans had a lot of heart, World War II veterans had more education, and Vietnam veterans had even more education and worked to establish professionalism. He compares veteran organization politics and their importance in lobbying. He discusses veteran benefits and

getting a tenure bill passed while serving on the Legislative Committee of the CVSO Association. He talks about attending the first CVSO Spring Conference in Superior (Wisconsin), and describes his by-the-book service and the selection process on the Kenosha County Draft Board during the Vietnam War. He mentions working as Secretary for the Kenosha County Veterans Council's Memorial Committee.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995.  
Transcribed by Carla Warren, WDVA staff, 1998.  
Transcription edited by Channing H. Welch, 2008.  
Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2008.

### **Interview Transcript:**

Mark: Today's date is September the 12th, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Calvin Hewitt of Bristol, Wisconsin, a veteran of World War II and we are in Mr. Hewitt's home here in Bristol. Thanks for having me in your house this morning.

Hewitt: You're welcome.

Mark: I appreciate it. It was a nice drive this morning by the way. OK, I like to start the interviews by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Hewitt: OK. That's easy. I was born in Chicago, Illinois, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1924. I was raised in Chicago on the south side. I was going to Lindblom High School at the time. Well, in '39 and then I graduated in June of 1942.

Mark: During the war.

Hewitt: Yeah, that was during the war. I was seventeen when I graduated and became eighteen in September of that year. So, I enrolled at the University of Chicago in September of '42 and you know there were no deferments at that time. At the University of Chicago, my dad had gone there, I don't know -- I was there for two quarters anyway not doing very well academically. My mind was elsewhere. I asked the local draft board chair, he just lived a couple doors away from me, to put me on the next draft list. I knew it was coming anyway. That's what you'd call "volunteer for the draft."

Mark: I see. I was going to ask about that actually.

Hewitt: So, yeah, in March of '43, I went down to the Chicago AFEES [Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Station] Induction Center, went through the process and I was very -- had a very good healthy profile. I played football in high school and so on. But I had one thing. I'm a chronic asthmatic. We had maybe four, five, six guys that were sitting on a bench there and eventually a doctor comes along and he says, "None of you are bothered with asthma, are you?" You know, sort of a rhetorical question. Anyway, nobody said anything and we're in. Now you mentioned interviews. The only thing I can remember about an interview was there was a table with maybe like the Marines, the Navy, the Army and in those days, in 1943, you know the inductees went. So many went here, so many went there. If there was somebody who was attractive, they would, well apparently the two quarters at the University of Chicago got the notice of the Navy and all I remember was they asked me "Would you like to sail or anything like that?" I figured I

better keep my feet on dry land. So, then I was in. We went up to Fort Sheridan and—

Mark: What did you do there? I mean was this the standard basic training or was this just getting the uniform?

Hewitt: This was just induction. Fort Sheridan, Illinois was an induction center. There you take your tests, they have the AGCT, Army General Classification Test, which was administered there. I recall, they were firing at air targets over Lake Michigan at the time, it was cold, March of '43. Anyway, we were there about two weeks and then we were through processing and were sent to wherever they were sending us. Well, some days later, in we, well, I have April of '43, sometime early in April of '43, we were shipped by train down to Clearwater, Florida. That was the U.S. Army/Air Force. We landed at night, or we debarked from the train at night in Clearwater and I remember a heavenly smell. You know I'd never been outside of Chicago really, all my life. Yeah I was eighteen by then. I was inducted at eighteen. The, ah, it was a tent city. Clearwater is nothing like it is today. It was just the "boonies" of St. Petersburg. We were there for a couple weeks I think. It was a lot of dysentery and so forth. I never was affected luckily, but we were moved to hotels in St. Petersburg. There I went through the Air Force Basic Training for maybe two, three months.

Mark: This is the marching and the "Yes, Sir" "No, Sir" that sort of thing?

Hewitt: Close order drill and classes on basic army things.

Mark: I went to Air Force Basic Training myself although it was forty years later.

Hewitt: Yeah, there is a difference.

Mark: I remember a lot of screaming and yelling and four letter words and vulgar sorts of things. I've talked to a lot of World War II veterans and that wasn't necessarily, although sometimes it was, it wasn't necessarily their experience. Was that the case with you?

Hewitt: I tell you Mark, that volume speaks for itself. They were processing so many they didn't have time for all that chicken, you know, it was -- they had drill instructors, there were regular cadre that did that you know, put you through it, but there was no -- I remember, we'd do a lot of marching along and we would sing. This was in St. Petersburg. Every once in a while, a sergeant would come in and say, "Come on sing up" or something like that, you know, grab a guy, ah none of that stuff. But I was there and I was all ready to go. I was through with that in about two, two and a half months. I was ready to go to Armorer School, I would have been a machine gunner on a bomber or

something but that's when the ASTP [Army Special Training] Program took off.

Mark: They approached you about joining? Or did they say "Private Hewitt, you shall"?

Hewitt: They never approached. I tell you, that AGCT score, if you had a 110 score on it, you would qualify for OCS [Officer Candidate School]. If you had 115 or above, you were in the ASTP Program. I happened to have 116. Well, as it turned out, when I went -- when we landed at the Citadel [South Carolina], that -- the Citadel was a "Star Center" they called it. They processed the ASTP people and sent them to all the colleges all over the -- Harvard, Yale, you know all the big ones, and the little ones and so forth. I stayed there probably because I had two quarters at the University of Chicago and they were going to put me into the second stage of this thing and I was protesting so much about even being there that they put me in the beginning. So, I ended up with nine months of intensive training. Later I got the equivalent of two years of college out of it, you know, credits.

Mark: What did you study?

Hewitt: Basically, pre-engineering. You know, first two years of college. Math, history, English, you know the whole -- In math, I had it in high school, I had 4 years of math, they had what they called a university preparation type course. At the University of Chicago, I had algebra and something else. Then I had it again at the Citadel, so I should have been well-versed in basic math but I never was a real sharpie at it.

Mark: It was never my subject either. So, at the Citadel, in the ASTP Program, what other sort of soldiers were in that? Were there a lot of college boys, such as yourself? Did they come from—?

Hewitt: Well, now I was giving you a clue, that this was a "Star Center" and when everybody was shipped out to all the different colleges, then the people that were remaining there, that was the element of the Citadel. In other words, they were going to function as a regular ASTP course. We had really, there was on this AGCT test, the highest ever scored was 162. A guy named Deutsch (??) and he was at the Citadel. I don't know what the average is, but 130, 145 that kind of score was not uncommon. Occasionally when people would hear that I was 116, they looked at me like I was a cretin or something, you know. I don't understand that., you know, How can it be? One doesn't take too much importance in those things, but these were a highly unusual bunch of GIs. A lot of them had a year of college, two friends had a year at the University of Illinois. A lot of them were, you know, yanked out of college. Just like I might have been if I had -- So, it was an interesting time. At the Citadel, where they, you know, it's been in the news, well they had a few cadets there

but basically it was -- But they did try to impose some of the cadet regimentation on the GIs, which did not work at all.

Mark: Why do you suppose that was?

Hewitt: Well, these were a bunch of bright guys in the Army you know and they weren't going to take any of that crap, you know, that Mickey Mouse stuff. The head of the Citadel at that time was a guy named Summerall (??) who was either Chief of Staff or some high thing in the Army just before the war and then Mark Clark was more recently the head of it. It was a high-class school and I often wonder why some one of those, and they may have, didn't write a book about that thing because it was like animal house, you know, that type of thing. Like they played Taps every night. One night, the guy went from Taps into the Bugle Call Rag. Those things caused an uproar and somebody else thinks of something else. I suppose a lot of it, it was like juveniles. Bright people in a restricted setting and doing a lot of juvenile reaction to it. It was -- Oh, and a lot of the ASTP units were not allowed to indulge in sports or anything like that. A lot of forts and so forth, camps had basketball teams, football teams. Well, they had a pick-up basketball team at the Citadel that had a guy named Teagues, Berbarian, Ladig. Well, Teagues for awhile, he was at DePaul University and was a name. Berbarian, after the war, he was an all-American at Purdue. They just had, ah, five, six guys that were beating everyone they played. It was almost touch and go to keep it out of the news. I know the Fort Jackson Red Raiders, they had a streak of forty-seven wins for the basketball team. You can imagine, we were wild about that, but it had to be shushed. It was strictly unofficial.

Mark: Not supposed to be happening.

Hewitt: Yeah, right. But that was the kind of people we had there?

Mark: So when they broke up the ASTP Program, how far did you get and how did you learn the news and your eventual next assignment?

Hewitt: Well, while we were there, we were still doing close order drill and so forth. But, when they broke us up, they just shipped us a lot of different things. I landed in the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. They were getting that ready to ship overseas and a lot of the ASTP people went to the 100<sup>th</sup>. But, that's just my experience. They went all over. Well, I was in the K...the K...not Battery, what do you call it?

Mark: Company?

Hewitt: Company. And we had about three months of infantry basic. It was a hurry up kind of a thing.

Mark: Which was what? Shooting?

Hewitt: Well, oh ya had to do more then that, but that should be in every basic training. But, bayonet, you know, "Aargh," that didn't sit well with me at all. Anyway, when it came time for them to call out the ASTP people mostly and get them ready to ship overseas, they interviewed each one of us and when I went in, this Captain said, "Do you like the Infantry, Soldier?" and I said, "No, sir." Here you stand at attention. I said, "No, sir" on key things. Three times and each time it was a good choice. But anyway, they shipped me out to this 670<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion which was just being formed at Camp Gordon, Georgia.

So, there again, there were mostly ASTP people that going into this thing. I actually went overseas with a lot of these. There was a guy named Cork. His dad was a, I think the head or General in charge of supply, what you call them? Adjutant General? Or something like that. I don't know. Anyway, he was from Cornell University and he was a quarterback there. There's another guy Angel, big, big guy who was -- played football at Oklahoma. In fact, I busted my cheekbone playing pick-up football in the States. That's one of those service connected accidents. (Chuckle). I wasn't exposed to combat but I filed for service connection when I became CVSO [County Veterans Service Officer] just to have the experience. They service connected that zero percent. So it made me eligible to join the DAV [Disabled American Veterans]. So I did. Anyway, we're in the artillery.

Mark: What sort of training do you do for that? I assume you had to fire the guns before you went overseas.

Hewitt: I was in headquarters battery and I was in the radio section. You studied code, you had to have ten words a minute to qualify for that and whatever else it takes to qualify to be a radio operator. They had these FM field sets, you know and I ended up, when we were ready to go overseas, as a radio operator in the fire direction, fire control. I didn't like that at all. That was when you go into a position, you dig in and you're on the radio and each artillery battalion had a couple of those little Piper Cub - L5's or something they called,

Mark: Little spotter planes.

Hewitt: Yeah, for fire direction. Either that or a spotter, you know a forward observer would call in the coordinates and then the various people in the fire direction center would do their thing. Which was one of the great things in our artillery control plus our weaponry, the air bursts, and things like that were far superior to anything the Germans had and I imagine the Japanese. But that's the sort of training and a certain amount of close order drill.



Mark: Right. Then you got ready to go overseas?

Hewitt: Right. That was in June, no, September of 1944. We left, the 670<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion left for Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. Then we were there for 3 months or so getting ready to... for shipment overseas and then in January of 1945, we went to Miles Standish which is Boston Harbor and we sailed in January of 1945.

Mark: So, describe your voyage overseas. What kind of ship was it?

Hewitt: It was a... it was a former banana boat which had accommodations, they were fast you know for one thing and they had luxurious accommodations for I don't know how many people. That was secondary. There was a big, what the officers used as a mess hall right as we walked, waited in line to go down to our mess below deck. We could see in there this nice restaurant where the officers were eating. We were -- this was the, the commodore was on -- it was a forty-eight ship convoy and this was the flagship of the convoy and they were escorting us and so forth. It was the North Atlantic in January of '45. It was rough. I'd say over half the people were sick most of the time. I never was sick for a minute. We had two messes a day. You'd go down this, into the below deck into this steamy, it was almost like descending, into hell., you know (laughs) Steam coming out of the light and the noise and the aromas. But, I always had a big appetite in those day, oh tremendous appetite. It took thirteen days to go across. I brought a couple, two boxes of Baby Ruths and Butterfingers, twenty-four in each box and I often say that that saved me between those two meals a day.

Mark: Saved you from starvation?

Hewitt: Yeah, yeah. I was always skinny but I don't know, I must have had tapeworm or something. thirteen days—

Mark: You landed in England or France?

Hewitt: We put into Portsmouth Harbor and I remember seeing those white cliffs, they weren't in Dover but York or whatever it is, not York, what is it, in the south anyway. When I saw the white cliffs I was enthralled. I had always read a lot of history and so forth and I knew I was alone because most guys couldn't care where they were. In Portsmouth Harbor, I do remember seeing the Warspite battle— a British battleship that was well-known. It was anchored there. Anyway, we were there overnight and then the next day we went into Le Harve where we disembarked and from there to Camp Lucky Strike which was a big tent city where thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of GIs went through. From there we went in March 1945 to Fontaine-le-Bourg, Normandy. That's just north of Rouen in the Normandy country. I had a castle something or other somewhere in here. But there were Chateaus and

they would be surrounded by fields and so forth. We were there from, well, sometime in March until April. I don't have the dates here. I have them somewhere else, but I'm not going to try— We were there way before the artillery, the equipment, everything to arrive.

Mark: Waiting for the guns, to clean it up.

Hewitt: Yeah, the guns. Of course with headquarters battery, we were doing other things like our radio and fire direction and surveys, that was another part of, yeah, communications.

Mark: So it was actually quite awhile before you got into combat?

Hewitt: Well, the next month. April, we went in. I was in combat the last six weeks of the war. We went from -- I was the radio operator for the Battalion S-2, it was the intelligence office, also liaison. As Corps artillery, that's all we did. We were supporting some division or some Corps, we were in some Corps or some army, whatever. Our first battalion position was on the west side of the Rhine firing into the Ruhr Pocket. It was a pocket by that time. Now, this is April something of '45. Then we were there for a couple weeks, I have that down here... I made a note... this is my... this is my orders when I was sent home. I thought that was sort of...

Mark: You've got a list of locations here. Maastricht?

Hewitt: Oh, yeah. Going into -- I was with this battalion S-2. We had three jeeps from the battalion, advance party. We left Fontaine-le-Bourg on March 30<sup>th</sup>, oh, yeah, I got the dates even here. March 30<sup>th</sup> and arrived in Maastricht, Holland, we stayed overnight in Maastricht, then from Maastricht, we went to Bedburg, Germany. That went through -- we had gone through Belgium, a little piece of Holland and then into Germany. We were in Bedburg for two nights. There was one little, night -- you said -- first exposure to combat. Well, there was just a small party of about three officers, I think and I don't know, six or eight enlisted men and we had this villa, like, with a stone fence around it and this was in Bedburg, Germany which hadn't been liberated for too long. Then, you know, the Battle of the Bulge had just before that. Anyway, we did guard duty. There was so few of us enlisted men, we'd each take two hours or something like that. We had some C-ration cans, I think they were peaches, you know, about so big and we \_\_\_\_ (??). I went around the back, it was something like 11:00 at night or something like that and we put the can by the gate so if the gate was opened we would hear them. I was on the other side of the, and I heard that thing, late at night, in enemy territory and all the things— I can still almost remember, you know, we'd been trained to kill, and so forth, got the carbine ready, went around the thing, well, it was a cat licking the peach juice out of the (laughs). That got my juices going.

Mark: I bet it did. I bet that cat is lucky to be alive.

Hewitt: Well, that's true. If it looked anything like a German, it would have been a goner. I had a friend who told about his first day in combat and on either side of the road, a German comes walking down at night time and everybody -- they were throwing grenades and the guy was just blown to pieces. But that's the kind of reaction that I would have had. Well, OK, from Bedburg,, then we met up with our battalion and we were, I can't tell you who we were assigned to because I don't remember. But we were firing from Krefeld which is just a little north of Dusseldorf which is on the east side of the Rhine. Almost into that area. We were there about three, five days.

Mark: So, what are your targets at this point? Are there specific locations or is it harassment fire or do you know from your standpoint?

Hewitt: How could we know? At night time, you could see the, you know, just like the movie *Battlefield*, flashing, like fireworks going off all over. You don't, from your limited perspective, especially from an enlisted man it is -- Well, in this, we had -- the Captain was in the, was a foreign observer in a factory building right on the Rhine. While we were there one night the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was sending the patrol across, and we were there when they were getting into the boat. That was fascinating. Here these guys were going across and they said they had to probe with their bayonets for mines as they, when they got to the other side. The driver, a guy named Heck, and myself, we had run errands from one observation post to another ,and it was at night, and we were walking along just casually, feeling our way almost because it was so dark and we got to the other place and we heard the next day that a German patrol had been right there. We probably walked, we might have walked right through them for all I know. Of course when they send patrols they don't want to make contact. That shows you how naïve and innocent, because we were completely exposed, chatting, strolling along the Rhine there in this factory area.

Those things, well, when I had six weeks in combat, I guess you had to learn fast because there was another time towards the end of the last week when just a cavalry outfit was between us and it was somewhere in either Austria or Czechoslovakia just before May 8<sup>th</sup>. We were, the Captain and his jeep, we were up at a point making contact with somebody and we did whatever we did, came back, the very next day another, similar, from another battalion was -- were killed by one of these Panzerfausts, like a German bazooka. We didn't see anything, I can remember being alert and all that, but I never -- There were things like that. I suppose the majority of people in combat were pretty much that way. The Audie Murphys and so forth are at the other, way at the other end, extreme. Luck as a lady. Well, I'm through with that. I mean, I don't have any more recollections. How long have we been talking already?

Mark: Oh, forty-five minutes, or so. Well, I'll ask you a couple things.

Hewitt: OK.

Mark: For example, did you have much contact with the people in Europe? You had mentioned that you had hardly been out of Chicago before the war and now you're in Europe and as you mentioned you had read perhaps more than other soldiers. Did you have much contact with the French or the Belgians or the Germans? How were they the same or different?

Hewitt: The French, yeah, we were there for a month or more and we would go into town pretty liberal. I didn't speak any French, and those locals didn't speak any English for sure. No I had no contact with them. These things you hear about these romances and what have you, that's—

Mark: Pretty atypical?

Hewitt: In the movies as far as I, well I didn't -- I never ran into -- personally I never did, and I never heard of any in my outfit. I did buy a pipe in the town of Claire and I started smoking the pipe and I still do to this day, because my grandfather smoked corn cob Redtop, Tiptop tobacco. It's terrible stuff. He'd let it dry out even. And he lived to eighty-six, so— My dad is a violently, anti-liquor and smoking but when I got there, you know away from everything I hand it to my dad to keep me away, because I've been a tea-totaler all my life. But the smoking I did. This little pipe from Claire, France, I still have it and three or four years ago, with one of my daughters, we had a return trip to London and Paris, it was the first time I had returned to Paris in forty-six years. I wasn't real enthusiastic about going, but I tried to be cool about it, and you know, not diminish anybody else's joy. But when I got there, I had a -- I felt perfectly natural. A lot more traffic than I remember, and so forth, and we had a rental car. We went across the Channel of Calais and landed at Calais and picked up a rental car so we had three days in Normandy, and we did go to this area, Fontaine-le-Bourg. I couldn't find the chateau even though I had a topographical map from that period where I had put a dot on it. We just didn't -- you know forty, forty-five, fifty years later.

Mark: How things change.

Hewitt: Really.

Mark: So the Army got you smoking. But you apparently...

Hewitt: I don't blame it on the Army 'cause I didn't drink coffee either, and I never did in the Army, so. Although I wish I had now.

Mark: But you mentioned, that you didn't drink at all. Was that typical? Are you typical do you think? As someone who's worked in Veterans Service, I'm sure you've seen...

Hewitt: Oh, well, no. Even when I was in the service, one guy that was, a guy named Hill, a Corporal, he was alright. By the time we got, the war was over and we were in Hertz, Germany running the Chafeez Motor Pool, this guy Hill, was not only an alcoholic, he was a hopeless drunk. I mean, things like shooting up people and that brought to mind -- I was a T4 and more or less his, he was my responsibility in a way. But, it seems like a guy like that could do almost any kind of grievous thing and nothing would happen to him really. And yet, some straight-laced guy, you know, right down the line makes some little mistake or goof, and they'd land on you with both feet, make an example of you. Well, that's the way life works really, only it's more accentuated in the army. You know, the glue that holds us together, it has to be tough. When somebody who's supposed to be on the high end, on the right track, when they slip, then they Boom! clomp on you. Make an example. They can't make an example of somebody who's a bum anyway.

Mark: They won't care if you punish them or not.

Hewitt: Yeah.

Mark: When you weren't in combat, what other sort of social activities I guess you could call them, did you have? Did you get to write home frequently? Did you have much contact with people back in the States?

Hewitt: Like I have the -- in three years, my parents saved those letters I wrote home. There were 420, I think. So, that's pretty and -- I have read through them. There's no great treasury of information. It's mostly repetition. Some of those things, like this, this sort of thing, you know -- That's the sort of thing that I gave -- at the end of the war, I wrote this sort of thing to them. I think this was one of my letters, from one of my letters.

Mark: The Germans. Did you have much contact with the German people while you were there?

Hewitt: Technically, there was no fraternization.

Mark: Technically, you say.

Hewitt: Well, they lifted it because it wasn't really enforceable.

Mark: As you're campaigning through Germany, did you have much worry about sabotage or the civilian population and how they might be able to hinder an American military operation?

Hewitt: Oh, yeah, our captain was more worried than we were because we were probably were just too dumb to be worrying about it. He would have his .45 loaded and when we were making these liaison things, I'm talking six weeks, you know, that's not a heck of a long time. But, when we were in between and staying someplace, oh, I remember one with a feather bed, it was glorious. Just to sink down on. Well, he always had that loaded .45, we were more nervous than he—

[Dead air on the tape]

Mark: OK, I think it's working and I think we're back. I can't remember what we were talking about. Oh, Germans.

Hewitt: About civilians, German civilians. I don't recall any apparent—

Mark: Sabotage or anything?

Hewitt: Hostility or threat or— In fact, after the war was over, I mean the combat was. The war ended. We were rounding up, we were stationed at Finsterwalde, right on the Czech border in Bavaria. We were rounding up the German soldiers, they process them and then send them home, and then occasionally SS, that was another thing. We were sent out , this artillery battalion, we'd have outposts like. We would—GIs are curious—We'd go out to the cow paths, you know, we came to one, in a little settlement sort of nestled in among some -- the low lands of the Bavarian Alps, and we walked into a tavern and there was a whole bunch of -- it was like a GI German convention. I think we just turned around and went back out.

Mark: You mean there were Germans.

Hewitt: Yeah.

Mark: German soldiers.

Hewitt: The war was over, but we were rounding them up. Well, we were in a place far from any help and if we arrested them or whatever, gathered them up, we wouldn't have had any place to take them or do with them. Well, anyway, a place like that, we went in, "Haben Sie eier? Do you have eggs?" A nice house frau cooked me up an omelet, which I hadn't tasted for probably over a year. Most of the people, especially in the rural areas didn't really have a lot of contact with. They still worked their fields. In the towns, the many towns that we went through, were devastated. Like the first town was Aachen, just a terrible battle took place. It looked like a movie set, you know with wires hanging, trees all shot up, really impressive. And then, Kassel, Germany, I remember, and Nurnberg, buildings bombed out and the only thing left would

be the plumbing, like a stool on top of a pipe. That sort of thing. That's what we saw mostly.

**[End of tape 1 side A. Side B starts with repeating: and Nurnberg, buildings bombed out and the only thing left would be the plumbing, like a stool on top of a pipe. That sort of thing. That's what we saw mostly.]**

Hewitt: We came into Julich which is near Aachen. That was supposed to be a very rich per capita, before the war. But, a town like that, they would have -- every window would have a white flag out, but you could see there was some bullet holes in the walls and so forth as you go through, I mean, it was definitely a combat zone. Seeing those white flags in the towns we passed through was more common than anything. We wouldn't see a lot of them. Civilians. In some of the bigger places like Kassel, I don't know, we'd be amazed at how people could live in these ruins. They were in a pile of rubble, they'd have maybe some basement rooms, or something like that. There was a certain amount that, but not a lot.

Mark: As for your training, when you actually got into a combat, did you think... did you find that your training was adequate, effective, or ineffective?

Hewitt: I would wonder at anybody would really analyzing something like that.

Mark: What do you mean?

Hewitt: Well, when you're in, or going into combat, you're not thinking about your training. If you survive, especially, I'd say, you couldn't help but feel that your training was adequate. But, survival wasn't just a matter of training. Luck had a lot to do with it. So, I don't really have an answer for that.

Mark: OK. What about morale among the troops that went through Germany. What made you guys fight? Was it anti-fascist sentiment? You wanted to get home and get it done with?

Hewitt: When I answered that here, I thought the world was falling apart and we were there. That's why we fought. That's about it. There wasn't much. We had guys that were playing a rubber of bridge and they would—this was in the six weeks we were moving frequently—and when we'd move, they'd be playing it, you know, and they'd put the cards down and then do what they did and then pick it up again. Sort of, almost like an addiction, some of us thought. But, that sort of thing, that's what we were thinking of. We weren't -- each his own devices, or whatever amused you. There was a certain just—boring. I always had a book with me. One I carried all over, even into combat. It was called the *Bible of the World*. It had six or seven of the world's great religions, and I would dip into it. I enjoyed that. But, my father was the head reference librarian for the Chicago Public Library so, for forty years, and reading was always a part of my life so I had no problem with that. I had

some subscriptions like to *The New Yorker Magazine*, the *Chicago Daily News*.

Mark: Did you get them frequently?

Hewitt: No, not at all. They'd have European editions and stuff like that, but it wasn't frequent. Sometimes you'd go weeks without getting anything.

Mark: I take it that sort of amusement was atypical of some of the other men with whom you served.

Hewitt: Well, don't forget a lot—

Mark: [Both speaking at the same time. Unable to decipher]

Hewitt: A lot of us were ASTP people, so I don't know how atypical it would be. Atypical of the service at that time and not so much when I was on the draft board for ten years, that was a well-educated, during Vietnam, that was a well-educated military we had. They say all the rich people were going to school, well I know what happened to them. When they got through with school, they went into the Army. Some of them we chased all over the place. One guy, he went to graduate school even and he got letters of recommendation from people all over the place about what a great person he was and so on. Just before his 28<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> birthday I guess, which was the end of the draft. Once it passed, they weren't vulnerable anymore. We got him to an AFEES and he was rejected, physically.

Mark: But he got quite an education out of the process, too. OK. When the war in Europe ended, where were you?

Hewitt: We were supporting -- we were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army and we were in these places, these maps— [rustling of paper]

Mark: Czechoslovakia, somewhere, if I'm not mistaken.

Hewitt: Yeah, well let's see. April 25<sup>th</sup>, let's see, April 30<sup>th</sup>, well here, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, leave Wehrmain (??) Georgia (??) to Oepping, Austria, O-e-p-p-i-n-g. This is on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. May 4<sup>th</sup>, Oepping to Hayhauser (??), Germany, back into Germany, Hayhauser (??), on May 5<sup>th</sup> to Z-z-l-e-b-y, Czechoslovakia and we were there overnight. From there we went to H-o-u-z-n-a, Czechoslovakia. Houzna or something like that. That's where we were when the war ended.

Mark: Do you recall hearing the news and people's reaction to it?

Hewitt: Well, here we were in this Houzna, Czechoslovakia, in the field so to speak, although we always tried to get accommodations, you know, what the Captain



has too. But the Battery ,certainly they were in the field conditions. No, I don't remember any whooping or anything. It was just another day. It was very, it was -- we knew it was coming, I mean, we were definitely slowing down, there was no action or anything for maybe a week. Other than moving from one place to another. So, then on May 10<sup>th</sup>, we went from this Houzna, Czechoslovakia to Kamm (??), Germany. That's the war is over. From Kamm on May 28<sup>th</sup>, we went to Furth . Well, we were there for eighteen days. That's when we started doing this—actually it was after the war—started doing this mopping up kind of stuff. There was a prisoner of war type of, in the Kamm area. We'd round up people, we'd run -- there'd be civilians who I, I have a thing in my mind, somebody like Eichman or somebody had gone through it, 'cause there was a couple instances that I remember, one guy on a bicycle and a woman on a bicycle, typical Germans, way off from nowhere, and I have a feeling that he was somebody.

Mark: Could be.

Hewitt: Yeah, Furth, for eighteen days, then we went to -- that's when they sent the 670<sup>th</sup> back. They took us out of the 670<sup>th</sup> and put us into the 115<sup>th</sup> Artillery. That was in Straubing, Germany, which is just south, near the Danube River. Regensburg, Straubing. We were there just a short time and back to Furth. We were in Furth then 'til September of '45. When we went to Erks (??), Frankfurt am Main. That's another story.

Mark: Well, let's hear it.

Hewitt: Oh.

Mark: You're on occupation duty now.

Hewitt: Yeah.

Mark: I suspected that.

Hewitt: There were points, everybody wanted to go home. The guys who had a lot -- you got points for length of time, battles—

Mark: Number of kids if I'm not mistaken. That sort of thing.

Hewitt: Well, that was even earlier. I mean, they cleared out most of those people, anybody—in fact, when I was still in the States—anybody who was thirty-eight years old or older could go. We had several that stayed and one guy, Borden I think his name was, he was a grandfather, or Bennett, that was it, Benett. He was a grandfather at thirty-eight years old and he stayed with us and went overseas with us. But, that -- those points, we knew we were—

Mark: Getting ready to go?

Hewitt: We're waiting to go, we're ready for some motorpooling in Erks (??). I was—oh, that was another story too. Here you convert an artillery battalion to a motorpool, a service battalion. I don't think any army in the world could have done that because out of this whole battalion, there were all but just a few who could

**[End of Side A of Master copy? Gap in tape]**

Hewitt: I had convinced this S-2, that , he just assumed I could drive, because I wanted to be his radio operator, moving around rather than digging in, you know, the fire control side. He found out eventually that I couldn't drive, oh, I know when he found out. It wasn't until we went on that advanced party, into, we ended up in Germany. The driver had been driving and then the Captain said, "Take over for him, because he's dead-tired." I said, "I don't know how to drive, I've never driven." Anyway, the Captain then, he drove for awhile and then he started getting sleepy and he said, "Drive." So I drove, sixty miles I figured. That was going through Belgium. You have to follow, you know where the war was, there were signs you had to look for to follow. Kind of shifting and so forth, I just never had practiced. Growing up in Chicago, you know, my dad didn't have a car or anything, until he was retired. Then he said, the Captain said, "I'm going to teach you how to drive." Well the first thing—I was driving and backing out and the jeep was mounted, the spare tire was mounted on the side of the jeep on a bracket and it hooked up on that thing, nothing big happened of it, but it just folded the bracket back so instead of having the tire sticking out, it was just up against the -- So that was that. Then we were out on one of these—now this was in, it was down, it wasn't in Normandy. Maybe when he told me to drive I had already, he already knew about it because it seemed to me that I was driving the thing going down hills, it was in like the hedgerow country, one of these sunken roads, just going up on the embankments on either side. We heard a sound and around the corner ahead of us, here comes this tank, filling up the whole road, so I stepped on it because I see a little wide place. I was going to -- the Captain just about died. He wanted me to stop, you know and go and back up or something. But anyway, that's my driving.

Anyway when the war was over then, we went to run Eisenhower's motor pool. They made me headquarters battery, or headquarters dispatcher. Oh, what a deal that was. You're on for a day and then off for two days and that would be a day, twenty-four hours. You'd sit there, I was smoking cigars too at the time and we were finally, you know, after the war we're getting allotments. So I'd sit there smoking a cigar and I was running the whole battery: VIPs, we had a couple Sedans, an old Chevrolet Sedan, Senators and people like that. They would go drive all over. That probably would have been interesting to me except I wasn't qualified to drive. Anyway, I sent

people all over the place and that went on for awhile and then the Army set up, oh, a morale booster at Shrivenham, England and Biarritz, France, they set up Universities. Right away I jumped at that, to the one at Biarritz. So, probably, it was December and January or maybe January and February, I think that was it. I was in Biarritz.

Mark: What did you study?

Hewitt: I had, you could pick anything you wanted, I had Beginning German, Elementary German, Conversational German. This place, we were -- I was in the Princess Eugenie, I mean it was Hotel du Palais, this was built for Princess Eugenie by Napoleon. I've seen it in movies since then when it's in finer state. But then it was just bare bones and, no heat or anything. I remember, it was cold in the winter and we'd fill the tub with hot water and soak in it just to keep, to get warmed up. But, it was pretty luxurious. Classes were in villas and things. One was Western Philosophy, or something like that. The other was Musicology, or some music course. That guy who taught the music course was a dead ringer for Meredith Wilson, *Music Man* creator, remember?

Mark: I know *The Music Man*.

Hewitt: Meredith Wilson.

Mark: The name doesn't ring a bell.

Hewitt: He was a dead ringer for him. These were all professors from the state-side schools. There were some from the Army too that ended up there. PhDs there were, could have been PFCs [Private First Class] for all I know. But there was no rank on Biarritz. That was -- There was one guy, Roy Peters who was Assistant Field Director for the VA in Milwaukee. He was there, he had some function. He wasn't a student, he was in the administration. He was a General with the 84<sup>th</sup> Division here in reserve. There he was a Colonel or something like that. But he was such a striking figure, that's the only reason I remember him. There were guys like Richard Warf, who was actor and director, mostly a director. Mordechai, oh, people that I have heard of from Hollywood and so forth that were there. That was a nice, nice duty there. Beautiful. Just to keep us happy and occupied while we're waiting to get a boat.

Mark: And it apparently worked.

Hewitt: Yeah.

Mark: You speak highly of it.

Hewitt: Yeah.

Mark: So you finally got to go home then in March of '46. That was a bit later than a lot of other guys.

Hewitt: Yeah.

Mark: If you would describe your own re-entry back into society. I assume you took a boat back to the States. So, if you just trace the steps between Biarritz and Beloit, I guess. That's where you eventually went to college.

Hewitt: Well, OK, Biarritz back to Hertz (??) for whatever a month or so, then on a train and I remember I had the flu. This is -- I'm headed for home. This train was -- there were compartments and this was a wood, they were different, first, second and third class. This was wood. I had the flu, ached in every joint and that was the most miserable several day journey I ever had. Yet, I could always look so relaxed, people would think that, you know, I could be sitting on a pin cushion and people would think that I'm enjoying myself. It was just a natural thing with me. But, I got to know more Belgium and it was just a dormitory kind of a thing, you know. I wrapped myself in an army blanket and I woke up, I don't know how much later, next morning, whatever, sweating, wet, soaked. I sweated it all out and then I was OK from then on.

We had time to use up our surplus. They had control on your -- they had these deutsche marks and francs and things that we printed up ourselves. But they had a currency control where you couldn't bring or send more than you actually were paid, because there was a lot of black market stuff. So, we all had different amounts and so forth. I went out and I bought a Belgium pipe and meals. Mostly stuff to eat. Then, the road, the ship back, same kind of a, basically, the same kind of a ship. I think it only took ten days or something like that. One thing I remember about, there were a couple, Tex Ritter, the singer and Louie Bellson the drummer, they were on that ship coming back. Into, I guess -- oh, no it was New York Harbor because we saw the Statue of Liberty. We were there long enough to have a pass into New York. I remember the feeling, wow, this was in Manhattan and Broadway and so forth. The traffic and the bustle. My feeling was just like I'm a fish out of water, you know. Not depressed or anything, it was just an impact. We never sewed on stuff, so we went to a Broadway tailor upstairs and had him sew on all our stuff, patches, our T4 stripes, a hash mark, there was an overseas bar, you know all that stuff. Then we went to -- Did we go to a show? I don't know. It was just, not particularly interesting.

But, one thing we did, we stopped at -- right in Manhattan at a place, a soda fountain. I asked for a soda and the guy was very snippy, you know, chocolate or vanilla or what kind or whatever he said. He was sort of -- There were maybe three of us, sort of wide eyed or something. That was nothing either. We had our soda and then we went to pay and the guy said, "That's paid for already." Some young man that was down the way saw these three

veterans, he paid our—in those days, maybe it was a quarter or something like that, or twenty cents, or maybe less, but it was still a nickel. It was a nice memory. I've got a few like that. Other than that, we came back, the train was much improved over the ones I had ridden, I road when we— They had everything, all the junk stuff on them, before I went overseas. By the time I came back they had that pretty -- they had tiers of bunks like. So, it was different. We went through Chicago going up to Camp McCoy. They stopped in Chicago at a siding or something it was for I think a couple of hours and a lot of us went to a public telephone to call home because there were several of us from Chicago. Then we went up to Camp McCoy, I think it was two weeks. Not more than two weeks. Then we get on the train back to Chicago. So from the train station, one of the guys that I—one of the few guys, a guy Howard Calvin, I kept up with—he had some kind of bug, and I offered to go home with him. You know, “Don't worry about me.” Well I got on the streetcar with my barracks bag and in Chicago, you know, they -- in uniform you didn't have to pay the fare. So, ride the streetcar, nobody notices you, nobody even looked at you that I know of. It was so commonplace. Anything but any kind of -- there was no celebration anywhere along—

Mark: No parades and the old ribbons and the whole business?

Hewitt: Every time I hear these Vietnam era veterans talk about "we weren't welcomed back," my god, I don't know. I suppose in World War II, the first ones in 1945 maybe after the war was over, the first ones may have had some bands or something, but I'll bet there were several million that had my experience of it. Just nothing. I mean, nobody was looking for that. Who needed it? I can't understand what they're— Well, I can understand , but (??)

Mark: OK. So you're back home. Let's discuss some re-adjustment issues. First of all, I suppose there would be the medical, psychological re-adjustments, other than your cheek, did you have any sort of physical ailments, any sort of lingering effects of disease or anything? Now you were in Europe.

Hewitt: I'll translate my head movement. None what-so-ever.

Mark: What about psychological or emotional re-adjustments? Did you have -- was it a difficult problem for you? Was it a problem at all? Did you have nightmares or any of that sort of thing?

Hewitt: No, nothing, nothing, nothing. I mean, I can understand people might have those things, and I was in places where I could have gotten killed, but no, nothing like that. That cat scare was the worst thing that, you know, got my juices going.

Mark: In terms of finding work after the war, you went to college again. Did you use the GI Bill benefits?

Hewitt: Oh, yeah, yeah. In fact, the first thing I did—you know I got back, what was it, April of '46— and the first thing I did was, my grandfather had twelve acres in Michigan. Every summer since I was a babe, we would spend the summers there on these twelve acres. It was right near Lake Michigan. So, I had a great youth, every summer on the beaches of Michigan. But, my granddad was out there and he was a real mentor to me in a way, besides teaching me to smoke. He didn't really teach me—

Mark: Picked it up.

Hewitt: Copied him or mimicked him. But I stayed for a month or so there ,and he was getting up in age ,and he still had a pretty big garden and I helped a little bit, but mostly did the things I always used to do, you know, go down to the beach , read., so forth. Then I enrolled at the -- I was accepted for either Knox College or Beloit College. Some people in the army told me, "Don't go to the University of Illinois or the University of Chicago, a big schools. Go to a small school." Well, I did. Luckily, I picked Beloit and that's where I met Marge. She was there also. She was a WAVE in World War II, and she was also there under the GI Bill.

Mark: Now, I've spoken with a lot of veterans who went to the UW Campus, not oddly because of course, I'm based in Madison and a lot of guys have stayed there. These guys will describe a campus filled with veterans and almost no other students. Was that the same at Beloit College?

Hewitt: No.

Mark: That was different?

Hewitt: There were a lot of veterans. I don't know the exact numbers, but there were a lot more students than they were used to having. They were constantly having to find housing and so forth, and, you know, accommodations for us. But, Marge?

Marge: Yeah.

Hewitt: How -- what would you say the proportion of veterans to non-veterans was at Beloit?

Marge: I have no idea.

Hewitt: I would say a good -- would half be non-veterans?

- Marge: I just don't know. We were all returning.
- Mark: There were quite a few of them?
- Hewitt: Yeah.
- Mark: They were using the GI Bill as well I take it.
- Hewitt: Oh, the other vets, yeah.
- Mark: Did the GI Bill cover your educational expenses, or did you have to work?
- Hewitt: Well, in World War II, they paid tuition up to \$500 and bought your books and gave you—
- Mark: A living stipend?
- Hewitt: \$75 a month or something like that.
- Mark: That was adequate?
- Hewitt: Oh, yeah. Then when we got married, there was a little thing about -- I think we got \$120 from the GI Bill, didn't we?
- Marge: It was something like that.
- Mark: Oh, is that right?
- Hewitt: Yeah. You know, she got some, was eligible for it and I was eligible for it married. That was sort of a new thing when we did that.
- Mark: In terms of other veteran's benefits available at the time, did you for example use the Home Loan or other sorts of programs?
- Hewitt: Well, we bought this house, we got a state second mortgage loan, \$2800, 3% interest, and I didn't qualify because I was not a state veteran. But, Marge did qualify, so that helped a big, big deal. You know I wasn't a CVSO at that time. My predecessor was the one who took care of me and I was really impressed.
- Mark: We've got about a half hour left, so let's talk about your tenure as Service Officer in that remaining time. How did you -- first of all, when you were a veteran and not a Service Officer, you mentioned you had contact with the CVSO here at the time. Who was that? Was that VanKiller?
- Hewitt: Evan VanMiller. How'd you know that?

Mark: I wrote this thing. I know these things. So, before you became a CVSO, did you have any particular impressions of what that office meant? As you indicated, he was apparently quite helpful to you personally.

Hewitt: I used it for that and I don't know if I used it for anything else. In Kenosha County, anyway, the CVSO, Evan Van Miller, made it a practice of, you know, returning GIs were supposed to get their discharges recorded at the Register of Deeds. Right off the bat, Evan had 'em come into our office first, and then we would bring the discharge and get it recorded and then return it to the vet. We'd have contact with them in other words. File a claim for service connection, whatever. So, that worked out very well. I know we had about 30,000 records altogether in this little county.

Mark: Oh, it's a fairly big county compared to Vilas County or something like that.

Hewitt: The ninth biggest most populous county.

Mark: So, how did you become the Service Officer?

Hewitt: Well, I worked at Simmons. We lived in Beloit. Marge's parents bought this place in 1944 and in 1950, they had some people renting this while they were -- they would spend six months in Florida and six months up here. Well, they had somebody renting it and then these people were going to buy their house, so we came over from Beloit. I was through with Beloit College. Incidentally, I was twenty-three years old and I had finished Beloit College, three years in the Army, and our first son arrived. Twenty-three years old. Pretty good, huh?

Mark: I didn't start college until I was twenty-four I don't think.

Hewitt: Good for you. Anyway, we came over here in 1950, and then in 1955 we bought the place from them. So, what was the question?

Mark: How did you get to be the CVSO?

Hewitt: Oh.

Mark: Did you apply for the job? Or, did someone approach you?

Hewitt: Well, when I came over, I got a job at Dynamatic in town. It was just, unfortunately at a time when Eden Corporation was taking Dynamatic over or absorbing it. I was there for two weeks and I got fired. Here I was with four kids.

Marge: You didn't have four kids then, pardon me—



Hewitt: Oh, three.

Marge: Two.

Hewitt: Three and a half. No, no, no. When we were here, 1950, Andy was born.

Marge: Oh, there's the puppy and the dog.

Hewitt: Oh.

Mark: I saw that.

Hewitt: That guy, he's a rogue anyway—

Mark: So you applied for the position? I mean you read about it in the paper or something?

Hewitt: Yeah. That's it. That's what I was going to say. I finally ended up. I applied at American Motors and they said I had an incipient hernia or something and when I took care of that, I could go there. Well, I didn't go there. So I got a job at Simmons, a very paternalistic employer but very low pay. It was like forty-five dollars a week. I worked there for eight and a half years as it turned out. Well, after eight and a half years, this was in 19— late 1957 probably. No, it was 1958 when I got the job. I took a test, because they were talking about abandoning Kenosha, and they had a new plant in Munster, Indiana, so the writing was on the wall. Actually they didn't pull out altogether until 1960 which was -- but the writing was on the wall. One of my P1 in my department, I was in the General Accounting, or Factory Accounting they called it and one of the guys said, "This job is open, why don't you apply for it?" Well, along with forty-two other people I did, and I ended up with it. One thing, when they were interviewing, they got it down, I guess they gave a test, they got it down to five people and my assistant, Doris James was one of them. But, they -- when I was being interviewed by the county board, they said, "You're in, you have four years of college and you don't have a degree." Well, then I had to fess up. When it came time for the graduation ceremony I made the mistake of asking to be excused from the graduation ceremony. I never intended to go through it. I was just sort of a little rebel. The more the school objected to that, the stiffer I got. They even contacted my parents in Chicago. Here I was, a combat veteran and so forth and on my own. Married. One thing led to another and I just didn't go and they didn't give me a degree. Well, in 1962, I knew that they owed it to me. I had read several cases where legally, I was entitled, so I wrote -- there was a new president and whatever. Anyway, I got my BA Degree. But, when I was being interviewed by the county board, I had an alleged, something like that \_\_\_ (??) but they picked me.

Mark: You served almost thirty years. Twenty-nine years. If it can be summed up in a nutshell, what were some of the biggest challenges facing you as Service Officer in those twenty-nine years? How did your work change? Or, did it?

Hewitt: Oh, yeah, it changed.

Mark: In what ways?

Hewitt: Well, in 1958, that was end of the Korean War Period. There were a lot of educational benefits still and in the next five years or so that wound down. There were time limits on all these things. Of course, filing for service connection was the same, you know a lot of them are. There were pension benefits. At that time, there were a lot of World War I veterans filing for non-service connected pensions. That sort of changed, you know, the composition of the veteran population and the benefits that are available.

Mark: Right. Now, Vietnam veterans came back during your tenure. There's debate—

Hewitt: I sent them away on the draft board and I welcomed them back—

Mark: If we have time, I'd like to go back to the draft board too. There's debate among veterans themselves, much less those who study veterans about whether or not Vietnam veterans were different from other veterans or were they pretty much the same as other veterans. As someone in veteran's service, what was your take on that? Did they have the same problems, or were they distinct from other generations?

Hewitt: Oh, basically, the same problems. But, you know, the benefits were different, educational benefits were different. Our association put -- had a bill introduced to make Vietnam vets eligible for state benefits fully a year before the bill actually was introduced. We were concerned with those things. We did our part to get things in motion. It's easy to see what the difference was. Here a Vietnam-era veteran would go to Vietnam, be sent to Vietnam for a year, this was policy. He could be in, well, he could be all kinds of situations. He could be behind the lines or whatever. It's different, and he could have a horrible experience. I've talked to Point guys on the, you know, from squads who spent their whole time as a Point man and never encountered the enemy. That's highly unusual. But it wasn't all blood and guts. My son was in the security agency and he was there with advanced units listening to the radio, monitoring the Vietnamese. He was in that Cambodian incursion. He wasn't bearing arms. That wasn't his function. He bore arms but he -- his function was to listen. Anyway, they'd go through this experience of a year and then be flown back, usually flown back, not in a not in a troop transport or anything and from this one extreme to another to

**[End of tape 1 side B.** Tape 2 begins with overlap: Anyway, they'd go through this experience of a year and then be flown back, usually flown back, not in a not in a troop transport or anything and from this one extreme to another to]

a hostile civilian population. They, we, weren't all hostile by any means, but, I mean, the hostility was apparent.

Mark: It was a turbulent time.

Hewitt: Yeah.

Mark: I guess would be a diplomatic way to put it.

Hewitt: I hate the '60s. I have bad memories of those '60s. Oh, sure.

Mark: So in terms of veteran's service, this was a factor then? Did you think for example that these guys were reluctant to even come to your office at all? Did you have trouble seeking them out? Or did they come to you like any other veteran?

Hewitt: Well, that thing I said about recording your discharge, that worked like a charm.

Mark: In the '60s. In the Vietnam era.

Hewitt: Yeah, these people have no idea that there were any benefits or (screeching tires) what they might need or -- but that's --

Marge: I heard the screech of brakes.

Mark: Neighbors?

Hewitt: That's irresponsible. They're friendly enough but— [tape stopped and restarted]

Hewitt: I have a lot of empathy for them. In fact, my oldest son is a Vietnam vet and I was on the draft board so I had a lot of empathy for them. But, what bothered me were like these, there were a lot of the professional types. Now I'd say they have a problem too, which is legitimate enough. They wore the camouflage fatigues and go on -- and I admit that adjustment, like I said, you go to Vietnam, you come back to a hostile -- It's a tough adjustment. But, there wasn't a lot I could do as a CVSO. But they were -- we did what we could.

Mark: Now you served on the Legislative Committee of the CVSO Association for quite a long time.

Hewitt: Quite a long time.

Mark: So I'd like to speak a little more specifically about that. What were some of the major issues that the CVSOs wanted addressed and how were they received in the Legislature? Who were your allies? Who was not so favorable to your positions?

Hewitt: The first thing in 1959, we introduced a bill to extend the tenure of a CVSO. That may sound self-serving but you know, you'd be hired and then after two years the way it was, you'd have to, every two years you'd have to be sort of rehired. For our kind of a job, we felt that was a serious detriment to have us, be subject to politics, so we got a thing through that you'd serve for four years. Soon after that, I know our County Clerk, just couldn't understand how we did it, but we got through this tenure bill.

Mark: That was 1967.

Hewitt: Was it that late?

Mark: Yeah. You mean a permanent one? Where he was unlimited tenure.

Hewitt: Yeah. I had been on -- What was I saying?

Mark: Tenure Bill.

Hewitt: Oh, yeah, I actually wrote that. Very simple. Just, you know, just a few words. That was very satisfying.

Mark: Now that took a long time to get through the Legislature, what were—

Hewitt: Actually, the fact that it got through at all, it was amazing.

Mark: Who was opposed to it and why?

Hewitt: Well, there was no precedence for anything like that.

Mark: I see.

Hewitt: Absolutely no precedence.

Mark: So, like the County Treasurer was always—

- Hewitt: An, you know, their elected officials are elected. Yeah, no, there was no precedence for -- and then that was changed subsequently too when the County Executives came into being and so forth. I enjoyed that. That was before we had a County Executive in Kenosha County. I was able to spend a lot of time going to meetings, to hearings. I enjoyed that. We had a crew, Bob or Bill Ford from Waukesha County, and Harold Olson from Columbia County. That was a -- we had a great crew. Kip Tessemer (??). This Harold Olson, he worked with the department for a short—
- Mark: Yeah, the name sounds, well, the names all sound familiar.
- Hewitt: He was a master. I've never -- I've seen him appear before committees and you know how these vultures are. They'll trap you into something and then they'll chew you out. Oh, he'd never get boxed into a corner. He was called to give testimony by the Chairman of the Government Affairs committee several times. Just because he was so well-respected. But that was the group I was serving with. That was a nice experience.
- Mark: A good bunch of guys and very effective, I take it.
- Hewitt: We were interested and we persisted.
- Mark: Now there was also the grants counties issue during that time, apparently very divisive among the CVSOs.
- Hewitt: Yeah, I was the one that did most of that. We had complicated formulas and so forth, I remember one time up in Calumet County, at one of our meetings, I was giving some kind of report and I always hated to get up in front of people. So, this was painful for me at that time. And I was rattling off something and Al, I can't remember his name, the old Service Officer from Calumet County, he's a World War I vet, and he said, "What in the hell is he talking about?" I can remember to this day what my reaction was. I just smiled because I thought here I've been doing all this thinking about consolidating and eliminating and so forth and he just had no idea what I was -- but that's all part of it. Of course, the World War I vets, they were on the -- I was fortunate to know quite a few of them.
- Mark: Yeah.
- Hewitt: Because '58, '59, '60 right in there is when they almost en mass retired.
- Mark: Right. You saw quite a change over in personnel. When you left, the Vietnam Veterans started to come in.
- Hewitt: These World War I Veterans and Service Officers had a lot of heart, a lot of compassion. They, Evan Van Miller got into a lot of things that I wouldn't

touch with a ten-foot pole. You know, legal things that he could be liable for and so forth. Well, that was typical of the World War I vets. The World War II vets started coming in. There was some more educated, and he needed to be because, the laws, VA and the State were evolving, changing and then problems and so forth. Whereas today, I imagine it's just like the later Vietnam vets who were so well-educated. That's what you would find among the CVSOs. Very much more educated and professional. I'm glad to see that they've got a committee that is trying to establish professionalism. That was one of mine, but I never got it off the ground.

Mark: Do you think that varies from county to county?

Hewitt: Oh, yeah.

Mark: If you're in Sawyer county, you've only got so many veterans to draw on. Whereas in Dane county—

Hewitt: You mean as far as CVSOs?

Mark: In terms of their educational level there.

Hewitt: I think the county board probably is pretty -- are more and more standard as far as what they are looking for. I know the department has a test which they will, maybe administer for all I know, which is certainly a standardized thing for culling out or gleaning the applicants. I must say that it's probably all over the state. We got it as far away from politics as possible. It will never be totally. That's what makes things work. I'm happy to see they are looking to establish, trying to establish some professional image of a CVSO. 'Cause that's what it is, I mean really when you think of an analogy, you really have to know to be an effective one. You're a defacto attorney really on many of these cases. You just have to be smart enough to that you aren't an attorney.

Mark: What you said about the World War I Veterans is interesting, because they didn't have the educational level that you later generations do. But you do seem to indicate that they were more zealous or gung ho about serving the veterans. Do you think they were more so than later generations were? Or just do it in a different way, perhaps?

Hewitt: Well, it's a whole different thing. I mean, we're a lot more educated now... nowadays. In those days, you had to be passionate about veterans and so forth. In 1958, we had our first Spring Conference up in Superior. I had no idea. I just started in the Spring of '58. The first thing I had, you know the first month of two, I was going way up to Superior. I hadn't even, except for the service, left. So I flew up there. It was the only time, no, I guess Jack Luban flew a couple times, but anyway I flew up there on the old airline, I can't remember what it was, and landed in Duluth and it was in the evening

and came down that hill from the Duluth airport into Superior and this guy, he was a limo like and he had to get back for another party or something, he was terrible. He dropped me at the Superior State College and it was a hot day and Casey Jones, CVSO from Marathon County, Triechel (??) from Manitowoc County were in their undershirts sweating, and a can of beer in their hands, laughing, their faces beet red I thought, "Oh, lord" to myself. "What have I gotten into?" They're in a dormitory and I eventually ended up -- my roommate was Jerry Shubert from Jefferson County. He was later the department's claim. So that was my introduction.

Mark: Not what you had expected.

Hewitt: Well, in a way it sort of illustrates the difference, Jerry Shubert, the World War II veteran and \_\_\_\_ (??) and Casey, the World War I. They did a lot of good, I'm sure, but it's a whole different persona.

Mark: That kind of thing is interesting.

Hewitt: There were a lot of them too, I mean, like I say—

Mark: The World War I veterans, you mean?

Hewitt: I got to know a lot of those World War I. There was a guy from Menomonee County, Kaufman. I saw him sitting on the bed and he invited me in to have a shot. He was drinking rye whiskey. You know, first thing, he had just gotten out of bed, Lumberjack type around here. They served the purpose, but it evolved.

Mark: We got about ten minutes left, maybe not even that much. I've got one last area from the questionnaire that I forgot to cover. That involves Veteran's Organizations. Other than the CVSO Association.

Hewitt: OK. I never, I never belonged to anything before I became a CVSO. And to this day, if I had never been a CVSO, I'd probably be a recluse here and you certainly would not be here.

Mark: Was there a reason for that? Was it your own personality?

Hewitt: I just was happy doing my thing.

Mark: So, it's got nothing to do with the Legion's politics or whatever. It's just not your cup of tea.

Hewitt: No. Because as soon as I did, I joined the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans. I've been in all three of those organizations for a good many years now.

Mark: Now that you... you became a member because you became a CVSO, but once you did, did you partake in their activities at all? Did you go to the clubhouse? Did you go to the meetings?

Hewitt: In Kenosha County, we had a Veterans Council which existed before I came, only it was deteriorating. The World War II mothers, Mothers of World War II, Gold Star Mothers, different women's organizations had gradually taken it over. It was not a Veterans Council as such. As CVSO, I thought, "Now this is something that's important and should be." People like John Mauer in later years and John Moses all agreed that organizing the veterans organizations -- But anyway, over the years, it evolved and by 1969, the Veterans Council really was behind the establishment of the Kenosha Veterans Memorial Fountain which is on the lakefront. That eventually cost them about \$150,000. I was the Secretary, I was on the board. It was not for profit board. And incorporated. It was called the Kenosha County Veterans Council Memorial Committee or something like that. We got to things like that and it's still healthy today. It's got like twenty-five veterans organizations functioning. That was my contact. I always said that when I went to a meeting or something of one of my organizations, my relationship deteriorated. When I'm in the office, I've got to be open to anybody, you know any veteran, he doesn't have to be a Legionnaire or anything. I was very particular about that. I didn't push anything from there. But then when I went to one of my VFW meetings or something, I couldn't take that. They couldn't take me and I couldn't take them. All this back-biting and—I think they're great, they do great work. My membership, I think it's important to be a member. The numbers are important also 'cause they have very effective lobbies ,and you got to have numbers to be effective. Besides being effective lobbyists. But, that's it. I get along with my veterans organizations. Much better if I stay away.

Mark: Those are all the questions I had. Is there anything you'd like to add? I guess we never did touch on the draft board.

Hewitt: Yeah.

Mark: When did you become—

Hewitt: 1965.

Mark: Is that an elected position or did you volunteer for that?

Hewitt: You're appointed to it by the President of the United States. One of those things down there was signed by the President.

Mark: Yeah, I'm sure someone must have given him your name though.



- Hewitt: Yah. Well it's sort of a self-perpetuating thing. There was an opening, I knew all of them on the board, they said, "I think it's about your time to serve." Well, actually one of them was a Veterans Service Commissioner. You're familiar with that?
- Mark: Yeah.
- Hewitt: Yeah, George Tiegen. He was on the board. He's the one that probably got me involved in it.
- Mark: What were your activities? What were your duties?
- Hewitt: Drafting for the Vietnam Period.
- Mark: Now, I've spoken with a couple gentleman who served in that capacity. They've both described how they, as they say it, were trying to, looking for ways to not draft people. Was that your experience?
- Hewitt: No, strictly by the book. All of us draft board members too, and there was some change, we were all combat veterans, we had a good one. We went through that whole period of the '60's, without any of us, you know throwing blood on records or breaking—
- Mark: Oh, I don't mean protests. I mean there were so many young men and only so many places in the military, that they could be somewhat selective.
- Hewitt: No, half were mentally—physically, mentally or morally—exempt right off the bat. So the other fifty percent, you know, you worked with them. No, just what they're classified as, no it was perfunctory. One, we had a lot of things with this conscientious objection and one of the most puzzling kind would be the Seventh Day—not Seventh Day, Jehovah Witness. One Jehovah Witness actually served a year in jail because he refused to. When we would nail somebody, they would go to the U.S. Attorney and they picked the ones they would prosecute. If we sent a dozen, if we ever got one prosecuted that would be an exception. So, you know, that's beyond our—
- Mark: Scope, I suppose.
- Hewitt: No, it's by the books. Incidentally, Joe Kline was on this thing and Nolan Gibson from Grant County was also. They're the only ones I knew that were CVSOs and on the draft board.
- Mark: Real briefly, is there anything else? (pause) OK.

Hewitt: I -- you know, there could be, I'm sure there's all kinds -- nothing that deserves making or that I would— I enjoyed this, and it made me reminisce a little bit and oh, incidentally, your manuscript.

**[End of Interview]**