

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
ARLIE CHARLES HOWE  
788th Military Police Battalion, World War II  
1994

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Howe, Arlie Charles (1922- ), Oral History Interview, 1994.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 174 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 174 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

### Abstract

Howe, a Monroe, Wis. native, discusses his World War II service in Iran with Company D, 788<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion, and post-war life in Wisconsin. Howe talks about his pre-war life focusing the effect of the Great Depression on his family. He was drafted into service in 1942, and details basic training at Camp Swift (Texas) and the trip overseas on the USS West Point to the China-India-Burma Theater. Howe stayed briefly in Bombay (India) and mentions minor differences in operating procedures between United States and British forces and discusses at length his observations of the civilian culture in India. Stationed at Bandeshpur (Iran), he relates his duties as a military police officer such as providing security for local communication lines, and establishing a presence to discourage Axis moves on Iranian oil fields. Howe touches upon the sporadic attacks his unit faced from German financed "bandits." He describes work in his areas such as assembling C46 and C47 cargo aircraft. He touches upon his opinion of Russian soldiers, VE-Day in Iran, flight back to New York, and discharge. Howe talks about his post-war life filled with a variety of jobs including Sheriff of Green County, Wis., and mentions keeping in touch with individual acquaintances from his service days.

### Biographical Sketch

Howe (b. January 12, 1922) served with Company D, 788<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion in Iran during World War II. He was honorably discharged from service and achieved the rank of Sergeant.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells.

Transcribed by Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs staff, 1994.

Transcription edited by David S. DeHorse and Abigail Miller, 2001-2002.

## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Van Ells: Say hello to the folks Charley.

Howe: Hi folks!

Van Ells: Okay. Charley was in the Persian Gulf Theater I don't know if it was theater or just a command?

Howe: They called it a command.

Van Ells: Okay. It's amazing to me how many--I mean literally around the world American soldiers were stationed.

Howe: Various commands, exactly.

Van Ells: And I you know I try to do a little research for this and I couldn't find much of anything about American troops in Iran. I thought it was very interesting.

Howe: I provided you with one in "This the Mightiest Army" there is a brief section in there on what we were doing exactly. Did you find that section in it?

Van Ells: No, I don't recall that actually. I looked through the picture book here.

Howe: Okay. It was called "The Mightiest Army" and in that it describes briefly what in a condensed form what we did there. It wasn't the real important parts of the war but it was very important to the Soviet Union.

Van Ells: Maybe we could just start with telling me where you're from and what your life was like growing up in the 20's and 30's.

Howe: Okay. I was a poor kid I lived in Monroe Wisconsin a small town just south of Madison here a town of 5,015 people at the time when I was a young person. And, we were poor my mother was a widow woman my father died when I was in the third grade in a accident and my mother raised eight children without the use of heavy welfare

we called it Mother's Pension. The other thing was called Relief there was no such thing as welfare in those days.

Van Ells: This was during the 30's.

Howe: That's right, and I recall, should I go on about this?

Van Ells: Sure.

Howe: I recall in my childhood that often times when the welfare department in my county consisted of a Poor Commissioner and a secretary. One desk for the Poor Commissioner and another desk for the secretary and when you needed something from the Poor Commissioner like we needed a sack of flour because we baked our own bread and a sack of flour came in 49 1/2 pounds to avoid some sort of a tax, anything over 50. So I had to go up my mother said "Charles, go to the Poor Commissioner, go to Mr. Thorp and see if you can get a sack of flour so I did. I went up and they gave me a ticket to go to the A & P to get a 49 pound sack of Sunnyfield flour in a cloth bag and that got us through the week, fine without having to starve. I attended high school in Monroe, Wisconsin, oh, I was the average kid, hand-me-downs from the neighbors and stuff like this because we were poor, hell, everybody was poor in those days.

Van Ells: I was going to say now this is typical of the depression.

Howe: Even the rich people were poor and we were all happy about it hell we had nowhere else to go so we were all happy and content about it and crime was at a very low speed also in those days. I went through to high school in Monroe and graduated in 1939 or 1940 I beg your pardon. And thereafter I got a job, I always worked, I always worked, I have to tell you this that I was, I have no sympathy for people that can't find something to do. I always worked even during the bad times of depression. I had paper routes or else we had a little wagon that my brother and I used to go around and pick up scrap metal, pick up rags, clean rags and take them, they were recycling in those days, its nothing new. The metal that we could find and rags and we used to turn a buck just with that. I always carried papers, I had enough time to play baseball in a league also. And my childhood was very busy, I always worked, I always worked, I had a paper route or had pedaled bills for the grocers that was where they went from door-to-door and slipped a sale bill in somebody's mailbox or

between the screen doors advertising that they were having, the business people, and I did that. I never was without something to do I always was able to earn money, to earn a buck. Well after I got out of high school not being a very good student, Mark, I wasn't a good student. I just wanted to get by because in my position I knew I would never have the money to go to the University, so education meant very little to me because I was resigned to the fact that I was poor, I'll always be poor and I'll do a poor man's job and that's what I'll be. I was satisfied with that because I knew where my station was and what it was. Then, so, and not knowing, oh I wish I had known this, and you couldn't get it from your friends because they had a friend that was going to, had his eyes set on the University of Wisconsin in ROTC program by a scholarship. So they don't, you see, your friends won't tell you because if you compete with them for entrance it's another competitor and they're not going to tell you anything. So, by not knowing all these things where there was other places to get an education I just languished in this theory that I'll be what I'll be and I'll do what I can but had I known that there was such a thing as an ROTC program that I could have gotten a scholarship I would certainly would have applied myself because up until fifth grade, up to sixth grade I was a very good student, very good, and my marks were always high and had I known I was going to be, had something like this, had looked to the future, I could have gone there easily on something like that.

Van Ells: I was a very bad student by the way too. I failed gym so many times.

Howe: No kidding! Gym!

Van Ells: Simply because I wouldn't show up.

Howe: That isn't bad. Gym isn't bad. Well I graduated anyway from high school with low grades just barely enough credits to make it out.

Van Ells: And that was 1940 then.

Howe: 1940.

Van Ells: I'm curious, you eventually went on into police work and I'm wondering if you had any thought about, if you had considered a career in law enforcement before World War II.

Howe: Oh, let me tell you this, when I was a kid growing up I was a block from the jail, from the county jail. We lived on a spur track of the Illinois Central across the street and the jail was on 12th street. We could look over to the jail and see what was going on over there. And I always wished I could occupy the jail. I said, "God, I'd like to in there."

Van Ells: You mean working there.

Howe: Yeah, I'd like to be the sheriff because in a small county the sheriff resides in a very beautiful living quarters that hooked right on the cell blocks. So, the prisoners are in one, in the cell block in one side of the jail and the living quarters were really beautiful. It was a mansion you might say a white brick mansion. And I lived, I always wanted to live in there cause I knew what was in there. Cause I had been in there different times. And I always wanted to live in there and I thought I'd like to be the Sheriff, but not really a big deal, it wasn't a big deal with me. I thought that was another goal beyond my reach so I didn't even go for it. I was not very ambitious. So, after high school I worked for the Kraft Cheese Company in Brodhead, Wisconsin as a warehouseman. You know, in those days, Mark, anyone that was embarking on a career didn't care if it was a shoe salesman, if they weren't going to be educated further, not going to be a professional person or an educated person. They would resign themselves to the fact that they would work as a bank teller, a warehouseman, or a store clerk or something like this, this was their career, this is what it was in those days. And any one that wanted to be a success, got a good job is a clerk in Montgomery Ward because they were advancements to another city in a head of a department and so forth like that. So we, that's the way we did, we were all the same kind of people in that we, whatever we worked at, a menial job, was our career, and I chose that I would be, work for the Kraft Cheese Company because I figured there might be some advancement to a foremanship and this sort of thing.

Van Ells: And then World War II came.

Howe: Then World War II came and I was working at the Badger Brodhead Cheese Company, in Brodhead, I drove back and forth. By the way, I did set some goals. I was one of the few guys that I knew that could, bought his own automobile. At that time at Brodhead I had to commute from Monroe to Brodhead to work and I couldn't always

ride with my boss cause he was tied up with work at the main office and so forth and he couldn't leave for Brodhead when I should have been at work so I had to buy my own car. And I bought a 1934 Ford for \$125 and I was one of the few people of my circle of friends that ever had an automobile and a goal had been reached.

Van Ells: What did it cost in those days? Just out of curiosity.

Howe: I paid \$125 for this Ford 1934 Ford V-8 four door sedan. Pretty nice automobile. I was one of the few to have a car so naturally I had girlfriends and a lot of leeches that wanted a ride with me. Okay, getting back to the draft thing.

Van Ells: I'm wondering, do you remember like you hear people talk about I remember what I was doing when President Kennedy was killed, do you remember where you were when you heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

Howe: Yeah. Pearl Harbor, I was at home listening to the radio of all things and hearing it at home in my living room with my mother. "My God, listen to that Ma," and that's where it was a very shocking to hear this. But, reading out of the reports, since and getting into it a little bit since I've been here, it was predicted that it was going to happen. Anyway, being a person that wanted to stay home and I wasn't much of a hawk or an adventurous person, I hung back, I didn't run to the recruitment office like some of my friends did. And another thing, I regretted not doing this, going to the Canadian Air Force. Now I look back on this and I should have been enlisting in the American Air Force or the Canadian, and not doing either, wanting to stay home languishing behind waiting for the draft. I said well they're going to get me sooner or later and they did. I was drafted in December of 1942 and went to Fort--Camp Grant Illinois, and from there to Camp Swift, Texas where I started basic training to be a military policeman to a combat unit of a battalion. Not the type of military police that patrol the town and shake up soldiers and stuff like this. We were a different type of a unit that was trained in combat. We had a tank, we had a armored car, with machine guns, and this sort of thing and we weren't infantry people.

Van Ells: Okay, let's discuss the training a little bit.

Howe: The training.

Van Ells: I'm trying to imagine the scene at the courthouse in Monroe.

Howe: Okay.

Van Ells: Is that the way it happened? You got your little greeting from the selective service--

Howe: Yeah, right.

Van Ells: --and you were ordered to report--?

Howe: To Milwaukee by bus and this was, this is a very embarrassing part of--

Van Ells: I don't want to embarrass you Charlie.

Howe: Oh, oh, it's kind of funny now, but it wasn't, it was very serious at the time because when you come from a small town, you're very, very naive, bashful and so forth, so when you are asked to go to Milwaukee and go to a big warehouse that has nothing in it but a labyrinth of walls and so forth and your asked, ordered, not asked, ordered to take off all your clothes. All your clothes! In a cold warehouse in the wintertime and walk around with a record or a clipboard in your hand and often times women would come through to pick up something from the doctor. Women! And oh my Lord this was terrible, guys would hunch up and try to cover up and everything, but the women didn't seem to see the guys at all. Ohm maybe a few of them did and ran out to throw up or something. For the most part, we were very embarrassed, there was no place to hide, no place to hide your stuff.

Van Ells: And most of the guys that you were going through this with were from small towns like you?

Howe: Small towns, collectively from Wisconsin, and my county, more Green County where I lived from Albany and Brodhead and little towns little farmer kids were also there. It was a whole bus load, maybe 42 people that went with me to Milwaukee and to go through this horrible ordeal of having your clothes taken away from you and running around naked in a warehouse and having doctors paw on you and so forth. Well then, after being 1-A of course, you went



back home and waited for the call and it came and you left and like I said I went to Camp Grant, Illinois then to Camp Swift, Texas where the training was to begin.

Van Ells: Did you go down on a troop train?

Howe: Yes, and it was a sit-up troop train, honest to God, this is horrible, no Pullmans. We were picked up at Camp Grant in this orange Chicago-Milwaukee-St.Paul day coaches. And it was a whole train full, maybe fourteen fifteen cars of people going to Camp Swift, Texas. They weren't all being in the military police there were some going to the infantry and some to tank destroying units and so forth. But, from Camp Grant, your shipped out maybe fourteen car loads of men, and day coach, no sleeping unless you slept in the aisle or slept in your seat.

Van Ells: Or slept upright.

Howe: Oh, it was terrible. And we were, I think we were two and a half days, two nights I know for sure on the road.

Van Ells: What was the atmosphere like on the train?

Howe: Happy.

Van Ells: Were you goofing around or horseplay?

Howe: Adventurous, very happy and still we were still, I was, this is a personal thing, I kept to myself because I was frightened, naive, dumb, didn't know anything about the outside world but for the most part the atmosphere was pretty happy. It was kind of amazing cause you didn't know what lay ahead. But I stayed to myself.

Van Ells: And I assume most were draftees on the train.

Howe: All were draftees. And surprisingly enough, Mark, going back to the tough times of the 1930's, some of the guys that were in my unit, and on that train, were drafted out of the CCC Camps. We still had tough times and some young men didn't have jobs and they went to the government to get into the CCC Camps for these civilian works projects that they had. And a lot of the guys were with them. So, it

was surprising how many people didn't have jobs and how the army was alright because where else you know--

Van Ells: They get three squares a day.

Howe: Absolutely, absolutely!

Van Ells: I'm interested in now when you found out you would go into the military police. Is this something you found out at Camp Grant?

Howe: Yes, you are given all sorts of IQ's and this sort of thing and tests where you best fit. You're tested by the signal core, how you understand the Morse code, deet de deet deet, and then you were to write what was it, two dots and a dash or a dash and whatever.

Van Ells: I don't know what it is.

Howe: No, and they tested you on that because maybe the signal core had a requisition into for so many men and they wanted to get some people. Well, of course I flunked that, I didn't know anything about that stuff. So, then they say, "Where are we going to put these guys?" well they need a military battalion and military police battalion so we'll send them to Camp Swift.

Van Ells: Why do you suppose you got picked for that? Did you have some sort of aptitude?

Howe: Well, no, after I found out and looked at all the people, we had very few really dumb heads, you know the dunder-heads, they sent to the infantry, and I thought we were going there, because I looked at myself and looked at some of the others, but then after knowing these people, the most of them were high school graduates, most of them had higher IQ's, it was a plumb of an outfit, it really was, when I look around, it was really a good unit. Very sharp bright men, and very athletically inclined people, you know.

Van Ells: I was going to say your what, six foot?

Howe: Yes.

Van Ells: You're kind of a big guy, you think that had something to do with it too?

Howe: Six one, sure, and that's why I think I landed there because they wanted somebody with a little bit smarts to be able to evaluate orders. I mean if you're given a special order, a general order, you were able to go ahead and do this without thinking about it, and if you had to think about it, you had the capacity to think of a situation that could arise if you had to make your own solution to comply with the order.

Van Ells: Okay.

Howe: And our people were smart. I wanted to go to OCS the worst way after I found that out and I said "Oh, God, why didn't I get in the infantry," cause I could have made OCS without any problem there, but then with this bunch of select men, you don't have a chance because they're others that are a little bit better than you are that would make it and be selected for OCS.

Van Ells: Or at least as good as you.

Howe: That's right! So, I got bummed out of that deal. So, no OCS (Officer Candidate School) for a guy like me.

Van Ells: Oh well.

Howe: Ah, we spent in Camp Swift, we were there for the basic and then we took our technical training there, which included a rigorous training much similar to the ranger training that they--

Van Ells: Why don't you describe that? What sort of rigorous training did you do?

Howe: Rigorous. Very, very rigorous. Very, very athletic. Tree climbing, tree climbing! They don't have that anymore. Tree climbing.

Van Ells: I was in the Air Force, I don't know, we didn't do much of any of that.

Howe: They don't have that anymore. Tree climbing, and how far can you jump from a high place without breaking your legs, you're elevated, and if you come away with pain you of course that was your limit. But, you could go, guys could go up as high as twelve, fifteen maybe

twenty feet and jump and land on the ground without being too hurt because you were taught to roll and this sort of thing.

Van Ells: How about you?

Howe: I made about twelve.

Van Ells: That's impressive. I don't know if I could do that.

Howe: I don't want to do that anymore.

Van Ells: Of course, I'm not young anymore either.

Howe: No, I don't want to do that anymore. And the rope thing, we didn't do, but we had to do a hell of a lot of obstacle. Every day, obstacle courses, and machine gun fire over the top of course.

Van Ells: This is real machine gun fire.

Howe: Real weaponry, and M-80's, you know, planted along your route so that they'd explode when you came. It was pretty rigorous. We didn't do, like I said, we didn't do cliff climbing like they did at Normandy. But, our training was very, very, very rigorous, more so than, I could look over and see what the other people were doing in the areas that we were training on, I guess the other guys--

Van Ells: --had it kind of easy compared to--

Howe: --they had it easy, even the infantry didn't have it that tough.

Van Ells: How tough was the discipline?

Howe: Very tough, very--

Van Ells: I mean were there a lot of yelling drill sergeants and things like that?

Howe: Not in that matter, sure at first there was, but because there was, like I say, the type of men we were, it didn't require this by the Non-Coms or the drill sergeants or the officers to really get on our case because, maybe our backgrounds furnished them with the type of men that they could manage easily without a lot of hollering and swearing and so forth. The guys, like most of the people that I knew

came from either Wisconsin or the Chicago area, and whenever we have a reunion its easy to get everybody together because we're from Wisconsin and from Chicago.

Van Ells: So, the police unit you went over to Iran with, most of them were from around here?

Howe: Exactly, the Middle West, Wisconsin and Chicago. That's what the unit comprised.

Van Ells: Cause I was going to ask, you know, a lot of guys that just went into the infantry got thrown into units with you know guys from California and Alabama or whatever.

Howe: Yeah, a geographical mix of people in a infantry company unless it was the National Guard that went of course. But my units--my company was all Wisconsin and Chicago. The whole battalion was that.

Van Ells: That's interesting.

Howe: Yeah, isn't it though?

Van Ells: Now, I'm wondering how you northern guys got along down in Texas. Did you get off the training base much; did you have much free time?

Howe: Okay, now let me tell you about this. You asked about discipline, now let me tell you about this.

Van Ells: Okay.

Howe: We were, I had one leave in all the time I was in Texas. One leave. And there was a reason for this. The Colonel that we had believed that if he kept his men away from the women, away from the town, away from trouble, away from booze, that we'd be better soldiers, focusing on training. And also we were quarantined. They drummed up a fake case of a guy having the measles. "You guys are all quarantined. You'll be quarantined for six weeks." Well, we were quarantined.

Van Ells: And it was something you knew was a bunch of--bull.

Howe: Yeah! You knew it was a bunch of--and I learned to be a barber there, I cut my buddies hair, there were several of us who set up shop and cut people's hair because you weren't allowed out of your area, you had to stay within your barracks area and we weren't allowed to leave. As a matter of fact, guards were, our own people, were guards posted around our area to keep us at home. There was absolutely no leaving. And this thing went on and we really didn't get any leaves till we left Camp Swift. It was horrible. But--

Van Ells: But there was the one time you had--

Howe: Yeah. One time we went to Austin, Texas to visit and see what it was like. They had to do that; otherwise they would have had a mutiny. But that was the only time, and all the time I was there, we were there and trained all through January and we didn't leave there until July, and um only one time off base. It was not good. No fun.

Van Ells: I guess not. So, when did you get orders to go over seas then?

Howe: We got, all right, we went, we were, left Camp Swift, Texas, and we were bound for somewhere, we didn't know.

Van Ells: Oh, you didn't know where.

Howe: No. A port of embarkation.

Van Ells: Where did you go, did you get on a train and go to New Orleans?

Howe: Fort Dix. No, we went to Fort Dix and we had this time we had luxury, we had Pullman. What a great thing. We had Pullman, and we came up through the Oklahoma's and that area, into Illinois, into Iowa, and do you know that when we got to Freeport Illinois, was on the great Northern Western Railroad, now not in existence, I knew, saw landmarks there that I recognized, and of course, don't get off the train, had guards at the door so you couldn't get off. Went into Chicago, and into Chicago, one kid saw, and we were traveling over the top of this street on some of those elevated railways, not the L but on the--

Van Ells: Just the overpass.

Howe: --overpass. One guy, Toshaky was his name I guess, he saw his Ma. "There goes my Ma, she's goin' da bakery!" He talked this kind of Polish. "There's my ma goin' da bakery," leaving out some of the-

Van Ells: Some of the crucial parts of speech.

Howe: "There's my ma goin' da bakery, Ma! Ma! Ma!" And he's hollering of course and she doesn't know, she doesn't pay any attention, but he's not very far from his Ma. Imagine. And we, then we went to eastward on the real fast, oh, fast train, it was like the Broadway Limited, the Pennsy Railroad, and uh, going east we ended up in Fort Dix, and uh, I'll never forget, it was a beautiful morning when we stopped on top of a mountain top and we were looking down, it was Hershey, Pennsylvania. Very beautiful down there. Wish we could go. Well, we ended up in Fort Dix because that was the port of embarkation for this Sicilian landing. They were going to, things were getting, looking favorable in North Africa, and they were planning ahead to invade Sicily with the troops out of North Africa and the troops that were sending from this country. We were included in that bag of tricks. Something happened, we got there too late, the ship had left Fort Dix and we weren't on it. Might be alive today for that reason. The Guardian Angel was around somewhere and shoved that ship on without me on it. And uh, so then we were transferred to Camp Shanks, New York, very new camp, real--

Van Ells: That's on Long Island, I think. I get confused.

Howe: Actually, it's Nyack, New York is the closest. And this camp encompassed and took in some of these cities, Orange, New Jersey. Nyack, New York. And the people that lived there, lived within the army post, lived within our post. It's amazing, we marched somewhere and we'd be marching down the main street of Nyack, New York or something, cause that was within the confines of this army post. Isn't that strange?

Van Ells: It is.

Howe: And uh, we were at Camp Shanks, and finally we got a furlough from Camp Shank for one week to come home. The Colonel did arrange to have special trains, a special train to haul, hold half the

battalion to Chicago, and uh, and then uh, half the battalion had to stay at home in case we were called.

Van Ells: Yeah.

Howe: So then, the next week then, the other half of the battalion went home. And this is all the leave we got, all the furlough we got cause very soon afterwards, we were in New York port again loading onto the U.S.S West Point. At that time, the fastest, largest troop ship the United States had.

Van Ells: Okay, we'll come back to that. I'm interested; you came back to Monroe then. You went back to Monroe for a couple of days.

Howe: Back to Monroe on furlough, sure.

Van Ells: Now, did you notice that the town had changed, now that the war had been started?

Howe: Not a bit.

Van Ells: Not a bit!

Howe: No, I noticed no changes. It was just as peaceful and serene and nice as anything could be. And uh, I didn't notice any changes.

Van Ells: Was there much rationing yet, at the time?

Howe: Oh, yeah. That was in place of course, but then when Charles came home, the rationing went all, I mean, mother fed you well, even though she had to cheat herself in weeks to follow, or weeks before, you know.

Van Ells: The things parents do for their kids.

Howe: Yeah, not only that I had a sister [LAUGH] I had a sister that used to hoard, she used to buy up sugar and stuff like that, to keep the hoarders from getting it. And uh, we always had an abundance supply because I had a sister that was married and lived in the same town but she always managed to be able to find sugar and this sort of thing, and she bought it up so the hoarders couldn't get it cause she detested the hoarders. Not being one herself, of course.



Van Ells: So then you go back to New York, and you get on the fastest troop ship in the U.S. Navy.

Howe: Yeah, right, it's called the U.S.S. West Point. It was once christened U.S.S. America when it was a civilian ship. I don't know who owned that, but it was a great ship. And uh, we were on the water 33 days. We left New York in the nighttime; we had to go below decks.

Van Ells: I was going to ask what the accommodations were like.

Howe: This is not meant to be racial, but it was the way things were at that time, but the black soldiers absolutely refused, absolutely refused to ride below the water line. Uh, at that time, I might say, that the black soldiers, in those days, weren't near the soldiers that they are today. Today they outgun the whites I think as far as soldiering. They are the best soldiers in the world. But back in those days, they were not very good soldiers. They refused to conform to discipline and uh, they weren't good. Uh, but, I don't think I'm slamming them when I say their the best soldiers in the world today.

Van Ells: Uh hum.

Howe: They are the greatest fighting men, contrary to what they were then.

Van Ells: So it sounds like your ship was a pretty good mix of different units.

Howe: Oh, it was.

Van Ells: It was a pretty big ship. I take it.

Howe: Oh it was, it was huge. I can't recall how many men boarded that ship. Twenty thousand was it?

Van Ells: They were like, infantry troops and military policemen such as you.

Howe: Infantry, absolutely, everything, everything was on that ship. And they were all, that ship, happened to be headed toward India in the CBI. So you see, they had to have replacement infantrymen. By the way Buster Crab was on the ship.

Van Ells: Is that right?

Howe: Do you know who Buster Crab is?

Van Ells: Yeah, yeah.

Howe: He was a swimmer and a Tarzan in the movies. He was on that ship. I don't know whether George Gobel was, I heard rumors that George Gobel was on that ship also, I don't know for sure.

Van Ells: Now, were they famous at this time? I don't know.

Howe: George Gobel was. And of course, Buster Crab was, I mean, sure he'd been in films of Tarzan.

Van Ells: That was in the thirties's then.

Howe: Sure.

Van Ells: I'm not up on my Tarzan.

Howe: Sure, he was a Tarzan. He was after Johnny Weismueller, so he was one of the famous Tarzans. And he was on the ship. He was going to the CBI. And I thought I was headed there too. Oh my God, I didn't want to go there. So we got to Bombay. Oh, 33 days on the water. First we went to Brazil to Rio de Janeiro, and then to Cape Town, South Africa, up the Indian Ocean. We made these stops for fuel, of course to Rio de Janeiro.

Van Ells: Uh hum. That's a long trip over there.

Howe: Yeah. They had to fuel up at Rio de Janeiro, and then fuel up again at Cape Town, and then up to Bombay where we were disembarked. Put into work, put to work right away. We were first off the ship, because we started having to control troops who were coming. And we were going to stay there a while. And uh, we had to control in the staging area, the troops. It was our job. And put to work already.

Van Ells: Was there much of an American presence yet at the time, or were you one of the first ones there.

Howe: No, not really, oh there was an American presence but, we were there but there was a skeleton crew of people that were running the

staging area, you know, a small group. They say this outfit over here, this over here, you people will bivouac there, and we had the luxury, we went right to an English camp, called Camp Calabwa, and we were there because we were going to be there a while working with the troops and sending them places, and hauling them around staging area and telling them where to go and what to do and so forth. So we had job to do. And many of these troops went to the CBI to Burma, to fight the Japanese. We were there, maybe a month when all the troops were dispelled and sent to their places. But they had to camp, they had to bivouac; we were guests of the British Army in Camp Calabwa.

Van Ells: I assume your accommodations were better than--

Howe: Very, very good. We slept in tents that were these kinds that they had. Had double lined tent with an air hole, air conditioning, naturally. We were issued English/British clothes. I wore a pith hat and a British Juga beer jacket like, you know a jungle jacket.

Van Ells: Is that right.

Howe: And we were, the underwear that we had were made by the Hindustanians. And they gave us new underwear. We had new wardrobes so to speak. And, honest to God, Mark, I'll tell you, they made, because the Hindustanians are slender people, if they gave you a 38 waist, they gave you legs about that big. So, bandie legged people you see, they figured that's all we needed for legs. And we had to rip the underwear open, boxer type shorts, you had to rip them open, the legs so that our legs could breathe. But, everything else fit pretty good. I enjoyed wearing the British uniform. It was kind of fun.

Van Ells: Yeah, they're pretty dapper. Aren't they?

Howe: Very. Very, but, we weren't allowed to have shorts.

Van Ells: Hmm.

Howe: That was only something that the British, we could not wear shorts we had to wear the long ones. We had regulations. The army just did not allow you to wear shorts in those days.

- Van Ells: Hmm.
- Howe: The British did, we didn't.
- Van Ells: What did you think of India? I mean this is your first trip abroad I assume.
- Howe: India was a very fascinating place. It was something I'd never seen before. Like I go back to my boyhood, naive, dumb. I had never seen anything, never been anywhere. Uh, India, I got lots of leave there because we were stationed right on the edge of the city. You could walk downtown to see the snake charmers and eat at some of the better hotels, hoping not to get the collar and stuff like that. And uh, see all the Indian fakers and buy a child for a few annas if you wanted a little kid you could have one for a few pennies.
- Van Ells: Maybe, you mean like a baby?
- Howe: A baby! There were mothers willing to sell their children for pennies. And um, there was an interesting place in Bombay, where anyone any man that rolled up a debt and couldn't pay his debt, he had to have, offer his wife for prostitution. And, there were, in this one street, Ballard Street, I think it was, Ballard, anyway there was cages, cages and cages, like jail cells, in the open air and inside the cages were women. And they would solicit if you walked past, they would solicit you. "Jig, jig, Johnny!" You know, they wanted you to come and if they, if you could go to them and pay them and then they would be to retire the debt that their husband owed. Isn't that awful?
- Van Ells: Hmm. Shock for a--
- Howe: We didn't have very many takers. [LAUGH]
- Van Ells: Kind of a shock for a guy from Monroe too.
- Howe: It is! I couldn't believe it. And uh, oh, let me tell you about an experience. At Camp Calabwa, they have, the natives prepare the food. It was nothing to see 'em peel potatoes and then fuss with their feet, they're bare footed, and uh, comb their hair or something. And I loved their tea. They made the most luscious tea and I'd always get a full mess cup full at every meal. And, oh, this one time I was gorging down the tea and I was finishing my cup when I felt

something across my face. And here it was somebody's hair that had been combing his hair that got in the tea somehow. And here I had this, "Oh look what Charlie got!" you know. Tea is for what you had on your mouth, a mustache. And it was hair, a quite a bundle of little swatch of hair from one of the guys, from one of the cooks.

Van Ells: Not terribly appetizing I take it.

Howe: Oh no! And we had uh, they did a lot with mongooses' and snake fights there.

Van Ells: Oh, you had mentioned that before.

Howe: Yeah.

Van Ells: That was kind of a colorful--

Howe: Oh, it was because, I doubt whether the mongoose was ever allowed to kill the snake because the fakars had to go get more snakes from somewhere. So, there was this, always this in the streets of India, was the guy with the flute playing to the snake out of a basket. Then there was always the guy that had a bag full of snakes and he'd turn one loose and he'd let the mongoose out of another bag and there'd be tussle and then the fight was always stopped before the mongoose could kill the snake.

Van Ells: Umm. Now you said fakar?

Howe: Yeah, Fachier.

Van Ells: What's that--

Howe: It means there are sort of a priest, we call them fakars in school, but I think the word is pronounced Fachier.

Van Ells: And that's some sort of--

Howe: It's an Indian name for these people that were supposed to have been religious folks to lay on a bed of nails or so forth.

Van Ells: Oh, I see.

- Howe: Or, to endure burning walking on coals and stuff like this. Very interesting country.
- Van Ells: Pretty exotic place.
- Howe: Oh! Wonderful! I'd like to go back someday and visit, but I think it would be different now. Oh! And one thing they did, the women always, oh, you'd be surprised to know that in the streets of Bombay the wealthy women went to a Max Factor, had a huge building, on one of the main streets, next to some of the places where they had the finest hotels. Max Factor had a studio there and the Indian women did participate in going to the Max Factor studio for facials and hairdo's and stuff like this. And they always wore the Cerise. But uh, one thing that they did do that wasn't very nice, and I hate to see it, the women as well as the men, chewed a leaf called Betel nut.
- Van Ells: Umm, yeah.
- Howe: And the sidewalk outside of Max Factor was always splattered with this bah, orange sputum and sputum all, bah, ugh, it was awful. And the smell of cow dung was prevalent everywhere. I mean they used it as fuel. And uh, you could smell the air was heavy all the time.
- Van Ells: And the cows wandered the streets.
- Howe: And the cows wandering the streets. Any animal wandered the streets, unmolested.
- Van Ells: I'm interested; you mentioned you grew up poor.
- Howe: Very.
- Van Ells: And everyone in Monroe was poor. And then you went to India.
- Howe: Yeah.
- Van Ells: Is there a comparison there?
- Howe: Well, I, when I was poor growing up, what I saw in India was absolute poverty, I was a wealthy person compared to what they did. It was awful, just terrible. And I feel sorry for the people. But I

think things have changed now, and I think I'd be surprised if I went back and it would be different now.

Van Ells: Takes a lot of money to get there.

Howe: Oh boy! Yes it does! [Laughter]

Van Ells: Okay. So, when did you get to the Persian Gulf then?

Howe: Persian Gulf. We was there, like I say, I was in Calabwa for about four weeks until we got rid of all the troops, and got 'em all sent off to where they were supposed to go. Then it was our turn. We got-- we were embarked from the port, from the dock, on an old tub called the City of London. Ugh, the thing should have been at the bottom of the ocean. It was absolutely horrible. At one time it was a very nice ship, I think. But at this time, it was, the crew was Hindustani natives, and the captain I think was British. But it was a tub, it was awful. And uh, we were going to go in this thing to get out of the Indian Ocean and up into Karachi and up the Persian Gulf and into a place called Khorramshahr on the river. So uh, we left on the City of London, that was a horrible, dirty, black ship, along with British troops. They were on their way somewhere else too. It was awful, terrible, there were cockroaches all over, and we ate breakfast, there was something like bad Cornflakes, condensed milk and stuff like this. I was awful glad to get off that ship.

Van Ells: That's kind of a long trip too.

Howe: It was. It was seven days on this ridiculous boat. And we broke down in the middle of the Indian Ocean. We floated listlessly and hopelessly around, they anchored, I guess, and we just went around the anchor, went around the anchor. And we were the sitting duck for any Japanese or German subs that would happen to be in the area. Finally got, after a day in the sun, they final got the thing going again. We steamed away very slow, maybe four knots or what. Not very fast.

Van Ells: Umm. So where did you land?

Howe: Landed in, Khorramshahr. It was a city in Iran. Across the river, you could look to Basra and over here was Khorramshahr, and we landed in Khorramshahr. And we were loaded off right there. And

immediately we went to a place, staged immediately and went, not even overnight in Khorramshahr, went to Ahvaz and then to Bandar Shahpur, another port city.

Van Ells: Now, Bandar Shapur, this is the Strait of Hormuz, somewhere. Or is this--

Howe: Well just above the straight. It was below Khorramshahr, above where the Karoom River, the Tigris and Euphrates joined and come out and Basra's on one side and Khorramshahr is on the other. It goes out to the gulf, and it's below there that we went.

Van Ells: What were your duties?

Howe: Our duties at first was were just merely to control the ports, prevent thefts. And later we got pushed into going different places where there was trouble along the lines. The guys, my company was split, I was on a detached outfit that went to Bandeshpur, forty some men. And uh, the rest of my company stayed in Khorramshahr and they had hazardous duty for a while, because they had to run to different places. There was a railroad tunnel that was being G-2 Tal said there were Kurds, were going to bomb the tunnel shut, or else they would go up to Indomesch where the road was being blown up and so forth. And then after our business in Bandeshpur, we learned to get along with fewer men for the duties on the Vander.

Van Ells: Uh hum.

Howe: And some of us then were dispatched to those places so, as far as the combat zone, you'd say is now non-combat zone, however, I've had larcenists hit in the neck and Christy got hit in the leg. So there was, we never lost a life, but all they had was small arms fire, the bandits.

Van Ells: Yeah.

Howe: Small arm fire. No weaponry that would, we as a matter of fact, when we went on these engagements, we wore fatigue caps or regular hats.

Van Ells: No helmets or anything.



- Howe: No helmets, because there's no, no artillery or anything like that.
- Van Ells: Uh huh. Did you get combat pay?
- Howe: No. Nothing like that because these people were our allies. And we were police, we were policing the area, so there was no combat pay. We took our weapons carriers, and armored car or tank, and went to these various places.
- Van Ells: I see. These bandits, as you call them, they were financed by the Germans?
- Howe: Financed by the Germans.
- Van Ells: What was your, I'm interested in what you were told at the time, how much--
- Howe: We weren't told anything, we weren't told much at that time. Uh, we told, that there was a possibility; there was only a few units, the Hindustan soldiers that were there by the British, and us that were soldiers that could actually fight. The others are all port people. Stevedores, and this sort of thing. A lot of blacks, a lot of whites that were in charge of unloading the ships with native help. And uh, they couldn't, last time they fired a gun was in basic training, you see they didn't know anything about soldiering or fighting. So, it was just us, the Indian troops, the Hindustani troops and us were the only soldiers that could defend this place. This entire country. And we feared, we were told that it was a possibility that the German Army, had they not been busy on the Russian front, and on the fronts that had been developed that they would have come down through Turkey to shut off, cause Germany, uh Turkey was friendly toward Germany. And they were, we've told that possibly German's could come down through Turkey, sweep into Iran and Iraq and try to take over the supply lines that was going to the Soviet Union, through Iran.
- Van Ells: And there's oil there too, of course.
- Howe: Oh yes, you bet.
- Van Ells: I'm trying to imagine, this is in this little narrative here, that German parachutists, I'm wondering like, where they took off from or did they come in submarines.

Howe: We didn't ever come in contact with them. We were later made aware of, after the whole thing was over; we were made aware of this. That's why I put it in yellow because we didn't know it, learn of it till on the ship home or, till we got put somewhere else that German parachutists had entered the country and stayed in the mountains, but had made dishing out money to the Kurds, and I have no luck for those guys, dishing out money to the Kurds to harass us and supply lines. You see we had two lines; we had a railway as well as a superhighway that went through the mountains to the Soviet Union. And the men in the trucks, the Americans that drove trucks were in more of a hazardous position than railway people were because the Kurds would pick them off, the drivers, and the truck would tumble over the mountain side and down into the ravines, and then they have crews of thieves that would go pick up whatever.

Van Ells: And that was pretty much what they were after.

Howe: That's all they were after.

Van Ells: They just plunder.

Howe: That's all they were after. They had no ax to grind with us; they just wanted what we had. One of the most bizarre things that we came across or knew of, it was in my company, I wasn't along with this detail, was that the horrible things they did to Americans if they didn't die. They would bury them in the sand and then they'd take the top of their head and take it off so the bare skull was exposed to the sun. These guys were alive! And then the bare skull was exposed to the very hot sun, and of course they would die from that. Horrible!

Van Ells: I'm sure.

Howe: Those are some of the horror stories. But I wasn't hit. Two friends of mine were hit because they returned bandits with fire, they had ancient weapons, but they'd fire.

Van Ells: What did they have? Did you know?

Howe: I didn't ever know. It looked like something we had from the Civil War or something from the uh, some of your European arms that

maybe have come from the French or something, the French Revolution. You don't know. It's too far away.

Van Ells: Were they on horses?

Howe: They traveled on camels.

Van Ells: Camels.

Howe: Because the camels were two part, were two fold, they would haul away the booty.

Van Ells: Oh.

Howe: You see they'd haul away what they stole. And it was nothing for a good bull camel to haul a grand piano, one on each side of his back. Tough, strong guys. And these camel caravans would travel the interior section of Iran and Iraq, where Americans weren't, because they could go unmolested, they could travel the inside borders way far in where the Americans weren't. And they could travel far, wide with these camel caravan. It was interesting, I used to see the camel caravans going along, usually led by a bull camel and a little boy. A little boy many times controlled the camel train. And the big bull was in front, and he had decorations on and he had tassels hanging and a big bell, dung-ka-dung-ka-dung-ka, and he'd walk along. And maybe twelve camels back, tied together. And uh, that's the way they went, they carried all kinds of stuff. I saw them from afar.

Van Ells: Never close up.

Howe: Never--Yeah! I was in Toronto I saw 'em close up. These were the guys that weren't the crooks though that I saw were there.

Van Ells: Yeah.

Howe: And that's the way it was. Anything else?

Van Ells: Yeah. How frequent were these attacks? Were they sporadic?

Howe: Not--Sporadic. Not very often, but they were sporadic, because, when we got, when G-2 told us that something was happening, then we were dispatched. I have some photographs of, one photograph of

me, I only led one group, maybe twenty men, and I got a picture of the departure outside of the train, and its a roster, and someone took my picture.

Van Ells: Yeah, I think I remember seeing that.

Howe: Yeah, and I have a Springfield on my, slung on my shoulder. And I was in charge of that group. And we went to Andimesch, which is on the railroad line, because they feared that the tunnel, one of the tunnels, of the many tunnels in that railway would have been blown shut. And uh, we found nothing of course. The one thing that I was in fear of my life was where, Intelligence told us a group was going to raid a tire dump, a tire depot, where all the tires, thousands, and thousands of tires for anywhere from jeeps up through large diesel trucks were stored. And, our information had it that there was going to be a raid there and by God there was. And we were planted there ahead of time. And uh, we saw them come in. It was very scary to see them coming and there sneaking up all around. They're armed. And uh, when the officers turned the lights on and exposed them, immediately they started firing on us. Never got hit. None of our people got hit that time, but I guess we got three of them. The rest fled. But uh, that was the closest thing I got to any real danger. I didn't like it.

Van Ells: No. Did you get to, did you have any inkling or any idea of what kinds of supplies were going up to the Soviet Union? I assume you saw the big trains going.

Howe: Oh yes. Oh yes. Well, because when I wasn't out on field duty, I would work the Jetty's, or the port, the docks. And uh, a lot of jeeps, blocks, created jeeps, a lot of ammunition, a lot of railroad material, rails, railroad hardware, this sort of thing. Um, lots and lots of trucks. Many, many trucks. And lots of aircraft. Now the aircraft, this takes another thing. I never served at Abadan, but there was a place called Abadan, which is an oil port, to this day, its come in the news, in the Persian Gulf conflict, Abadan. And it was at Abadan that the, that they had a huge assembly plant for fighter planes that we were sending to the Soviet Union.

Van Ells: Like they would come over in parts and then reassemble them.

Howe: That, they would come in a box, and those guys would put them together, and they also put together the C-47's and the C-46's there also. And they would put them together and they were flown to the Soviet Union by Soviet personnel, they didn't allow us into, close to the country at that time. We were the only American troops to have any kind of contact with the Soviet Union at that time, because no one had was allowed to have ever been close to the Soviets, just us. And the native personnel that my--sailed the upper route to Murmansk, they probably were in contact with the Soviets. But we were constantly in contact. They weren't a friendly people. They would have liked to have been.

Van Ells: I was going to ask you. What were your impressions of the Soviets? Were they tough, were they mean?

Howe: They were very tough. They looked like they were very crude. Their uniforms didn't fit. And they looked like hell. They'd come and they'd say, "skdjflskjf," you know, whatever they said. And that was about all they said. We had one of our fellows that really got chummy with some of the Soviets. And he went to their barracks at different times, where they did a hell-of-a-lot of singing. Beautiful singing, very, all this beautiful harmony, and singing Russian songs. Oh they, they could sing. These guys could sing. Beautiful.

Van Ells: Um, I suppose in Iran, there wasn't much opportunity for leave, to get off the base and stuff.

Howe: No.

Van Ells: I better straighten your impressions of the country.

Howe: In Bandeshpur, where I was, there was no, hardly no native people. It was strictly an army installation. And we weren't--we didn't get off of the base very much. Only when you went on special detail or called to a certain place to look for trouble or trouble had been rumored to be. And, I did get to Tehran once, as--a on leave. And that was kind of fun. It was peaceful and they had some high-class hotels that you could go and drink.

Van Ells: Did it compare to Bombay at all?

Howe: It was a little bit better than Bombay. It was better. Because, you see, why it was better, because back before we got there. The Germans were there. And Germany, the Germans had started to modernize uh, Iran. And so doing, they brought with them some of their culture. Nice hotels, of course, the hotel for Doce, was a great hotel. Great place to go. And uh, the different things that they had introduced to the modern or liberal Persian populace, and they, they were getting right along. And the Shah, being of modern—he of course had some influence in started promote, promoting the country to--

Van Ells: Westernization.

Howe: Yeah. Thank you. I couldn't reach that word.

Van Ells: I try not to stick words in people's mouths.

Howe: That's fine; you helped me out there.

Van Ells: Okay. Um, so the war in Europe ends.

Howe: Yes. And we start to fold up.

Van Ells: Do you remember the announcement?

Howe: There was no--Oh you mean the announcement that the war was over.

Van Ells: Yeah, when you first found out that the--

Howe: Oh sure. Oh sure. V-E Day.

Van Ells: What was the atmosphere?

Howe: Oh, joy and jubilation and grumbling that we weren't on a ship going home already. [LAUGH] Both, both things. "Why the hell are we here yet? We got to get home for Christmas." You see, this was in May 8, 1945. Okay. "What are we doing here? This things all over with, lets go!" And it takes a lot of time to fold up and close a base, and close up the country, because locomotives had to be sent and we weren't going to leave all that stuff there. We left a great deal as it was.

Van Ells: And as it was, I mean, we were still fighting the Japanese.

Howe: Absolutely! So this stuff had to be transported to another front. And the troops, we were to go somewhere else. I mean it wasn't just go home. You had to go where they sent you, where manpower was needed, in the South Pacific if need be. And that was what you did. But it took us so long to close the bases, close things up, get rid of our stuff and send..., all the while troops were leaving, leaving, leaving, leaving. Finally it got down to where, in my, I got transferred to Khorramshahr then, 'cause we closed Bandar Shapur. And I got transferred to Khorramshahr—[END OF SIDE A]

Howe: [TAPE 1 SIDE B)--the Baluchi guards that were armed with clubs...

Van Ells: Baluchi? What is--

Howe: Baluchi. There's a country between Iran and India.

Van Ells: Baluchistan or something.

Howe: Baluchistan. Yeah. The Baluchi guards were very good for us, I mean, we used them before, and they were armed with ax handles or baseball bats and stuff. They were very effective. Beat the hell out of intruders you know, with those clubs. And uh, so I had under that, another guy and I from Company C, we had a weapons carrier and we did nothing but take care of these guards for about two or three weeks, and then finally it was our turn to come home and we came home.

Van Ells: So, when you're packing up this base, my assumption is that the Japanese had not surrendered yet.

Howe: No.

Van Ells: And by the time you got this base packed up--

Howe: They had surrendered.

Van Ells: Okay.

Howe: Because it went into September came and the Japanese had surrendered. "Now why aren't we going home?"

Van Ells: Yeah, I was going to say, yeah.

Howe: "Now we should be going home." But we were still packing up. And floating again.

Van Ells: Now there were some instances where troops if not rioted, then, demonstrated against, they wanted to get home, this happened in Manila, I guess. There was none of that sort of--

Howe: No. Nothing like that.

Van Ells: Not a social disturbance?

Howe: No, nothing like that.

Van Ells: Cause as a military policeman, if there had been--

Howe: Nothing like that.

Van Ells: And so, when did you get on the ship to go back?

Howe: I flew back.

Van Ells: Oh, you flew back!

Howe: Yeah, the rocket run, we went from Abadan, I was hauled to Abadan on truck, several guys and myself. From Abadan to Egypt, Cairo, to Tripoli to the Azores, to Bermuda to New York.

Van Ells: Hmm. You're the first person I spoke to who flew back. I take it that was unusual.

Howe: Well yeah, because I--the country was--oh, the replacements had come for us and we were allowed to leave, and I wasn't allowed to leave until the replacements came. They came on a troop ship and the same troops that brought the replacements took our people away. And uh, I was fortunate to be left behind, I thought "Oh God." I was crying and feeling bad cause they--"Good bye!" I went down to the pier and watched them go of course. I felt bad, but then I lucked out



by going--They arrived in the United States on board ship in New York City, they arrived Christmas Eve. I had been discharged and had been home by December 15.

Van Ells: I was going to ask, when you got, when you flew back, what was, it was December then.

Howe: Yeah, December, before Christmas. My goodness, I went to Fort Totten, New York. We landed at La Guardia and hauled to Fort Totten New York, a small Fort on the, by Tarrytown on the Hudson River, beautiful little place. As a matter of fact, the guard at the headquarters was a St. Bernard dog. [LAUGH]--Really! He had a head about like a bushel basket. You could have mistaken him for a lion.

Van Ells: It still sounds pretty fearsome to me.

Howe: But he was great. He was a nice friendly dog. Well anyway, Fort Totten, stayed overnight only and then on a train immediately to Camp McCoy. And I was there a day and a half.

Van Ells: Did your out processing then?

Howe: Yeah.

Van Ells: Just a lot of paperwork and that sort of thing.

Howe: Yeah. Yeah. Came home.

Van Ells: And then you got that magical piece of paper.

Howe: Yeah, and I never did belong to the 52--I don't know.

Van Ells: 5220 club.

Howe: 5220 club. I because, I immediately went to work again. I got out, languished a week and then went to work.

Van Ells: Explain the steps in going from Camp McCoy I guess it was, or Fort McCoy.

Howe: It was Camp at that time.

- Van Ells: Or Camp McCoy to Monroe. Did you get on train to go back?
- Howe: No, we went from bus. Took a bus from Tomah to Madison to Monroe by bus.
- Van Ells: Then, what do you mean that you languished a week?
- Howe: Oh, I laid around a week, and then I thought, Christ I got to get busy, so I got a job as a cheese maker apprentice. Cause I, oh I went to Whitewater, I was going to go to school there, I was going to go for college. And I had my room and everything and by God, someone talked me into going to be a cheese maker because oh, there was a lot of money in cheese making. So, By God, that's what I wanted, I wanted the money. So I went into the cheese making, didn't like it.
- Van Ells: So you went back to Monroe.
- Howe: Back to Monroe, yeah.
- Van Ells: A lot of the guys your age were also Vets, and this sort of thing.
- Howe: Oh sure, sure, sure there were a lot of them around, wearing army clothes, and frequenting the pool hall and hanging around.
- Van Ells: I was going to say, did you socialize with the vets or with the non-vets?
- Howe: No, no I didn't, because I--I had to go to work. I mean, I thought I had to go to work. I wanted money. And so, I worked, and those guys would, had a life of Riley, some of them for a year, they didn't even attempt to get a job.
- Van Ells: Was there an unemployment problem?
- Howe: No. I think that, well maybe at first, because you know, you don't start getting work until the factories or whoever provides services, is serving the veterans that returned. So this expands the economy. Well, at first there was not much to look at in those days. The veterans started going to college. That's where they belonged, that's where they should have went. And uh, those that didn't go kind of laid around.

- Van Ells: Hmm. But you had no trouble finding work.
- Howe: Oh, no.
- Van Ells: 'Cause some vets complained that they couldn't find any work.
- Howe: Like I say, I told you before, in my early years, I never had any trouble, I always worked.
- Van Ells: Umm hmm. Um, then so, you didn't join the 5220 Club?
- Howe: No. I didn't know anything about it.
- Van Ells: You could have used the educational benefits. Did you--
- Howe: Yeah, yeah, I went to Platteville then.
- Van Ells: Oh.
- Howe: I started in Platteville. After I didn't like cheese making anymore. I had a bunch of money, and I said, "Now I can go to college because I got this money and I get money from Uncle Sam, I'm going to do it, it will take it all the way through." So I went to Platteville, I was going to be in Agribusiness or something similar, or be an agricultural teacher. But I didn't have my wits about me again. I should have went for elementary education. Well, none of those happened. I was in college and behaving myself and taking all kinds of sciences. And after I was there about six weeks, seven weeks, my brother came to me, he knew I had money. He said, "I got the greatest thing. I want you to come with me, were going to go in business, we're going into the poultry and egg business. I got a truck. You got money to buy. We'll get a GI loan from the state for running capitol." We were going to buy chickens and eggs and haul them to Chicago and make all kinds of money.
- Van Ells: Was your brother a vet too?
- Howe: Yeah. And, he used his up in home buying or something else. He used up his stuff, so he came to me because I had earned a great deal of money from this cheese-making thing. I spent one summer making cheese, the salary was at that time was gross, huge; I made

big bucks, because you worked seven days of the week, Sunday's included. And it was hard work, long work, long hours. So I made lots of money, and I had all this money. And he knew it. And so I went with him. Blew my college, blew my money, it was a bad venture. Went broke, belly up.

Van Ells: Such are the risks of entrepreneurship.

Howe: Yes, absolutely.

Van Ells: Did you use the, there were housing loans too?

Howe: Yep. I never did. I never did use one of them.

Van Ells: Okay. When did you get into police work?

Howe: Okay. After I lost my butt in the poultry business, I went and worked for a bread company down in Dubuque, Iowa. And I worked for them from 1949 till 1953 of December when the Sheriff in my county got in trouble with the clandestine and illicit operations and so forth. And he was forced out of office and the Governor of Wisconsin, appointed me sheriff to finish the term of this guy who wasn't able to. So that put me, I thought I'd like that, so I quit the bread company and I was going from store to store wholesaling. Not from door-to-door, I wouldn't do that. And uh, so we went to, I was appointed by Governor Kohler, then the Governor of the State of Wisconsin. Because the Republicans in my town, in my city, the county uh, Republican parties. Well, you know, this guy Charlie, he might be a go-getter, lets get him to.

Van Ells: You see, I was going to ask how the Governor got your name.

Howe: Yeah. Only through recommendations by the Republican people of Green County.

Van Ells: Were you active in the party or that sort of thing?

Howe: Not active at all. Not active at all. But they just figured that I was a guy that could go around people and "Hello," and politic. They thought I'd be good for the party. So they got the Governor to get me.

- Van Ells: Do you think your military police experience had anything to do with it?
- Howe: Oh, absolutely. Oh, without a doubt. And uh, so the election was going, and I was not a candidate but they got me to fill the interim between the new coming sheriff and the old one that got put out. So, I filled the interim about, oh, six weeks. And the election, no, it had to be longer than that. It had to be a couple months, because the elections occurred in November. And uh, the new guy took me then as Under-Sheriff, to be his assistant. And uh, so then I worked for him for; we were only allowed two terms. After his two terms were up then I chose to run myself, and I won two terms of my own. And then after that there was no place to go so I came to Madison.
- Van Ells: I see. I was going to say, I was wondering how you got to the Capitol Police.
- Howe: Because there was nothing more in Monroe, I wanted to buy a restaurant that wasn't for sale. So I left Monroe and came to Madison to work for Even Acres, Inc. to prove out a chunk of land off the Interstate by running a business out there for them, a service station with all kinds of services to prove the land, then after the land was proven, I bought the place. And then Holiday Inn moved in, and the weather seal people and a park came, and this sort of thing had all came because Even Acres were able to sell plots on the proof of my success as a businessman on the Interstate. Then I moved to town, I mean, I got in trouble with the Mobil Oil Company because I wouldn't do everything they said. I went up and signed on with ARCO a block and a half from my house over by Farm and Fleet. There was a brand new station going up and I said, "By God, I want that." And I got that station and worked there till 1978. I was being consumed by--I wanted to keep making big bucks. I made big money and I wanted to keep doing it. In order to do that you had to allow help to leave and not replace it. So, uh, I was consuming myself, trying to work their job and my job too. And I was being consumed since '78, and I said, "Hell, I'm going to give this up while I got money." Then I went to Webcrafters and worked nine years there.
- Van Ells: That's right by my house.
- Howe: In the maintenance department.

Van Ells: Right off Fordem there.

Howe: Yeah! And I worked there nine years. I got to be the project leader. I was too old to be, they said we can't give you foreman, but we'll give you project leader in this department and uh, you'll be project leader. You'll tell the men what to do and where to go, but we won't call you foreman. And I said, "Why not?" Why you're too old. You see in was in the sixties then. Or, late fifties. I worked there nine years and then I quit when I was 62 years old and I said I'm retiring. And not to be, they had me teach [noise blocks out words] and it took 90 days. I made a noise on there didn't I—

Van Ells: That's okay.

Howe: [LAUGH] And I teach, stay there part time, they gave me a raise and I would teach the new guy, and he got a hell of a job out of this. He was a young man, and he got a hell of a big job out of this, he got to be foreman of two departments of the maintenance of the presses and maintenance of the buildings, the same as I had. So, I left there and I became a househusband. My wife was still working at American Family Insurance, so I became a househusband and a dam good one. I could cook, wash clothes and iron and do all that stuff, clean the house. And then, she came home, so then I said I've got to go find some other place to employ, some employment. I went to the airport and worked there as security and then didn't pay well and I came over here when I found out that Tony had been killed, and here I am.

Van Ells: Well that's good. And we love having you too.

Howe: Thank you. Thank you.

Van Ells: I just have one more area I want to touch on.

Howe: Yeah.

Van Ells: Um, you mentioned reunions, you go to reunions. I'm wondering if you joined any veteran's organizations right after the war or years later.

Howe: Oh, no. I belong to the American Legion, but I was never active. I joined the VFW, I was never very active, and I still--

Van Ells: You belong now?

Howe: Yeah.

Van Ells: And when did you do that? Was it right after the war.

Howe: Right after. And then uh, I belonged to the VFW here, I'm not active, I'm going to get a cap to wear, you know. But that's all I do. And we have reunions, my outfit, Company D, only the Company D, we've kept in touch and we're all close. You know when you live, well, you know how that is, you're a veteran. When you live with men--

Van Ells: Well, except I don't keep in contact.

Howe: Oh, you don't do that. Okay. We kept in touch because of our geographical proximity of each other.

Van Ells: Yeah.

Howe: We kept in touch and we have this reunion every October.

Van Ells: Is it in the same place? Or do you move it around?

Howe: Same place. No, we're, it's always in Janesville, because half way from Chicago and Wisconsin. We meet there. We love each other, you know, it's a great, I have a lot of feeling for these men that I served with.

Van Ells: Do you guys talk about the old times?

Howe: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we do. "Do you remember when--Do you remember?" "Yeah!" And it's all fun. Fun and games.

Van Ells: I suppose the spouse is around.

Howe: All there. Yeah, and you know, our mailing list now, last year I handled the entire thing, programming and mailing and all this stuff, I was the organizer of the thing. And I made them; I did something

new that they had wanted to include the women into this fellowship. And I stated, the women are part of this, and they come, they're with us, we don't exclude them, they are part of this group. And, they are, and in our honor roll, or for the death, you know, list, we're now including the women, which is what you should do. I mean, they're part of it.

Van Ells: Sure.

Howe: And they enjoy it. And become, my wife has made several wonderful friends in that group.

Van Ells: Well that's good.

Howe: End of story.

Van Ells: Great! Do you have anything else that you want to add?

Howe: No, I'm damn glad to be alive! I'm damn glad to have been sent where, because, you know, a sad thing happened to me, I lost my brother, my kid brother.

Van Ells: In World War II.

Howe: In World War II. He was a gunner in an armor, on a B-24. And, on April 22, 1944, when all this concentration of bombing was going on in Europe, he was on a B-24, I don't think they had the P-51 accompanying the bombers at that time yet, this was in April, and over Dover, the plane had almost got back to England to their base, the Eighth Air Force, and some German plane, they relax, you see, they relax. They put down their gun and they smoke and they look out the window and they don't see somebody coming in at 12:00 or 1:00, and apparently this guy snuck in on 'em and shot 'em up and they were over Dover where they landed, where they lived, where they are, cause it isn't very far from France over to England.

Van Ells: Yeah, I've been to Dover, actually.

Howe: And, that's where he got it.

Van Ells: And so, you had two other brothers.



Howe: I had four brothers in the military. Four all together, four boys.  
And uh, my brother, Jim--

Van Ells: One didn't come back.

Howe: One didn't come back.

Van Ells: All the rest of them did. Do you talk to your brothers much about  
the war?

Howe: Well, I'm the only one, my brother, I have only one brother left out of  
the family of eight kids, there are only two of us left, one brother  
that's older than I am, and myself.

Van Ells: Did you discuss it with your, while they were alive?

Howe: Oh, yeah. Oh, sure.

Van Ells: That's kind of interesting.

Howe: Yeah.

Van Ells: Well, that's all I have.

Howe: Okay. Thank you for—[END OF TAPE]