

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
HANS SANNES
Paratrooper, Army, World War II.

1999

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Sannes, Hans, (1920-2004). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy from Video: 3 sound cassettes (ca. 135 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy from Video: 3 sound cassettes (ca. 135 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 135 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 2 videorecordings (ca. 135 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Hans Sannes, a Stoughton, Wisconsin native, discusses his experiences as a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division during World War II, as well as his time in the National Guard and the 32nd Infantry Division before the war. Sannes tells of being encouraged to join the National Guard by a friend despite being only seventeen, and he touches on training. Activated in 1940, he recalls spending a year at Camp Livingston (Louisiana) with the 32nd Infantry Division, doing drills, and practicing with weapons. He speaks of volunteering to be a paratrooper and the training at Fort Benning (Georgia): packing parachutes, physical training, running with gas masks on, and jump training. Sannes discusses the paratroopers' responsibility to check each others' parachutes in the airplane and the death of an acquaintance during a jump. He portrays the paratroop officers, many of whom were West Point graduates. Assigned to Company D, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Regiment, 101st Division, Sannes touches on advanced infantry training at Fort Bragg (North Carolina) and being promoted to sergeant. Shipped overseas on the HMS Strathnaver, he tells of getting separated from the convoy after an engine failure and spending a month isolated at St. John's (Newfoundland and Labrador) during repairs. After being put on a different ship, the SS John Ericsson, Sannes tells of training in Hungerford (England) and seeing V-2 rocket attacks while visiting London. He comments on hearing rumors, seeing Dwight Eisenhower shortly before D-Day, and being in a couple of photographs with Eisenhower. Sannes details jumping into Normandy the night before D-Day, seeing a few French civilians after he landed, meeting up with other men from his company, and getting delayed by a fire fight on their way to their objectives, which were some causeways at the beach. He talks about moving forward under fire, clearing out a German barracks, and guarding a marshy perimeter at Carentan. Sannes comments on starting to smoke cigarettes in England, the availability of alcohol, and food in the field. After a brief R&R in England, he describes jumping into Holland and being in combat for seventy-two days straight, including spending the first night in some woods, seeing a friend have a near miss from a bullet, and being saved by some British tanks. Sannes recalls getting orders to go to Bastogne (Belgium) by blackout trucks with only necessary equipment, not including first-aid kits. He addresses lacking enough blankets for the cold weather, rotating the company through a farmhouse to warm up their feet, and making arrangements with a local farmer for cows to supplement company rations. Sannes describes being given a ride by General Maxwell Taylor in England. During the Battle of the Bulge, Sannes details the day he was

wounded: hearing about an imminent attack on the radio, running for cover, going to the aid station after being hit, and travelling by boxcar. He reflects on having his souvenir guns stolen. He talks about getting shipped back to the States on a hospital ship, attending 101st Airborne Association reunions, and using the GI Bill to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which he recalls as being overly crowded. Sannes discusses getting disability payments for his damaged arm.

Biographical Sketch:

Sannes (1920-2004) joined the National Guard in 1937 and was honorably discharged from the Army in 1945. He participated in the Invasion of Normandy, Operation Market Garden, and the Battle of the Bulge. After the war, he settled in his hometown of Stoughton (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 1999
Transcribed by Cassandra Kitto, 2011
Edited by Joan Bruggink, 2011
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011

Interview Transcript:

James: Alright.

Sannes: And I had burned some—put some stuff in there to burn, but I made a mistake. I didn't think it was starting to burn very good and I leaned over to see if it was burning all around, and a gust of wind came and "whoosh," right up in my face. So I just had superficial discomfort from it and carried my cot outside at night and I'd get a little breeze when I slept that night and, ah, just for that one night—course it was called off that night.

James: Yeah, that was the night before the night before, right.

Sannes: But one of the officers says, "You better not go," he says, "his face is burned." "Naw," I says, "it'll be alright. Get out in the cool air," I says, "it helps, and it'll be alright." And I says, "You don't think I'm gonna stay back after being here—"

James: Sure. With all this planning.

Sannes: Yeah. So I got that—that's where that cap came in. It was one of those winter caps that you put under the helmet.

James: Oh, yeah.

Sannes: And, ah, just a little visor, you know.

James: Well you—

Sannes: No wait, I take it back. It had a—I might have turned it around, but the visor was down here and I blackened what I could.

James: Well it's pretty unusual, being such a famous photograph, you know.

Sannes: [laughs] Yeah.

James: That picture of Eisenhower talking to you guys, just before you jumped. As I say, I've seen this picture in probably a hundred books, you know.

Sannes: Next time you see it, he took three pictures there, and I'm seeing two of them, and it's this one and this other one that they sent me, oh, a year ago probably that I got through the Air Corps. Individuals can't get 'em, see.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: But, ah, I'm in there on that side.

James: Oh, on another picture, but this is you in this picture?

Sannes: Yeah, yeah. But the other picture of me I'm standing around the corner.

James: Yeah. Just hold that there for me, just a sec. Right. Right, then. Alright. Very good. Alright, that should do it.

Sannes: You'd think.

James: Now, let's—we have to go back and start over.

Sannes: Yeah, that's right.

James: Right, so Hans Sannes was born where?

Sannes: Stoughton, Wisconsin.

James: Stoughton, right. And when did you join the Army?

Sannes: Ah, I was in the National Guard for, oh, right up until the war was declared.

James: When did you join the National Guard?

Sannes: Oh, I joined, let's see—

James: About '39 or a year or two before?

Sannes: Ah, it was about '38. It was about—no, no, '37.

James: '37.

Sannes: I was only—in 1937 I was only seventeen when I joined, 'cause I fibbed?? my age a little; I wanted to get in.

James: Right, but there was no war, not much going on in '37. What prompted you to do this?

Sannes: Well, one of my neighbor friends, my buddy, used to come around with his uniform on—he was a little older than I, and he had those puttees, you know, that you wind around, and I was kind of envious of him, and he says, “You can get in,” and then he kind of egged me on. He said, “You can lie about your age; they won't check on you.” So when they asked how old I was, I said, “Seventeen.” If they had asked me when I was born, I'd have probably told them the truth.

James: [unintelligible]

Sannes: Yeah, because—anyhow, I did that one time with a couple friends. Chicago to me was the biggest city in the world, you know.

James: Sure.

Sannes: When you had never been there and you were living in Stoughton.

James: Right.

Sannes: So a couple of buddies and I went down, and I had been working at Cab and Body down here in Stoughton, I don't know, thirty-five cents an hour, I guess, and so I had some money, and those guys were working so we decided to go to Chicago and go to a burlesque show. In those days that was big stuff.

James: Oh, yes.

Sannes: You know, 606 Club and all you'd see is [unintelligible]. [laughs]

James: Right.

Sannes: So anyhow, we went down and these guys prompted me. They were both eighteen; I was only seventeen. They said, "Don't forget now, you're eighteen." And don't let the—

James: The guy at the door.

Sannes: So anyhow, they went up and they got their tickets and I went and told her I want a ticket and she says, "How old are you?" "No," she says, "when were you born?" And I said, "1920." I made a mistake and I told the truth, see. [James laughs] She says, "Then you're not old enough, you're only seventeen." So she wouldn't let me in, so we didn't go. [laughs]

James: Oh, you blew it!

Sannes: Yep. I did. By being truthful; I'm George Washington and the cherry tree.

James: [laughs] So in those days, what did that involve, being National? You went and joined in Madison?

Sannes: I joined—no, Stoughton had a, we had a company.

James: Oh, local.

Sannes: Yeah.

James: So your training involved what, a month in camp somewhere?

Sannes: Ah, I think it was just one week. Two weeks—one week, I think. I can't remember now, it was so long ago. And then we had a winter camp for a week, I know that was a week, but—and then—

James: Did they show you how to operate a gun? You had M-1 Springfields then, 1903. Yeah, the 1903.

Sannes: So anyhow—oh, that was fun, it gave me something to do.

James: And they paid you how much? Do you remember?

Sannes: Oh, geez, I can't remember. It wasn't much.

James: No.

Sannes: A few dollars a month, or something.

James: Yeah, right.

Sannes: You weren't doing it for the money, but, ah—

James: No. Did they pay for your uniform?

Sannes: Oh, yeah. They give you all that stuff.

James: Sure.

Sannes: So anyhow, then the war broke out, of course—war was just about breaking out I guess, and they were—

James: You mean in Europe?

Sannes: Yeah, and they were talking about the draft here, you know, in the papers a lot, and, ah, then I found out that I didn't have to be drafted because the Guards were gonna be activated.

James: Right.

Sannes: And they were, October 15th.

James: Of what?

Sannes: 1940.

James: Of '40, okay.

Sannes: And so then we ended up a short time after that going down to Louisiana. Camp Livingston, Louisiana, and there we spent a year.

James: Do you remember what outfit you were in? Is it the 32nd Division?

Sannes: 32nd Division, yeah, Company I. And, ah, it's the same thing as the Guard, you know, same company, same guys, you know. So we went down, why it was a big, kind of a big joke, you know. We had a lot of fun, you know, the guys—

James: Reds against the blues, I think it was.

Sannes: And stuff like that, and end up there won't be any war, but at least we'll have something different.

James: Right. Your training probably picked up, though.

Sannes: Oh, yeah. We did, we did regular training, and then we hadn't been down there really too long—I can't remember how long—when they did activate us into the regular Army. So—

James: But the war still hadn't started yet?

Sannes: [pause] Ah, I don't think so. I don't think the war had started. They activated us into the regular Army before the war started.

James: Right. So where did they send you then?

Sannes: Well—

James: 'Cause those rumors just lasted that summer, that first summer.

Sannes: Yeah, but then after—well, let's see, I was in Fort Benning [Georgia], or, ah, Livingston, Louisiana, and then after that—I was only there until February, '42. And, ah, October 15th, 1940, I think—yeah, '40, when I went down—and, ah, so—

James: It was probably '41 that you were still—

Sannes: It was '41.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: And, ah, then one day, it was getting kind of monotonous, you know, the same [James laughs] kind of drilling—

James: Sure.

Sannes: Same kind of stuff going on every day out in the field. We'd go out in the morning with heavy overcoats on, these regular Army overcoats, you know. They were all wool. And we had sweaters and stuff underneath. And it would be warm or fairly nice in the morning, you know. It didn't even freeze ice under the cups and stuff. It was cold enough, but then you'd go out to drill and come back at noon for dinner carrying the overcoat, carrying sweaters, you were so hot, [James laughs] and the water was running and, oh, Jesus—and then we went in, we went to have lunch and they'd pass out the salt pills. And, ah, of course, take a salt pill. And then it was really hot at noon. Such a change, you know. So—

James: Did they give you any special training then or you just—

Sannes: Just like the riflemen do.

James: Right. No other weapons or anything?

Sannes: No.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: Well they, according to my memory, ah, we had some, ah, [pause]—

James: Machine guns?

Sannes: Yeah, we had some light, light machine guns. And, ah—like one each, with each squad I think—or each platoon, I mean. And, ah, stuff like that. And then they run you through so that you know how to take it apart and service it if something jams up and stuff like that, and the same with rifles. You would have to spread the stuff on a blanket, you know, and sometimes we wouldn't go out to drill, we'd just have in—or not inside but I mean out by the company street, and put a blanket down and everybody take your riffle apart, put it back together, try to do it in good time. In case we need it. And, ah—

James: And [unintelligible]?

Sannes: Stuff like that. And we had bayonet practice and all that stuff, and then—

James: And marksmanship practice? [clock chimes]

Sannes: Yeah, we were on the range. Not a heck of a lot, but anyhow, we were on the range every once in a while. And, ah, and so one day, a couple of my buddies and I were walking down the company street and, ah—you're familiar with all these terms? Company street, you know that?

James: Oh, yeah.

Sannes: All that stuff, well sometimes you talk to somebody who probably hardly ever been in a camp, you know.

James: No. I'm used to all of this.

Sannes: But I know you've interviewed everybody and you probably could go back over the same stuff. But anyhow, we were walking down the company street and he says, "Look at the bulletin board." There was a big notice up; they wanted people for the paratroops. And we started talking about it and, you know in between us, and [unintelligible] well you're supposed to be at one hundred eighty-five pounds or under and all—

James: Or less?

Sannes: Huh?

James: Not over a hundred eighty-five?

Sannes: No; well, that's what they said.

James: Oh.

Sannes: And, ah, one fellow, a guy named Tom??, he's dead now, but he weighed—he was on the football team, regimental football team. He weighed two hundred or better. He said, "Hell, they'll never take me," good friend of mine. So, "Heck, you can put your name down anyhow." And you know, he says, "One hundred eighty-five," he says, "I can't make that." So he says, "I guess I'll have to stay where I am." So it ended up some other guys I didn't know—they had been introduced into our company from some other town. Neillsville, I guess, and, ah, Milwaukee, we got a couple. Anyhow, the three guys, who—the three originals—I'll call them originals, the ones who were talking about it at first—and, ah, three other fellows from our company went, decided to, you know, to—so we all joined, or signed up, it had to be all volunteer, and all _____??, you know. So we volunteered and we all made it in good shape and, ah, when they did—

- James: Now, how much—then when did the war start in relation to this? When did the United States get in the war, I mean?
- Sannes: Well—
- James: See, Pearl Harbor came—
- Sannes: We still weren't in the war.
- James: This was before Pearl Harbor?
- Sannes: This was February '42.
- James: '1?
- Sannes: No, I got in the paratroops February '42.
- James: Oh, that was after the war. That was after Pearl Harbor then.
- Sannes: It was right after Pearl Harbor. Right after the war started. But it was '42 I got into the paratroops.
- James: Right. Okay, so—
- Sannes: And, ah, so then I got selected by their usual method of selecting people: who you knew. [James laughs] You have a communication—you'll be selected, me and one of the fellows taking a communication course from, you know—and the way they picked those probably, they'd put us all in a row of keys, da da da da and dit dit dit, and all that, you know, the Morse code.
- James: Right.
- Sannes: And they said, "We know you don't know anything about the Morse code, or we don't think you do, but just put down what you hear. If you hear two dots, put it down, and if you hear three dashes, put it down," whatever we hear on this thing. So we did. Everybody did, and of course I don't know—it wouldn't make much difference, I suppose, but anyhow, I was one of them. They just had to have some guys.
- James: Right. Did they gave that test at Livingston while you were near Claiborne, at Louisiana, or was this after you got to Benning?
- Sannes: No, ah, wait, no, this was in Benning, I think. I think it was right after we graduated, before we were assigned to a company.

James: Oh well, we have to go back then. We have to go into your training. We haven't talked about that.

Sannes: Oh, the paratroop training.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: Oh, well.

James: When you wanted to sign up you were in Louisiana, and so you signed this thing and then nothing happened for a month or so and then you got a letter or an order? How'd that go?

Sannes: Well no, they, ah—yeah, you signed up and then they let you know very shortly after that.

James: And then they shipped you where?

Sannes: And, ah, then we got orders that we were supposed to be in a certain place—to get on a train at a certain time to go from Louisiana, or from Camp Livingston to, ah—

James: Fort Benning?

Sannes: Fort Benning.

James: Right, okay. Now this is '42? This is February '42?

Sannes: Yeah, that's when I took the paratroop—

James: Okay, so after the war had started then?

Sannes: The war had started—

James: It started in December of '41.

Sannes: Yeah, it—

James: Right.

Sannes: The war was going on, yeah.

James: Yeah, yeah.

Sannes: Boy, I'll tell you, it isn't easy to remember back sometimes, even important things.

James: Right.

Sannes: But anyhow—

James: So how old were you then, at that moment?

Sannes: At that time? Well I was [pause]—

James: You were born in '20.

Sannes: '20, yeah.

James: So that—you were twenty-two years old.

Sannes: This was '42. I was twenty-two years old, yeah.

James: Okay. Well you're older than the average, probably.

Sannes: Probably. The oldest guy we ever had in the company was thirty-one. We thought—everybody thought he was old, [James laughs] and yet he was kind of a small guy. He was shorter than I and well built, and, ah, one of these guys that were pretty muscular, you know, did a lot of boxing and stuff. You'd never, ever find him falling out of a march or anything. It would be one of the younger guys, if anything. I mean, ah, well you get one of these older guys and he's pretty tough sometimes. [James laughs] You never—

James: So tell me about your training in Fort Benning.

Sannes: So in Benning why we, ah, we had to do—for paratroop training we had to learn to pack chutes. I got a training schedule right there.

James: Oh, really?

Sannes: Right in front of you.

James: Alright, I'll check it out later.

Sannes: Yeah, and you had to pack chutes, parachutes; they had this all timed, this much time for packing parachutes every day, and, ah, packing chutes, and then we had running and rope climbing, all this gymnastic stuff.

James: How'd that go? Hard?

- Sannes: No. Well, you had to climb to the top of the gym on the rope and down, and you'd do that just as a matter of course. I mean everybody does up and down and if a guy doesn't do it he'll get another chance or maybe two chances.
- James: Yeah.
- Sannes: But they'll help him a little bit. See, some guys get tangled up with their feet in the rope and they, you know, but there's a way to put your—
- James: Keep your feet apart and away.
- Sannes: Well, no. You can use your feet.
- James: Oh, they allowed that?
- Sannes: They allowed that. But as long as you get up the rope that's fine; that's all they cared. And, ah, but if you use your feet, you know, after you pull, then you can stop for a second.
- James: Sure.
- Sannes: But then again, you get some of these hot shots, they go up hand-over-hand like a monkey, you know.
- James: Yeah.
- Sannes: But there isn't too many of them like that. Most of them were just ordinary guys that never did much of that.
- James: Sure.
- Sannes: And then tumbling and, oh, stuff like that, all the gymnastic stuff. Running was a main factor.
- James: Give me an example of what they asked you to do.
- Sannes: Well, after we were in the troops, right after we were in the troops, we had a session, or I should say quite a long period, where we—they'd wake you up before breakfast and then take a little, couple mile run, two-three mile run. Put your trunks on and [laughs]—I know one time we'd gone into town, another guy and myself, gone into town, we came back fairly early—a lot of these guys, well not a lot, but there were some guys that weren't in real good shape when they came back. Heck, I was smart because I put my trunks on when I got back from town and I was all set. And then we had a gas mask on, you'd run and then—out of the hour you

can walk about five minutes or something, they'd let you walk a little bit and then you run some, just dog trotting. I put my, I laid my gas mask right beside me. Some of these guys were looking for all that stuff in the mornings. Cripes, well why don't you stay home and take care of your stuff, you know, we'd kid 'em, and, ah, of course they were kind of gassed up at night, I suppose. [James laughs] But geez—anyhow, ah, then we'd have that little gas mask run and have breakfast, and more or less the same infantry training. You know, we'd focus on bayonets and—

James: Did they run you any further than two miles?

Sannes: Oh, that was every morning, yeah, just to get limbered up. And then we'd have all exercises and stuff.

James: But any longer runs than that two miles?

Sannes: Oh, yeah. We ran more than that.

James: Longer?

Sannes: Yeah, but they—

James: Five miles?

Sannes: I really don't remember.

James: I see, okay.

Sannes: I don't remember any. I never kept track how far, but it wasn't—we didn't have real long runs. It wasn't—it was just so that you could run, you had to run. I mean, towards the enemy, not away [laughs].

James: Right.

Sannes: But anyhow, we had short runs, and especially those gas mask runs, they were—

James: You had to run with the gas mask on?

Sannes: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

James: I'm trying to figure out why they thought that was important, that you'd do both at the same time. It seems to me if there's gas around you wouldn't be running so long.

Sannes: Well—

- James: Maybe a short time.
- Sannes: Yeah, if there's gas around you had to get your gas mask on in a hurry. I suppose they figure—
- James: Is that tough running with a gas mask?
- Sannes: It isn't bad. When you first start out _____?? the first few times, and then after that you get a little conditioned and you can do it much easier. But you're, you're puffin' pretty good after the first few days. I mean, you're glad to see the break come around, you know, and then you can take your mask off.
- James: Right.
- Sannes: But, ah, I don't really know. We had 'em and they figured if you got 'em, you might as well use them, so I suppose. But that's the only—truthfully, except a couple times after that, that's the only time that we had any gas mask training. Otherwise we'd put our gas mask on outside of a brick building, you know a gas building, and, ah, put our gas mask on—our gas canister and everything on outside, and then everybody would go through, and, ah, then they'd wander around inside for so long, just a little bit, and then you can go out the back end.
- James: What did they use for training, tear gas?
- Sannes: Tear gas, yes. As far as I know.
- James: Yeah.
- Sannes: It's all it was.
- James: Right.
- Sannes: Guys—yeah, some of the guys did kind of cry a little.
- James: Did they give you training with a knife?
- Sannes: Bayonets?
- James: No, just a regular—did you carry a small knife?
- Sannes: Well, I carried a small jackknife.
- James: Yeah, that's all? They didn't issue a stabbing knife?

Sannes: No, no. They just wanted us to sharpen our bayonets real good.

James: Okay.

Sannes: But—no, we had jump knives, you know.

James: That's what I'm talking about.

Sannes: You press on 'em and they'd flip open, but they were—blade was about that long on 'em.

James: Right. Is that the purpose, to cut your parachute straps if necessary?

Sannes: Oh, yeah. If you get hung up in a tree or something. Cut yourself loose.

James: I knew a fellow who jumped—he never used that, he said he could never get it sharp enough; he always carried a razor.

Sannes: Well—

James: He said the razor blade he carried all through the war worked better than—

Sannes: Well, yeah, you could use a razor blade. Kinda hard to get hold of; if you drop it—

James: If you drop it—

Sannes: —from thirty feet up [both laugh]—

James: You'd never see it.

Sannes: You don't want to go down and look for it.

James: Exactly. Okay, now we're coming around to the jump, the jump training.

Sannes: Well, in order to qualify, why you have to have five qualifying jumps, and, ah—and they set aside those days. We didn't have any regular training, we just had special—those days were just to get through our jumps.

James: You had that jump tower there.

Sannes: Well, there's two of them; two hundred fifty foot and one was a free fall and the other was a—

- James: Right, so tell me how that went. Did you progress along that ____?
- Sannes: Well, see they—when your turn came you, and the guy next to you—you're in two you know, two guys, and you'd sit in a big seat, chutes above you. Now that's a control tower, and the chutes above you—
- James: Right.
- Sannes: And they run you up all the way to the top, two hundred-fifty feet, and then when you hit—you're strapped, they put a strap on, you know—so, and these seats are like the ones at the circus, they'd have sometimes, wooden bends at the end—and then you'd sit—"click" you hear above and that's the release, you know. You got—there's four cables and that chute comes down on the cable, but the only thing keeping you from going too fast down is your wind, and, ah, your parachute, look up and it's nice and full, you know. You're coming down and you're coming the same speed all the time. Real nice. And that was just to get you so that you won't be too afraid. And then you go up—
- James: Right [laughs].
- Sannes: And then of course you got the, you got your other tower.
- James: Right. So how many of those practice tower jumps, drops—how many of those drops did you have?
- Sannes: About two, and then—
- James: Okay, and then you went to the other tower?
- Sannes: Oh, no. One, one on them with the seat. And, ah, just to give you an idea that the chute will hold you up, and then we went over on the other one, free fall, and that's the same thing, they hook—but you get strapped in a harness, you know, a regular parachute harness. And then you go up, they tell what'll happen, you'll hear the same thing as when you're in the seat. You can hear that click, you know you're going down; you know you're loose. So—and, ah, if it's too windy, they wouldn't put you on that because that might blow you into—
- James: Into the tower?
- Sannes: Into the tower and stuff. It's just for certain times, and, ah, then you drift real nice away from the tower, and then you're happy when you do that.
- James: Was the sensation what you expected or was it a surprise?

- Sannes: Ah, it wasn't a surprise, it was what I expected because we had just come down on those others, and I knew that I wouldn't come down as fast on the free fall. You know, you had less weight. That bench, you know, that wood's about that thick and it was heavy. So anyhow, that was alright, and, ah, that was a free fall. Well we took a couple, two or three rides on the free fall [unintelligible].
- James: Many guys wash out at this point?
- Sannes: I really don't know. I don't know of any. Of course, I didn't know anybody. The only one—all these people were strangers. You were all mixed up, and, so anyhow, we get through that and then of course they give you—and then of course is your, ah, your five airplane rides when you jump out.
- James: Five?
- Sannes: Yeah.
- James: Okay.
- Sannes: And, ah, what happened on maybe the first or second jump that I had, there was a guy on the plane, and you know, when they give the order you stand up, hook up, and everybody—you're supposed to check the parachute of the guy in front of you and see that he has got the—
- James: Harness.
- Sannes: Riser coming up over his shoulder, not under it, and so it comes so it's just free rope, static line. So anyhow, we all did that, but a fellow in another plane must have had it coming through here, 'cause then, of course, your chute, when you jump, your chute's tied at the apex, you know, and of course that pulls, pulled the chute under your arm, too; it won't let it open very good, and that's what happened to—I remember that guy's name, it's Earl Pratt, I think it was—got killed; **[End of Tape 1, Side A]** a guy named Pratt, and he slept second bunk from me, and we didn't know that somebody got killed. They landed a couple of planes and we were in one of 'em that landed after this guy got killed. I suppose they communicated back and forth and decided they'd better land. Well, they no more than landed and somebody said—I didn't hear him, but he probably said, "Get your tail out there and get that airplane up there and jump these other guys." And it's smart because if the horse throws you, you're supposed to get back on him. And, ah, that's the idea behind this. They didn't want to scare anybody off; then guys get talkin' and—

James: Right.

Sannes: So they—the plane hadn't even stopped and they gunned it again and up they went.

James: So how was that first experience?

Sannes: I didn't mind it too much. Ah, you get butterflies in your stomach a little bit, but I, I didn't—

James: Could you control your chute pretty well?

Sannes: Yeah, yeah. Pretty well, I'm not gonna say real accurate, but—

James: Right.

Sannes: I mean enough to—enough probably for a little wind drift, miss a church steeple or—

James: Or a tree.

Sannes: Or miss a tree, stuff like that, you know. I mean, you could, you could slip it, you know. You pull down on one side of your chute, that spills the air out and your chute will—

James: Pull right in that direction.

Sannes: Yeah. So anyhow—boy, there's a lot of things like that you'd probably—that I'd probably never forget, and those luckily were important things to remember.

James: Right.

Sannes: Why one guy went through a—where was this?—this was our first night jump, I think.

James: Don't jump too far ahead now. [laughs]

Sannes: No, oh, oh, oh.

James: Don't get our story tangled here.

Sannes: No. I was gonna tell about a guy that went though—this was in the daytime, though—

James: Oh.

Sannes: But he went, he went through a greenhouse.

James: Oh, my.

Sannes: He went through a greenhouse, glass all over everything. But—

James: So you're down—after five jumps then they gave your shield or jump pin?

Sannes: Yeah, then you're officially in the paratroopers.

James: Right, and what was your rank then?

Sannes: Everybody that takes this training, that signs up for this program, goes through this thing, is back to a private. You could be a general, or you could be a colonel to go through that jump training—I'm not saying a general, but lieutenants, captains, they left the infantry and if they joined the paratrooper they would go back to privates. Start out right down at the bottom unless their previous, ah, you know, their previous rank had been in such a, you know, such a—

James: Important area?

Sannes: Important thing and for some reason you have to be in that special unit, because there's a lot of captains in that rank that had gone through it and had their wings, but I think it depends on what you—if you were just a captain in an infantry company, probably you'd go back to private. So—but we had an awful lot of—well, I won't say. I could tell you this now, but it's the same thing I'll tell you later.

James: Okay.

Sannes: A good share of our officers came from off their training from, ah, what's that—they were part of the—half of it is Marines.

James: Oh.

Sannes: And the other, no, the guy goes through—

James: In previous training?

Sannes: No, goes through—

James: Navy or Army?

Sannes: Goes through the Army training, what, ah—

James: Rangers?

Sannes: No. Not Rangers—well anyhow, it's a school, Army training school.

James: They had one Leavenworth, I know that.

Sannes: No, but, ah—

James: Command school? I can't think of the word you're looking for.

Sannes: Ah, I'm looking for—it's a very, very popular school for—and then you're an officer when you come out.

James: Oh, OCS [Officers Candidates School].

Sannes: No, not OCS.

James: Oh.

Sannes: We did have a few of those here and there sprinkling, but not too many. But, ah—

James: The ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]?

Sannes: It's a school of something like—

James: The ROTC in college?

Sannes: No, this is a school. Anyhow, geez, it's a command school. It's one that a guy'd be proud if his son could get into that school.

James: Oh, you mean a military academy?

Sannes: Yeah.

James: Oh, yeah, the United State Military Academy at West Point.

Sannes: Yeah, that's the one I'm thinking about.

James: Oh.

Sannes: And, ah, our officers, we had a lot of them that came from—

James: West Point.

Sannes: And we had—I ran the radio for a guy one day, I was a couple years older than he was. I was just a sergeant and he was a colonel—no, he was a lieutenant colonel, I think, and he was a couple years older than me, you know, but nice guys, real nice guys. We had one guy, one Sunday morning, you know, we weren't in any hurry, we just wanted to get down and get breakfast and it was raining a little bit, get breakfast before, before, you know, everything was eaten, so we walked down to the mess hall and ate, and as we were leaving the mess hall, Colonel Shapooly??—he was a colonel in my battalion, our battalion commander—he walked in, and I didn't know him personally, you know, but he walked over to a bunch of us that were leaving and he said, "I wonder if you—" now he was a West Point—he said, "I wonder if you gentlemen would help me for a minute?" "Sure." Nobody said no.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: And, ah, the way he phrased it too, you know—so what he wanted, he had been picking up the paper around the mess hall; he had some in his hand. He had picked up some. He said, "Ah, this looks terrible around here." He says, "I wonder if you'd just help me pick up some of this paper laying around." [James laughs] And we thought—you know, it took that long to do it, a bunch of guys. We got done and he said, "I certainly want to thank you guys." You know how many—you could get a West Pointer or you could get OCS, it makes a difference who it is. You could get an OCS officer that was a big shot.

James: Sure.

Sannes: And yet this guy was a lieutenant colonel and, geez, I wonder if you gentlemen would help me.

James: That was nice, yeah.

Sannes: We'd go through hell for him.

James: Sure, of course, of course, yeah. So after we finished our training, then where'd we go?

Sannes: Well see, then we were, then we were put in units after we finished our training.

James: How big?

Sannes: Well, in companies, and then battalions, and they had to restructure the whole thing, you know, and, ah, we had nothing to do until we were in a

unit, and then—so I got thrown in Company D, and they made a second, ah, you know, a second, or D Company, 502.

James: The regiment was 502nd?

Sannes: Five second, yeah.

James: Of the 101st?

Sannes: 101st.

James: Okay.

Sannes: And, ah, I was in the 2nd Battalion and 2nd, 2nd, ah, I was in the 2nd—

James: Yeah.

Sannes: It doesn't make any difference.

James: No, it doesn't. Where'd they go?

Sannes: So then we went to, ah—we stayed there for—let's see, now where were we now here?

James: Finishing at Benning.

Sannes: Finishing at Benning, and then we got put in outfits, put in—reorganized and everything, and they got sent all over. The guys that I got to know, they were gone, and so that's when I got put in D Company. Yeah, right then, and, ah, then I stayed in Benning—well not Benning, but I went to Fort Bragg [North Carolina]. In fact, everybody [clock chimes] from the 101st, I think, went to Fort Bragg.

James: Did you get advanced training there?

Sannes: Oh, yeah, every day.

James: Right. Then what—how did the training pick up now? Now we're into it here. How intense was this?

Sannes: Well, not so much more than ordinary. I mean, [laughs] you did the same thing pretty much, you know, infantry. Actually, that's what we were when we hit the ground.

James: Right.

Sannes: They gave you some different tools to work with, but—

James: So what did you carry to the ground now that you're a finished paratrooper? You carried some radio equipment?

Sannes: Ah, no. I was lucky enough to get out of that.

James: The radio business?

Sannes: Yeah, because they—the companies they, ah—anybody they had gone through, they had one or two too many had gone through and they were in our company and they wanted to be radio people, so I didn't get to be.

James: They took your job away and what'd they give you then?

Sannes: Well, right then they gave me a rifleman, a rifleman's job.

James: Okay. [laughs]

Sannes: I held that for a while, not too long, and then I got sergeant. And then I had that for, I had that for maybe—well, I had that for three years, I guess.

James: So at Fort Bragg, you were there 'til they shipped you overseas, is that right?

Sannes: No, in Fort Bragg—oh boy, I can't remember dates.

James: No, dates are not important; just give me the progress.

Sannes: Okay, then at Fort Bragg, you know how rumors start?

James: Yeah.

Sannes: And then you'd get a rumor here and there. I learned early in my career that don't believe them until you know they're true.

James: It was the same thing in the Navy.

Sannes: Yeah, so it didn't bother me. And then I went up to Camp Shanks in New York, and then, well, we knew we were going overseas.

James: That was the departure point.

Sannes: We were getting ready to go up to Camp Shanks; we got all our stuff and went up to Camp Shanks. You can't forget things like that. You just turn the—

James: Turn the other side.

Sannes: Turn to the other side. Well anyhow, I went to Camp Shanks and we didn't do much training up there really. And, ah—

James: Do you remember when you were shipped overseas? What month that was, roughly.

Sannes: Ah—

James: It was in '43 probably.

Sannes: It was—yeah, yeah, '43, and, ah, I think it was in the fall.

James: Well, you know, you can tell if you just back it up from D-Day, how long you trained in England before you jumped in France. So that'd be about six months?

Sannes: Well, we didn't do training in France after we jumped.

James: No. I said how long you trained in England before you made the jump.

Sannes: Oh, yeah, from when we arrived in England. Well you see, it took us a long time to get to England.

James: Oh, how'd you go?

Sannes: Well we got part way—

James: [knocking sound] It's alright.

Sannes: That was you?

James: That was me.

Sannes: [unintelligible]

James: No.

Sannes: No we got part way out with a convoy and—quite a ways out in fact, a couple days, and halfway—and then one morning we started leaving the convoy, and then of course everybody was wondering what in the heck's going on. And we found out one of the engines wasn't working. We couldn't keep up with the convoy. So we had to pull out of the convoy and they sent one, one cruiser back with us, you know, for escort, and we

didn't know where we were going. We ended up in St. John's, Newfoundland [Canada]. We sat there, we sat there for it had to be a month, nothing to do.

James: You had the whole division?

Sannes: Yeah, the division was on there. In fact, they even got a radio transmission one day from Germany, and they, they did this all the time over in units??, they were trying to scare us, saying, "We know you're coming over, we know what boats you're on, we know when you're coming over 101st, so be prepared," they said, and all that crap. They had a woman talking.

James: No shit.

Sannes: And we weren't allowed to make a telephone call, we weren't allowed to send any mail.

James: You were isolated for a month?

Sannes: Yeah, at least a month, and we weren't allowed to leave the ship at all. They had guards, MPs [Military Police] patrolling from point to point, you know. And they caught one officer, I think he was an under officer, they'd say in Germany, a lieutenant or captain, and they—he had telephoned his wife in Europe.

James: From St. John's?

Sannes: I don't know how the hell would they find out. I suppose that the company had orders—

James: Were monitoring your phone lines?

Sannes: Yeah. Anyhow, so he was, they said that he was, there was nothing more to do with him but court-martial him, because he wasn't allowed to make a phone call or anything.

James: He went home.

Sannes: He went home; he went home the easy way. Anyhow, but, ah—I just happened to think of that—so we just laid down and the guys played cards and stuff like that, you know. Except—oh, and then there was Sea of Commando Bay, and at the mouth of this bay—I don't know; have you been to St. Johns?

James: Nope. I've been to Halifax [Nova Scotia, Canada].

Sannes: Halifax, yeah, I've been there, but we came down—the bay comes like this from the ocean and there's narrow here. In fact, they take you through there, ah, one of these escort ships will take a small boat, they'll take the big one too, 'cause it's a big rock in there, and so we got in the bay there and, and we pulled up to the dock and secured the ship to the dock and they started working on it. Them guys below, we were way up above, and the name of the ship was the HMS Strathnaver. It used to be a luxury ship.

James: Oh.

Sannes: It had one of these—inside the first floor we had a railing that went up like this, you know, all gold gild and stuff like that. But they made it into a troop transport, so anyhow that—so, let's see now.

James: So after a month in St. John's—

Sannes: So anyhow, they worked on that thing all the time. There were welders there all—here and there at certain times, and pounding and stuff way down below, you know, and two or three times they thought they had it fixed, and I think it was about maybe just twice or something, they'd run out in the harbor for a week. They wouldn't go too far out. Well, enough to turn around and then they'd come back. And they did that a couple of times, and, ah, it wasn't running right anyhow I guess, and so finally they—we got off of the thing. They put us on a—oh, we did get a chance to go up to, up to, ah, why they had a nice Red Cross place up there, ah, Red Cross and, ah, well you know, canteen.

James: Yes.

Sannes: Big canteen. And oh gee, we ate, we ate really good up there, and we only went up there for a day.

James: In St. John's?

Sannes: Yeah, they let all the companies go up, not at once, but—

James: Sure.

Sannes: And, ah, malted milks, and oh, you could get a nice variety, but then they had—we hadda—everybody [laughs] had to pack up, come back to the ship.

James: And they gave you a new ship to try again?

Sannes: So then we went down, then we went down—yeah, we—I think we went—yeah, we went down by train, I think, down to New York.

James: New York.

Sannes: Oh, wait, no, it couldn't have been—oh no, no, no, no, no: Halifax.

James: Yeah, you went to Halifax?

Sannes: Halifax. And, ah—I say New York because it's the closest place, I think. Anyhow, we went to Halifax and caught a convoy. The next day we caught a convoy and then we—

James: What kind of a ship were you on then?

Sannes: Oh, ah, SS John Ericsson. It was a US ship.

James: Transport.

Sannes: It was a lot smaller though.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: But I guess I don't know if there was any other ship, but that's the only one I know.

James: But they got the whole division on it, though?

Sannes: Well, our whole division went across then, unless they took someone someplace else, I don't know. But, ah, we all got to England at the same time.

James: Where did they park you in England?

Sannes: Oh.

James: Where was your training place?

Sannes: We got split up. My training place, ah, was at Hungerford, just a little, little village. You can go, go down there, walk down there about a mile and have fish and chips, just a little restaurant there. So, anyhow, [pause] you can see right here where I was.

James: Oh, yeah, we'll get to that.

Sannes: Did you see that map?

James: Not yet, not yet.

Sannes: Of England. Well you'll see Hungerford. We were—I don't know, I'm just guessing, about, maybe forty miles, thirty miles from London. And, ah, we'd get passes, you know, to go to London, a couple days. And every once in while they'd give our company a pass.

James: How was that? Did you enjoy that?

Sannes: London?

James: Yeah.

Sannes: Oh, yeah. I went there a lot of times. I used to _____?? in London.

James: Oh, did you?

Sannes: Ah, just—it was from the time we—we'll, we'd been to Normandy and then we came back. See, I'm ahead.

James: You're jumping ahead a bit.

Sannes: Yeah [laughs], anyhow—

James: So anyways—

Sannes: But when we'd go to London we stayed overnight and take the sights in. Well, we went to Madame Tussauds Wax Museum, and you saw the big clock, you know, and we went—

James: Did you enjoy the air raids?

Sannes: Did I enjoy 'em?

James: The air raids, while you were in London?

Sannes: Oh, yeah. I heard them, I heard them.

James: Did that make you scatter?

Sannes: Every once in a while—not—I never had to scatter; I would just kind of figure out how close that one was gonna come, [both laugh] but if they—if we figured they're coming too close then we would take off. But, ah, we were there when they had those, ah, first rockets. Those—

James: Doodlebugs?

Sannes: Huh?

James: The buzz bombs.

Sannes: Yeah, yeah. It was like airplanes, they'd send them over.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: I then we there when I guess those torpedo-shaped ones—

James: The V-2s, yeah.

Sannes: Yeah. We were there then, too. Of course we went to England twice and then Normandy and then back to England.

James: When you were in England did you have many practice jumps there, in England?

Sannes: I never had a practice jump in England.

James: Never?

Sannes: No.

James: So you trained—

Sannes: So you, you gotta—you gotta know how to do it now or you're dead. I mean, it's a good idea. We never—

James: They were through teaching you then?

Sannes: Yeah, ah—

James: So you sat around there for a while then before you jumped before D-Day?

Sannes: Oh, I'm not gonna say that we didn't have something to do. They saw that we usually had something to do.

James: Probably out running in the field or something.

Sannes: Yeah, we usually had something to do. We didn't lay around too much, but ah, we had a lot of time off in June.

James: So you got all set and you're gonna—they told you—tell me about that. So somebody says the landing is coming and we're gonna have to jump and

so forth. Did they give you a time? Did they say we're gonna do it tomorrow? How'd that go?

Sannes: Well, I—you know, I heard, at that time, for being Scandinavian, I was—kind of wanted to believe some of the rumors going around when we were in England. There was one—after we came back from Normandy, there was one rumor going around that we were gonna jump in Norway. Well, I've got lots of cousins over there now, but how in the hell would you ever know where they were in Norway? [laughs]. So, anyhow—and there the was the Falaise Pocket where they had two hundred thousand Germans all in a big pocket. They were gonna send us there, and then that didn't come true. I'm guessing that got cleared out quick. So anyhow, now I got too—

James: Yeah, now we're ahead again.

Sannes: Yeah. [laughs]

James: So your first jump, then, was on the night before D-Day?

Sannes: Yeah.

James: Now tell me about the meeting with Eisenhower. You ended up with a picture of him.

Sannes: Oh, yeah. See, that night—the night before got cancelled, you know, so that night, the next night, why, I was—I think that was about 8:00 o'clock or 9:00 o'clock and I was in the doorway to our tent—we just had eight-man tents, you know, set up, and so I was standing kind of in the middle the tent and I saw all these fellows around, E Company, and we were D Company and they were in the next one. And there's quite a few fellows standing around, and I said—well, I thought they either were telling good jokes or else they were thinkin' of hitting some kind of card game or something. What the hell are they—what the hell are those guys doing? you know. So I said, “Ah, to hell with it, I'm gonna walk over there.” And I did, and I got over partly, partly—out near the edge, you know, and tried to crowd in with them.

James: Sure.

Sannes: Pretty good at that by that time, sneaking through other men. So anyhow, I got up about halfway up to Ike and—

James: You probably recognized who it was now.

Sannes: Before I realized who the hell it was. And then he was sitting up there and somebody else was sitting next to him, and I'll be damned. So then I did

really start to push and crowd—and I got up pretty close, and then they moved. They took three pictures from where I was. I got in two of them; that wasn't too bad.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: But—

James: Did they—did he speak to you?

Sannes: Oh, no, no, there was—oh, hell, you got thirty-five people around.

James: He didn't talk to any—he must have talked to somebody?

Sannes: Yeah, he talked to the lieutenant that was there. What he talked to him about was, “Well, what are you carrying there, what are you carrying in those pouches?” you know, and what are you carrying, and just asking general questions.

James: Just making talk. Now they've taken movies of this same scene. Have you seen those? I've seen D-Day movies showing Ike in the same position. I wonder if you noticed whether you were in any of those.

Sannes: Ah—

James: You must be.

Sannes: Yes. Of course the first movie with him—

James: *The Longest Day*?

Sannes: *The Longest Day*. Yeah, I think I was in there, I'm pretty sure. I think the people in Stoughton would remember that, some of them, but, ah, I don't know. They took three pictures that time and I figured my position was such that I'll get on—maybe get on one. And Ike was right here, and I was right by him. First one came—first picture came from here someplace. And then he talked a while and I thought, “Ah, hell, I'm going around the other side,” I thought to myself, and I did and I no more than got on the other side and this guy with a camera must have moved over on my side because this one is—I'm looking right at him, too, you know.

James: That's great. So now when did you take off to go to drop? What time of night?

Sannes: I've never known the exact time.

James: Well, roughly.

Sannes: Roughly, probably 1:00 o'clock.

James: One AM?

Sannes: Twelve maybe.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: You see, it's light over there. It was light over there at that time, you know, in June. Pretty light here.

James: And the flight, how long did the flight take you? Couldn't have been long.

Sannes: [laughs] I was gonna say maybe I was sleeping.

James: I can't believe that.

Sannes: I used to sleep on those planes, but, ah, you know, I mean.

James: Dozed?

Sannes: Dozed, right. But ah, I didn't sleep that night. Oh, I don't know, maybe—it probably only took an hour. Probably didn't even take an hour 'cause it's only—what is it, twenty miles across that channel?

James: Right, and you were about thirty miles in, yeah.

Sannes: But you see—oh yeah, it could be.

James: But you had to get in formation?

Sannes: But you see, the thing of it is—yeah, oh, yeah, all those planes.

James: So that everybody dropped in sequence.

Sannes: All those planes had to be in the right formation, and there was of a bunch of them. So—and we, we circled around, I don't know—we didn't go directly to our drop site.

James: No. The drop as I understand it was around 2:30, so—

Sannes: It's possible. I figured it was earlier than that. Anyhow—

James: So they said, "Hook up and we're going," huh?

- Sannes: Yup. Stand up, hook up, check your fellow in front of you, didn't usually have to say that, but they did often anyhow.
- James: Sure. So how long—how big—many men did you have in your DC-3?
- Sannes: Ah—
- James: Twenty or thirty or forty?
- Sannes: Eighteen.
- James: Eighteen. Two sticks? Well, one stick?
- Sannes: Eighteen and, ah, sometimes it was less than that—[End of Tape 1, Side B]—but eighteen.
- James: Eighteen on this night, anyway.
- Sannes: Oh, yeah. Yeah.
- James: So, out you went and then how did you get down and so forth?
- Sannes: Well, I got down fine, I think. I came down—
- James: In a field?
- Sannes: Ah, there was no trees right near me, I came down a little—I couldn't see much, you know, down; when you got down closer to the ground then you could see better. And when you're higher—I don't know how high we were when we jumped. They talk about three-, four hundred feet, but we may have been five hundred, I don't know. It doesn't take long to get down. Anyhow, ah, I landed in a kind of a courtyard. There was a vegetable garden over here, and I saw a couple of equipment bundles laying in that vegetable garden, and I thought, well at least I jumped close to—
- James: Somebody else?
- Sannes: Somebody else [laughs]—someone—not a guy probably, but just a bundle. Anyhow—and up here there was a house and it was oh, probably from here to the street from that garden. Well, I thought, I don't know, I didn't have any, ah, anything—that I had anything in that equipment bundle, and waters and all that stuff—anyway, I just better not monkey with it, I don't know what the hell it is. Let the mortar men take care of that or whatever. So I went up—oh, and then the door opens, and “Oh my

god,” there’s some older fellow, [James laughs] and then there was a younger, younger gal—two of ‘em, I don’t know, maybe more. Oh, God, oh, Jesus Christ, they were—they had been wishing that so long, I suppose. And so then I didn’t even go up to the house, ‘cause I—they said to watch it, watch the _____?; well, generally watch it. Booby traps or, or—don’t get too friendly right away, you know, and I wasn’t about to go up there, walk into something, and see some big German sitting at the table.

James: [unintelligible]

Sannes: It would be alright if he doesn’t know I was there.

James: Right.

Sannes: But, ah, goldarn it, so I laid down and I took off across down to the road down here, a little ways down the road I walk.

James: Still hadn’t seen anybody?

Sannes: I hadn’t seen anybody, no, but I hadn’t gotten too far down when I could hear some talking, and, ah, there was a lieutenant or captain—lieutenant, I think—with a couple of guys around him. He had been trying to figure out just where they were, and this lieutenant said we were gonna walk back—see, I think he found out, got a little light down by his map, you know, trying to find out where he was, and he did, and he came back, he must have been up to the house that I was at, and he came back, and he says, “Yeah,” he says, “I got it all down in my noggin,” so—

James: He spotted you then?

Sannes: Oh, yeah. He knew I was there. I told him I’d come across.

James: Oh, okay.

Sannes: And he knew I was there, but he said, “We’ve got to find out just exactly, or try to find out which way we gotta go to get to the ocean.” So anyhow—

James: Was that your objective, to get back to the ocean?

Sannes: Well, yeah—

James: Back to the landing site?

Sannes: Get back—

- James: To where the landing was coming?
- Sannes: Yeah, oh yeah, right where the landing was, because we had three, three, ah, causeways. These causeways go from shore, just like a long pier you know, and then they—and they're built to take trucks and stuff, so if a ship comes in, they can back—and we were supposed to secure three of 'em, knock them all out, _____?? 'em. Anyhow, so anyhow, that's what we were supposed to do, and ah—
- James: You didn't need your clickers, those crickets?
- Sannes: I didn't use mine though; I lost it, in fact.
- James: I was gonna say, you didn't bring that home, did you?
- Sannes: No.
- James: That would be a nice memento.
- Sannes: Yeah, you see, I must have lost it, and I haven't seen it since. Anyhow, maybe it slipped out of my hand. Anyhow, got to the beach, it was 11:00 o'clock in the morning, something like that, 'cause we ran into a fire fight. You know, I had heard that there was soldiers working for the Germans that were Georgian—
- James: Russians—
- Sannes: Russians.
- James: Prisoners, right.
- Sannes: Russians, and they'd work for the Germans. I supposed if they got hit they'd be—
- James: Right.
- Sannes: And they'd pay them a little something I suppose. So anyhow—and this was cavalry, this was supposed to be a cavalry outfit, and it was right, too. I started to go across a field—the road was going down here, and trees along it, and, ah, another row of trees up here, and it's kind of an open field here. So back here—I'm backing up a little—back here a couple of hundred yards, they said—well, we came to a place that was kind of marshy, and it came up about to your ankles, water, and slush, and mud—so they said, "Well we'd better, we'd better, ah—" then the officer says,

“We’d better put a point out here, a couple of men out here farther ahead.”
By that time there had been, ah, I suppose there was a dozen guys.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: So we, so we walked—so I says, “I’ll take one point,” and a guy named, ah—got killed[?] right ahead of me; I’m trying to remember his name.

James: He was on the point with you?

Sannes: Yeah, he says, “Well,” he says, “well, I’ll make a start.” I says, “Go ahead, I’ll be back behind you a few yards,” maybe fifteen yards I was behind. Walk real slow, you know, in that muck. Hell with that. And then it, then it straightened out and we got through that little marsh and got out on dry land and started to cross the field. That’s when we [makes gunfire noise].

James: Oh.

Sannes: Oh, yeah. They knew we were coming here. I don’t know how they knew it, they knew it. Anyhow—Burton, Burton, that’s the guy.

James: How did you deal with those guys?

Sannes: Well see, I was—Burton was halfway across that field and I was, I don’t know, maybe—it’s hard to tell by yards, yardage, but anyhow, I finally—maybe fifteen, twenty yards out, out from this bunch of trees. So anyhow, Burton was ahead of me, and you know every damn time I hear that [makes gun fire noise], I just hit the deck, not knowing if they were shootin’ at me or what. I didn’t know; I was flat in the deck. And Burton [unintelligible]. I couldn’t see if they got Burt. I was up here and I think Jesus Christ, he hadn’t moved for quite awhile. Usually, you know, you don’t move, but once in a while you get a cramp and you have to move something, and I didn’t see him move all this time; [clock chimes] I thought something happened. I’ll never reach him [unintelligible] right into him. So I—he turned around, and I could se—when it was quiet, he creeped back and [unintelligible]. I asked if I could—and it was night, you know, it was still dark, or pretty dark, but then I finally got back to my [unintelligible], back to the trees, and I was down here, and then I went down these trees to the road, and I could look right down it, being careful to stand in the weeds, I could look right down that damn road, only I knew these guys were all around in here. How am I gonna get over by them? Nothing on the roads, hell. Let’s see if I can walk quietly down this road. When I got quite a ways down the road, and here I thought, “Oh, no.” I thought it was a burglar. [brief interruption] I got down and the first thing I saw on that road, or just off the road, was a guy, he must have been 6’6”—

James: A German? A German?

Sannes: Oh, yeah. He was German, but I thought, holy smokes, [James laughs] He was laying flat on his back like this you know, blood coming out. So I thought, what the hell I'm not—keep going up, the other guys are right up in here. So I waited there a few minutes, couple of minutes, ah the hell with it, walked real quietly right up along the shoulder, and then I did run into our guys, and they had kept on going so they just about met me. And here there was a big stable and some guys had gone down there and they flushed a couple of guys out of that stable and then their barracks were right down there. And one guy walked in—walked in the end of them barracks; I don't know what he got; Silver Star or something. Kind of dumb, you know, one guy, he walked into that barracks. And he had a Tommy gun, some guys were up, some weren't. They were all up now and by that time he was just blasting, and [unintelligible], and they were going—they were all trying to get out of there. They finally did get out of there and our guys ran into some of them down here. So a couple of other guys, they went back to the barn. It must have been ranch hands, because they had a couple of horses. Here they come out riding a couple of horses. [James laughs] Imagine that, come riding out—they got orders, though, the next day.

James: No horses?

Sannes: Nobody would be riding horses or nobody riding German motorcycles. We had done that, too.

James: Yeah. So those guys in the barracks, how many guys did they flush out?

Sannes: I don't know.

James: I mean like, twenty or thirty or—

Sannes: I don't know. It's in the book; it's in one of my books. Ah, I don't know. Everybody in there was sleeping, see—

James: You captured some and killed some, is that the way it went?

Sannes: I don't know of any that were captured. I don't know of any that were killed 'cause I wasn't right there.

James: Oh.

- Sannes: By that time I was up here with the other guys. But this guy walked right into the darn thing and started shooting. Of course then our guys went up there and—
- James: So then you secured your position—
- Sannes: Well, no, that's as far as we had gotten, and it had taken quite a while to work our way up because we were working our way up along that road for a while before we ran into this monkey business. So that's why we didn't get down there either until noon. And finally, one of the officers with us—by that time there was a couple of them—one of them said, "We can't be fooling around up here shooting Germans," he says, "when we're supposed to be down taking those causeways. We'll have to detour the rest of whatever is up around here to get down to the—make sure we take those causeways over. It's further than we thought, I guess, and we didn't get there until—well, it was before noon. And then we were down there—when we got down there one guy, one guy was—oh, they had a plane that had gone in too low and crashed into the trees, took the wings off, and, ah—they didn't get hurt, but they didn't have any paratroopers either. I guess they were on their way back. And the radio operator on that plane, I believe it was a radio operator, they only had crew of two or three, and, ah, he was cussing and yelling at the pilot, he says, "From now on I'd like to know if I'm gonna die just a little ahead of time." Here he didn't get hurt, but he got thrown around a little, you know. He was—
- James: This was one of the jump planes?
- Sannes: Yeah, but he was sleeping. They were gonna go home. They jumped the guys and here he thought he'd take a little snooze in the plane compartment.
- James: Next thing he knew he's on the ground.
- Sannes: Yeah, next thing he knew. I'd like to know if I'm gonna die, even if it's a minute ahead of time; can't blame him for that.
- James: So then?
- Sannes: Well, then we went—from then on we—
- James: You got to the causeways and stopped there?
- Sannes: Yeah. There wasn't—nothing doing there. The guys had been there, but you know, the causeway's all cement, you know, thick cement walls, and they go way back and turn, and railroad tracks all the way back to the road. We didn't walk back there.

- James: By this time you've got—how big a group had you assembled?
- Sannes: Well, probably three-quarters of the company.
- James: Oh, that's pretty good.
- Sannes: Yeah. We picked a few up on the way, too. [laughs] One, one of the officers from somewhere off that I don't remember passed our company. He goes by our company and he says, "Hey, you, you got all your guys?" "No, we're short a couple, a few," and he says, "Well,"—and then the officer yelled over and said, "Well," he says, "better take this one along with you. I'm sure he's with you guys," and it was one of our guys. It got so mixed up, you know, the planes—
- James: By this time you were hearing a lot of noise from the landing on Normandy, right?
- Sannes: Well, yeah, you hear a little shooting and flak. They had, ah, barrage balloons pretty well patterned all around the place. So if they, if the German planes got after 'em, why they run into the ropes, or into the—
- James: Cables.
- Sannes: Cables. And then we went—the company was pretty well assembled. We, ah—by the time we got down to, ah, when we got down to, ah—the more I try to think of some of these places, the less I can. Um, [pause]—
- James: [unintelligible]
- Sannes: Oh, no, we weren't down that far yet. But we, we, ah—we were still—
- James: Well, you're on the Orne[?] River.
- Sannes: If I had that map open.
- James: Oh, okay.
- Sannes: Well, I wish I knew it—just where it was, but, I don't know. There's [unintelligible].
- James: What is that?
- Sannes: That's Holland.
- James: Oh.

Sannes: We got to get in the front end and then we'll get—and then we'll get—on beach. We walked to Carentan [France].

James: Carentan, okay.

Sannes: And then—

James: In Carentan, did you stop and stay there?

Sannes: We cleared the front through the battle, yeah.

James: Oh.

Sannes: Carentan, there was—here is the main route in yellow, and here is where the soldiers, a bunch of soldiers all laid around _____? dead sleep overnight in a field someplace around Carentan.

James: Okay.

Sannes: And here is where a guy got a, not a Silver Star, but a—

James: Bronze?

Sannes: Congressional Medal of Honor.

James: Oh, really.

Sannes: [unintelligible]

James: One of those guys in your company?

Sannes: Not in my company, but in my battalion. But you see, the thing of it is, they were held up at Carentan. When you're being held up you couldn't go north, there are swamps on both sides of the road, so they headed them up through the road. We did go out in the swamp a ways and then the officer in charge of a bunch of guys, well, he, he said, he said he could do it. Tell the guys to fix bayonets and he charged them, and he got the whole bunch of Germans running, and they were shooting and—so—

James: Were you in on that charge?

Sannes: No, no, that wasn't even my battalion.

James: Oh.

- Sannes: But anyhow, ah, he got a Congressional Medal of Honor, ah, I'm trying to think—
- James: Well, let's get to back to what you were doing.
- Sannes: Yeah.
- James: So you're held up at this point, so you're strung in a line, or—
- Sannes: Wait, where was I?
- James: In Carentan.
- Sannes: Oh, there. Oh we were—yeah we were pretty well assembled by that time. The only thing was that road I was telling you about, and for quite a ways towards Carentan it was deep ditches and that—the Germans had flooded that.
- James: Right.
- Sannes: They flooded the whole thing, so we were in water sometime up to here, and some guys would carry the gun up here 'cause, you know, keep your guys up—dry, but, ah—and then there was bridges there. There was about three bridges up to Carentan and every time you'd come to a bridge—and there was Germans on the other end of these bridges and they were—
- James: With machine guns.
- Sannes: Every time somebody came out on the road, they'd shoot at him, but they'd have to take care of those guys as they went, you know, bridge by bridge. They finally—but I never got that far up. We got to a place up in here someplace and it was dark, getting dark, pretty dark and we decided to sleep there in this, oh, sleeping bag, or not sleeping bag, blanket and whatever you got—sleep. So—and then the next day—
- James: What were you eating then, K-rations? You had those? You took those with you?
- Sannes: Oh, K-rations, yeah; not C-rations.
- James: No, you didn't have room for those.
- Sannes: I didn't want C—nobody wanted 'em.
- James: Why didn't you like the C? Why?

Sannes: That's the canned, isn't it?

James: Yeah.

Sannes: Why?

James: Yeah.

Sannes: Because—

James: Well, it comes with a key, you could open it.

Sannes: Well, yeah, but we could open them boxes better.

James: Oh, okay, well—

Sannes: And they tasted better.

James: Ah, that's what I was trying to get you to say.

Sannes: Yeah, they tasted better.

James: Right.

Sannes: Everybody wanted the boxes.

James: Yeah, okay.

Sannes: See, we're fussy when we go to war. [both laugh].

James: How about cigarettes? Did you smoke then, Hans?

Sannes: Ah—

James: Everybody did in those days.

Sannes: Well, there's a story back of that, too; just a little. I never smoked in my life until, until, until I was—yeah, I know what it was, we were in England. It was after we had been in Normandy, we came back to England, you know, just for a little while, and, ah, I didn't—never had smoked in my life, and about all I'd dare do was take a drink of coffee.

James: You get with those English girls, they change your mind.

Sannes: Well, what did I say before? [James laughs] Anyhow—

James: You said you met one.

Sannes: Well, there was a lot of nice English girls.

James: Yeah, sure.

Sannes: My wife doesn't think so.

James: Well that's alright. You were young and foolish in those days.

Sannes: Yeah. Anyhow—I'm losing my train of thought—cigarettes.

James: Oh, we're talking about cigarettes.

Sannes: Oh, yeah. This is a funny thing. I never smoked, never wanted to smoke, but, you know, I used to get a carton of cigarettes, I think it was a dollar for a carton, and, ah, every week I'd—the canteen would come around, you know, and they sold cigarettes, and I mean, everybody could buy a box, or a carton. And I used to buy a carton, and a guy would give me a dollar and I'd give him my carton.

James: [unintelligible]

Sannes: I knew some of them smoked more than a carton a week. So anyhow—and then they'd start fighting about my cigarettes. One guy, "Well, he promised them to me." "No, didn't you promise them to me?" How can you remember.

James: Right.

Sannes: So anyhow, I said one day after that, "I'll start smoking them myself; why give them to somebody else?" And, ah, I was bluffing. But he goes, "Yeah, you start smoking." Yeah. I opened one up, started smoking it, and turned around, thought I had to cough. [laughs] And then, you know, it wasn't long before I was smoking regular.

James: How long before you gave that up?

Sannes: Thirty years.

James: Thirty years, yeah.

Sannes: I was up hunting up in Canada.

James: You decided to quit then?

Sannes: Yeah, half a pack left and—

James: How much drinking did you do in England? Beer?

Sannes: Oh, they had, ah—

James: Or gin?

Sannes: _____? All you could get in England just about, unless you go to the black market, about all you could get was gin and beer.

James: Right. Did you care for either of those?

Sannes: Oh, gin and orange, I would drink that.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: And, ah, beer.

James: Warm beer wasn't very tasty, was it?

Sannes: Naw, I'd get that bitter, they called it bitter—ah, once in a while it's alright, but—

James: So when—how long were you in Normandy before they sent you back to England? You established yourself at Carentan, but—

Sannes: Oh I went back—yeah, well you see, ah, I think we were supposed to be there a week and we were there five, I think.

James: Five weeks. Yeah, well the beachhead was pretty well established then.

Sannes: Oh, yeah.

James: [unintelligible]

Sannes: But they were established there. You see, they put us down in a great big marsh here, and they were—this is what the Americans were afraid of, that they'd come across in rubber boats—

James: Across the marsh?

Sannes: Across the marsh, and it was a deep enough marsh. And they figured that if they came across in a whole bunch of rubber boats, you know, each one holding ten people or something like that, why—so they strung us all along here, so if we saw anybody coming at night, you know, toward us,

we knew they weren't fishing. [both laugh] So—and they kept us there for a couple weeks.

James: So every time the fish jump, all the guns opened up, I'm sure, [Hans laughs] 'cause I know in those lines, if one starts, everybody else starts.

Sannes: Well, anyhow, no. The thing of it is, you know, we had guards walking from point to point here—we had outpost men, we had guards walking from point to point as well, so, ah, but the guys didn't like to go at night, you know, because they were always afraid that someone with a Tommy gun would be walking [brief interruption]—

James: Okay, go ahead.

Sannes: Ah, they all expected that someone would be walking right behind them and wouldn't have their safety on that, ah, Tommy gun. So they never liked that duty.

James: No.

Sannes: We went two men, see, on patrol, two guys would do that. Two guys would walk to the next post. Two down and two back and they'd keep that up, always the two so they couldn't ambush somebody as he walked. And so we were there, cripes, must be—we did that a week, anyhow.

James: Could you hear any ___?

Sannes: No, nobody came across in any boats.

James: They didn't send any mortars over or anything like that? I would think they would.

Sannes: Ah, well, I'm getting mixed up in Holland.

James: That's another story.

Sannes: I know it. I'm trying to think [pause]—

James: Well anyway, so after a week you went back to England?

Sannes: Oh, no. We were there altogether five weeks.

James: Oh, I'm sorry, five weeks, yeah.

Sannes: Yeah.

James: But you didn't move, you held that position, roughly?

Sannes: We were there until we went back to England and, ah, like I say, probably a week or ten days that we were there.

James: And how did that go, back in England?

Sannes: Back in England?

James: Yeah, you didn't do any training, you just went to—

Sannes: No, all we did was—

James: A little R&R?

Sannes: Yeah, R&R, but then also we had to take care of all the, we had to take care of all the rumors around. We had to just, "No, I'm kidding, I'm kidding," dispel all the rumors, I was gonna say, because—

James: Yeah.

Sannes: Because there were some that we were going here and going there.

James: There are always rumors.

Sannes: I know it. But, ah, when October—or when September, I think it was 17th, we jumped in—

James: In Holland?

Sannes: In Holland.

James: That was a tougher jump, right?

Sannes: Not for me.

James: Not for you? 'Cause a lot of guys got put in the wrong spot.

Sannes: It wasn't a night jump, you know, in Holland.

James: No, yeah, okay.

Sannes: And it was on a Sunday and the Air Corps had taken care of all the, all of the, ah—you know air—they already blasted the heck out of our airfield. There was hardly any shooting at all when we were coming down, you know. I mean it was so nice until we got down and we—

- James: Didn't hit any trees?
- Sannes: No, it was a big field, so there wasn't anything to hit. It was real good until the next day. I mean, it was nice on that jump.
- James: Until the Germans counter attacked? **[End of Tape 2, Side A]**
- Sannes: Well, they did go after us the next day, but, ah, a friend of mine, we was sleeping in the woods, you know, up there. That was after we had jumped in the afternoon—bedtime, and so we went right into these woods. It had kind of a hill going down, kind of a hill going down, kind of a valley down here. And these woods, we didn't know anything about this wood. So anyhow, our officers got us in this woods, he says, "Come on, we're gonna bunk down here for the night. We don't know what else to do so we'll just take it cool until tomorrow morning," and I cleaned out a place and laid down and sleep, you know. My buddy, Fetzter[?]
—in fact, I saw him in Ohio once—he's a big guy and he says, "Well I'm gonna sleep up here, behind you; I'll sleep right up here on this little hill." Holy smokes, the next morning it's getting daylight and, ah, he says, "I think I'll get up, see what's around here." "Yeah." I hadn't gotten up. He had gotten up on one elbow, and then he heard the shooting just down the road, figured, "Oh, that's just the ____? down in the valley." And then next thing you know he says, "Oh," he says, "I'm hit." In the middle of the woods he was hit 'cause he turned around. He had been hit through his clothes—there was something else he had in his pocket, tobacco can or something, had gone through that—but it—all it was on his hide, on his skin was just red—
- James: Was this shrapnel or was this a bullet?
- Sannes: Bullet.
- James: Where was the bullet?
- Sannes: I don't know. We didn't see it.
- James: It wasn't in his clothes or—
- Sannes: No, we didn't even look for it, we were _____? But he says, "No, it just hurts."
- James: He moved away?
- Sannes: Yeah, we both moved, but we moved the whole—oh, wait now, we did try to get better positions, because they started shooting down below and they

could look up at us and if we—the only way we could, wouldn't be exposed was—well, you know, you had to, if you want to get up over that—you had to shoot something, and—but some linemen helped us out that time 'cause I guess they all learned what to do at headquarters. They were behind us and they had made kind of a headquarters, a few officers back there, and they decided the only thing to do was just to back off through the woods, you know, without getting shot. But just about the time we hadn't quite figured out what to do, it was either three or four British tanks came around the bend and right out, going right across the field down toward the valley, and they no more than got going down through, they started blazing. We got prisoners that time. All these guys—well not all of them, some of them, some of them—all say it was just like hunting rabbits, you know. But anyhow, this—that scared the devil out of 'em and what they didn't capture, they shot at. But that saved us because—well, we could have backed through that woods too, but you never know what's on the other side.

James: So where'd you move then?

Sannes: Now that's—trying to think of where we went, ah—

James: Well, you didn't stay in the same area, did you?

Sannes: No, we got out of there. We got—

James: 'Cause the German shoved everybody back.

Sannes: Oh, we got out of there. All I remember is we walked across, some of us walked across this big valley, you know, kind of a nice place, and then up the hill, and there was some houses up the hill. They'd been shooting from the houses, too, but there was some houses up on the hill, so the guys started to go through house by house.

James: Right.

Sannes: And they, they got a few, and, ah, that's where I got one of the guns. I got one of the guns, I think, right along those houses. It was just like new.

James: A Luger?

Sannes: Yeah. No, it was—

James: Or a P38?

Sannes: P38, and it was just like new. [clock chimes] 'Course I didn't keep it long when I got in the hospital.

James: You got it in the hospital?

Sannes: We got it—no, when I got back from the hospital, in my barracks bag.

James: How did we get to the hospital? You're jumping into a hospital now.

Sannes: No, I didn't want to. I didn't—I got this P38, that's how I'm trying to remember. Ah, I remember a local bread, black bread, on the table in one of the houses and a big butcher knife over there. They must have probably been having lunch or something when we came, and I don't—let's see; where the heck did we go from there?

James: You didn't cut off a slice of that bread and have a little?

Sannes: Oh, no. It might have been poisoned. [laughs]

James: Well you just chased a Dutch family out of their house. They wouldn't have poisoned it.

Sannes: I don't know. Very likely those Germans wouldn't have been in there. Just a small house, you know, a plain house. But, you know, I had to go through 'em one by one.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: A guy had shot one of the soldiers and he was laying in the street down below and he says a guy from a window—he pointed at what house it was, and I said, "No, we got him." He, he was staying up there. He made a mistake of shooting. But they were going through the houses, anyway, and they would have found him.

James: They would have found him.

Sannes: But I'm trying to remember where we went from there.

James: How long were you in Holland? A month?

Sannes: Seventy—seventy-two days.

James: Seventy-two days.

Sannes: When we finished Holland, that was, at that time, was the longest the division had stayed, the longest the division had stayed—

James: In combat?

Sannes: No. Oh, continually in contact with the enemy.

James: Yeah. Well, yeah—

Sannes: But—

James: So this is—this is how long total, how many days?

Sannes: Seventy-two.

James: Seventy-two days.

Sannes: Oh, I know, I know where we went now. I know where we went now. We went to, ah, Lille, France. We went to France, and we went by boat. This big _____?, this big Marshall Lindmeyer[?] boat I remember. We went over to—oh, we we're caught up on _____ again.

James: You think so? Except you couldn't get back into France now.

Sannes: No—

James: Why are you getting there?

Sannes: I was at, ah, Jesus Christ, Holland. I wasn't at Holland was I? Seventy-two days, yeah.

James: Well, you had seventy-two. I don't know if you included the drop on Normandy and then continued—

Sannes: Oh, no. I didn't include that.

James: Well, you were dropped in Holland a couple of months afterward.

Sannes: Oh, yeah, yeah.

James: You went back to England after Normandy for a little bit.

Sannes: That was seventy-two days when we were in Holland.

James: Okay.

Sannes: Now it's coming back to me.

James: Alright, well now it's getting close to December now. You're getting close to the time when the 101 ended up in Bastogne [Belgium].

Sannes: Yeah.

James: Were you there?

Sannes: That's where I got hit.

James: Excuse me, just a second.

Sannes: Huh?

James: You didn't miss a thing. [both laugh].

Sannes: Well, I didn't get hit just so I could find out what's going on.

James: Oh, I thought that's the reason you were there?

Sannes: Maybe? for a book, or for other, you know—

James: Tell me how you got to Bastogne. Let's just jump ahead to that.

Sannes: Well, alright. Like I said—wait now. Oh, we went to France. We went back—geez, I could have showed you.

James: That's alright, it's not necessary.

Sannes: It wasn't Reims, it was another town that we—

James: [unintelligible]

Sannes: This wasn't Reims.

James: Oh, okay.

Sannes: It was another—

James: Well, it's alright. You don't need to find it.

Sannes: Alright, but it's another town. It's near Reims, I think, and we were gonna stay there. And we were even gonna stay there for Christmas.

James: Okay, now—

Sannes: And we were gonna go, company by company, we were gonna be allowed to go to Paris for Christmas.

James: For a holiday Christmas?

Sannes: Yeah.

James: The war was gonna be over in just a couple weeks at that time.

Sannes: [laughs] So anyhow—

James: Everybody thought.

Sannes: Yeah, so anyhow we, ah—guys, get your stuff, get your gear all together and after this, after all this we'd get resupplied and all that stuff, you know. And we stayed in this other town, must be less than a week, two weeks maybe.

James: Okay.

Sannes: And then we got orders that the 101st were gonna go to Bastogne, Belgium.

James: Right.

Sannes: We got that order and that we would be transported at night by trucks, blackout trucks. So we only had so much time—

James: Oh, yeah. Time is of the essence, isn't it?

Sannes: To take care of our, take care of our—stuffing our duffle bag and stuff like that and mark 'em and move them back to camp. Take just what we needed. We didn't have anything much left. We didn't have first aid kits even. You know—

James: Right.

Sannes: And the guys that got hit, you know, and stuff that could—

James: So we know about when this was now. This was the 18th of December.

Sannes: Yeah.

James: Yeah, 'cause that's right after—

Sannes: Guys never had morphine or anything, you know. So, well, I don't know, I don't need that.

- James: No. So they trucked you up there, cold as hell. Coldest winter in Europe they've ever had.
- Sannes: 17th of December.
- James: Right.
- Sannes: And, ah, I don't even think, I don't think we even had enough blankets, I know that. That was a premium.
- James: That was the main problem, you didn't have any supplies.
- Sannes: We slept in our clothes all the time; shake the snow off your clothes.
- James: You had to set up your perimeters.
- Sannes: Oh, yeah. Oh, that's what they did right away.
- James: Right.
- Sannes: And we got, well my outfit, ah, I mean 101st, got more or less the northern part. And First Company was northeast—northwest I mean. And we just stayed there and—
- James: You're running out of food now.
- Sannes: Well, we had arrangements for that, I guess, with a farmer that—
- James: Oh, yeah.
- Sannes: —had cows, so I think—seems to me that we _____? a couple of meals. Now we didn't do anything with that, the farmer always hid, but he wasn't gonna let the _____? know, and he shot a cow [James laughs].
- James: So—
- Sannes: But anyhow, so we just had our rations—
- James: Except the cows, right.
- Sannes: And they captured the—the medical team they had that flew over from England, I imagine, they dropped all these medical supplies. Germans got over half of 'em, I think.
- James: Yeah, I was gonna say they missed.

- Sannes: Yeah, missed the drop and they got over half of 'em, and, ah, so—and I don't know, that's about all. We didn't do any training, we didn't do anything, just sit, sit, sit, sit. And we sat there from the 17th, after we got our sectors all set, you know, and got our—we had a little farmhouse that we could go back to and get our feet warmed up, you know, once in a while. It was a policy with our company that, ah, every so often whoever is in charge of the guys will have to see that they go back and get their feet warmed up, take their boots off and socks, and rub your feet.
- James: A lot of guys had frostbite?
- Sannes: But they were in different companies. They weren't in ours.
- James: You didn't?
- Sannes: We never had a case—
- James: Did the Germans make a rush on you from there?
- Sannes: Well they did, yeah. They, ah—kind of small little counterattacks, you know, here and there in different parts.
- James: They didn't bring up the tanks to make a push with the tanks?
- Sannes: No.
- James: You had mortars?
- Sannes: We had mortars, yeah, but—
- James: But nothing bigger?
- Sannes: But nothing bigger and, you see we had one tank destroyer, I understand, in Bastogne, and they only had a few shells for that.
- James: Yeah, that's what I was told.
- Sannes: So, you couldn't—company commander and battalion commander, they couldn't call for tank support, you know, 'cause they didn't have enough ammo. They had a—in other words they had to divvy it out. It would distribute the ammo wherever it was needed mostly.
- James: The food wasn't a problem for you?
- Sannes: Well, we got our rations, as far as I can remember.

- James: K-rations?
- Sannes: Yeah, and like I say, we had cow help.
- James: [laughs] Sure, you cut it up, that'll serve a lot of guys.
- Sannes: Yeah, yeah. Then we had a stove—
- James: Did you ever run into McAuliffe? Did you ever meet him, see him?
- Sannes: No, but we got a ride with, we got a ride with, ah, I can't recall if it's already here or not, without—
- James: Taylor?
- Sannes: Taylor, yeah, and in fact—
- James: Maxwell?
- Sannes: Max, yeah. In fact, I met him at a reunion.
- James: Oh.
- Sannes: One time, but, ah, a fellow and another fellow and I said one time, "Nothing doing here." I think this was between engagements, 'cause there's nothing doing. "You're not gonna walk down to Hungerford, are you?" "Naw, naw." "Well, hey, why don't we go to Newbury [England]?" a guy said to me. "Yeah, that's a nice little town." That was eight miles, seven miles. "That's easy to walk." "Naw, hitchhike." Well that wasn't really legal, but, ah, there wasn't anything to do. We get out there on the road, we started to walk a little bit, and car came along and geez, took a look and a flag waving from it and, ah, oh no, and here goes Taylor. His driver was sitting there and we got out of the road, we got away from the road so—gave him plenty of room, you know, and he did stop. "Hey you fellows—where you soldiers going?" Taylor said. And, ah, we said, "Well, there's nothing doing at Hungerford, we thought we'd go to a bigger town."
- James: This is back in England; we're suddenly jumping into England.
- Sannes: And we thought we'd go to a bigger town than Hungerford. Newbury—
- James: That was like Stoughton?
- Sannes: That was like two hundred, yeah. [laughs] So anyhow, "Well," he says, "hop in," he says. "I gotta give a little talk down past Hungerford. Jump

in,” he says, “and I can let you out down there.” So we got in the back and got a nice ride to Hungerford with the general and his flag wavin’ up on the front fender.

James: That’s pretty nice.

Sannes: Yeah, for a sergeant—

James: Right.

Sannes: Made good time.

James: I’d say, I’d say. Taylor wasn’t at Bastogne, though.

Sannes: Well, no, he got there late because he was held up and he couldn’t fly back.

James: Yeah, right.

Sannes: He was, ah, in the States.

James: So, you’re hunkering down and waiting to see what happens. There’s no airplane to drop because the bad weather and turbulence.

Sannes: Yeah.

James: Then Patton came up to open the door for you.

Sannes: [unintelligible]

James: What, 3rd Division?

Sannes: No, rescue.

James: Huh, rescue? Oh, no, I wouldn’t use that word.

Sannes: Okay, because you’d be entirely wrong.

James: Right. No, I never felt that he really rescued you.

Sannes: He didn’t.

James: No.

Sannes: We could have held out, we could have got food where we got the food before.

James: Before, from the farmhouse?

Sannes: No, I mean, steal some chickens. [laughs] I don't know, we would have got food, though, because—

James: How many people were there?

Sannes: Where?

James: In Bastogne? How many soldiers did you have?

Sannes: Well, we—there was a lot of them in Bastogne.

James: I know, but you're not gonna have—you wouldn't feed all those guys that much longer.

Sannes: We were just feeding—well, the only thing that we had to worry about is our own company.

James: Oh, I see. The hell with the rest of them?

Sannes: Well [James laughs] we were not gonna try to run around with some beef all over the—

James: There's no reason to share, right?

Sannes: Well, no. [James laughs] Take enough to get around that perimeter, it'd take us a day to bring all that beef around.

James: Right, yeah, right. It's easier.

Sannes: But, ah, we'd a made out. Well here, an example, the 25th is Christmas. He said the 25th, all you heard was, "Ahhhh, he's coming up. Patton's on his way up." And everything will be all right, and all that stuff, you know. But you know, I never saw Patton and I never saw one of his soldiers and I was up on the north end of the—

James: Perimeter?

Sannes: Yeah, I was up at the north end of the doughnut, all of us where, and nobody ever saw Patton or heard tanks or anything. Where'd he go? Just turn around and go back?

James: [laughs] I don't know.

- Sannes: Couldn't figure it out.
- James: Soon as the—
- Sannes: And, and I didn't see anything until January 3rd, anything of Patton's soldiers. And I got wounded then on the 3rd.
- James: Tell me about that now.
- Sannes: I can tell you about that because, because, ah, I told you about these orders that we had?
- James: Right.
- Sannes: Anybody that, that's in charge of any men, you know you're supposed to check on them and make sure they all get their feet warmed up. So, I happened to have a man down in the farmhouse, and it was warm in there, they had to keep throwing wood in there, you know in the kitchen, and, ah—one of those old kitchen stoves, you know. It kept plenty warm. So anyhow, ah, this guy McAuliffe we heard on the radio. We had the radio on over there, you know, it was always on. "Attack imminent." Did I say that right?
- James: Yeah.
- Sannes: Im—
- James: Imminent.
- Sannes: Anyhow, and they expected everybody to get out to their post. Well, Jiminy Crickets, this guy had one boot on I said, "Come on, let's get logging there." "Well," he says, "I'm getting' it, I'm getting' it." "Hurry up." So I tried to hurry him but you can't hurry him too much. So anyhow, he got his boot on and got going, and I said, "Get out in the slip trench now, you're the last one I've gotta worry about," so then—except myself. So I went and was going down—I got about halfway in the slip trench, it was a kind of a crown on that hill, so that when you're back of it—but when you get up over a little ways—
- James: You're exposed.
- Sannes: You're exposed, totally from about five hundred yards of woods. And I got and I thought—I hit the ground once in that part right over there, I was on the right side the hill, and then I laid and nothing happened. Nobody—and then this time I crawled out a ways and took a good look, didn't see anybody moving along the woods or anything and I jumped up and took

off. Then I hadda hit the ground again, 'cause they'd start shooting as soon as they see something.

James: Right.

Sannes: Men, vehicles, anything, so I hit the ground again and laid there, and I thought, "Well, next time I'll make it. I'm gonna get there." Son of a gun, I heard something coming up behind me, and I thought, "Oh-oh, here's our tank destroyer." He's got only a few shells left, but I never thought the tank even—nobody would come, you know, just for a bunch of guys they would—

James: Right.

Sannes: But one guy? So I didn't stop to think of that. I says, "Well wonderful—
[break in tape]

James: Alright.

Sannes: Well anyhow I'm sneaky enough, I took off for the house and when I got up by the, got up by the side barn door near 'em I could hear some talking, but I couldn't understand and I couldn't, you know, comprehend what they were talking about, or—and it didn't sound like it was American and I didn't know, so I crept up close and I thought, "I gotta find out." I have to have an attempt whether I find out anything or not, whether they're Germans or Americans. Anyhow, so I opened the door slowly and there's my lieutenant standing over a table, a couple other guys I knew, and I was hit and they called for a jeep right away.

James: Then where'd they take 'ya?

Sannes: They took me to a, just a big Army tent that they had—

James: In Bastogne?

Sannes: Ah, well it was on the fringes of Bastogne, I think, or close. Must have been, I don't know where because—but it was a big Army tent, or I mean a big circus tent, like a big circus tent. And it was—all their hospital supplies. There were guys laying all over the floor.

James: It was a battalion aid station, yeah.

Sannes: Yeah, they were laying all over the floor in there, and so I could still stay on my feet and, ah, well they wrapped, threw some wraps on this thing and so then, come around a little while they got me a ride, but the planes

couldn't fly. So there I go again by boxcar. [laughs] They put me in one of those, what do they call them, eight by eights?

James: Forty by eight.

Sannes: [laughs] No.

James: Eight horses with forty men. A small boxcar.

Sannes: Small boxcars, then they had some—they made some litters, you know, on the sides, couple guys laying on each side. At least I could be on my feet. And, ah, so they, and then they—it was cold when they opened the doors, but they had the doors open pretty much to see where they were, I suppose.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: But of course where they were, they're just going to Paris anyhow.

James: Yeah. Well this eighty—

Sannes: Oh, wait, I take it back, because we stopped some place and unloaded before we got to Paris 'cause it was a big school, converted school, hospital, that they had made a hospital out of and, so anyhow, ah, and then I got in there and no more than got in there, and I walked in there and Jiminy Crickets, I never had a chance to do anything there. "Got any guns? Got any guns to sell?" Aides working in the hospital, they'd come up to you, "Got any guns to sell? I'll buy a gun if you've got a good revolver, good pistol." I said, "I've got guns, but I'm not gonna sell them." I had them, I thought I did, but that was from before when I got 'em and they were supposed to be in my stuff. Somebody took it out of them, that, too.

James: Oh, when you went up to Bastogne in a hurry, when you left your stuff back, somebody stole it out of your bag?

Sannes: Oh, sure, they went through our bags.

James: Yeah, and that was your P38 that you had?

Sannes: Yeah.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: So—

James: Do you have any of that shrapnel from that .88 shell still in you?

Sannes: No. I told them to save anything they find in there, [James laughs] then he started looking in my ear. “No I didn’t mean that, not my ear.” [both laugh]. There’s nothing in here. No, but anyhow, he said they’d save anything they found in there.

James: But they didn’t. Did they—

Sannes: They said it went right through, so—

James: Did they put you to sleep to fix your arm?

Sannes: Oh, yeah.

James: Yeah. You’re in a cast after, right? [clock chimes]

Sannes: Six months or seven months in a cast.

James: So you went home directly from France?

Sannes: Ah, no. I went to England. Can’t leave jolly ol’ England.

James: Back to England, third time now.

Sannes: Yeah.

James: Okay.

Sannes: And, ah—

James: Find that girl?

Sannes: No. [Jim laughs] Their guys are just kidding you about all the beautiful girls, I mean when—

James: They all look pretty good when you don’t see many of them.

Sannes: No. Anyhow, anyhow, maybe I was looking for my next meal about that time. I hadn’t eaten for a long time.

James: They at least had decent food.

Sannes: And it took—let’s see, I was gonna say I went back by one of those hospital ships. Yeah, I went back on a regular hospital ship that had a red cross on it—[**End of Tape 2, Side B**—so we didn’t get torpedoed.

James: That wouldn't have stopped them.

Sannes: No, I don't think it would have.

James: No, all the medics I knew took those red crosses off their helmets as fast as they could 'cause those were just targets, that's all they represented.

Sannes: Yeah.

James: Something you could aim at.

Sannes: Well, no, in our outfit I see—we see some, you know—see them running around with an armband on.

James: Yeah.

Sannes: Of course, we probably deal with a better class of people.

James: That must be it, yeah, it must be, it must be. [Hans laughs] Yeah.

Sannes: Ones that don't lie and shoot. No, I tell ya—

James: Well the Chinese and the Koreans, they had no compunction about shooting at a medic. Well, at whatever—or the Japanese.

Sannes: Well, I—I wouldn't trust any of 'em.

James: No.

Sannes: Any of 'em.

James: So—

Sannes: Say, I've been listening so much, I'm thirsty. [brief interruption]

James: Your wound healed to every body's satisfaction? But a frozen elbow, then?

Sannes: Yeah. Oh, I can do more with it than I figured I could.

James: Yeah. Like Don _____?

Sannes: Huh?

James: Don _____? A friend of ours.

Sannes: Yeah.

James: He can't overextend his elbow any farther than that. He has this, but he can't go beyond this. Yeah, you can almost straighten it, about the same.

Sannes: Yeah. It can't, it's no doubt it changes your life a little but, ah—I can't play golf or bowl like I used to, any of that stuff, you know.

James: Sure.

Sannes: I used to love to bowl.

James: So in England, then you were just there 'til they got a ship that would take you home, a hospital ship?

Sannes: About a week, I guess, before I—

James: 'Bout a week.

Sannes: Well, maybe three, four days.

James: Was this one of those Army hospital ships? Do you remember? You don't remember the name of it, do you?

Sannes: No, I don't.

James: It's not important, okay. You sailed to New York?

Sannes: No. We were figuring we were going to New York,—

James: Yep.

Sannes: And then hell, we ended up—

James: Not back in Halifax again?

Sannes: No.

James: Oh.

Sannes: We skipped that one. [James laughs] Instead of New York they went down south. Down to, ah—

James: Norfolk [Virginia]?

Sannes: Norfolk.

James: Alright, okay.

Sannes: Yeah. And then from there I went to Chicago.

James: So you were discharged out of Chicago?

Sannes: Yep.

James: Okay.

Sannes: I was glad I went to Chicago, anyhow.

James: Yeah, very close to home.

Sannes: Yeah.

James: And, ah, let's see, other than the Purple Heart and the Theater Ribbons, did you earn any other ribbons?

Sannes: Nope.

James: Did you, ah—

Sannes: Well, ribbons, I mean—

James: Well, there's lots of Theater Ribbons.

Sannes: You're talking—

James: Unit citations.

Sannes: Oh, yeah.

James: You must have a lot of those.

Sannes: I got a lot of them, but I—a lot of them I'll never see. You know, they got—

James: [unintelligible]

Sannes: We got a lot of them that I don't ever see. A lot of—in fact, ah, several times, couple times that I know of, maybe more, our whole unit got cited.

James: Yeah, I know you had unit citations and you must have had several of those.

Sannes: Yeah. Yep.

James: One for Normandy, one for Bastogne, one for Holland, for starters.

Sannes: Yeah, well I—

James: You didn't bring home any other medals? Nothing?

Sannes: No. Where I was they didn't wanna give them out.

James: Okay.

Sannes: You know, in one place.

James: Right. They, ah, what else did I want—oh, yeah. Did you join any veterans' groups when you got out of the service?

Sannes: Yeah, I'm a life member of—

James: VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars]?

Sannes: VFW and Legion [American Legion].

James: Does the paratroopers group, the 101st—they must still meet, the 101st Airborne.

Sannes: Well, see, ah, we got—I'm trying—we've only been to a couple of reunions, I guess, but, ah, we've got an association, 101st Airborne Association.

James: Right.

Sannes: That's—

James: Do you ever see any of your old buddies?

Sannes: I tell you—one time, a couple of times I've gone. Once I saw—was that the time we saw Robert? I guess so. Once we saw Robert, a guy named Robert, and—who was with us—well a long time, and that's all. And then another time I saw Jimmy Flemmings—somebody else I can't remember. I've seen about three of them at two reunions; guys from my company. You know, when you're a part of something—I was thinking how we were gonna have a good time—

- James: Yeah, but you didn't—
- Sannes: Yeah, and the only thing you can do is you talk to somebody and pretty quick you're getting around to war stuff. You know, I know it's a reunion, but I don't want to have to talk about that all the time.
- James: Right. Yeah, see they were really strangers, you know.
- Sannes: Yeah.
- James: You had nothing to do with them before and nothing afterwards.
- Sannes: No, no.
- James: It's kind of a—did you take advantage of the GI Bill at all, when you got out of the service?
- Sannes: I did. I went for a loan.
- James: For a loan or for college? Or to buy a house?
- Sannes: Well just for a ninety dollar a month thing when I was going to school.
- James: Where'd you go to school?
- Sannes: Well, I went to Decorah, Iowa, and then I came—I made a mistake and I transferred to UW Madison at the time when they were having everybody, or having a lot of students sitting in the halls.
- James: Yeah, it was so crowded.
- Sannes: Yeah. It was terrible even—you know you get a—I can't think of the professor's name—it was just like it was a theatre. The room was practically all full, and he was lecturing, and he lectured that way, with that many people, and you know who took care of the grades and stuff like that.
- James: It was the TAs. Yeah.
- Sannes: Yeah, a whole bunch of TAs running around, and, ah—
- James: That's the university system.
- Sannes: I had trouble enough, for Christ sakes, one-on-one with a teacher, and Jesus Christ, here you [James laughs] —and then—

- James: Yeah, pretty impersonal stuff.
- Sannes: Oh, impersonal—and then when you’re commuting back and forth—
- James: On top of that. From Stoughton?
- Sannes: Yeah. Well, you see, that isn’t far, but then when you’ve got nobody here to ask if you’re stuck on a problem, and stuff like that—there’s nobody here to help you in Stoughton.
- James: Right. Yeah.
- Sannes: And then when you get up there—and then after class, if you’re gonna see a professor—
- James: [unintelligible]
- Sannes: Then you can get in line and you think it’s one of those old chow lines. [James laughs] Geez, talk about—
- James: Yeah. I had to depend on the book and the TA.
- Sannes: So, and then, ah, so I went there, well—help me, these credits helped me, and then in Luther, I—I should have stuck to Luther, I should of—
- James: Yeah, you got close teaching down there.
- Sannes: Yeah, oh, I got along good with Professor Dawkins[?], he’s a professor of chemistry. He said, “You know, you’re like a [unintelligible],” he says, “I hate to tell you that, but,” he says, “I think you’ll get swallowed up—
- James: And that’s just what happened.
- Sannes: And, ah, he said, “I wish you’d stay here.” I should have; if I could get a C in chemistry, why for me that’s wonderful. I mean—
- James: For anybody.
- Sannes: That’s a good passing mark in chemistry, and, ah, then I got a good mark in biology or, you know, English.
- James: You were still single by this time?
- Sannes: No, Rose was with me down in school.

James: Oh, okay. You got married right after you got out of service?

Sannes: Yeah. [unintelligible conversation in background] You got me thinking now about everything.

James: I didn't realize that was a tough question. [both laugh]

Sannes: Don't ask me where I'm gonna eat supper tonight.

James: [laughs] Don't ask me either. We have the same problem. Good, okay. Well, you never went back to Fort Benning to visit any place, or just never have been down there again?

Sannes: Oh—

James: Or Fort Bragg?

Sannes: Benning. No. They've got two other—they've got four towers in all, I guess.

James: Yeah, I understand they do.

Sannes: And they had what they call a "monkey cage."

James: Oh.

Sannes: We had that. All metal rods that climb around and—

James: Oh, yeah.

Sannes: You know.

James: They didn't have that when you took that, though?

Sannes: No. And then they didn't have, ah—oh, there's other things. They had a lot of things. They had—

James: You've not been interested doing any jumping from airplanes after you got out of service, are you? That never fascinated you?

Sannes: Not that interested, but I did go jumping when I was fifty, sixty years old.

James: George Bush is into it now. He's made two jumps after he's seventy.

Sannes: Yeah, I know, but, I have my wife. I probably can break a leg some other way.

James: Yeah, right. I'm surprised he hasn't done that. You know, bones get pretty fragile when you get up there.

Sannes: Yeah.

James: And jumping wouldn't bother you at twenty, but it'd bother you a lot when you're seventy.

Sannes: Yeah, that's right. No, I, ah, I was gonna try to get along now 'til the glory be.

James: Right. How many jumps did you make in your career?

Sannes: Thirty.

James: Thirty-eight?

Sannes: No, just thirty.

James: Thirty. What do you mean, just thirty? That's a lot.

Sannes: Well, some people think that when you're in the paratroopers you're gonna jump just about every day. But you don't, it's like anything else, and you're scheduled for a jump not even one a month, you know. The only way—some guys get a lot of jumps, but a lot of them test equipment, stuff like that to see how hard it is.

James: What percent disability did they give you in the arm?

Sannes: Well they gave me—

James: Twenty?

Sannes: No. They gave me forty.

James: Forty percent.

Sannes: What do I get now? Forty? I've been getting' it for so many years—but, ah, they—one guy when I went to Luther College, they notified me that I'm supposed to go to—what town was that little—

James: Decorah?

Sannes: Well that's where we lived, but I was supposed to go to this town and you know, get an evaluation at a—

James: You mean Iowa City?

Sannes: Yeah at the VA—was that Iowa?

James: Iowa City or Des Moines.

Sannes: Des Moines, that's where it was, and then an evaluation of my arm now, because this was a number of months afterward. They figured, I suppose, that it straightened right out, so they better not lose any money on me.

James: Well they were trying to figure out where to cut that disability down, save some money.

Sannes: Yeah [laughs]. Anyhow, they did cut it down.

James: Just keep telling them, "My arm hurts." Don't stop saying that.

Sannes: Oh, no. They cut it down. They cut it five percent.

James: They did?

Sannes: Um-hmm. And, ah, so—

James: Did you tell them you saved them—saved these people, all these fellows all these years? They owed you that.

Sannes: No, I wasn't about to tell them I owed them anything—

James: They owed you.

Sannes: Yeah, that's what I want to tell them.

James: Right.

Sannes: But you see, the thing of it is, I don't know, I suppose it could always be worse.

James: Well, you could have that thing through your head; that would have been worse. Then you would have never left the hill. That would have been a lot worse.

Sannes: Not only that, but I'd have been madder than hell. [both laugh] No, but the funny part of it is—

James: [unintelligible]

- Sannes: I got it back. I'm getting forty-five percent.
- James: Oh, you did get it back, okay.
- Sannes: Yeah, I got it back, 'cause I used to ride up on the train from Chicago. Once in a while I'd ride up with a doctor from Stoughton.
- James: Who?
- Sannes: Dr. Snowdow??.
- James: Snowdow, yeah I know him.
- Sannes: Well, he's gone now; a long time ago now.
- James: Yeah.
- Sannes: But he was a good friend and he was our family doctor. So I used to—sometimes I'd run into him in the station, you know and we'd sit together and talk.
- James: Sure.
- Sannes: He said he'd never—well he had [unintelligible], he was sittin' down in the swamps to help, you know, and he says, "I didn't do any good," he says, because—I told him my age, and he says, "Ah, you're too old to be running around." Apparently he was with a company or something, or with a battalion or something, 'cause he was talking about running around trying to keep up to these young fellows. And he says, "I can't do it." But he said—and they were discharging him at that time, but he said he'd never take anything but a hundred percent discharge.
- James: Disability.
- Sannes: Yeah, "But you might have to go," he said, "up to Tomah to get that."
- James: Yeah, in Wisconsin you have to go up to Tomah.
- Sannes: He said to get that, so—
- James: Okay.

[End of Interview]