

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
IVAN SCHWARTZ
Infantry, Army, World War II.

2000

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Schwartz, Ivan, (1919-2010). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 45 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 45 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 45 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

Abstract:

Ivan Schwartz, a La Valle, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as a member of Company D, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division and his experiences during the D-Day invasion. He talks about being drafted, training at Fort Wolters (Texas) where he learned to fire several types of rifles, infantry training at Fort Benning (Georgia), and serving as a waiter in the officer's mess hall. He comments on the voyage to England, training with a flame thrower, and practicing amphibious landings. He describes landing on Utah Beach during the Normandy Invasion, including going ashore with the 6th wave, seeing swamped tanks and dead paratroopers, and advancing through Montebourg and Cherbourg. Schwartz details combat in France: air support from P-47 aircraft, duty carrying ammunition for an 81 mm mortar, the smokeless artillery powder used by German troops, and air support bombing close to friendly lines due to drifting smoke. He comments on food, mail, and finding a German P-38 pistol. Schwartz touches upon his experiences at Saint-Ló, moving through the heavily mined Hurtgen Forest, R&R in Wicker (Germany), spending his birthday on the Siegfried Line, and transfer to the communications section. He talks about taking German prisoners who happily surrendered to the Allies rather than be taken prisoner by the Russians. Schwartz describes stringing wire to a forward observer post while under artillery fire, an act that won him the Bronze Star. He speaks of someone who took his place in a jeep and was killed by a mine, a close call in some hedgerows, and seeing a couple pilots bail out of their planes. After being sent home on a thirty-day furlough, Schwartz talks about bringing home a bag full of German weapon souvenirs, learning of the war's end, and seeing German prisoners of war working at a canning factory in Reedsburg. He talks about his involvement in the 1916 Thurber-Greenwood Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Biographical Sketch:

Schwartz (1919-2010) served in the Army from 1941 to 1945 with the 4th Infantry Division in Europe. After the war, he entered the painting business and settled in Reedsburg (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000.
Transcribed by Katy Marty, 2008.
Checked by Jackie Mulhern, 2008.
Corrected by Channing Welch, 2010.
Corrections typed by Erin Dix, 2010.
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Transcription of Interview:

- Ivan: Talk right in here. Okay.
- Jim: Yeah, you just—you don't have to put it any closer than this. That's fine. Just hold it. That's good enough. Okay.
- Ivan: This should be—does it turn to the left?
- Jim: You don't have to do anything, just hold it. All right. Where are you? Oh, there you are. [Approx. 30 sec. pause in recording] A little lower.
- Ivan: No, I said it to myself after that last August accident we could have totaled the both of us totality instead of totaling a brand new Chevy Lumina, and I said, "On Sunday I'm not going to drive no more."
- Jim: Well, that's the safe thing to do, Ivan.
- Ivan: Well, I'll be 81 the last of September. I think it's the time. You've driven me far enough.
- Jim: All right. Sounds good. Let's do it this way. All set. That's great. Now you look pretty.
- Ivan: Thank you. [Ivan and Mrs. Schwartz laugh] Coming from another man that's nice, conceptually.
- Mrs. S: This is a [unintelligible] show [unintelligible] [laughs].
[Approx. 20 sec. pause in recording]
- Jim: Okay. Interviewing Ivan Schwartz, 27 July, year 2000. Where were you born, Ivan?
- Ivan: Where was I born?
- Jim: Yes.
- Ivan: Ah, in Town of Little. It'd be five miles from La Valle in 1919 on September 30th.
- Jim: Okay. When did you enter military service?
- Ivan: Well, believe it or not I was a member of the first group of fellows who were inducted—we'll use that word. At that time they said under the Selective Service Act, but that's just a glorified name for a draft. That was in 17th of March, 1941.

- Jim: Where did they send you?
- Ivan: Well, first we went to Camp Grant, Illinois. We were briefed, some instructions, and we were given some clothing, and I think our civilian clothes were sent home, and from there we were escorted by Corporal Davis—a train clear to Fort Wolters, Texas; Camp Wolters now. It was near a little town near Mineral Wells. Somebody said it was about fifty miles from Dallas, but there I had my basic training. 64th Infantry Training Battalion.
- Jim: Okay, and that training was twelve weeks? Twelve weeks?
- Ivan: I would say yes, mm-hmm.
- Jim: And what did you do? Did they have a specialty developed by that time? Did you have a specialty?
- Ivan: Well—
- Jim: Or were you just a rifleman?
- Ivan: Yeah, infantry. I dealt with rifles in the firing line, the 03, and then the M1 Garand and the Browning 45, and then we had the Thompson machine gun, and awful lot of bayonet course training.
- Jim: Did they give you an MOS number then? An MOS number for a specialty?
- Ivan: No. Well, my serial number is 3620.
- Jim: No, no, no, for your training, I mean for your experience.
- Ivan: I don't recall.
- Jim: They used whatever your activity is in the infantry.
- Ivan: Well, I couldn't believe it myself when Sergeant Eikenger(??), my training sergeant, he says to me one day, he says, "Private Schwartz, would you care to stay back as a Training Sergeant?" and I says, "Well, I'd much rather go with my buddies."
- Jim: You were probably older than the others.
- Ivan: Oh, yeah, maybe. No, I was 21 when I enlisted in '41.

- Jim: Okay. So, then what did they do with you?
- Ivan: Well, when we finished our basic training we were shipped by rail to Fort Benning, Georgia, an old camp. Matter of fact the barracks were sort of a log construction. They were infected with bed bugs. And we had extensive training there with the infantry, and a good friend of mine had been working in the officers' mess, Bill Kern, and he said "I'm leaving for some other tour of duty and so they will be opening another officers' mess, and so if you wish to go up to submit your name down to battalion headquarters and a couple days later the Sergeant Rhymes(??) says, "Private Schwartz, report to officers' first mess immediately." And when I stayed in officers' mess as a table waiter from then clear to a week before D-day in England I got out of a lot of training, and the captain says, "Private Schwartz, you're not getting as much training as you're supposed to get. You'll never make it." "Well, sir I'll take my chances," and—
- Jim: How'd you get to England?
- Ivan: How'd I get there? Well, it was one of the monstrous convoys ships as forward far as you could see to the rear and to the flanks escorted by the Coast Guard cutter I guess. But it was a ship manned by the British, but it was a French(??) ship, USS Franconia. [Both RMS Franconia I and RMS Franconia II served as troopships. Both were built by English companies, and both were owned and operated by Cunard, a British company.]
- Jim: Was this in the fall of 1943?
- Ivan: I guess that would be, yeah. I don't know if I remember the month exactly I can't. But the first thing we saw when we docked at Liverpool got to see this extreme shelling the Germans did, rubble.
- Jim: Where was your camp from Liverpool?
- Ivan: Ah, Camp Honiton, it—well, Honiton, England. It's not too far from Exeter, and—
- Jim: What further training did you have there in Exeter?
- Ivan: Well, they had beach landing. Also training with the liquid flame thrower which I did. I thought to myself I wouldn't enjoy carrying a backpack of flame throwing if somebody shot a hole, shot into it with a tracer bullet, she'd blow up. So on hikes and in moors I was in officers' mess most of the time. So I missed some of what they were seeing.
- Jim: I see. Did you do any participating in any of the practice landings?

- Ivan: Well, we had, at Camp Carrabelle, Florida, in '38 or '39, I don't know somewhere. They had a lot of landings. Well, in LCVs [landing craft, vehicle, personnel] they'd go around and around and maneuver, and then they'd come into the landing. Guys would get seasick, but I was in the officers' mess then, too.
- Jim: But in England did you go to Slapton Sands? Were you there at the Slapton Sands where they had the practice D-Day landing?
- Ivan: No.
- Jim: Did you participate in some of these landings in England?
- Ivan: No, no, no.
- Jim: Okay. So when did you move over to France?
- Ivan: France?
- Jim: When did you move from England to France?
- Ivan: D – Day. On the sixth wave.
- Jim: And you were in the 4th Division?
- Ivan: 4th Infantry Division.
- Jim: You landed at Utah.
- Ivan: Yeah, Utah. Sainte-Mere-Eglise was our first objective. Montebourg was the next big city.
- Jim: You were carrying an M-1 at that time?
- Ivan: Yes sir. The best rifle they had.
- Jim: Right. Okay, and how was the sixth wave? Was there much opposition to the sixth wave?
- Ivan: Well, fortunately we were landing at the Utah instead of the Omaha. Those poor guys there.
- Jim: Yup.
- Ivan: We had sniper fire and some machine, but no problem. The guys were scared and Teddy Rosewell(??), I think was where there he said, "Keep

moving behind that break wall. You gotta move forward 'cause there's ship after ships coming in."

Jim: Did the LSCP(??) put you right on the beach, or did you have to wade in quite a ways?

Ivan: I was up shoulder depth in water.

Jim: Yeah.

Ivan: That Rommel had that so fortified with obstacles under water—

Jim: Right.

Ivan: So I was wet all day that day and that night and part of the next.

Jim: Right. Some of the boys had trouble with the water, didn't they?

Ivan: Yeah. The saddest thing I saw, Jim, was a, I don't know if it was an LST or a bigger one, it was unloading tanks of the 70th Tank Battalion with those flotillas, and they go down the ramp from the ship, and the water, the channel was awful rough, and believe it or not it was one or about three of them I saw that the ship water over the flotilla—down they go, crews inside.

Jim: Those floats didn't work.

Ivan: No, not in rough water like that, but some—they got some of them on the beach, though.

Jim: How long were you on the beach before you moved inland?

Ivan: Oh, I don't think a half an hour. No, they kept workin' on these guys, "Move, move! Keep movin'!"

Jim: You kept in regiment units? Together as a regiment?

Ivan: 8th Infantry.

Jim: Regiment.

Ivan: Uh-huh. Company E, 1st Battalion.

Jim: So where was your first stop, Ivan?

Ivan: Well, it was coming close to Montebourg, but in the meantime after we hit the beach we started running into some 82nd or 101st Airborne, and they says, "What are you taking prisoners for? We can't afford to do that? We can't tie up out men to hold prisoners." What grieved me so much was seeing some of those paratroopers [chokes up] hanging from a tree and shot to death. Never had a chance [crying]. Excuse me. Well, we got to Montebourg, and I was with the 80 mm mortars, ammunition bearer, and they were set up in kind of a valley where the hill was behind 'em and a hill in front, Montebourg up on a higher altitude. And the Germans tried their best to knock 'em out with artillery. When they couldn't get low enough they'd hit the wood, ricochet the shells across on the raise or go off this hill. But I don't know how many tubes of mortar tubes they burned up from D-Day to Cherbourg. Anyway, when we was at Montebourg at night you'd hear the Germans would be in that city, and then the next night the Americans would be in the city. The Germans sent one day or one night a whole, I suppose maybe it was a company of bicyclists, coming in on bicycles at night because during the daytime if it was anything larger troop movements our Air Force P-47s, God bless 'em! And then later on—well, we were there at least a week. Here they tried a whole bunch of fellows on motorcycles, and those P-47s were so effective in near Montebourg which is sort of a railroad city. There I see a whole row, a train row all rolled over in a ditch. They must've hit a flatcar full of jerry cans of gas with their tracers. So, that took care of that. Those P-47s were 8th Air Force. I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for them.

Jim: Probably. Now, you were an ammunition carrier for an 81 mm mortar?

Ivan: Yes, sir. Yeah.

Jim: How far would they shoot?

Ivan: Oh, Jim, I wish I could remember what the maximum—

Jim: Well, roughly. A mile?

Ivan: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Jim: Much further then the 61?

Ivan: Yeah. They were wicked. We had some forward observers that were so good at registering 81 mm firepower that some claimed that Lieutenant Taylor could put 'em down a chimney. He was that accurate. [Jim laughs] He was so good. I can remember, I used to carry a walkie-talkie or a telephone, string it up to the rifle companies' outpost guard to register in on tanks or machine gun post, and he'd call in on the phone that was hooked up, or by radio he'd call in to Sergeant Wright. He says, "Sergeant

Wright, would you give me one round of smoke?" And it would be about ten seconds and here she was.

Ivan: And he'd make adjustments, and boy, he'd clear that place out.

Jim: I bet.

Ivan: How big is an 81 mm mortar? Three feet? Oh, the tubes are this high.

Jim: Okay.

Ivan: And a base plate.

Jim: Right.

Ivan: And then a tripod. And these gunners, who were experienced and trained and trained and trained—they had to cross level those bubbles, vertical, and they were so good that we had some gunners that would have nine rounds in the air before the first one hit the ground.

Jim: Oh, man.

Ivan: It's hard to believe. It was so quick and efficient. Oh, they shot many, many rounds.

Jim: Now, did the mortar—did you have to press something to make them go off, or did you just—

Ivan: No.

Jim: Drop in the tube, it'd be automatic?

Ivan: To set that shell off there was a shotgun shell in there, and for additional range they had increments of powder that they clipped on. All this the helpers, the gunners, not gunners but the ammunition had to get ready, get ready and then laid out. They were so effective it's hard to believe.

Jim: Now, the 61 mm mortar—

Ivan: It's smaller.

Jim: It's smaller in diameter, but about the same length, is that right?

Ivan: Well, it's a shorter shell. The story I got the rifle companies had the 860, and being up close they were hesitant about firing them because they smoke so and give their position away. That was one thing with our

machine guns and our rifles where the Germans had more or less smokeless powder. And you can imagine what this brought.

Jim: Yeah. Right.

Ivan: Counterattack. Counterfire, I mean.

Jim: Yes. How far back were the 81's?

Ivan: Oh—

Jim: From the line.

Ivan: At least a quarter of a mile.

Jim: But you didn't have to do any of the forward observing?

Ivan: No, Lieutenant Taylor or some other ones would. We had a forward observer with each of the three rifle companies, A, B and C Company, and they were trained with radio, and they were good men, yeah. I don't know just which company would be on line then, too, but I didn't envy 'em.

Jim: So how big? How much do those shells weigh? Those 81 mm mortars?

Ivan: Oh—

Jim: 20 pounds?

Ivan: 20 pounds? No, no. I don't think the HE [high explosive] heavy—it might have weighed each three or a pound and a half to three pounds. The HE light, oh, a pound maybe.

Jim: That's all.

Ivan: Yes, roughly. And most of those gunners run that shell down that tube, and just "Bang!" Their hearing was gone, too. After a while they couldn't hear much. At burst they'd duck down, and another one would duck down. Them poor guys. Yeah.

Jim: When you carried the mortars up to them tough camp, though, they came in a box or a satchel—

Ivan: It was a cloverleaf they called—there was, oh, three parts, oh about this long, and there was sometimes—it'd depend—if it was HE letter, HE heavy there'd be, ah, three, six, or nine rounds in a thing, or HE [unintelligible] there'd be maybe a dozen.

Jim: Yeah. That's the part I thought might weigh about 20 pounds.

Ivan: Oh.

Jim: You brought that [unintelligible].

Ivan: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jim: And you put smoke up, too.

Ivan: Smoke shells?

Jim: Up, yes?

Ivan: The forward observer would call for one to make adjustments.

Jim: Right, and how about white phosphorus? You didn't use any of that?

Ivan: I don't remember if our mortars used that. Maybe the 4.2 mortars. It was the larger size, the largest we had. They were very wicked. They might have used it, but some of the P-47s I think they used white phosphorus once in a while. But I never noticed it by us.

Jim: So where did you move to next, from there, that position?

Ivan: From Montebourg to Cherbourg. Hooray! We liberated Cherbourg and got our first port. Supplies would come in up there, and that was our first wash-up and showers and change of clothes that we had.

Jim: In the city?

Ivan: In the city of Cherbourg. The Germans had that pretty well fortified, but those forward elements outdid them.

Jim: Right. So were you in a hotel, or where did you get this shower?

Ivan: Oh, they just picked some home or someplace.

Jim: They took over some French house and—

Ivan: Yeah. Yeah. We'd find lodging with a roof [laughs].

Jim: You got some warm food?

- Ivan: Yeah, the owner of the company cooks, their trucks and their field units, here they'd come, and to get ahold of mess kits again it seemed good to us from C-rations and K-rations. I often said, "I think these C-rations were left over from World War 1."
- Jim: [Laughs]
- Ivan: Oh, if I could sneak some onions in "Frenchy's" garden to go with it I could down them then.
- Jim: Right.
- Ivan: I lived. Thank the Lord.
- Jim: Right. I understand. Did you get mail during that time?
- Ivan: Oh, yes. Uh-huh. One of my best buddies, Bill Russell from Dunhill, New Jersey was our mail orderly and he would always get the mail. He took pictures which he wasn't supposed to—he had a camera, and he had it under his jacket. And when I visited him in '48 he said, "Would you like some of these pictures?" And I told him, "Everything, tanks and troops," and so he gave me a bunch of negatives, and I had some pictures made. I got quite an album of 'em. Do you wish to look at them?
- Jim: Sure. Well, that's nice. And did you stay long in Cherbourg?
- Ivan: No, no, then we moved down to the vicinity, I'm pretty sure it was near Saint-Lo, the Saint-Lo break. That's when General Patton took over.
- Jim: Right.
- Ivan: Jim, I wish you could have seen that field, a monstrous field was just row on row on row of tanks, and we said thank heavens we have air superiority(??), not the Germans, because they sure could have raised havoc, and after all the planes bombed Saint-Lo, he even requested I don't know how many bombers, B-24s, B-17s. They went and bombed the first day, but they didn't furnish the prescribed number of bombers so he, Patton, wouldn't even move until they come along with the right amount of bombers at the end of the next day. And lucky for that the wind was the wrong direction. Each wave of bombers would drop a smoke signal to mark the target, and the wind was blowing the dust and the smoke from the shellings back towards the land. The 70th Tank had to pull back. Rifle companies had to pull back. It was getting so close to them. And they finally got word to the Air Force that they were dropping way behind because of the smoke rolling back. So they got that corrected. But when we jumped off, oh it was just full of craters, you can't hardly imagine, and

yet the bombing of those troops—there it's detailed with some small arms resistance. That's where I found my P-38 pistol [a 9mm pistol developed by Walther as the service pistol of the Wehrmacht, the unified German armed forces].

Jim: Huh!

Ivan: I seen something wrapped in a kind of a blue cloth. I thought that looks like the butt of a pistol sticking out. I thought well, booby traps or nooby traps, here goes. So I had a shoulder holster and carried it all through the war—

Jim: Did you bring it home?

Ivan: And I still got it.

Jim: Oh, good. All right. You were on foot then. You didn't go by truck?

Ivan: We went by 2 ½ ton trucks, and we had a dickens of a time keeping up with Patton. We was cleaning up sniper fire, machine gun fire, small arms resistance behind Patton.

Jim: Did the 4th Division stay in Patton's 3rd Army all the time?

Ivan: Just towards the last. When I left we were with Patton close(??) to Nuremberg, Germany. Yeah, Belgium, Luxembourg, yeah.

Jim: So after Saint-Lo, then where?

Ivan: Ah, well, went through the Hurtgen Forest, the Ardennes, and then into Germany. That Hurtgen Forest was a horrible place. And after—had that campaign taken care of then we were replaced by other divisions. As a matter of fact, though, it seems so when we were on land it was either the "Big Red One," the 1st Division, 4th Division and the 5th Division. And we went for rehabilitation into Wicker, Germany, and there's where we had our supposedly Christmas gifts by mail. They come from home, and did that seem good. Wicker, Germany, and then some of my buddies of the 12th Infantry Division they were in Wicker, Germany, and they held off supposedly a company of Germans for several days, and they finally waved the white flag, and a German officer, this was Larry Schuster's [unintelligible]. He told me he couldn't believe that our troops were so outnumbered by the Germans and such a resistance they still had, and they surrendered. They made them line up against the building, and Larry Schuster said, "Oh boy, maybe here we get a machine gun." And they interrogated the fellows, and they found that he was a cook, and so he done the cooking for them. And this –

- Jim: For the Germans?
- Ivan: Yeah, the German officer said he could be the cook. They weren't prisoners too long. They were liberated, but eventually there you could see the German army was holding back, falling back.
- Jim: What was the matter with the Hurtgen Forest?
- Ivan: How's that?
- Jim: The Hurtgen Forest. What was the problem?
- Ivan: Well, it was a big heavy woods. Mined—a buddy of mine, Eddy Spoonbill(??), I can see him yet—
- Jim: The mines were a problem?
- Ivan: Yeah, anti-personnel mine he stepped on and lost his leg.
- Jim: Those "Shoe"—
- Ivan: "Shoe Mines." [Also called "Schu," "Shu," or "Shoe Box Mine"—small wood box fragmentation mines] Carried him down out of the forest, and that was it for him. Then he ended up when he got stateside in Loganville [Wisconsin]. He got to drinking. After he got a silver service job with a mail route, and he got into fishing, but that got tiresome. He went downtown to "life one," and then a little bit more, and he got addicted, and he finally—oh, he had cirrhosis of the liver. He went down to the Veterans Hospital in Madison. They said they cured him, took care, "Now don't whatever you do go back to drinking." [unintelligible] He was just tempted, and he went back, "Bing!" He was gone. Anyway, that Hurtgen Forest I was sure glad to get out of that. Trees mangled, shelling, artillery the Germans and ours, and mines—they had one of those tanks with the big heavy thing to swap underground to detonate the mines. Then next was the Siegfried Line, September, 1945.
- Jim: 5, 4.
- Ivan: Yeah, '44 that's right. I spent my birthday on the Siegfried Line, September 30th, in a pillbox .
- Jim: With your mortar? [Both laugh] With your mortar?
- Ivan: Yeah, yeah. Still with the mortars. Well, I think about that time I had taken over the job of communication sergeant supplying the forward observers

with the radio batteries and radios, walkie-talkies, and also we had that backpack radio that had greater range.

Jim: Okay.

Ivan: Well, the inci—

Jim: Go ahead.

Ivan: Interesting incident in the Hurtgen Forest was up by the pillboxes, and we looked way down through the woods, and I, one day I says, “Hey, there’s German soldiers down there.” [crying] There was three men, two of them were German soldiers that give up, and the one in the middle was a wounded American they give up to bring him to our lines. I thought that was nice.

Jim: Unusual.

Ivan: You’d be surprised how many prisoners we’d taken, and they were so tickled to give up to the Allies. They didn’t want to go to the Russian front in the Siegfried line; we went back through it at the Battle of the Bulge, ’45 about February or March, in the same area. C company took 91 prisoners and never fired a shot. And they were so tickled. They said “We waited for you a week.” About the SS troopers, a reminder, they said, “You hold that line or else.”

Jim: Yeah, they’ll shoot you.

Ivan: They were the stinkers, those SS boys. Yeah.

Jim: In the Bulge, where were you? In the south end, on the south side?

Ivan: Well, near Malmedy and St. Vith and Prum.

Jim: Oh.

Ivan: We didn’t get to Bastogne. That was 101st.

Jim: Yes.

Ivan: Yeah.

Jim: But you were at Malmedy?

Ivan: Oh, yeah.

- Jim: After or before?
- Ivan: That was before the Battle of the Bulge.
- Jim: The massacre.
- Ivan: Huh?
- Jim: After or before the massacre?
- Ivan: I don't remember for sure if we went through that second time. I remember taking capture a German officer who had come around the hillside. He was evidently lost, and then that was the first time I seen our 90 mm anti-tank weapon that they had on tanks which was supposedly comparable to the German 88. Which was a terrific weapon. Mm.
- Jim: At the time you were there though, the story of the Malmedy massacre you hadn't heard of, is that right?
- Ivan: No, I hadn't heard of it. No.
- Jim: 'Till you got home?
- Ivan: Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's right here in my 4th Division book. All the details, all the company names and fellas and Battle of the Bulge. There is better in the print. In my memory isn't—imprints not so good any more.
- Jim: So where'd you go next then?
- Ivan: Well, we—town after town, we were just going to Nuremberg, Germany and realizing what the German situation was, the war. They had prescribed a series of furloughs to fellows that were eligible for furlough 30 days at home and return eventually to their company. This is a strange thing, too, I think. Out of the company strength of about 250 men from D-Day to Nuremberg, Germany there's only three fellows that never were evacuated from injury, health, or killed. Sergeant Preer(??), Sergeant Anders(??), Sergeant Schwartz, and Sergeant Anders(??) and my name. **[End of Tape 1, Side A]** All three of 'em were thrown in a helmet and stirred up and some G.I. drew those three names, and here we come back. The Liberty Ship and a fellow said, "Schwartz, I hear you're going to go home on a furlough. Would you mind taking a trophy home for me?" Oh, I says, "I'm taking a Model 52 Winchester 22 and also a P-38, and if the officers confiscate these weapons of mine then they probably will yours, too. It's a chance we're all taking." I ended up I think with four German Lugers, and I wanted one so bad, and I, don't know, so many trophies. Honest to Pete, Jim, when I got home in Madison I weighed my duffle bag on a scale. It

weighed 91 pounds. That's how much stuff was in it. But I was so glad. That Statue of Liberty never looked so good. Boy—

Jim: I heard(??) my click.

Ivan: I hope I haven't bumped something.

Jim: No, you're doing fine. You're doin' fine.

Ivan: So, we's about three or six days out of New York Harbor coming back, and the Germans had thrown in the towel, and oh, hooray! The ships tooted their horns and such. And we got to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey across from New York Harbor, and some of the fellows were released, discharged honorably, from service. So then, by the way, our ship when we walked back on it, I forget the number, but a whole group of German prisoners of war who came over to the States to work in our canning factory like they did here at Reedsburg, and they had their tents in Webb Park down here, and each morning the sergeant would 'em over to the canning factory, and how beautiful they looked marching in step. They didn't practice that goose step, just an ordinary step.

Jim: I see.

Ivan: Anyway, my records were kind of goofed up so they gave me the mustering out pay for I think it was about six weeks, and eventually the records caught up with me, and I didn't get discharged 'til the 28th of June '45, and that [unintelligible]. So, Jim, as I say, thanks many time for the Good Lord and thanks to the 8th Air Force and their 81 mm mortars. There's one incident when I took over as Communication Sergeant. It was near the Siegfried Line, and we were up with Capt. Thomas, Lieut. Taylor, and Sgt. Vernon McIntyre, and Emfinger was the jeep driver, and Rigsby, and I said, "Well, we are getting short of radio batteries. Get some wire." Well, Max said, "I'll go down to battalion headquarters and get some." Well, I said, "I'll go along and help you." "Oh no, Sergeant, Lieutenants Taylor and Schwartz. You stay here and run this big radio." Now here is what puzzled me. Riding in that jeep I rode always behind the passenger, front passenger, and McIntyre rode behind the driver. Now why he went and rode where I did, instead of sitting there he'd have been living today.

Jim: Oh!

Ivan: That jeep didn't go oh, 20 yards, "Kaboom!" The land mine, and I could see McIntyre [unintelligible] arm. He was dead when he hit the ground. Jeep was tipped over. Rigsby [chokes up] and [unintelligible] back trouble. I never did find his right arm, and really—

- Jim: And the Lieutenant?
- Ivan: Powerful mine—the road had been windswept by the engineers, but the Germans were smart. They used plastic inside those big box mines, no metal to detect. And the funny thing too, as we looked down there was a [unintelligible] tracks. There was tracks of another vehicle went down, and luckily they straddled those mines that was in a series across the road this way, and just as would have it Emfinger's jeep hit this one.
- Jim: And the Lieutenant?
- Ivan: If it wouldn't been for Lieutenant Taylor I wouldn't be here talking.
- Jim: Right. What happened to him?
- Ivan: Lieutenant Taylor?
- Jim: Yeah. Did the jeep roll on him?
- Ivan: No, he didn't go in the jeep. Emfinger was the driver, Rigsby was the rider, and they were both injured and laying in the ditch.
- Jim: Oh.
- Ivan: Yeah.
- Jim: But they didn't make it.
- Ivan: Yeah, I think they made it, yeah. They got 'em to the hospital and gave 'em treatment with McIntyre. So Captain Towns says "Schwartz, now you gotta take the sergeant of communications." So that was it, and I had a wonderful squad of about five fellows that they'd do anything, but I never expected them to go out and string a line or fix communications with radio to another company unless I went along. I never expected them to do anything that I wouldn't do myself.
- Jim: Was that generally a single mission to string line, or did it take two fellows? Two fellows to string a line?
- Ivan: Ah, it took two guys usually to string a telephone line. C Company—the 1st Battalion Headquarters they used the big drums. I don't know what the size number, that wire was heavy, real heavy. But, ah—
- Jim: Okay.

- Ivan: This was after the Bulge. We were to take a little town way down in a deep valley, and our line was knocked out, and Von(??) Ben Levin, and I went and found it. I called in, clipped the phones on the wire. Called back to Sergeant Wright, "Can you hear me?" "Yeah." I says, "We found the break. We'll patch it. Then we're gonna go on. It's right in a heck of a big crater," and this particular field in the area that we had to go through was out of the woods into a wide big field, and the Germans were way across with their gun emplacements(??). They had excellent optical equipment. They seen everything we did, and Ben and I, in fact when we went down across that field everybody was whitewashed clothes, the jeeps were whitewashed white. 'Cause it was winter and snow. And Ben and I fixed that, spliced it out, and got started, left the crater and started moving down from here to the sidewalk, and "Shoo [whistling sound] boom!"
- Jim: 88.
- Ivan: Hit right exactly in that crater, and it was just, had gotten out of there just in time. And I says, "Ben, to heck with this! Let's get out of here."
- Jim: [Laughs] Start runnin!
- Ivan: "We'll rig a wire on one of those big drums down tonight. Regardless if the darned field is mined we're going to go down through the field and get the wire down to these poor devils down there." They were out of water, out of rations, there was no way you could get it to 'em. And so being the provider, the only communication of the whole battalion, I was awarded the Bronze Star for that. And there was two or three fellows were deceased. [Crying] "Help us." Gave 'em fire, good ones. After, I don't know, Air Force or anti-air artillery took care of the Germans up in that woods we finally moved down on to the little, another little town, and I don't definitely remember too much from then on. But that was just one of the incidents that Ben Levin and I could thank the Lord. Oh, that was—
- Jim: That's close.
- Ivan: Another time in the French hedgerows we had a lot of sniper fire, Germans dug in so much. My friend Ervin Johnson and I had to relieve ourselves, and so we went behind a hedgerow. And I was almost sure that the rifles wouldn't come, and he went through the hedgerow here. We went and walked down and took our packs off, and all of the sudden a machine gun started just mowing the brush off that hedgerow. Boy, did you ever see two guys crawl. Left our darn packs, and I looked back, and here they were just riddling those bags. Now whether that had some happy rifle company boy or a German someone, but there again I was lucky. And [laughs] oh, I guess I can thank my lucky stars time and time again.

Jim: Oh, yes.

Ivan: Yeah. Some thoughts reoccur that get me started on a sentimental disposition. Jim, you'll have to excuse me.

Jim: Doesn't bother me.

Ivan: Sometimes these things are so vivid in my mind they come back so clearly. Some things I should remember that happened a month, a year, or weeks ago, and I forget, but that's the life of the military. Yeah, that was something we walked from D-Day all the way to Cherbourg, every step. And I never could thank our Air Force, the 8th Air Force. Gee, we ran into some resistance, something like tanks or machine guns or something that would warrant a P-47. They'd just make a call back. Fifteen seconds, or fifteen minutes here they'd be "Bzz," flying about four, and they'd spot the target. Then about this time down they'd go. You'd look over and you'd see a big black plume of smoke, "Count your men again, Hitler, another tank blew up." [Jim laughs] They were so good. And this was in France one time and this P-38, I see him coming over the woods low, and he's into sort of a glide and couldn't tell if the plane was hit, and we could see that the pilot had bailed out, but you know how the P-38 with that twin tail boom, he didn't eject high enough, and he got—

Jim: Caught.

Ivan: Caught there, and he tried his auxiliary chute, and that wouldn't open so I watched that plane—

Jim: He went down with it.

Ivan: Go down [crying], crashed, and the bombers that we lost up at Saint-Lo breaks, see them circle around. And then later on in France a P-47 pilot, it was very seldom that I see the P-47's knocked out of commission. His plane was, and he bailed out, and he landed just over our lines, and he picked an old German helmet or something, and was he tickled not just that his life was saved that he landed on our lined but he got a souvenir, and I thought it was something.

Jim: Oh, pretty lucky.

Ivan: Yeah. Well, as I recollect, Jim, I kind of covered it as best I could in detail. You know if you wish to look at that or look at some of the pictures I've got I can get that out.

Jim: I'm not through. We're not through.

Ivan: Sure.

Jim: We're not through.

Ivan: No, no, you're welcome as long—just so we get home before dark.

Jim: [Laughs] Don't worry about that. I got my driver. I don't have to worry about that.

Ivan: Yeah.

Jim: She has to worry about that.

Ivan: Is this the Mrs.?

Jim: Oh, yes.

Mrs. M.: Yes, it is.

Ivan: Well, there's my driver.

Jim: [Laughs] Tell me.

Ivan: Passenger.

Mrs. M.: [to Mrs. Schwartz] Does he tell you how to drive?

Jim: Tell me, did you keep in contact with any men of your regiment or company?

Ivan: After I got home?

Jim: Yes.

Ivan: Jim, you don't mind me calling you Jim. For the first years, three years about or maybe five, I used to hear from, oh, at least a half a dozen of my buddies, and gradually as the years come, next Christmas maybe a couple less, passed on or something, and the last one was Bill Russell of Cambridge, New Jersey. He was our mail orderly and took pictures. The last winter was the first time I never heard from Bill, and I think that something happened. He was the last.

Jim: Did you join any veterans groups?

Ivan: I first joined when I got out in '45, the American Legion, also VFW. I was adjutant in the VFW for a while, and then I went—I was always

interested in the north, so I went up north, and I worked on a resort for ten summers so I didn't keep up my membership. Anyway, when I come back home I rejoined the VFW, a lifetime member, and we have a wonderful post and wonderful fellows and wonderful commander, and the first Tuesday of every month I'd say there's a wonderful dinner prepared for us by the Ladies Auxiliary, \$6.50 and all you can eat family style. And—

Jim: You're in Reedsburg?

Ivan: Right in Reedsburg. It's a new club, 1916 Thurber-Greenwood Post. It's right directly behind the Burger King, if you see that on the east side of town. And it's fun to go down for me. I can't hear the best what the speakers are saying, even with this, but as a buddy of mine said, "Ivan, it isn't necessary to come down for the dinner or hear the speeches. It's to revisit the comrades. There are so many of them."

Jim: [unintelligible]

Ivan: I would say at the last meeting at the tables there was at least 50 fellows.

Jim: Have you been to any 4th Division reunions?

Ivan: No, they seem like they're so far distance I never went. Oh, I've often liked to even kind of retrace some of the steps on D-Day, but that's out. So, I'm just happy to be here. Yeah.

Jim: And what did you do after the war?

Ivan: Well, my brother-in-law was a shoe repairman in Reedsburg, fixin' shoes. And I thought well, I could take advantage of the GI Bill and learn the shoe repairing business which I did, and which was good. But then after a while went by I went north for a while and come back. And I went with my brother painting. We painted for years until '69? Well, somewhere there, I went on my own painting, and I wish I could have went two more years with it. I had arthritis in my legs, I couldn't climb anymore. However, I just painted the west side of my garage a couple weeks ago.

Jim: You didn't suffer any wounds, though?

Ivan: Huh?

Jim: You weren't suffering form any wounds in the war? No wounds. You weren't injured?

- Ivan: No, the only piece of shrapnel I got was in France, a German mortar. We was under German fire. A piece of shrapnel hit me in the heel and never cut the leather. That's the closest I come.
- Jim: Oh. That's pretty good.
- Ivan: That I know of.
- Jim: That's pretty close.
- Ivan: Oh—yeah, there was a case, too, under fire. Somebody had a slit trench, and a guy was in, "I want to make a run for the slit trench." I looked over, and there was a guy, right level to the surface it was filled up. I stayed right where I was—oh, at least from here to the sidewalks. I laid flat on the ground, and a shell came right close to that slit trench, and the top fellow got it.
- Jim: Too high.
- Ivan: He was too high.
- Jim: Yeah. Well, that could have been you, too.
- Ivan: It could have been me. I had that in mind, but somebody beat me to it.
- Jim: It was the luck of the draw.

[End of interview]