

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
CHARLES S. SUSSMAN  
Intelligence Officer, USA, World War II  
1996

OH  
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**Sussman, Charles S.**, (1919- ). Oral History Interview, 1996.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (120 min.) analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (120 min.) analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

### Abstract

Charles S. Sussman, a Jersey City, New Jersey native, discusses his World War II service as an Army intelligence officer with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade and later experiences with the Jewish War Veterans and the Military Order. Sussman enlisted in the New Jersey National Guard, 102<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry-Horse and as a Jewish soldier, talks about being the first minority of any kind in that unit. He describes assembling at the Montgomery Street Armory in New Jersey and receiving World War I weapons and uniforms, basic training at Fort DuPont (Delaware) and maneuvers with wooden trucks and machine guns, cardboard tanks, and broomstick rifles. Sussman tells about Army changes after Pearl Harbor, advances in intelligence technology, reaction of civilians to troop trains, and Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Camp Davis (North Carolina). He speaks of discrimination against Jewish people wanting to be officers and the way he escaped that, duties of an intelligence officer, additional training with British and Canadian forces, and Army life in England. Sussman relates his unit's participation at Normandy, combat experiences in France, interaction with the Belgian underground, and morale of German troops. Sussman details the Antwerp-X Operation (a pre-Battle of the Bulge intelligence operation) including information on troop supply and Brigadier-General Clare H. Armstrong. At the war's end, Sussman was stationed in Ludwigsburg (Germany) and mentions occupation duty in Germany and seeing a small concentration camp. Sussman provides an in-depth discussion of his feelings after the war. He talks about his lack of direction due to length of time he had been gone (1940-1947) and the death or marriage of the majority of his generation. He describes the Jewish War Veterans, a veterans group which did not attempt to pass pro-veteran legislation. He speaks at length about the Military Order, veterans reunions, and trips to Belgium to commemorate the Antwerp-X Operation.

### Biographical Sketch

Sussman (b. March 29, 1919) served with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade during the Antwerp-X Operation. He achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and was honorable discharged from service in 1947.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, August 24, 2002.

Transcription edited by Abigail Miller, 2002.

## Interview Transcript

Mark: Okay. Today's date is July 12, 1996. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, doing an oral history interview this morning with Col. Charles Sussman, a veteran of a very interesting operation in Belgium during World War II. Good morning and thanks for coming in.

Sussman: Good morning. Always pleased to visit my favorite city, Madison.

Mark: Mine too, I guess. Ah, let's start at the top. Why don't you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to your entry into the military.

Sussman: Well, I was born on March 29, 1919, in Jersey City, New Jersey. My father had come to this country in 1898, from Romania, with my mother; settled in Jersey City and he was a farrier, a horse-shoe person. So I grew up exposed to horses and everything connected with horses. It was a pleasant growing-up. I was the youngest of six siblings. Three sisters, two brothers, and myself. And as we matured, of course, the great depression soaked us all up. We were comfortable. And force of circumstance eventually took my father away from horses. When the time came for me to enter college, I did so. The depression was over the land and one thing we grew up with was pride. There were times when I, my friends, my relatives had no money but our clothes were clean and if we didn't have the money for a haircut, our mothers gave us hair cuts, and even the patches on our pants were clean. Now there is a message there but let someone else figure that out. And this pride caused me not to take any money for my college tuition for I worked for the \$450 a year tuition to NYU. In the six years I attended NYU, to a degree in accounting, paying my own way. That was a matter of pride.

Mark: What did you do to earn money?

Sussman: I pumped gas in my father's gas station and I did—he was already out of the horse business. And got paid for it—I used that money to pay my tuition. So the first of the matter of pride for me and a matter—it upsets me when I read of people are very unhappy with the money they get from the government. Hey! No one gave me any money. And if they did, I wouldn't have taken it. I would have pumped gas and gone to college at night and still gotten my degree, but that is another story. I still remember very clearly Germany's invasion of Poland. I know precisely where I was. I remember very clearly the reasons I enlisted. I and my friends, and those kids I grew up with. And why we enlisted. The draft had just been started. Selective Service. And why we would not wait for Selective Service to pick us out.

Mark: Well, let's explore that a little bit. I suppose the question is, why did you join up?

Sussman: I said I was born in 1919, so the period I'm talking about, we were still exposed to the ethics, mores, and morals of World War I. The worst thing that can hang around any one's neck was that he was a draft dodger. Or there are other descriptive terms. We grew up with this. It was kitchen talk. "Don't mention his name. He was a shirker." And, in time, it got to be the worst thing. And when the news pages were full of Selective Service information, I, together with kids I grew up with, we made a decision. No one will ever hook that on our neck. Of course, it never occurred to us that we were going to war. This was an obligation due the government. They wanted us for a year, hey, here we are. But we were going to beat them to it. We would go and enlist and that is why I enlisted.

Mark: And you did?

Sussman; Yes.

Mark: You enlisted in the New Jersey National Guard.

Sussman: Well, yes. For a reason. I had to finish college. I was in my last year of college and we found out if we enlisted, they would take us immediately, but if we enlisted in the National Guard, they were due to federalize some units in four to six months. So whereas we were wearing the uniform, we would be permitted to finish our college and then be federalized and go away as a unit.

Mark: Yea. Now, when I joined the service, forty years later, when you went into the National Guard or the Reserves, you still went to basic training with the Regular military type. Was that your situation? You joined the New Jersey National Guard, what sort of training did you have?

Sussman: No, it wasn't precisely that. I joined, well, let me put it to you this way. In those days we—my generation was a romantic generation. And we still remembered reading history. As history should be taught, not as it is taught today, in many venues. And horses were—nothing was more romantic to me and Jersey had a very romantic unit that went back to the Revolution. It's called the Essex Troop, or more formally, the 102nd Cavalry-Horse. And I am going away for a year, I'll be in a romantic unit. It didn't occur to me that there never had been minorities. This was a society unit. If you were an officer, you had your own batman, you bought your own horse, and no cavalry nags—good horses. And I was probably the first of a minority to ever enlist in peacetime in the 102nd Cavalry-Horse, the Essex Troop. But they took me quick. And shortly thereafter, after I got used to

what this was all about, I ran across other friends who advised me that a new, separate battalion was being formed in Jersey City and they had all enlisted, unbeknownst to me. And wouldn't it be nice if we all went away together. I thought it was a good idea, and I got sick of cleaning out horse stables anyway. I asked my captain. He was glad to get rid of me. He signed the papers and I went away with the 122nd AAA, a separate battalion being formed, and in December 4, 1940, we were federalized and went to—

Mark: You were federalized as the—in the anti-aircraft?

Sussman: As a unit. And everyone started from scratch. The officers, the men, the non-coms. And our weapons and our uniforms were World War I, the pants I wore had 1917 on the waistband. There were no boots, there were puttees and shoes. And the old British-type tin pot helmet. And the weapons were either Lee-Enfields, 1917, or Springfields, 1903. I'll give you my serial number if you want to know it. 20283730. Suh! [laughter]

Mark: So, when it came to being federalized, I mean, where did you go to—where did you—

Sussman: We assembled at an armory in Jersey City, the Montgomery Street Armory, 999 of us marched down Montgomery Street to the Delaware Lackawana Railroad Station on the Hudson River, boarded trains not knowing where we were going, and we wound up at Fort DuPont, Delaware. Fort DuPont was something left over from the Civil War. The Spanish American War, she mounted 12- and 16-inch barbette guns, disappearing guns to protect Delaware Bay, which is another story which you may find interesting. And there is where we did out training, on the DelMarVa Peninsula, Delaware, Virginia, and Maryland. And on our maneuvers we used stove pipes and—there weren't any machine guns, but we improvised. Made our own wooden trucks and cardboard tanks and wood machine guns and in some cases broom rifles. We had fun.

Mark: I was going to ask, once you were federalized, how things perhaps changed for you? Did they become more military? Obviously, you didn't have equipment. In terms of discipline, and those sorts of things, did the Army suddenly become a more serious type of thing?

Sussman: We were probably the best soldiers this army ever saw. Everyone was motivated. Nobody had to do a sales job on us and they were highly intelligent college boys. Certainly no one with less than a high school education. The air of the times was such as you knew your responsibilities, you—this was a romantic time. And we tried. I will say this. On the day the war was declared, we were probably the best

trained artillery unit this army ever saw. With World War I weapons, we would solve problems that the other new-comers later on couldn't do with more advanced equipment or more advanced technology because our people were trained and later on in this discussion I will tell you what the results of those training — that training. We were pleased. By no means was this hardship. In no time, civilian contracts were let and the wooden barracks would be—there would be an empty lot at Fort DuPont and within seven or ten days you had a two-story barracks building. So it wasn't your mother's living room, but it was warm, it was comfortable, it was neat, it was clean, and it was inhabited by some pretty good people.

Mark: And you started in training down there for how long?

Sussman: Well, we reported for duty. I said we were federalized on December 4. I was to be released—I and my group that had enlisted for one year—we had been federalized for one year—were supposed to be released from service on December 4, 1941. We volunteered to spend that weekend to permit others who were our forward troops a last weekend away, and then we would be released on Monday. We volunteered it. On Sunday was Pearl Harbor Day and, in my case, I didn't get home until 1947. That was that.

Mark: Now, Pearl Harbor occurred on that Sunday. What—I assume you recall the event.

Sussman: Oh, yes.

Mark: What was your reaction and those around you? I mean, you were about to get out. You were about to finish your obligation and this changed everything. I'm interested in the mood, the attitude, amongst you and your fellow—

Sussman: We were pretty well aware of events all over the world. I said, this was quite a literate group. College, not less than high school, in any case. So we discussed things. We knew what was going on. Nobody knew what was happening in the Far East. That never occurred to anyone. The mood was, thank goodness we prepared. And there wasn't any hair-pulling. There might have been relief. Because it gave purpose to the year of training. Up to that point, it was all games. We knew our games very well. But it was Pearl Harbor Day. A purpose was affixed to the equation.

Mark: Now, at the time of Pearl Harbor, had you gotten more modern weapons, more modern equipment? Or were you still using the broom sticks?

Sussman: No, no. We were pretty well sold up. I still remember we had gotten a delivery of very early radar equipment. The SCR-268. And it was highly classified and the radar was kept under guard in a far field, always plenty of guards around it, and live ammunition. Which never had to be used. And with that was 3-inch guns which were just new versions of World War II — World War I — weaponry, and training had started on the SCR-268 which was to direct the guns. They had started on the techniques of radar directed gunfire. I, by that time, I was carrying a Browning Automatic Rifle, which was a left-over from World War I. Nothing wrong with it. It killed very efficiently, but it had some things wrong with the general design. The men still carried the Springfield '07. They had gotten rid of the British Enfields left over from the war. The Browning water-cooled machine guns, left over from the war. They were quite efficient. Good shape. Our trucks were the first thing that they really replaced, and we had our full load of trucks, and jeeps were just coming in. We were in pretty good shape. On July 7. Or, December 7, rather.

Mark: And after Pearl Harbor, how did things change for you?

Sussman: Well, there wasn't any time to think. Pearl Harbor Day wasn't over and flat cars started pulling into Fort DuPont. Orders had been received. There were four hundred and some of us who had volunteered to stay over. Five hundred were out on leave. And the four hundred, we had to load a battalion of guns, personal equipment, and what-not on the flat cars, some of that by midnight of December 7 - December 8. We would be going somewhere. We didn't know where. You want a little anecdote?

Mark: Yes. Absolutely.

Sussman: I remember my brother driving down from Jersey City with my mother. They had gotten the news. They knew I would be on the way. So they went over to New York, to a delicatessen—one of my favorite stories—Katz's Delicatessen that still had a sign hanging from World War I: "Send a salami to your boy in the Army." And they bought up all of the salami and baloney and what not, and they had found an old barracks bag and they filled it full up, threw everything in my brother's car, and drove from New York down to Delaware City, Delaware. It's at night, and I got a call from the guard at the gate. We were loading our guns on flat-cars. War had not been declared, but we knew we were off. "There is someone here to see you. Better get out here." I go out there and there is my mother and brother. And we said our goodbyes. I told them I couldn't spend any time. I was busy. "I'll be in touch with you, good bye." And off I take with the barracks bag full of salami and baloneys and hot dogs. When the train finally took off, no one had made provisions for food. I had the only food that was on that

train until we hit Chicago. They had to depend on Red Cross people with coffee and donuts all the way from Delaware to Chicago. But I put a guard on each end of my car, kept everybody out except friends we recognized, that we gave a piece of salami and bread. And we feasted all the way into Chicago where there was a change of trains. But, aside from that little anecdote, which is always a pleasant memory, creates pleasant memories, this business of four hundred people loading sixteen guns on flat-cars, each weighing nine tons. I still remember the weight. And our trucks. And our equipment. And mounting guard, crossing the country in the middle of December. We always had armed guards on the—these were exposed guns with nothing on them except canvas. I remember crossing the Continental Divide. I had guard duty on one of the guns and at the very top of the Continental Divide there is a little town. And the train stops, I guess, to pick up water. And the whole town had turned out with coffee and donuts. It must have been two - three o'clock in the morning. Freezing! It was so cold out there. And a little girl running up. This train puts in at Los Angeles, at the docks. We were told that the smell — get everything off the train and wait. A ship if coming to take us somewhere. The ship never showed up, thank goodness. We were in Ohio when war was declared. Which will tell you something about our state of readiness. And you asked the question about attitude after the war. Well, I only had one attitude. I can only speak for myself. This looked like serious business now, and there was no profit in being a corporal, T-5. I better find out how to become an officer. Well, I did. Was accepted. Entered the AAA officer's school at Camp Davis, North Carolina, Class 30. And graduated the same year.

Mark: Now, this OCS lasted how long?

Sussman: Ninety days.

Mark: And, what sort of training was it? What did they do? What turned you into an officer?

Sussman: Three hundred and seventy-five of us entered that class. Seventy-five graduated. That's for starters. You had to have, in those days, it might have changed—a good background in mathematics. Artillery fire, was, after all, the solution of a mathematical problem. One of established trajectories. With a few more components added to it, such as the flight of the aircraft, the move of the aircraft. And the ability to command, Personal observation of your instructors. Proven ability to command, I suspect. And academic achievement. There were a variety of other courses beside military courses, the military being what it is. Sanitation, first aid, communications, radio electronics, there were a variety of other subjects. And the need of the military for officers.



- Mark: Now, up to this time, you had been in the National Guard.
- Sussman: No, the day I was federalized, I received the discharge from the New Jersey National Guard, and the thanks of the governor, and simultaneously I had another oath and another—
- Mark: You were federalized. You were still serving with other people from your area.
- Sussman: Yes.
- Mark: Okay.
- Sussman: We were federalized which meant that the jurisdiction now has the federal government.
- Mark: But you were still serving with people you knew?
- Sussman: Oh, yes. The units all stayed. That was just a paper thing.
- Mark: So when you went to OCS it was probably a much greater mix of people from different parts of the country?
- Sussman: Or all over the world. All over the world. It was a great experience. And one wonders at the quality of the officers. The quality was, in my experience, my experience, was long and—I could not tell an OCS graduate of these—of this school, I can't speak for any other school—of a West Point graduate. I've seen feats accomplished by OCS people. I've seen West Pointers stuck on staff just to get them out of the way—they were a pain in the neck. That doesn't mean that West Point was turning out bad people. On the contrary, they perhaps at higher levels, they performed better. On the command level, on troop levels, the officers were not that far removed from the soldiers that when it counted there was any difference.
- Mark: So, who was—who went to OCS?
- Sussman: Volunteers.
- Mark: Almost all college, I would imagine. Some who weren't?
- Sussman: I wouldn't know. There may have been some who weren't. It helped to have a degree. I imagine there were others who can do mathematics and perform other functions who never went to college. I just don't know that.

Mark: So you finished OCS. Then what did the army do with you?

Sussman: I'm going to be very blunt. You want me to be blunt? Lay it on you?

Mark: Yea.

Sussman: The early days of the war, if your name ended with a vowel, you had no chance of becoming an officer. Unfortunately. If your name ended with -stein, -goldberg, -or -mann, chances are you were going to have a difficulty. But there was one thing that saved us. And that was that the top ten percent of the graduating class can select his own area, where he is to be sent, with American troops, anywhere in the world. I picked California. That is where I came from. I had made friends there, as long as I had to bust my back to become an officer, send me back to California. I wound up at Camp Hahn, which is outside of Riverside, across from March Field, which is still there. And was assigned to my first unit.

Mark: Which was what?

Sussman: Now the army was a growing thing. I'm a second lieutenant with a new uniform—hadn't the foggiest idea what was expected of me. Told to report to the camp commander, which I did, together with others and some captain gives me papers, says you are the intelligence officer of a regiment to be formed, the 511th. I said, "What rank does it call for?" He said, "Lieutenant-colonel." I said, "This is a second lieutenant." He says. "Get out of here. Go on, there is where they are." Get over there, I find about twenty officers milling around. Finally somebody, a lieutenant-colonel, shows up. Says, "Well, we got an impossible job, so let's do it." And that I liked. But within a month, other orders came down that said the War Department had concluded that regimental formations were passé. We were now a separate battalion. Out come the books. What does a separate battalion do? "And, Sussman, you are the intelligence officer for the battalion." "What is my rank?" "You are a major." "Second lieutenant." "Shut up and do your work." And finally we whipped ourselves into a battalion staff. On a given date, we go down on a rainy night to the train station at Riverside and debark a thousand frightened, scared, hungry people. But my father didn't raise a fool. I had gotten the colonel commanding before we went down there, I said, "These guys are going to come out scared, hungry—probably haven't been fed in two days—let's get some sandwiches and coffee." All the officers went to work and we made hundreds and hundreds of sandwiches, pots and gallons of coffee. We go down on our trucks and pick up a thousand men—oh, my gosh—and they were soaked and hungry and scared. And hadn't the foggiest where they were. We brought them in. And this was the 226th Separate Battalion, which is another story. We fed them, we dried them, we had a chaplain there that had a mass then, from up in New York

State. He had to give lots of them a lot of comfort and relief. From the beds, we had the beds all ready set up for days. Let them get a good night's sleep; there was no reveille the next morning. Which was the smartest thing we ever did. Little story I want to tell you. Those men, still meet, the survivors, and we make, Gertrude and myself make visitations when we can. And they always remember that first night on duty. It paid off because, later on in Europe, there were times when we needed their unreserved loyalty, without question, do what I tell you and shut up. And we got it. So, maximum number came back. And we trained in the desert, Camp Hahn fell off in the Mojave, and we whipped—and again, one of the finest units of its type in the armed forces. It proved itself over and over.

Mark: Now, you said, it's type. What was its type?

Sussman: Anti-aircraft artillery. In a changing world where the technology, I mentioned three-inch radar directed guns. I slipped in before precision detonating fuses. This was high technology. Very high technology. But later on, when they replaced these older weapons with 90 millimeters, ah—we read a lot about the 88 millimeter gun, the Germans—you never hear anything about the American 90 millimeter gun. Which was a far superior weapon, far. Its muzzle velocity would take the turret off a Tiger tank. The three-inch gun couldn't. The Sherman couldn't. So, when necessary, we used our anti-aircraft guns to knock the turrets off the Tigers that were coming in. Then run the guns back to fight the Vengeance [unintelligible], the V-1's. Now, this was advanced technology and yet these kids had to fight their weapons. They were never taught to be anti-tank gunners. But they did, and they were damned good with it. And, a little side story — do you want some anecdotal material? We attended a reunion in Belgium, Gertrude and I, and one day I am told I am to be at a dinner, at the equivalent of their West Point. An artillery school. There is an NATO exercise called Reforager—Reforager was run every year. I come back, and I am given the title, the First Reforager. Talking about the oldest survivor of Antwerp. Somebody comes by and he says, "There is somebody in civilian clothes wants to see you in the bar." So I excuse myself from my table and I go in the bar. There is a gentleman introduces himself as Admiral So-and-So, Commander, Sixth Fleet, Mediterranean. I asked what he was doing up in Belgium. He said, "I came to observe the Reforager exercises." He said, "Let me ask you some questions. We have a problem with the fleet." And, bingo, I said, "Exocet!" He said, "Yes." That is the French missile. And ship-to-ship. Anti-ship missile. And I said, "What do you want with me? I'm out of here forty-five years." He said, "I've always been fascinated with your accuracy. Do you remember some numbers?" I said, "Yes." He said, "At what point did you engage?" I said, "Fifteen thousand yards." He could not believe that a World War II weapon, 90 caliber, engaged at fifteen thousand yards. He said, "When did you destroy?" I said, "Always before four thousand. Between fifteen thousand and

four thousand.” Now, we destroyed 98 - 99% of our targets. Germans never found that out. They hadn’t the vaguest what we were doing. But that is another story. He said, “If you had to make a decision about the Exocets, what would you do?” I said, “I’d go through armory lists and find out what they did with those 90 millimeter guns. They couldn’t have destroyed them all. There must be a few batteries laying around. I’d clean them up and put them on my major vessels. I’d get the old radar we used and have these things radar-directed. And I’d find all of the old precision-detonating fuse I could find. And when you have an incoming Exocet, just let loose with a whole battery of 90’s.” There isn’t an Exocet in the world that could get through that. “Oh,” he said. “Interesting. But you have any idea where they are?” I said, “No, make some. What’s with the big technology? You have the technology. You have the ammunition creating facilities. Do it.” I don’t know what happened. We make visits with numbers of the Navy League. We’re always being invited aboard naval vessels at Fort Lauderdale. And I keep looking for a 90. I don’t see them. That doesn’t mean that they are exposed. But I haven’t read anything about Exocet threats. Possibly since they got the Gatling-type chain machine guns on the small frigates. Which they possibly do to save jobs. A lot more expensive. Where were we?

Mark: I was about to ask you what the function of an intelligence officer was? In an anti-aircraft unit.

Sussman: Just the same as every other intelligence in the world, which was the collection of, the analysis of, and the dissemination of information regarding the enemy and his capabilities. If it is a military unit, there has to be an enemy you are preparing for. And he is the officer who is charged with the collection of information regarding the enemy’s capabilities and intentions. And analyzing it in the light of other information you have and then disseminating it. Keeping it in your hip pocket is no good. Sending that same information out to the interested parties. In my case, dealing with V-1’s, we were the ones who detected the erection of the launch ramps. Nobody knew what it was for. It was analysis of human intelligence, ground intelligence, and aerial intelligence, photography intelligence. And coming to the conclusion, here is a new weapon. And by studying the angle of the ramps, deciding what the target was. All they all pointed to Antwerp. That was the function of an intelligence officer.

Mark: Well, I suppose its time—how long was it till you went over seas? You served together, you trained and—

Sussman: We were shipped over a year after we formed which would bring us to June - July of ‘43. We landed at Liverpool, went to an obscure place, an old British airfield in the Midlands called Blackshore Moor. And we waited. We waited for D-Day, or

something approximated it. Which meant training, training with the Brits, which came in good stead later on. Canadian training, with the Canadians. And keeping ourselves busy. Training. Firing. Taking our weapons out to the coast and firing at towed targets. Rifle training. Camp life can get very boring so we kept ourselves amused. That was about all.

Mark: Now, was this your first trip overseas?

Sussman: It was my first trip overseas.

Mark: I'm not sure that the U. S and Britain are culturally distinctive. There's not that big a cultural gap that you could have going to other countries. But still, it's a different place, a different culture. Did you get off the Post much and did you get to experience England?

Sussman: We were very fortunate in that we were twelve miles from a cultural place called Buxton. Buxton had an excellent symphony hall. It's now spring and summer. No, it isn't spring and summer. Yes. Spring and summer and they played music. It was an absolute delight to spend the weekend up at Buxton. I've walked that twelve miles many times. Slept in the fields for want of anything else just to be up there. With my friends and a bottle of—we made our own liquor, incidentally—which we promptly named Moorish, after Blackshore Moor, the place where we were stationed.

Mark: This was you and some other officers?

Sussman: That's the U. S. Army that had access to medicinal alcohol and fruit juices, being the U. S. Army. Now, the expenditure of medicinal alcohol was quite high. But, it wasn't abused. We had empty bottles. Somebody would arrange for a five gallon can of medicinal alcohol. Nobody would drink their orange juice rations or whatever happened to be on the menu that week. And then we'd mix fifty-fifty alcohol and fruit juices. Go on up to Buxton and lay on the grass and listen to operatic music, symphonic music, whatever.

Mark: Now, I've heard of guys in the South Pacific on lonely islands making their little own distilleries. But in England, it is a little more western-ized.

Sussman: And more sophisticated.

Mark: Was it hard to get alcohol and that sort of thing?

Sussman: No. We had a very fine doctor. A gynecologist from a place in Colorado, name

of—I'm thinking of his name and the town he came from. And a bachelor, as far as I remember. And one who found out where the medical stuff was for keeping medicinal alcohol. Grabbed a jeep one day, trying to requisition, and came back with a couple of five gallon cans. Then he sat on those cans until we had enough orange juice or grapefruit juice stored up, and threatened to cut off the supply to anyone who abused the privilege. And he observed the mixing—it was about fifty-fifty. No one abused it. I was never able to find it. It was just a social way to spend of musical Sunday in wartime England. Others found friends. Made alliances. Some even got married. Many got married. They live in this country today.

Mark: Now, you mentioned that you got there in '43. The invasion was in June, '44.

Sussman: Right.

Mark: As D-Day approached, did your training change? Did the attitudes change? And when the invasion occurred, where were you precisely?

Sussman: All right. I'll tell you that in a moment.

Other Person: Everything all right?

Mark: [to Other Person] We're about to have D-Day. [to Sussman] So I was asking how the existence of your unit had changed up to D-Day, and what happened—

Sussman: We were put on alert—but we had had many alerts that didn't amount to anything. An alert consisted of everyone being restricted to camp. Full loads of ammunition; sometimes twice as much ammunition. But we knew something was up when, in addition to the usual preparations we were issued chemical-impregnated jump suits and these were anti-gas clothing. Now, remember, this is June and it is pretty warm in that part of England—in the Midlands of England—in June, and here we are with these chemically-impregnated—stinking, and they were vile!—anti-bacterial, anti-chemical warfare clothing units. In addition, they took away our gas masks which used to be slung over the shoulder—it was a monstrous thing—got in everybody's way and would swing under one of your armpits. And they gave us a more sensible gas mask and we had to try these on and get them fitted. And if we wore glasses, special glasses were made. We had that done once before. But make sure we had additional glasses. And double loads of ammunition — two bandoleers per person. And it was at that point that we knew this was for real. Several days before what eventually turned out to be D-Day, we quietly packed up. We each had two duffle bags. One was kept in storage in Britain. One went aboard the—

**[End of Tape 1, Side A.]**

--trucks we brought with us. And then, there we were, with our weapons, ready to do whatever we were trained to do. And we boarded our vehicles, and other vehicles showed up—military police provided. We headed south to the coast and where we had seen depots of tanks and depots of ammunition just strung along miles of highway, suddenly we saw no encampments—strings of ammunition, artillery shells, tanks, spare parts, and eventually we came to a small village, the name of which escapes me at the moment. We were told to debark, gave us an empty field and put up your pup tents. We slept in an open field for several days. This might have brought us now to the 5th of June. I am just guessing at this. And we were assigned our ships. Five of these—I guess they were British, LSI's, Landing Ship Infantry. I don't believe the Americans adopted that form of debarkation. In our case, the ship went up on shore, the prow opened up, and out you came. But that would only hold about forty - fifty men. We were putting two hundred and fifty aboard these seagoing monsters. That went up onto the shore but the gangways would drop and you just went down the gangways and walked ashore. Now, we tossed around on the Channel. It was pretty miserable. I guess they didn't need us. And eventually, we went ashore.

Mark: And this is how long after June 6?

Sussman: I am guessing, now, was it three? Eleven o'clock in the afternoon. In the morning.

Mark: [unintelligible]

Other Person: [unintelligible]

Sussman: The furthest south, right underneath Pont du Hoc. Utah. Omaha, either.

Mark: It's in the record somewhere. How long was it from the time you landed there to the time you got into combat?

Sussman: Combat for my type unit was a different thing. What a summer. There was one point where there was machine gun fire on both sides. Our orders were just walk straight ahead and ignore it. Was that combat? I don't know. I never lost a man, myself, in all the time I was in Europe. That is what she was saying. The men remembered that. Others got attached to other units and one of our batteries lost twenty-eight men. I don't know why. But, to take a thousand men inland in that time without losing a single guy, without getting a toe-nail broken, was that combat? I don't know. When was I subjected? I was wounded on the River Maas. In January, 1945. That wasn't combat. I just happened to be somewhere where I

got whacked with shrapnel. And yet I lived for a hundred and fifty-four days under these V-1's. Was that combat? We lost all kinds of—over 4,000 civilians—twenty-eight men of other units. Not of mine. The figures are here. On casualties. We were not subjected.

Mark: But you shot your guns, at some point?

Sussman: Oh, yes. Heavens, yes. I killed a guy in Paris. I was one of the first Americans. It isn't in any book. Where in the—somewhere, and I'm told—I—you have to understand, I had twenty-one trained technicians—intelligence specialists—people rarely knew what I was doing or where I was. My commander always knew. One day he says, he gives me a strip map and he says, "Go into Paris. Here's your orders." "Paris hasn't even fallen. What are you telling me?" "Just do what I tell you. Take your men. Take one two and a half ton truck and one jeep. Load up with ammunition and food. You may have to wait for us." "Okay." I get a strip map. "Take this road. You'll find your way to Paris. Cross the Pont Neuf—the ninth bridge—get to Mont [unintelligible]. Find the University of Paris. Find the Holland House. Clean it out. And just wait for us." He doesn't tell me it's headquarters for the signal corps of the German Army of the West. Obercommandant West. He doesn't tell me that. He didn't even know it. So we find our way into Paris and Paris hadn't fallen. The Americans weren't there. The French weren't there. They were off on another road. But there is gunfire on the other side of the Pont Neuf—over [unintelligible]—the Left Bank. I tell the men to stay put. It is nice and quiet on this side of the River Seine. Let them get to it, whatever they are doing. Shooting themselves. And we go about our business. And we found our way into the University of Paris. Found the Holland House, which was a dormitory. Kicked in the front doors and assigned men to take it floor by floor. Clean out whatever was there. On the third floor—a three story building—I kicked in the front door and there was a German with a pistol right there. Well, I got off the first shot and, goodbye. As an aside, when our youngest son had his—he got married—goes to Paris for a honeymoon. I said, "Here's what I want you to do. Find the Holland House, get up to the third floor—walk up there. You may have to bribe the concierge. Tell him you want to go into that room. Walk straight ahead and rub your hand on the plaster. And you'll find an indentation." I remember the bullet going through the sucker and knocking the plaster off behind him. He did. But that is neither here nor there. Was that combat? I don't know. It was followed by some of the best drinking and orgies I've ever observed. But, combat, was Belgium. And that was it. I can tell you all about that.

Mark: Sure. I want to wait for that whole thing. You had to get from Normandy to Belgium first, and it sounds as though you had some fairly interesting experiences



along the way as well. So, we've discussed what an intelligence officer does. Now that we are in Europe, why don't you tell me a little bit about how you performed out there. You described this operation in Paris. What—there was an intelligence analysis system. I am sure you had to read maps and report, but it sounds like you also went out in the field, you had to take a look at something.

Sussman: Right. If I can—let's go back. I left out one—this is anecdotal. Let's tell the whole story and my experiences with like senior officers. We're up in Boston—my troops, ready to board a transport to go across to where we were going. And as we were marching out to our transport, I later found out—well, the old Mount Vernon—a passenger ship—which had not even gone through conversion stages to a troop ship. They took the name Independence, I believe. It was the Mount Vernon. Two MP's grab me, "Lieutenant Sussman?" "Yes." "Come with us." "Hey, this thing on my back?" "Drop it here." They dropped off an MP to watch my weapons and whatever I was carrying. They threw me into a staff car—we used to call them staff cars in those days—they take me to downtown Boston, to the Federal Reserve Bank. March me in to an officer who's got a potato sack. Still said Idaho on it. He says here is \$50,000 in \$5 bills. "What am I supposed to do with that?" Every man on that ship is to get a \$5 partial pay. You will be boarded at your point of destination by a finance officer. You will account to him for the \$50,000. Payroll forms in good order. The usual payroll forms." I said, "What authority have I got?" He said, "You can issue any order you want in the name of the master of the vessel." "Any orders?" "Yes." This is Geerheiser at his worst. If I am going down, he is going with me. Okay, there I come. Everybody is on the ship and there I am with \$50,000 in a potato sack. I told them marines, "You are in my territory. Carry my stuff up on that deck." And they did. The captain is there greeting me. "What are your first orders?" "I want a big room down as close to that drive shaft as you put me. I want a safe with a combination. I want a two-man marine detail, armed, weapons, day and night, outside my door. I want a cot. I want this and that. I want a list of every finance officer aboard this vessel. In addition to, I want a manifest of every trooper, every person on this ship. I want that in twelve hours." I had it. An eagle colonel comes down, furious. "What is the meaning of this?" "Sir, you are a finance colonel. Here are my orders, which I am now transmitting to you." He was going to court-martial me. "Let's go talk to the captain. Tell him you are going to court-martial me. Won't do you any good. Just help me do this job." We were boarded in Liverpool by a drunken major. This guy was staggering. How he got out of that little thing. He comes up ready to crucify somebody. But every single nickel was accounted for. And the payrolls and the finance colonel congratulated me for just a wonderful experience. "Thank you." And that major, he says, the first vessel came into Liverpool that year that he hadn't nailed the guy. Well, that was just anecdotal. Now, where were we?

- Mark: Oh, I was asking about how you gathered the intelligence. You said in the report that you had to go out in the field.
- Sussman: Okay. Average day. We were in a static position. We obviously had targets or anticipated targets. I'd find out where the nearest—or where our—we were always reporting to somebody at brigade level or division level and army level. I marched into SHAEF Headquarters—Supreme Headquarters—looking for Supreme Headquarters G-2. I couldn't get what I wanted anywhere else. I got my first couple of orders. To find out the local disposition, where they were centered, what the capabilities, any other transverse, what were the last infantry actions, who is on my left, who is on my right. Let me have a battle plan. And I wanted an order of battle. An old time. Order of battle, the composition of our local troops, of friendly troops, and the enemy troops, as we do. If we were in a position where there were heavy enemy dispositions in the front or on the sides, I'd ask for photo interpretation. When were the last photographs made? And more than once I asked that special pin point locations be—photographs be taken and brought back to me. Specially when our troops were passing through. Setting up our guns, our 3-Section. Which was responsible for setting up our guns. We had sixteen big, heavy guns. You just don't throw them on the ground and say, "Fire." They have to form arcs of fire. And we have to know what the enemy's capabilities are. Well, we did some swapping of information between units in front and rear, and on the sides. And that was just part of it. Sometimes you'd just go out in the field and observe. Human intelligence has always been part of it. Sometimes you'd send a sergeant out, but if it was dangerous work, you'd go yourself.
- Mark: This would be behind the enemy lines?
- Sussman: Well, it's an amazing thing. Anecdotally, we ran across a woman in 1984 who was a dear, dear friend of ours. [Unintelligible] She was a member of the Belgian secret army. She always worked fifteen - twenty miles behind the Germans and supplied us with date. Her name is Gilbertte—well, her husband, he's dead. Gilberte Lenair. I can see her to this day, very distinguished, wonderful, wonderful. Holding a conversation, she said, "You know this little girl, eighteen years old, got shot on your doorstep?" [Unintelligible] Lifts up her dress and there's—I said, "I knew some skinny little rat kid caught a packet on our steps." Had this knee. We see her till this day. There is a bonding that takes place. Now, her work was behind the—she was at Bastogne—fifteen miles behind the Germans, radioing dispositions, capabilities, troop strength, armor strength, and what direction they were heading in. She's in the books.
- Mark: So, the Underground, the French and the Belgian. They were very helpful.

- Sussman: I can speak nothing about the French. They never helped me. The Belgian, we had a saying, “The Belgians never forget. The French never remember.” One anecdote I can tell you—you don’t want to hear this.
- Mark: What makes you think I don’t want to hear it?
- Sussman: We’ll have to get into that later. No, I can speak from experience that the Belgians—well, all my speeches I make overseas, I always laud the Belgian working man because he had as much to do with the success over there as did the Allied forces. And he died in huge numbers. And I haven’t had that experience with the French. Maybe they did die in huge numbers or in few numbers. I have no way of knowing.
- Mark: The side effects of the front line [**There is a stretch of silence on the tape here.**] You were out gathering intelligence. Now, in the period between D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge I am interested in what your assessment was of the German war capability—what did they do well? What was most feared? What sorts of things could you exploit? Weaknesses? Could you exploit some? In general, what was your assessment of the German capabilities pre-Bulge.
- Sussman: You want to remember that Germans were continuously in a defensive posture. And it’s almost axiomatic that troops on the offensive should have a multiple of capabilities vis-s-vis the troops on the defensive. I’ve heard people say three to one, four to one, five to one, ten to one, whatever. I don’t know how much, but it takes a great deal more strength on the offensive than it does on the defensive. The Germans were superbly equipped. Their tanks were so superior to our tanks until the 90 millimeter anti-aircraft guns started knocking their turrets off. Again, I don’t know why it isn’t lauded as much—possibly because we never had that many. A decision was made just to manufacture so many whereas the entire German national effort went into making the 88 guns.
- Mark: I suppose it could just be that these 88's were shooting at Americans and you’re telling the story.
- Sussman: I don’t know, but those of us who have observed the 88 had nothing but admiration for it. For its capabilities. And the German is a war-maker. He has a history. He’s got determination. I don’t think the average German soldier—I know the average German soldier didn’t have a political bone in his body. It was—
- Mark: I was going to ask you if you got a sense of morale. I mean, troop positions and equipment capabilities are one thing but did you get a sense of how the German army functioned?

- Sussman: They made superb use of their defensive positions. I think whatever efficiencies existed in the higher ranks. The German non-com is not like the American non-com.
- Mark: In what sense?
- Sussman: If a situation arose—this is a universal statement—if a situation arose that he could not reach in his memory or his training to solve it, it did not get solved. Especially if the situation called for a unique solution. He would not employ the unique solution without the approval of his superior.
- Mark: This is the German soldier, I mean?
- Sussman: The German soldier. Now, you can stretch this all the way back to D-Day. Germans had reserve divisions but some political nut said, “Don’t wake me up. I’m going to sleep. And don’t move the reserves without my permission.” We had a very firm grasp on the beach heads before they finally work up to the fact that they were no longer on the beach—they were ten, fifteen miles inland. And the reserves were getting the heck beat out of them by air supremacy. Now, I suspect in the reverse position, American officers would have said, “Screw this. Put those reserves in there. I’ll worry about the consequences later.” That’s—Germany was defeated at that moment. Hitler slept through the invasion. I believe every word of that because that is typical of the Germans. The American soldier, in combat, when he is motivated, he is unbeatable. Absolutely unbeatable. But he has to be motivated. I’m convinced there never was a day—a twenty-four hour period—during the Viet Nam War we could not have ended that war without using A-bombs. That we could not have ended that war if we had the political will and if the soldiers were so motivated, but whoever made that political decision, that the following targets had to be approved in Washington, never read Von Klauswitz. Or read anything else, either.
- Mark: I suppose it is time to get to the Antwerp-X Operation. Why don’t you just describe how this all came about.
- Sussman: Okay. Now, Paris has fallen. I’m ready to enjoy this war. You get assigned to the air defense of Paris. Germans still had a few bombers around and quite a few fighters and they would take stabs at Paris every now and then. Didn’t bother anybody. One day I get a message, to report back to the Normandy coast to reinforce other intelligence units. The Germans on the Channel Islands had been by-passed. They were raiding the mainland for food. Deter them, any way. It sounded reasonable, so I round up my men and we jump in our trucks and back to

Cherbourg. Fort de Chercevo—I get to Fort de Chercevo—an old Napoleonic era place—and there is another—I’m there four or five days waiting for instructions—and another message comes. Head north rapidly into Belgium. Find a town called Kierburger, report to the commanding general for a special mission. So I round up my troops, borrow enough food for two or three days. Load a march. Extra ammunition. And off we go. I spent the first night in Rouen, in the church—the old beat-up church there. The British had it. Bedded the men down for four hours. And it was there I came across—although I had heard it before—a quaint British expression. British lady soldiers doing household things there, being wakened about four o’clock by some beauty who said, “Sir, I’ve been told to knock you up at four o’clock.” I thought that was very British. Hey, Curfee, that means wake-up. I even remember the rotten breakfast. Corned beef on stale bread and hot tea. But, it got us going and that evening found us 180 miles - 200 miles further north into Belgium. I had stumbled on Kierburger, which wasn’t even on the maps. Found General Claire H. Armstrong, who had been waiting for me. He knew I was on the way. He had asked for me. Never knew me. That is how it came, from Paris diversion—send me into Cherbourg in case anyone was trying to keep track of me. On up to Kierburger. It was there when I was briefed I found out — now it is September. Antwerp had fallen September 4. There was still fighting going on. Ground fighting. But intelligence had discovered the construction of ramps. It is now September, ‘44. East of Antwerp in German occupied territory, and north in Holland. The Skjeldt River comes down there. They were building these ramps. So I worked with intelligence trying to figure out what the devil — see, we got to get some better pictures of this and, if possible, send in some ground people to get some human intelligence. That didn’t work out because you had the Skjeldt River there. And it didn’t make sense. And they finally came to the conclusion that Antwerp was about to be subjected to a new type of bombardment. What had happened was this. The British and the Canadians shot up a hundred and fifty miles up the coast—a brilliant dash—and grabbed Antwerp. Antwerp was the second or third largest port on the continent. And the logistic situation was, there were seven armies in the field being supplied across the beaches. Every port on the Atlantic coast and most of them on the Mediterranean had been destroyed by the Germans. Winter was coming. Beaches could not be used because of the storms. Meaning—and the air could not supply seven armies in the field. No way. That’s when the Canadians—with a brilliant march — almost over night, there they are with the third biggest port, 180 miles of wharves, 300 million gallon storage capacity PLO—petroleum oil lubricants— heavy lifts. All intact. Hitler must have awakened and had nightmares and he said to his planners, “We must destroy Antwerp. Let us now start preparing an offensive.” And he calls in Von Runstead—a really good tactician—and they made the plans for the Battle of the Bulge, the target of which was Antwerp. The secondary mission was to split the Allies, the British getting stuck up north, no

way to supply them. And the Americans—So, what do we do. Called in the best artillery officer they had—Claire H. Armstrong—became a dear friend of mine. Claire Armstrong was told, “Anything you want, anything you need. We have an idea these are rockets.” Never used in warfare on this scale, but by the number of ramps they were building, this was going to be one hell of a show. They knew nothing about the V-2’s against who there would be no defense. They were ballistic—straight up and straight down, 3,000 miles an hour. Forget it. So, he knew of some troops — my own included—called us all up there and said, “This is what we got to do.” I’ve called in 20,000 anti-aircraft people. We’re going to set up arcs of fire in the direction of the ramps. And as these ramps changed, we will have daily photo-interpretation. We’ll change these arcs. We called in just about everything the British can spare, the Polish can spare, and we had 22,000 troops.” Here are the defensive arcs. I got pictures on different days. And the units that manned those arcs. You’ll see it on page after page. And on October 4, I believe, I may be wrong on the date. It’s in that little book. The first V-1’s approached and we destroyed them. Now, it was given—

Mark: How many came?

Sussman: Five thousand were fired and 288 got through us. There was—now—here—

Mark: How did you discover they were coming?

Sussman: There was radar up front. We had ground observers close to the Skjeldt. Our intelligence people. Sometimes I’d be up there, observing the firing. Now the Germans never had any intelligence about the effects. They thought they had really squelched. That is why the Top Secret designation. To keep them off balance, never knowing what the results of these firings were. Now, there was an eight-mile bulls-eye and that encompassed the entire pier area. Our job was to keep them out of the eight-miles. They splashed down anywhere else, even—we had them coming on top of our heads, killing our people. That was not counted as a hit. Those we kept out of the eight-mile area. With the result there never was one day of work lost on the piers. There was never one ship hit while loading or unloading, and that’s where my admiration of Belgians came from. They reported to work, they dug out trenches, they fed us, they washed our clothes, and they died, something like 4,000 or 5,000 of them died. And meanwhile we are running around trying to get as much intelligence as possible on the Germans’ intentions. And most of that came from photo-interpretation and the shifting of—there was no good bombing those ramps, they were highly mobile. You’d knock it out, they had a bunch of them in reserve; they’d put up a new one.

Mark: Still, you stopped a lot of them but a lot of them got through.

Sussman: Two hundred and eighty-eight.

Mark: So, over a hundred and fifty-four day span, and this is still several rockets a day. And what time would they fire?

Sussman: Day and night.

Mark: There was no set pattern?

Sussman: Day and night. I think you'll find a quotation. Ninety-seven point eight per cent were destroyed. There never was an artillery operation that can even come close to it.

Mark: And some did get through?

Sussman: They got through.

Mark: And it didn't have a major effect on the shipping?

Sussman: It had no effect. As long as they got in the eight-mile section. I said, not one ever hit a pier. It may have gone into the water in the eight-mile section. It may have hit some railroad tracks that way, or a little town this way, but not one single day was ever lost supplying the troops.

Mark: That is pretty good shooting, I must say.

Sussman: Well, you want to read something? This was a big secret. To get anything out of the British, like, read this paragraph where my finger is. There is another quotation from Sandy Duncan, their British Minister of Supply. And they were beside themselves, absolutely beside themselves. They couldn't believe it. This was all Armstrong. That's why you go over to Antwerp today, there is a room over there, a five hundred year old Stadhurst, dedicated to Claire Armstrong who was given the name of the Savior of Antwerp. He is revered. And there is a life-size bust of him on a wooden plenum, much other memorabilia, and a great big bronze plaque paid for by Eisenhower out of his pocket, reciting what went on and how much the conclusion of the war was due to that man's efforts. And underneath the statue is a showcase window that was built into the plenum where my book, "The Story of Antwerp-X," in leather and gold is exhibited. So they take a different view of it over there. I was a region commander of the Military Order—you have a chapter here in Madison—and for the first time in the history of the Military Order, which goes back to 1920, an entire city was honored by

their getting—being awarded—a decoration, the Patrick Henry Medallion—that was through my efforts. And this is a medal which is awarded for patriotic achievement. And in this case, the entire governing body of the Military Order voted to present the medal to the city of Antwerp. Reciting in there, the reason being their stubbornness of the people.

Mark: So the V-2's stopped coming when?

Sussman: The V-2's came down—this was in intricate job—they had production difficulties. If they could have turned out in the same quantity as the V-1's, this war would have had a—perhaps—a different turn. It certainly would have extended the war. They were still firing V-2's January or February. The war ended in May. Sporadically, hither and yon, every once in a while they would take a punch at London. But the thing basically ended in March. The operation—

Mark: Once the Americans—once the Allied troops pushed further towards Germany. So, when the Battle of the Bulge was going on, as you mentioned, the target wasn't Antwerp. I assume you were aware that they were coming, or weren't you?

Sussman: Who is they?

Mark: Germans. They were heading in that direction. You knew that the battle was going on.

Sussman: We were a part of the Battle of the Bulge. We knew, living there, that we were the target. We'd be out on infantry patrols, we'd put in our time doing our thing with the rockets, and then have to find the strength for a few more hours to get out there. We had fire fights. We were attacked bitterly on New Year's Day, 1945, they destroyed our—many—they caught 150 aircraft on the ground. They were dropping paratroopers all over the place. We had the distinct joy of being personal friends with a marquess, a lady, who was the owner, the widow of the owner of the hotel that was our headquarters, and she had built for her the most magnificent homes you ever wanted to see outside my old headquarters building, the [unintelligible] Hotel. And Gertrude and I were visiting there, and I said, "Gertrude, where I am standing, fifty years ago I was on patrol, and German paratroopers had dropped in this area. And I was told finally, get them out of here. Right here, we stood at that spot. So, this was going on all the time. We were never that far. The Skjeldt River, you could toss rocks across it. Germans were over there long after we arrived. Tactically, it made no sense for them to lose a lot of men crossing the river, the Maas. So, in addition to this, infantry work was a good part of our work. Didn't look forward to it, but it had to be done. Somebody had to do it.



Mark: As the Allied armies pushed the Germans into Germany, and getting into the spring of 1945, were you still in Antwerp, or did you go—

Sussman: Oh, no. Let me—we knew that this thing had come to the end. General called us in and said, goodbye and get on with our work. And he told me I was to join another brigade. We were the 50th Brigade. The 51st Brigade was a subordinate unit to us. Join them. They now got to become infantrymen. Just do your thing there. Report to so-and-so. I'll catch up with you another time, general. And off we went. Zingo, into Germany. I wound up at the end of the war at Beruit, on the Czech border. A lot of interesting experiences all the way in. Then I came back to Ludwigsburg, and stayed in one spot until the time came to go home.

Mark: Then, as you got into Germany, what did you see and what did you find?

Sussman: The roads were crowded with refugees. Every which way kind. I mean, by the hundreds, by the thousands, by the tens of thousands. Ludwigsburg, going, two interesting things happened to me. One, I had gotten orders that there was a castle along this highway. Go in their, take it, secure it, kick the inhabitants out, and secure the building. They didn't tell me it housed the biggest library of pornography in the western world. So, we did that. Got up there. Some retainers, pushed them out of the way. Found the madam of the house. Good looking woman. Gave her one hour to pack up her ditty bag and get out of there. Spread my men around the place and told them to secure this place. Shoot anybody that tries to cross that fence. An hour later, I go back, she is dead, laying on the bed. She took poison. And eventually military government came up and they relieved us. We went into Ludwigsburg and nobody said there was a small concentration camp there. There were dead bodies thrown—this was like a holding area for one of the bigger ones. And didn't endear the local population. This was right in town. They had to know what was going on there. But, I might say this, my own personal opinion is, and nothing I have seen has made it change. The war time Germans that I've met, one of our politicians at the time said, the German is either at your knees or at your throat. Nothing I've seen can change that opinion. If they were at your throat, you were dead. If they were at your knees, they were begging for something. I never did worry about the Russians, having seen their people, and we seen any number, tens of thousands of Russians left between Paris and Normandy, they had been working the people. They were pretty miserable things. And they were short, they didn't look like soldiers. They were supposed to be PW's. I couldn't see it. They were just pretty miserable, hungry, scared people. Nothing to be afraid of. All during the Cold War period, only the A-bomb bothered me. But, as people, never bothered me. They never bothered me. And their problems.

Mark: So, when the war in Europe ended, as you mentioned, what was the burg?

Sussman: Ludwigsburg. Ludwigsburg, a small town in the Schwartzwold, the Black Forest, it was relatively untouched by the war. The only terrible thing I saw there was the small concentration camp. I've got two photos of—I stopped taking pictures—

Mark: Yea, when you say small, I mean, on what scale?

Sussman: As I recall, about 15-20,000. It wasn't a metropolis.

**[End of Tape 1, Side B]**

Mark: And who was in this concentration camp?

Sussman: Jews. Jews, Russians, not too many of any particular group. It was obviously a place where they held them until they could find room somewhere else, up in Poland. It wasn't a prison as we would build it. Holding camp. Barbed wire fences, primitive housing.

Mark: It wasn't the mad killing facility like—

Sussman: No, it was a holding place. I suspect any killing that took place there was an occasional gun shot.

Mark: And you stayed on in Germany, occupation duty?

Sussman: I came back in, I think it was January of '47.

Mark: That was a good chunk of time to have been—

Sussman: What happened was, General Armstrong became Chief of Historical Section - SHAEF. Supreme Headquarters. He often told me that he aspired to become a military attache to Belgium after the war. And he had called me. I just didn't know. I was at sixes and sevens. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I had old parents I hadn't seen in many years. I knew my generation was either married or dead, or moved away. I'd be coming back to a place I didn't particularly care for. And I found every reason for not going back. Until he called me, General Armstrong, one day, and said, "Sussman, I see your name on orders. You are going home." "Thank you for calling me." He said, "I don't want you to go." "Why not?" He said, "Well, you know, Chief of Historical Section - SHAEF, remember I used to tell you I want to be moved to Attache - Belgium?" "Yea." He

says, “I’m being named Military Attache—Belgium. I want you with me. You know where a lot of bodies are buried.” “Well,” I said, “That takes of Claire A. What happens to Charlie S?” This is the way we used to speak. He said, “How high do you want to go?” Now he had me hung on a hook. I said, “Do I have to make up my mind now?” He said, “No.” Take a couple of months. Go home, see your people. Come back here. Your job is waiting for you. “Thank you,” and, sure enough, I’m on a troop ship out of Le Havre, the [unintelligible]. I got home, couldn’t believe that. I kept my promise. He eventually finished his tour as Military Attache and became Chief of Artillery, Ninth Division, in Texas. Got cancer. No, before he got the cancer, he retired. Bought or rented a castle in the Canary Islands. Used to write to me begging me to come on over so we could fight the war again. And I kept promising him I’d come. Next thing I heard, he was in Walter Reed with cancer. Then he died. And his wife followed shortly thereafter. Surprisingly enough, his son, Dewitt Armstrong, he’s a retired army general, corresponds with me. He has his father’s diaries and, in fact, he didn’t come to Belgium. He came and he’s got a grandson that is Claire. He’s an active duty major and we met him in Belgium. So, we are still familiar with the family.

Mark: So, after the war?

Sussman: After the war, I stumbled around. I came back to New Jersey. Took a refresher course at NYU. Went into the practice of accounting. I was bored to death. Went into another business. Started a mortgage banking business, together with a lawyer friend. Eventually we were in twenty-eight states and in 1969 I ran into Gertrude for the second time. She had become a widow. Gordy was already in college, here in Wisconsin. ‘70? What did I say? One year. And we were married in ‘71. Five boys.

Mark: I want to talk briefly about veterans benefits and that sort of thing. When you went back to school, even for that brief time, you would have been eligible for the GI Bill. Did you use it?

Sussman: I don’t remember ever reaching out for anything. It is possible I signed some form title, you know. The amount of dollars and cents, if they applied at all, tell you I never even reported this thing. For fear it would screw up my—if I decided to leave the service—there never was a source of information you could get all your questions answered.

Mark: So the home loan and all that kind of thing, you didn’t spell yourself for?

Sussman: Now, hold on. You just mentioned something. My first house had a GI mortgage. It was the difference between 4.5% interest and maybe 5.5% interest. It was a

\$19,000 loan in 1947. Which was paid back. I really got nothing. I kind of used the government credit to ensure mine.

Mark: Veterans organizations and reunions, and those kinds of things—

Sussman: Yes.

Mark: I want to save reunions to the last. I want to talk first about veterans organizations. For example, the big one, VFW and American Legion and so forth. Did you ever join any of these groups?

Sussman: I—a relative of mine was one of the founders of the Jewish War Veterans - United States. And he signed me up somewhere, in 1943. His name is J. George Fredmen, he was of the generation of Fiorello Laguardia, and Franklin Roosevelt. He marched in New York City against the Nazis in the 1930's.

Mark: So you were still in the service at the time?

Sussman: I was in college at the time. I was in the service when he signed me up.

Mark: That was what I meant.

Sussman: Post 10, Jewish War Veterans, Jersey City, New Jersey. In fact, I still have his [unintelligible] he sent me, signed by the then national commander, J. George Fredman, my brother-in-law's brother. Now, since then, at one time of another, I joined the American Legion. Didn't feel like—in fact, I didn't drink beer, so I had—

Mark: That seemed to be the biggest activity?

Sussman: That, and what can we squeeze out of the government? What representative should we threaten if he doesn't pass each bill?

Mark: So they never appealed to you?

Sussman: They didn't because they violated a basic philosophical moral principle of mine. I didn't wear a uniform for what I could get out of it.

Mark: And the Jewish War Veterans didn't do that?

Sussman: They were more interested in Israel, as an ally of the United States. They, as far as I know, they are always tailing somebody. The Veterans of Foreign Wars would

sponsor some legislation—I don't know of any of that legislation that they sponsor that they join in with the American Legion, or Catholic War Veterans. When something would come down the pike, that they felt met their requirements, I still—until I ran across the Military Order whose basic philosophy is that it is better to serve than to be served, and everything else stems from that. Hey, this is my thing.

Mark: I want to get to that group in just one second. I have one more question about the Jewish War Veterans.

Sussman: Sure.

Mark: When you got back, were you—you were signed up. When you got back, were you active? Did you go to meetings?

Sussman: Yes, I went to many meetings. For one thing, we suffered casualties. We knew the people who died. Post 10, I mentioned, also had another name, the name of one of our deceased. That was a young pilot who died in the North Sea. The Grover Post. A young pilot, one of the first in the war in Europe, shot down over the Baltic in a fighter plane, and they named the post after him. Grover Post 10. I knew him. I know others. And I was looking for things to do. Remember, I was a bachelor. Everything had fallen apart, gone dead, and whatever. So it was a monthly thing to go up there and plan but after a while, I guess, like many organizations, the thing takes a political turn. I want to be state chairman. What do I have to do? Well, work. Will you back me? No. Well, maybe. It stopped being a military thing.

Mark: In the Military Order, when did you get involved with them, and how are they different from the other veterans organizations?

Sussman: All right. We retired to Boca Raton. An old commander of mine, Colonel George Turner, was quite a well-to-do person, had retired and bought a place in Boca Raton. And he said, "When you are ready to retire, you come down to Boca Raton. That is the place for us. So, when time came for us to retire, I got ahold of George Turner. "Well, we're ready." "Come on down." And after we had moved down and arranged for our place, he said, "I'm going to introduce you to an elite organization, some of the greatest guys I know." "Fine." The local chapter of the Military Order, which had some great guys he was still friendly with. And what appealed to me were two things. First, political discussion was completely taboo. Partisan politics. Discussions of legislation, except if they might affect the security of the United States, taboo. In other words, what do I get out of it? Forget it. That was deadly. Forget it. And the third is, civic activities, such as parades, marches, monuments. And something called Youth Leadership. Which was being

conducted at that time—or starting to be conducted at that time — at a college in St. Augustine, Florida. Flagler College. We became charter members of that activity and instructors, once a year, and that was an activity that particularly appealed to me and it took me all over the state. Not necessarily the brightest, but kids—eleventh grade kids—who have exhibited leadership potential by their activities observed by their teachers. Civic activities, and social activities. And take them for four days to Flagler College and expose them to very, very intensive indoctrination by leaders of industry, professions, the military, and government. We had some pretty big people come down and talk to these kids. And the purpose was not to change them but to reinforce and develop their natural inclinations, and we turned loose some great kids. Until it reached the point where a kid has his—and we only took 105 in one year. He has this on his resume. And he wants to go to one of the military academies, it is a big step forward. Bought you college; a big step forward. We’ve now changed around. So many applicants that we now go by counties. We just completed Dade County and Palm Beach County. The authorities pleading with us, “Please, hold your classes more often.” These are voluntary things. So this is why we’re active.

Mark: And this particular program is very important to you, personally.

Sussman: Yea. Because it gives meaning to why we are together. I’ve often heard the expression. “Hey, if it’s different than this, then I’ll learn how to drink beer and join the American Legion.” Now it has meaning.

Mark: If I am wrong, correct me, but you joined this group after you moved to Florida?

Sussman: Yea, shortly.

Mark: Which was?

Sussman: ‘81.

Mark: So you were later on in your years before you got involved in this organization that suited your mind-set?

Sussman: Later on? You mean, more mature.

Mark: That’s what I mean. Thanks for correcting me.

Sussman: I will never admit to it being later on. Anyway, yea.

Mark: That is very typical.

- Sussman: We have many other activities. We get in our uniforms and—I was wearing my Army Navy Club shirt. Social organization. The greatest thing in the world.
- Mark: Now, if I am not mistaken, this organization is one of former army officers. Or is it just military officers?
- Sussman: No, its all services, including Coast Guard, National Aviation and Aeronautics people.
- Mark: Officers.
- Sussman: Officers and warrant officers. And their descendants.
- Mark: Have you got ten, maybe fifteen minutes left? And you seemed to wax poetic about some of your reunions. And how you met with some of these men after the war. And what these relationships—
- Sussman: [Unintelligible] Over the years, I made half-hearted attempts to locate some of the guys and was never successful. One day, my phone rings and a voice gets on and says, “This is George Blake.” I haven’t heard this voice in half a century. One of my officers. “George! Where are you?” He had a summer home—a winter home half way up the state in a place called Vero Beach. “George, for Pete’s sake, how did you find me?” “We’ve been looking for you for years. I ran across Pete Sweers”—that’s another story—“and he told me he saw you in Belgium.” I said, “That’s right.” We made a date to get together. The hugging and the kissing and the carrying on. We became dear friends till he died last year. He was an engineer, out of Pittsburgh. Floated between Florida and Pittsburgh. Mentioned Pete Sweers. 1989, and we were in Belgium. Every five years the government called me in, “Will you represent the United States at the ceremonies?” “Of course.” We go over there and somebody comes running over to me and says, “Sussman! You’re dead!” “Nah, you’re dead, Pete.” And the hugging and the kissing. What happened, this one night, we were under intense bombardment. Pete Sweers was a—I’m trying to remember—either a gun commander or a platoon leader, and we lost one of our guns. They don’t answer our radio or our wire. Pete says, “I’ll take a couple of men and we’ll go out and see if we can find out what happened. We knew what happened. We were under paratroop attack. Altenjager, in German. That was the last we saw of Pete. Until I saw him in Belgium in 1989. So, after the greeting—you’re dead, you’re dead—“What happened to you?” “You wouldn’t believe it.” “Try me.” He takes his men out and they find the guns. Crew had been wiped out and the gun had been spiked. The Germans were still there. They take him and his two men prisoners and they are marching east toward the

German lines. And they are marching and they are marching. And there are no lights. Just marching. So they—everybody sat down while they tried to figure out to do next. According to Pete, he got bored so he just took off in the other direction, and he kept walking until he hits an American infantry outfit. They were moving fast. Somebody gave him a helmet. Somebody else gave him a rifle. Said, “You march, too.” He winds up in Germany and I hadn’t seen him—we wrote him off for dead—no word from him. Missing in action. Apparently Washington had it sorted out some time later on. Of course, he stayed in the service. Became a colonel. Retired and moved to Tallahassee where he lives to this day. How did I get on to this subject? Oh, reunions. Now, Pete Sweers, living a very happy life, his Christmas cards are something to behold. They are excerpts from the diary of the year. He writes a three or four page letter, what happened to Pete and Marge—whatever his wife’s name is—and his nine children, day by day. That is his Christmas card. And one day maybe we’ll take a ride up there and see him again. Now, because of this reunion with George Blake, he tells me that every battery—there’s four operating battery and headquarters battery—has been having reunions and everybody has been looking for you. I’m glad they didn’t find me, but aren’t you — we’re having reunions and semi-reunions. Having a semi-reunion at Daytona Beach. “I’ll be there, if I’m invited.” “You’re invited.” And that started it. Around the state of Florida, we have the remnants of two batteries that meet in Daytona Beach, and one in a little town in the central part of the state. Remember, these are all farmers and very naive, good guys. These guys were so straight they used to frighten me. You’ll see, I attended a school called the Air Force School of Applied Tactics. That was in Kissimmee. Where Disney World is. And the battalion, on its way to Boston, came from California, to Florida, set up its guns in some kind of operation in the swamps. And the men scattered to the various towns, met girls, and married them. And, lo and behold, scattered up and down the central part of Florida there are scads of these guys that married local girls. We weren’t there that long. And they have many reunions. Now, we attended one in Tennessee two years ago, of a different battery. Now, my old battery, headquarters battery, is having a reunion in Denver. My old sergeant—what’s his name—anyway, is the host. And this is the way it has gone. We were kids. I used to tell George, before he died, I never want to be like the guy in the Rotogravure—when I was a kid growing up, papers would have a Rotogravure section. There was always one guy with a cane—he is the last surviving member of the 48 & 8 group. Remember 40 & 8? Who had got the magnum of champagne. The last survivor always got the magnum. I don’t want—I want a magnum of champagne, I will buy it. I don’t want to earn it that way. So, I don’t want to be in the Rotogravure. There we go. That explains the reunions. Now, in addition, we have state conventions of the Military Order which we are enjoying. We have friends all over the state of Florida. We have the national convention, which we won’t go to this year because it’s in Denver in the month of August. I see no point in going to



Denver twice in one month, practically. We leave here and we go to California. I need a rest when we come back.

Mark: One last thing I want to talk about. Men value these ceremonies in Antwerp that you go to.

Sussman: Well, it started in 1984. We came home from a trip and there is a call waiting for me—U. S. Council, in Antwerp. “We’ve researched the records and we found out your were a staff officer with General Armstrong. At the request of the Belgian government, they are having a big to-do, fortieth anniversary, and we want you here. Will you come?” I said, of course, and Gertrude agreed. So we went. I hadn’t the vaguest idea what we were getting involved in. First of all, it goes back to the difference between the Belgians and the French. “Belgians never forget. French never remember.” They treated us so royally. Anything. I set my own program. I want to see my old village. See the references and this. And the quotations. You talk about waxing poetic. Man, you can wax poetic. Gertrude and I walked down to—I said I must see the Ritz Theater. 1 December, a V-2 came down the chimney of the Ritz Theater in the heart of Antwerp. Took out five hundred people like this, that were sitting and watching the movies. And all that remains today is a rebuilt theater and a little plaque. Rips you up. Because these people are sitting one moment—they are enjoying life. The next moment, they are not even dead—they never even existed. Made part of the atmosphere. Now, the ceremonies. What had happened was this most peculiar thing. I got an idea once. I came across that book, “The Story of Antwerp-Ex.” It was in color. I said, My gosh, I am going to die one day and this thing will go right down the toilet. I know that Belgium has a attache in Miami. So I said to Gertrude, “Find me a book binder. I want this thing bound in leather and I want across the top of this, or the bottom of it, Antwerp-X, 1994-1995, A Gift to the People of Belgium from...” and our military rank. I dug up the name of the attache. I called him up. His name was Guy Govert. He still lives down there. I wanted to talk to him. “Come on down.” Down to Miami. And, this Govert turns out to be my kind of guy. The guy was a NATO fighter pilot that trained in Texas. I ran a business in Miami and I think he is a lawyer—a real estate guy—but he represents—he got dual citizenship. I said, five businesses, Guy and Charlie—what do you think of this idea? Let’s stir things up. I want to make this gift to the people of Antwerp. I want you to get it in your pouch—your diplomatic pouch—I want it directed to [unintelligible] meister, in Dutch, with a short letter of transmittal. Govert says, “That’s a good idea. We’ll do it.” I wrote a very short letter, introduced myself, tell them my wife and I feel that the proper custodian should be the city of—took about six—and we forgot about it. We came back from our trip to California and there is the call from the American consul: “You must come. You have been requested through the Belgian government and the State Department. Back to me, to represent the United

States.” Well, that sounds reasonable. Okay, I’ll be there. Can’t describe what went on. We were in the newspapers, constantly. Full page. I have a letter from the ambassador who said your visit resulted in a constant PR for the United States, of increasing favorable publicity by three or four hundred per cent. They keep track of that stuff.

**[End of Side A of Tape 2]**

So, what happened, every five years, we get an invitation, come on back. So we were there in ‘84, ‘89, ‘94. Now, getting back to this thing, and why this is so important to the whole story. I insisted that part of the time be spent in Kiervagen. And Kiervagen, I learned enough Dutch at that time, I made a declaration—big dinners, that Kiervagen was the nail in the shoe of the horse of Antwerp. And here you had all these Flemish people who—nailu? nailu?—what’s he talking about, nail? And, by then, I got off my Dutch and I said to the mayor, I said, tell them, read Richard—Henry the Fifth—no, Richard the Third, wasn’t it? I had it at my fingertips, anyway. If I were killed, the guns would stop shooting. If Kiervagen were hit, I would be killed, the guns would stop shooting. Antwerp would have been destroyed. Antwerp was the horse. Kiervagen was the nail in the shoe of the horse of Antwerp. They went out of their minds. Had a huddle. And immediately named me the second Annabagger [?] in a thousand years. The first was the sultan who got assassinated in 1950. That never made me comfortable. Anyway, so every time we go back there, it is an interesting experience. We are always welcome there. It is a very fashionable, shiny, beautiful town. One of the remarkable things—oh, yes, this is a highway net. They asked me to dedicate this street. There I am with the American attache. Now, this is a great story. I love stories. Silvertop was a handsome young tank commander. Our friend, Gilberte, the lady of the history books, she was the Germans’ worst nightmare. As the Canadians were dashing up, she was watching the Germans lay mines on the one road, and as soon as the Germans would get out of sight, she and her gang would be pulling the mines out and deactivating them. Until the first Canadian tank appeared. They flagged it down. She hops aboard the tank and who is commanding the tank is Colonel Silvertop. Now, according to her daughter, who says, did mother ever tell you about the great love affair? What love affair? She said, “Silvertop.” And they found out they were the ones that laid the wreath there on the bridge, and mother until he got shot dead three weeks later. Well, that wasn’t very bright. He had a tank and still got shot dead. So, we—now this happened before we ran across Gilberte, and it wasn’t until several years later that Gilberte’s daughter told us about the affair between Gilberte and Silvertop. The books are full of Silvertop. He showed great spirit and elan and dash, to make that trip. And we received this honor of laying that wreath on the bridge. Now the same day they opened the highway link in honor of my general, Armstrong. And

we were asked to cut it. This is Culs, or Bergerbeiste, at that time. Now, getting back here, these things are always adventures. Going to Kierberger, meeting people, we had so many anecdotal things about our last trip which was the fiftieth anniversary, where one of my sons and his wife—two of our sons and their wives—came with us. And at that time, the king and queen of Belgium were there. The British prince, what is his name? Prince Andrew. He came over. The Russians sent a battleship over with marching bands. We received a magnificent gift from the people of Kierbergen—a wood-cut which now hangs on one of our walls. And, to have our children there—we're sitting on the same pavilion with the Duke of York, the Chief of Staff of the Belgian Army, and a few more dignitaries. There is Charles in there somewhere. And we sent over Hazel O'Leary, to represent the United States government. And here are the Russians. They sent over a marching band. And marching troops. Here is another thing. Remarkable, the number of people they sent over. In Europe, it is a big affair. I'm looking for a statue that they erected to our people. Oh, there is Gilberte, in here, too. Here is myself and Gertrude. And back here—

**[END OF TRANSCRIPT]**