

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
ROMAN J. WEHRLE  
301<sup>st</sup> Ammunition Supply Company, Army, World War II  
2000

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**Wehrle, Roman J.**, (1913-2000). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 55 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 55 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 55 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

**Abstract:**

Roman "Bud" Wehrle, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service with the 4th Battalion, 301st Ammunition Supply Company in North Africa and Europe. He details enlisting in the Army, training at Camp Sutton (North Carolina), learning safety measures for handling and transferring ordnance, and learning to set up ammunition depots. He describes how General Motors and Buick employees recruited people into ordnance. Wehrle describes the different types of ammunition his unit was responsible for and establishing ammunition depots at Bone and Oran (North Africa). He briefly discusses the 301st Ammunition Supply Company and the Arab and Italian workers it hired. He describes how the ammunition was shipped in color-coded, water-proof boxes or cans. Wehrle mentions a situation where some poison gas shells were accidentally sent to the front lines, but were not used. He discusses interacting with the local Arab population, and he mentions writing the letter home to the wife of a soldier who "shacked up" with a local woman who was a "little too much for him" and who died of a heart attack. Promoted to sergeant, he describes how his responsibilities and privileges changed. Transferred to Europe, Wehrle comments on establishing depots in Southern France using the labor of German and Italian prisoners of war. He claims, in Italy, mud was a problem and one tractor "tragically sunk out of sight." He details the food situation in Africa and France, saying the food the soldiers ate was practically the same food the POWs ate. Wehrle talks about local kids getting scars on their faces from licking the last bits of food out of C-ration cans, and describes trading gallons of butter for chickens. He emphasizes that prisoners of war could not be forced to work, but were enticed by promises of better food. Wehrle mentions that there were two types of Germans--the drafted soldiers who were good to work with, and the followers of Hitler who would not work. He touches on correspondence occurring between his wife and wives of English soldiers. He briefly talks about being commissioned into a segregated African-American unit in North Africa. Wehrle describes several Midwest soldiers who were caught in an ocean riptide and drowned, and not being able to do anything to help them. One soldier watched his friend get pulled out to sea and then committed suicide with a grenade. Wehrle relates his preparations for Japan, but then he was sent home on a liberty ship. He describes returning to the job he had before entering the service, paying VFW dues, and meeting his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter after being discharged.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Wehrle (b. February 28, 1913-2000) served with the 301st Ammunition Supply Corps during World War II. He was honorably discharged from service in 1945 and achieved the rank of 2nd lieutenant.

Interviewed by Jim McIntosh, 2000.  
Transcribed by Katie Seelow, 2009.  
Transcript edited by Susan Krueger, 2010.  
Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

**Transcribed Interview:**

Jim: Okay, off and running. Interviewing Bud Wehrle, and it's the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2000. So, where were you born?

Bud: Madison—Where? You're gonna have to talk a little louder. My hearing aide went to hell on the way up. [laughs]

Jim: 19-what?

Bud: Pardon?

Jim: 19-what, what year?

Bud: '13.

Jim: 1913.

Bud: 1913.

Jim: And, when did you join the Army?

Bud: In uh, I got that all written down so I wouldn't forget it here [checks papers] Enlisted, in April of 1942.

Jim: Enlisted? You weren't drafted?

Bud: No, I enlisted. I got in before they drafted me.

Jim: And what unit did you join? The Air Force.

Bud: No, in the Ordnance.

Jim: U.S. Army Ordnance.

Bud: U.S. Army Ordnance. Ammunition Specialty.

Jim: And where did they send you first?

Bud: Camp Sutton, North Carolina.

Jim: For Basic?

Bud: For Basic, yah. We were supposed to be there one month, and then go over seas. To help—actually our unit was formed—it's a long story.

Jim: We got time. [both laugh]

Bud: You want the whole story?

Jim: Of course.

Bud: Well, Mary and I were over at Blackhawk one night having dinner. And Don Olds and his wife come along, and they sat with us. And we had dinner, and he was talking about how he just went into the Army. And I said, "What's this now?" Well he says, "I had some kind of a deal, that they were recruiting automobile people. General Motors and Buick dealers." And he said, he was with the Chevrolet people out on a Washington Avenue— I don't know he was Vice President or something like that—and he enlisted. And uh, he said to me, "So what are you doing?" I said, "I'm not doing anything, I'm waiting to be drafted." And he says, "Why don't ya join our unit?" So I says, "I'll look into it." Which I did.

It didn't take much looking. I went in, and went Downtown, and signed up for this unit. And a few weeks later I got a call to report to an Armory in south Chicago. I don't remember the name of it. But at any rate, it was right near the White Sox's park. I could see the White Sox's park from where we landed. My dad drove me down there. And with just the suit that I had on—dressed you know, in civilian clothes. And it says you don't bring anything, everything will be furnished when you get to your destination. So we boarded a train and went to Camp Sutton North Carolina. And that was a new Camp. It had just opened up. It was a hellhole creation. It was a hardening camp. It was supposed to be a hardening Camp. We were getting thirty days of Basic Training, and then going overseas. And well, the thirty days turned into one year. Mainly because of the break out in Africa, of the el Alamain —where Montgomery finally broke out, and it didn't seem as important that we get there that soon.

The United States was furnishing on Lend-Lease, all the ammunition, equipment, motorized equipment, and things like that, to the British in Africa, North Africa, and they needed American personnel to operate, and that's where we get into it.

Jim: What is your training? Your month training, or what is your training—what does it consist of?

Bud: Well, the idea was. In thirty days, we were going overseas, to North Africa. That's what we signed up for. Well it so happened, Montgomery broke loose. And they didn't need us at that time. So we were here in the United States for another year. So we finally went over a year after, to Africa, North Africa.

Jim: I don't know what they trained you to do. That's what I wanted to know.

Bud: Oh, I see. Handle ammunition.

Jim: Handle it.

Bud: Handle ammunition. We went to a couple of different places— Savannah Ordnance Depot in the United States, and a couple others— to learn all about ammunition, as much as we could in a short amount of time. How to handle it, and things like that. And that's what we went over for, to handle ammunition.

Jim: All kinds?

Bud: All kinds. Nothing Air Corp. Just basically Army.

Jim: Mines, small arms?

Bud: Small arms, 105 hulls. We had more of those than anything else. And uh, loading and unloading ships. We were stationed at, in, mainly harbors, Bone, Algeria. Tunis—we were always stationed right at a harbor. Mainly to unload and load ships, with ammunition. And then, after we got the ammunition unloaded— well we followed it along, and we supplied the troops. 5<sup>th</sup> Army, Italy, and the 7<sup>th</sup> Army in Southern France, and we were an outfit that operated pretty much on our own. A company of 160 men, handling ammunition.

Jim: The reason this outfit was specially trained, was because it was too dangerous for an ordinary soldier to be dealing with this? Is that the basic—

Bud: Well you have training to handle the ammunition. How to handle it and things like that. And that's basically what we learned before we went over.

Jim: What was difficult about handling it?

Bud: Just knowing how to handle it, what's dangerous, and what isn't. And things like that.

Jim: What's dangerous?

Bud: Well, the—now that I talk about it, it doesn't seem that dangerous at all. We never had many problems. A couple of the ammunition stacks blew up. But we didn't—there was nobody injured or anything like that. There was something different, but it was interesting. How best to describe it? Just a matter of handling ammunition; from the ships to the shore, from the shore to the troops. And we mainly, loaded and unloaded ships at different ports. Like in Africa, we were stationed at Bone, in Algeria— we landed at Casablanca originally. And went from there to Bone, that's a town along the sea coast of Africa. It's a sea port. We were there for a few months, and then moved to Oran loading and unloading ships, ammunition. Setting up ammunition depots. And uh well, let's see—

Jim: I still don't know, why there was, what they required special people to do this. It's just ammunition in a box. You pick up the box, you can carry it from here, put it on a truck

and carry it to there. I just don't see why they needed special people. There must be something in your training that's difficult.

Bud: Well, I'm making it sound simple, but it's actually—we had to learn how to handle different fuses, different types of ammunition. And mainly, it's pretty safe if it's handled right. But handling right—you had to learn how to handle it right.

Jim: That's what I want you to talk about. What does that mean, handling it right?

Bud: Well, so that you don't blow up a dump. You don't uh—

Jim: Right, how could you mishandle it? Dropping it, or—

Bud: Yeah, that's right. Be careful of fires and things like that.

Jim: I mean a lot of that, the dynamite for instance, you are gonna set it off by dropping it. It won't explode, ya see?

Bud: Yeah. [laughs]

Jim: You have to have a fuse in there and a lot of things. You know it's fairly inert. It's not like nitro, which is different—

Bud: Yeah, the ammunition was shipped—most of it was shipped without fuses. Fuses were separate.

Jim: Oh I'm sure. [laughs]

Bud: Naturally, well it—people think that it comes all in one piece, and it doesn't, it comes in different segments. And uh—I'm talking about a ship load of ammunition, where you had thousands and thousands of rounds that were handled. We had—actually we learned how to handle it and then we in turn had crews that we hired. We had—by we I'm talking about our Company, about 150, 160 men—we had a couple thousand people working for us Arabs, Italian prisoners—who were more than willing to work. We got along great with them—they didn't wanna fight in the war in the first place. So we had a lot of them. We had a thousand of them, I'd say thousands really, in the ammunition dumps. And these ammunition dumps would be spread for over a mile or two on the ground.

Jim: Did you have to be careful about separating different kinds of explosives?

Bud: Yeah, yeah we had to watch it. Everything was labeled. The boxes were usually labeled with different colors and things like that. I remember one instance where we [laughs] uh—this was in Africa—and there was a lot of commotion around the company quarters that Eisenhower wanted to know who sent the gas ammunition to this Company, depot, ammunition depot. And uh in that Depot we had poison gas. Never used it fortunately, but it was there, it was available. I remember it was yellow—different ammunition had

different colors—it was yellow with red stripes on it. And somebody, somehow, got some of that ammunition sent to the wrong place. And it was right up to the front lines, and that was the most dangerous part of the war as far as I'm concerned. Because Eisenhower wanted to know who sent that ammunition up, because that would have started WWII you know, you might say— actually if we'd have used poison gas. And that's what it was, we carried it along, but it wasn't to be used, only in case—

Jim: What kind of a shell was that poison gas put in?

Bud: 105.

Jim: 105 artillery shell?

Bud: 105 How, Howitzer.

Jim: Howitzer?

Bud: 105 How.

Jim: And do you recall what type of poison gas it was?

Bud: What is that?

Jim: What type of poison gas was it?

Bud: I don't remember what kind it was, but uh I remember the rounds because I sat and looked at it. Because I was superintendent of storage at the time, so-- [laughs] You know what I mean, who sent that up? I had no idea how that got up there. Fortunately they caught it— they caught it before shooting it off— the front lines send it back, and Eisenhower wanted to know, as I said, who did it?

Jim: And it was you.

Bud: Well yeah, I was the superintendent of storage. So it was my baby, but I didn't handle every round of ammunition. We were sending thousands of rounds. We had big ammunition dumps that covered a couple of square miles. We kept it—everything was in the open. All the depots you know, ammunition was out in the open.

Jim: There was no protective cover for any of it?

Bud: No.

Jim: How did you store it, was it in wooden boxes?

Bud: Wooden boxes, mainly, yeah.



Jim: No cover from water or anything?

Bud: No, no it was the waterproof, the 105, how they came in, a sort of fiber—maybe three in a case. They came in a fiber container that was waterproof. And the small arms, like the small arms fire, that came in cans, sealed tin cans, embedded—not embedded—but placed in wooden-- The outside was a wooden case, inside was the—and that was waterproof for small arms fire, small arms ammunition. Things like that.

But we'd handle tons, and tons, and tons, and hundreds of tons of that ammunition. I mean I'd say we had plenty of help. Cause we hired. We'd load and unload ships, on the different ports. That's why we spent most of the time in the different ports in Africa and Italy.

Jim: How did you speak the language to the natives?

Bud: Get through—you know it's amazing how you can get by. You know these young kids, in Africa especially, Arab kids. Never had any schooling. You could talk, converse actually, they could, in five different languages.

Jim: Incredible.

Bud: French, Italian, Arabic, German. You know, just from associating with the different troops that were there. These kids were always available to help out. We always hired them you know to do things. You feed um, you take care of um—

Jim: I was gonna say, did you give them any money or just food?

Bud: Food, food and clothing.

Jim: Oh, clothing too?

Bud: Oh sure. You gotta give um clothing and food. They didn't have anything over there. Nothing to buy. It's just pitiful.

Jim: Cigarettes?

Bud: What's that?

Jim: Cigarettes too?

Bud: Oh yeah, always cigarettes were available.

Jim: Right, that's good. You'll probably want those.

Bud: Yep, and so did the women.

Jim: What women?

Bud: [laughs] French women.

Jim: Now you didn't talk about them, what about them?

Bud: There were a lot of them around, they ya know—

Jim: Did you stay out of trouble? With those French women?

Bud: Oh yeah, sure, no problem. [both laugh] No problem. Yeah.

Jim: Well you can confess now, and no one cares you see. If you have a secret, you can tell us.

Bud: I know what you mean. No that uh—one of our men got too involved, I hate to say it. But it actually killed him—

Jim: Oh, how did that happen?

Bud: Well, we were situated in a town in North Africa, and he found this girl that he liked pretty much. And uh, well let's see, he sorta visited here quite often. We were in this one area, and he shacked up all night every night. Finally died of a heart attack, 33, 34 years old.

Jim: Too much for him?

Bud: Too much for him. Yep, this gal was a former call girl. She was beautiful. Had a lot of experience, little too much for him.

Jim: Did you have to write the letter home for him?

Bud: I did.

Jim: How did you cover that one up?

Bud: I don't remember, I often wonder about it. Because his wife, we knew her, we met her over at—she came to visit, my wife came in to visit at one time at Camp Sutton, North Carolina—And his wife came to visit too before we went over seas. And that's how I met her. She was a nice gal. Nice couple. But he just got involved over in Italy, and it was Italy yeah.

Jim: So what did you tell the wife, how did he die? Just say he died of a heart attack?

Bud: Yeah, that's right. Ya know, I said just as plainly as I could, well he did. He died of a heart attack, and that was it.

He was shackled up there with her, every night he'd go to this gal. Well we were in this area for quite a while. And after a while he got quite friendly with her. And she was a good lookin gal. At any rate, it was still too much for him. He died, 33, 33 years old or something like that. Heart attack.

Jim: Were you in charge of this group that you were in? Were you in charge?

Bud: Well uh, no I wasn't in charge of it. All depends about what you mean by being in charge of what group. I mean, that—

Jim: I don't know what your rank was at this time.

Bud: Oh, I was the, well let's see, Technical Sergeant, I think at the time. I got a Commission later on. In France, I got a Battlefield Commission. And uh, I was a Sergeant at that time.

Jim: Tell me about getting a Battlefield Commission.

Bud: Well you just earn it. [laughs]

Jim: Well come on now. You don't just earn it. What did you do to earn it.

Bud: [laughs] We, I can tell you in a few words. We, our Company, needed uh officers—they didn't last too long—quite a change of officers, and I was a Tech Sergeant at the time. And so they needed, each company needed a certain amount of officers. And we only had one or two, so they appointed me. I got a commission, a discharge from the army, and the commission came right with it you see.

Jim: So you were out, and in again.

Bud: Yeah, that's right. I was actually the Sergeant, and retired from the Army. And then was immediately hired, the Army of the United States. As a Second Lieutenant.

Jim: Where were you at this time? In France?

Bud: France.

Jim: What were you doing there?

Bud: What was I doing there? Well we were handling ammunition.

Jim: From where?

Bud: From, uh, let's see—

Jim: Marseilles?

Bud: Marseilles. We landed in—we went from, let's see—we went from North Africa to Italy—I wrote these letters [checks papers] Casablanca 1943, Bone Africa '43, Oran Africa '43, Tunis 1944, Piombino Italy September 1944. We went to Piombino, Italy, and from there to the Riviera in France. Marseilles, France December of 44. Got the commission in April of 1945. And I came home in September of 1945. I was 30 months overseas, eighteen months in Africa, and 9 months in France, and 3 months in Italy.

Jim: Did your duty change when you became an officer?

Bud: Oh yeah, yeah. [laughs] Changed quite a bit.

Jim: Tell me.

Bud: Well it changed, in that, an altogether different life.

Jim: I know. [laughs]

Bud: You should know. You were in—

Jim: I've been both sides. I've been an enlisted man for a while, and then—it's much nicer.

Bud: Now, well you got a lot more privileges.

Jim: No kidding.

Bud: — and uh, so that worked out pretty good. I'm just happy, no—sorry I didn't come sooner.

Jim: Specifically, how was your duty different? What responsibilities did you know assume?

Bud: Well I had more responsibilities, and I was in charge of the motor pool, and uh the ammunition storage. And uh, that was the main thing, come to think of it.

Jim: Was life sort of hectic? Or was it sort of routine?

Bud: It was hectic all the time.

Jim: You mean, you're trying to fill orders, for material, and you're always behind to get in? Or how was that?

Bud: Well yeah, the help— we had lots of problems with the help— and in Italy, the mud. You see there is nothing but mud in Italy. We had ammunition trucks stuck all over. In fact these big Caterpillar trucks that we had, got them stuck. I got pictures at home of one tractor that tragically sunk out of sight, in the mud, in Italy.

Jim: But you didn't have to take the ammunition very far in land, you just had to set up a dump, and then if somebody wanted they had to come and get it?

Bud: That's the idea.

Jim: You didn't deliver it to any of the units.

Bud: No we didn't. We just had it for them, and the units—once and a while we would deliver it. When we had to. But that didn't happen very often— Usually they came and picked it up themselves. So that was the, the idea was to have it when they wanted it, and sure there was plenty of it.

Jim: You never run out?

Bud: No, no, we had plenty of ammunition. We lots of ships— in fact we had ships that were waiting to be unloaded— in the harbors over there. We had beaucoup. Everything, ammunition and supplies. Englishmen, and the Frenchmen, and geez, America beaucoup, we had everything.

Jim: Did you deliver ammunition the British and the French?

Bud: Yeah. Yeah, mainly American, but to some British, some French. But uh, we didn't do much delivery. And they had the quarter master took care of that. What we would do, is just receive it, unload the ships. Load ships and unload ships. We'd take from when it came in the harbor. And took it from there, and established the dumps, ammunition supply, ASPs, ammunition supply points. Keep the ammunition close, as close to the troops as we could get em. And uh, it covers a lot of territory, the handling of ammunition. From unloading a ship, to getting it to the troops, that needed it.

Jim: When a supply ship would come in with ammunition for you to put in your dump, did you unload it off of that ship?

Bud: Yeah.

Jim: And you didn't use any of the deck hands aboard ship to do that?

Bud: No we'd have our own. Nope we didn't use them, we had our own people. We had, I'd say, thousands of Arabs, and Italians. Italians were good workers, they didn't want any part of that war. They surrendered early you know. And so he had a lot of the troops working for us—

Jim: And France, what did you— you spoke with the French folks.

Bud: Yeah.

Jim: How were they?

Bud: Fair. Yeah they were more interested in handling, having their “fets.” What we’d call um, “fets,” the celebrations [laughs] The French were great for that. They didn’t—

Jim: They wouldn’t show up to work.

Bud: They had three day celebrations. They were celebrating something all the time. Burned us up you know. We were over there to win a war. The French had been in it so long, and they sort of took things for granted. We come, trying to get a convoy through a town, and here they had the town all torn up, they had a band playing, they were dancing in the street, and were trying to get through. I remember that, make us made you know. French just see, you know— well they’d been through so much, you know, the French had in the war.

Jim: So you didn’t have any trouble getting any mail, or food? You always have plenty of food, and plenty of —

Bud: No, it took—you, no, that was terrible—the uh food was awful, but they did the best with what they could. We were eating the same foods that the prisoners were. We had a lot of—

Jim: What prisoners?

Bud: That we had working for us, Italian prisoners, and German prisoners, and things like that. If they wanted to work, we’d put um to work. If they didn’t, they didn’t. You couldn’t um. The rules of Geneva, you couldn’t make a prisoner work. Unless they wanted to. So we gave them a choice, do you wanna work in ammunitions and get fed better. Or do you wanna eat the regular food without the work. Well that—

Jim: How did you feed um better? Or what did you offer them that was better?

Bud: Well, uh. None of the food was really, in fact we were eating practically the same food as the prisoners were. I don’t know how to describe it, just basic food.

Jim: You’re not talking about “C” rations now are you?

Bud: Oh yeah. No, everything out of a can, everything was in a can you know. The little Arab kids I couldn’t figure out what was happening. I’d see these little kids, you know, with that ring around their face. And it took me so long— I finally found out, that they were licking the inside of the cans, the “C” ration cans. And they get a scar on their face from licking the last drop out of those cans, “C” ration cans. That’s the way most of the food came. That and gallon cans. Butter you know, axel grease, came in gallon cans. Take that, and we’d trade the sheriffs for a gallon of that, a can of that. We’d trade the sheriffs for chickens. We, once and a while, we did a chicken dinner. They had chickens all over, you know they raised chickens. And that’s the only meat we got, fresh meat. But uh—I’m talking about Africa.

Jim: What about France?

Bud: Well French—there was more to eat in France. You could go— we could get into the town or something like that and eat. It would usually be American food, done up the French way, cooked by Frenchmen or things like that. So there was certain changes in it. Even though we were eating canned rations, it was just prepared differently. All American food. There were no stores. Nothing in the stores, the counters. Mainly in Africa, you know there were nothing in the stores. You know what war had been going on before we got there, several years, and so everything was cleaned out.

Jim: No shopping in France?

Bud: Nothing much in France to buy, at that time. Yeah, America beaucoup, everything was American over there. There was the tires and the cars and the gasoline. And uh, the French knew how to use it, and how to get it.

Jim: Didn't you eat in some of the French restaurants? That must've been good?

Bud: Well it was mainly American food. Yes it was good from what we had, it was American food, but it was prepared differently. And that's about what it amounts to. But uh, anything was a change as far as the food was concerned, 'cause we had our own cooks all these years. We had good cooks in our Outfit, can't complain at all. They'd go out and bargain. They'd take a can of what we would call axel grease— really it was butter, it wasn't butter, it was come concoction, like an imitation butter— Yeah that's right, they'd take a can of that and they'd go out and trade for chickens and eggs or something like that. We had a good bunch of cooks, they'd got out and they get—can't complain about the food, they did the best they could.

Jim: Did you have any trouble of sabotage?

Bud: No.

Jim: You had post guards around all those ammunition though?

Bud: What is that?

Jim: You had to post guards around—

Bud: Oh yeah, oh sure. Yeah we had uh—the only big problem we had one time, the—you see these ammunition. We'd stack um. Piles of ammunition, two three, four hundred yards apart. And it uh cover several miles and things like that— One day I got a report that the, there was a fire in one of the ammunition stacks. And so, checking out, fortunately it didn't get any farther than the one stack. Which, that wasn't a big problem. The whole dump could have gone out. But what happened was there was a bank in the small town

near there. And these robbers set the fire to the ammunition to distract everybody. So we went to the ammunition, and here they were robbin' a bank in the town, small bank—  
**[End of Tape 1, Side 1]**

— small town. But uh, things like that happened. I'd forget about these things. They come along now that I think about em.

Jim: You had no trouble getting mail from home?

Bud: Yeah, it was terrible. I um—well originally it was, when we first went in, I uh—

Jim: Excuse me. [pause] Talkin' about France I guess. And, you used German prisoners of war that they were in the prison camp. Near where you were, is that how that came about?

Bud: We used those that wanted to volunteer.

Jim: Tell me again, how did the food attract them?

Bud: Uh, the food?

Jim: You said you could offer them better food, to encourage them to work with you?

Bud: Yeah, well [laughs] there was only one type of food, and that was the army food. C-rations and things like that. There wasn't anything to buy, in the French stores, or markets, or anything else.

Jim: You said you couldn't force them to work—

Bud: Oh no you can't, you couldn't, they had to volunteer.

There were two different types of Germans. The *Wehrmacht*, which was the average German that was drafted in the war. And then you had the, really the followers of Hitler, who were a different breed entirely.

Jim: S.S.

Bud: And so none of the, all of the Germans that were drafted, they were easy to get along with. They were willing to work, and things like that. You had to be careful in hiring, who wants to, and who did not. You see, it's hard to explain.

Jim: No I understand.

Bud: But knowing the Germans in Hitler's time. You know anybody that was really a Hitler follower, toed the line. And anybody that that wasn't, that was drafted—they had a draft, just like we do—they call it the *Wehrmacht* I think, something like that.



Jim: The army, the regular army.

Bud: They were easy to get along with, no problems at all. Like, ya sit and talk with them—

Jim: They wanted to go home just like you did.

Bud: They did, that's right, we had a lot of them working for us after the, and during the war. We'd go out in the ammunition dumps, and sit in the jeep you know, and with the car being right there. Sitting with the German, wasn't any problem at all.

Jim: Did they speak English?

Bud: Enough to get by.

Jim: And did you try your German out on them?

Bud: [laughs] Try the German—

Jim: Did you have German in high school?

Bud: No, no. It's amazing how, I mentioned a little while ago these little Arab kids. You know, they could talk 5 different languages. But after you're visiting with these people, you could pick up their languages, the Germans, the Italian, and the French. Without having learned it, or taught it in school. Just amazing—

Jim: Children pick up language so easy—

Bud: I know.

Jim: — when I was in Korea, the Korean kids, and in Japan, those children could speak English so well. That their American parents, that listened that couldn't speak, but their kids, picked it up the same way as the Koreans and the Japanese kids did.

Bud: You know, it always amazed me, how these Arab kids, real young kids, that never went to school, could speak these different languages, like four or five different languages. Cause they had visited with all these troops all these years. The different troops that were, occupied the land. The Arabs, the French, the Germans, the Americans.

Jim: Were the Germans good workers?

Bud: Oh yeah.

Jim: I mean if they decided to work they worked.

Bud: Yeah that's right. We had a lot of them working for us, handling ammunition. Those that volunteered— like I said before the Hitler group—

Jim: They wouldn't do anything?

Bud: Oh no—

Jim: They wouldn't work for you at all.

Bud: The bad ones were shipped to the United States.

Jim: [laughs]

Bud: They were.

Jim: Is that right?

Bud: The tough ones. Oh yeah. Well they shipped them out of the country, and they say the *Wehrmacht*, they were getting killed in a hurry.

Jim: Oh really.

Bud: The people in, the Germans in Africa were the ones that really caused a lot of trouble. Cause they were the elite that they had over there at the time. And when they surrendered, they were shipped to the United States. And couldn't get any trouble over here. And the rest of them, thousands and thousands, were easy to get along with. We never had any problems with them, not at all—

Jim: Did you keep in contact with any of them, after you got out of the war, any of the Germans?

Bud: No, we didn't. No none of the Germans. We did with the English though.

Jim: Oh, what was your contact with them, you didn't talk about that—

Bud: Well my wife got to know them at different places, she—

Jim: Where was Mary?

Bud: Well, Mary came out to visit me in North Carolina when I got into the Army, and went into Camp Sutton, North Carolina. So, she took a vacation, and came out to visit for tree weeks. [laughs] Well she stayed for three months. [both laugh] It so happens, that some of the other fellows that I was with, their wives came to visit too, so Mary got friendly with them. And I'm trying to figure out how she friendly with the uh—Oh yeah she started writing. We met in Africa, a lot of Englishmen. We were practically living with the English in Africa. Got to know them real well—

Jim: Nice folk.

Bud: Then the wives got corresponding. The people there, the troops that we met in uh Africa, English troops, their wives wrote to our wives.

Jim: Even though they'd never met?

Bud: They'd never met.

Jim: I see.

Bud: Now I still have letters at home, from the different people, the letters, that they exchanged, that she got from these different English women. Interesting—

Jim: Have you ever visited England?

Bud: No, never been there.

Jim: Oh my goodness.

Bud: Nope, never been there in England at all.

Jim: Any of those folks that Mary wrote to, are they alive?

Bud: Wouldn't know, wouldn't have any idea. Didn't keep up the correspondence after the war.

Jim: Oh, it didn't last at all.

Bud: No, no.

Jim: Have you kept up the relationship with the boys you were in the—

Bud: We had a convention, about 1977. Something like that.

Jim: What was your unit called, you never told me.

Bud: 301<sup>st</sup> Ordnance Ammunition Company, Company U, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion

Jim: And your company was comprised of about how many folks?

Bud: Hundred and—it varied from about 120, and 150 people. We were unique in that we traveled as a lone company you might say. They shipped us wherever they needed help in loading ships, unloading ships and things like that. So we weren't any part of any one division, we belonged to the Army like we were in the 5<sup>th</sup> Army in Italy but we never,

were in the private company. You might say that they sent us different place to load ships, unload ships, handle ships, and travel on the ships, things like that. Setting up ammunition.

Jim: And the leader of this company, was what rank?

Bud: Captain.

Jim: Captain?

Bud: Yeah. Yup, an automobile man from Indianapolis. He had a Buick agency in Indianapolis. This group that I was with was recruited through the automobile dealers. That's how I got involved in it.

Jim: Oh really, what did the automobile leaders have to do with Ordnance, I don't understand the connection?

Bud: Well, that's a long story, that's how I happened to get into this outfit, we were—

Jim: You told me about talking to this one guy, this fellow. I didn't understand the association to automobile, with Ordnance.

Bud: Yeah, automobiles, General Motors you might say, I don't know if it was General Motors in particular, but it just so happened that most people that I had met, were General Motors people. In fact, the Company of our Outfit, Captain Griffith, he was a Buick sales man, he had a Buick agency in Indianapolis. And uh joined the Army, enlisted in the Army, just as I did. And he came up with the Captain's rank, and he was a Captain, he was the head of our Unit, our company. He had a Buick dealership in Indianapolis, and Lieutenant Ness, he had another, another Buick man, in some other place. This all came about from this conversation we had about Blackhawk. These automobile people were recruiting.

Jim: What were you doing at that time?

Bud: I was working at the alumni research foundation, a laboratory technician. And I figured, I'd be drafted sooner or later, so I went and enlisted.

Jim: Well it turned out pretty good.

Bud: Well I tell ya, it sounded pretty good at the time.

Jim: Did you keep in contact with these fellows, these automobile dealers, after the war?

Bud: No, sort of split up after. We, actually we were split up. We got different promotions and things like that. We had to go to different outfits. Like it started out originally with mainly automobile men, when you get a transfer into a different outfit, a promotion or

something then you go to a different outfit. So I wound up with a different company entirely, in fact—

Jim: So they were all strangers then?

Bud: Yeah.

Jim: But they did the same thing the same work.

Bud: Yup, and they were segregated at that time. And uh, the Army was quite segregated.

Jim: Oh, I understand. I notice that we had, next to the first Black unit 5th Infantry, which was an all back unit. And they had, aboard our hospital ship we had a lot of patients from them.

Bud: Well when I got the commission, I was assigned to one of the Black companies.

Jim: Oh really, how did that go?

Bud: Fine, got along good with them. I never had any problem. They were along—they were one of the older outfits in there. This group that I had joined, they were there from the time of the first invasion. They had been there for a long, long time. And uh, so it worked out real well—

Jim: But when you went to Africa, they had already been in place? They had already—it was past the invasion time?

Bud: Some of um had. We went there right at the time—we were there to help out—they were having a rough time. And finally, what was the Big Battle that they had?

Jim: El Alamein.

Bud: El Alamein. That's where the Americans got the hell kicked out of them.

Jim: Inexperienced troops

Bud: That was bad, that really was bad. All the Americans were all inexperienced troops. Had inexperienced officers it was really—and we took a licking from the British, and I remember the Scotch unit we were attached to, or associated with—

Jim: They gave you the needle?

Bud: Oh did they.

Jim: Oh really.

Bud: Oh yeah, they were mad really. They'd go, "Why did ya send people over here that didn't know how to fight?"

Jim: Oh my.

Bud: That was really bad, and they didn't expect it, and the Army made a complete change. They took all the officers in charge of that Unit over there, and replaced them immediately. And that made a world of difference.

Jim: Well, it's toward the end of the war. You're still there, I wanna say you didn't come back from Europe until fall.

Bud: What do you mean?

Jim: Fall of '45—

Bud: Now I came back in the fall of '45—

Jim: After the war was on in Europe, what did you do?

Bud: Actually, we were all ready to go to Japan. So then things changed over there, so when we went home and were discharged. And uh we were worried, really worried that where we were, we were going to go home. Get leave, and go over to Japan. And we had been overseas, for 2 ½ years at that time, and that's quite along time to be away. Time went fast.

Jim: You were married at the time?

Bud: Yeah, in fact my daughter was born the day I landed in Africa. May of 1942.

Jim: Oh, where does she live?

Bud: She lives now in Florida.

Jim: Florida?

Bud: Gainesville, Florida. Yeah her husband is a doctor, one of the Quislings.

Jim: Oh yes I knew that, I'd forgotten that.

Bud: Ron Quisling, maybe you know them.

Jim: I didn't know him, but I knew his father. Which one of the Quisling brothers was his father? Not Abe.

Bud: No no, I didn't know Abe. He died young?

Jim: Oh, Gunny.

Bud: Gunny, he died young. He had cancer of the throat.

Jim: Yeah that's right, his twin is still alive here in Madison.

Bud: Yup, yeah—

Jim: I practiced with his twin. So I knew all about them.

Bud: Great family, interesting family. But at any rate, they moved down, and now he's in a hospital down in Gainesville, Florida. They've been down therefore quite few years.

Jim: So when you got out, in the fall. You went back in a ship, or on a ship?

Bud: Ya, I came back on a liberty ship. Converted with, a little bigger than a liberty ship, a sea bike it was called. And it was, there was a fear that we might be shipped directly to Japan—

Jim: But you weren't?

Bud: No, we weren't fortunately. Things had changed in the region. But we were scheduled to go over there, with the complete Company. Which had a lot of experience, and they didn't care much whether we'd been home in the last ten years or not— [pause]

We came back by ship, went over by ship, went over in the America, it was the biggest transport that the United States had built at that time. They converted into a troop ship, we pulled guard duty on it, our company pulled guard duty on it. Which meant that we had to get on the ship two days before the troops got on. We had to establish our guard posts, and that was sort of a, was really an honor our company was given that assignment. So we did board the ship in New York Harbor, and got there two days, and set our guards in there, different quarters and things like that. And then uh, we carried 5,000 troops over from New York to Casablanca, took four days. Traveled—

Jim: Zigzagging over.

Bud: I got on the ship, a couple of days before they landed, and I was putting these guards around the different places, we talked to the sailors you know, asked them questions. And they said, oh we travel alone. I says, "By god. I'm a land lover and these sailors are givin' me the works." Come to find out we did travel alone.

Jim: That's because that one battleship it moved fast enough it could stay away from the submarines.

Bud: Our ship could travel 35 miles an hour. And the German submarines couldn't travel that fast. So we constantly would zigzag. But, uh—

Jim: So coming back, on a similar ship, or some what smaller?

Bud: It was a smaller ship, it was called a sea lion, or see something, that was a class of ships just above the Liberty ship. We sailed out of Marseilles and came back, to New York.

Jim: And from New York, where did they send you?

Bud: Camp Shanks, New York. We landed at Camp Shanks.

Jim: And then from where?

Bud: From there to Madison. No wait a minute, McCoy.

Jim: Then you were discharged from McCoy?

Bud: That's right; we landed at Camp Shanks, the same place that we had taken off from. That's inland, right along on the Hudson River. Not too far from New York, 20 miles maybe. 20 miles from New York City. Cause I know on the way over we changed tanks for oil before we got on the boat. And got liberty to go into New York, every night for a while. Good transportation, right along the Hudson River.

Jim: After you got out of the service, did you use the G.I. Bill for anything?

Bud: No.

Jim: You went back to work?

Bud: Yeah, that's it.

Jim: So they saved your spot.

Bud: Oh yah, they did. They were great.

Jim: I was gonna say, was that a concern of yours, Bud?

Bud: When I first went in they matched my salary. That made up for what the Army didn't give me. And it worked out pretty good. They were great.

Jim: That was really nice.

Bud: Really nice, worked out real well.

Jim: Did you join any veterans organizations?



Bud: Uh yeah, I got the V.F.W.

Jim: You still active in that?

Bud: Well, I pay my dues. Yeah sure [laughs] I haven't been to a meeting.

Jim: I've never been to a meeting, but they keep sending me these stickers. I got so many stickers now I can't right letters fast enough.

Bud: [laughs] Yeah I get all the mail and stuff like that, and I send in the dues. And that's about it, but I've never been to a meeting since I joined years ago.

Jim: Was any part of your training useful to you after the war?

Bud: Well, I wouldn't say it was, it probably wasn't.

Jim: Didn't pertain.

Bud: No.

Jim: Well did your Unit get a Unit citation, you must've done that.

Bud: I had a couple of um. A couple of citations for something or other.

Jim: Well nobody got wounded?

Bud: No.

Jim: No accidents of any consequence, with any of that ammunition?

Bud: Nope, fortunately we didn't have any. We lost two men drowning.

Jim: While they were off the ship, or were they unloading—

Bud: No, no. We were traveling—we were traveling from—in Africa. We were going from one place to another by convoy. And we stopped along the way to rest, near a sea side. And, it was hot. You know, it's usually hot. So we went swimming. And a couple of the fellas from the Midwest, never been near an ocean before, didn't know what tides were. Got caught in the rip tide.

Jim: Out they went.

Bud: I'll never forget that. Tommy Thompson, our Company Clerk. He got caught in that. And I could hear the yelling, and the confusion and things like that. And everybody's around the beaches, and there's nothing within miles, of there. No village, no city, no nothing.

You know, so what could we do? A couple of the fellas started to go out there, and then—

Jim: Oh you lost them too.

Bud: Lost them too. Charlie Higgins, caught them almost, and Tommy Thompson is the one that drowned. Right then there we saw him floating, and then his head bobbing way out. It was pathetic. Couldn't do a thing about it.

Jim: My hospital ship was at Inchon, Korea, right about. And there was twenty-seven foot tides there. So if you were in the water, you know at the wrong time, you'd get swept out to sea. Cause that tide ran about eight knots to the hour. And there's just no way, even if you were in a small boat, you couldn't row out of that. If the tide was going out, and you're a small boat, you're going too. And they lost a lot of people who were not—didn't pay attention to the tides [both talking at once]

Bud: We could have lost several more because we knew a bunch of land lovers from the Midwest, we didn't know a thing about ocean tides, currents and things like that. And neither did they. Went in swimming, and wham he got into this tide, and it pulled him right out, and we could see him going way out in the distance, and couldn't do a thing about it. Couldn't do a thing about it, I'll never forget that. The following day, his best buddy, two days later, his best buddy that he traveled around with—they came into the Army together—he grieved so much. He took a grenade, and he pulled it, on his chest.

Jim: Where was he, at the time?

Bud: I don't know where he was at the time of the drowning. But he was around the camp somewhere or other. He couldn't have done anything to help him. But I mean, he just felt so badly about this thing. It surprised everybody. Cause he was a pretty level headed kid—

Jim: He lost it.

Bud: Took the pin, outta the grenade, and he held it against his chest. And that was two days later. No, I never could understand that. I can't understand a lot of thing like that. But, yeah, it's one of those things.

Jim: Right.

Bud: Things like that happen.

Jim: Right. So then I guess, after you got out. That was about it as far as you—nothing else further of interest for us?

Bud: No, we went, actually got up—well actually we thought we were going to Japan—But things settled down then. And actually we came home, and that was it. Got discharged,

and were happy to be home. Saw my young daughter. Hadn't seen her in 2 ½ years. She was 2 ½ years old, Susan—now is Ron Quisling's wife—She was born the day I landed in Africa. They sent a cable-gram, and wrote a letter that day, and I didn't hear about it until a month later.

Jim: Oh my.

Bud: I got the cable-gram and the letter the same day, one month after she was born. That's how things were in those days. Nothing you know really, you just weren't prepared for that. Army did a lot, addressed the complaints, things like that. But still it happens, things improved later on.

Jim: Okay, I think we've about done it here. I can't think of anything else.

Bud: Alright, I'm probably wasting your time here.

Jim: No, no. Very good. Thanks a lot, I appreciate this.

**[End of Interview]**