

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
John James Haddock
127th Regiment, 32nd Division, World War I
1986

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Haddock, John James (1900-1992), Oral History Interview, 1986.

Approximate length: 1hour, 9 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, John James Haddock, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin native, discusses his service during World War I as a member of Company F, 127th Regiment, 32nd [Red Arrow] Division.

Haddock tells of dropping out of boarding school when in the eighth grade, and going to work at a Milwaukee firm as a machine operator and then as a railroad call boy. He quit the machinist trade to go into the National Guard in June 1917 at the age of 16. Haddock spent a month and a half drilling and learning the manual of arms at Camp Douglas (Wisconsin); his most indelible memories were of the bluffs, tents, and nighttime sound-off of taps. More intensive training followed at Camp MacArthur in Waco (Texas). Federalized, the 5th Wisconsin became the 127th Regiment of the 32nd Division. Put on troop trains, the 32nd arrived at Camp Merritt (New Jersey). Haddock relates the voyage to France escorted by “subchasers,” encounters with horses and French schoolgirls, being made a corporal and used as a runner or messenger for battalion headquarters in Alsace-Lorraine, and a standing-room-only boxcar ride to Château-Thierry with his division to reinforce AEF (American Expeditionary Force) troops in thwarting the German drive on Paris. Haddock had a vivid memory of a dawn breakfast in the woods near their destination, where a minister offered a prayer, and a sobering thought. Haddock acted as a runner, relaying messages from the major at headquarters to his captain at the front lines. He notes his first experience under fire, and that on one of his runs, at headquarters, he was rendered temporarily unconscious, the major killed and lieutenant wounded by an exploding shell. Haddock describes a harrowing attempt to run a message to the French 10th Army, all previous runners not having returned from the mission. A recommendation of the Distinguished Service Cross for Haddock’s bravery was lost when the recommending lieutenant was killed. Haddock expresses high opinion of both French, and German soldiers.

Biographical Sketch:

Haddock (1900-1992) served with the 127th Regiment, 32nd Division in World War I. He was involved as a “runner” (messenger) at the Battle at Château-Thierry.

Interviewed by Richard Zeitlin, 1986.

Transcribed by Linda Weynand, 2012.

Transcription corrected by Channing Welch, 2014.

Corrections typed in and abstract written by Jeff Javid, 2015.

Interview Transcript:

Zeitlin: I'm at the home of John J. Haddock on Monona Drive, Madison, Wisconsin. Today is Wednesday, August 13th, 1986. Mr. Haddock is a veteran of WWI, and we'll be discussing his experiences in that war today. Can you tell me some information about your family as to where you were born, what town you were from, growing up, and educational attainments?

Haddock: I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in the year 1900, September the 14th. My parents were both immigrants from England back in the 1880s sometime. I went to a boarding school called the Wauwatosa Boarding School at that time. I got as far as the eighth grade. One of the difficulties there was a teacher who I didn't get along with because she used a pretty strong arm with a wooden pointer she had. I wasn't the type of lad to take punishment like that, so I had difficulty in that grade. That was the eighth grade, and I learned very little under her. Finally it got so bad that she'd send me to the principal's office every day almost. Finally he told me, "Son," he says, "You might as well go home. You're not learning anything in school, and you're getting the students riled up. [inaudible] now fighting and so forth. You might as well go home and tell your father that I said he ought to put you to work somewhere in a job." Which I did. Then my father said, "Well then, if you won't go to school, go to work. Go find a job."

Zeitlin: What did your father do?

Haddock: He was a locomotive engineer for the Milwaukee Railroad. I went down at a firm called McGreider, Frishke, and Frey [??]. I was fourteen years old and hired out as a machine operator. I did that for quite a while. I went from there to a call boy on the railroad. Then my father died. The superintendent of the locomotive shop called me down to his office and said that my father had told him—he was dying then—that he should look out for me and see that I learned a trade of some kind. I had two brothers. One was five years older than I was, William. Ernest was fifteen years older than I was. Both of them passed away now—both of them young. William died at the age of fifty-one, and Ernie died at sixty-eight.

Zeitlin: When you worked in the railroad shop you mentioned that you were a call boy. What is that?

Haddock: Calling crews for the locomotives. On the freight trains, they're not a regular scheduled train. They call 'em whenever they get enough cars to make up a train. Then they call the crew. I called the engineers and the firemen. They had a different caller for the train crews. I did that for quite a while. I think that was the last job I held, yes. No, then he—oh, superintendent called me down there, and then he told me what my father had told him to do. He says, "What kind of a trade do you want to learn, John? You can take your pick of any trade—electrician, machinist." Well, my brother was a machinist so I picked the machines to my

sorrow—never did like it. Quit it as soon as I got the opportunity. In the meantime I went into the Army. [inaudible]

Zeitlin: When you say the Army, this is what year approximately are we talking now?

Haddock: This is June 7th, 1917.

Zeitlin: When you say you went into the Army, did you not have some experience in the National Guard prior to being in the Army?

Haddock: Well, this is what I call the Army.

Zeitlin: Okay. Can you explain [inaudible] what was the [inaudible] for getting into the National Guard?

Haddock: Quite a story [laughs].

Zeitlin: [inaudible].

Haddock: Those days [??]—a National Guard Armory at 27th and Vliet in Milwaukee, and I knew about it. The war had been declared, and everybody had the war spirit. I got the war spirit, and I wanted to be a hero [laughs]. I was only sixteen years old at the time. I went up to the recruiting man on recruiting duty in front of the door outside on the street. I asked him, “How old do you have to be to enlist in the National Guard?” “Gee,” he says, “I don’t know.” Here’s the man on recruiting duty that don’t even know that. He said, “I think it’s seventeen. How old are you?” I says, “Seventeen.” So, “Well, come on up and see the lieutenant.” He took me upstairs to the lieutenant. “Here’s a lad wants to enlist,” he says. The lieutenant looked at me and he said, “How old are you, lad?” I says, “Seventeen.” “Oh,” he says, “You’re too young.” He said, “You have to be eighteen. Come back in a week.” So I came back in a week, and he says, “Weren’t you in here last week?” I says, “Yes.” He says, “How old are you?” I says, “Eighteen.” “Swear him in, Sergeant.” So that’s how I became a member of the 5th Wisconsin Infantry, Company F of the 5th Wisconsin Infantry.

Zeitlin: When you mention the war spirit, can you just describe a little bit about it? Were people familiar with what was going on in Europe prior to our [inaudible] in the war, or how did this all arise? Just in your own experience.

Haddock: Well, I really couldn’t say much about that. I was pretty young. I do know that they were holding patriotic rallies and things like that. Flag raisings they had. Mothers would put a flag in their window—wait a minute—silver star, I’m not certain it was—I’m thinking it was a silver star, and if their son was killed in action they put up a gold star.

Zeitlin: When America entered the war [inaudible]

Haddock: Oh, everybody had the war spirit, yes. Everybody was all enthused about the war. Newspapers were full of it, and war [inaudible]. So I got the war spirit, and I joined up. I drilled a couple times in the Army; once a week I think we drilled. Didn't know much about soldiering, but they did drill a couple times and taught me my right foot from left foot and so forth. Then we were called into service and went to Camp Douglas, Wisconsin.

Zeitlin: The National Guard I assume was federalized.

Haddock: Not yet.

Zeitlin: Not yet. Okay. It was still called the National Guard?

Haddock: Yes—well now, I'm not sure about that. Maybe we were federalizing. But anyhow, we went to Camp Douglas, and there we spent I would say a couple of months, yeah, month and a half, anyhow. What I remember most about Camp Douglas was the beautiful cliffs around, I mean with the trees on top of them. Our parade ground was a field down on the level. The thing that stands out most in my mind about Camp Douglas was we were all in tents—each company of the regiment, I was in Company F—I think they ran from A Company to L. I think the L Company was from Janesville. I think that was the highest. Laying in our tents at night they used to blow “Taps”—10:30 I think it was. The first call meant “Go to Bed.” That was at 10:00 o'clock I think. Then “Taps” was called for the last call, and everybody had to be off the street and everything then. What I remember most was laying in my tent and listening to the bugle calls of the 124th Field Artillery--which was about three-quarters of a mile across the field from us—hearing that bugler blow “Taps”. Beautiful call. “Go to sleep, go to sleep, go to sleep”, that bugle call would call. Then the 107th Engineer bugler would blow, and then the 119th Field Artillery bugler would blow his “Taps”. One fade [??] out through the other. Then it would start and come to the infantry, and our regimental bugler would blow, and the next regimental bugler would blow, and so forth. It was the most beautiful thing I ever heard in my life. Stands out clearly in my memory.

Zeitlin: Can you describe the average period of work and training you experienced in the [inaudible]?

Haddock: Well, we were raw recruits, all rookies. We were getting the basics. Right shoulder rounds, left shoulder rounds, at ease, and so forth—the different commands. Taught how to obey them and so forth. That was principally what we did at Camp Douglas. Well, they'd take us out on the field and teach us the various maneuvers out there also.

Zeitlin: What kind of maneuvers are you talking about?

Haddock: Squad formations where the captain would call—I don't recall the command anymore. I don't remember how many squads there was in a company, but quite a few—dozen maybe. He'd give a command, and that full company would break up into a right turn—each squad in a right turn—and go off on different angles and so forth. Principally it was learning the manual of arms, discipline, and things like that.

Zeitlin: Did you ever practice with more than a company size?

Haddock: Not up there, no. Down in Texas we did: Camp MacArthur.

Zeitlin: So you went to the squad-sized drills, you learned the manual of arms, pretty much disciplinary type of—

Haddock: That's what it was mostly.

Zeitlin: Then a month and a half later what happened?

Haddock: Then we entrained for Camp MacArthur, Waco, Texas. The trip was uneventful going down as I recall. Then we went out on the drill field. The camp was laid out with a mess hall—that's where we ate, we called them mess halls—a wooden mess hall with benches inside which was a luxury for us then. The company streets were laid out in streets. We were put in tents—had wood stoves in 'em fired by wood, stovewood, fired by wood which we had to put in ourselves. This was getting late; now I'm speaking of the fall. We went out on the drill field to drill, and it had never been used as anything, and it was a cotton field. I can still remember all the cotton bolls were still on the cotton, hadn't been picked. We trampled all those beautiful plants down with our feet when we started drilling. We went there in sometime in July, the middle of July, I would say and we stayed there until January of the following year. Intense training before going overseas. They sure did train us; we were hard as nails when we left there. The first call was 5:30 in the morning; 5:15 in the morning was first call, fall in for reveille at 5:30 in full uniform—guns on our shoulder, ammunition belts on, and our packs on our back and so forth. Then they'd blow reveille, the bugler. That brings to mind a little story about that. This is a cute story. [laughs] I have to laugh when I think of it. We were so tired out from drilling every day, and I don't know, probably nine hours I would say, that we used to lay and take five minutes to get dressed, lay till the last minute. Then hurry up and get dressed. Then some bright soldier got the idea to put on our long overcoats. We had overcoats—even in the summertime—that reached to our ankle boots. Don't put on your clothes or anything or your uniform; just jump out of bed at the last second and jump in and put that big long overcoat on. Put your rifle belt on that, and come out and stand reveille with your rifle on your shoulder. Well, that was swell. Even the sergeants started doing it. Everybody was in love with it. Give you another five minutes to sleep, laying there anyhow. Somebody tipped the captain off to it. So one morning he stood up in front of the company at reveille, and he says, "Well, men, I understand you

have a new dress format.” He said, “All you men please remove your overcoats and fold them up neatly and lay them in front of you on the ground.” So [laughs] here was the entire company in underwear [laughs]. Long underwear—we wore long underwear winter and summer. He says, “Well, what do we have here? All right, Sergeant,” he says to the first sergeant. “You take these men for a little stroll up and down every company street in the regiment,” he says, “Let them show off their beautiful underwear for the rest of the regiment.” [laughs] So we paraded up one street and down the other and how they did catcalls and what have you and give us the raspberry as we walked [laughs] in our underwear. So that cured it; none of that went on after that.

Zeitlin: When your company went down to Texas, did you then start to operate as a larger unit with more companies? [inaudible] you were in Company F of the 1st Infantry.

Haddock: Yup.

Zeitlin: When did they start calling it—

Haddock: 32nd Division? Sometime in that period: I think the minute we arrived or just before we left Camp Douglas we were put into federal service. Then we became the 127th Infantry.

Zeitlin: I see.

Haddock: Not the 5th Wisconsin any more. 127th Infantry of the 32nd Division. That’s what it was, 32nd Division. By the way, I’m going to the 32nd Division convention in Janesville this time end of the month.

Zeitlin: You were talking about the training.

Haddock: We used to go out on the field there, and, oh, we had such a rigid training out there. They’d get athletic push-ups in the morning first thing we got out there. All kinds of push-ups, bends, and what have you and running. They’d run us around till our tongues were [??] hanging out. It was a really, really good program. We got hard as nails from it. Then we would come in for breakfast and go down to the mess hall. They gave us a pretty good breakfast as I recall: sometimes it would be ham and eggs, sometimes bacon and eggs, and so forth and some kind of a bran or something like that, cereal of some kind, and plenty of coffee—that black Army coffee. It could stand up in the cup by itself. So then we would go out to drill after breakfast. Then we’d go back to our tents and we’d have a clean up [inaudible]. We’d clean up all our equipment, everything and then we’d have an inspection. We had to take all of our stuff out into the company street. The captain and the lieutenants would come along and inspect our rifles for dirt and all that and inspect our equipment to see that it was clean. Oh yes, I should tell you about the washup. We had in front of our tent we had a little raised platform: little table-like made of wood. On there was a bucket of water and a wash basin and a large

bucket on the floor where you'd wash there: pour some water in the wash basin—everybody used the same wash basin by the way. You'd wash with soap and water on your face and then you had a towel and clean up that way. Pour the water on to that bucket down there. Then it was up to some member of the squad to empty that bucket. The corporal would designate somebody for that job; usually somebody that was in trouble got that job. Then we'd go down and eat. Then after eating we'd come back, he said, "Police up." That's what it was called: police up your place. Then we'd go out on the drill field. Probably about 8:30 I would say when we were headed for the drill crew and stayed out there till noon. We went through all kinds of formations, company formations. They started to teach us the war maneuvers: bayonet practice and things like that.

Zeitlin: Rifle practice?

Haddock: We went to the rifle range—I don't know how often. That was, oh, probably a mile from where we were. We'd march over there, and then they'd put us on the rifle range. They had men in a sort of a trench and the trench in front of it so they wouldn't get hit with the bullets. They used to put up a marker where your bullet would hit that great big bulls-eye they had up there. On a pole they had some kind of a cardboard marker they'd hold up where the bullets were. That was fine for us. But when the officers took rifle practice, some of them couldn't even hit the target [laughs]. Us privates got even with them: they'd give 'em all bad marks [laughs] on their shooting, on their marksmanship.

Zeitlin: How much marksmanship training was there?

Haddock: Oh, all the time we down there I think they'd take us over every once in a while to the rifle range. They'd have what they called disappearing targets, too. A target would pop up out in the field somewhere, and you had to find it and fire at it and shoot it. Some of it was long distance firing. We used to have a scope I'd guess you'd call it on the rifle to designate how far you were shooting and so forth and help you with your sight.

Zeitlin: Were the rifles [inaudible]? That's the old 03 Springfield, isn't it?

Haddock: The old Springfield rifle—and did they ever kick. If you didn't hold that rifle butt tight up against your shoulder you'd have one sore shoulder for quite a while. They kicked terrible.

Zeitlin: Were they accurate?

Haddock: Yes, very accurate, yes. They were very good rifles, yes. Later on—we never got 'em—they had what they called an Enfield rifle. The men who came in later in the war, the draftees, they were issued then Enfield rifles. But we had the Springfields all the way through. Very reliable guns, too, very reliable. I know I got buried one night up at the front in mud at least a foot deep. I was in a foxhole

down below—raining, terrible rain, foxhole filled with water. The guy above me, about fifteen feet above me, had dug a foxhole up there, and he threw a lot of his mud down on me while I was digging mine. We were all in such a hurry to dig because the shells were breaking around there. He caved in sometime during the night, and he came down, mud and him and everything and buried me up to my neck in mud—my rifle and everything. But I dug my rifle out and cleaned it up, and it didn't affect it at all.

Zeitlin: What other kind of training did you do? Did they take you out on regimental-size drills?

Haddock: We had regimental-size drills. I remember one time we had a divisional—well, it was more of a review. The inspector general from Washington came down to look us over before we went overseas to see if we were fit. If I remember correctly there was 47,000 men in our division. We had all the men on the field at one time. We paraded by regiments, not companies. A little story about company parades: The trick in a company was to keep a straight line, double rank and straight line going across the reviewing stand which was very difficult with 250 men in a company to keep that straight line. This particular time we came down the reviewing stand in a line, I looked down the line, and it was like a snake. Oh, it was horrible. The captain, he must have been having a fit. Then he gave the command, "Eyes right." Everybody in the company at one snap turned his eyes and looked at the buttons on the other man's jacket next to him. When he did that the men saw the crooked line, and they straightened out straight as an arrow when they went by the reviewing stand. I can still remember that well.

Zeitlin: So after being trained and given all these exercises and various marching and so forth, how did you get from Texas to where the ships left? What was the next step in this process?

Haddock: They put us on troop trains. They were not sleeping cars either, they were day coaches. We didn't travel like we did over in France in boxcars. We were given day coaches. I understand the entire division of 27,000 men was en route in twenty-four hours. I remember going over to get on the troop train. It was in a freight yard. If I recall there must have been fifteen to twenty troop trains standing there with engines on them ready to go. All they needed was the troops to get on them. Quite a sight to see all those trains lined up in a row one next to the other. The trip was uneventful except I remember one part of it. We got to somewhere in Pennsylvania—I can't think of the name of the town right now—and we stopped—I don't know what—we stopped anyhow at a station. A man came up to me with a business suit on—outside the window—handed me an envelope. He told me to write my name and address on it, and then I did. Then he handed me a dollar and his card. He said, "Write to me when you get over in France." So we proceeded to Camp Merritt, New Jersey, which was a very nice camp—something we'd never been in before. We were quartered in barracks. Two-story barracks with a big coal stove in the middle of downstairs one. Then that heated the

upstairs, too. It was beautiful there and inside for a change after living in tents all the time. I'll have to tell you a little incident that happened there which was very, very funny, was funny. We were upstairs on the second floor. They had a fire extinguisher—large one, very large, that you had to pump by hand. It would throw quite a stream a water and quite a way; about twenty feet it'd throw that stream of water. So one of the guys got the bright idea of sitting by the window, and the toilet house was right around the corner from us, and everybody wanted to go to the toilet had to pass under this window. So he got another fella to pump the fire extinguisher, and as somebody would come by down below—and that was zero weather, too—and he'd let 'em have it [laughs]. Oh, they'd get hit, and they'd yell and run [laughs]. Anyhow they hit the wrong man. One time there was this sergeant comes by, and they doused him with water. Well, all you could hear was footsteps coming up those stairs. He says, "All right, you smart guys, come on. I'll teach you a lesson. Get all your full marching equipment on ya. I'll take you out, and I'll show you how to be a soldier." Oh man, he took us out; kept us out for about four hours. Were we done in when we came back. Then he says, "I'll teach you how to soldier instead of playing like you are." [laughs]

Zeitlin: This is in January.

Haddock: Yes, about the end of January. Yes, 'cause we entrained [??] on the ship about the first of February.

Zeitlin: At Camp Merritt, New Jersey, what were your duties there?

Haddock: Nothing. We were bored to death. That's why the boys started that fooling around. They wouldn't give us a pass to New York—we were only across the river from New York. So one incident I remember there, we had a Bohemian in our medic squad. His name was Scala, Ferdinand Scala. Very, very nice obliging lad, he'd do anything for anybody. I can still remember him from back in Camp McArthur. He talked broken English. In the morning—[**End of Tape 1, Side A**] Ferdinand would call the various squad members by name. The corporal's name was Freddy Rupert. Alan Sheen was another member. Alexander was another member. And I was in there, of course. And [inaudible]. Well, Ferdinand would start when they had first call. He'd yell at the corporal, "Ruppick, Ruppick!" His name was Freddy Rupert [laughs]. "Ruppick! Ruppick! Giddy up, first call, five minutes ago already!" And then he'd holler at Alan Sheen. "Sheeny, Sheeny! Get up, reveille ago already!" [laughs] And he'd yell at me, "Haddock, Haddock! Get up!" [inaudible] me and Sandy [??] would—we were sure that [laughs] would quiet 'em down. But he was quite a guy. Well, anyhow, we got to Camp Merritt. Ferdinand came to me for an [inaudible]. He said, "Lemme," he says, "my fadda and mudda live near here. I know where the live, but I don't know where it is. I haven't seen 'em for ten years. I wonder if I could get there." "Well," I says, "they're not giving any passes out, Ferdinand, but that's a little something different." So I said, "Where are they?" He says, "Perthemboy." Well, it was Perth Amboy [New Jersey.] So I went over to the YMCA man and asked if he

had a map. He did, and he brought it out. I told him what he wanted here. So I went to the captain for him, right to the captain. I explained the situation. I said, “I know you’re not issuing any passes. “But,” I said, “in a case like this where he hasn’t seen his folks in ten years, and he’s going overseas and may not come back, I think it would nice if you issued him a pass.” “All right,” he says, “John, I will.” Gave him a three-day pass. So he went home and saw his folks. So let’s see now, where were we at? We were—

Zeitlin: In New Jersey.

Haddock: We weren’t allowed to go to New York to visit; we weren’t allowed to leave camp. So it was very boring there. So then we got orders one day that we were going to leave in the morning. They took us down to a troop train. We weren’t too far from Hoboken. Then they took us to Hoboken by train, unloaded us at a depot there. We had to walk maybe half a mile, three-quarters of a mile, somethin’ like that, to the ship. As we walked down through Hoboken some guy started to sing, “Goodbye Broadway, Hello France.” Sang that all the way down through the main streets of Hoboken.

Zeitlin: Just one guy or the whole—

Haddock: Oh, the whole group. Everybody took it up then, everybody singing on the way down. The streets were lined with people, three and four deep, waving and yelling and were waving American flags. So we got down to the dock and marched up the gangplank onto the USS *George Washington*, great big huge ex-German liner that was interned when we declared war on Germany. I was told—I’m not sure if I’m right or not—that it held 9,000 troops. It was an enormous ship: 930 feet long, enormous ship. The trip across was uneventful [inaudible]—not uneventful all the way, but mostly all the way. We were in triple-decker bunks. You could drop down if you lifted the bar. It was just canvas—no mattress—just a canvas we laid on. You could drop them down if you wished. Some of the boys started settin’ these frames right on the edge so when they’d try to get up in there he’d roll over, down he’d come on the man below [laughs]. So that was indoor sport they had going over. Then they would have abandon ship drills. You never knew when they were coming. The red lights would start to flash, and the sirens would go off and what not, and then, “Abandon ship.” You went to your cot [??], where you slept there. Get a life preserver out from under the bunks, put it on. Then you would wait for the command to abandon ship. They’d give the command, and you’d line up a circular stairway way, way down on the bottom deck. You lined up that circular stairway. We had to wait for the top decks to empty out first. Quite often they did that. Sometimes they’d do it at mealtime. They used to irk us no end—you have to put your dinner under your bunk till you come back. Anyhow, later on, they told us the dangerous part of the voyage would be forty-eight hours off the Irish coast where the submarines usually attack. There were eleven ships in our convoy. We could only go as fast as the slowest ship so the convoy stayed together. That was pretty slow because there were freighters that

were carrying food supplies, ammunition, what have you over there. So we went along at a snail's pace most of the trip. It took us about two or three weeks to cross the ocean, I know that.

Zeitlin: Was the convoy escorted?

Haddock: We had one subchaser with us, yes. One subchaser.

Zeitlin: That's it? Just one?

Haddock: Yeah.

Zeitlin: For the whole convoy?

Haddock: Until you got to the Irish coast when you'd meet the whole—they'd send out a whole flock of 'em. Oh, maybe eight or nine warships—small ones. Subchasers, they called them, and destroyers, and so forth. We were having our meal at forty-eight hours off the coast, and the lights started to flash, the sirens went on, and we all got mad. Here we are, another trial run. So went up to the deck and took up our stations up there after we got our life preservers and so forth. I'll never forget: behind me stood a major. He had on some kind of a water-proof suit. He had his .45 revolver in his hand, and he was so nervous it was shaking. I didn't like to have him standin' back of me holding that .45 gun with his hand shaking [laughs]. Boy, he was nervous. It was February, and I looked down in that black water, and I thought, are we going to have to get down there pretty soon? They did not have life rafts for us—not lifeboats for us. They had life rafts that held forty-four men—not sitting on the raft, hanging on the water with a rope all around this raft, and they'd hang 'em on that rope. That's the way you were gonna abandon ship. Believe me, I looked down in that black water, and I thought, are we going to have to get down in that? Now, all of a sudden, boom! We heard an explosion. I thought it was a torpedo hit us, but it wasn't. It was our gun in our upper—all those ships, troop ships and convoy ships, they all carried six-inch guns with the naval officers and the crew to man 'em. This was a submarine attack—a real submarine attack! We didn't [inaudible] it, but we feared it was, anyhow. Sure, and then that gun going off we thought we were hit with a torpedo. Then all the guns start firing. Then it stopped. We could hear the sailors cheering up on the afterdeck up there where the gun was mounted. We heard through the grapevine they had hit the submarine. Now, whether they did or not, we don't know. But that was the story that went around, that they had hit it. Then it was uneventful from there to Brest, France, where we landed. Immediately they put us on a troop train and took us to La Rochelle, France.

Zeitlin: When you arrived in France, how were the French people that you met, you encountered on the way from the ship to the trains? I imagine there were a couple of days in between your arrival and—

Haddock: No, as I recall, we left the same day right from the dock. The train come right up on the dock there.

Zeitlin: So La Rochelle was the first time you really—

Haddock: Well, the natives did come down when we landed, I remember that. Some of them threw flowers and handed flowers to us and so forth. Then they took us to La Rochelle. Our job there was to take charge of the corral. That was the port. Well, the port was about three miles from La Rochelle. It was called La Pallice. It was on the seacoast. They shipped Army horses—see, we had no trucks in those days, it was all horse drawn—they shipped Army horses and mules to La Rochelle where the corral was. We had 700 horses and 300 or 400 mules.

Zeitlin: For the division or for the regiment?

Haddock: This was [inaudible] us at all. This was importing them for the whole Army, just our company was there. So I was scared to death of horses. Never the same, of course, to be at the bottom of the gangway when these great, big—I don't know where they got those great, big horses from. They had—some of them the size of a washtub it looked [laughs] to me like. They were enormous horses. They'd open the gangplank door up there, and that horse'd come down, and he was wild. He had no halter on him. His eyes were bloodshot, and his tail was all bloody from rocking back and forth in the stalls coming over in the storm and everything. He'd come down there like a wild one. They expected me to put a halter on that! [laughs] When the horse came down, I ran! [laughs] I wasn't going to stand there for no one! So the sergeant says, "What's the matter?" I says, "I wouldn't dare try to stop that horse and get a halter on him." "Well, you let me get her, and then get out of here. Get over to the corral here, and get out on the—we'll find another job for you." Well, I got outside, and the sergeant out there says, "All right, here's six horses tied on a rope. Take 'em up to the corral." Which was about a mile from there, I guess, or more. So I took the rope with the six horses. I kept watching my feet; I was afraid they were going to walk on me. I was just scared to death of 'em. As we got down the line, I noticed 'em—I kept looking and looking. First thing I know they were in a semi-circle around me. I was surrounded by horses. I got scared. They started to pull on the rope. I dropped the rope, and away they went. I hadda go back and tell the captain [laughs] I lost the horses. He sent somebody after the horses. He says, "Get up in the corral and shovel the manure out of the stalls. You aren't good for anything else." [laughs] So I went up and reported to the sergeant up there. Then he put me on a feeding detail—feeding the mules and horses. They were headed into the stalls up there. You hadda go past them—the rear—to get to the front. He gave me a bucket of oats or whatever it was for the mule. I skidded by him, and he rolled over and tried to squeeze me against the side of the stall. I finally got to the head end up there and dropped the bucket into his manger or whatever they call it, and then I jumped up on top out of the way of him. He kept trying to nip me, kept nipping at me up there. Finally I hadda get out of there, that's all. The sergeant was yelling at me, "Come on, you

gonna stand there all day?" So I started back, and when I got to the middle of him I lost my nerve, and I jumped. As I jumped he let go with his rear foot or front, I don't know which it was, and he hit me in the butt, and he sent me sailing out into the street [laughs]. I absolutely refused to feed any more mules. I said, "You can put me in the jailhouse if you want to, but I'll not go past any more of those mules!" So then they put me to cleaning up. Boy, I was glad when I got out of that.

Zeitlin: So how long did you stay at that building at La Rochelle?

Haddock: Couple months. While I was there, naturally, I met a little French girl. You want to hear that story?

Zeitlin: Sure.

Haddock: I was talking a walk one Sunday afternoon, and I met an American sailor. American sailors used to always bring a carton of cigarettes with 'em when they come ashore because they knew that we could not get what we called tailor-made [mass produced, factory made] cigarettes. The Army issued us a bag of Bull Durham [tobacco] and had the cigarette papers right on there. We had to roll our own. He says to me, "Hey there, soldier, here's a package of cigarettes for you." They used to always give every serviceman they saw, they'd give him a package of cigarettes. He says, "Where you going?" I says, "I'm not going anywhere in particular. I'm taking a walk." "Then walk down that street," he says. "I don't know what's going on down there. I just came up from there." He was on that way, past this building there, and they had about twenty to thirty French girls there, all dressed so funny. He says, "They all threw kisses at me and waved at me when I went by". He says, "So go on, walk down there." So I thought, well, I'm seventeen years old, I'm out for a good time [laughs], you know, and I started to walk down. As I did I see them all coming up the street towards me. So they turned in the house on the corner where I was standing. The minute they got in the curtains came apart, and they were waving at me and throwing kisses to me through the window. Pretty soon a young man came out. He says, "I talk a little English", he says, "and I work for the Bank of France." And he says, "The girls want you to come in and sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" for them." I didn't even know the words [laughs]. I says, "Who are those girls, anyhow?" "Oh," he says, "they're a bunch of school girls in costume. They're rehearsing a play they're gonna put on in about a week." He says, "Won't you please come in?" "Oh," I says, "all right, I'll come in." He says, "They're serving coffee and cake in there." Well, that sounded good to me, so I went in. Then they got me up to the piano, and we sang "The Star-Spangled Banner", and I mumbled and hummed through most of it. Then they sang "The Marseillaise", which is a beautiful song and so forth. I see this one girl over there, and I kinda took a shine to her. Then I start talkin' to her, and she took me in and introduced me to her mother, who was there. So when it come time to leave her mother came over and asked me if I wouldn't go home to dinner with 'em. Well, I sure would. I went on, and I got the

nice meal. So I started to go with Blanche Mitard . Not much, but on and off. We went to the play. That night they had the play and so forth. Then we were called to leave there and go to Alsace-Lorraine on a short call. At noon, we were going to leave.

Zeitlin: That was the front, Alsace-Lorraine.

Haddock: Well, there was Frenchies up there, yes. A quiet, quiet front, but it was wartime up there. I went over, and I asked the sergeant for permission to go over to say goodbye to the girls, and then he gave it to me. I ran over there, and they were gone. The mother said nice of you to say goodbye for me. I was sittin' there eaten my dinner on the cobblestone driveway, and I see a sergeant coming up with a big bouquet of flowers with an American flag wrapped around it. He was looking around and looking around, and my god it looks like he's looking for me. Sure enough he spotted me. "Here you," he says. "I just met two girls downtown. They wanted to know if I knew "Caporal Haddock" [laughs]. He says, "Yes, I know Corporal Haddock." "Well, would you please say goodbye to him for us and give him these flowers?" "Here," he says, "take em, I don't want 'em. I carried them all the way from downtown." So we started to march downtown to the troop train. I stuck the flowers in the end of my rifle. If the captain had ever looked around I'd have served sixty days in jail for it [laughs]. I hoped they would see it, and sure enough they did. They bust right through the ranks and tripped the guys who were marching in step and threw their arms around me and kissed me—both of them—and then they ducked out. So that was the end of those girls. But I did correspond with Blanche when I got home, and my wife corresponded with her, and they used to exchange gifts and so forth. Then along in about 1925 the correspondence stopped. We never knew what happened to her, never could find out. Our letters weren't answered or anything. So never did find out until 1968 when I made another trip back to France, and I went back to La Rochelle. I took a cab out to where she had lived, rang the bell. Nobody answered. I said what do I expect, somebody after fifty years to come down and say, "Hello, John"? So, on a hunch I went across the street to a bakery shop. I says, "Mitard?," and I pointed across the street. "Oh, oui," she says, "oh, oui." She started rattling off French to me, and I couldn't understand it. So she called a kid out of the garage to tell me what she was saying. He says, "Go next door to number 6. They moved from number 8." Okay, so I went over and rang the bell at number 6. Who's going to come here? Somebody I know. Elderly woman answered the door; seventy-eight years old she was. I looked at her, and I looked at her, and after fifty years I recognized her as Blanche's older sister Denise. So I said to her, "Denise?" She says, "Oui." She looked at me, who in the dickens are you? So I had a picture of Blanche and I showed it to her. She started to cry, "Morte 1925." She died of tuberculosis. So she took me upstairs—oh, they were so poor. Uncle was in a wheel chair. He'd had a stroke and so forth. I didn't stay long 'cause she couldn't talk English, and I didn't remember much of my French anymore. Where do we go from here, now? **[End of Tape 1, Side B]**

Zeitlin: When you left La Rochelle you were heading up towards Alsace-Lorraine and towards a more active sector. If you could start there and describe your experiences moving up.

Haddock: It was uneventful, the trip, as I recall it, going to Alsace-Lorraine.

Zeitlin: This is now what month?

Haddock: Hmm—

Zeitlin: Spring anyway, huh.

Haddock: June, I would say. June—I'm just—it catches me. I'm surprised. It must have been June because we went into Château-Thierry during July, so I'd say it was June. We went through a town I never known, Belfort, quite a large city up there. We got off at a—no, I didn't think I'd ever forget the name of that town where we were stationed. Dannemarie, Dannemarie that was it. I was attached to the battalion headquarters as a runner carrying messages between the major of the battalion and my captain up in the front. I had been promoted to corporal, and I was [laughs]—the captain says he had to send somebody to battalion headquarters to take charge of the runners. He sent me. I suppose I was more expendable [laughs] than anyone else, inexperienced, and only a kid. So he was glad to get rid of me, probably. So we were stationed in a two-story building across the street from the battalion headquarters. We were probably a mile back of the lines, at least a mile, long, open-firing land between the town of Dannemarie and where the trenches were. There were trenches then. French troops had been occupying them and the Germans for four years then.

Zeitlin: Did you have any interactions with the French or the British troops, or were the American soldiers completely on their own?

Haddock: We were completely on our own up there. We took over that sector. The French were on our right and left. We took over. Of course I wasn't up there. I was back in Dannemarie most of the time. I also had to run as a runner, and I had three other runners with me, if I remember correctly. I remember going up there. One of the things I remember best was I used to go up there and get into trenches every once in a while. Trenches were dug, oh, about head high deep so your head would be—you could see over the top of it, and you could use your gun, too, over the top of it. The fellows used to say, "You want to take a shot at em, John?" I'd get down there once in a while. I couldn't see nothing I was shooting at, but I shot the rifle just to say I shot at the Germans. I got up there one day, and the fellow says, "Come on down here. We got a target for you to shoot at." So I went down. He says, "See that guy way over there, that German soldier digging that hole?" I looked, and sure enough there was a man with a pick digging away and digging away and swinging that pick, and digging away. The sergeant says, "I'll bet you a dollar you can't hit him." "Why can't I hit him?" I says. He said, "I'll bet you a

dollar you can't hit him." So I took a bead on him and fired. Well, what the dickens, still kept swinging that pick. I shot again, shot again, still swinging the pick. I couldn't figure that out because I was a pretty good shot. They sent a patrol out that night to find out what was going on. They found out that it was just a framework of wood, had a German helmet on it and a German coat hung over it [laughs], and they put that pick in there. All they were doing was shooting holes in that German coat that they had hung over [laughs]. Then in between the trenches, too, there was an apple orchard. The cook says to the boys, he says, "If you get out there and get me some apples I'll make you an apple pie." So these crazy soldiers went out there at night. Well, there must have been a dozen of them up there picking apples. The Germans heard them and opened fire on them, opened up with machine guns and all. And boy, did they come tearing out of those [laughs] apple trees, but they didn't drop the apples. They hung on to them and brought 'em back, and we got our apple pie for it anyhow. Well, what else was up there? We were only about fifteen kilometers from the Swiss border, I know that.

Zeitlin: How long were you there?

Haddock: We were there until the end of June, I would say. Not too long, a month maybe, something like that. Maybe it was a little after June. Probably the 1st or 2nd of July we pulled out.

Zeitlin: Where did you head then?

Haddock: We headed for Château-Thierry. The big drive was on. The Marines had already stopped the German drive that was trying to take Paris and turned them the other way, suffered heavy, heavy casualties for doing it. They threw in the 1st Division then of the regular Army to relieve them and started calling for reinforcements. We were one of the divisions. The 28th Pennsylvania Division was one, and the 27th Division from New York was another one, the 1st Division, so forth. So we were all converging on Château-Thierry. We turned the drive around and started it the other way. The Marines and them had done that. So they put us on troop trains. No, they put us in boxcars. They had stenciled on the side of the cars "Chevaux 8", eight horses, and—I don't know how to pronounce that word H-O-M-M-E-S, I always called it "Homess." I don't know what it is—"Hommes 40"; in other words forty soldiers to a boxcar. They took about a six-inch strip around about head high in the cars for ventilation. There was no seats in them, no nothing. You stood and laid on the floor and slept on top of one another and everything else. Anyhow, the one eventful thing I will never forget is we pulled into Paris, saw Eiffel Tower, and we stopped on a boulevard. There was a boulevard running alongside of the train. We could see Eiffel Tower from there, and I got quite a thrill when I saw that. I don't know whether the locomotive was taking coal, water, whatever, but we were there for quite awhile. Across the boulevard there was an apartment building. On the third floor a door opened, and young lady come out. She must have just taken a bath. She had a long bath

towel—it went from her chin down to her ankles—held up in front of her. Well, now you just imagine probably a thousand men in these cars looking at a young female up there when they [laughs] hadn't seen a girl in months and months and months. They started to yell. How they did yell and yell and yell and yell and yelling, but if they hadn't had 'em locked in there—they had the pegs in the doors so you couldn't get out. They all woulda [laughs] abandoned the train right there. It went along all right until the wind came up, and the wind would blow that towel back and forth. And how that gang would yell [laughs]. So that was one of the unforgettable parts of the war. We went through Paris, out beyond Paris to the outskirts, and then through about fifteen miles from there, I would judge, into a woods. The kitchens came up, and they served the meal, stew. That's usually what you got when you were on the march and moving. We had stew and coffee and bread, so forth. We went to sleep there, laid right down in the woods with just the bedclothes we had with us. They woke us up about 5:00 o'clock in the morning and served us breakfast—good healthy, big breakfast. I'll never forget the minister said a prayer for us. He says, "A lot of you boys are going where you'll never come back." He says, "A lot of you won't come back." So I can still remember him saying that prayer. It was just breakin' day in the morning. They loaded us onto trucks, no seats, all of us standing up, packed right in too we were, and we rode all day. We had what's called hard rations: canned corn beef and some hard bread that they had. That was our dinner and our supper. We got to Château-Thierry on the Marne River about 5:00 o'clock. We pulled down along the river, and there must have been a mile and a half line of trucks there. They unloaded us. We started to march back through the town of Château-Thierry over the Marne River on a pontoon bridge that had been put up by the American soldiers as the regular stone bridge had been blown down by the retreating Germans. We crossed, started the march up a great big hill. Oh, I never thought I'd get to the top of that hill; I was staggering before I got up there. I was just all in. I was only a kid, and I couldn't take what the older fellows could take. I was staggering, and this Bohemian, Scala behind me, was in the rear right behind me, reached up, grabbed my rifle off my shoulder, and if I remember correctly the rifles weighed eleven pounds. "Hayda, give me that gun," he says. "Give me that gun." He had one on each shoulder. That's all I needed to keep going, and up I went. We marched until about 8:30 that night. Oh, we were just done in. Laid down on the ground again until about 3:30 in the morning they woke us up. Started marching again, a regulation Army march of fifty minutes marching and ten minutes rest. Just keep that up all the time. Fifty-minute march, ten-minute rest: that's what they call the regulation march. We marched all that day. That night we pulled into a town called Ronchères. It was quite a historic place as far as I was concerned. The battalion headquarters was set up there, and the men went on. I didn't go with them; I was with the battalion headquarters. They went about another three quarters of a mile and dug in along a sunken road. They dug foxholes wherever they wouldn't get hit. I hadn't gone up there yet. In the morning the major give me a message to give to the captain. I went up with the message and found him in the foxhole along this road. I handed it to him. I was standing there and waiting for an answer, and he grabbed me by the arm, and he

pulled me down. He said, “What’s the matter with you? You wanna get killed? Don’t you know they’re all shootin’ at ya?” Well, I heard this “crack, crack, crack” around my head, but I didn’t know [laughs] they were bullets. That was my first experience in the fire. So I ducked down then. He gave me a message back, and I went back with it. Then the major had an answer for him and sent me up. The answer was for them to attack, so they started out over an open wheat field. The Germans were about three-quarters of a mile across that open wheat field in the woods. I gave him the message, and he give me one going back, so I went back. On my way back I came to the building where the headquarters were, and the Germans were shelling all around there. As I got in the building the lieutenant was standing in the doorway. The major was sitting on a nail keg lookin’ out the window that didn’t have any glass in it. I was between the window and the door when a shell burst right out in front in the lawn right in front of the road twenty feet from the building, I guess. A piece of shell probably six, eight inches long come spinning through the air and hit the major in the neck and all but cut his head clean off. The lieutenant got it in the knee and the leg. It blew me over a bed in the bedroom—it was a bedroom. Blew me back over that bed, the concussion. Knocked me, stunned me for a little while. Then I came to and got up and helped with—got another man to help me get the lieutenant down in the basement out of the way. It was a stone basement down there. Well, I had the privilege of going back there in 1968 and going back and visiting that building again where I had been before.

Zeitlin: What was your reaction to this combat and to the whole feeling of being in the war and experiencing combat?

Haddock: Well, I was scared at times, no question about that. I experienced some pretty rough times. I remember one in particular: carrying a message which was very, very dangerous at the time. The major was gone. The lieutenant was in charge of the battalion—didn’t even have a captain. He gave me instructions to send a message to the French 10th Army which was on our right to close up, move over. There was an opening between our Army and the French Army and the Germans were getting in behind there with patrols and stuff. So I sent a runner out. He didn’t come back. Sent another runner out, he didn’t come back. I sent seven runners out, and none of them came back. The lieutenant said, “Well, John, you’re going to have to go, we don’t have any more.” “All right, give me the message.” I knew that something was getting these runners. I’d have to be very careful. I didn’t know what it was, but I was going to be very careful. There was a church in the town and a churchyard behind it or a cemetery behind it and a stone wall along the cemetery. I got along the cemetery and got down to the end of the wall, and I looked around, couldn’t see anything. I ventured out. The minute I did then I saw some of my runners laying there dead. Just then it was “crack, crack, crack, crack.” I could hear the bullets whizzing past me and kicking the sand up around me. There was a little sunken stream, a little creek, about a hundred feet from where I was. I showed it to my wife in 1968, and I said, “Believe it or not I made it one leap from here [laughs] to that creek when I heard those bullets snapping

around me.” I dove into that water—only about a foot and a half or two foot of water in there—I was down below the level of the ground. I made my way along that creek for quite a while until there was an opening. Sure enough they were waiting for me; they knew I’d have to cross that open water there, open place. They let me have it, but they didn’t hit me. I ran so fast they didn’t quite get a line on me.

Zeitlin: Did you have a rifle? Were you armed?

Haddock: Oh yes, I had a rifle. We secured it strapped on our back, though. That’s how they always knew we were runners. That’s why they always took shots at us, knowing we were runners. So I followed that creek and followed it all the way over to the French Army. Got over there and delivered the message to the general and waited for an answer. As I waited for an answer, the Germans saw me come in there with my rifle on my back and knew I was a runner. So they started to shell this headquarters. It was an earthwork redoubt [a small temporary fortification], I would call it, about four foot high built up above the ground. They dropped a shell right in that circle—inside the circle—killed about six, seven French soldiers. With that I dove for a foxhole that was on the level of the ground. I dove in that foxhole, and a Frenchman jumped on top of me in there. Another shell broke very close to us and hit a tree, and the tree came down and landed on the top of us. A tree of about six inches in diameter is all, landed on top of us and pinned us in the hole. Well, after the shelling was over we managed to lift the tree up and get out of there. Then I got my answer, and I went back. Was I glad to get out of there.

Zeitlin: What was your impression of the French and the French Army?

Haddock: Oh, I liked them very much. I thought they were very good soldiers, very good soldiers. They were well disciplined and always took care of their uniforms good and so forth. Germans were too, believe me. They were a great bunch of soldiers; nothing you can say wrong about them. Oh, when I got back with my message the lieutenant says, “John, I’m recommending you for the Distinguished Service Cross for that trip you made.” Which I should have got, too, but he was killed the next day so the recommendation never went through. So that was the one trip I will never forget, very, very dangerous all the way through.

Zeitlin: That was at Château-Thierry. Now when you moved up past that, what happened next?

Haddock: That was Château-Thierry. That was—yeah, but that was beyond Ronchères, yeah, that was the next town. Then we went up to—I can’t think of the name of the town right now. At night—so we got up, we could hear the big guns roaring. We knew we were getting close and closer to the front, and closer to the war all the time. Pretty soon I was at the head of the battalion with the major of the battalion, and he had a guide with him. He says to the guide, “You sure you know where you’re going, or are you lost?” The guide says, “Well, to tell you the truth

I'm lost." So he says to me, "You get back and notify all the captains of the companies to dig in right where they are and stay there for the night till we find out where we're at." So I did; I went back. On my way back they started to shell us. On my way back they dropped a shell that I thought was going to hit me on the head. It screamed so loud when it passed over me. It couldn't have been over three, four foot above my head. It landed behind me on Company G from Madison, Wisconsin. It hit and killed fourteen men and wounded twenty-nine. I'll never forget looking at that pile of men the next day. Well, I'm not going to say—I remember seeing an officer who was from Madison. I won't mention his name 'cause a relative of his is liable to hear this. He was in that pile with his legs sticking out and his silver bars on his shoulder. I could see he was a lieutenant. What a mess that was. So—let's see now. Okay. **[End of Tape 2, Side A]**

Zeitlin: Okay, so you moved up--you were moving up towards the front and being shelled by the Germans. What happened then, after the Company from Madison got hit?

Haddock: Well, we all dug the foxholes and stayed there most of the night. Early in the morning, regiment--the lieutenants says go back and get the troops up, get the captains. So, get the troops ready to go. We're gonna move up, out of the way there. So we went up on the hill, out of the way. 'Til about eleven o'clock in the morning. Before we got the order to advance. [inaudible] So we started down this hill and the shells were bursting all around, the Germans saw us comin' down the hill, started to shell us. And some of them were missing us and hitting the artillery horses at the foot of the hill. It was terrible to see those horses mad, some of the men were hit and wounded, laying on the ground. These horses rearing up in the air and coming down on those wounded men. Then I remember a--a sergeant in the artillery who was a neighbor of mine in Milwaukee when I was a boy. And I can still remember him with his .45 revolver shooting horses to keep 'em from trampling the wounded men. Shootin' horse after horse. The only way he could stop 'em.

So we started down this hill and out into an open wheat field. And I was in the reserve line, the second line of those advancing. And it wasn't long before the first, there was no first line. So many men got hit--we were the first line, most of us, with a few stragglers from the other line. And we were the first thing--we were under rifle fire and then machine gun fire. So, we'd advanced about a hundred feet and then dropped to the ground and started firing at the Germans. We couldn't see 'em, all we could do is fire at the woods. So we advanced up about half way across this wheat field, when a lieutenant gave the signal to drop we all dropped down. Now he says, "Start firing at that bushes over there. I think there's a German machine gun in there." So we did, about twenty of us there, there was. And we started firing at those bushes. Evidently he was right because the machine gun, gunner, turned his gun right on us. He didn't turn it on any individual. He just sprayed us. Well, when one row would be done, hit the man next to me through the shoulder, come back with the gun, hit the man on the other side of me through the forehead. Well, then I says, well I'm gonna get it next, and I took my helmet off and covered my face. I always had a fear of getting hit in the face. I covered

my face with my helmet. And he swung the gun back and I says, "Something happened. What happened? What happened to me?" I was [inaudible] and didn't know it, I was hit and didn't know it. "What happened to me? Something's happened to me?" Then I laid down [??] finally I came to and [inaudible], I wonder if I got hit. I started to move my arm, "That's all right." Moved the other arm, "Oh, I didn't get hit." Moved my one leg, "No, I'm all right." Went to move the other leg and I couldn't move it. Well, what's the matter? Looked down, I couldn't see nothing wrong. Then I looked down at my foot and I saw the side of my shoe is all tore open. Well, gee, "I musta got hit, what a lucky hit." And [inaudible] the blood had filled up the shoe and was coming out of the side of the shoe, was cut open and out of the shoe laces. Then I says, "Oh, I got hit." And the leg was more or less paralyzed, I couldn't move it. So I was under fire yet, and shells were dropping and machine gun bullets were still popping all around. So, "I better get out of here or I'll get killed." So I crawled back to the second loaders [inaudible], about a foot and half, maybe two foot below [inaudible], I laid there until the line moved on.

Zeitlin: Did they fire back--did the men fire back at the machine gun?

Haddock: Not when he was shootin--not when he was sprayin' 'em with bullets. No, they--I don't know what they did. No, they weren't firing then. You couldn't because you just got too many of 'em. And then the lieutenants gave the command, "Move forward." That's when I knew I couldn't get up. And I tried to get up and couldn't get up. Then, well, I don't believe there was over a dozen men got up out of the twenty that was there before that, going in. And the lieutenant nearly got killed too.

So I crawled back to this spot and the French--two Frenchman came along with a little two-wheel cart, pickin' up the wounded. They saw me and they picked me up, put me on the two wheeled cart and took me up to a point on the road where they thought the ambulances were coming in but they weren't, but they didn't know that. And then put me right on the ground to lay there and I had to lay there and lay there and, oh I was so thirsty. I woulda given anything for a drink of water. I'd lost so much blood and I knew I shouldn't drink water because they tell you not to drink water if you get wounded, don't drink too much. Well, I was so thirsty. [inaudible] I saw what I thought was a pipe coming out of the side of the back of the road with a stream of water coming out of it. And I thought I was having hallucinations then. And I looked again, and I says, "That's a spring!" And I dragged myself and crawled over to that spring and took my mess kit drinking cup out and filled it with water. And I drank, and I could not stop. And I drank too much and my lights went out.

I don't know how long I lay there. And I came to--I was sitting up and someone was holding me, sitting up with his arm around me. And I opened my eyes and I saw a gold star that meant a general. I thought, 'Well, I am out of my mind.' I closed my eyes for a little while, opened 'em again and that star was still there. I looked up at that face, I says, "Are you a general?" He says, "Yes, I'm General

So-and-So." Uh, 28th Division, Pennsylvania Division. "We're gonna relieve you men tonight." That's [inaudible] lookin' over the situation.

Zeitlin: Is this still the Argonne? Is this the Chateau-Thierry?

Haddock: Chateau-Thierry.

Zeitlin: Okay.

Haddock: And, uh, so he says, "Call the chauffeur." All the generals, have chauffeurs. He says, "Come over here, help me carry this man to the car." They put me in the rear seat, took me down to where the ambulances should be comin' in. They left me down there, with a lot of other wounded men down there. Want me to continue on?

So, we were all in a building and a doctor came over and cut my shoe off and put a--dumped some iodine on the wound and wrapped it up with a bandage. And then they--they didn't have any ambulances, they were so busy, so many wounded men. They didn't have nowhere near enough ambulances to handle it. So they were loadin' 'em in the trucks. Men with broken arms, broken legs, and badly wounded and shot up inside and everything, laying on these--not even a mattress on the floor, nothing. In Army trucks. Well they put me up on the seat with the driver because I was not so badly wounded. I was conscious and so forth. So, I'd faint every once and a while, the soldier driving that big Army truck with one arm around me to keep me from falling out the side of the truck. There was no doors, Army trucks didn't have doors, canvas canopy with no doors on 'em. He sat there, half the time holding on to me, he'd hit shell holes and I thought we were gonna go flying in the ditch. And he drove, hours and hours and hours and after dark, he was driving after dark without lights, because he didn't want the airplanes to spot 'em, throw a bomb or shoot the machine gun at 'em from the plane. And, so, we drove into the wee hours of the morning, I didn't--never did know what time we came to. And, it was on the railroad line. Put us in a building, at about ten o'clock in the morning they took us all out and it was raining. They lined us all up on stretchers on the depot platform. Waiting for a hospital train to take us to the hospital. Then they took us down, lined us up on the station platform, raining, raining, raining, all these wounded men like that, laying in the rain. Finally the hospital train came, they put us in, a regular hospital train, and American train. And I don't remember how long we were going back to a town called Vichy.

It's down in Central France. And it was a health spa, this town was. And had a lot of hotels there where people used to come to drink the spring water. It was supposed to be beneficial for sick people. And they turned all these hotels into hospitals for the wounded men. So they took me to what they call the International Hotel. And, uh, I was there for two months. And my wound was still running, still had bandages on it, big, heavy pads. Oh, I'll tell you about the doctor dressing my wounds. I was a--I used to have to go down and he'd dress it every day and he'd just take one jerk and off would come that bandage and I would yell, they could hear me all over the hospital. Because that--that piece of gauze down

in that open wound was down in the nerve center and it was hittin' the nerve center and when he's jerk--oh, the pain. And I got so mad one morning, I says - he was a captain too - I says, "You're a horse doctor! You're not a doctor." [laughs] I was so mad. And even then he [inaudible] he looked up with a smile on his face, he said, "I know I'm hurtin' you, but I'll tell you why." He reached in the can and took out that pad. "Now see all this proud [??] flesh here, all this--" what you call it? Matter and stuff in there. "It's all on the bandage." He says, "You cannot get a cleaner wound than that. Sure it's bleeding, but it's clean. Now if that were your problem, you'd have the nurse soak it all up nice and then peel it off nice but," he says, "that will not heal that way. Not like mine will." Well, I says, "I'm glad you told me. Now I understand. You just keep right on that way." But it never was any pleasanter, believe me.

But, I went back in 1968 and drove down there. Found a park close to the hospital where I used to stay. And, oh yes, when I was in the hospital I couldn't sleep, didn't have any pain killers those days, I couldn't sleep. At night I used to get out of bed and go stand on the balcony out there. And I wouldn't be out there too long before the nurse makin' her rounds knew I would be out there and she would come out there and talk to me. She was from Rochester, New York. Beautiful person. Person about thirty-five years old. And she'd stand and talk with me. We'd talk, talk, talk and then she'd go off to make her rounds, then she'd come back again. Then I went over in 1968 I went over and there was the International Hotel, just like it was when I left it, [inaudible] through the glass doors and the beautiful wild out there, it was all beautiful trees and flowers out there, and I looked up at the third floor balcony where I used to stand. Still there like I left it. That was quite a thrill to go back there.

Zeitlin: Now after you--how long were you in this International Hotel?

Haddock: Two months.

Zeitlin: Two months of recovery.

Haddock: And, uh, one day the doctor says to me, "John, have you tried a shoe on that foot?" I says, "No, I haven't." He says, "I wish you'd put a shoe on and come back. I wanna see you walk." I put a shoe on, it hurt like the dickens but put the shoe on. Didn't lace it but got it on. I walk across the floor. Walk across the floor, he says, "You're goin' outta here tonight." Says, "We got three car--three train loads of wounded men coming in tomorrow. We have to make room for 'em."

Zeitlin: Americans?

Haddock: Yeah. Americans. That Chateau-Thierry drive was on then. Well, the Argonne, Argonne was on. And the one before it, Soissons, was a big drive up there. And, uh, so I went back with a bandage on my foot. And went up to town, far as the standard gage railroad would take me, got off there and waited for a--what they call a [??] gage railroad, it was only about two foot wide, the tracks were. And [inaudible], I was a corporal and I was in charge of--

Zeitlin: Did they send you back to the front?

Haddock: Yeah, right back. I was a corporal and I was in charge of about ten men. Who were ex-wounded men goin' back to their outfit. While we were--the MP, there was an MP there, he says, "Go on over to that building, I'll call you when your train comes in." We went over there, we were in there about ten minutes when the door busted open and a lieutenant with a .45 revolver in his hand busts in and he says, "All right, put up your hands men. Everyone here, put up your hands." Well, we complied with his order and then I got up and he says, "Who's in charge?" I says, "I am. Now maybe," I says, "You'll explain to me what this is about." I says, "We're all wounded men goin' back to the front, to our outfits and we shouldn't be treated like this." He says, "I'm sorry but," he says, "there 3,000 deserters from the 5th Division back here somewhere and we're tryin' to round 'em up." So then, that justified the visit.

So we got on this little renegade's [??] train, on bales of hay, sittin' up and getting our heads knocked up from the branches of trees as we--they laid the tracks anywhere, through cemeteries and over graves and everything. Get up to my Division, get off, and I--soldiers checked me in, I says, "Is this the 32nd Division?" He says, "Yes." I say, "I'm lookin' for the 127th Infantry." He says, "This is it. You're talkin' to it right now." Well, I says, "I want Company F." "This is Company F." I go, "Well, who are you? I don't know you." "Well," he says, "you musta been one of the old members." I says, "Yes, I was." "Well you ain't gonna find many around here, you know." I says, "I won't?" He says, "No, you won't. There's one over there you might know." I says, "Who's that?" He says, "Sergeant Waugh (likely Sergeant William N. Waugh), Bill Waugh." "Oh," I says, "him and I were buddy buddies, you bet your life I know him." So I went over to Bill just so glad to see him, "Hello, Bill." I put out my hand, he looked up at me, like a--I don't know, like a man that didn't have all of his marbles. "Hello, John." He didn't care who I was or what I was. He'd been all the way through all the fighting and never was wounded and never--and saw all the men killed and wounded, so many of them. So, [inaudible], I says, "I'm sure glad to see you Bill." "There aren't men many left," he says. So, I says, "Who's in charge?" He says, "Lieutenant So-and-So, he's in that dugout down there, about forty foot underground." So I went down, I salute the lieutenant, I says, "Corporal Haddock reporting for duty." He says, "Corporal Haddock? Are you one of the original members?" I says, "Yes, I am." "You went through Chateau-Thierry?" "Yes, I did. I was wounded there." "Okay, you're Sergeant now. Line Sergeant." That meant I had other sergeants under me. So, I'm out [??] and I feel pretty big. Kid seventeen years old in charge of fifty men, a couple sergeants and all the corporals and stuff standin' out in front of 'em and giving the commands. [laughs] I felt pretty big. A little nervous at first but I got along all right.

So, uh, then we started the--then they--they sent us into the Argonne forest drive. We started marching to get there. And it was horrible for me to march with a wounded foot, still running. And I marched--we marched day and night. And I just was gettin' so wore out, I was weak from layin' in the hospital two months.

And I just was worn to a frazzle. And I started staggering. Pulling up one foot and then the other and then pulling the other one out of the mud, it was a muddy road. And I was beginning to stagger. And afterwards I talked to Bill Waugh at home in Beloit, went to visit him, and he says, "You know, John, I was watchin' you." And he says, "I'd watch you pull one foot out of the mud and head in that direction and then you'd pull the other foot out and head in the other direction. And I knew you wouldn't be there long, and the next time I turned around you were gone." And I headed right into the ditch head first, passed out, didn't know what was.

And I was layin' there yet and it was dark. And evidently some troops had stopped to rest there and I heard the soldiers talking and I heard one of them say, "Well, he's dead." The other guy says, "I don't think he is. Go on over and see." "Nah, he's dead." Talking about me. So one of come over to me, roll me over, "No," he says, "he's not dead!" He says, "Stop one of them ambulances out there. We'll put him in there." Well they stopped and ambulance and put me in there, and took me back to the--towards the hospital. Took me back to an old chateau. And they laid us all out on the ballroom floor, we're all a buncha wounded men. I wasn't wound- -I was wounded but was still able to walk a little. And I woke up about ten thirty in the morning and they were servin' breakfast. Had some breakfast. Around about eleven fifteen, eleven thirty, or something like that, there was a little balcony up on the side of the wall and a major walked up in full uniform. "Boys," he says, "your troubles are over. The war is over. Armistice was declared at eleven o'clock this morning."

So I--sent me on a troop train back to Bordeaux and I shipped out of there--

Zeitlin: [inaudible] rejoin the regiment?

Haddock: No, no I was [inaudible]. My regiment went in the Army of Occupation, stationed at Coblenz, Germany for some time. No, I came home as what they called a casual. And there's a little story connected with that too. They put me on a former passenger liner, the *USS Sierra*. Small ship, 350 feet long was all it was. I got home, I wrote to my older brother that I came home on a little bit of a tub called the *USS Sierra*. And he wrote a letter back to me and he was highly insulted. "John," he says, "1905 I left home, goin' around the world." I remember that, he went around the world as a seaman on a sailing ship. 110 days on water without seeing land between New York and Australia. And he says, "I jumped ship when I got to Australia, I couldn't take it anymore. They didn't pay me. So I hired out on a passenger liner from Australia to San Francisco." And he says, "The name of it was the *USS Sierra*. And I object to you callin' it a little bit of a tub! [laughs] I thought that was a big deal when I came over on it." Imagine that.

Zeitlin: So when you got home, how was the discharge here? How did that work?

Haddock: I, oh well, we came home on a ship and I'll never forget coming into New York harbor. All the ships' whistles were blowing, the fire tugs were shooting water, in all directions. They put us on a troop train, come up on the docks, and started out at Albany, New York. Oh no, on the way to Albany, the Major who was in charge

of the train--well, officers had a car of their own and we were quite crowded back there--and the officer, the Major came back and he says, "Boys, all the noncommissioned officers move up into our car. We got lotsa room, more room than we need and we'll relieve some of the crowding back here." So I went up, I was a sergeant so I went up. And we got to Albany, New York. Red Cross girls got on with coffee and donuts and so forth. But they would come and look in our window, then turn around and bolt. Never came in our car at all. Now we couldn't figure it out. Finally, the Major was in there [??]. We said, "I wonder why they don't come in here." They had wire mesh all over the windows, I don't know what it was for, but maybe shell-shocked men or whatever, it was all wire mesh all around. So, he went out on the platform, he says to the Red Cross girls, "How come you didn't service the men in that car in there?" "Well, we can't go in there." "You can't go in there? Who told you that?" "The men in this car are [??]." "Why?" "Well, they're all shell-shocked, they're crazy men in there. We can't go in there." [laughs] Them louses, they told the girls that, and then [inaudible] goodies [laughs]. Then they came in with their pitchers [??], told them they were getting conned, you know. [laughs] Oh, that was really funny.

Zeitlin: So did the train take you back to Milwaukee?

Haddock: So, no, to Rockford, Illinois, Camp Grant, which is there no more now, they tore it down. And I was discharged from there, nothing much to it. All I remember, first night I was in the Camp I went to a movie for the first time in lord knows when. And it was the finest film I ever saw. It was Charlie Chaplin in the trenches. [laughs] And a man just coming from the trenches, the fighting over there, would appreciate that. But I'll never forget him, he was firing at the enemy and when he'd hit the--one of the enemy he'd put a cross on the board. When all the sudden he reached up and put a dash up--[laughs] showing he missed somebody, had to take one off. Oh, that was a funny film, I enjoyed it so much.

So I went on to Rockford, was discharged from there and came home. My mother was so glad to see me. And hadn't seen me in quite a while. And they had several parties for me and so forth. A friend of mine at home had erected a flag pole during the war as a spirit of the war. Had a big American flag flying up there. And took me quite a while to get adjusted to civilian life after serving so long in the Armed Forces. But I finally got adjusted. Got married, lived happily ever after.

Zeitlin: When you think back on that time, that time of World War I, your experiences in the war, what are the things that you - after a lot of reflection - think of as being the most important? I mean, there were good times, and bad times and it was basically a very difficult experience, I'm sure. What is it that you, um, when you summarize in your own mind, how--what would you describe your feelings now?

Haddock: Now?

Zeitlin: Yeah, how do you think of it now? When you think back on that time now, sixty years ago.

Haddock: Well, I wouldn't do it over again.

Zeitlin: [laughs]

Haddock: That's one thing for sure. I didn't realize what I was getting into. It was really a tough experience. I certainly would never consider--or any of my relations, or advise them to go in, anything like that. And I do not like wars, I hate wars. Nothing is gained by them. We fought the war with Germany to make it safe for democracy and we've done the same thing a couple times since, so what does the war accomplish? Accomplishes nothing. But brings on a lotta sadness and so forth. A lotta hardships. Lotta hardships. So I can't see where a war accomplishes anything. What did the Vietnam War accomplish? Starting to set ourselves up for the same kind of a deal down in Central America. So, I can't see where they accomplish anything. Nothing learned by it at all.

Zeitlin: When you think about that kind of experience is there something that you personally derived from that experience? And I know, you just said you think that wars, generally speaking, don't solve the problems that they're supposed to. Now, you as a person though, when you look back at your life's experience can you say that you personally also didn't gain anything from that?

Haddock: Oh. I gained--I gained discipline, which I needed badly. Made a man out of me. [inaudible] There's an old saying in the Army, it's kind of peculiar English but this is the saying, "They can't make you soldier, but they can make you wish you had." Demonstration of that is down at Camp McArthur, G Company from Madison was a mixed company, [inaudible]. And two of the men got in a fist fight over there. So as punishment, they had to dig a hole six foot square, six foot deep. So they dug it. When they go through, they were smartin' off. Sarge says, "Well, you haven't learned yet, have ya? All right, you get out of that hole, and you stand up on top here, and you shovel the dirt down back in the hole. And you down there, shovel it back out the other side. And just keep at it. 'Til we see if we can't make a soldier out of you." So that's the way they have of making a soldier and making you wish you had soldiered. So, those fellows in Company F were getting quite a kick out of it. Well, went over there-- [interview ends abruptly]

[End of Interview]