

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
QUERINO MONACELLI
3rd Armored Division, US Army
2018

OH
2123

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2123**

Monacelli, Querino, (1917–2019). Oral History Interview, 2018.
Approximate length: 1 hour 31 minutes 44 seconds
Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Summary:

In this oral history interview, Querino Monacelli discusses his service in the 1st Army, 7th Corps, 3rd Armored Division with the 391st Artillery Division during from 1941 to 1945. He served with the First Army during World War II and served in five different campaigns in Europe.

Monacelli was born on July 16, 1917, in Lohrville, Wisconsin, and grew up there during the Great Depression. He attended Redgranite High School and graduated at the age of 16. As a teenager, he worked as an apprentice at a local quarry. He was then drafted in June of 1941.

He trained initially in the Mojave Desert for the war in Africa but was sent to Westminster, England, in 1942, after Pearl Harbor. He recalls speaking Italian to Italian prisoners of war in England while in training. Ten days after D-Day, in 1944, he landed on Utah Beach. While in Northern France, Monacelli mostly worked to haul ammunition.

He then details his struggles working to maintain the mechanics and gas of a truck during the Battle of the Bulge. Additionally, he recalls the massive destruction of civilian areas in both France and Germany. Monacelli then discusses his participation in the liberation of the concentration camp Nordhausen.

When hauling ammunition in the German city of Göttingen, Monacelli and his friend stayed with kind German civilians overnight for some much-needed rest. He then discusses when he met Lieutenant General George Patton in England. He then discusses where he was on V-E day and how much he celebrated with his friends abroad.

After returning to the United States he was discharged at Camp Grant, Illinois. He then discusses souvenirs he brought home from war, a Belgian handgun and a German dagger. After he returned home from the war, Monacelli returned to the quarry and continued cutting stone. He then recalls the trip he took on an Honor Flight as well as current involvement with the VA.

The interview concludes with him discussing the different awards and recognitions he received for his service including the Silver Star.

Biographical Sketch:

Querino Monacelli was born in July 16, 1917, in Lohrville, Wisconsin. Before being deployed, Monacelli worked cutting stone in quarries near his home. He was drafted into the army in June of 1941 and he attended basic training in Louisiana. He was part of five different campaigns in Europe during WWII including the liberation of Northern France and the Battle of the Bulge. After returning home he returned to the quarries until he retired at the age of 62.

Archivist's notes:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. It is strongly suggested that researchers directly engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2018.

Transcribed by Brooklyn Smith, 2018.

Reviewed by Morgan Roelke, 2020.

Abstract written by Morgan Roelke, 2020.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of OH2123.Monacelli_file1_access.mp3]

Brooks: Today is Tuesday February 27, 2018. This is an interview with Querino Monacelli, who served with the Army in the 1st Army, 7th Corp, 3rd Armored Division with the 391st Artillery Division during World War II. This interview is being conducted at Mr. Monacelli's home. The interviewer is Ellen Brooks, and this interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program. There are a couple other people in the room; we have nephew Tony Palma and Querino's wife, Jean. So we'll just start at the beginning, if you can tell me where and when you were born.

Monacelli: I was born in 1917, on July 16.

Brooks: And where?

Monacelli: Right here in Lohrville.

Brooks: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about your early life and your childhood?

Monacelli: Well, we grew up in the Depression, you know. I started high school in 1930. I graduated in '34, and I wasn't sixteen till May. I mean till June-- er, July, rather. Anyway-- so there was nothing to do. There were no jobs, no nothing; absolutely nothing. So I was home for a couple years, and when I got to be eighteen, my dad was working in the quarries, cutting stone, and-- here in Milwaukee, Lannon. And Sussex. And he says to me one day, "What are you gonna do?" And I-- 'cause we-- I was at home. We had I think we had three or four cows to take care of, and we were lucky that he had that. 'Cause there were no jobs, no nothing. People twenty years old never saw a dollar bill! So he says to me, "What are you gonna do?" I said, "What is there to do?" Well he said, "You wanna come to work with me?" Well I says, "I'll try it." So I went to work with him as an apprentice, and I worked with him for six months. And never got a penny, but he paid for my cost of living down there. And so a little while later, after the six months, my brother-in-law was a boss in Illinois in the quarry and they needed cutters there. And I had worked with my dad I think six months. And them two were arguing where I was going. I had nothing to say. My dad said, "He hasn't worked long enough." My brother-in-law said, "It looks to me like he's doing pretty good." So he won out. I went to Illinois, and I worked there, I think-- they had a big job-- I worked there one year. And so then I came back here, and got a job in Sussex. And I worked there till I got drafted in 1941, Friday the 13th, June-- in June. 1941. Friday the 13th, that was-- that was the end of that baloney. [both laugh]

Brooks: And tell me about how you-- what it was like when you got drafted. When you got the notification.

[End of OH2123.Monacelli_file1_access.mp3][Beginning of OH2123.Monacelli_file2_access.mp3]

Brooks: All right, we were talking about when you got your draft notice.

Monacelli: I got home-- let's see; there was a draft notice in May. And then-- of, I think, '41-- and then I got home and there was a letter; postponed it for one month because they didn't have barracks rooms. So there was a job here. They were working here-- my dad were working the quarries here. And I quit two weeks early down there, so he says, "Now, what are you gonna do?" I says, "Nothing!" [laughs] And he already had a job for me here. And it was new, entirely new to me, because they had heavier tools, and it was granite instead of limestone. And so anyway, I got-- and you had to worry about sizes here, and over there it was random sizes in limestone. So it took me, oh, a couple of weeks, and I got used to it. And I ended up making nine dollars a day there. And that was a lot of money in that-- in '41. So anyway, that ended and there was a lot of them old guys; that was new to me. And they'd come and watched me work. And all these men were in their late sixties, and I was just-- what, twenty-two or three, I guess. And they'd come and watch me, and this old guy, Frank Morse[??] was next to me, and my dad was here. And he come over and tell me, he said, "Never mind them fellas; never mind them." I could hear 'em talking. So the last day, I went over to say goodbye to him. I says, "Frank, I gotta leave tomorrow." Well he says, "I'm glad you stuck it out." He says, "I had money behind you." [all laugh] Anyway, from there went to Camp Grant, Illinois, the next day. And from there we went down to Fort-- Camp Polk, Louisiana. And there we put in thirteen weeks of basic training.

Brooks: And how did you feel when you first got drafted?

Monacelli: What's that?

Brooks: How did you feel when you first got drafted?

Monacelli: Well, kind of-- it's hard to describe because we got drafted for one year, you know. And of course everybody-- and then Pearl Harbor happened. Everybody's bitching about the one year continuously; but when Pearl Harbor happened nobody said a word. No more bitching, the bitching ended. And then from there we went-- from there we went to the desert, Mojave Desert. Which would be towards the end of the summer, we went to Mojave Desert for training for to go to Africa, and the African war. And because it was-- I forgot to tell you, it was an armored division, you know? And so we stayed there, and one day they got the call to go to Africa. We packed up-- packed up everything. And this-- you know, the roads out there were just dirt. And there was a-- they were counting off the names, and there was a jeep coming down the road. The dirt was just flying, and dust. And he pulled into our driveway, and the war in Africa was over; that's how close we came to getting-- So that was pretty good. So anyway, from there, then we went to Virginia. It took sixty-two trainloads to carry the division to Virginia. I tell people that and they look at me like I'm senile, but they forget that-- sixteen thousand men. And I got a picture in the other room that shows we were one of the smallest outfits in the division, and there was two hundred and eighty vehicles. So it took a lot of trains. So the guy come to me, and he said to me-- Harrelson [sp ??] was his name, from North Carolina. He said, "They want volunteers to ride in the vehicles on the train for sabotage; protection for sabotage.

[00:04:58]

Because of-- the troops in the passenger cars, they couldn't even look out the windows because of that; because of a lot of sabotage. So we took-- so that was pretty nice. You could see the countryside sitting in the cab, and this fella stopped-- train stopped one day right on the crossing in Kansas; in Kansas. And the kid-- kid's come running up to the train. He had a twenty dollar bill, he said, "Go get me a bottle of whiskey." There was a whiskey store. Well the kid run, and he's running out of the store-- I can see him, yet-- with the whiskey, and the train started going. The whistle blew. [both laugh] He didn't have no whiskey, or no twenty dollars. [Tony laughs] So anyway, we got to Virginia, Camp-- I can't think of the name of it. It's in Virginia. Because we were-- and then we went to Pennsylvania from there. And from there overseas. So--

Jean: Coffee's-- [inaudible]

Monacelli: Huh?

Brooks: It's good.

Jean: Okay?

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Monacelli: What's that?

Jean: Well, I'm asking--

Monacelli: Oh, okay.

Brooks: It's okay.

Monacelli: Anyway--

Brooks: So you went from Virginia to Pennsylvania--

Monacelli: Yeah.

Brooks: Was this all before-- this was all before Pearl Harbor happened?

Monacelli: No, Pearl Harbor-- let's see, Pearl Harbor happened on December 7.

Brooks: Right, okay. So you were-- you did your basic, and then you went to the desert--

Monacelli: Yes.

Brooks: -- and then is that when Pearl Harbor happened?

Monacelli: We went there after that I guess.

Brooks: Okay.

Monacelli: Anyway-- and we finally-- Can't think of-- I know we left in September.

Brooks: Of '42, then.

Monacelli: Yes. We left in September '42. Yep; overseas.

Brooks: Okay. And how were you feeling when you knew you were getting ready to be deployed?

Monacelli: I'm sorry, I missed that.

Brooks: How were you feeling? What were you thinking?

Monacelli: Oh, everybody feels kind of tough, you know, but-- and so you never know what you're gonna get into, you know? And so they were calling off the names to go on the boat-- on board. So, called off the names and the two guys in front of me, one guy in front of me says-- And this guy was pronouncing all the names, you know. And he was pronouncing them Polish names pretty good, so they were kidding me about my name. "He'll never get yours right." [inaudible] "Ten dollars" [inaudible] He said, "We'll bet you ten dollars they won't." "Okay." So he pronounced it perfect, you know, so I got twenty dollars, ten apiece, out of 'em. [both laugh] Anyway, that was-- I forget. It was a ship. It was a cruise ship from New York's harbor[??] to Florida for tourists. It held four hundred and twenty tourists. So they put twenty-two hundred troops on it. Yeah. Can you imagine? We slept on the deck with our feet hanging over. We slept on the deck-- the deck was like this table, and we had our feet hanging over there.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Monacelli: Twenty-two hundred guys. And everybody's sick because it was a flat-bottomed boat. See, if it ain't flat bottomed it takes the waves better. So-- and that was an awful stormy trip.

Brooks: Did you get sick?

Monacelli: Yes. Five days without eating and then-- The trouble is, is then when you start to eat, you try to eat-- and maybe I shouldn't say this, but you had to eat on a boat about this wide. And everybody's-- So there was one guy that was in the-- he worked on the sea all his life, you know, no problem. So after four or five days you stand there, try chewing, and chewing, and you can't swallow. And so the other guy made some crack, and made everybody sick again. So that's-- what the trouble was, the sea-- we had an awful bad storm on the sea. And they were flat bottomed. And so anyway, the piano was in the corner; it was a big room for-- They had church services, and played cards, and stuff. But the piano went back and forth in that room till that just smashed.

[00:10:03]

There was so many people sick they couldn't even get enough to work in the kitchen. You know, those are things you gotta put up with. And the bathroom facilities was all terrible. But anyway, we made it. And we got to England, and I think it was near Westminster-- Westminster, England. Yeah.

Brooks: How long was that trip? Do you remember?

Monacelli: Uh, four days I think, five-- And the trip coming home was just about the same week. But it was about four or five days. Yeah.

Brooks: So tell me about your arrival in England.

Monacelli: Well, we-- they poured us in what they call billets, and we call 'em camps. You know, they call them billets. And they put-- it was just like-- like a house. But they put six, six or eight guys in each billet. And then you had bedrooms, you know. And you had to go out to the kitchen for the mutton; they fed us mostly mutton. And it was an armored force camp, too, there, in England. But they weren't barracks, they were houses. And so from-- we had a lot of training there. And they had ball games on-- see, football was something strange there, so they-- they had a football game one Sunday and a lot of the English people came. So we had to pull guard at the gate to check everybody's pass. There was two guys. So this one kid said to me, he said-- there was-- there was an awful lot of Italian prisoners in England from-- What do you call it? From-- where were they fighting? Let's see. I can't think of it. Anyway, he says to me, "Can you talk to them?" I said, "Yes, I can talk to 'em a little bit. So he kept nagging me, and nagging me until finally I got sick of it, and I talked to 'em. I said, "Hey, why, you--" to this guy. [Tony laughs] Well that stopped everything. It plugged up everything. There was a colonel on the bicycle, an English colonel. He couldn't get through. So he finally did, and we saluted him, and the next morning at reveille, in the dark, they were calling off the names. And the lieutenant got done, and in the end-- in the end he said, "Well," he said, "we've had some complaints about people talking to these Italian prisoners." And everybody started laughing in the ranks, and they kept-- I could hear my name, you know. There was nobody else that could. So I got two weeks of KP for that. [Monacelli and Tony laugh] Yeah.

Tony: Quetz, how many ships did it take to get to get over to England?

Monacelli: Huh?

Tony: Do you remember how many ships it took to get over to England?

Monacelli: There was 585 in the trip.

Tony. Mm.

Monacelli: The ships; in the convoy. And all night long you heard depth charges. Yeah. Yeah, there's quite a few.

Brooks: What were you-- what were you saying to the Italian prisoners?

Monacelli: What's that?

Brooks: What did you say to the Italian prisoners?

Monacelli: Oh, I just talked to 'em-- oh, they wanted to-- They wanted to know from me-- I never had a chance to say much. They wanted to know when they were coming to America. I said, "If you don't-- if you don't get out of the way, or do something, you ain't never gonna get there." See, because I-- before that the sergeant went-- when we got to England the sergeant went to get gasoline, and it was all in cans; at the wharf. At the what-you-call-it. The dock. He got there, and he came back and he says, "They tell me there's Italian prisoners working there, but--" he said, "I couldn't find any." He came back empty. So he says to me, "Would you come and try to see if you can talk to them?" I said, "Sure." Well, the same thing happened there. I hollered and they come out of there like bees, you know. Hundreds of 'em, and they wanted to know when they were going to America.

[00:15:01]

I said, "If you don't start working here, you ain't never gonna leave. You gotta load these trucks." Well, in fifteen minutes all the trucks were loaded. Yeah. But-- So anyway, I had to interpret a couple other times, but that was it. Then we got to England, and then they-- Like I said, we were in their armored force camp and done a lot of training there till we had to go overseas. I think we were there four months. There was two million troops there, U.S. troops. And the government paid England two dollars a day for every troop that was there. I never thought that was really nice. [Monacelli and Tony laugh] We're there for their war.

Brooks: Yeah.

Monacelli: Yeah. A lot of people don't know that, but yeah. But anyway, then we finally got to D-Day. We got to D-Day, which-- having vehicles, you know, we had to get in LSTs to get across the-- what you call it; seventeen miles. So we're loading the LST-- there's four rows of vehicles like that, and you're loading in, and I'm here.

Brooks: In the middle?

Monacelli: Yeah, in the middle side, there. And there's a-- 'course, then you're sitting waiting, and waiting to get to the ship-- till the ship gets in the port. I think we were waiting there like three hours, and this ship-- this vehicle, here, they had a new recruit on there. They had a new recruit. And I-- he was-- there's a .50 caliber-- there's a big .50 caliber rig like that, there. A big gun, and the driver down here. And so this new guy started monkeying with that gun, and I couldn't get over that. I couldn't get over it. Them guys wouldn't-- he was new, he never saw the gun before. He was a replacement. And so anyway, I-- I was gonna yell at him, and I thought, "Well, there's a sergeant, and that should be able to take care of that. And he kept monkeying around, and monkeying-- and finally he pulled the bolt back and let it go. And he shot the other guy in the other vehicle right between the shoulder blades. And then he was a basket case. But anyway, we got

loaded-- we got loaded, started going across the pond. [laughs] And of course when you get there, you know, the guy on the ship, the captain, or whatever he is, he's supposed to measure the deck. So the LST next to me had all jeeps in it. They pulled in first, and they were pretty close, you know. [inaudible] So they dropped the gate-- that guy didn't measure, and I dropped the gate and the jeep went out of sight. And you're supposed to get down there and hook it up. And so-- but the track, it was different, you know, a little different. So we started going down and, of course, you've gotta waterproof it so it runs. And I started going down, and down, and down, and the water started coming in up on top. And there's a roller in the front, and the roller didn't hit the ground; I couldn't feel it yet. And finally it hit the ground, and then we started coming up. Well we got all wet; full of water. Yeah. And that was on a Sunday night. That was on a Sunday night. Ten days, June 16, on a Sunday night, and it's just getting dark. And you can hear the burp guns, and everything, and you're supposed to de-- You had to get all the waterproofing out, dig a foxhole, and unload everything.

Brooks: What beach were you at?

Monacelli: Huh?

Brooks: Which beach were you at?

Monacelli: Utah. See, half of the division went on Omaha, and the other half on Utah. And so-- because it was so big. There was sixteen thousand men, and vehicles, and you didn't have enough ground for us to go any sooner, you see, because you can't have all vehicles concentrated; they'd bomb the hell out of you. And so anyway, we got that all done. Got all the-- all the waterproofing off, and so-- started going the next morning.

[00:20:04]

And that was the beginning. Yeah. Lot of small arms fire. And of course, besides all the bombs dropping, and all-- we got bombed twice by our own planes. But-- the reason for that was-- you see, you know that when the Air Force works-- there's a certain point, see, they're gonna go here. The Air Force says, "We're gonna be there at 12:20." See-- "And we're coming," you see. So we gotta put down-- we gotta put down our pamphlets-- our panels; red and white panels so that they know it's friendly. Well, we were a little late. See, they were early, and we were a little late, and we got bombed twice. Didn't hurt nobody. One guy-- I think one guy got hurt. Yeah. So I got under the vehicle, and it was just twice as deep as that cup. [laughs] Man, that tore up trees, and stuff, and shook that-- Well, when it hit the vehicle we had-- we had a hundred and eighty rounds of 105s, which is like that. That big. And about fifteen thousand rounds of everything else. You couldn't worry about that. But anyway, from then on it was no picnic. That was the beginning, so. That lasted quite a while. And then, you know, they-- the division was sixteen thousand men, and then they would divide the division into three task forces, see. And each task force would have reconnaissance, and engineers, and infantry, and artillery, and everything else. And so-- like as if you were going to Wautoma they'd want one task force on 21, and then maybe another one on the one south of here which is--

Jean: 73. Er, 22.

Monacelli: 22 or 73, whichever-- 54, maybe. And they'd always keep one in reserve, see. And then, you know, that's-- that was a rough business. And one time further into Germany, I forget where it was, we had a general by the name of Rose; his last name was Rose. He was Jewish. And I remember I was with the task force Lovelady, and it was getting dusk at night, you know, and the general come right past us because he was the general of our division. And he come right past us and it wasn't very far-- I don't think it was as far from here to that road up there-- he run into a single German tank. And the young guy popped out of the turret, and he recognized that he was a general. And he asked him to throw out his pistol. When he went to throw-- he grabbed his pistol; he shot him in the head. Yeah. So that wasn't a very good day. Yeah. But they took care of him later. But anyway, it was quite a grind.

Brooks: And what was your-- you were artillery?

Monacelli: Yeah. Well, see I have to explain that.

Brooks: Yeah.

Monacelli: But-- the artillery had-- of the division-- has three batteries, A, B, and C. Well they went-- before they went overseas, each commander-- or whether he was a captain or whether it was a colonel of the artillery battery-- had had a choice to get the first for his, uh-- to carry the ammunition. Vehicles-- a truck or a track. A track had tracks in the back and two wheels in the front, rubber tires. The trucks had all rubber tires. So two of the batteries picked trucks not thinking that they might have a flat tire. And ours, he picked tracks. So when they got-- it wasn't bad, but it wasn't much firing.

[00:25:02]

But during the Bulge-- during the Bulge we had to haul for all three of 'em because they all had flat tires. If they had shrapnel on the road, or if they got shot they couldn't do nothing. So we had to travel-- I was down to a hundred and fourteen pounds; we had stuff to eat and no time to eat it because they needed the stuff in the Bulge. They shot of a lot of stuff. Sometimes the gun-- the gun-- the shells were piled as high as that window from the outside on the gun. We had to haul it away to the dump. Yeah. So anyway--

Brooks: What was the advantage of a truck? Was there one?

Monacelli: Six by six.

Brooks: What was the advantage to take a truck?

Monacelli: I don't think there was any.

Brooks: Oh, okay. I just thought maybe 'cause they picked--

Monacelli: No, I shouldn't say that. The track-- you had to drive a little bit slower with a track.

Brooks: That's what I thought.

Monacelli: But you could go forty miles an hour. That's the only difference. But they were sure sick about it.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Monacelli: Yeah. Give me a glass of water, Paul.

Tony [??]: Okay.

Jean: I'll get it.

Tony: Oh, I can—

Monacelli: Yeah.

Brooks: So you went from-- you were in, um, Normandy.

Monacelli: Oh, yeah.

Brooks: And then--

Monacelli: All the way across; the five campaigns.

Brooks: Yeah. So can you kind of talk through them with me, the different campaigns you were involved in?

Monacelli: All of 'em.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Monacelli: Yeah, see the division was all-- involved with all of 'em. The Bulge was the worst. Well see, that name-- the name of that is the Ardennes. See.

Jean: There you go.

Monacelli: Yeah.

Brooks: Were there any big campaigns that you were in between Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge?

Monacelli: Let's see. Jean, get my wallet, will you? The names are on there; I can't remember 'em. There's northern France, and Ardennes, and Central Europe, I think.

Brooks: Yeah. And on the sheet that we got it says Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland.

Jean: You have them written down on that.

Monacelli: Well, you've got them all right there.

Jean: Yeah, that's the form. Then you don't need this.

Monacelli: No, no, we don't need it.

Brooks: Yeah, I was just hoping you would tell me more about these individual campaigns.

Monacelli: See, they varied quite a bit.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Monacelli: Sometimes-- like the last campaign, when the Germans were kind of losing it, and they were giving up we went ninety miles one day, you know. And they'd come and hand us their guns. They would drive us over to 'em. So that's why that varies. But then the worst was in Belgium and France. And that was terrible. And the-- of course the food problem was-- you couldn't expect much. They had a kitchen truck; they had a kitchen truck, but they-- you hardly ever saw 'em, you know. They couldn't-- they had to worry about it getting bombed-- bombed, you know? Dug a lot of foxholes, six, seven foxholes, and then-- because if you advance a little bit, say a mile or two, you'd have to dig a foxhole. Because they-- when they moved they left sensors in the ground so when they fire, they knew how far. They knew when-- er, when we fired, they knew how far we were. See, so it was-- it wasn't a picnic, yeah.

Brooks: Can you tell me a little bit about the campaign in northern France?

Monacelli: That was pretty much the same, but not quite as intense. It was-- it's hard to describe, you know. And the shelling wasn't as bad. [pause] And you know, like-- see, I was hauling the ammunition. I got ahead of my story. So with the guns, the guns were on the tank chassis which-- well, the breach-- the breach-- it's hard to explain. The breach was probably over here, see. Over here.

Brooks: Do you want me to pause while we're--

Monacelli: And then the breach-- the breach comes all the way back, and then on the back of the tank, here, it's just a flat spot. They had no place for our shells. We had to stay with them and hand them to 'em as they fired. And we got a pounding besides, you see. So that's why.

Tony: Maybe you want to pause.

Brooks: Sure.

[00:29:59]

Monacelli: And when them-- when them tanks would move, they moved pretty fast. If they they set 'em up, there, they'd all fall off.

Tony: Quetz, where was the--

Monacelli: The engineers-- the engineers didn't engineer that too well.

Tony: Where was it that you came across the city, and instead of going around it the commander said that he wanted each team to put five hundred rounds--

Monacelli: Oh, that-- that was at the end of the war; at the end of the war. People-- I hate to tell people because it sounds so damn terrible. When we-- when we met the Russians way out by the Elbe River; that's where we met them, at the Elbe River. And we met the Russians. So some officer decided to get-- the whole Corps, the whole 7th Corps had seven hundred artillery pieces. Which, the tanks-- the tanks and the artilleries-- which there was more than one, big and small-- there was seven hundred. So they picked a town on the map-- they picked a town on the map and fired seven hundred shots in that. Now what kind of a sport is that? And people-- people talk about all the other enemy armies, what bad things they do, you see? [inaudible] Some of them guns-- some of them guns were eight-inch; ours was three, or three and a half, and they done a lot of damage, seven hundred shots.

Brooks: Was it the Russians that fired those shots?

Monacelli: No, no.

Brooks: This was your--

Monacelli: They didn't fire anything.

Brooks: Yeah.

Monacelli: We just-- they crossed the Elbe River and we shook hands with 'em. And couldn't talk to 'em much-- with 'em, you know.

Tony: Why did they have to shoot at that city? What was the reason?

Monacelli: Just-- no reason at all! Just to celebrate, I guess, that it was over. Well, let's shoot in the field! Yeah. That was terrible.

Brooks: Can you tell me a little bit more about the Battle of the Bulge?

Monacelli: Well, I can tell you that the elements was one of the worst things, the snow and cold. And we had no damn boots at all. And so they finally got some for us, and we put them on and they rip right off; they didn't last long. And, see, the worst part of it for me was I-- we had a trailer with eighty-five rounds of M105s. And there was this much room; this much room on the top. Cold. So if I wanted to sleep on my back all night, I had to go on

my back, and then vice versa. That wasn't very comfortable. And so-- and the food-- you hardly ever got any food because it was pretty bad! To tell you the truth-- I hate to even say it because having a vehicle in that type of situation-- I tell you, it wasn't easy. You had to worry about the gasoline. And I-- one time I had to carry gasoline across forty acres in the dark; two gallon-- two five-gallon cans for one hundred and twenty gallon tanks; 260-gallon tanks. All night long. And so, anyway. But in the Bulge, we had to go after ammunition all the time. And so we-- we'd-- if there was any units on the highway, or near the highway—feeding—we'd stop. And they'd say, "We ain't got enough food." They'd refuse us. Yeah. And then we would move to the dump, there in the Bulge. We was running so fast that we couldn't have the time for anything. And I was having trouble in my bladder because-- so I told the doctor-- We had a nice doctor. I said, "Doc," I said, "I got troubles." He said, "What kind?" I said, "With my bladder and urine," I said. He went right over to the lieutenant, and he says, "You take that man off. You let him off till he's okay. No driving." But anyway, we go there-- there'd probably be six or seven of us going to the dump. Sometimes you had to go maybe twenty miles.

[00:35:00]

You hardly ever knew the roads, you know. You never knew the roads. I can tell you one instance, we go-- We kept track of the roads pretty good. So we got a new sergeant. We got a new sergeant because he was a twenty-year man. An old Army man, see. They had to have a job for him. So this one guy got hurt, so they put him in his place. We're going to the dump-- there's seven of us. His name was Marlowe [sp ??] from Iowa. But he was-- the sergeant was riding with him, first guy. We're going, and going, and going, and Marlowe says, "You're on the wrong road." 'Course you don't tell a sergeant much, you know. "You're on the wrong--" "Never mind, I'm the sergeant," he said. Well, he pulled in the road-- he pulled in the gate-- up she went; hit a mine. Yeah. Hit a mine. He went way-- and it ruined Marlowe's legs. We put sandbags under the driver's seats before we got there. It's a good thing or he lost both legs. You see? That's the stuff you gotta put up with. Because he was a sergeant, you see? He'd-- they-- he'd been on the road; he knew the roads, but he didn't like having somebody tell him what to do.

Brooks: And when you're talking about the "dump" you mean the ammunition dump?

Monacelli: Yeah. Ammunition dump, yes.

Brooks: So you had to--

Monacelli: So we get there-- during the Bulge one night, we got there; it was getting dark. And then you gotta find your way back in the dark, you know. And you never knew what you were gonna run into. So we was pretty tired, and I said to the sergeant-- there's six, seven colored guys sitting around the fire that work at the dump. I said, "Can you get them guys to help us load?" 'Cause you see, you had a box, two shells, bigger than that cup; this big. Boards that thick all nailed together. You had to tear every two shells apart-- uh, box, to get the shells. We had a hundred and eighty to put on. So I said, "Can you get us to help-- them guys to help?" He went over there, talked to 'em; he come back and they weren't behind him, they weren't coming. He went back. He had to pull a gun on 'em to get 'em to work, to help us.

Tony: Were there a lot of--

Monacelli: Huh?

Tony: When you were in the Bulge were there a lot of bodies in, um--

Monacelli: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Tony: I mean, could you-- were the roads clear?

Monacelli: We lost fifty thousand men there! And I had a vehicle, like I said. And the snow was-- the snow was pretty near deep as this chair.

Brooks: Like a foot?

And you could-- you could see 'em laying there. And you had to drive-- you had to miss the bodies. And one guy was picking 'em up out of the snow. "Stand up, there," he said, and he'd take all the rings off him. [pause] Yeah. That kinda stuff. Yeah. And besides all the problems. And a lot of guys got colds. And I had a hell of a cold, and I don't know how I made it. I don't even know. [inaudible] But-- and you couldn't eat. You couldn't eat decent, you know? You couldn't get nothing to eat. So I think-- on the Bulge, it was quite a while, you know.

Brooks: Do you remember how you communicated with your family back home during that time?

Monacelli: No. You know.

Brooks: Not at all?

Monacelli: Because we-- we wasn't in in a position-- we'd get mail sometimes, you know. And-- but who knows, maybe once a month it would catch up with you. Yeah, that was very seldom; very seldom. And, of course, you wouldn't write and tell what you're going through, you know? It's-- why would you tell your mother that you sit in a foxhole thirty-two hours full of water? You know. That's-- [laughs] Like one time we had-- our troops had fifty thousand German troops surrounded. They fired artillery on every road. They couldn't get out; they couldn't get out. And it rained, and that's-- and of course, they were firing at us, too. And that's when that happened; thirty-two hours and just raining like hell in the foxhole; full of water. Yeah.

Brooks: What was going through your mind during that?

[00:39:57]

Monacelli: [laughs] A lot of things. But then, you can't let it destroy you, you know? You've got a job to do. A lot of people say, "Well were you afraid?" Why, sure, every minute, you know. You can't-- you can't-- you can't-- you've got a job to do. And a vehicle to take

care of, you know. And them guys-- them other two guys on the vehicle, they never helped me carry gas. No. That's my job, see.

Brooks: So there were three-- three people in the vehicle?

Monacelli: Yeah. There was two other guys with you. Yeah. So it was a kind of a rare experience, I'll tell you. Yeah. And of course-- and then you had to feel sorry for the public, the people. The people-- you know, they talk about the war and the troops, but the war is just as bad, if not worse, on the public; on the people. They can't-- they can't do nothing, you know? Their homes are all smashed, and so--

Brooks: You mean in the countries, so like in France and Germany?

Monacelli: Yeah, in the countries I-- yes, yes. So, yeah.

Tony: He also-- I don't know if I put that in the letter, but he was a camp liberator for Nordhausen.

Brooks: Yeah, um-- yeah, there's a couple things on here, um--

Monacelli: Yes, okay.

Brooks: --that we can talk about. I'm not sure if they're in order. But then-- so that might be next in the story, the camp liberation at the concentration camp Nordhausen?

Monacelli: Nordhausen; Nordhausen. I remember, we come-- you know, there's a building, and we got there. And of course, one of the reasons we looked in the building is that we saw a row of bodies from here to that other street up there, this high. All dead, you know. That's before we started looking in the building. Well, then they rolled right out of the vent. Their knees-- their knees, they were as big as volleyballs, and stuff, you know. It's terrible. Yeah. Yeah. But they had-- there was a bulldozer digging a grave over that-- that whole row; from here to that street out there, and they were piled higher than this counter. You know, decomposing already. Yeah.

Tony: So they dug a big trench?

Monacelli: They dug a big trench, yeah.

Tony: Put the bodies in there [??]

Monacelli: That was Nordhausen. But then, you know, it was bigger. We just saw part of it. It was so-- them places were so big! You know, 'cause they destroyed a lot of people.

Tony: What do you think about the people that deny that--

Monacelli: Yeah, yeah.

Tony: --that it ever happened?

Monacelli: Well, I suppose they had so much pride in their country that doing that might have helped them, but it didn't help nothing. No. And there was people here that said that, that it never happened. You know.

Tony: Right.

Monacelli: Yeah, I think they-- it happened, all right.

Brooks: Did you know about the--

Monacelli: Huh?

Brooks: Did you know about the concentration camps when you'd gotten to Nordhausen?

Monacelli: No. No, we didn't know, you know, that actually we'd run onto it. [??] But we heard of other ones, you know. We heard of other ones.

Brooks: And was there anybody still alive in the camp when you got there?

Monacelli: Oh, yeah. Some. They were alive, but not for long; they wouldn't have lasted long. The ones where we opened that up. Yeah.

Brooks: Were there any Germans left in the camp?

Monacelli: Well there were civilians. The ones in them houses like that were civilians. The troops-- we never seen too many troops.

Brooks: Yeah, any guards or anything.

Monacelli: Yeah. Well, yeah, the troops that-- we seen the most troops when we were going through like on that day we went ninety miles 'cause they were giving up and giving us their guns, and stuff. We used to catch some prisoners sometimes. I remember one time we got some prisoners, and we had to talk to a different unit; something about the rounds, and stuff. And there was twelve of us standing there, and there was a little German guy from-- he was German but he was in our forces.

[00:45:02]

He was a translator, and-- short guy. And they were-- you had to interrogate 'em, six, twelve of 'em, and he told 'em to empty their pockets. You know, "Stand up." They were standing and empty their pockets. And of course, this one big guy, he was an SS. He felt like he was better than the rest of 'em. The rest of 'em had all their pockets open but him. Well, this guy-- this short guy told him to open his pockets twice. And he bent down, and he come up and he hit him in the jaw and knocked him flat. Well, when he got up, the pockets were open. But, you see, he was an SS guy. But those things happened.

Brooks: Did you get to interact with any civilians?

Monacelli: With the German civilians?

Brooks: Yeah.

Monacelli: Well, I have to tell you-- see, I had the vehicle, and we were hauling ammunition. And we were in Göttingen, which is a big city like Milwaukee, or bigger. And the front wheel came off. So-- and I had-- and we had to wait for our maintenance to get there, to find us. And then, you know, you couldn't go to the car parks and get a new wheel. So they finally did, after two, three days. Third day, I guess. So-- but on the second day we were walking on the street. We left one guy at the vehicle all the time. You had to. We were walking, and this one old guy, his name was Hildreth, he was around thirty-eight years old by that time. He says to me-- we were walking by these nice houses, and he said, "I wonder what the hell it's like to sleep in a bed?" So we went to the front door, you know? And pounded [pounds on table] on the door, and by god, could hear the old lady move the curtain. And I made her know that we wanted to sleep. She opened the door and brought us to the bedroom. And here they had them thick feather things on the bottom, and one on top. Well, we got in there and we slept for twenty-two hours. [all laugh] The guy-- the guy at the track, he was mad and didn't know where we were, and he needed a little relief. And-- but we got outside-- We got outside and started going to the vehicle, and I said to the other guy, I said, "Jesus, you know, she could have shot us with our own guns." Yeah. You see? But she didn't want it any more than we did. But-- she wanted to feed us, too, but we didn't take that.

Brooks: Why not?

Monacelli: Well, I don't-- I don't know. They had stories where guys were poisoned.

Brooks: Ah.

Monacelli: Yeah.

Brooks: So you met George Patton.

Monacelli: Yes.

Brooks: Can you tell me that story?

Monacelli: Yeah, and I met-- well this here, this here. Eisenhower-- that's what he told us before we went over into England-- I mean, France. And-- But I was about, well, I'd say from here to the street, or the house over from him. Because there was an awful lot of troops.

Brooks: How far do you think that is, to the street?

Monacelli: What's that?

Brooks: How far do you think it is to the street? Like, in feet?

Monacelli: Oh, I would say about two thousand feet, maybe?

Tony: What, this street right here?

Monacelli: Yeah.

Tony: No.

Monacelli: No, not--

Tony: No, about fifty feet, sixty feet?

Monacelli: [inaudible] Anyway, then I saw Montgomery-- in England-- Montgomery. We got there and naturally we had to get spit and polished up. And we was in the ranks, you know, and he was walking in our rank. And it was getting a little bit-- it was quite early in the morning. And he stopped by me, and he said, "Where you from?" And I told him, "Wisconsin." And he said, "How-- how's the military?" Something about the military. I said, "Okay." "Good show, good show," and he saluted his way to-- [Tony laughs] Yeah. But Patton-- you see, I was in-- we were in the service battery, which-- of the artillery, and you had to do all kinds of stuff; haul garbage, and everything, in peacetime, you know? And you'd done the service work.

[00:50:00]

So I drove a lot of officers in peacetime. Day after day they'd send you in to headquarters and sit there. And some days you'd sit there all day and go nowhere, and the next day you'd probably drive five officers. So this one day, it was-- we were in the Mojave Desert. And the roads out there weren't too good, so I had to go and drive this lieutenant colonel; his name was Hendrickson-- Henderson. So, yeah, one of the command cars with no sides open, you know? And it was dirty and dusty, and I happened to meet a big outfit on the road. I had to get over, and I looked-- after we passed him, I went and looked up ahead, and I see a guy walking around the jeep. And I said to colonel, I said, "Colonel," I said, "that looks like Patton's pistol shining. He's walking around the jeep." And we got a little closer, and-- "Ah," he says, "I don't think so." We got a little closer and sure as heck, it was. So we pulled up behind him, and he was stuck in this road. See, that jeep driver met that vehicle and he got over a little too far and got stuck. So we got out, and he's swearing at the driver; swearing around the driver. [laughs] And we pushed him out and he didn't even say thank you. And he was still swearing at the driver when he jumped in. [Tony laughs] So we get in the car; we get in the car, and when-- I don't think it went fifty feet, and the colonel says, "My, doesn't he have a foul mouth." [Tony and Monacelli laugh] So, yeah. Yeah.

Brooks: Was he what you expected him to be?

Monacelli: Well, I didn't expect him to-- see him swearing that much, you know. But we knew that he-- well, we talked to some of his troops, you know. And they talked about-- just about as much as I did about him. They didn't like him either. So yeah. But the desert, you know, the desert was terrible because-- there used-- When we first got drafted there was

guys thirty to thirty-two, and then they sent them home. And then they called them back, see. And we were out in the desert, and you know, doing exercises out there. If you were doing exercises till you got acclimated to the-- you'd look on the ground and he's laying on the ground. And them guys thirty-two years old. That was the worst part of it, the heat. Hundred and thirty degrees, you know? And so.

Tony: When you crossed over the Channel.

Monacelli: Huh?

Tony: When you crossed over the Channel of England to France.

Monacelli: Yeah.

Tony: What was the weather like that day?

Monacelli: It wasn't bad.

Tony: It wasn't? Okay.

Monacelli: It wasn't the-- it wasn't the rough-- sea wasn't rough.

Tony: Okay.

Monacelli: No. It was pretty good.

Brooks: Oh, I'm okay. I'll wait. Thanks.

Monacelli: Yeah, so it was pretty good. A lot of ships, lot of stuff, you know. Like I said before, the guy's supposed to measure the water and they don't. He don't care. He didn't have to go down there. We was lucky.

Tony: Did a lot of people drown?

Monacelli: Huh?

Tony: Did a lot of people drown getting off of the landing?

Monacelli: I don't know how anyone ever got down there. Pretty lucky, boy. Of course, we got all wet. Everything was wet. And of course, like I said that was on a Sunday night. And you could hear burp guns already. And dig a foxhole as [pounds on table] this table, yeah. You never know what's coming up the next day. Lot of aircrafts, you know, strafing; strafing.

Brooks: What was the last battle that you were in?

Monacelli: Let's see, I think-- I think the one in-- when we met the Russians at the Elbe, yeah.

[00:54:59]

And then-- that was kind of funny. And somewhere I got a picture of that, I think. They pulled us out, see, when they met the Russians they pulled us out. And it was on April 30-- 23. So we parked-- we walked into this small woods. And so we stayed there three, four days and-- Dessau; Dessau was the town. I think it was about four or five miles away. And this one guy from up north, Geiger his name is, he said-- he said, "Let's empty one of our vehicles, you or mine," he said, "and we'll go up there and get some beer." We had walked there and we run into a brewery. So I said, "Okay, we'll flip a coin." Well, we flipped a coin and it was mine, so we had to unload the vehicle. We unloaded it-- and now mind you, the officers and others didn't know nothing about this. We drove down there and we loaded, I don't know, I think about twenty-some small kegs of beer. We come back, nobody-- we didn't have no problem. And he found-- he found one or two of them tapping things, you know, for beer. Otherwise what good would it be?

Tony: Yeah.

Monacelli: So it's getting dark and we're drinking this beer, and they know it. That beer-- you pour a beer in an aluminum cup, and you got no foam. That's stuff foamed-- it foamed just as nice in an aluminum cup. It really was good stuff. So we're sitting there drinking it, and one of the guys says, "Well, I wonder if the officers want a keg?" So I said, "You gonna take a chance, go ahead. [laughs] Ask 'em." By god, they took it. And it wasn't long, and they were after another one. [all laugh] So we didn't have no problem with that. Yeah.

Tony: Did you meet the Russians?

Monacelli: Yeah, sure. Yeah. You couldn't discuss nothing with 'em because nobody knew any English, and we didn't know no Russian. There wasn't too many of us; there was only about eight or ten of us. Yeah.

Brooks: So where were you when-- where were you when the war ended in Europe?

Monacelli: When the what?

Brooks: When the war ended in Europe.

Monacelli: Oh, yeah. Well right there at-- at Dessau, that's where it ended for us. And then they brought us back through the Harz Mountains for oh, I don't know. I think we were there pretty near a month; three weeks or a month in the mountains. And so one lieutenant-- there was deer there. One lieutenant had some-- we didn't have-- supposed to have no guns. And he had some guns left in his track. And he wanted to hunt the deer, and so he said to me and two other guys-- We, the four of us, we go on the hill. We shoot 'em and then give 'em to the natives, you know? They couldn't have a deer. The people with the money had the deer. So some other officers heard the shooting and they investigated, and that was the end of that. [laughs] [inaudible] So then they brought us to-- let's see, from the Harz Mountains we went to-- in France, on trains. We got on the train, went to France. And there's a place there, they got the troops ready to go home. And it was a

great, big field; lot of ball diamonds. All these units in there, they played ball. Awful good ball players. We watched quite a few of 'em. And then when your time come up, they put you on the what you call it [??] and go home.

Brooks: Can you tell me how you felt when you heard that the war was over?

Monacelli: Oh, that was pretty good, yes. We were-- I'll never forget it. We were in a-- We found a bombed out factory, and we found-- we found where they had the showers. And we had the showers, and we took a cold shower. There was no hot water; took a cold shower. And that's when we heard about it, yeah.

Brooks: How did you hear?

Monacelli: Some other troops. Some other troops were going by. Yeah. Yeah, that was a good day.

[01:00:00]

Brooks: Did you celebrate?

Monacelli: Oh, yeah. Well [laughs] we didn't have much to celebrate with, but we did when we could. Yeah. On the boat, then they put us on the boat, there, you know.

Brooks: So you got on the boat from France.

Monacelli: Yeah. Yeah. We got on the boat the same week that we went over. Coming home later.

Jean: Four days-- four years later.

Monacelli: Years later-- two years later.

Brooks: And how was the trip home?

Monacelli: Seasick again. Yeah, that was pretty bad. But the ship was a little bigger. The ship was nine thousand guys on it, but you see, it had a different-- it would go up thirty feet and down thirty feet like that, yeah.

Brooks: And then where did you disembark in the States?

Monacelli: Well, let's see. It was around December 8 or 9 in New York. Yeah.

Brooks: And what--

Monacelli: That was something to see.

Brooks: Yeah. Can you explain-- describe that?

Monacelli: Yeah. And then we got on a train, and see-- yeah, we had to go to Camp Grant, Illinois.

Tony: When you got-- you landed in New York. You were on a boat. You got off in New York. Did you stay in New York, then, for a while?

Monacelli: Yeah-- no, not till very long. Not-- I think they got on the train-- they got on the train the same day.

Tony: Okay.

Monacelli: And we went in New Jersey. We went by New Jersey on the electric train a hundred and twenty miles an hour. That was kid was talking to me, he said, "There's my house." [all laugh] Went by his house. Hundred and twenty miles an hour. Yeah.

Brooks: So you went back to Camp Grant.

Monacelli: Yes.

Brooks: Um, and is that where-- did you go through processing?

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Brooks: --and things like that, yeah.

Monacelli: Yeah, processing and everything. Yeah. And then I got on-- I think I got on the bus to come home. [inaudible]

Brooks: Were you discharged there at Camp Grant? Is that where you were discharged?

Monacelli: Yes. Yeah, Camp Grant.

Brooks: Did your family know that you were on your way home?

Monacelli: No, no. No, 'cause we had no way of communicating. No phones on the boat and on the train. It was okay.

Tony: Wait, so how did you communicate-- how did you communicate when-- For instance in-- after Normandy in Northern France, how did--

Monacelli: Well, we would write a letter, Paul, but it would take a long time--

Tony: No, but I mean how did they communicate with all the other troops to-- How did they make the plan?

Monacelli: Well, that-- that was headquarters, was that, see.

Tony: Yeah, but how did they let you guys know? How did you know what the plan was?

Monacelli: Oh, sure. See, at headquarters, then the lieutenants tell the sergeants, and you keep going. But I have to tell you, one time when we just got into Germany-- and it was, I

don't know, maybe-- Getting dusk; 6:30, 7:00. And I went to the headquarters track because I was parked near it, see. From here to the house over there. Parked near headquarters, and they always had the shortwave radio on. See, from the U.S. And I got there, and it was just-- there was a newscaster, maybe you've read about him, by the name of Gabriel Heatter. Anyway-- and he'd-- when he'd come on the news in this country, when he'd come on the news, he'd say, "Good news tonight!" And if it was bad news, he'd say it was bad news. And here he come on, and he said, "Good news tonight! The American forces have landed in Germany; nobody since Napoleon." And that was us. Yeah. So-- that's the first anybody since Napoleon, he said. But that's the way they did it, you know. There wasn't much communication. As far as letters from the families, yeah. You'd write-- and they'd write to-- my sister would write to me, and then Clara wrote an awful lot. But it would take forever to catch up to you, see. Sometimes if you were-- if you were-- like the one time there at the Siegfried Line they held us there for eighteen days. Never moved. Couldn't move.

Tony: At Siegfried Line.

Monacelli: Yes.

Tony: The Germans-- [inaudible]

Monacelli: Yeah, they bombed the-- they pounded the hell out of us.

Tony: Now, what campaign was that, Quetz? What was that--

Monacelli: I don't know which-- where the area would be.

Tony: No, but what-- what battle was that?

Monacelli: Well, it had to be Rhineland. Rhineland, I think. Rhineland.

Tony: Okay.

Monacelli: Yeah, because the Ardennes come later. Yeah.

Brooks: And were any of your family members in the military during that period of time?

Monacelli: My oldest brother had trouble with his legs and they sent him home, and my other brother was in Alaska. Yeah.

Brooks: Before you got discharged—or before you got sent back to the States was there any talk of you going to the Pacific?

Monacelli: No.

Brooks: No?

Monacelli: Oh, yeah there was; for a couple days. That's all. But that kinda died down quite-- yeah.

Brooks: And can you tell me a little bit about your homecoming?

Monacelli: Well, there wasn't much. There was nobody around, you know? Nobody-- one guy in the truck with us. And there was only one, and I went to-- I come home and I went in the house to see my mother, and then I went to see my aunt which was in the backyard. You know. And she must have seen-- seen me, or something, because she was already crying while coming to meet me. Yeah. So, yeah, it was--

Tony: Can you describe the Siegfried Line? What was that line?

Monacelli: Well, they had-- they had cement blocks sticking up and cross iron stuff.

Tony: Oh.

Monacelli: You see, they had three, four rows all the way across the country. Yeah. That didn't bother nothing. They went through that stuff. But that's where we-- that's where they held us for eighteen days.

[00:05:03]

Tony: That was their last stand, was the--

Monacelli: Yeah. Eighteen days. And there was a guy by the name of Birchwood up-- no, he's from Birchwood. Geiger is his name, up north here. He killed a cow there every so often. And then nobody would wanna come and eat the meat. I said, "What are you killing them cows for?" I said, "Your government's gonna have to pay for them. They're gonna put in a claim for [inaudible]" You know, that's-- like one guy, he go in the house. And we had the right; we had the right to look in the houses and get cameras or guns. Well, this guy-- this Geiger, this same Geiger, he put a hand grenade in the toilet bowl! Yeah. And he'd shoot the mirrors. He'd shoot all the mirrors, I'd say, "You're gonna pay for them." And he'd talk about other troops being destructive, see. Yeah, well, I'll give him hell.

Brooks: Did you take any souvenirs and send it back home?

Monacelli: No. I think-- oh, you mean me send?

Brooks: Yeah.

Monacelli: Well, one time I tried. I found a nice-- We run into a bomb[ed??] train with boxes full of Belgian guns. A Belgian whatcha-call-it. Small rifle, small ones.

Jean: Handgun.

Monacelli: And it was all cosmoline. I took the .105 casing and it fit perfect. I taped it, and I went-- somebody was watching me, because I went to get a piece of paper to put the address on, and it was gone. Somebody took it. Yeah, otherwise--

Tony: You had a-- didn't you have a dagger? A German dagger?

Monacelli: Well, yeah. I carried that in my pocket.

Tony: Okay.

Monacelli: I had another small box-- a box just like this-- a box this high I put this knickknack stuff in. The one guy, Paul, this one guy-- this same guy, this Geiger, he had about three hundred gold watches that he took off-- He'd ask everybody what time it is and took the watch. Yeah. And he give me two or three. Well, the box got home but the watches were gone. [Tony laughs] Somebody in the Postal Department figured where the boxes were coming from, it was worth looking into.

Brooks: And where did you get the dagger from?

Monacelli: The what?

Brooks: The dagger, where did it come from?

Monacelli: Oh, um. Let's see. I can't think, now. I got the Luger, is that what you meant?

Tony: Well, no, I meant, you know, the other dagger. You had a Luger, too, but--

Monacelli: But the dagger-- I can't think of where the heck I got that. I gotta remember where that was. [pause] I can't remember that. But the Luger, I can.

Brooks: Where did you get the Luger from?

Monacelli: From a guy; a body.

Tony: A German.

Monacelli: Yeah. But that's the one I give to Jack. Yeah, cuz that's worth a couple thousand dollars.

Tony: Probably more.

Monacelli: And I seen enough guns; I didn't want any more guns.

Brooks: So when you got back home were there any parades or celebrations?

Monacelli: Oh, no, no.

Brooks: No?

Monacelli: No.

Jean: They didn't know what that was.

Monacelli: No, not in them days.

Brooks: Did--

Jean: Not like now.

Brooks: Did you take--

Monacelli: See I had-- I had the '38 Ford, and I think-- I don't know if they-- Rhonda [??] used it; he put the wheels on it, and then I-- I had to get a battery for it. Got that, and then Chuck Clarkson-- Chuck Clarkson got home the day after I did. And we used that car. No, there was no welcoming committees or nothing.

Tony: He can't even, uh, get into the VA clinics.

Brooks: Oh.

Monacelli: You're going-- but see, then at that-- we gave 'em-- We were able to draw twenty dollars a week on unemployment. So we go down to unemployment office, and then go have a beer at the tavern. But there's where you met everybody that came home, see.

Brooks: It says the 20-- the 52-20 program? You get twenty-two-- twenty dollars every week per year.

Monacelli: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Brooks: Did you take advantage of the G.I. Bill?

[00:09:56]

Monacelli: No, I didn't because, you know, I was cutting stone when I went, and I never even-- I should have. I guess I should have. But I just went to work.

Brooks: So you went back to the quarry?

Monacelli: Yeah. Yep.

Brooks: Did you, um-- Have you joined any organizations? Like the VFW--

Monacelli: Yeah.

Brooks: --or any of those. Yeah?

Monacelli: Yeah, I belonged to the VFW when I got home. They formed it. The guys from Waupaca came here to initiate it.; from Waupaca.

Brooks: And why did you decide to join that?

Monacelli: Pretty good.

Brooks: Yeah?

Monacelli: Yeah.

Brooks: Well, looking back on your service how do you think it changed your life?

Monacelli: Well, I don't-- at the-- It's hard to describe, you know? And like I said before, an awful lot of bitching, and-- but then you finally-- You finally get so that you accept it, you know; you accept it like everybody did after Pearl Harbor. That was-- that was really something to see because they were so hot and bothered about it, but-- Yeah, we went on maneuvers right after that. Instead of going home on furlough-- I had a furlough scheduled-- instead of going home on furlough you had to go on maneuvers. Which-- it wasn't easy. And then, you know, having a vehicle to take care of all the time, that was a son of a gun. Yeah.

Brooks: When you look at movies from the time period, what do you think about the way that World War Two is portrayed?

Monacelli: Well I think they done the best they could, you know? What're you gonna do? You couldn't-- and the troops-- The troops weren't always the best, you know. You see, the troops that the Army was made up of before that had to take in all them inductees. You know, they had a hell of a job, too, because everybody was mad and wouldn't cooperate and wouldn't do things, you know? Until finally they had to adjust to it. Pearl Harbor helped that, you see. I could-- kitchen-- Kitchen, you know, like everybody-- KP. There was-- the one time we was on KP there was six of us-- on KP. 'Cause we fed three hundred and fifty men six times a day because they were forming the divisions. So-- what the heck is he standing for? There's no ice on the road. He's standing in the road; the truck over there.

Tony: I don't know.

Brooks: So you had six guys.

Monacelli: Yeah, six guys.

Brooks: During KP.

Monacelli: You've got a whole roster of a couple hundred men; they go down the roster for KP duty. That's the worst there is. There was six of us. So we pulled the whole week. I had to do a week at a time so you wouldn't come around too often. So this one big kid from Chicago, he was a regular comedian. And so we were always laughing. And the sergeant was a twenty-- twenty-four-year man. He was in the Army twenty-four years; and he had a cap, you know, a cap. And when you-- officer come in the Mess, or something, you had to holler-- what you call it. I forget now. Oh.

Brooks: Something on that-- [inaudible; speaking at the same time]

Monacelli: --Attention; attention.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Monacelli: So when you did that, he dragged that cap down his chest [??] like that, and it struck him so funny that we laughed and laughed, and couldn't stop laughing. And he's giving us hell, and he gave us five weeks of KP. Yeah. Jesus. And we fed-- there was a new unit coming in. They were starting a new division, and they took three hundred-fifty men, you know. So we had-- we washed six hundred and sixty dishes and cups twice a day. [Tony laughs] Oh, god.

Brooks: That's hard work.

Monacelli: Twice a day.

Brooks: Yeah.

Monacelli: Yeah. But that ended after a while. But it was-- it was kinda tough. The conditions, the elements, the-- the trying to stay alive. You know. [pause]

[00:15:07]

And the food. The food like in-- during the war, the food-- the kitchen truck, once in a blue moon you'd see it. And, 'course, I was a good friend of the driver, and he'd look for me. And they'd bake breads for all us; they'd bake bread right in that truck. Man, he give us a loaf a couple times; it was pretty good. Yeah. But it was tough.

Brooks: What would you say to someone who was thinking about going into the military today?

Monacelli: Well, I don't think it would hurt anybody if you don't have to put up with what we did. You know, I would think it's okay. It would help every young man there is, I think. Yeah. It sure-- a lot of them could use it. Yeah.

Brooks: Um, I just-- I have a couple things I just wanna clarify. And we can keep going, too, but I just want-- before we finish up. So you were deployed in 1942? In September?

Monacelli: September?

Brooks: Yeah, '42. Does that sound right?

Monacelli: Let's see. I think I was working till '42. [pause] I was in '41-- I think I got drafted in '41.

Brooks: Right, and then you were-- when did you go overseas?

Monacelli: Let's see. In-- I think we went in-- it's hard for me to remember.

Brooks: That's okay.

Monacelli: It was in September, late September.

Brooks: Okay. Maybe it was '43? Just because we have like, a--

Monacelli: Jean, get me that wallet.

Brooks: --we have a lot of missing time in 1943, so I'm just wondering.

Monacelli: I'm trying-- I think the dates are there, that I went overseas.

Jean: Oh, okay.

Monacelli: Give me that glass, there. [pause] September '45; I went in September '40-- oh no, '43. '43--

Brooks: Okay. That makes sense.

Monacelli: --and then '45.

Brooks: Okay.

Monacelli: The same week.

Brooks: So September-- yeah, that makes more sense. So you were training until-- and so September '43, and then-- okay. Gotcha. That makes sense.

Monacelli: And see, here's all the names there. That's-- that's Normandy; Normandy, France, Ardennes, Rhineland, and then Central Europe.

Brooks: Can I see? What is this?

Monacelli: Central Europe.

Tony: That's the draft--original draft—original card.

Brooks: Oh. Report of Separation; Honorable Discharge.

Monacelli: Yeah, a view of [??] the campaigns.

Brooks: Yeah. Great. That's great.

Monacelli: Can you see that?

Brooks: Yeah, kind of. [laughs]

Tony: You're doing better than we are. [Brooks laughs]

Monacelli: Yeah. So--

Brooks: Yeah, and then we-- you got a few different ribbons, right? You got a Silver Star?

Monacelli: Oh, there's-- I don't know that-- What's on that--

Tony: No, it's on there.

Monacelli: Yeah, it's on there.

Jean: Four, um--

Tony: Here, I can--

Monacelli: It's underneath here.

Tony: Where is-- where is it, Quetz?

Monacelli: Ah, come on here. Five Battle Stars, I think, on one--

Jean: That's on your-- [inaudible]

Tony: American Defense Service; European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with one Silver Battle Star.

Monacelli: Yeah.

Tony: Four Overseas Service Bars and one Service Stripe.

Monacelli: Yeah.

Brooks: Do you remember when you got the Silver Star?

Monacelli: No. No, I don't remember that.

Brooks: And, um, why do you have trouble with the VA? If you don't mind me asking.

Tony: He can't get in. They won't take him.

Brooks: Why?

Tony: We don't know.

Monacelli: What's that?

Tony: Why won't the VA take you in? The VA.

Monacelli: Oh, yeah, they'll take me.

Tony: Oh.

Monacelli: I go to the-- I go to the clinic. Yeah.

Tony: But do the VA, do they take you in now? Because remember, before they wouldn't take you.

Monacelli: I don't know what was that-- what was that about. I don't know. There must have been some confusion. You mean for medical purpose?

Tony: Yes. Yeah, the Veterans Administration. You go to the VA clinic?

[00:20:01]

Monacelli: Yes.

Tony: Okay.

Monacelli: Now. There's no problem, now.

Tony: Oh, okay. But there was, right?

Monacelli: There was, yeah.

Tony: Yeah.

Monacelli: I don't know why, but I got that straightened out. Medically-- I don't go for medic. I go for my ears.

Tony: No, but I mean they accepted you so that you have that--

Monacelli: Oh, yeah. Sure. Yeah.

Brooks: Good.

Monacelli: There's no problem. I think I could go for medical stuff, too.

Tony: I took Quetz on the Honor Flight, and it was very interesting from my perspective, that generation.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Tony: So the youngest person on the plane was eighty-eight, and the oldest person was ninety-seven at the time. And there was a communication among 'em, but I would classify it as a silent communication, where you could sense the camaraderie, the respect, and the expectation-- When we got to D.C. they had probably sixty wheelchairs all lined up. The first guy passed the wheelchair, no one took a wheelchair. All of 'em walked to

everything. I think there was one person who actually came on the flight with the wheelchair, but they all walked past the wheelchairs. So it was an interesting day.

Brooks: What did you think about the Honor Flight?

Monacelli: Oh, I would go again. It was pretty good. I don't know why those guys that hesitate to go-- I don't know why they worry about it. But it's pretty good. Yeah.

Brooks: Do you feel like you get recognized as a veteran these days?

Monacelli: Oh, yeah. Of course, I wear a pin on my cap. I think-- my doctor asked me what that pin was for the other day. Didn't he Jean?

Jean: Yeah.

Monacelli: Yea; a division emblem on my cap. Yeah.

Jean: Oh, yeah.

Monacelli: I was surprised. One woman asked me-- I forget where that was. She asked me-- and somehow, I don't know if she-- She asked me how big the division was, and I told her. And then I made the mistake of telling her that we lost six-- pretty near six thousand men. She started to cry. [laughs] That was in the store in Waupaca, I think. Yeah. And then, I suppose, a lot of guys wonder, too. But, you know, you wear it-- it's hard to describe. You wear the pin-- I lost a lot of good friends, you know. We lost a lot of good friends. You know, when you're in service four or five-- three, four years, you develop a lot of friends. I remember-- I got a picture of him-- [inaudible] The first week we was there, he got his head-- his head cut off. You see, that kind of stuff. And you wear it for that. Yeah.

Tony: How did that happen? Was that shrapnel, Quetz?

Monacelli: Huh?

Tony: Was that shrapnel?

Monacelli: Yeah, sure. Pretty close-- pretty close, see. And you got no defense for that.

Brooks: Did you keep-- have you kept in touch with other people who were from your division?

Monacelli: Well I did for a while, but then, you know, then they-- There was a lot of reunions. This division had, um-- what do you call that? In the magazine? They had a--

Brooks: A newsletter?

Jean: Newsletter.

Monacelli: Yes. A newsletter, for years. And I belonged to that, and of course, I never went to none of the reunions. They had 'em in Milwaukee and all over the country.

Jean: And they still are. The same--

Monacelli: Yeah.

Tony: They're still having them?

Jean: Yes.

Monacelli: Yeah. I think there was in one of them magazines on the top there, Jean.

Jean: Yes.

Monacelli: Or on the floor. Go get it. It's on the floor, I think.

Brooks: So you didn't go to the reunions?

Monacelli: Huh?

Brooks: You didn't go?

Monacelli: No, I didn't go. I didn't-- I should have.

Brooks: Do you know why you didn't?

Monacelli: No. No, that-- The traveling in the city, that's part of it. Yeah.

Brooks: Well is there anything else that you wanna add? Anything we--

Monacelli: Well not-- not much. We covered quite a bit of it, I think. Yeah.

Brooks: Do you have any questions, Tony? Any follow up?

Tony: No. Not bad for over a hundred, huh?

Brooks: No, not bad at all. [laughs]

Tony: Remember all those names, and dates, and times.

Jean: This is an old-- old one.

Monacelli: Yes, an old one.

Jean: It's a 19-- er, 2011--

Monacelli: But this is just to show you--

Jean: But that's what it was. He would get that each year.

Monacelli: Let's see that.

Tony: Why don't you give Ellen one?

Monacelli: See, stuff like that.

Tony: Can you give Ellen a copy?

Jean: Huh?

Tony: Can you give Ellen a copy?

Monacelli: See, like here-- the generals, here. There's the generals.

[00:25:04]

Jean: I don't think we have one [??] even newer than that. I don't see any.

Brooks: So this is-- can I just see the--

Monacelli: That's the Cologne Cathedral. I was right there, same place as-- [inaudible]

Brooks: Oh, wow.

Monacelli: That's the Cologne Cathedral.

Brooks: Let me just see this cover page really quick. So this is the 3rd Armored Division Association Newsletter.

Monacelli: Yeah.

Brooks: This is the 2008, 2011.

Tony: Why don't you-- why don't you take that with you? If you wanted it.

Brooks: Um, yeah, we can talk a little bit about the donation stuff. I'm gonna go ahead and turn off the recorder now, if that's okay.

Tony: Sure.

Brooks: Are you all right with that, Quetz?

Tony: Quetz?

Monacelli: Yeah?

Brooks: I'm turning off the recorder?

Monacelli: Yeah.

Brooks: I'm gonna turn this off.

Monacelli: Yeah, okay.

Brooks: All right.

[End of OH2123.Monacelli_file3_access.mp3][End of interview]