

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
ALBERT J. ZWACK  
Infantry, Army, World War II  
2002

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**Zwack, Albert J.,** (1917- ). Oral History Interview, 2002.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 90 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 90 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 90 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

**Abstract:**

Albert Zwack, a Saint Marys, Pennsylvania native, discusses his World War II service with the 23rd Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Army in Europe. Zwack recalls being almost finished with a year of selective service when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, being sent to Fort Sam Houston (Texas) for training as a rifleman, and winter training at Fort McCoy (Wisconsin). Transferred to Ulster (North Ireland), Zwack comments on the civilian community and the tension between Protestants, Catholics, and English children evacuated to Ireland. His unit landed in Normandy during the D-Day invasion, and Zwack mentions waterproofing his equipment with asbestos, being secluded on the ship during the first day of the invasion, landing on Omaha Beach, hedgerow fighting, and his role capturing a German soldier for interrogation. He mentions a bomb collapsing his foxhole on top of him and being dug out by other soldier. He describes intense combat, finding shrapnel imbedded in his canteen, and avoiding mines on and around the roads. He talks about being wounded by mortars, carrying a wounded comrade who was hit again and killed on their way to the surgeon, and spending a month in the hospital. He discusses getting special orders to be an interpreter in the 4th Rhine Coal Control in Essen-Bredene (Germany). He recalls being sent out to scrounge for supplies, running into a supply officer he knew, and surprising his unit by returning with a lorry full of goods. He recalls getting chewed out for transporting civilians to church in a military vehicle. He talks about spending time in Paris and having guard duty at the Eiffel Tower. He recalls a couple times he drank with some high-ranked officers and how differently the officers acted in those situations. After the war ended, he mentions delays getting back to the States, getting married upon his return, and being involved with unions after returning to the civilian work force.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Zwack (b. 1917) served in the 2nd and 3rd U.S. Armies during World War II. He eventually settled in Mineral Point, Wisconsin.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2002.

Transcribed by Jeremy Osgood, 2009.

Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

**Transcribed Interview:**

Jim: Okay, it's the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, 2002. Talking to Al Zwack. Where were you born, sir?

Al: Saint Marys, Pennsylvania.

Jim: And what were you doing on Pearl Harbor day?

Al: I was walking up the company street in Dodd Field. Dodd Field in Fort Sam Houston, in Texas.

Jim: When did you join the Army?

Al: January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

Jim: January, '41.

Al: Don't I have it on there?

Jim: Probably. Did you join the second division right away, or was that your—

Al: After basic training, yeah.

Jim: And what was your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty]? Rifleman? Gunner? What?

Al: Rifleman, at first. Since I went to the 23<sup>rd</sup>, I went to the D Company, after basic training.

Jim: And where was that training camp? In Fort Sam Houston?

Al: Yeah. 'Cause when I went to the 23<sup>rd</sup>, I was there until, I don't know. It was before Pearl Harbor. But they took the entire D Company, and gave them Military Police training. And of the 100, about 160 of us, 162 of us, 34 of us made it and we were supposed to become Military Police. And that is where I was at for Pearl Harbor. When Pearl Harbor day came. But then they left and went somewhere, and I had my year in. I was ready to be discharged.

Jim: Had you been drafted into the Army?

Al: No. Selective Service. Number 154, the first one that the Secretary of War Stimson removed from that old World War I fish bowl.

Jim: So you were drafted then.

Al: Well, I didn't have to go, as that information will tell you. That I gave you. No, they were only interested in people that were out of work. See, there was no war on or anything, and that was still part of the old Army. Primarily people who had some training in the CCCs.

Jim: Right. But everybody had to serve a year. And then, theoretically, you're getting out. When that selective service duty was done.

Al: Yeah. And of course, you realize, it wasn't exactly a year, because you had a month of furlough time coming. So at that time I had my year in.

Jim: And you were almost out.

Al: Yeah.

Jim: When Pearl Harbor came. So, what did you think? Did you know then—

Al: They didn't give us an opportunity to think. They just returned us to the infantry, to where we came from. Only instead of the 23<sup>rd</sup> we went to, MacArthur brought his troops back, or sent the 38<sup>th</sup> back from the Philippines, and they were changing the TO of the Army units, and instead of the old square divisions, they were incorporating the new—

Jim: Triangle.

Al: Three divisions. Two up, one back, two up, on back, all the way down the line, didn't make any difference if it was a squad, a platoon, a company, a battalion, a regiment, a division, or what have you.

Jim: That was the way it was.

Al: No, the doctor told me, he says, "Hell, you don't have to go, Al. You got a good job, you don't have to go."

Jim: What kind of a job did you have?

Al: I worked as a, oh, I worked in a, we made anodes for x-ray tubes and stuff. But then, this was a division for a part of the company. Where the salesmen would bring down an order, and a stock order, and a print, and this, and he had to make up maybe a half a dozen units that he would send to the company that ordered them, and after they were inspected and everything, and they would determine if they were going to buy them or not, and if they did, why they'd order them, order a whole bunch of them.

Jim: But with that job, you could have had a deferment if you'd wanted it.

- Al: Oh, well, yeah, that was part of it. Cause it wasn't part of the unit, part of the company that was making starter and generator brushes by the millions for Ford Motor Company, or something like that. This was a separate unit, a separate part of that company.
- Jim: So, all of a sudden you told the folks back home, looks like I'm not coming home.
- Al: Well I didn't have any folks. See, my mother died when I was seven. And I didn't have to go to an orphanage, fortunately. I went to live with my grandparents. I grew up with them. I went to school, there.
- Jim: In Saint Marys?
- Al: Yes. A Catholic school. They were all Catholic, those people there. In fact there were three Catholic churches. Matter of fact, I was probably ten years old before I knew there were other people on the face of the earth besides Catholics. Know what I mean?
- Jim: Sure, small town, all Catholic.
- Al: When you grew up, when you first seen the light of day it wasn't long before you were baptized, you were baptized Catholic. Then as time went by and you were able to vote you were immediately handed a, became a member of the Democratic Party. And then when you did go to work, the next thing you got was a union card.
- Jim: Right. Everything fell right in place, in order.
- Al: Everything fell in place. As a matter of fact I can remember in that classroom, there were probably, I can justifiably say that there were probably more Baltimore Catechisms in that classroom than there were Webster's Dictionaries. Now what I mean?
- Jim: Sure. That's cute, that's cute. So, all of a sudden you were down in Texas. That was quite a change for you. Weather-wise, everything.
- Al: Oh, yeah, you became acclimated. I didn't mind it. I just leave my hands off of—
- Jim: No, I just want to be sure it's on. Now it's on.
- Al: It wasn't on before? You missed all that?
- Jim: All that. We left out all that. As a rifleman, was the training long and extensive, or how would you describe that?

Al: Well, we continued to train. It was, at that time it was just primarily basic training, you know. But that included, well, things like close order drill, extended order drill. CPX problems. The ability to take the damned thing, to take the rifle apart blindfolded and put it back together again. You know.

Jim: Sure. Were you, were most of the guys there older or younger than you, or about the same?

Al: They were most primarily younger.

Jim: You were older than the average, then.

Al: That's why they called me Old Sarge.

Jim: Old Sarge, before you really were old.

Al: Yeah. I was old to them.

Jim: To them, right. Five years seems like a distant age, I'm sure. How long were you in Fort Sam Houston?

Al: Oh, my gosh, I was there until, let's see, 1942. The fall of '42. Then we came up to Camp McCoy. Swept the sawdust off the floor up there, they'd just built it. And that's where we took further winter training and stuff, then. You know.

Jim: Which kind of training was that involved?

Al: Winter training, that's being able to survive up in Iron Mountains, Waters Meet, they'd have their maneuvers up there. And testing their winter equipment to see whether it would hold up or not. But they wouldn't allow any, after the first week they allowed us to have fire. Otherwise you just dug a hole in the snow and put some pine boughs in there and put your sleeping bag in there. Got to be careful what I say here. Put your sleeping bag in there and that was it.

Jim: Okay. Then when did you move over to England?

Al: In September—

Jim: It says Ireland here. That was the first stop?

Al: Yeah, that's Ulster. That's the Orange Free State. We went out of Camp Shanks. Took the whole battalion for KP there.

Jim: When did you go to Ireland?

Al: I forget what the date was, but it was in September of '43. '42, cause we were in Ireland in '43. That was something else, I remember going to midnight mass with, there weren't many people, they were old, much older people in Northern Ireland, because all the young people were either in the service or were in manufacturing over in England. See. And then the older people there.

And they had the children that England had sent over to Ireland, Northern Ireland, to keep them out of the blitz, when they bombed London and those places, see. And so these, some of them, quite a few of them were Irish Catholic women, and they'd have two, three, four children in their homes that they took care of. That was something else.

You can't believe, I could sit here and tell you about stuff that irked me. I remember going to midnight mass at Christmas, in 1943. In Ulster, in Orange Free State. Part of the British Empire. And we come out of midnight mass, we started down the street, and the ladies, "Oh, we can't walk on this side of the street!" "What?" "No, we're not supposed to walk on this side of the street." "Well, when you're with us you can walk any damn place you want to. You know." "Yeah, but these buildings have windows in them, and there's people in there, and you're gonna be gone, you ain't gonna be here, we know where your going." So, okay. So we crossed the other side of the street. Can you believe that? They were good enough to take care of those kids. Those English children that were being subjected to the bombing there.

And like their, let's say, their husband, in normal, when the war wasn't going on, you'd think they could get a job for the British government. Like what, say, delivering mail, just to apply for a job delivering mail. Oh, no. No. You can't believe what that was like. But this has, this doesn't have anything to do. It was part of the war.

It was no different then, well, it was different than the old man come to you and say, well, "Sarge, you get three men or four men and keep up your dog tags and get and go see S2 Intelligence Officer and, want you to go over to the German lines tonight and get a prisoner. And don't come back until you got one." What kind of a job do you think that is?

Jim: Difficult.

Al: It isn't like being in the Navy. But anyhow, you come back with one, and he'd never even look up from his map. "Is that the best you could do?" It'd be some kid, maybe 17, 18 years old. They'd say, "Well, let's see what he knows," so I'd interrogate him. And he knew where the mortars were, where their machine guns were and everything. And they would, you know, tell you.

But that's something, when you gotta be awful careful. When you get him he's waiting till they were getting kind of tired, and just before they're ready to

change. See they'd only leave the guys out in these gun positions for so long. And I remember when we got, this one time. Well, one time. I only did it once. That was enough. By gosh, it's there [unintelligible] wasn't down there. Their Sergeant wasn't down there. They had got mail from home. They had little candles down in this old house, you know, down in the basement. And they were reading their mail. That was a good thing, because they were wrapped up, involved in that. Before we got the guy on the gun that was out. The sentry or whatever you'd want to call him. Hände hoch! Alle waffen ablegen. Sei gehorsam—verweigern oder Flucht versucht wurde geschossen. [Translation: Hands up! Put down your weapons. He who disobeys or attempts to flee will be shot.]

Jim: What's that? I don't know about that one.

Al: Mit uns kommen, und schnell machen. [Translation: Come with us, and hurry up.] Huh? Well, anybody disobeying orders or attempting to escape will be shot. Sei gehorsam—verweigern oder Flucht versucht wurde geschossen. [Translation: He who disobeys or attempts to flee will be shot.] And he was firm about it, you had to be firm, because that was what impressed them, when he was just like their officers were to them.

Jim: No equivocation.

Al: No, that's right.

Jim: So, when did you move from—

Al: The worst part was going through the god damned mine fields. Huh?

Jim: You went over to England though, in the fall of '42 did you say?

Al: No, '43. I was over there in Patton's Third Army.

Jim: You were in Ireland then from September of '42, you were there a year?

Al: Nine months.

Jim: So that would be, uh—

Al: Then in June of '43—

Jim: Then you moved to England?

Al: Yup. And then we made the, Bradley wanted the second invasion. And, of course Patton had to relinquish us.

Jim: So, in '43 when you got to England, was your training different?



Al: Nah, we just got ready to invade. Take part in the invasion.

Jim: So it took a year, then, of training before you got ready to go across.

Al: Well, nine months.

Jim: Well, you got there in June of '43, and it was a year later when you went across.

Al: Yeah, maybe it wasn't June. We were there in the fall. We got there in the fall of '43. I don't know, I got a book in there you can have, little, you know, gives the exact dates.

Jim: Good. Now was England pretty crowded when you were there? Soldiers all over everywhere?

Al: Oh, yeah. It was ready to sink.

Jim: That's what everybody says.

Al: Oh, yeah. But we were down at Swansea and Cardiff, and we were waterproofing our equipment and stuff.

Jim: How did you waterproof certain material? Did you—

Al: Asbestos.

Jim: Asbestos.

Al: Yeah.

Jim: I'll be darned.

Al: It was impregnated asbestos, they'd put over the guns, you know, and seal them. But then they'd have it wired so you could just rip it open and have your gun ready in no time. Great amount of detail work went into it. But we did waterproof our rifles. We wore waterproof clothing. In fact when we went in we had, jeez, I can't remember. Long underwear. Impregnated. Regular clothes. Then the impregnated clothes on the outside, that was for gas and stuff. And we had extra shoes, and almost like a great big pack. Wasn't a combat pack, it was a everything, carried a lot of things in there that the people that were already there or the people that came afterwards wouldn't be able to use. Even a gasmask, which we never did use, we had to have them with us, too.

Tiger! You want to get in on this, Tiger? [laughs]

- Jim: Did you get into the town in Cardiff?
- Al: Well, we did go to a British, oh, it was a place similar to what a Red Cross would be. Only it was a British, you know.
- Jim: Drink some warm beer?
- Al: No, we didn't. Uh-uh. We didn't, no. No, we had tea. Crumpets or cookies or stuff like that. Milk. English tea cakes or whatever you want to call them.
- Jim: You didn't have a chance to go out with the English girls?
- Al: Oh, hell no. No. No.
- Jim: Why not?
- Al: We were restricted, the invasion was coming up.
- Jim: Yeah, but you were there before they started restricting.
- Al: No. No, as soon as we, see, we replaced another division. And, of course, I don't think Patton was too happy. And he was a damn sight less happier when Clark wanted the Third Division for his Fifth Army in Africa or—
- Jim: Italy.
- Al: In Italy, too. But anyhow, I suppose Eisenhower probably had to make the decision, and so Bradley relinquished the Second Division to Bradley's First to make the invasion with the Big Red One, the First Division on the left, the 29<sup>th</sup> on the right, and then we went down the middle. Next day, D plus one.
- Jim: Did you train, practice any landings?
- Al: No.
- Jim: No, none of that.
- Al: None of that. They didn't know we were gonna be involved in it. They didn't think it was necessary. All I can remember is the Navy, those guys, Jesus Christ, I wonder where the hell they thought we were going. They'd run in, they'd hit a sandbank, and, Christ, the damn water would be up over our heads. Drop it, and we'd go in anyhow. And they would turn and go back and get some more guys on the LSTs [Landing Ship, Tank], LCIs [Landing Craft, Infantry], LCVPs [Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel], you know.

- Jim: So, when did you know that you were going to be moving into France? The day before? The night before?
- Al: Oh, I think we knew probably a week before. Cause we weren't going over there to play tiddlywinks with manhole covers or anything. We were, you know, for, what do they call it? R and R? We knew we were going to be part of the initial invasion force, see.
- Jim: So, on day one, you were still in England.
- Al: No, we weren't in England, we were on the ships for a couple of days before then.
- Jim: Oh, beforehand. So you had the chance to observe it from behind, then. The landing.
- Al: Well, we never, no. It wasn't like being a member of the media or anything like that, to where they could observe all this. You were in the infantry, you were secluded. You just never got, you're lucky at that time to know who's on your right or on your left. Cause there were other people moving in too, on other LCIs and on other, but we got off of the big ships about five miles out, and get on the landing craft. And then moved in. But hell, you didn't picture, you didn't know what was going on except what was immediately in front of you.
- Jim: Right. But you could see that there were bombing, maybe, pounding with the big guns.
- Al: Yeah, you could here the, I forget what battleships there were. There was I think one for, I don't know whether there was or not, but they were for, one was probably for Yukon Beach, one for Omaha Beach, one for some, but yeah, you could here it whistling over you.
- Jim: And all the airplanes going through. So you'd see a lot of activity.
- Al: Yeah. Airplanes.
- Jim: So, that was, the first day then, you had a chance to watch all that, before they put you ashore. If you went ashore the second day.
- Al: Well, it was a little different than that. Yeah, you could see what was going on around you. But, it isn't like watching a damned football game or anything. I mean, you know, that's so far removed from reality that it's almost ridiculous.
- Jim: Right. So, you got the order in the morning, they put you on the small boats, the landing boats in the morning.

Al: Yeah, it was at night. It was late at night, and then we got in there like, I forget what they called it. It was H-Hour plus so many, like H plus 13, 15, something like that. That's the way they designated it. But still it was the following day. But it was H-Hour plus so many hours.

Jim: Got it. They dumped you off in the water, over your head.

Al: Well, I don't think all of them did, but it so happened that the one I was on, the water was over our heads. But we had so much equipment—

Jim: You lose anything?

Al: No, we didn't lose anything. The sandbars would sometimes run in, but they—

Jim: A lot of guys dumped it, because they had to swim and they couldn't swim with that 60 pound pack on their back.

Al: Yeah, I wish it only weighed 60 pounds. I don't know how much the damned thing weighed. But now, every unit, and every General of the unit had different requirements for, you know, how they. Now the first ones that went in there wouldn't carry that much stuff with them, because they were engaged immediate, as soon as they got in there. But when we went in, it was maybe, oh probably an hour before we engaged. And we happened to engage units of a German division that happened to be in there on maneuvers, that they didn't even know it was there. They didn't know that German unit was in there. Our intelligence didn't.

Jim: Was the beach sandy, were you okay walking?

Al: Yeah.

Jim: Not too much shingle there.

Al: Shingle?

Jim: The layers of sand that shingle out on a beach.

Al: No we never paid any attention at all, we just followed it up—

Jim: You could walk right up to the bluff there at Omaha beach?

Al: Yeah, oh yeah. We walked right up to the top of the bluff and from there—

Jim: You weren't on the [unintelligible]

Al: No, not until we got **[End of Tape one, Side One]** up into the bluffs.

Jim: Right. We'd already got rid of those.

Al: Yeah.

Jim: That was good. A lot got killed there.

Al: I'll say. Snipers raised the hell with us, but they were out of that unit that was on maneuvers there.

Jim: How far off the beach did you get the first day, Al? Inland, about how far would you say?

Al: Oh, I don't know, I'd have to look it up in the book. We didn't get in too—

Jim: About four or five miles?

Al: Oh, no! No! No, not that far. Maybe a couple of hedgerows. What? 300 feet. 300 yards, possibly. Till we hit the—

Jim: Till the hedgerows came in.

Al: No, and when we hit the hedgerows, that's as far as we went. Cause I can remember taking, you know these outdoor, where you go down into the basement of a place, and they have doors on there that open up? Of course this place was all blown apart. And I grabbed one of the doors, dug a foxhole, put the door up against the hedgerow. And fortunately I did, because that night, I suppose it was a German bomber. I wouldn't be a damn bit surprised if it wasn't one of ours. Hit, one of the bombs come down and hit pretty close to where my foxhole was. But I had that board, that door, what was left of that door over it. And in the morning the guys came over, and of course my arm was out, and they dug me out of there. Damn thing just buried me in there. At that time that was the least of my concerns.

Jim: So how did you deal with those hedgerows? Your company.

Al: Oh, we just fought from one row to another, you know. That's all. They stopped at night. They didn't fight at night, we didn't fight at night.

Jim: Use Bangalore torpedoes to open up some of those hedges?

Al: Yeah.

Jim: Till they got that paint that the scoop in—

Al: Yeah, the 3rd Armored Division developed that.

Jim: So before that the Bangalore was the only thing you could really do.

Al: Yeah. I remember when they first started that. We had a Chinaman. I don't know how many children he had. Three or four. And he was laying out, in between the hedgerows. And one of the tanks had dug a, could get through the hedgerow, and went out and run over the top of him and brought him up through the bottom of the tank. He went to England, he was there in the hospital for, oh, over a month. And he came back, and he lasted about ten days, and then he got killed. But that's the way it was with the, you know.

Cause you was only, all you had to look forward to was either the litter or the grave. Cause if you got wounded, like I got wounded a couple times. Fact one time, I can remember one time, there was some rounds came in and, Jesus! All wet all down my leg. And a few scratches across the butt. And that, I never even applied, I had Son John put the little sulfur powder on it, and a patch. And I took my canteen out and, God! The shrapnel was in it. That's what was running down my leg, the water from my canteen!

But I wasn't about to go back, because they knew we were bringing reserves up, and this artillery and stuff was going over us, and they were going back, and get hitting into the area where our reserves were coming up, see. I felt safer where I was, rather—

Jim: Closer to them.

Al: Huh?

Jim: Closer to them.

Al: Well, you gotta use your head once in a while. You know? So I just stayed there. Boy, talking to a guy about that far away from E Company, I will never forget, and I looked, and there his head was out on the road.

Jim: You didn't hear it get hit?

Al: Yeah, took his head right off, and the blood was about that high off his torso. I don't even know who he was.

Jim: What a shock.

Al: Well, that goes on all the time. That was day after day, it was something. I never forget moving up to Gemund, and the E Company had got a new platoon leader, and he had just come over from one of these, 60-day wonders or whatever they called them.

Jim: 90 days.

Al: 90-day wonders. And he said, “Sarge?” He says, “Get your men off the road. Can’t you see those mines?” I says, “Sure. I see ‘em. That’s why we can avoid ‘em, because we can see ‘em!” See? It had snowed, and it had got warm, and of course it was metal, and the snow evaporated from the top, and you could see them, see.

And about that time, why, there was a German couple came down the road with a baby carriage. So I stopped, I stopped the guys. I went up to them, and talked to them. And checked the baby carriage over. And all they had in there was, like, bacon and ham. Food. Food was a very important part. You know, you can imagine what those people went through, when they talk about how the rationing and everything here. I didn’t know anything about the rationing here, but I know those people, I talked to them, and I—

Jim: These are Germans.

Al: German. A German couple. Coming out of the town.

Jim: You could speak German?

Al: Yeah.

Jim: Well, you didn’t tell me that.

Al: Sure. And—

Jim: Well, that was a big help for your company, to have you be able to speak German.

Al: No, they didn’t want that. Well, yeah, I interviewed a lot of the people who were captured, you know. But then they had other, like, what’d they call them? Forerunner of the CIA? OSS? Yeah. They had their people there, too, see. They were interested. Course they were more interested in where all the Rembrandts and paintings and where the people had diamonds hidden, where they had gold stuck away, and where they had rifles stashed. You know.

But anyhow. Then I told them to go ahead, pass on through. So they went down, and that Lieutenant says, “Sergeant, I thought I told you to get your men off the road!” I said, “Sir, if these German people can go down that road, my people can come up it! There’s a reason for them.” And I knew what it was, and I never told him. They, the Germans, wanted them to see them. Why did they do that? So my people, the ones I had, didn’t. Not that I was always right, but I’d been involved in it long enough to know. They wanted them off the road. Why did they do that? Because they had shoe mines, box mines, and stuff on the side of the road then, that, it wasn’t long and he lost two or three guys. It wasn’t long before he was up

on the road following my people. Well, not my people, you know. Following us. You know. You got to use your head once in a while.

Jim: Tell me about how the Lieutenant would get you to go pick up some prisoners for interrogation. How did that go?

Al: No, the Lieutenant would have nothing to do with that. Unless he was a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, a S2 or something, and he would have the maps, and he would show you where our mine fields were, where their mine fields were, and what intelligence he has as to where these German positions were, to where you could go and get, possibly get a prisoner. But like I said, I only did that once. That was enough for me.

Jim: Tell me about that. So we get it on tape.

Al: Well, I think I did, didn't I?

Jim: You did that before we started taping.

Al: Oh?

Jim: Yeah. Tell me about finding that, that was an interesting story.

Al: Did you think that was interesting?

Jim: Right.

Al: Well, I don't know, we picked up our dog tags so they wouldn't rattle, picked up a few guys, and just, when night came we went through our mine field, and there was German mine fields. And went in to where these gun positions were, and that's where, what did I say?

Jim: You found them down in a hole.

Al: Oh, yeah, they were down in the basement of a little house, you know. And like I said, we didn't do much. They didn't do any fighting, and we didn't do any fighting at night. We'd fight during the day, and then we'd get up and we'd go start again. Hell, they weren't there. They were gone. And where had they gone? They'd gone to the high ground. And then we'd chase them, until they caught us. They were in the high, you know. And then we'd fight all day again, and exchange. It wasn't that simple, but, then the following morning, and, hell, they wouldn't be there again. They'd have another position. Prepared positions. They knew the country, they'd been in it for years before we got there.

Jim: You found these people when you were on patrol that one time, reading something. What was that?



- Al: Oh. Well, they were reading letters that they had gotten from home.
- Jim: They were in the basement of a house?
- Al: Yeah.
- Jim: You must have surprised them.
- Al: I didn't surprise them. We didn't touch them. There were too many for us. We just wanted the guy, we just wanted one prisoner. That's one man, to take back to interrogate. That's all.
- Jim: So how'd you get a hold of him?
- Al: Well, we waited until he got tired. You could tell when the time come. And we just surrounded and got him by surprise, and he was—
- Jim: How would he be alone, though? That's the thing I don't understand.
- Al: Well, they always had somebody out, just like we always had somebody out.
- Jim: Oh, on guard duty?
- Al: On guard duty. And of course they got mail, I suppose, they only had the one guy out there. Generally they'll have two. But they only had the one guy out there, and he was in the gun position. And also observing, to see whether anybody was coming or not.
- Jim: Did you sneak up behind him?
- Al: Yeah. Up behind him. Anyhow, we got in there without him seeing us and got around him. Of course it was forested—
- Jim: How'd you keep him from yelling?
- Al: Sei ruhig. [Translation: Be quiet.] That's the first thing you say.
- Jim: What is that? I got to get that word.
- Al: Sei ruhig. [Translation: Be quiet.]
- Jim: What's that mean?
- Al: Be quiet. Then you'd tell him, "Waffen ablegen." [Translation: Discard your weapons.]

Jim: What's that?

Al: Drop your gun.

Jim: Did you handcuff him or not?

Al: No.

Jim: Just walked him back.

Al: Just walked him back.

Jim: And you said often they were young kids.

Al: Yeah.

Jim: What would you do when you got him back to your line? Who would you give him to?

Al: Take him in to the old Colonel, had the maps out. Or take him over to Bachus, the guy that was a real good friend of mine. Oh, God.

Jim: Didn't they need you to talk to him?

Al: But he got a, he took a battle, they wanted me to take one. I wouldn't take one. He wouldn't take one unless I did, I wouldn't take one unless he did.

Jim: Take one what?

Al: Battlefield commission. See, he became S2, he became the intelligence officer after I left and got wounded the second time. [20 second gap in tape]

Jim: These kids never, did they seem to help much, or did they know much?

Al: Oh, yeah, it's surprising how much. They kept their people informed. Probably a hell of a lot, probably better, I shouldn't say hell of a lot, but better than what we were informed. Because we were just who was on your right and who was on your left, and what your objective was.

Jim: And they knew the territory, so they had something to say that was worthwhile.

Al: Yeah. But then, they didn't really, I wonder how much of that was necessary, because they had these units set up, and just as soon as a gun fired over there, it would bring the coordinates in on them, and they'd zero right—

Jim: Don't walk away. You're attached here. [Tape cuts]

Al: We weren't in the reserve.

Jim: Oh, I see. So you weren't on the lines very much.

Al: No, not steady all the time, no. There were times—

[both talking at once, unintelligible]

Jim: Your rank at that time was Staff Sergeant.

Al: Yeah. Wasn't much of a rank. Didn't pay any attention to rank.

Jim: Oh, you didn't.

Al: Oh, I know how they would operate in the Navy. But, you see, it's different. It's just like going fishing. I go fishing. But I go trout fishing. And here's a stream. And there's only a certain percentage of those trout that will bite at one time. And so, every waterfall, every undercut in the bank, every hole, presents a new opportunity. But then you have to move along and try to find those particular trout that are biting. You see, I'd never make a good Navy man. Because when I go fishing, I sure as hell don't want to be restricted to the confines of a boat. In the same respect, when I go into the service I don't want to be restricted to the confines of a boat, either. See what I mean? I like out in the open. I'll take my chances with nature and with the outdoors, and with something under my feet.

Jim: How about that weather? When it got so cold? How did you feel with that?

Al: You mean up here in the United States?

Jim: No, when you were in Europe, fighting.

Al: Oh, in the Ardennes? Oh, hell, that was a cakewalk.

Jim: Because?

Al: Well, as far as the weather goes, I mean, it didn't bother me that much.

Jim: A lot of guys got frostbite.

Al: Yeah, but I never did. Of course, if I did, I probably didn't pay any attention to it.

Jim: Did you get to Paris?

Al: Did I get to Paris? Yeah. Why would you ask that?

Jim: Well, it's a different experience, different people.

Al: I'll say.

Jim: Why wouldn't I ask that?

Al: You know, it just so happened that after Brest fell, there were three divisions there. The 2<sup>nd</sup>, the 8<sup>th</sup>, and the 29<sup>th</sup>. The Generals drew lots. Well, it happened to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. Then of course the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division has three regiments. The 9<sup>th</sup>, the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the 38<sup>th</sup>. So, the regimental commanders drew lots. Well, it happened to be the 38<sup>th</sup>, the one I was in. Then you had three battalions. And the battalion commanders drew lots. And our battalion commander, the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the 38<sup>th</sup>.

When we went through, after we left Brest, to go back up to the front, we dropped off in Paris. Because Eisenhower was concerned about the supplies getting sent up to the front. They were disappearing before they got up there. Whole railroad cars. Some of them were American soldiers that they'd, got them off to the sidings with all kinds of rations and stuff then that they would sell to the French. Some of the French were involved in it too. So we rode the, well, I only went up once. And they would ride the trains up to the railhead. And if any Frenchman, or anybody got on the train, bang! They'd kill them. Strict orders. If anybody gets on the train, shoot them. And they did. They had to solve that question, but I didn't.

I, me and this guy that wrote that book there, and the three of us, we would hold guard mount under the Tour Eiffel. The Eiffel Tower. Oh, maybe, probably twice a week. And we'd hold guard mount there, see. And that was my duty while I was in Paris.

Jim: Did you enjoy Paris?

Al: Every bit of it. In fact I even forgot what the hell she said in English. Oh, yeah. Fact the last time I was wounded is out at the Pont de Clichy, went out there after I left Liege, went out to recuperate. And I would take the Metro and go into Paris, and I knew I could go any place I wanted to in Paris. I knew my way around after spending I forget how many weeks there prior to going back up to the front.

Jim: Oh, yeah. You knew all the girls by then.

Al: I knew a lot of the French gendarmes. But in the same respect, they knew the girls. But you had to be cautious, about which, you know.

Jim: Yeah, you didn't want to pick up any diseases.

Al: You got it. You knew what I was getting around to, didn't you.

Jim: Sure.

Al: Yeah, but there wasn't hardly any of them in there that couldn't speak German. Then, of course, I picked up a little French, too. And then our intelligence, he wasn't in charge, he was, but he took a battlefield commission, and before the war was over he did become the intelligence officer for the battalion. Guy by the name of Bachus.

I remember when we moved from fort Sam Houston up to Camp McCoy. And it was during hunting season. I know that because in the morning I looked on the Pullman cars, guy lift the blinds up and looked down, and I remember one guy said "Jeez, look at the houses, they're all white out there." And Bachus, he was from Boston, he was a diamond salesman before he went into service. "Yeah," he says, "Paul, boy," he says, "They paint houses up this way." But that wasn't what the guy meant.

Jim: He meant the snow.

Al: Yeah. He'd never seen snow, he says, "Look, the houses are all white." We had another, we had a sergeant, our platoon sergeant. An old army man. And they gave him a furlough to go home before we came up from Fort Sam Houston to McCoy. And I remember when he got back from his furlough, talking to him, I said, "Did you go home on your furlough?" "Yep." "Where'd you go?" "Went to Memphis." He was from Tennessee, got off in Memphis, and his parents were waiting there with the wagon and the team. And I remember Bachus telling me, said to him, he says, "You went home from there?" "Yeah," he says, I went home." "Well," he says, "how long did it take you to get home?" And you know what he said? "Two wagon greasings."

Jim: Amazing. Amazing.

Al: Kitty! God damn it cat!

Jim: She scratching something?

Al: Yeah. Old scratcher.

Jim: Tell me about getting wounded.

Al: Oh, let's see. Well it was shortly after, remember me telling about that Lieutenant telling me to get my people off the road? And we had lost our gun. We had lost our gun, and they wanted us to take a 300 set-up at the company was up a little ways from where we were. And, course, I had me and Son John, and another guy. I followed the tank tracks. Cause I knew, if there were any mines, they would have exploded them, see. And got up where they, and uh-oh, I knew right away,

hey, there's something wrong here. They were at the crossroads, and I can remember, you can't believe those German mortar men, you couldn't believe how they could bracket in a crossroads with their mortars. They were a hell of a lot better than our people were, that's for damn sure.

Jim: They'd had a lot more experience.

Al: Yeah. And got up there, and was just getting ready to leave, and guess what? The tanks started their motors up. And just as soon as their motors started up, then the Germans knew there must be people with them. And they started pouring in the ordnance.

Jim: Mortars. Artillery?

Al: Well, the artillery went further back, but the mortars dropped around us. Yeah.

Jim: And one of them exploded near you?

Al: Yeah. It wounded all three of us.

Jim: Is that where you were hit in the head?

Al: Yeah. See one piece hit the helmet and just split it right open like that.

Jim: Oh, my!

Al: Then my head went over and hit the tank. And I rolled down in the tread. And I just come through, it's a good thing I did, I was just conscious enough to roll out of it before the tank took off. Otherwise I'd have been hamburger. But, I was okay. But I picked Son John up, carried him back. I was talking to him, he was all right.

Jim: Who's Son John?

Al: He was my last sergeant. Last one of about 22, or, well, there wasn't that many all at, but with replacements and everything, you know. Got him back there and I laid him down, and boy, the old battalion surgeon come running over to me.

I'd been with him from Fort Sam Houston, you know. We went deer hunting out in the Schneifel Mountains and everything. He had a glass eye, and I'll never forget, there's a big old railroad gun or something that would drop the round in, it would dig a hole, Christ, as big as, bigger than this room. And it rolled our tank over, we were coming back, our jeep over. We was coming back from hunting deer, you know, to have something different than our, for our meals, outside of the army. Not that we ever had anything, anyhow. It would only be once in a while that we'd ever get a warm meal. They'd bring the marmite cans up. Hell,

they had more shrapnel in them than, but anyhow. Drove the jeep over, and I remember him digging around in the snow, and finally washed it off and put it back in. He had one glass eye. Battalion surgeon did.

Jim: So they put you on the list and sent you back to, where'd you go back to?

Al: Went to Liege. But when I was carrying Son John back, I was talking to him, and there was a shell or something landed, must have been, I don't know, because I told the battalion surgeon, I said, "I'm okay, but take a look at Son John." And be god damn it if he wasn't dead.

Jim: Oh my.

Al: He was dead—

Jim: [unintelligible] for one minute.

Al: Yeah. I did feel him shudder. A round must have landed in back of us, and a piece must have gone up into. And that's where, if I'd have left him laying **[End of Tape One, Side Two]** he'd be alive today. He was pretty well. He had shrapnel all over him, but. God, you never know.

Jim: What did they do to you in the hospital?

Al: What did they do to me?

Jim: Did they put you in surgery right away or?

Al: Yeah. Well, after. You leave the, like, the battalion CP and you go to the division CP, or the division aid station. And then you'd go to, then the corps, and then you went back to Liege, and that's where they operated on you.

Jim: What, exactly what was the matter? You had wounds in your head and your face?

Al: Yeah. I had pieces of shrapnel went in here, and they cut it out over here.

Jim: Pulled out all the metal?

Al: Yeah, I think they got it all—

Jim: [unintelligible]

Al: Well, yeah. There in France they did some plastic surgery. They had a Jewish doctor there that did plastic surgery. I need to—

Jim: I can't tell, I can't see—

Al: Not after all these years. Except that I can't breathe through my nose, you know. It's all shot.

Jim: Did you go back to your outfit after you got out of the hospital?

Al: No, the Liege, they operated there. And I'm sure you've been to a grocery store? What do they call them now? They have a name for them now. You know, where they'll have about three or four stations where you go through? And then they have one, where if you have less than six items or so. Well that's the way it was set up, see, and they had the metal cans on the side of the bed, and you could hear the doctors removing the shrapnel from these other guys that were going through. And you'd clink, clink, clink, you know? But then they reach down under the pillow and pull out. "Uh-oh. Here's one for the Colonel." So you'd go over to that one, you know, the special one. You know the one like in the store where you only got six items or less? So then he's the one that operated.

Jim: Did you get all the shrapnel out?

Al: Yeah, he got it all out.

Jim: How long were you in the hospital?

Al: Well, I had to take penicillin shots. At that time you had to take a series of 24. The little Indian nurse from South Dakota says, "Where do you want 'em, Sarge?" I said, "Put 'em right here." Till about four o'clock the following morning, a whole other aid or nurse or something come in and I said, "Hey, put a few over here."

Jim: That's pretty sore.

Al: Well, and they had to keep track of them. If they miss count, you'd have to take them all over again. If somehow you miscount, miscounted or something happened that they didn't have the exact time, date and everything of when these shots are taken, you had to take them all over again. And I know some Navy men that you can ask. It happened to them.

Jim: How long were you in the hospital?

Al: A little over a month. Not much.

Jim: A month?

Al: A month, yeah.

Jim: Did you go back to your battalion?



Al: No I started back and there was an officer came on the train. "I'm looking for Sergeant Zwack." "Right here." He says, "You get off at the next stop." And here's special orders or something for me, and I had them. And I didn't get back there, because I had to go up to Essen-Bredeney and sit down with Walter Krupp and his associates. As an interpreter. Cause the war wasn't over yet, you know. Eisenhower was trying to get the coal mines back open for the coming winter. That's how far ahead they were thinking, see. So I went up there, and it was the following day. There wasn't anybody there except a Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel, and the Captain. Their jeep drivers, and their jeep. And that's all that was there. It was called the 4<sup>th</sup> Rhine control. And they didn't really need me. Those Germans, they spoke better English than I did. So then I got back to the war.

At least the Colonel from Supreme Headquarters, he told me, he says, "Well, Sarge, we're going to have to get some places because before it's all over with we're going to have British, French, Dutch, Polish, Ukrainians in this unit before it's all over with." So he asked me to go next door and see if we couldn't, and tell them people they had to get the hell out of there, they were going to take their home over. We had already taken the big home over. Now these were well to do people. Had a big brewery there in Essen-Bredeney. So I went over there and started to talk to them in German, told them what was required, what they had to do. And they were almost crying because they had already left that nice big home, and they were living with their children, next door, see.

So I went in there. And I happened to look up on the wall, and I said "[speaking in German]" And they said "What?" Boy, the old man came out. He was there. I was talking to his wife. Elderly people. And here it turned out that when this doctor with the glass eye and a number of us were out hunting deer. We were staying in their hunting lodge. These people owned the hunting lodge that we were in, see. I start telling them about it. They wanted to know if it was all right, and I told them, "Yeah, we just had to get rid of one German soldier that we found that was dead in the pantry part of it." And they still didn't quite believe it. And then something dawned on me. And I said, "There was a big boar's head over the fireplace, in the hunting lodge." And I said, "Zwei Bücher. Recht und links um." [Translation: Two books. On the right and the left side.]

Jim: Which means?

Al: Right hand side, left hand side. Mit das Luft vergangen. [Translation: Gone with the wind.] And that did it. Boy, they knew right away I was it.

Jim: Right side, side, with the what?

Al: Gone With the Wind. Margaret Mitchell. There was one of these books, one on each side of the mantel piece, below the boars head. Then, that convinced them.

And I can show you pictures of the place. I can show you obituaries of where they died. I can show you letters that they sent me afterwards.

Jim: You kept in contact with these people.

Al: Oh, yeah. And were they ever tickled. I—

Jim: The Krupp people?

Al: No. No, the Schnauders.

Jim: When did they send you home?

Al: When did they send me home? Jeez, took so damn long. Well, let's see. I was up there, and I wound up with, oh my god! I wound up with all these people under my jurisdiction. I was like an acting First Sergeant.

Jim: But where was this, now?

Al: In Essen. At the 4th Rhine Coal Control.

Jim: You're not in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division anymore.

Al: Nope. I started up with them, and they reassigned me, I don't know why, but they reassigned me as an interpreter to the 4<sup>th</sup> Rhine Control.

Jim: 4th Rhine Control. So you could like a gentleman for a change.

Al: Yeah, that was good. But then, I had to get shoes for these Polish. And the Polish and the Ukrainians didn't get along too good together. I had to get sanitary napkins for the girls, oh you couldn't believe. And we never had any rations. And the old man said to me there was a place not too far from there where there was a center, where they distributed, where the Army distributed the rations. So I went up, I took a British lorry. The British were there too then. And I took a British driver and lorry and went over there. And went in there. I was walking along, headed towards the Quonset hut, the headquarters. And somebody tapped me on the shoulder, and I looked around, Dutch Harding. Jeez, I couldn't believe it. Dutch and I before we would go into the attack we'd shine their shoes and put neck ties on and everything.

Jim: From the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

Al: Yeah, and we'd tease one another. We were, one of us was going to get a rehabilitation furlough to come back to the states, because, you know, they only give one out, out of a unit. And we'd tease one another about, "They're gonna get you this time," you know? And by God, they got both of us. But anyhow. I said,

“What the hell you doing here?” And he says, “I’m in charge of this place.” “What?” “Yeah,” he says, “Come on.” He reach down the drawer, and he gets a bottle of Jim Beam out, and sat there, and boy did I get plastered. And I told him, I says, we didn’t. “Hell,” he says, “You don’t need no damn order. Who you with?” And I told him. He loaded that up, and with all kinds of, not only, you know, like canned stuff and meat, but also with PX rations. Cigarettes and gum and all that stuff.

And anyhow, I got back, pulled around this nice great big rose arbor driveway, around to these people’s home. You know, the one’s that I was telling you about, who had to move next door to their daughter’s and son-in-law’s place. And I pulled up in front of the darn, great big columns there. Boy, their home was a beautiful home. And the Colonel come out on the step there and he says, “How’d you make out, Sergeant?” And he looked at me, and I could tell he knew I was pots. So I went around and I threw the tarp off the back. And he says, “You get this stuff?” When you see all those PX rations, all those cigarettes and gum, and candy bars and stuff. He says, “Just a minute, I’ll get some guys.” He says, “Maybe you ought to go rest up a little bit.” And I don’t know, it was the next day or whatever, he says, “How’d you ever do that?” I said, “I ran into a guy I knew.” No, by the way, so I gave him this order sheet so the next time he wanted something all he had to do was fill it out and sign it, and send somebody over there and he could get it, see. Which he was never able to until. Never had any requisitions for what we got. We didn’t need them. Just happen to know the right person.

There was an old, a Colonel. I took some of the especially Polish and Ukrainians, and some other guys. Some were American. And there was one or two British. Took them over to mass on Sunday. There was not, they just had something like, there was no walls or anything, you know. And just had a table set up there. They’d come back and got in the truck. I got in the front, and I looked down. Here was a Colonel. He says, “Sergeant, you know you can’t haul civilians.” And of course, these people were civilians. They were working for us. Some were doing the laundry, some were doing the cooking, some were doing, you know. The people we had in this 4<sup>th</sup> Rhine Control that we were getting together to come out with us. And, jeez, I get back, and the Colonel already knew about it. He says, “You can’t take this.” And I says, “Who in the hell.” “You can’t take these people to church on Sunday in a military vehicle.” I says, “I know you can’t in an American, I never read anything about a British vehicle.” And he knew I was getting hot under the collar. He says, “I don’t want any trouble with you.” He had, I forget what division it was, they lost quite a few people on the way over. Yeah, they did lose them around St. Laurens, St. Leger, St. Mihiel, just to keep the Germans on those islands out there. I forget what division it was, but anyhow. So, his people were the occupation forces in that area, you know, they were in charge of that. So I says, “Who’s gonna tell them Catholics.” He says, “I suppose you are. They don’t speak my language.” So okay. I told them, and then they start crying, and oh god.

Then I was with the Lieutenant one time, we went by a workshop. We went by a tavern, and here come a guy out, and we pulled up, and we didn't know him. We thought we knew him, we thought he was a British officer that we knew, he wasn't, and we backed. And who'd we back into? The Colonel, coming down. And he swore to hell. He thought that we had come out of that tavern, and you weren't supposed to fraternize with the Germans. You know. Eisenhower. No fraternization. And the colonel found out about that. But then the Lieutenant caught more hell than I did, because he ranked me, you know. Then the Colonel had to give him hell.

But then, when the war was over, I prevailed upon these stouters I could use a couple barrels of beer. And they did. He said he'd send them out and put it in a day room we had there, and just help yourself. And they had the little dance, and by god that Colonel, or General in charge of occupation people there, I forgot what division it was. 66, something like that. And he was there. And he was dancing. And he looked at me, and he seen 2<sup>nd</sup> Division patch, and he seen expert infantry seen, and he sees them, it was altogether different then. He thought I was just some, you know, an ordinary draftee. He never knew that I had been involved, or wounded, or been engaged in actual combat. He didn't know that, prior to that. Boy was he ever different. I don't know if it was the beer that made the difference or what, but he was altogether different.

That's like when I was in the hospital at Pont de Clichy. The Germans built that. It was an Air Corps, Luftwaffe, German Air Corps hospital, built for the officers in the German Air Corps. I was there recuperating, and laying out on the veranda there one day, off of the room I was in. And a great big bony finger pointed, "Hey, Sarge!" Jeez, I jumped just like spring steel, you know. You can't believe what that does to your nerves. I mean, you can watch it on television, you can read about it, but it don't mean anything. Until you're able to hear it and smell it, then you know what it's all about.

Anyhow, he said, "Hey, I know you." And here was General Weaver, 8<sup>th</sup> Division commander. He was our regimental commander down in Fort Sam Houston. And we got to talking, I said something about a thirty mile hike, the full field and everything, stayed out and put up our pup tents and put our field kitchens up and everything. And next day we went back and tore the boards off, put everything back up. We just closed, just nailed the [unintelligible] the barracks that we were staying in. Even swept everything off the floor. Piled all the bunks up, you know, and turned everything into wherever it needed to go. Supply sergeant and everything. And I said, "Yeah, I remember that. Thirty miles." He said, "There were thirty-three and a third miles, and I made every inch of it." And, got to talking. He said, "They seem to think I got a bad heart. Hell, there isn't anything wrong with me, I want to get back to my division." He called the nurse and brought over the orange juice and a bottle of booze and we sat there talking for the longest time, you know, going over old times down at old Fort Sam.

Jim: About time to go home from there.

Al: What?

Jim: Go home, from that hospital?

Al: No.

Jim: [unintelligible]

Al: You see, they had, what was it eighty points you had to have, to get out?

Jim: But you must have had a ton of points.

Al: Yes, I had a hundred and fifty two or something like that. But then, you see, I never was married. I didn't get married before we went over. Cause I was in the infantry and, I knew what that was like and all, and never got married. But she waited for me. She waited for me two years, you know. Then we got married after I got back.

Jim: When did you get back?

Al: Oh, I didn't get back until the end of September. '45, yeah. I had those many points, though, we were supposed to go down to Western Marseilles, what they call the green path and fly back. If you had over a hundred and fifty points, see. You only needed 80 to get out, but if you had a hundred and fifty, they'd fly you back. You know, they had planes going back and forth all the time, anyhow. Got down there, wound up with German prisoners. Wound up with candle makers, carpenters, electricians.

And then one day the commander there come over and he says, "What the hell are you three guys doing here?" "Well, we were assigned here." "Well, you don't belong here. You ain't got anything to do," he says, "You guys had enough." So he sent us up around Grenoble. Alberville, where they had the Olympics a number of years ago. And we wound up up there in an engineering outfit. And, God, we were there quite a while. I was up there long enough to go up the mountains and pick mushrooms. And I come back, the guys were ready to die, they thought they were. Went tell the mess sergeant of that unit come out, and he said, "Hell, where'd you get them? Boy," he says. Him and I sat down and ate them, after he cooked them. Nobody else would touch them. I picked them up on Mount Blanc. That's where the people would take there cattle, up there in the summertime, to graze off of the meadows up in the mountains there, see.

And, anyhow, we were there for quite a while. I ain't gonna tell you some of the goddamn things we did there. We had old Gunga Din doing our black market

work for us. He could get more out of one cigarette than we could out of a carton. But anyhow, almost got us in trouble. Yeah, they'd kill for you. The Moroccans. You wouldn't believe, I could be here all day telling you some of the things we went through.

But anyhow, make a long story short, we finally wound up on a boat, went by Gibraltar, came back to the states. And, of course as acting First Sergeant I made out my own orders. I should have gone to Pennsylvania. To Indian Town Gap, where I entered the service. I made it for Camp McCoy. Because I wanted to get back to Helen, you know. She waited for two years. You know, do you ever stop to think, they don't even stay married that long today. And when Tom Brokaw says that was the greatest generation, I can believe that. I can believe that.

Jim: Did you use your GI Bill after you got home?

Al: Did I read it?

Jim: Did you use your GI Bill—

Al: No, no, no, no.

Jim: Did you go back to the place you were working?

Al: Yeah, I went back, I went back.

Jim: Same job?

Al: Same job.

Jim: And you got married.

Al: Yeah, I got married here, went back there, bought a home. And, well, I don't think I was working two weeks, and they went out on strike. And I was out on strike for a month and a half or more. And finally went back to work again, only worked there maybe a week, and then they went out on strike again, for unsanitary conditions in the washroom, till the company would get around to putting the janitor in there. To take care of it. Can you imagine what it was like in those days, compared to what it's like, like up at Land's End in the facilities they have? Where the hell do they think they got them from? Off the backs of the greatest generation. Can you imagine in those days what it was like to try to get a union started?

Jim: Oh, I know that.

Al: How much of it do you know? What did you ever go through? Did they ever send the hoods in from Chicago to break a few bones? Did they ever send the

torpedoes in from the automobile industry out of Michigan? They wanted to get rid of anybody, they did. Anybody that got too far up in the union, Detroit would send the torpedoes out of Detroit. It wasn't long and you'd go along, maybe out shooting rats at night, and you'd look, Jesus Christ, an awful stench. So you'd go over and you open the hogshead up and there's a body in there, all cut up. I hear these people telling about what they, and I hear them telling, they had no conception of what it was like. They talk about the, oh boy, was it ever rough during the depression. They never knew when they had hard times here. A depression is when you don't have anything to eat. That's a depression. It's the same way with all this stuff, that was nothing but a cake walk compared to that Falaise Gap.

Jim: I bet. How'd you end up in Wisconsin?

Al: My wife was here. Helen was here. She worked in Milwaukee. That's how I met her, when I come out of McCoy, I'd go down there.

Jim: Oh, that's how you got there. So you lived in Milwaukee for a while?

Al: No. No, she worked there for Hipp's people. We did come back. After we went on strike that often and everything, the wife said, "Let's get the hell out of here." Okay. You see I have no brothers. I have no sisters. I have no children. I'm the last remaining descendant of this family. Last remaining direct descendant—

Jim: Incredible.

Al: I'll say it is. Talk about being able to write a book, I could, if I had gone to college, taken rhetoric. Figures of speech, similes, metaphors, comparisons and, but no, I didn't want to have anything to do with it. I was in Wisconsin I don't know how long. And they had, what was it? Retroactive furlough pay? I had quite a bit of it coming.

I went down to apply for it at Beloit, in that big post office down there. And he asked me how long I'd need, he said "God. You must have been in the," he said, "Were you in the infantry?" I said "Yeah." He said, "Were you ever wounded?" "Yeah." He said "Did you ever apply for disability?" I said, "No, I never applied for it." He couldn't believe it. He said, "You got a family doctor?" Family doctor? Hell, no. You know? Well, he says, "There's a doctor up the street here. Doctor Fitzgerald. Why don't you go up and see him, after you leave here." So I did. I went up, because he told me, he was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> division, too. Battalion the third. So I went up, talked to him and everything. He hardly looked at me and then he said, "Now you're saying that, wait a minute," the doctor says. "I'll take care of it." He sent it up to Madison, see. And you know why? It was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. But it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division that he was in, as compared with the 2<sup>nd</sup>—

**[End of Interview]**