

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

Anton J. Sanda

Conducted by Martin W. Thomas
and Joseph Glavan

November 10, 2004

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Note: In this transcript Mr. Thomas' (interviewer) questions are boldfaced, Mr. Glavan's (2nd interviewer) comments are bold/italicized, and Mr. Sanda's (veteran) are normal.

Part 1: Introduction

This interview is being conducted on November 10, 2004, at the Indian Prairie Public Library. My name is Martin Thomas. I'm speaking with Anton Joseph Sanda. Mr. Sanda was born December 8, 1916, in Chicago, Illinois, and now lives in La Grange Park, Illinois. Mr. Sanda learned of the Veterans History Project through an article in the *Sun Times* regarding a Chicago Public Library program associated with the Veterans History Project. I understand, from what he's told me, that he tried numerous times with the Chicago Public Library System, and they said they didn't have any such program in effect yet, and he was finally referred to the Indian Prairie Public Library. We're very happy he was. Sorry it took so long to get to this point. We're also very happy that you've kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. Here, then, is Mr. Sanda's story.

Part 2: Entering the Military

Mr. Sanda, how would you prefer to be addressed during this interview.

Tony, I prefer Tony.

Yes, thank you. Tony when did you enter the service?

The tail end of 1942.

O.K. Where were you living at the time you went into service?

In Berwyn, Illinois.

What were you doing before you went into the service?

I was a tool and die maker.

Where were you working?

Leyden Hydraulics, Incorporated.

Are they still in business today?

No, they're not.

Tony, were you drafted, or did you enlist?

I was drafted.

You were drafted. And what branch of the service did you end up in?

Well, I asked to be in the Combat Engineers, and I wound up in the Air Force. Because of the fact, they claimed, being a tool maker, could help there.

The reason I asked that, normally the Army was doing the drafting, and for you to move over to the Army Air Corps, that was not your decision, then?

No.

It was the decision of the service?

Yes.

For the good of the service, as they say. O.K. Where were you inducted?

[Berwyn, Illinois].

When you went in, were you inducted and then go home for a short period of time...

Well, I did go home for a very short period of time.

To get your affairs in order?

Yes.

Part 3: Training

Where did you take your basic training?

At Camp Grant.

At Camp Grant. Is that Illinois?

Yes.

What were your first days like in your boot camp?

Well, everything was new, pretty tough Top Sergeants, and if there was a...cigarette butt on the floor, and you didn't throw it there, you picked it up anyhow.

How long was boot camp?

Several months. I don't recall the exact [length of time].

Was that just boot camp, or was there advanced training that you...?

There was...boot camp training plus, we had almost infantry type training there, too.

So up until that point, you hadn't been assigned to the Air Corps?

Oh, yes.

Oh, you were already assigned to the Air Corps? I see. O.K.

Yes.

What sort of things, in the early part of your boot camp, were they teaching?

The use of the rifle. How to advance and crawl, well the basic [lessons on how to stay alive].

Combat, infantry combat techniques?

Yes, and the climbing and, of course, hiking.

Physical training?

Yes.

Calisthenics?

Oh, yes... Prior to entry [into the service, I belonged to an organization called Sokol, a gymnastics club].

How do you spell that?

S-o-k-o-l, Sokol.

Uh, huh.

And it was a gymnastic organization.

Uh, huh.

That training really helped me. It really did because the teachers there were tough [and made sure you met their standards].

So that made the physical training part of basic training easier for you.

Easier, [much easier].

Can you remember some of the guys who didn't have that and how they did?

Oh, yes. There were several friends. I got to be friends with many of them. And, [I corresponded with several after the war].

Sure.

And they had one heck of a time especially climbing and hiking...

Were there any of them that never did make it through that part of basic training?

Yes, there were a few.

What did they do with them?

I don't know. [Most probably put them into the infantry].

Was that a way to get out of the Army?

[No], made 'em K.P.'s, I guess.

So they, they weren't able to...

No, [they weren't].

...just escape military duty?

They found a job.

No. No way.

Excuse me for interrupting.

No, as a matter of fact, I'm glad you did. For the record, and I meant to mention this in the introduction, I'm accompanied in this interview by Joe Glavan. And Joe is a World War II Veteran, also, whom I interviewed some time ago. Joe's going to be doing interviews, as well, from now on. I'm sorry to have not mentioned that for the record earlier.

So, Tony, after your training at Camp Grant, your basic training there, did you have any other training at any place other than Camp Grant?

Well, you couldn't call this training, but from there we went to...an instrument repair [school]. And we learned how to take apart, repair, [and calibrate] virtually every instrument on an airplane. I went to school...[for] about three...months. [We calibrated instruments and took them to high altitude vacuum chambers]. When we got overseas, we really didn't need [many instrument people]...The instruments were totally destroyed [in case of crashes or flak damage]...so I went into Battle Damage Repair.

O.K., before we talk, we will talk about that, but before we get to that part, this was overseas, right?

Yes.

After your instrument repair training, did you say that was at Camp Grant or was that someplace else?

No, believe it or not, it was in Chicago.

In Chicago.

The military took over a building and made it into this instrument repair school. [It was located on the North side close to Lake Michigan].

Were your instructors military or were they private contractors?

They were military.

After your training there, you told me before the interview, that you then went to someplace near St. Louis.

Camp Jefferson Barracks.

Camp Jefferson Barracks.

The sweat box.

What did you do there besides sweat?

Training.

What kind of training?

Infantry training.

Infantry training. This is after you had the instrument training, now they're training you ...?

[The use of different firearms and a great deal of marching and parades.]

But you already had that in boot camp.

Well, but this was [more advanced].

This was Advanced Infantry Training?

Yes, advanced. Jefferson Barracks was just a sweat box, [but we learned a lot].

What time of year?

Summer into Winter.

And that was in Missouri ...?

Yes.

And after Jefferson Barracks, what then?

Went to New York.

Fort Dix, maybe?

No.

Fort Dix?

That's New Jersey. He and I talked on the phone. I was suggesting like Camp Upton out on Long Island.

Camp Upton?

Upstate New York was it?

Yes, I can't think of it.

That's O.K. If it comes back to you, go ahead and just mention it. But what did you do at the camp in New York?

Really not much. We were then told we were going to go overseas from there. [We didn't do much because the entire area was ankle deep in mud].

Embarkation Center?

Well no, it was inland.

It was?

Yes.

So what did you do there?

In a sense, we waited to be [transported to a port].

Waited for your orders to go overseas?

Yes.

Part 4: Going Overseas

So where did you actually debark?

In New York. Just the most surprising thing. We marched through the Union Railroad Station... Full pack, rifles, the whole thing. We marched, in broad daylight through the station to get to the [exit to the port]. And the women, that were evidently using the trains [as] passengers, would stop and [many] would cry... Well, I don't know what to say, but they felt [sad on] our leaving [for overseas]. They didn't know us, but the feeling was there. We went over across on the Queen Elizabeth. And we embarked, in broad daylight...I thought they were going to be secretive. The Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mary...crossed alone, no escort.

Because they were fast?

They were fast, and we had five inchers on board...We landed at the very northern tip of Scotland...

Let me ask you a question before we...because I'm going to ask you questions about your trip across. When you walked through the train station and then you got on the Queen Elizabeth, would you tell me how you actually got on the Queen Elizabeth?

Well...there [were many people checking the rosters making sure everyone got on board. Then we] embarked up the gang plank.

Up the gang plank.

And I understand there were 17,000 GI's on that ship. One stateroom, cabin, held 16 [men]. You had to crawl sideways to get into the bunk. You couldn't get in [by the] conventional way...

So, you're on the ship and first of all, how many days did it take to cross?

Very fast...four or five days. Some guys were on [ships] for weeks.

You mentioned the bunks and having to climb in sideways. How many bunks high?

Four to a wall.

Four tiered.

And there [were] 16 [GI's, plus their bags].

And what time of year was that?

The tail end of '43.

So it was winter?

Yes.

Were you on an outside wall? Was the bulkhead cold from the outside?

I don't remember.

What was the, what were the conditions like in the sleeping area besides the four tiered bunks?

Besides crowded?

Besides crowded.

Well, I'm surprised that the spirits were pretty high. There were a few that were grouches, and that you can always expect, I guess. But a lot of them dropped out to go eat because of the motion of the ship. And this one fella stayed in his bunk with his beads, and that's all he did, he wouldn't go to eat or anything.

What finally happened to him?

Well, when we debarked, he debarked.

(All laugh.)

Whether he ate or not.

Yes.

Now you say you went up and you actually landed at some port on the northern end of Scotland?

Extremely northern portion, and when we approached England, Spitfires came out and escorted us the rest of the way.

Into the port?

Into the port.

Do you know what city it was that you landed?

No.

Doesn't matter. How did you get from the port?

Well, we immediately boarded a train.

Was it a passenger train, a troop train or box cars?

Both. Everything. Whatever they could squeeze in there. Then, without even stoppin'... we went the full length of Scotland and down into England...[where] we bivouacked in a wooded area... High winds came up, and we wound up with a lot of our stuff up in the trees.

Really?

It was a funny welcome.

You were in tents?

No. The English people [built these huts with] chicken wire covered with tar paper. Have you ever seen that? It [comes] in sheets...that [become the] walls of the building... This wind devastated the buildings as well. So that was our welcome.

How long were you there?

In England?

No, at this bivouac area.

Just a short while, possibly only a [couple] days. Then we boarded another train and went to our [destination]...The names of the towns or cities, I just don't remember. But we were at an airport, about 90 or so miles out of London.

Now, roughly, what month would this have been when you got to this base outside of London?

It [was late] '43.

What season was it?

It was...winter.

Winter. If you went into the service at the tail end of '42.

[It seems it was always winter].

And if you find information at home that contradicts this we can always amend this part, don't worry about that. At the time that you're here at this base in England, what rank were you by then?

I think I was Corporal when we first got there.

Part 5: Experiences

And by this time you had already been assigned to the, obviously, to the Air Corps.

Yes. We were actually a Service Squadron. We were not attached to any bomb group, and we had to go anywhere some help was needed as a service squadron. So, we set up our trucks. The trucks became our workshops. They started their bombing runs and... the flight crews went through further training in England. Originally they were going to use the B-26 as a low level bomber. And a flight went out with that intent and absolutely none of them came back. None of them.

How many men per flight?

There could have been about 18 [planes, 8 men per plane] in the flight, but not a one of them came back because of the fact [of] low level [flying], they were beautiful targets.

Daylight or night time bombings?

Daylight. And the enemy had ships out in the channel which were gun ships [with machine guns] and anti-aircraft [cannons], as well. And if you had the misfortune of flying in that direction, you caught living hell there, too. But that one flight was totally wiped out. And that's when they stopped low level bombing and went into their standard what 12-13,000 feet of bombing.

Now, I've got several questions to ask you about this. I have a hard time figuring out where to start. But one thing you just mentioned B-26 Bombers, and you told me that on the phone so I know you were servicing medium bombers. And you also told me earlier, not on record, that you were assigned to the 9th Air Force in England.

Yes.

Well, I guess we'll talk about the bombers first. Were the instruments you worked on exclusively the B-26 instruments?

Well, basically, yes. But like I said...I did not stay in the instrument repair. I was in Battle Damage Repair.

Oh, so the battle damage repairing was not instruments but some other aspect of the plane?

Yes, whatever part of the plane needed repair.

So you worked on anything, hydraulics or ...?

[No], well most of the time was sheet metal and the plexiglass noses on the planes.

What best prepared you to do that? Your civilian training in the tool and die industry or...?

Exactly.

On the job training?

My own ability and on the job. I didn't go to any school for that.

Were there any of your co-workers that had formal training in this?

Oh, yes. They went through the schools in the States. Well ...I developed a method of repairing flak holes in the noses of the planes which really speeded up the repair and much, much, clearer for the flight people. And this repair went into the official manuals of repair... They gave me the Legion of Merit Medal [for this].

Really? Be sure to mention that on that form (Biographical Data Form).

Oh.

I just wondered if the fact that you didn't have the formal training that told you exactly how the Air Force wanted it done, if that made you more able to think of, of things broader than the manual.

A broader aspect, yes.

A broader aspect, yeah, that's the word I was looking for.

And it had to be that way because the way things [were], it was so badly needed. I even went to [other] fields to do work on B-17's and Halifax. That was a British plane.

Halifax, was that a medium bomber?

[No, it was a heavy bomber, in the class of B-17's or B-24's]...It had fabric sides. I flew in that thing. And how it stayed together, I have no idea. [Everything shook and vibrated].

But they were still using fabric, uh ...?

Oh, yes, the sides were fabric.

And the wings were covered with fabric also?

[No]. And you get flak through [the fabric, the wind causes it to tear more]. Aluminum didn't stop [flak] either... [The crew] suffered a lot... They're up in the air, and they had [very little] medical attention [when] they were wounded.

Now, were you right there when those planes would come back with the wounded on board?

[No, I would be quite far away working on other planes].

So you actually saw them?

[Yes, at times.]

Were you ever asked or called upon to pitch in with the wounded or were you strictly...

Well no, that was taken care of [as I stated].

Something else you mentioned sort of surprise to me, that they had these trucks outfitted like mobile shops.

[Yes, and they proved to be extremely helpful, at times they were in use 24 hours a day].

I don't know. Was that a new idea? I mean, had you seen that before? I mean you were actually working inside the truck?

[Yes, we worked inside the trucks since they were set up to be the shops we needed].

Had benches set up?

Yes, the machine shop had a small lathe, a milling machine and a lot of hand tools. And the instrument shop all the calibrating equipment needed.

Permanently assigned to that vehicle?

[You could say the vehicles were assigned to us. Wonderful units.]

What size truck was this?

[They were semi's. The tractor would drop them off where we needed them, and there they became our workshops].

So the tractor would leave and just leave the trailer?

Yes. And [they were] fully outfitted for that particular reason.

Did it have heat in it? Did it have heat?

(Laughs.) Your body heat. [We put electric heaters in them. You most probably have seen how they obtained equipment on M.A.S.H. Need I say more!]

That was it, there's no way to heat...?

[Like I just stated]. It seems like almost everything I did was in the winter time.

Well, how long were you there in, at this base outside of London, roughly?

I don't remember if we went across in the late ['44 or '45].

Well, that could be right, from what you said, you re probably late ['44], then the winter of ['45] in London.

'44 and '45. Not in London.

I mean, outside London.

Well, from England we [went to France and used a] German air base that [had been bombed by us, but soon made useable].

And where was that?

All I can remember was France. [I don't remember the names of nearby towns].

Yeah, you mentioned on the phone, that's why I asked if it was a German base that they had established inside of France.

...We had to be fairly close to whatever was happening because of the distance the planes could fly...That's why we moved so often...[From] France we went...into Luxembourg, from there to Belgium, and from Belgium to Germany. [But not that quickly].

So each of these locations ...

Were just abandoned air strips.

Air strips.

Yes.

And your whole unit, your whole service unit was moving forward?

Yes.

So in France, let's just take them in order. In France, do you remember anything particularly interesting that happened to your ...anything you saw while you were there?

Well, a lot of planes coming in for belly landings and, and it's amazing how some of those [pilots] kept that plane flying with the damage that they had...

Were these all U.S. planes, or were there still British planes ...?

No, our planes.

And so a lot of them were making emergency landings because they were so badly damaged?

We had a B-17 come in, and he went off the runway and rolled right over a jeep.

I just realized, since, were planes taking off on their sorties out of this base or was this ...?

Oh, yes.

O.K. so the planes are coming back, some of them are returning to base

[Yes].

Not just too badly damaged to make it to another base...

Yes, that happened infrequently, but it happened.

So, the plane that went off the runway and rolled over a jeep, anybody hurt in that?

Yes, I understand that there was a person in the jeep. That's what I heard, but I don't know.

How many people were in your service unit, roughly?

I think between 40 and 50.

And this service unit stayed together, I mean these were all the same people from the time you started out in England?

Yes.

Did you get to know most of them?

Oh yeah.

Any good friends?

A lot of good friends. And we...corresponded afterwards. [But here of late the cards or letters would come back, guess why.]

I'm going to ask you several questions about these people at the end of the interview, that's why I asked. So, you moved from France to Luxembourg next.

But that was a very short [stay].

Short stay?

And then we moved to Belgium. [That was] the winter of '44 and '45. And as Joe can vouch for it, it was a horrible winter. And regardless of what you put on, you couldn't get warm.

What's your recollection of temperature, average lows to...?

...I don't know, [but I'm sure most of it close to zero or below].

Joe and everybody has said that was just horrible. Below freezing?

[Yes].

And that temperature just stayed that way, for how long?

Very constant, [most of the winter].

...Battle of the Bulge, eventually, when the sunshine came out, that's when the Air Force was able to During that period it was cold, damp...

And cloudy.

Miserable.

So something like what, 10, above 10 or 15 above?

[It was at this level as well as below zero].

Oh, below?

No, I would say, well...

Well, there were times...

There were days it could have been, I'm just giving you a ball park. It was cold, cold and miserable.

And then there ...

... talk about 10 or 15 degrees below and it might last for a day or two, but you're saying this went on for what, months?

The winter of '44 into '45.

That's why the Germans counterattacked the Bulge, because they had the bad weather going for them.

Oh, yeah.

And we had to be out on the line getting the planes absolutely ready for when the clouds would break so they could go. They did a lot of bombing in the Bulge. They were very good against tanks...

Which plane was this, now, you're talking about?

B-26. [Marauder].

B-26, still talking about the B-26.

Yes.

So, when you're working on these planes, did you have hangars, or was this right out on the tarmac?

Outside. [The planes were in their revetments. We would go out to the planes that needed repair. Our Trailer held most of the tools and material we would need.]

What did you wear? What was the issue uniform and then, if you supplemented it with any ...?

Well, fatigues, long underwear, whatever shirts, whatever you had, and I think it was illegal, but I got hold of a flight jacket with a sheepskin lining.

Sheepskin lining.

[That's what the flight crew wore].

What about the coveralls with the sheepskin lining, leather coveralls?

Didn't see any of that. And the shoes were very inadequate. Once they got wet, they stayed wet. We didn't have packs, you know, water proof. They were not water proof.

When you say shoes, are talking about low quarter shoes or were you wearing boots?

No, just a regular combat boot.

Oh, O.K.

Just leather, ankle high.

Just leather. Believe it or not, I wrote home to please send me some socks. And, believe it or not, that was the very best thing you could give 'em, was a dry pair of socks.

Was there a sweater or anything you could put on under the flight jacket?

You know, you just mentioned that. I got a sleeveless sweater from the Red Cross. Some women, you know...[knitted] 'em, and I still got it at home.

Do you really?

I still have it.

Now this was something that was knitted by somebody in the U.S.?

In the U.S. [They were volunteers for the Red Cross].

Donated to the Red Cross?

Yes.

And it made its way to you?

And there was a little Red Cross emblem sewed in there, and I thanked that lady time and again, [though she didn't know it].

I mean, just in your heart, or did you actually make contact?

Oh, well...I don't know who she was. But that sweater helped an awful lot, because it was wool. If you want to see it, I could bring it sometime...It's pretty [well worn]...

Maybe we'll photograph it and make it part of the record because you talked about it.

[Sounds good].

Gloves?

A rarity.

I meant what kind of gloves. You mean you didn't have any?

You didn't work with gloves, this type of work.

That's another thing. We cut fingers off the gloves and only had the lower portion on our hands [covered] because you really couldn't do anything [with gloves on]. That's where I caught...

Frostbite?

Well, [I got] frostbite [on] the fingers, and they're very, very sensitive. And my [left] ear [was frozen]. The skin came off exactly the shape of the ear. The whole thing just peeled off. [Portions of my legs, and all portions of my feet were totally frostbitten].

So, you weren't wearing any ear covering?

Oh, yes, sure, but evidently cold got underneath there somehow.

So what was your head gear?

[Similar to a flight helmet. A wool liner with flaps for the ears and a chin strap.]

A liner?

[Yes].

Oh, soft leather, with ear flaps?

With ear flaps, [as I had previously stated].

So you could tie it under your chin?

Yes.

Was that lined? Fleece lined or anything?

Just a knit wool lining.

So when you say helmet, you're not talking about ...

[The steel] helmet, no. [We had to wear the steel] helmet...on top of that. We had to wear the helmet all the time.

Regulations?

Well, we were frequently bombed. And this one time we had a pretty good raid goin' on, so I dived underneath a truck. When I got out [to look around, I saw] it was a 100 octane gasoline truck and fully loaded.

Where was this, what country?

[I] think that was in Belgium, too.

When you went under the truck, all you knew was you wanted to get under cover, you didn't know what the truck had?

I think the driver had common sense... He stopped and ran to hide somewhere.

He ran away from the truck that you ran under. Was anyone else under there with you?

No. Very often I was out on the line alone... The others...were elsewhere [on the line]...We had a two wheel, what would you call it?

Dolly?

A cart, a cart. That was towed by a car.

Oh, O.K. a little trailer.

...We built [a] frame that we could extend up to about 8 feet because we had to [be able to reach any damage]...It worked out quite nice. Then [we] installed a gasoline [engine power plant]...that produced our electricity that we needed [for our tools, etc].

You called it a gasoline what, Tony?

[Power plant].

Like a generator?

Yes...a two cycle gasoline [engine] driven generator.

O.K., I see.

...We had to heat the plastic in order to form it to the contours of whatever was damaged. [We also designed and made our own oven using the generator supplied power.]

Oh, this was for the turret or the nose?

Yes.

Where were you when you devised that method that got you the Legion of Merit?

I think we were in France by then or...Well, see, not only that but the bombardiers evidently were complaining that there was a switch, a very vital switch close to where they had to do their work, and the complaint came to us, so we made a little cover, plastic cover, see through, with [spring loaded] hinges [which kept them shut]... We installed them on all the planes, and that prevented the accidental release of the bombs. So, we did all of that, and that was also taken in to consideration on the Legion of Merit. [We also installed them on some B-17's.]

If I understand, you're saying that this was a clear plastic cover so that they could see the switch, but they wouldn't accidentally bump it and release the bomb.

Yes...we made [them to our own design].

To your knowledge, did that happen? Where they actually released bombs, uh,?

[That I don't know. While] working out on the line...a flight of planes came back [from a mission]...There was a farmer's field [about] 100 [yards] away from me. They flew low over that farmland and down come the bombs. They were unable to release them over target, and they can't land with them. So they dumped them in the field...

How low were ...?

Not armed.

Oh, O.K. so they didn't explode?

Oh, no. They weren't armed.

How did they dispose of it? I mean it's not damaged. How did they dispose of it?

I guess they stayed there 'til they went to clean up after the war.

Oh.

The poor farmers, they never knew what they were [going to get next].

Hit with their plow?

Yeah, speaking of farmers, when [we] were practicing low level flying, the farmer really complained that it was scaring the living bejabers out of their livestock.

Low level, how low were they flying?

Sixty, seventy, just tree top [height]...

Uh, huh. So they were trying to fly at tree top level and that's when they, that flight, got wiped out?

Yes.

You mentioned the gas truck incident. Roughly how many times would you say that enemy planes attacked your field?

[I don't remember].

Well, while you're thinking about that, here's another question. Did those attacks taper off towards the end?

Oh, yes. [Eventually they stopped completely. Shortage of gasoline and pilots forced them to use their airplanes where the ground action was.]

Because I understand they were running short of fuel for their own planes.

...Absolutely. Once we got control of the skies, we could do more things out. Towards the very, very end virtually no raids at all because what planes they had left they wanted to use them against the infantry...

Sure, was the closest threat to them.

Yes.

During those other raids against your bases, did you have any other interesting experiences like the gas truck?

...This, too, was, I think...in Belgium in '45, the winter was still on. And there was a unit I never heard of. I didn't even know it existed. [These units were portable shower vans. We could not wash up properly]...If B.O. had anything to do with [the war effort], and it flew in the right direction, [we could have been accused of gas warfare].

(All laugh.)

Our C.O. heard of them and believe it, he got us a chance to go [get] a shower... They equipped [and put up] a tent, quite a large tent, [up on a knoll]... They had a unit much like a, like a jet. It was a turbo type thing... The flame [went through the] coils, and that warmed the water... They [then] piped it into the shower heads... [There was] a little alcove [where] we took our clothes off and just put them on the floor... Then, oh, man, [we had a lukewarm, shower]. And that was pure luxury, that was just wonderful... Then...a cyclonic type wind came up; it pulled the stakes out [that held] the flaps and blew the flaps in and on the opposite side, it blew the flaps out. And there we were, naked...and the cyclonic winds comin' through there [like a wind tunnel]. That was the end of the showers. We dried ourselves the best we could; we got into those clammy clothes and got into ice cold trucks. The language was not repeatable. We got back to base, [but] I don't even remember getting a cold out of it...

Well, you know, I, that's, that really leads to the next questions I had for you. Besides this incident with the getting your first hot shower in I don't know how long, what were your living conditions like? Were you living in hard sided...

(Side A ended)

We ran out of tape while I was asking the question about your living conditions, and I was about to ask you what your quarters were like, what kind of shelter you had, and then I'd also like to ask you about how you were fed and some other questions along that line.

Well...we ate a lot of the C rations and K rations. Once in a while we would get a...hot meal. But, it was better than the infantry...still was not very good.

Now, you say on occasion you would have a hot meal, was this a military kitchen that was brought in?

[No, the meals were cooked on base].

And then they'd feed you, and then they'd just move on?

Well, they stayed with us, but we wouldn't get meals all the time.

I see. What kind of quarters were you living in?

[At times sleeping bags outside. At times in tents, and at times in Quonset housing. I remember times while in our sleeping bags of punching from inside the bag to knock rats off.]

Did you have cots in the tents or were you right on the ground?

[Yes], we had cots.

Cots and sleeping bags?

(Laughing) A military blanket sewed inside of canvas, that was the sleeping bag.

In the winter?

In the winter.

Was there any heat in the ...?

No. Like I say, we covered ourselves...you cover yourself with whatever you can... You've never seen a sight like say 3 or 4 GI's together [in] only their...long johns. The back trap hung down to the knees, and the knees, the knees hung...would hang down to your ankles. [What a sight].

Well, now, during this time when you're not on duty, what do you do?

You're on duty all the time. [We would try to catch up on our sleep].

You don't have any time to...?

During the major part of the war we [didn't have much time to ourselves]... It took three years before I got a week's R & R.

But I mean, at the end of the day, you must have some time besides just to go back to sleep.

It seemed like you worked sunrise to sunset. Well, I was out on the line many times without anything to eat for the whole [day]...I might have had a little bit of breakfast, but no meals the rest of the day... My wife gets angry [that] I don't get hunger [pains]... I get envious of people that say, "Oh boy, I'm hungry." ...I eat only because it's time to eat.

Well, when you're working day in day out, how many days a week, seven?

Oh, yes. One time we didn't even know it was Christmas.

Really?

[There were periodic times of a lull in action. Those times were spent sleeping.]

So, I mean, you know what you're doing, you see the product of your work, you see it going back up in the air, and you can see that you're an important part of the mission. Comparing that to your jobs before and after the war where you're really getting paid decent wages and for every hour you work here, I mean, you, basically, you're working from sunrise to sunset or more for just military pay, what were the rewards to you, if any, for what you were doing?

That we were helping, that we were doing something constructive. [It's the pride you feel that it's a job well done and in helping the G.I.'s doing the fighting].

How did you feel about that work compared to your civilian jobs before and after?

Well, it's very different. Your sense of pride ... Well...in my civilian work, I had pride in what I was doing...

So that was the same...the rewards?

Yeah, heck...\$32 a month when we first got in. (Laughing). Then, for my folks, I had a bond taken out of that \$32 a month, as well.

And the bonds went to your parents?

[Yes].

Talking about your parents, did you have other family at that time besides your parents?

Well, uncles and aunts.

Any brothers or sisters?

Brother, one brother.

Was he in the military also?

No. [He had a serious illness and could not get into military service].

Well, now, how did you, how often did you have contact with your family back home while you were over there?

I didn't see family or my wife to be for over three years. [Writing and receiving letters were our high times.]

Did you already know your wife to be before ...?

Yes.

Were you, what was your ...?

We [were] engaged before I left.

Before you left. So did you correspond with your parents and your fiancé?

Oh yes, oh yes.

How did the mail work, I mean how well did it work?

Surprisingly pretty good. Just amazing that they got the [mail] where we were..[especially because of our frequent moves].

They did a good job with the mail.

The "V mail" they called it, didn't they? [Very good job].

Would you describe the V mail paper?

It was quite, they shrunk it. Oh dear.

It was legible, like you said, they shrunk it down,

Yeah.

Let's say, it was a big letter, they would shrink it down, somehow, and it was on a kind of rough paper. I mean, not paper like this (indicating interviewer's note paper), it was just kind of rough. But, it was legible, you could read it and what not.

Are you saying they shrunk it down after you wrote it, or they shrunk a piece of paper you started out with?

No, no, after you wrote it.

After you wrote it, they shrunk it down.

The entire letter. That was for...saving space and weight.

Right. To your knowledge, were your letters censored, the ones that you wrote?

Yes. Officers had to censor them...I'm sure everybody else in our outfit had sense enough not write anything damaging.

Did they give you guidelines like, don't say where you are or...?

[Absolutely].

Just use common sense? You told me already that you really didn't have much time to yourself. And you said you had one leave?

One week.

One week of leave?

One week of R & R and believe it or not, they flew us to Scotland...The government had taken over many of the little resorts on the Lochs... [We had] feather comforters, feather pillows, tea in the afternoon. We were in heaven, really. Oh, it was so nice, and we managed to get to Edinburgh. There was a photographer there... [that dressed us in complete Scottish kilt dress. Then took professional pictures of us. My picture is somewhere in a dresser drawer.]

What did you do? What did you see in Edinburgh?

The people were excellent; the people were very, very nice... They were rationed, and yet they tried to give [food when] they barely had enough [for] themselves. So, in turn, we gave them...Hershey bars... [They were] the big, big thing there. We gave them whatever we could. And there weren't all that many stores open in Edinburgh. The Lochs [are] beautiful...We were there in winter, and...[did not see it in all its splendor]. The Loch area is really beautiful, and the people were so nice.

They were nice just ...

To the GI's. Yeah.

Did they act like they were grateful for your war effort?

Oh, yes, they sure did. And while we were in England, I got a couple of 2 or 3 day passes to London [while] the Blitz was goin' on. You heard that buzz bomb. When that engine quit, down came the bomb. [They were very] devastating.

You say you could hear the engine? You actually heard it when it quit?

[Very clearly].

So you knew that that meant...

When it came down, it would scream like, you know. You know it was gonna' drop somewhere around.

Did you ever see one?

Oh [yes], quite a few...

Somebody else told me they could see them going through the air.

But [do] you know this? Polish and Czechs were in the RAF as pilots, and they went out over the channel [and] got along side a buzz bomb, and they [put] their wing [tip] under the short wing of the buzz bomb, and they'd flip it [on its side]. That knocked the gyroscope...out of whack, and the [buzz bomb] would come down in the channel. [The] buzz bomb [flew at speeds of]...about 400 miles per hour, and with the [Spitfires], they were able to go along side of them and [as they say, upset the apple cart].

They must have been going just about top speed to catch it.

Oh yeah. [Later models of the Spitfires and several American planes went over 400 miles per hour.]

I never heard that before.

Absolutely.

That's good.

Just amazing.

I have a question in my outline, you've already answered but I'm going to ask and maybe you can elaborate on it. And that is, did you feel pressure or stress while you were ...?

Absolutely, very much so. [When battle damage surpassed our ability to keep up is when the feeling of pressure kicked in, and stress came later.]

Can you describe it for me, what the feeling was like? It was a fear or frustration or...?

Not fear, but possibly a desire to do more. Physically [and mentally] it was kind of impossible to do more, but you felt you always could do more. And, I never felt frustrated, [just the pressure of the situation]... Like you say, I took a lot of pride in the work, the fact that it enabled [the planes to fly missions instead of sitting in their revetments]... Well the pilots might not have thought so...I flew in the B-26's, and it's a real hot plane to fly. It had to have 2, 500 horsepower [per engine], two engines and four bladed propellers, fourteen feet in diameter... They needed power to fly, and [since] their wings were short; they called them the flying prostitute, no [visible] means of support.

(All laugh.)

No visible means?

Yes, [while]...landing...some of the crew [were] white knucklers...[Whatever they gripped, their knuckles would look white because they held on so tight]...[The plane] had to land at [over] 100 mph, and they were tough to fly, but damn good planes.

Did you ever have any USO shows?

No, we never were blessed with [one]. In England...we got [a] bit of a local talent type of thing, but never the big names...

Another question I have on my list is: Do you remember any particularly humorous or unusual events? I think going under the gas truck qualifies. Are there any others you can think of?

Well, the [cold] shower was [not humorous at the time]...Now we laugh at it...

Can I ask him a question?

Absolutely, Joe.

Tony, when you got the Legion of Merit, did they increase your rank, or did they try to make an officer out of you?

...When an officer [asked me about going to OCS], I didn't want [that].

You didn't want to go to OCS?

Absolutely not, no. I [was] a Tech sergeant [and proud of it].

O.K. I thought maybe you would be officer material.

Well, they thought...so. [It was close to the end of the war. Why start something new. I'd only end up as a second lieutenant].

But you didn't want it, huh?

During the war, I was telling officers what to do.

Just by virtue of your knowledge and expertise?

...Yes. But when the war ended, that ended. They got back their [options]... I tell you, though, brand new Second Lieutenants were hard to get along with, but higher rank, Captains, Majors...were wonderful. Our CO was a Major, and he was for the guys...[Saluting was put on hold for the duration].

Yeah, the Second Lieutenants were what they call a "Ninety Day Wonder."

[Most probably a good percentage of them developed into fine officers].

Part 6: Injuries

So, one thing we haven't covered yet is, you actually suffered injuries related to your winter of '44 – '45. Now, where were you when that happened.

In Belgium. I [don't remember the names of nearby towns or neighborhoods].

You were at a base ...

[Yes]. Being out at the line so long...and most probably, pretty wet shoes and [in turn your socks get wet].

What actually happened?

It was slow in coming. I think it was the fact that we had to go out there so often and be out there so very long that ...you don't feel the frostbite, in a way, coming onto you. You're feet are very uncomfortable, of course. But, you don't think that's what's happening.

How did you finally notice something was seriously wrong?

I finally got into a...MASH like [hospital]...

Dispensary?

Hospital...I was [there] a week. Most of the fellas in there...had very, very discolored legs.

Uh, huh.

Black and blue.

And were yours that way?

Oh, yes. And they wanted you to lay there with no covers [on your legs]. They wanted them to be exposed to [the] air... Getting back to your outfit [proved to be a problem. You were on your own and had to locate your outfit and find trucks going that way].

(All laugh.)

Did you wind up with any service related disability from that?

[Yes], I have to use the walker now.

But I mean, officially, did they ever award you ...?

Yes.

...service disability benefits?

Yes...I go to Hines [VA hospital].

Hines VA Hospital?

VA Hospital. They're pretty good there. They really try. There's a lot of doctors there from Loyola Hospital. [I feel that they are doing a good job of treating the veterans].

Yeah, I see you have the walker now. After you were discharged from the service, how was that experience affecting you?

Not bad. I was able to do things and work, but it bothered [me. It got worse as time went by. Now I use a walker to help me get around].

Did it slow you down at all?

Yes, I think so.

So after this happened and they sent you back to your duty assignment, that was in Belgium, then you relocated to Germany, your unit did? Anything happen?

...Everything was closing down by then. We really didn't have any problems when we got into Germany. Of course, there were no raids, no air raids by then; they had nothing to send out. And it was very, very calm in a way.

Anything else we should talk about before we talk about your rotating back to the States?

Well, I think it's [very] well covered. If there's time, getting back to the post office.

Oh, to your mail?

...This was when we were going to the debarkation station. You know, they named them for cigarettes.

Oh, Camp Lucky Strike and...

Chesterfield and Lucky Strike and all that?

That's where I debarked, Camp Lucky Strike.

You were at Camp Lucky Strike?

And they couldn't take us, they were too crowded. So they sent us back, quite a ways to an abandoned [camp site], the tents were knocked down. It was...some sort of a camping area for GI's. But everything was knocked down, and it was getting...very late at night...and believe it or not, we got mail even though we [were sent] back... I got a package, but it was [getting dark], so I [quickly] opened it up and got the other guys together. My sister-in-law [always made great] date cookies...and that's what these were. Oh man, we downed them, because we didn't have anything to eat [due to] the transition here. In the morning, I looked at them. They had a growth about [half an inch] high of mold...We just [scraped] the mold off and continued to eat them. But the night before, we ate 'em with mold and all. [We got our share of penicillin].

Here's a question I'm going to ask both Joe Glavan and Tony Sanda this. Why did they name the debarkation camps after cigarettes? Do you have any idea?

[Very popular names, easy to remember].

It wasn't sponsored by the Tobacco Companies?

No.

No.

Somebody in the military said let's just name them after cigarettes?

Yes, instead of one, two, three, or a, b, c, d. It was real nice.

It was different, too. Instead of something military, you had something, Camp Lucky Strike.

Yes. Even though cigarettes were in the C rations and then you could get them anywhere, I never got into the habit of smoking a cigarette.

Me either.

Really?

Yes.

In fact, I'll just tell you a little story. I would give my cigarettes every, we would get rations like every two weeks, and I'd get a carton and I'd give it to a buddy of mine that smoked. But when I got to go to Paris, I had no money, see. So what happened, the guys in my platoon all got together and donated stuff. You know, Hershey bars, cigarettes, razor blades, whatever. And the guy told me when you get to Paris there'll be somebody waiting for you, you know, the black market. I got close to, I'd say, a thousand dollars worth of...

A thousand dollars?

Wow.

No, this wasn't in American money, this was in French money.

Oh, oh, oh, but it was worth a thousand US?

But the guys that had gone to Paris and come back, told me what to do. By giving my cigarettes away, I got a lot of....

But you mean it was a thousand dollars?

Pretty close to that, yeah.

The equivalent of a thousand dollars, US? That's like, what, about, maybe twenty thousand dollars today?

Today, but it's so different. Yeah.

All I know, it was a lot of money and it was spent very fast. (Laughing)

Speaking of Paris, it reminded me. I was in the hospital. I [remember having a 103 degree] fever and didn't [realize] it. I was [still going out on the line working. I finally went to the medics after nearly passing out.]

This was at what point, back when you were...?

In France.

O.K.

[While in the hospital] I made friends with one of the other [patients]. I didn't know him before. We were discharged from the hospital [at the same time]... Strange thing, you had to make your own way back to your outfit... You had to find transportation [with] anybody going [in the direction of] your outfit. Then both of us kind of looked at each other and decided, "Hell's fire, let's go to Paris." So we went to Paris, without passes, and if you got caught without a pass, you'd still be behind bars today.

Uh, huh.

Two days, but we stayed with the USO and [went sightseeing]. [We] went partway up the Eiffel Tower. That's as high as they'd let you go [because of security]. And the Arc de Triomphe, beautiful. And the churches [were very inspiring].

So you did some sightseeing around the city?

...[Yes]. I don't remember how I made my way back to the outfit, but [I finally got there only to find out] they had me down as AWOL. [After explaining where I was, the slate was wiped clean.]

They already knew that you were discharged?

...I told them what happened. [I was in the hospital for four days.]

They had you down as AWOL because they didn't know you had gone to the hospital?

[Yes].

Yeah, but he wasn't returning to duty so they ...

So we cleared that up. I never got charged with AWOL and saw Paris. You do funny things.

It's funny, you mentioned those cookies. My mother used to send, and it was a blessing, Lipton Soup.

Oh.

You all talk about the little things from home.

She would send me five, you know Lipton Soup, you just put in hot water and that was just, I'd look forward to that. Being in the infantry.

[That's great. It almost bordered on luxury.]

Did you ever have Spam?

Oh, don't mention that name.

Why?

[We had it much too often].

Oh, you had a lot of Spam when you were over there?

Yes.

Yeah.

I haven't had it since.

... a lot of pancakes, too. It seemed like, anyway, in my outfit they were always ... I can't look at a pancake.

Oh, we never did get [pancakes].

Part 7: Returning to the States

So, now you're ready to rotate back to the States. Did your whole unit come back at the same time or were you...?

Yes, [except for one unfortunate fellow traveler. A nearby ammunition dump blew up, and he broke a leg getting to a safer haven].

O.K. How did you get back to the States?

On a Liberty Ship in the middle of December. [The sea was extremely rough]. The propeller [came] out of the water, [because of] the...tremendous waves, and the whole ship would shake when the prop [was out of the water. A crew member] told me they put an oversized prop on this ship to get a little more speed. It was a [bad] trip. The Atlantic in December is [one] big wave after another. We got hit broadside [by a huge wave. The ship] keeled way over, and if you [were] on deck, you had [better have had a grip on the safety] rope. One of our [men]...lost his grip and was sliding right to the rail [when fortunately], his legs straddled a vertical portion of the rail which saved him from going over]...

Good news and bad news?

...[Originally], the Liberty Ship was a [very successful] cargo ship, [then they were converted to troop ships]...Way down in the bowels of the ship, they [put] chest high tables, long rows of them and about this wide (gestures a span of about two feet with his hands) and you stood [while] eating...They had bunks all the way around on the outside of these tables. A broadside wave hit us, and all the mess kits [slid] into these...bunks, [food and all].

Food and everything?

Food and everything.

How many days did that trip take?

Oh, God. You know, I don't remember. [I would say about two weeks].

It wasn't the Queen Elizabeth, so it wasn't four or five days.

Oh, no. It was 12 or 14 [days], something like that.

Where did you debark from, and where did you ...?

I debarked in New York.

No, I mean, where did you leave Europe from, what port?

[I think it was Lucky Strike].

Maybe Le Havre, was it Camp Lucky Strike?

No. It was one of those cigarette [bases].

O.K. And then you arrived in New York?

Oh, we saw the Statue of Liberty. Oh, I'm telling you, what a sight!!

And you'd been over there how many years?

A couple of months over three years.

Over three years. What was it like coming into the harbor?

Oh, you can't explain it. It was a [great] feeling...Seeing the Statue of Liberty [brought tears to many of us tough guys]. And...there were fire fighting ships...They had hoses [which sprayed] colored water...[They formed a double row through which we sailed]...The other ships would toot their horns. We come in alone...there were no other ships with us. But [the feeling was beyond description]...

Pretty emotional?

[Very much so].

Yeah. So you land, and you get off the ship, and then what?

We got steak dinners.

Where?

...There are a lot of big buildings...on the dock, I guess warehouses. They put tables and [chairs] in there, and we got a steak dinner [with all the trimmings]...One or two days later, we boarded a train and came to Chicago.

So, at this time now, you're about ready to get out?

Well, no. I didn't get discharged 'til [we arrived at] Camp Grant...

So, at this point, but as you were coming home, you're a Tech Sgt. 5, right?

Tech Sergeant, yes.

And, did you spend any time in New York before you took the train back to ..?

No.

O.K. So then you're on the train going back to Camp Grant. Was your unit still together, or were you all broken up by this time?

Oh, still pretty much together.

What was that train trip like?

...A short time after, we pulled out of New York and [into the outer areas]... I have never forgotten. A middle aged woman and what definitely must have been her daughter, 18 or 20 years old. They were standing and looking at the train. Sort of expectant looks, like they were [waiting] for their man. [Very sad].

Was this in New York or ...?

Yes. It hit me [hard]...so sad to see that...

Yeah.

Pretty sad.

So on the train trip coming back to Chicago you're probably all in kind of a celebratory mood?

[A big yes].

How did you celebrate? I mean, you're just sitting there on the train.

Yes...I never was [much] for shouting and waving arms and all that, but just the joyous feeling and seeing things here again, back in the States. And then when we did get home, I, of course, went to my parents first.

Did they know you were coming?

Oh, yes, I wrote them. But they didn't...know when.

So, you pulled into, where did the train come in?

Union Station.

Union Station. And then they'd let you all go home...?

Oh, no... We went to Camp Grant.

First? So you're all still in the convoy to get up to Camp Grant?

Yes.

Where was Camp Grant, exactly?

[I'm quite sure it was to the north of us]

Do you know, Joe? Was it North Side?

Yeah, that's what I'm thinking of, somewhere around Evanston ...

No. It was farther...quite a bit farther.

Grayslake?

[I don't think so].

Well anyway, you're still all ... and they put you on what, trucks or buses? How did they get you ... ?

Well, I had to spend almost a week in the hospital at Camp Grant because of my leg. And...my wife now of 58 years, would come to visit me there...[on the] Aurora, Elgin. But they're extinct now, the line [has closed down]... But she would take it to Camp Grant...

Joliet? Joliet?

She would come up there, and this one time it was quite late at night, she had no where to go, and right around Camp Grant there are no hotels or anything, so she slept on the bench. This was in winter, too. She slept on the bench, outside on the railroad [station platform].

At the depot?

[Yes]. And then the next morning, the train master came there and saw her...He brought her [hot] coffee. Then we found out that there were guest lodging in the hospital itself... But...it didn't faze her at all, [but she did appreciate the hot coffee].

Uh, huh. So you were there for a week.

Yes.

And then what happened?

[Complications. They let me out too soon. An incision in my leg broke open and became infected. That meant a couple more days in the hospital].

You were discharged after your hospital stay at Camp Grant?

Yes, so then I went home as a civilian....

And what was your reunion like when ... Excuse me, was this the first time, Tony, that your folks saw you, or did they see you before you went down to ... ?

No. They didn't see me.

'Til you came back from Camp Grant?

From Camp Grant.

What was that like?

Well, reunions, being away so long... They're heart wrenching and they're heart warming. [The joy in my parents faces totally nullified any and all thoughts I had of what we had gone through.]

At the same time.

Tony, I'm just curious, you know, discharges was based on your points.

Uh, huh.

You must've had a lot of points to get out early ... Being overseas that long.

Was the war over by that time?

Yes.

When were you discharged?

[December] of '45.

Part 8: Life After Military

Oh, O.K. So, after your reunion with your fiancé then and your family, what was life like for you, the adjustment time right after you got out? What did you do?

...I don't [remember, but for] a couple of months, it was kind of tough. It was rough [to a point]. I tried not to be downgrading, but you're... Being overseas and seeing...all that happened and then coming home was pretty difficult... I guess I was hard to get along with for a while. I don't know how else to say it, but gradually you get out of it, and things [would go] well.

When did you get married?

In May of 1946.

And did you go back to work right away, or did you ...?

No.

Go to school?

[No].

Was your job at Leyden Hydraulics waiting for you?

Well, when I went there, they needed help, and I had no problem at all getting the job. And it paid well.

This was at Leyden?

Leyden, yes. And then after I retired, at 65, a very good friend of mine has a shop in Schaumburg, Illinois, and he asked me to come work for him part time.

Uh, huh.

Two days, three days a week or so, and before you know it, it was a full week, and it was a full time job. For 6 years, for 6 years after I retired [I was employed]. He was so busy and needed someone [with the required skills], so I stayed. And then, [we] had a mutual [understanding for me to retire again].

And you were tool and die making that whole time?

[That, plus general machining].

Part 9: Closing

I'm close to wrapping up. I have two important questions to ask, and one is going to be is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't covered in the interview, but I'm going to ask that question next and let you have time to think about that if there's anything at all we talked about at any part. But the last question that I was going to ask you is this: your time, and you already answered part of it. Your time in the service and all the experiences you had, the hardships, and you saw some action and uh ... The rest of your life, how has that military experience influenced your thinking or your life in general.

[It taught me to be more cautious and observant. Appreciate life, your wife and family.]
...I feel very, very bad when I hear of casualties in Iraq. It really hurts. And I hate to see those kids out there. Well, we were kids ourselves.

I feel the same way. Isn't that funny. I pick up the paper, and they say 5 GI's killed today.

Yeah, it hurts. It hurts.

Here's a question, too, I think I didn't ask you this because I think we probably talked before ... Iraq. A question for both of you, then. As World War II Vets, you knew very clearly what was going on, why you were fighting. You knew that we'd been attacked at Pearl Harbor and that we had a reason to be at war with Germany. And so you looked at your hardships and the casualties in a certain way. Suppose you were the age you were then, today, and you were being sent to Iraq. I'll ask you both separately. Whoever wants to go first. How would you feel about that?

Devastated.

Yes!

One word: Devastated.

How about you Tony?

I feel the same way.

I'm against wars of any kind. It's just a damn ... You just know X amount of people are going to be killed.

On both sides.

Without a doubt. Why do you have wars ...?

In Iraq, they will **never** get a democracy there, never. There's too many [different factions].

It's not in their culture.

But there's too many diverse groups there...

Terrible mistake...

And I don't think it should've ever happened. I don't know, to me Bush feels like, in a way he doesn't care. I don't believe, I don't think so, but anyhow you get that feeling, you know.

I was going to ask more questions that would get very political. Let me just ask... well, off record. Let me ask you this (instead): Thinking back now is there anything at all that you think we might want to cover that we didn't talk about yet.

Well, no. In a way of getting back to feelings, World War II almost had to be. You certainly wouldn't want to be governed by that foreign country. That, in a way, was a just war, and I think Roosevelt and Churchill were put there at the absolutely right time in their [lives]...

We just wrapped up and went off record, and then Tony and Joe and I were having an informal discussion, and it reminded me of something else I should have asked. Tony, you told me off record you did stay in touch with some friends that you knew from the service. Would you tell me about your club?

Well, just prior to the war, or when the war first started, there were eight of us, close friends.

Tape 1 Side B end.

Tape 2 Side A

We ran out of tape, and I found a new tape and we're back on record. Tony, I started to ask you about your, your friends you stayed in touch with after the service. Would you describe that please?

When the war first started, there were eight of us, very close friends. And we all joined the military in different branches, different areas, different countries. And, the good part of it was that we all came back, in late '45. In 1946 all eight of us got married, and we formed a little club, and it didn't take [a rocket scientist to think of calling] ourselves the Fortysixers, so that's what we did. And we would meet at that person's house as close to the anniversary as possible, and the ladies would cook up a tremendous meal including

desserts, and then we got to feel that that's too much work for them, so then we all would go to a restaurant of that particular person's choice and have our meals there and then go back to [their] home and talk, and the fellas played cards. [Now all these many years later], only two men [are] left [of] the group, and seven ladies. But we still meet, and we take the widows with us every where we go, they're not neglected...it's just a very, very enjoyable day, [and the war stories get stretched a little more].

That's wonderful. So, it's a support group for the women who have lost their husbands. What's the remaining veteran in your group? What's his name?

Ed, Ed Hemzy. H E M Z Y.

What branch of the service was he in?

He was in the Pacific [doing unheralded but vital work]...The British actually...[devised this system.] It was associated with the Air Force, [Navy, and Infantry. Men would be placed in secret, remote areas, where they tracked enemy movements. They would then report their positions, enabling us to put up counter measures].

He was in communications of some sort?

[In a sense, yes].

Do you think he would be interested in being interviewed?

I'd have to ask him. As a matter of fact, I'll see him very soon.

Tell him about your interview.

O.K.

Did you ever join any veterans' groups after ...?

Yes, I belong to the VFW and The American Legion.

Currently?

Yes.

Which post?

VFW first.

And American Legion?

Yes.

Which post for the VFW?

Berwyn Post [Number 2378].

And the American Legion?

La Grange. The Coulter Post, [Number 1941].

Oh, Coulter. Jesse Coulter?

Yeah.

Do you still attend meetings, occasionally?

A lot less. It's a shame, but it's not easy for me to get around.

Well, thanks for going back on record, and if you don't have anything else, we'll go off record again.

But, this Fortysixers club of ours, especially the ladies, they've known each other since grade school. Now that is going back [many years and still close friends].

Yeah, a lot of years. Well, it's good thing that you're still including them in your get togethers.

Oh...absolutely.

O.K. we're going off record.