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Veteran**

**Robert von Hasseln
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Interviewers**

**Interviewed on February 7, 2002
New York State Military Museum
Saratoga Springs, New York**

Q: Tell me where and when you were born.

WC: September 27, 1923 at Saratoga Hospital in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Q: Did you grow up in Saratoga Springs?

WC: I am a native of Saratoga. I went to School #7 and then Saratoga High School and graduated in June of 1942. Then I worked at General Electric in Schenectady in the Navy Building. My job was to rivet together compass cases. It was short lived, just a few months, because as soon as I turn 19, I was drafted. That was in December of 1942.

Q: Tell us about your family.

WC: I have one sister three years older, a mother, and father. My mother had moved from Schenectady to Henry Street and my father lived in Wilton, just north of Saratoga. They met and got married and moved to Broadway until I was about two years. We have pictures of us with my father on the roof of City Hall. We later moved to Caroline Street, then East Street, and finally Regents Street until I went into the service.

Q: So you were in high school when Pearl Harbor happened?

WC: Yes, I was an air-raid warden on the block. My job was to walk around the block and make sure lights were out and shades were pulled down. One night I was in the community theatre and heard the sirens blow on City Hall. I thought it was an air-raid so I got out of there and ran up East Street telling people to get off the street. Come to find out, it was the all clear siren. I had missed the whole thing. [laughing]

Q: How did you become an air-raid warden?

WC: I don't remember. I was probably just asked.

Q: Did you really think the German were going to bomb Saratoga?

WC: No, they would bomb along the coast first. But if they did, a lot of people would have been killed because they just pulled the shade halfway down and peeked at you out the bottom half of the window. In England, they had black

covers for the windows and shades drawn. They closed it right up but inside had a normal life with the lights on. I noticed the difference when I was sent to England.

Q: Do you remember where you were when the Pearl Harbor attack was announced?

WC: I remember Roosevelt coming on the air but I don't remember where I was.

Q: Were you surprised? Did you think it was going to change your life?

WC: Yes, but I didn't think too much about it. I was still in the middle of high school.

Q: Was Saratoga different during the war?

WC: Oh yeah. There were ration stamps for gas, meat, and food. Those are the things I remember the most. Being without gas was the hardest because you couldn't go anywhere. You got more stamps if you worked at the war plant.

Q: Did it change your life very much?

WC: Not too much because I didn't have a car.

Q: You were working at GE when you got your draft notice. Tell us what happened from then.

WC: Two bus loads of local Saratoga boys went from here to Albany and were inducted into the Army in December of 1942. We had two weeks off and then in January of 1943 we went to Camp Upton Induction Center on Long Island. From there, the local boys were broken up, traveling by train to different locations. I ended up at Camp Bowie in Texas and many of the others ended up in California.

Q: Tell us about your time at Camp Bowie, Texas—what was that like?

WC: It was field artillery with 55 Howitzers in the 551st Field Artillery, Company B. I was there for a year but I spent a lot of time in the medical stations. I had allergies and the dust in Texas got to me. I asked if there was someplace without dust where I could breathe better and I could do more for my country. They said, "Europe doesn't have dust." [smiling] They knew what was coming. So I was sent over as a replacement. It took fourteen days to go across the ocean in an English tanker. I won't tell you what we ate on the way over. There was a big group of us who landed at Bristol, England and then took a train further south. They had us all out in the field and this sergeant in front of us started reading APO numbers, "Clements' APO 1". A bigger number would have been nicer for me because "1" sounded close to the front. It was. I was sent to the 1st Infantry Division which was way out front. We were combat engineers. We had more training.

Q: Why kind of training did you do as a combat engineer?

WC: Building bridges, pontoon bridges. They handed me a bazooka.

Q: What was your first thought when you were handed a bazooka?

WC: That it would be noisy! [both laughing] And it was. I had training with them but never used them until we got to Normandy.

From training, we went to a bivouac area down in South Hampton to get ready for D-Day. We were all in tents down there and no mail could go out and there was no leave of absence. We lost some men out in the channel just practicing when the German U-boats hit us. We pushed the training as we got closer to the date. June 5th was originally supposed to be D-Day and we boated and were out in the pouring rain and high waves. I went out from England in a LCT, landing craft tank, a flat bottom steel thing that bounced all over making the men sick. Then we got word that the battle was delayed because of the rough and rainy conditions. Our platoons were connected with the different regiments of the 1st Infantry. My platoon was connected with 16th Regiment and were one of the first ones going in on the LCT. A lot of the troops went over in the big ships and went down the ropes to the landing craft.

There were probably forty or fifty on our boat with quite a few of us new. All of a sudden we heard this peck peck peck on the front of the boat where the ramp was and shells start coming at us. We were right there by the American Navy and they were starting to fire over our heads... We had several direct hits from the Germans. The first shell went through the little space where the Navy skipper was driving our boat. It took his legs off. Four of us were tucked behind the tank figuring that was going to save us but that is what they were shooting at. Another shell broke the ramp. Two men came past us with their rear ends gone, their pants were blown off. A shell hit the boat's machine gun ammunition and blew that up and two guys next to me had the top of their heads blown off. The guy next to me was missing his left arm. I didn't get a scratch. There must have been someone looking out for me. When it was time to get off, we couldn't use the broken ramp, so we had to jump off the back into four feet of water. I had a rifle, backpack, and fifty pounds of TNT on my back. I lost everything trying to get to land. As I was running towards the cliffs, I grabbed a rifle off the beach but it was a German rifle. That didn't help me because my shells wouldn't work in it. We dug fox holes in the bank because the Germans were dug in up on the cliff. I was about to get in my hole when a colonel ran down the beach yelling "Only people left here are the dead or those about to die. Let's get the hell out of here!" So we got out the bangalores [an explosive charge placed within one or several connected tubes] to blow a path through the barbed wire to make an opening for the infantry to get out. People were floating in the water like the corpses you see floating around on a fishing trip. Many of the troops had this rubber Mae West life jacket around their waist—the kind that you push a button and it inflates. All we could see was their rear end because their heads and legs were underwater. When I finally did get out of the hole, and started up to make a road, I looked

back and a mortar shell hit the hole I had been in. Another guy was in it. Someone was looking out for me.

The main problem on Omaha Beach was that the homing pigeons being sent over to let us know what was going on were being shot down by the Germans. We had no idea what was happening. The Germans had moved up their whole regiment to bunkers the night before so now they had the advantage of a hiding place and of numbers. Another problem was that our Air Force was dropping their bombs two or three miles inland which didn't hurt the Germans on the beach at all. The Navy was dropping their shells on the beach and the Germans were up on the hill so that didn't help. So it was a massacre. What helped us finally find holes and break through was that a lot of the troops on the hill were actually Polish men who were surrendering to us.

When we got up there we ran into two GIs lying there wounded by shoe mines—they are called that because they blow your feet off. They directed us through the mine fields verbally so we could get there when they didn't. They were some of the heroes of the war. We didn't get too far that night. There were Germans on one side of the hedge row and we were on the other side. We could hear them talking.

It took us thirteen days to get to Caumont which was our objective the first day. That was partly because our left flank was open because the English weren't coming up with us. On the beach, out of more than forty tanks with big guns, only eighteen made it on shore. They were supposed to be our back up. What saved us was one navy boat came in as close as they could, (they must have been hitting bottom) and put their gun right into the hole, the window, of that bunker and blew the inside right out. The bunker is still there—I saw it when I went back for the anniversary—left for history's sake.

After the officer saw that I had a German rifle, he took it and he said that if the enemy saw it they would think that I had shot a German to get it. So the officer took it away and gave me a machete. The machete came in handy for digging in the roots of the hedgerows. Finally supplies started coming in and we got new rifles. The first couple of days were slow: just to get people in was hard. You couldn't stay on the beach, because the Germans just kept coming. You couldn't retreat because the English Channel was there. So you just had to go to it. From then on we got to Caumont in thirteen days and we dug in there. The infantry was on the hill by the church and we were in the fields behind the church. Even there, one day I was walking up the road and an 88 landed right next to me. It was a dud so it landed and just rolled down the hill. That was another time I was saved but that was a close call. We stayed there until the 24th of July and then we moved on to Saint-Lo for the big break-through. By then we had lots of supplies so we were ready. But there was another bombing error. The Allies were bombing by the thousands, the ground shook even though they were landing miles away

from us, but the bombs were dropping short so two fields of GI's were all blown apart from the bombings. It was terrible. [*For further information:* <https://www.b24.net/StLoPeriers.htm>]

At some point in our moving through Normandy, our squad took a ten minute break behind a French house and a woman came out and told us about an American pilot who had been shot down who they had taken in. They put some old clothes on him and put a label on his shirt "Undertaker-mute" so no one would try to talk to him. The lady said his name was Len Shell. What a small world! I had gone to school with him in Saratoga! He was a good friend! Years later, on the 50th Anniversary of D-Day, Len and I went together and we both had speeches to present. He could have made a movie about what he went through. He walked right through the Germans while they were having lunch and nobody bothered him. He lived off of grass and food in gardens and then people fed him as they moved him from house to house. One day Len was standing by the road when the Germans were marching American prisoners by and he recognized one from Saratoga. He was hoping the friend didn't recognize him and speak out! Then, the day Len and I were speaking at the 30th anniversary, this prisoner was there too. Small world.

Q: Was Len still at the farm house when you were there?

WC: No, they moved him several times—sometimes in attics. He would look out windows to see what was going on and knew the Germans were looking for him after they found out he was still alive. They shot a couple of French people who had housed him.

Q: Do you still see Len?

WC: Yes! He is in a nursing home now and not in good shape. I go to see him. Len was in D-Day in a small dive bombing the Germans who were keeping supplies from coming to us by knocking out trucks with soldiers and ammunition and food. Then it was the combat engineer's job to clean up the roads of all the stuff they had blown up.

Our squad liberated a little village in France. I have pictures of me sitting on a jeep with a Frenchman. We had a bottle of wine and cookies. Later on, after the war, I was in Paris and met this Frenchman on the street and he gave me the pictures!

Our squad broke the German's defensive line, the Siegfried Line. In the service, we couldn't tell our family where we were until we were there a few weeks in case we got pushed back or something. Though I couldn't write home and tell them where I was, a UP photographer took pictures of us and took our names. When a photo of me came out on the front page of the Saratogian, my family knew where

I was three weeks before I could tell them. The New York Daily News also had our photo.

We broke the line at Aachen. We could have taken Aachen—the Germans had run out of Aachen—but supplies weren't keeping up with us. We hadn't eaten in two or three days so when jeeps came by we begged some rations off of them. But shortly the Germans came back into Aachen and it became a house to house fight. The city was destroyed. When I went back years later, the city was rebuilt but they left one building with all of the bullet holes and shell holes and windows gone as a reminder.

After Aachen we were taken off the line because we had been on the line since D-Day. We got three day passes to Spa, Belgium, a city like Saratoga Springs. I was there for one day and the Germans were dropping paratroopers in GI uniforms to screw up the road signs to foul up our advances. So we were called back to the line. I had a tough time getting back because I didn't know the password. An officer took me into a room and grilled me with questions about baseball teams and all of these things to see if I was really a GI. I got through the grilling and they took me back to the company.

Now we faced the Battle of the Bulge. Instead of being at Spa, Belgium, I spent Christmas and New Year's in no man's land [land unoccupied or under dispute] near Bastogne. Our battalion laid 30,000 anti-tank mines. We wore white sheets over us for camouflage but the Germans knew we were there. They sent up flares to see us so we would freeze when the flares went up. The mines stopped German tanks from coming that way, but the Germans bobby-trapped the mines so we lost GI's when they went out to dismantle the mines.

We advanced near the Rhine River and the first Division's objective was to take Bonn and get the bridge. Both sides were after the bridges. The Allies wanted to control the bridges so German troops on our side of the water couldn't get back to Germany. We were bombing them with artillery and tanks, as close as we could we were shelling them trying to knock them down. The Germans wanted to destroy the bridges so the Allies couldn't get past the river. When we got to Bonn, the Germans had just been there and blown the bridge.

We were just west of Remagen. I crossed on that Remagen Bridge two days before it caved in. Another rear echelon engineer group came after us and they lost about twenty-eight men when the bridge caved in while they were working on it. The Germans came up to bomb the bridge. Between the shelling and heavy tanks going across, it went down.

In the Bulge I was wounded once. I was out in no man's land and the 88's [German gun designed as an anti-aircraft artillery weapon, effective as an antitank

gun] were coming in and getting close. I jumped in a hole but it wasn't deep enough so it blew my helmet off and knocked me out. I was unconscious for a day or so and came to in a first aid station. They gave me some aspirin and put me back on the line.

We were in Remagen just a week or two and on the fourteenth of March, I was hit again. The combat engineers had to go ahead of the infantry to make bridges or some way of crossing. We were out in no man's land again, on a moonlit night and we had to go up over a hill where the Germans could see us. I even saw the flash but didn't know who it was for. We always walked fifteen feet apart so a shell wouldn't hit too many of us at once. The shell landed between me and the nineteen year old kid in front of me. It went through my side and leg and into his back. They took us into a barn and a medic came, put us on litters and a jeep took us to an aid station where they did what they could to care for us. Next we were taken to a larger aid facility where they operated on us and took the shrapnel out. Later I found out that the kid in front of me didn't make it. After the operation I was put on an airplane stacked with stretchers which took the wounded to a facility just outside of Paris. I stayed there until the war ended in Europe on May 8, 1945. I wrote a letter home describing the celebration with the French diving in the water with colored streamers.

Q: After you were released from the hospital in Paris, where did you go from there?

WC: I went to join my outfit in the Nuremberg area.

Q: What do you remember about your time in the hospital?

WC: Well, I hadn't been up to walk yet after the surgery and I'm a musician so one thing I remember is hearing Glenn Miller's theme song come up through the window. I somehow hobbled across the room to the window to see Glenn Miller's band. He wasn't there because he had gotten killed but the drummer was leading the band which interested me because I was a drummer.

The patients who could get up and walk around were put into tents out back. This hospital had been built for the German pilots called the Luftwaffe. It was a nice hospital which we reused. In the tents, there was a lot of stealing going on. At night, some guy would take your shoes or blankets or cigarettes and bring them into Paris to sell. The MP's would watch the GI's on the street holding a pack of cigarettes go into urinals which were open below the legs. The GI's would come out folding money and the MP's would go into the urinal and come out with the cigarettes taken from the Frenchman. You could get most anything.

When we were on the line, we had C-rations, K-rations, a cold can of stew with lard in it, so if we got near a chicken farm, we would trade soap or candy for fresh

eggs. Cook them with a blow torch and add some German pumpernickel bread and you had a good meal.

Back to speaking about the hospital, we did calisthenics in the tent to get you back in shape which was good because my legs were still very stiff. But we also had trips into the city and got several pictures. Sometimes men on the street would take your picture. I also have several from those booths you can go into and for a quarter you get a strip of photos with Paris '45 printed on them.

After I recovered and the war ended, they sent me back to the first engineers and put me in Company B because they lost so many men crossing the rivers. That was tough going out in the rowboats because we lost a lot of men that way. After I returned, I noticed that the guys who were privates were now sergeants and many of the old timers had gone home already. The first division ended up in Czechoslovakia and then came back. We stayed in German barracks near Nuremberg. Bob Hope came to Nuremberg so I got to meet him. Once I was in a large stadium and I looked up to the first row of the balcony and saw Chick James who went to school with me. I got to talk to him. The fellows who were in my original field artillery outfit in Texas were still there in basic training while I had been through Normandy and France and Paris writing letters to them in Texas. Finally they came over during the last couple of weeks of the war. I don't remember how we found each other but we did so I was back together with a number of boys from home. We got a box camera and took pictures and sent the film home to get developed.

After the war I had a good time. In the army you don't know if people are lawyers, carpenters, or plumbers--you are just part of the group. But we found out from headquarters that we had a guy from Tommy Dorsey's band, one from Sammy Kaye's band--three or four big time musicians. I had been in a band back home but nothing like theirs! We formed a dance band and used the field house, a unit built for movies. The captain played trombone and was the leader. I played the drums and was the vocalist. We traveled to Nuremberg and played for the USO and the Red Cross dances. One time three of us were given a jeep and sent to Czechoslovakia to buy more brass instruments where they were manufactured. We had a three or four day trip out of that. Each Saturday the battalion passed their review and had inspection. A jeep would pick me up with my drums and bring me to the open field where I would play the drums while they marched. Then the jeep would bring me back to the barracks and I would write letters home while they had inspection. So I ended up having some fun.

I was there until September and because I had enough points I was one of the first ones to go home. I went down to Le Havre by train or truck and I got on a Victory Ship with the 9th Army Division who had captured the Remagen Bridge which I had walked across. There was a big sign on the side announcing "Crossed

the Rhine.” It took a few days to get home. I remember that it was during the Word Series and there were all kinds of pools going on. We landed in North Carolina I think and from there we got a train to Fort Dix to be discharged and collect some of my mustering out pay. After a week there, I got a fifteen dollar train ride from Fort Dix back to Schenectady where friends picked me up and brought me home. My mother and father lived on Marion Place then. They had a big house and rented rooms to Saratoga’s summer crowd and to Skidmore College students during the school year so they had a room for me.

Life got sort of back to normal except one day when some kid shot a cap gun off and I hit the deck. That was force of habit. I went back to the church choir and met a teacher who lived in Mariaville and we went together and got married in 1951. We had three children. One is a lawyer in Seattle, one designs backpacks for a sporting goods company in Boulder, Colorado, and my daughter Peg is in Saratoga with two daughters. If I run out of work, I am a cabinet maker. I put an addition on Peg’s house and built all of her furniture and all of my furniture. When I got home from the war, I got a job at the Farmers Hardware Store where my father worked. There wasn’t much of a future there but I needed a job and it got me started. Then I did general carpentry for years. Dick Evans, one of my best friends, a black man who was high ranking in the state VFW came into the hardware store one day and said “Clements, what are you doing in here, counting bolts and screws and sweeping the floor? If you really want to go to college, get some on the job training.” I had met a Swedish contractor at the hardware store who was an artist with tools. I asked if he would take me on which he agreed to. The VA was right next door in City Hall at that time so I saw Dave Burke, the one in charge of VA men, and I got all of the forms to fill out. The contractor gave me a four years of apprenticeship and I have been at it for fifty-six years now. I still do some when I am not laid up. Last year I had two ankle surgeries so I didn’t do much work.

Two years ago on December 16th, The Saratogian had an article on the Battle of the Bulge. They had my picture and mentioned about my laying the mines. At the end of the article they said that Clements was a retired contractor and I haven’t gotten a call for work since that article. That’s the way to retire! [both laughing] After I got done working for two different contractors I built a workshop in back of my house so in the winter I don’t have to go out in the cold. I still like to do cabinet work, custom kitchens and book cases.

Q: Are you involved with any veterans groups?

WC: I am a life member of the Saratoga Springs VFW Post 420, a life member of the Purple Heart, and a life member of the Battle of the Bulge group which meets in Latham four times a year.

Q: Let's go back and talk more about some of the things we went over quickly. Let's go back to England where you were doing your training before D-Day. Did you get out into the English countryside or did you meet the English people?

WC: We met people in the city. I remember going to dances and you'd come out at night and you couldn't see where you were going and couldn't light matches or smoke. The cars had bumpers around their lights. You would just bump into people. In Belgium it was worse. You would come out of a bar and it was black and you would feel your leg get wet from some guy standing next to you who you couldn't see. [both laughing]

Q: Any impressions of people in England? How did they treat you as Americans?

WC: Three things that you have probably heard before: The English soldiers didn't like the American soldiers because they were oversexed, overpaid, and over here. That is the famous expression.

Q: Did you have a comeback for that? I have heard "The English soldiers are just unhappy because they are underpaid, underfed and under Eisenhower."

WC: Yeah that is one comeback.

I went to the 30th anniversary of D-Day, Every five years they had the reunion and I never went because I was working. Finally when the 30th anniversary came, I decided I was going to go. My wife couldn't come because it was during the school year. and she was a teacher. So I brought my son who was a senior in college. Phil was twenty years old and this was his graduation present. He went through the entire thing with me. He admits now that he wasn't patriotic at all. He had long hair and all the things that irk a military father. He didn't act very nicely over there. He was a vegetarian so he couldn't eat most of the meals with us. We were in suits and he wore dungarees with his banana peel hanging out of his pocket. We went to Ireland first and then to England and then Paris. We took a special train from Paris to Normandy three different times. The hotel fed us at about 4:00 in the morning before leaving for Normandy. One of the trips to honor veterans. The mayor presented medals. It was at a vacation village right on Omaha Beach. All of the old timer French people were in the windows looking at us. They wanted to shake hands with us because they remembered that we liberated them and gave them freedom. My son and I stood on Omaha Beach together. He was the same age that I was when I landed on the beach. That was quite exciting. He picked up this small thin flat stone from the beach and put a 1st Division patch on it and gave it to me for Father's Day. That was very special. The third day we went to Normandy, we went to the monuments and the cemetery. There was a lady with us at the cemetery with her thirty year old son. He was born the same day that his father was killed on Omaha Beach thirty years before. We helped them find his grave and laid a wreath on it. They had never been there before.

Q: Did being there change your son's perspective?

WC: We had the ceremony on the D-Day anniversary at the beach. We were up by the cemetery. All of our first division flags were marched in and all of the different countries that were involved in freeing the French were represented with flags. As each country raised their flag, the country's band played their national anthem. That got to my son Phil. He told me later that he was the kind that never stood up at a baseball game when they played the national anthem. After being in Normandy, he was the first person to stand up. He still writes to me about how it changed his life.

Q: Let's go back to Omaha Beach. Tell me what you were thinking when you were in the LCT.

WC: I thought I was going to be killed. I was scared. As soon as the shells started hitting the boat, someone started reading Eisenhower's message to the troops for that day. "You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months, The eyes of the world are upon you....And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking." Then you see the guy sitting up there with one leg and you wonder. And so many of the troops laying on the deck were so seasick they couldn't even move.

Q: Did anything in your training prepare you for that?

WC: No.

Q: What did it feel like seeing those things right next to you, all around you?

WC: I was a mess. You don't even know how to think. You're thinking that the next one was going to get you.

Q: But you kept moving.

WC: We jumped off the back of the LCT. You had to keep going. I never learned if our boat ever got back to England to pick up another crew of men.

Q: What kept you going?

WC: Bodily you mean? I don't know. Wanting to get out of there. There was nothing you could do but do what you needed to do.

Q: Were your officers and sergeants talking to you at that time? Did you know what you were going to do next?

WC: Not there. The colonel on the beach got us moving. Everything was all disorganized. Your squad was part here and part up the beach. We all landed in the wrong place.

Q: So when you got to the beach, you hunkered down in a position and then the Colonel came along?

WC: I was on that cliff digging a hole. Pointe du Hoc [An ominous piece of land jutting into the English Channel which provided an elevated vantage point from which German guns delivered fire upon both Omaha Beach and Utah Beach.] was just to our right. That is right by the cemetery now. The Rangers went up there and then found that the Allies had already taken both of the German guns. They lost many men. As I had mentioned, we got busy putting the bangalores out and started running them up into the barbed wire to make a path through.

Q: Tell me about putting the bangalores up. Did someone have to get under the wire to set them up?

WC: They are long pipes that you put together and just run them up. If you are lucky, they just slide under and through the wire. If not, someone has to go up and they don't usually come back. You are a dead duck up there. Everything was to the German advantage: the cliff, the level part, the bunkers to the right and the left. During the trip that we took thirty years later, we learned that a Frenchman had bought one of the bunkers and took the turret out and put a picture window in and was living in there. The walls were four or five feet thick! The bunker on the right had been blown up by a ship that came in. The old gun was still there but all rusty after thirty years. The English had a museum there that we went to with a movie showing the D-day and with a model of a 1st Division soldier. We went back there on our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary with our daughter. We had been in Paris and went by train and then rented a car in Caen to go to the beach at Normandy. My daughter and wife and I sat on the beach and had a picnic. It sure wasn't any picnic the first time!

Q: Were you thinking about the first time as you sat there having your picnic? Was it coming back to you?

WC: No, there were kids running on the beach and a little village with a restaurant and cottages and people driving around. It was a different world. I certainly thought of it when I was alone on the beach with my son.

Q: Did it seem strange when you are back at Omaha that all of this happy activity was going on and people were having fun at the beach where so many people were killed?

WC: You re-picture some of it. You still see all of those bodies floating around in the water. Very few tanks got out of it too. Most of them were destroyed right in the water.

Q: Let's move ahead to Aachen. Were you involved in any of the street fighting?

WC: No, they called for us if they had any streams to cross or construction work. We carried rifles but in many places like Aachen, we did a lot of mine-sweeping. Everything was mud over there in France. We built roads out of trees and kept felling trees one after the other. Mud was almost up to your knees.

Q: Did you ever use your bazooka in combat?

WC: We were always ready to use it. We made sure it was in working order and we had target practice. Once we got word that German tanks were coming down the road. I was behind the hedge row aiming at the road but they never came.

Q: Were you a good shot with the bazooka?

WC: I hit the target most of the time. The only way you could beat them was to get behind the tanks to shoot the rear end. The shells just bounced off every other part. Their tanks had a range so they could reach us when we couldn't reach them. So we needed numbers to beat their power. What we did mainly was aim at their tracks and blow them so the tanks couldn't move. Some of the tanks they developed could not be penetrated with a bazooka.

Q: Did you feel like it was a useful weapon?

WC: Yes, because it could be used for other things.

Q: What was the Bob Hope show you went to like?

WC: It was like the shows they have on TV. He went to every war and every troop location. He had a few pretty women to get the guys all shook up and he told some jokes. The only thing that burnt some of us up was that we heard three times that he was coming and we would travel sometimes through the rain to get there but then he didn't show up. Finally the third time he got there.

Q: Let's move ahead again. When you got back after the war, was it hard making the adjustment after spending so much there?

WC: I don't really remember much. I was home and my parents and friends were there. I met a lot of the guys who had been in the war and had a special bond with them.

Q: Do you have anything else on your mind to speak about? When you look back at it after all of these years, is there one particular feeling of thought that comes back the most?

WC: The Battle of the Bulge. Remagen Bridge. Cold. Poor equipment. We had nothing but a rain coat. You dig a fox hole with that little spade chopping through the roots, thinking you are going to stay, and you just about have it deep enough to fit in and then you are told to move out. So you dig another hole. That goes on forever. When you do get in it you are laying there with your helmet as a pillow and nothing but your wet raincoat over you with the water dripping on you from the raincoat. These are things that you think of. At home you have a bed and a blanket.

Q: Did it change your life?

WC: It makes you more positive about life. You know your life could end any time. You see it end very quickly over there. It makes you want to do things that are an advantage to yourself and other people. Love of Country—I probably didn't think about my country when I was in high school. I studied about my country in high school but didn't think about how to live.

Q: You had mentioned earlier to us about being involved in building the jail cells at Nuremberg. Could you tell us about that?

WC: Our battalion remodeled cells at Nuremberg. We built high walls around. We built a bench for Hermann Goring to sit on, but then he committed suicide. He took a pill before he was going to be hanged. Anytime you see anything about the trial on television, all of the guards are 1st Infantry Division.

Q: What had the building been before you remodeled?

WC: It could have been a jail because there were metal door and bars.

Q: How long were you there?

WC: Several weeks but I was done before the trials. I was one of the first ones to leave. But the 1st infantry Division stayed as guards during the trials.