

**Joseph W. Kneiper
Veteran**

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Interviewers**

**Interviewed on July 17, 2001
Latham, NY**

Q: Mr. Kneiper, where were you born?

JK: On Sand Creek Road in Colonie.

Q: You're close to where you were born and grew up.

JK: Yes.

Q: Did you go to school in Colonie?

JK: Yes, grammar school and high school.

Q: You graduated from high school about when?

JK: That would be '41, because I went in the service in '43.

Q: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

JK: I was probably home or somewhere around the area.

Q: When you graduated from high school did you go directly in the service?

JK: No, we had a farm and I worked there, then I worked for the railroad for a year and then I went in the service in '43.

Q: Volunteered? Drafted?

JK: I volunteered.

Q: Where did you go for basic training?

JK: In Camp Rucker, Alabama.

Q: A lot different than Colonie, New York isn't it?

JK: Yes.

Q: What was it like down there?

JK: Well, we were kept busy; we didn't have a lot of time to find out what was on the outside. I just went to cadre school there. And then I went to Camp Sibert after that. That's where I went through everything, and that's where we started the company, or the battalion.

Q: So how was basic for you?

JK: No problem.

Q: You were a farm boy probably in pretty good shape.

JK: Yes, I had no problem.

Q: How were the Southerners down there?

JK: We didn't get out that much, but we had no problems.

Q: Once basic training was over where did you go?

JK: I went to Camp Sibert then and we started the battalion.

Q: This was the 87th...

JK: 87th Chemical Mortar Battalion.

Q: Is that chemical mortars?

JK: Yes.

Q: 4.2?

JK: 4.2 Chemical Mortars, yes.

Q: So you trained on those?

JK: Yes.

Q: What was that like?

JK: Well, they sent two of us to Huntsville Arsenal in Alabama. This was something new, right? They sent two of us there to learn how to fire the gun and we had to come back and teach the company.

Q: How long did you train with the chemical mortars?

JK: Well, most of them got there in May and then we stayed there almost a year before we went overseas.

Q: When did you find out you were going to go overseas?

JK: A week before we went over. They gave us ten days off, we knew then. We went out of New York City on the Queen Mary.

Q: What was that like?

JK: Oh, it was something. No escort, no nothing. Nothing could keep up to it you know?

Q: You weren't concerned that that was how the Army was going to treat you the rest of your career, did you?

JK: No, we knew it wouldn't be like that [Laughing].

Q: You landed in England?

JK: Scotland. England didn't have a big enough port for the Queen Mary or Queen Elizabeth.

Q: From Scotland where did you go?

JK: We went to the little town of Tiverton, England.

Q: What was that like?

JK: Well, it was Army. When we got there, there were so many of us compared...but people treated us good, we lived in the people's house. They gave us a room, two soldiers to a room right in the people's home.

Q: They treated you pretty well.

JK: Real good, yes.

Q: Were you assigned to a division at that point?

JK: No, we were strictly a battalion at that point. We didn't get assigned to a division until the night before the invasion.

Q: While you were in England, you were basically training?

JK: Training, yes, not too much, we had it pretty easy there.

Q: Did you get to see much countryside?

JK: No, not too much.

Q: Did you get to London?

JK: No, just into Plymouth.

Q: So, around May of '44 are things getting a little busier just prior to the invasion?

JK: We really didn't have much of a change until the day we went to get on the boat. We went over on the USS Bayfield. It was a Coast Guard ship and it was a flagship for the Navy. Eisenhower was on it, too.

Q: Really, did you get to see him?

JK: Yes, we all shook hands with him and when we were going over the side he said "I wish I was with you".

Q: At that point what division were you assigned to?

JK: We still didn't know until we got on the beach.

Q: Did you go in on D-Day?

JK: Yes.

Q: Which wave?

JK: The first wave.

Q: What beach did you land on?

JK: Omaha Beach. [87th Chemical Mortar Battalion actually landed on Utah Beach]

Q: What was it like going in?

JK: Well, we went in on a landing barge and we couldn't get all the way in, so we had to drop the front door and run off into the water. I drove a mud hen in so I didn't have to get in the water.

Q: What was that?

JK: It's like a jeep but it went on land or sea.

Q: So you got to drive ashore?

JK: Yes. Well the reason I drove was because the guy who was supposed to drive was afraid of land mines, and I was so sick from the waves that I didn't give a damn. [Both Laugh]

Q: Anything was better than being seasick.

JK: Yes.

Q: When you arrived on the beach, what were the conditions like?

JK: We had no problem right there. We had a pillbox we were supposed to take and...we had orders that one fellow was going to surrender...now, that's hard to believe, you know? And, I had another little...Danny DeFrancesco and we got around the pillbox and got to the door. We knocked on the door. This guy opened the door...

Q: He surrendered?

JK: He surrendered and the other ones wouldn't come out so we threw a hand grenade in.

Q: That was persuasive?

JK: That made them move.

Q: But you actually knew ahead of time that somebody was willing to surrender?

JK: Yes. This was the briefing we got that night.

Q: So you finally convinced everybody that it was a good idea to surrender?

JK: Well, we had to move. We had to get off the beach because they knew we were going to land, and we needed room to fire these guns, too. That night the paratroopers and the gliders came in and we had to stop fighting and help them. It was really a bad mess.

Q: How many tubes were there in your battalion?

JK: We didn't work as a battalion, we worked as a company.

Q: Ok, how many in each company?

JK: We had 124 in each platoon, we had two platoons. So, there were 248 men plus officers in the company.

Q: So, the first evening you're assisting the paratroopers?

JK: As far as being bombed and shot at, we weren't; we really worked to get the paratroopers and gliders out of the trees and all that stuff. And, we did shoot down Max Schmelling. He was alright. We had orders to take him back to the line and let them go.

Q: Really, what was he flying?

JK: He had a little fighter plane.

Q: The second day...

JK: The second day we had to move to our right flank to Cherbourg, because that's where Patton had a command. That was a port. So, we didn't have too much trouble going that way because they only had one way out and they knew they better be out of there. And, that wasn't too bad but after we came back and started going towards St Lo, that's when we really had heavy, you know...

Q: What was your job in the platoon?

JK: I was a forward observer. I wasn't a forward observer when we went in but we lost two Lieutenants and I was next in line. I just had four guns that I observed for.

Q: Were you a sergeant at that point?

JK: Staff Sergeant.

Q: So, you were an FO for four guns.

JK: Yes.

Q: So, were you assigned to an infantry unit?

JK: Different ones, we moved back and forth wherever they needed us. I was with Colonel Van Fleet; you must have heard of him...he became a five star general. He was quite a soldier, boy, and a nice man.

Q: What was the typical job of a forward observer?

JK: Whatever infantryman was in charge, he'd see an area and he'd want me to open that up, so they can move through there. And he would say "fire twenty five shells", or "a gun", or something like that, and I would find it on a map, call back to my platoon and tell them what to fire and when to fire.

Q: What did you think of being a forward observer?

JK: It was very interesting. I mean, you see some bad things that you wished you didn't see...but still, we know we had to do it, so...

Q: Was there generally good cooperation between you and the infantry?

JK: Yes, I never had any trouble with any of the officers I was assigned to.

Q: At this point, what division were you with?

JK: I really don't even remember what the division was. We might be firing in the morning and get orders to load up and go fifty miles the other way to join somebody else.

Q: Generally, how were these weapons transported?

JK: By jeep. We had a jeep with a trailer. And we had ammunition jeeps the same. A shell was twenty five pounds each. It was chemical warfare but we never...we probably had chemicals available over there but we never...

Q: What type of shells did you use?

JK: We fired HE [High Explosive] and white phosphorous and smoke. We used to lay down smoke screens.

Q: What did you generally use the white phosphorous for?

JK: So we could laugh to watch them run [Laughing]. No, you could start a fire...they were really scared of it, no kidding, when they'd see that flying through the air they'd really take off.

Q: That was nasty stuff.

JK: You're not kidding.

Q: The Germans, I guess, didn't have anything comparable to the 4.2 mortar.

JK: No.

Q: So, it was a pretty effective weapon?

JK: At two miles I could take the four guns and zero in on a target 10 by 10 with two shots for each gun. That's how good the gun was. ...how good the gun was and how good the guys in the platoon would set that gun...

Q: Did you also do time on target?

JK: We were supposed to be up front for a week and then get relieved. We weren't assigned to anybody so we had no meals.

Q: Did you get to Cherbourg eventually?

JK: Oh yeah, we got there within four days.

Q: Where did you go after that?

JK: We headed back to St. Lo.

Q: Did you get involved in the fighting in the hedgerows?

JK: I can tell you a funny thing about it...I don't like to tell because I got a bronze star and I shouldn't have gotten it...the hedgerows were really...that's all you could see from one hedgerow to another...as far as personnel...so this morning I woke up and there's this 88 barrel right over the top of my head. So, everybody's asleep, so I reached over and there was a captain there and I hit him on the leg and kept pointing and saying "shhhh...don't move". So, he says to me "what the hell are we going to do"? I said, "Well, we don't want everybody jumping up". He got a bazooka and said "I never fired one". I said "Oh, Jesus". So, I put two shells into tank. See, the bazooka wouldn't knock the top because they were too heavy, so you had to get them from underneath. We fired two in there and no movement...so I go over the hedgerow and get on the track of the tank and threw a hand grenade in...the turret was open and all...I just couldn't figure it out, so I threw a hand grenade in there and I waited a few minutes and then I got up on there and I could see then that the thing must have been knocked out by an airplane. The damn captain writes me up for a bronze star.

Q: Well, you didn't know what was there...

JK: But he wrote himself up for one, too. [Both Laugh]

Q: Just about anything could happen very quickly in the hedgerow because you just couldn't see.

JK: You couldn't see from one to the other.

Q: Were the chemical mortars useful in that type of terrain?

JK: Yes, we could just about land that shell wherever we wanted.

Q: It must have been tough being a FO under those conditions.

JK: Well, no it wasn't because we knew we would fire in a different hedgerow so we could move forward. You get educated fast when you get over there.

Q: How long were you fighting in the hedgerows?

JK: Not too long, we started moving to the cities and then Paris. They declared Paris an open city.

Q: What was Paris like?

JK: It was something. The champagne and that was great.

Q: The Parisians were rather appreciative?

JK: In Paris they treated us great, but they opened the bars and you had to pay.

Q: How were the French in the countryside?

JK: We didn't have too much trouble, believe me, we had it pretty easy once we got in there and got moving. And then Patton came and he stirred up the bees nest...it was hard trying to keep the foot troops up with him, and he was no good without the foot troops.

Q: So, what did you think of Patton?

JK: Don't ask.

Q: OK, so what did you think of Patton? [All Laugh]

JK: He was probably a smart man but he took too many chances. I mean for the individual foot troop. "Don't be scared soldier, push on". That's when they started that saying "my blood and his guts".

Q: After you got out of the hedgerows and Paris, where did you go next?

JK: We went into – now this was over the course of two months or so – Belgium, Germany...and that was on the border...we were in [unclear] Belgium, and it was on the border near Aachen, Germany. And, we did something that was really funny – funny to us but not to them. There were two trolley cars sitting on the [unclear] side. Between [unclear], Belgium and Aachen there's a big hill...and these two trolley cars sat there, so we put twenty five rounds in each trolley car, pushed them up the hill, and let them go down that hill into Aachen. You talk about an explosion!

Q: Who was your commanding general at that point? What division, do you remember?

JK: I was still under Colonel Van Fleet. I spent most of my time with him. But then, he was the colonel in charge, and, when I went in, Teddy Roosevelt, Jr. went in with us.

Q: What was he like?

JK: Well, I'm telling you he was 65 years old and walking with a cane. He had no right being in there. But, he was a gentleman, boy. We had a mission once and we're firing twenty five rounds each gun. One of them broke an elevate screw. So, I got a screw and started changing it. Up comes Roosevelt, the general, and my battalion commander. The battalion commander gave me hell because I didn't salute the general. So, I said to him "I've got a mission to fire; I'm not going back there to salute him now". I said "colonel, help us put rings on those shells" - you see, a shell, if you understand a mortar, they are barrel fed and they had a shell in it that goes off and they have rings that are set for the distance – so the colonel started putting them on. After I got it all done, I went back to the general and I put my hand up to salute him and he said to me "don't salute soldier, shake hands". And he said to me "that's the way to win a war...don't worry about the officers". It was nice, but then he died of a heart attack.

Q: What was Aachen like, was it a tough city to take?

JK: No, we moved in. Back then, they were just setting up for the last push, and we knew they were setting up everything.

Q: Where were you when the Germans counterattacked?

JK: Well, we were back eating, having our Christmas dinner, and when it happened another division relieved us. We're all sitting back in the rear area for a break and boy oh boy, these guys – our own guys – came running down street, left guns, left everything, so we get orders to go back to stop the line. I was too lazy to walk, so I got on the back of a tank and when I ended up I found out we were surrounded. The Germans had us, but we got out of there with no problem. We had a guy McCall. You know General McCall? He had guts, boy.

Q: You were used to help plug up the bulge?

JK: We opened it up so we could start moving troops through. But, they just spearheaded one section and it was so easy to surround them, and that was really their last big...

Q: Did you deal with the British much?

JK: No, No. It was pretty much alone. We moved a lot to different locations.

Q: So, you were basically used by whatever unit...

JK: We were assigned to an infantry division but anybody in that division could use us...any company.

Q: Do you remember the division commander?

JK: No, I really don't. It probably tells you in that paper there.

Q: So, the final push towards the Rhine, were you involved in that?

JK: On the final push was when I got hurt. I took this officer's place and went up there. We had a beautiful target – 12 German tanks all lined up in a wooded area – and we were observing from the last house in this little town. It was on the third floor. There were nine of us, observers and officers. All of a sudden, one of our tanks backed up against the building, firing towards the Germans. A captain comes up stairs and puts his head out of the window and hollers to them "Fire!" I said "you goddamned fool; they're going to fire right back and get us all". "Oh, don't be afraid" he said. So, I started down the stairs; I knew it was coming right back. By the time I got down two steps, the shell came in and I lost my operator – everybody else got killed but me. Just, that I had that feeling, you know what I mean?

Q: Well, you'd been at it long enough, you knew...

JK: You can pick up mistakes, too.

Q: This was in January, '45?

JK: The war was over a week or ten days after that, yeah.

Q: Where were you evacuated to after being wounded?

JK: I have no idea where I went...I know they put me on a jeep, and we're going down this road and the shells start coming and the jeep stops and the driver and other guy gets out and leaves the four of us on the road. But, then they took me to an evacuation hospital and I don't remember anything after that.

Q: You were sent to England?

JK: At first I went to Paris, and then I went to England, and then they flew me home.

Q: How was the care?

JK: The care was pretty good. I met a girl from Ravena, New York. She was a nurse and I think that kind of helped me. I was a year in the hospital.

Q: What were your feelings when you got hit?

JK: I had no fear of dying...I didn't know that I lost my arm because of the cast, and my head was all bandaged, so I didn't know I had no vision. But, this girl from Ravena told me. That sets you back a little bit. I was a whole year in the hospital between over there and the states, and when you're in the hospital like that and don't know anybody it's a...

Q: Must be tough...

JK: Yes.

Q: Where was the hospital in the states?

JK: Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

Q: So, it was a bit far for family to come down.

JK: No, mine were there the next day.

Q: Really?

JK: We landed at Mitchell Field, and then they send you to different...so I call...this is a funny thing that happened...they were taking us all out to eat, and this woman was driving the car I was going to ride in, so I was in the front seat...and she says to me..."where are you from"? I said "New York". "Oh, where in New York?" I said "out in Colonie". "Oh, she says, I've got a cousin that lives there, on Osborne Road in Colonie". I said "what's his name?" She said "Horace [unclear]". I said "that's my uncle!"

Q: You met all kinds of people.

JK: Yes, and I was with one fellow I went to high school with that got killed in St Lo. St Lo was just a big mistake. I mean our planes killed a lot of our men.

Q: Killed a general I think, too.

JK: Yes.

Q: What did you do right after you got discharged?

JK: My father had a farm and I worked on the farm for seven years, and finally I sold the farm and went in the restaurant business. We had a good business, my wife and I. Then, when the two kids got old enough to work...I made the best of it, believe me.

Q: Have you kept up with any of the people you served with?

JK: Yes, that letter is from a guy that I was with. But, I talk with maybe five or six of them every year.

Q: Does the unit have any reunions?

JK: Yes.

Q: Where do they hold them?

JK: We don't have reunions as a battalion because we didn't work as a battalion and we didn't know any of those guys. The last reunion was in the Poconos.

Q: The lifespan of a forward observer wasn't a lengthy one. Like you say, they went through two Lieutenants before they got to you.

JK: Yes, we must have lost four before me...and I did it on my own...we didn't have anybody who said "I'll go up".

Q: You did the job.

JK: I wasn't supposed to be there, but the way things happened I had to be there.

Q: In general, how do you feel about your military experience?

JK: It was great, believe me. I mean that, we had hard times, but we had a lot of fun. You learned how to take care of yourself; you learned a lot of things.

Q: You have a certain bond that people who weren't in the military find hard to understand.

JK: Yes. I say we had a lot of fun; we had good guys – I had good guys.

Q: What would you do for recreation?

JK: Now and then if they had enough time they'd play cards. They played red dog. Not too much, if you got a chance you'd lie down and go to sleep.

Q: Where were you generally billeted? Were you in tents, or generally in houses?

JK: We would ask people if we could use a room – if we had over three days – if you only had one or two days you just camped underneath a jeep or alongside a tree. I didn't get a chance to eat too much, because – the guns would get served or all the men would – but I just carried K rations. That's all my operator and I had for the whole week.

Q: Now, as a forward observer, would you work in teams of two, you and the radio operator?

JK: Just me and the radio operator.

Q: Did you generally have the same operator?

JK: I had the same operator until the day I got hit. The radio operator I had that day was the operator for the Lieutenant that was supposed to be up there. I said that, instead of taking my man back up there I'll take yours. He got killed that day. He wasn't supposed to be there and I wasn't supposed to be there.

When I got hit, the Belgian family was still living downstairs, so they see me coming down the stairs and they took me and put me in the basement. That night, the Germans took over. The next day the woman tried to explain to me "they are going to take care of you". A German officer came in and he could speak English pretty well. He gave me morphine, he patched me – put bandages on me and everything – and says "I'm not going to take you as a prisoner because we're moving back out already". "I'll put a gun outside the cellar stairs". So, that's what he did and the next day our own guys picked me up. It was two days before they picked me up, I got wounded on the 13th, and this was on the 15th. But, they consider me being hit on the 15th because that's when I was found.

Q: Was he a German infantry officer?

JK: He was a medic.

Q: Treated you well?

JK: Yes. He could speak English pretty well.

Q: His English was a lot better than your German?

JK: Yes. I managed – we had our little book with us all the time.

Q: Do you have any final thought?

JK: I don't regret anything that happened.

[Video Interrupted]

Q: So, tell us about Martha Rae.

JK: Well, in the camp we had a USO show. We had her and another singer, Bonnie Baker, you've probably never heard of her. She entertained and they had beer for us. There happen to be two chairs at the table I was sitting at. So, up comes Martha Raye who asks "Can I join you?" I said, "You sure can!" So she sits down and, I'm telling you, that was a beautiful woman. I mean looks...I mean her mouth didn't seem...so, she says to me "where do you go now, do go to the noncommissioned officer's club?" I said "No, I never go, I always go with my guys to the PX". So she says "could we go?" "Jesus, can you go!" [All Laugh] We

order a jeep and take her over. We really had quite a night, and that really impressed me, like I said I never...

JK: But then I was picked as a bodyguard for Franklin D. Roosevelt when he came into Birmingham, Alabama. I was in charge of the twenty guns, and I got to shake hands with him. But, I did shake hands with him at home because his wife had a place right by our house. Well, his bodyguard had one but they used to go there a lot when he was governor. But, he impressed me, too, he said - you know we were standing there with the guns - "sergeant, tell them guys to be at ease". And to think that these guys can be that...

JK: And then one day I went swimming with my jeep driver. He was insane or he wouldn't have been in the service. But he was crazy. We went, on this hot day - he didn't go in swimming, but I said there's a pond and a lot of guys are going swimming - so I went in swimming and when I came up who is there but one of my neighbors. I said "Joe", he said "Bill, what the hell?" I said "come out, let's go have a drink" because we had cognac on the jeep all the time. So, we go to sit down and have a drink and this friend said to me. "Are you scared?" and I said "no, what do we have to be scared of?" So he says, "Well, I'm scared". I said "Joe, I'll walk with you later when we push it". So, in the meantime we're sitting on the ground up against the jeep having a drink and the shells were really going, so he says "Christ, they won't even leave it alone so we can have a drink". The driver, Pershing Jones, says "I have the answer to that". He said "come, we'll move". So, the three of us get up to move and we move to the other side of the jeep and sit down. So, my neighbor says "now how the hell is this going to change anything?" Pershing says, "well, I'll tell you...when you're sitting here you can hear the whistle so you know they're going over your head so you don't have to worry".

Q: It's amazing you met so many local people.

JK: Yeah, but then when I came home...the friend that I was in the service with...he had a letter on his backpack - when I came up there and saw him lying there - I took this letter that went to his mother and father and mailed it. ...Never thinking, that when I went home, I had to face them and tell them what happened...but, I lied, I didn't tell them that our own airplanes did it.

Q: So there was a lot of camaraderie there?

JK: I do say we had a lot of fun.

Q: You had a good platoon?

JK: Yes, I had no trouble whatsoever.

Q: So, they were from all over the place?

JK: Most of them were from Massachusetts and that area over there. I had one fellow, [unclear] his name was, you swear [unclear], wherever one was the other was.

Q: They both made it?

JK: [unclear] got hit in the back from some shrapnel but he made it alright. Then I had the little fellow, Danny DeFrancesco from Brooklyn, New York. The day we landed on the beach he said to me “you pray and I’ll dig”. I said “to hell with the digging, you keep praying and come on with me”.

Q: When you landed in Normandy, what was the noise like?

JK: When we landed, there were no signs of war, whatsoever. They kind of moved back off the beach. I didn’t see any Germans the first two days.

Q: What were the paratroopers like?

JK: The paratroopers didn’t have too much to say, they were so fouled up; it wasn’t their fault it was where they left them off. But, you’d sit there and see the sky with all of them coming down, and then they start hanging in trees. You had to cut those parachutes off and try and hold them to get them down.

JK: We went to Cherbourg. Eight days later we were coming back and one day a guy said to me “I think I hear somebody in that ditch there”. I said “must be a German, but don’t fire until we see what it is”. It was a paratrooper. He was down in that hole with broken legs and lay there all that time. We got him out and got the medics. We didn’t hear any more about him.

Q: What was Cherbourg like?

JK: Cherbourg was no problem, whatsoever. We moved right in, took over and set up security, and moved back out.

Q: So, you weren’t ever attached to Patton?

JK: I’d be assigned to him to fire one day...

Q: Did you ever get to see him?

JK: Yes, I saw him one day when he came in before any of his other troops came in. He had this armored car that had more darn stars on it...and he gets out...the operator and me are in the front line dug in...he pulls up alongside of us and get on the hood of that thing with his field glasses and starts looking around. I said to my operator “let’s get the hell out of here”.

Q: That was your one experience seeing Patton?

JK: I saw him a few other times but that was the closest I got to him.

Q: Did you see Bradley at all?

JK: No. Mostly I was with this Colonel Van Fleet. He became a general.

Q: Good man?

JK: Oh boy, he could look in them field glasses and come out with...he was something...and good to the guys.

Q: What made him a good officer?

JK: A good officer is one that stays with you all the time. We had other guys give you orders and then you'd never see them. But he stayed right there all the time. And he greeted everybody with a "good morning" or a handshake. He didn't think he was any better than a native foot troop.

Q: Did you see any of the tanks they devised...those hedgerow cutters?

JK: No. They had quite a tank there, though, the Tiger with the 88. It was quite a...

Q: Did you get to see any of those?

JK: Yes, more than I wanted to. But they were pretty good guns. They could swing around. But the first ones one had 180 degrees to them, and you knew if you got behind them, you had them.

Q: The trick is to get behind them.

JK: They just had machine guns out the side.

Q: How did you rate the German infantry?

JK: Well, I'll tell you, they were there for the same reason we were there and most of them didn't want to be there; and they would surrender. I mean, I'm glad that I was in the European theater and not over in the Pacific because that was a different type of fighting.

Q: Were you ever up against any SS?

JK: I got orders one day from this Colonel Van Fleet - My radio operator's name was Deavendorfer - So you could tell he was probably German - this Colonel said to me "your operator talks German" and I said "Yeah". He showed me a little white flag and a note that the colonel inside this building had all SS training troops and he was willing to surrender. He said, "Will you go in and accept the flag?" I said "Me? I'm not no damn infantryman". He says "at least your guy can talk to them". So I was thinking "holy geez I've got to go in there". How do I know what they might start with 300 guys? So, I get in there and the general in charge stood right there and he walked up, shook hands and handed me the white flag. He put his hands up and we walked out. And we had orders then, "when you take them back, don't shoot any of them". He surrendered his whole group. See, the Germans would surrender, if you had them cornered they would surrender, but in the Pacific that didn't happen.

Q: Any German weapon that you didn't like to deal with?

JK: No, their rifles weren't too good. Not like our M-1. They had good machine guns.

JK: I've got to tell you about [unclear]. We were on a move one day; we got orders to join this group and move to another area. So my jeep driver said he was tired but I think he was drunk, so he said to me "will you drive and let me crawl in the back and fall asleep?" I said "Yeah I'll do that". We're driving and my radio operator says he can see people way up in the convoy ducking all the time. We said, geez, there's got to be a sniper somewhere. Then Deavendorfer says "holy geez I see him". "See that third tree down there? Watch how those branches open up every once in a while". Sure enough, there was a sniper there but I said to my diver, "Pershing, get your gun and fire it at that tree where the branches are moving." Geez, the jeep started to shake because we had a 50 caliber machine gun mounted in the center for aircraft at night. He hollers at me "how's that sarge, super thirty, cut the tree off and [unclear]". I'm thinking, "Jesus, somebody's getting killed and you're sitting there laughing".

Q: He was one of your troopers?

JK: He was my jeep driver.

Q: So, he was pretty good with a 50?

JK: I don't know if he even fired one before. [Laughing] "Super thirty" he said.

Q: You never got involved in the Hürtgen Forest?

JK: We were there two nights. It was cold.

Q: What was that like?

JK: Well, you can't see. It's dark all the time, I mean that's how thick the trees are. No sun, so it's cool, even in the summertime. But there wasn't much fighting going on there that day. You see, a lot of times the paper says these things and you say "where the hell was I?"

Q: There I guess you had to worry about tree bursts?

JK: Yes, I mean if you dug a hole you'd have to take branches and everything and cover yourself over because they burst up in the trees and go all ways.