

**Rex Moon
Veteran**

**Interviewed by
Hudson Falls HS**

**Interviewed on January 8, 2006
Hudson Falls, New York**

Int = Interviewer

RM = Rex Moon

RMW = Rex Moon's Wife

Int: Rex I hear you served in World War 2.

RM: I did indeed.

Int: Would you like to give us a little info on like where you were in the War, your occupation, and we can go from there.

RM: Well I went into the service in June of '43 and immediately went into basic training in Alabama in the middle of the summer, and it was a hot one. Then the Army decided to send me to college. I already had 3 years of college, but the Army said they needed engineers, so they sent me to Alabama Polytechnic which is now the University of Auburn and spent 6 months there, taking a lot of courses that I already had, but as luck would have it they needed foot soldiers. So, all of that came to an end in May, and by the following September I was in Europe getting ready to.....or following up on the invasion, lets put it that way. I joined the 80th Division just out of the Cherbourg Peninsula as it had just formulated its line of attack there, it had been made part of the 3rd Army which was headed up by George Patton, and from there we hardly stopped until we got to Austria and met the Russians, then the 80th Division was the last unit in the Army to fire a shot.....Our most distinguished act-action was, when you read about the 3rd Army's famous diversion away from Salzburg or from Saarburg and Metz to go up and protect Luxembourg from the breakthrough which was known as the Battle of the Bulge. My Battalion was assigned the job along with the 4th Armored Division to rescue the 101st Division which was of course surrounded at Bastogne. So, we were the first foot soldiers into Bastogne to relieve he 101st. We then regrouped and proceeded through the Siegfried line, went across South Central Germany because remember, we left- the Americans left Berlin or Northern Germany to the Russians. That was a deal that we had made way back. The Russians felt they were entitled to capture Berlin after the terrible things the Germans had done to them and attempt to invade them. So, we ended up pretty much on the border between Austria and Czechoslovakia and as I said our division was the last one to fire a shot in World War 2. I personally was taken out of my unit and sent into the Alps to help form a recreation center, because once the war ended we had a lot of troops and it didn't seem fair that they would have marching and close order drill every day, so various units would set up recreation centers for their divisions, and it was up there that I got it by a truck, and we're now at the end of May and I spent the rest of May, June, July, August, September, October, and November

until I got out in December in the hospital recovering from 2 broken legs, and I got out of the service. Then I went to graduate school no I finished at Union, then I went to graduate school at the University of Maryland. I then became the admissions officer at Union College, spent 5 years doing that, I then spent the next 15 years with the college entrance examination board running their financial aid program and then spent the next 15 years in the consulting firm telling people how to do things better in the field of higher education after which I retired and now live on this lovely lake in the Southern Adirondacks.

Int: Now when you talk about recreation centers, what do those consist of?

RM: Well we picked out, I'm sure units and divisions had them, ours was in a town called [unclear], it was up in the alps, it had been a very popular summer resort for the British, it had a [unclear], a brewery, and that's the first thing we got started, it had sailboats, it had a lovely beach, it had areas where you could play softball and touch football, it had good dining facilities that we were able to set up for the units. It was a resort town, and a lot of the houses were empty so we could use them as billets, so when the troops came up, it was a welcome change from the foxholes that they had to live in for the last 10 or 12 months. So, they got reasonably good billets, good food, lots of chances for recreation, lots of chances to try German beer, and this was real German beer. There were movies, we had all kinds of entertainment. Just had a little time off. And right there was a lot of efforts at that point to recruit if- you didn't know this, but you earned points by your service and the type of service you had, the length of time you had been in, and if you had a certain number of points and I forgot what it was, you could go home. That's as far as anybody was concerned the War was over, and if you had those points, well if you didn't let me put it way, if you didn't have those points you were probably gonna go to Japan and fight the Japanese, and for those who had points, and I had plenty of points, it was a big effort to try to recruit you to stay in the military. By then I had been a platoon sergeant and so I had a lot of experience in leading units in combat and it was something they wanted to be sure to have when they invaded Japan. I personally had no interest, I wanted to finish college and get on with my life, but before any of those final decisions were made I was injured and spent the rest of the time in a hospital, got to fly home and eventually go out.

Int: Do you remember how you acquired those points?

RM: Well yeah roughly speaking. It was based upon first of all your length of service, the nature of your service, in other words- for example, you see up there (points to plaque of badges on his wall) something called the combat infantry badge, that little blue thing, the thing with the long bar, that was worth a lot of points, that means you had spent at least 3 months continual contact- combat contact with the enemy. And that was worth a lot of points. So, I think it was essentially a length of service and whether you had been in combat or not. I don't remember specifically how the points system worked, but I remember I was happy to realize that I had enough.

Int: When you were in the Battle of the Bulge, it was known as one of the coldest winters in years, how would you describe it?

RM: How would I describe it? Well it was colder than this winter. Well I tell you it was so damn cold, and excuse the ladies who are gonna witness this but in those days men's pants didn't have zippers, they had buttons, so if you had to go to the bathroom you had

to unbutton your pants and your hands could so cold you couldn't unbutton your pants (laughter) that's cold. The Army you know they did the best they could I suppose with the stuff we had to work with. Feet were a terrible problem, I was eventually able- you can see in that picture (points to picture of himself) I was able to get a, you can have that picture you can take it (interviewer holds up photo and cameraperson zooms in, but it is almost impossible to see due to the dim lighting in the room), I was eventually able to get a pair of shoepacs, and those are the same as LL Bean boots, you know the LL Bean boots, well they're not the greatest because most days they didn't know anything insulating things like that, so I just put on my socks, but that wasn't too good. Now you seen that picture, some of the other guys have leather shoes, this famous leather combat boot that we developed for World War 2 was not a great shoe by any means, it had a high cuff around the top which was supposed to act like a [unclear] but didn't keep your feet warm and it was leather which wasn't water proof and it could get wet, one of the biggest injuries that was chronic in the service in Europe was something called trench foot, and it was only- just the fact that your foot was cold and wet most of the time. There was a secret that we all learned very early was whenever you got a chance to get another pair of socks, every once in a while they would come around and say "well we got some more socks", well keep the ones you had because the more socks you had, the better off you were and the socks that you were trying to dry.....How do you think we dried our socks?

Int: You put them underneath your clothing?

RM: Yeah that's right. We used to hang them on our belts, up with one section inside the pants above the foot section inside the pants on the top section hanging out, and as long as you had your jacket down over them they eventually dry and so if you had 2 or 3 pairs, you keep changing your socks all the time and that diverted because when you're living in a foxhole and you're expecting visitation by the enemy, you don't take your shoes off, your shoes are on most of the time 24 hours a day. So, if you can get an extra pair or 2 of socks you are well a head of the game, and long underwear was very definitely part of it. Yeah, I'm sure that.....actually considering the experience we had in World War 1 fighting also in Europe and in that area of Europe, we should've had better equipment. We were still wearing the same type of wool pants that they wore in World War 1, they still- we all started out with big long over coats. You ever seen an old Army over coat? (interviewer says that he has) Well I still have mine, they were wonderful warm clothes they were probably the best wool in the world, the only trouble is if you try to run in them- so you know the first thing we did? We cut them off, and you made jackets probably about the length as the one I have on in the photo, that one is not an old coat cut off, but that's what you did, you would cut those coats off. So, when guys first joined the unit, always fun and laying on the ground because the first thing old [unclear] would say to you "You better cut that damn coat down". The weather conditions were in simple terms, they were miserable because you're outdoors all day long and only after a while as you get into less combative situations where you're chasing the enemy all the time and he's not trying to chase you, you're outdoors and you're outdoors 24 hours a day, but once a while you get a break, you capture a town and you crawl in the cellars of houses, but remember in so many of those little villages in Europe at that time people were poor to start with, they didn't have a great many things, they were sleeping many of them on straw, I remember we used to say, the real sign

especially when we got over in the region between France and Germany, the sure sign of wealth, this sounds pretty awful and it was, was how high the manure pile was around your well. Boy you never drank that water, how those people, they must have built up terribly fantastic resistance, but they would, you see the manure has heat in it, so it would keep the well from freezing.

Int: In your time you spent in the battle of the bulge did you personally have any encounters with the enemy?

RM: Did I have any encounters with the enemy? Yeah.....Yeah, I had personal encounters.

Int: Is there any that you would like to talk about or describe?

RM: Well I got the silver star for capturing a roadblock that the Germans had set up to destroy tanks and that meant I captured a substantial number of Germans. I knew a little bit of German, but most of the things you did with them was simply to get their hands up and put their guns down or turn around and start moving or things like that. I never had to bayonet one thank god. That's really a close encounter.

Int: Yeah that sounds more like what they would do in Japan.

RM: Yeah well, we didn't do a lot of bayonetting in Europe. I don't know how much bayonetting they did in the South Pacific. The movies have a lot of bayonetting. The bayonet was very useful in opening cans, packages, k-rations, I think a couple of times, the rumors were that we were going to be in a certain attack, we better put our bayonets on and be ready and we put on but didn't have to use them. One of the great things about the 3rd Army was that we never stopped, we were always going forward. Our division was called "Patton's Troubleshooters" and at the time it seemed like we were getting all the dirty jobs. After the war of course, you had all the glory but while you were performing it, it seemed like a pretty nasty job, and I was lucky, I never got wounded, knock on wood.

Int: Did you or any of your close buddies ever kill any Japanese- uh I mean Germans? Or was it mostly capturing?

RM: Uhm.....Yeah. But you know, the nature of the attack was such- you didn't know. When I first joined the 80th I was called a BAR man, that was something in those days known as the Browning Automatic Rifle which was a 20-round semi-automatic machine gun in a sense because it had all the capabilities of firing 20 rounds from a clip, I have forgotten how many seconds, and it was heavy, but the attack strategy that was often used was to come out of the woods and everybody would be firing their guns and there would be an enemy over there in the woods somewhere that you were trying through and if you hit somebody, you probably scared them and if you didn't hit them, I mean you wouldn't stop, you would keep going because you had a certain objective that you were supposed to reach. Did I see dead Germans? Oh yeah, saw a lot of dead Germans. Did we kill them? Well somebody did. But your running across the field like the field outside here and your trying to save 2 or maybe 3 clips of the 20 rounds each out of your gun from one side to the other.....probably hit something. Maybe you hit them, maybe they died of splinters from the trees. The guys who count casualties are called grave registration. When you're in active combat you don't count casualties. Some of the

others job was to take care of the wounded and clear up the battlefield. But if you're in the infantry you're supposed to keep moving, so I don't know how many people were killed. I think it's in the neighborhood of 600,000 Americans killed in World War 2 altogether, but that includes the pacific as well as Europe. And of-course untold numbers were wounded in some fashion or another, but I wasn't.

Int: How long were you in the 3rd Division?

RM: Well from September of '43....no September of '44 until I was discharged. But I was injured on the 22nd of May in '45 and I was in the hospital after that. But I was discharged as a member of Company G, 18th Infantry of the 30th Division.[Note: The 18th Infantry Regiment was part of the 1st Infantry Division.]

Int: Learn any war Stories that were timely told?

RM: I was never great on war stories. (ponders) I really never- war stories. You know when so many of us got out of the service in World War 2 there seemed to be a unanimous effort on everybody to get on. You take this present force in Iraq, they got these guys that are 40 to 45 and 50 years of age and they picked up these reservists. I think we had one guy in our whole Company that was 39 years old, we used to call him "Pop" and "Old Man", we were all young, everybody was young and we hadn't done anything in life yet, we didn't have jobs, we hadn't finished our education so when most of us got out, we just headed out for something, usually school. An awful lot because of the GI Bill got some kind of further education. I went all the way through got enough courses to get a doctorate actually, but I only got a masters and I immediately went into college admissions work and even though I was trained as an industrial psychologist I never practiced industrial psychology, I did practice regular psychology on my family all the time but not as an industrial psychologist. But my point is.....our generation wasn't sitting around telling stories. You see the whole country was involved in World War 2. The whole country. The whole world was in fact, but it isn't like these things we've done since then where people come home from the service and they are in a sense kind of isolated because people don't....I don't know where have you been sort of thing. But when we came back from the service, we all had objectives we wanted to accomplish, we didn't have time to sit around, we didn't want to sit around. Now maybe the American Legion did, I didn't join the American Legion until about 5 years ago, and maybe those guys sat around telling old war stories. Everybody has war stories, they don't have to be combat stories, everybody's had experiences that are unusual and would never have again in any way, whether it was standing in line waiting to get your shot for some kind of disease stark naked in a rain coat and 110 degree temperature in the sun in Alabama, that's a war story, and they didn't have what they call breathing wrinkles, they were rubber raincoats, and he should've had a bar of soap underneath [unclear]. So, there were war stories, many of them were as funny as they were horrible or sad. I think probably most of the war stories people told as funny experiences. Yeah, one of my favorite war stories was the few days that we conquered- occupied Wiesbaden toward the western side of Germany, it was the location of Hermann Goering's Henkel Champagne Factory. Before he joined Hitler, he was a champagne salesman, and we liberated a champagne factory [unclear] now if you can imagine what that's like you can try, but as I'm writing home to my wife "we're doing everything with champagne here. We're washing, we're cleaning our teeth, and we're even drinking some." Liberating

wine cellars was not an unusual accomplishment once we got in Germany. Now the French who are the originators of French wine as having been occupied the Germans took all the wine away from them, took them over to Germany, so after we got the Germany and found the wine, the French especially in what would be the Western side of France where apples are grown profusely had a wonderful beverage called Calvados, which is an apple- not an apple wine, but an apple liquor, distilled apple juice and it's not, it's clear, somewhat like a vodka and that's what the French could do very readily very easily and it was quite abundant, but most of the good wine had been taken into Germany and once we got in there, we were able to liberate a lot of it, it never got any place. That was the first thing, you see if you're in the infantry, you're the first guys in and while looting was not a big specialty, if you found a few good eggs some place or a live chicken or there were stories about banks, but you see the German mark wasn't worth a nickel, epically in the hands of the Americans. We were paid regularly with a, what's called a script you know it was pieces, it had value to it and it had numbers in. But what do you buy with it? Well you could buy extra- you know when you were issued, there was a regular tobacco ration and if you were a cigar smoker- I think everybody was entitled to the same ration, it was something like that, was like 20 cigarettes or 40 cigarettes and 2 cigars and a pipe, a package of pipe tobacco. Well I was a pipe smoker, so I was able to trade off my cigarettes and my cigars for pipe tobacco and guys who wanted cigars could trade them off their other stuff, so a little barter system going. Seemed to me we used to get candy bars, but I can't remember that for sure. But we had food, our food was often, well came in 2 forms, and remember that I'm speaking for units that were in the field all the time sleeping in wholes and stuff like that. Our Company was blessed, as many were, with a Mess Sargent who believed that the troops should have at least one hot meal a day. And he would go through Hell and high water to make sure we got whatever meal he planned to be a hot meal and it was never lunch, it was either dinner or breakfast and breakfast was served early, but he'd show up, first thing he might have pancakes and oatmeal and ice cream. Now the way he made this ice cream, he would make it in a big garbage can, and he would fill it with snow, he would then put in 10 pounds of sugar and whatever canned fruit he had around he'd dump that in, he would stir it all up, and it would freeze overnight, and then the next morning everyone's standing around shivering eating their cold pancakes and their cold oatmeal and guess what, well we got mixed fruit ice cream today. (laughs) But then if- I remember when we got- I don't think we ever had a Thanksgiving dinner, but the day our battalion headed to rescue Bastogne was Christmas Day, we started off early on the morning on Christmas Day, and 4 days later we got to Bastogne and broke the German lines into the- so that supplies could come into the 101st. And.....must have been maybe a dozen of us had gotten together, we'd found a cellar in the house and we were building a fire in there because one of the guys had found a chicken and we're gonna have a little chicken supper. I don't know what we were cooking, we had found a pan in the house or something and a guy comes stomping down the stairs and he said "Christmas dinner is here, Christmas dinner is here", the Mess Sargent had come in and he obviously knew he wasn't [unclear] Christmas dinner, he's saved it, and we had Christmas dinner four days later rather late in the evening, he had found it, so we got our hot meal that day. There was some awful lot of ingenuity, which is party of the success of any military operation. I think we had good commanders, I don't think it was political, I don't think it was run as a political war. So many of our wars since then have been run as political

wars and the politicians are the ones who call the important shots and that doesn't make for- (dog attacks cameraperson) Hey Prince. Your fouling up the movie here.

Int: So, this would be your War Bride?

RM: This is my War Bride.

RMW: This is the War Bride. 63 years.

Int: Congratulations.

RMW: Thank you. (referring to cameraperson) I've seen you before.

RM: Sure, he's a guard at the high.

RMW: Yeah, I know. I had no idea that you were related.

RM: I didn't either.

RMW: That's great.

RM: (points to interviewer) This is his grandson.

RMW: It's nice to see you. (cameraperson gets shot of Rex's wife) You don't need a picture of me (laughter).

Int: So, how often were you able to write to or contact your wife?

RM: Well, there was lots of times that there wasn't enough light by the time you start at the end of the day, but you can pretty much....I wouldn't say every day, they facilitated military correspondent with something called (clarifies with his wife) v-mail. V stood for Victory, and it was a self-contained unit. It started out about this big (holds hands about a foot apart) it wasn't [unclear] and we had the writing space on it and you fold it over, you didn't have to put a stamp on it, then it was sent someplace and they made a photostat of it and they shrunk it down to about that big (holds fingers a few inches apart)

RMW: The Truth is he [unclear] and instead of writing he drew pictures of the surrounding countryside, which I've been trying to find ever since I got here. He wrote very little.

RM: When I was in the states I used to, you know it was one of things you just did, you wrote almost every night. But when-.....well first of all you're pen freezes. I don't think they had ball point pens in those days, I don't remember ball point pens. They would have frozen also. So, writing was not a regular activity, getting mail was not a regular activity. Though there were valiant efforts to try to deliver mail or to deliver packages of cookies, and of course the most famous stuff was, many of the soldiers apparently came from families where salami was a popular dish, and a salami had been coming to somebody in the mail for about 4 months, it was like a messy lean cookie, you could smell from a mile away. So other 2 or 3 month old salamis, they got through. But life in- you know these guys in Iraq today they live in the green zone and they take showers every day and they watch TV

RMW: They email home.

RM: And they talk to their families on telephone, I supposed now if we had World War 3, all the soldiers would carry cell phones probably and they'd talk to each other between their tanks and their trenches or whatever they are they'll call home whenever they feel like it, but we didn't have any of that technology.

Int: I noticed that you have your hat right here. (points to American legion hat on table) Are those the same as those? (points to medals on wall)

RM: Some of them are. There are 2 rows (picks up hat to show insignia). The top row is the same as you see up there, the bottom row are what you would call commemorative medals which are designed to wear on hats and they commemorate certain activities or events or represent certain types of service or medals that you might have received, they just look pretty on a hat, but those are the real things up there. (shows insignia to interviewer) Here's my rank, here's my division, here's my proficiency in weapons, and infantry.

Int: The medals up there, can you remember how you got them or what they're for?

RM: Well the highest one there is the furthest to the left and then they go down from there. The first 2 are....awarded for heroism or valor or gallantry. The next one there is for the Battle of- what we used to call the Battle of the United States, he got that for being the service. The next one is for Europe and that has 4 stars on it, the green one, that means that my service consisted of what were called 4 separate battles, there was the Battle of Normandy, there was the battle of Central France, there was the Battle of the Ardennes which was also the Battle of the Bulge, and then the Battle of Germany, and that's what those 4 stars are for. The next one is called the Victory Medal, and the last one in that row is service in the occupation of Germany. Now the little medal up on the right-hand side is a good conduct medal. The original requirement for a good conduct medal was you had to be in the service, I think it was 3 years and have had good conduct. (ponders) I would not have been normally qualified, so a year ago or so I wrote to the military and I said, here's my record, here's what I did, here's how long I served, here's where I was and asked if I was eligible for Good Conduct. Then they sent me a Good Conduct Medal. The medal on the left was given by the State of New York, I forget what they call it, some kind of a cross, well the main reason I got that is because I had a combat infantry badge which you received if you were in combat contact with the enemy for 3 months, that's the only way to get combat infantry badges. Now the medal on the bottom, the little blue thing with a gold [unclear] around it, that's called a Presidential Unit Citation and in some respects that's the highest honor I have. That was given to our Company for its performance in the relief of Bastogne or the rescue of Bastogne, and that's given to a Unit that performs and the definition of the award is a unit in which the performance of each individual is the level of the Distinguished Service Cross which is the second highest medal an American can get. So, in a sense it's a group award for unusual service in a combat situation and in some ways it's the highest award I have there, even though it looks like it's the silver star and I'm very proud of it, because of that most unusual circumstances. Now the other- the one down on the bottom was called the Senate Liberty Award that I was given by the New York State Senate, they had certain- these were done a number of years ago these were, both the cross and gold medallion were something that the politicians came up with to recognize World War 2 service which....what did Tom Brokaw call it? The Greatest Generation or something (Rex's wife clarifies). Yeah, well this is the politicians. We didn't get any reduction on our taxes.

Int: Out of your experiences that you had in the War, was there any battle that stuck out to you that was more important than the others, or do you think they were all of the same importance?

RM: That's an interesting question. I suppose from the point of view of urgency, the relief of Bastogne, maybe was most important and as I say for that we got a Presidential Citation, but I remember crossing the Rhine River was considered to be a pretty important affair because when you think about it that was really the first time that we were really on the ground with the enemy and we- as the Germans had discovered with the Maginot Line, do you know what that is?

Int: Is it like the Siegfried Line?

RM: Well the Germans built the Siegfried Line, the French built the Maginot Line, and as the Germans found the Maginot Line didn't have to go through it, we went around it. We found that the penetration of the Siegfried Line was not a big deal. Parts of places you can get around it, other places you could confront it and actually by the time we got to Germany, the Germans, the ordinary German in the Military was beginning to learn how to run backwards. They had been wiped out in France, I mean they had put up a pretty stiff resistance of France because holding France was the way they kept people out of Germany, and they never dreamt that we would get to Germany, and they were disheartened to say the least, and you know you ran into token resistance here and there and people were still getting killed but it was just a matter of a few-...being in a tough battle went from the day we landed on the 7th of June till Christmas when the Germans, remember that's when they [unclear] right around Christmas, right up until the 1st of January. The Germans were very very resistant.

Int: So, you got there the day after D-Day?

RM: Beg your pardon?

Int: So, you were in the Battle of the Bulge the day after D-Day, or uh, you were in active service?

RM: Well I was in the Battle of the Bulge in the sense that I penetrated the Bulge. The Bulge had 2 aspects, he got run over pushing them back, I was involved in pushing them back with, you see Bastogne was a key point, the Bulge surrounded Bastogne and every place else the Germans had overrun the Americans except the 101st Airborne. The 101st Division, 15,000 guys, or a lot less because no division was full enough, but let's say 10,000 guys were in that little pocket and they were supposedly good fighters, so recuing them became an important venture. The 3rd Army was going across and we were going to cross through [unclear] and Salzburg, no wait not Salzburg but Strasbourg and then into the Siegfried Line when the Bulge occurred, and it was at that point that the 3rd Army made a complete turn in direction and went up into Luxemburg to protect Luxemburg city from the Bulge. The Bulge never got Luxemburg because the 3rd Army had sent units up there [unclear] 80th Division and then we were picked off and sent further on up to the Belgian Border in preparation for the invasion or in the effort to relive the 101st Airborne. And you'll see that, if you watch the movie "Patton" you can get it from the DVD or on a disc either way. Wait that's the same thing, right? (interviewer clarifies) Whatever the other one is, it's a fairly old movie it'd been out for....watch it you'll see, that was my experience that part of that movie that deals with the Battle of

the Bulge and the movement across Europe. And Patton was the ultimate Commander of my Army. I saw Patton a couple of times and he was all blood and guts, he'd come down through the line shouting and hollering, and everybody would say "Hi General".

Int: Was he a big motivator for people?

RM: Sure yeah. Watch the movie, I mean it's a good movie and if this subject is something that you have an interest in, its well done. And does [unclear], and he had some bad moments, there's no question about it, he was constantly speaking out and he struck a soldier one time.

Int: And they called for his removal?

RM: Yeah well, he was never removed, he was asked to apologize. It's a very, now they say this Brothers, uh Band of Brothers, I just happened to catch that, and said "that's the Band of Brothers? It's the 101st Airborne again" They all looked like they were just dressed up for the movie They look to much like movie stars and much-

(tape interruption)

Int: Do you remember where you were on Pearl Harbor when it happened?

RM: Yes, I know exactly where I was. I'm not sure I should tell you but (chuckles). I was in, when I first heard about Pearl Harbor, it was on a Sunday and I was in the Colonial Tavern in the middle of Downtown Saratoga, and I'm sure I had a date with a skin walker, it was about o'clock at night, that's the first time I heard about it, now people have probably heard about it sooner, but I was a student in college and you didn't hear about those things too regularly, especially on a Sunday if you driving back and forth between Schenectady and Saratoga, but I remember sitting there and they suddenly announced it over the radio, and....what effect did it have? Well, not an awful lot of effect until the students started to enlist. I was in college and every time a member of my fraternity and they were all enlisting in the Air Force, that was a big thing, enlist in the Air Force, which was then run by the Army. But every time somebody left, we'd have a big going away party, and that's I guess really what for people in college at that point in time...people in college were being deferred, were being told you're not gonna have to go, we need college people, the War isn't gonna last too long. And so, in a sense, this is terrible today, but the early part of the War was just one big celebration after another, until I remember somebody from my fraternity who had been killed and boy that suddenly brought everybody up, here's a guy you knew, and he'd been killed. And then they came through and said if you will join the Enlisted Reserve Corps 'ERC', you will be able to graduate, and I was just a sophomore, so that seemed like a pretty good deal, so I was gonna be able to graduate, and the celebrations went on, the guys were leaving all the time, not in vast numbers, next week somebody else is leaving so we've got to have a party. And if you had friends in other fraternities, they had people leaving too, so you could go a party all the time for people leaving the college. And then of course the news began to drift of people being killed and that was awful shocker because they were people you knew. And then the word went around, those in the Enlisted Reserve Corps are gonna go, you're not gonna finish college and we probably learned that by April and we were all gone by June. If you were a medical student, you went directly to medical school and whether you had 2 years or 3 years of college, boom off to medical school.

And I think there were about 15 16 guys in my class who were in that category, maybe more, but probably more because, anyhow, not important why. But then there were a lot of us in the Enlisted Reserve Corps, and by June of '43, most colleges in America had closed or in a sense closed as regular academic institution male colleges, not so much for female colleges, male colleges were just emptied, and the Military took them over. For example, the Military Navy took over Union College, and they had things like B12 and B5 and "B" this and "B" that, and it depends, if you were training to be a Naval Aviator, you'd be a B5, if you were training to be a deck officer, you'd be a B12 and they had all these different things. So, the college kept going, but they were being run and paid for by the Navy.

RMW: My female college also had trained the WAVES there.

RM: They had WAVES, I didn't know they had a WAVE Unit.

RMW: Yeah. Because they lost students too.

Int: Now the people in this picture (holds up picture) did you know them before you got to the War?

RM: No. They didn't know me, I didn't know them.

Int: How long were the 4 of you together?

RM: Well I can't remember exactly my guess is that we were all what they called Replacements. A Replacement was somebody who got put into a Unit generally which was already in combat, because of the loss of personnel and after I finished that FTP program I got thrown into a training division in the United States and then they started picking people out of the hat and sending them overseas in not just one or 2 but maybe a dozen or 2 dozen and it was kind of a, I don't know how I happened to end up in the 8th Division, but I got put in there as a Replacement.

Int: So, you could've been placed anywhere?

RM: That's right, I might have ended up in the- probably wouldn't have ended up in the 101st or the 82nd because I didn't have any parachute experience, I was destined to be cannon fodder. You see when you come down to it virtually it, I would guess a unit like a division that originally had 15,000 when they started out, then certainly didn't end the War with 15,000. Somewhat less. How many of the originals were still in the unit? Oh boy Not very many. I mean when the 8th Division got to Austria, I would be inclined to say that not more than 10% of them were the same people that got off the boat when they first came to France. I wasn't one of them, I came along and got stuck in later, in the end of September and they'd already been in Europe for a month roughly. So, I don't know I've never heard a number on something like that, but in- we had new people coming in to our Company and into my Platoon all time, it was just constantly new people coming. Not very well trained either, younger and younger, then once and a while there's somebody who was 39 years old, but none of this stuff like they have over there now, that's ridiculous.

Int: (to the cameraperson) Is there anything you would like to ask? Well thank you for the interview.

RM: You're very welcome. You got any more questions, come on back. Or we could do a phone interview.