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Veteran**

Interviewer & Videographer: Orchard Park HS Students(I)

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**Interviewed on March 26, 2003
Orchard Park High School
Orchard Park, NY**

I: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

HAD: I was drafted.

I: What were your reasons for entering the draft?

HAD: It was required by the law of the United States. Register for the draft or they put you in jail. The reason they didn't take me right away was because I was still in high school and I was 18 before I graduated, so I had to register when I was 18. Of course, the minute they had your name, they wanted you. But they did give me a reprieve so that I could get my diploma and then they took me. God love them. [Laughs.] And that was in summer of 1943.

I: Were you upset about being drafted?

HAD: No, I wasn't at the time. A couple of years later I remember I looked back and said I should have been. But in any event, I wasn't expecting it to begin with because I can recall my Dad in 1941 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, we were sitting in the afternoon having lunch on a Sunday afternoon, and he said, "You don't have to worry, Herb, you're only 16. They're never going to get you. We're going to knock those guys off within six months. Don't worry about it." So, I reminded him as I was leaving for Camp Upton, "Hey Dad, what happened to your prediction?" Any other thoughts on that?

I: How hard was it to leave your family?

HAD: Well, it was difficult because I had never been away from home before for an extended period. We'd been on vacation and things like that, but I was never in summer camps or so forth and so on, and I was young, just getting out of high school, green behind the ears, you know, so to speak. I knew I was going to miss my Mom and Dad and my brother and sister. But that's, you know, it's one of those things you have to do. And when you get in, you're exposed to many different types of people. I mean, we had all kinds of ethnic backgrounds, all kinds of race, differences – I mean there was black, yellow, white, whole bunch. Plus, the fact you were mixed in with a crowd of people that were different from the people you were raised with. I mean I was in sort of a quiet residential area and all of a sudden, I was thrown in together with a bunch of other 18-19-year-old guys from New York, whoa!!!! [Laughs.] So, it was kind of a dramatic change in my life.

I: What were your family and friends feeling about it?

HAD: Well, I guess, I can remember my Mom was very upset about it. My brother and sister wished me well. My Dad reminded me to be good; if I couldn't be good, be careful, and he said, "Take care of yourself and don't forget to say your prayers," and I said, "Yes, sir."

I: You mentioned a brother and sister. How old were they?

HAD: My brother was four years younger than I was and my sister was eight years younger than I was. Well, you can sort of guess that I was 18, my brother was 14 and she was 10 at the time.

I: What were some of your training experiences?

HAD: Well, the first experience was being routed out of bed every morning at 5:00 with no other questions asked. I mean, when they said, "Get up," you'd better get up. You could hit the floor fast. And if you didn't, they used to come down along the bed line, you know, the bunks, and they'd slap your foot, your raw foot with a rubber slipper. Boy, you came off that bed fast. But in any event, you know, getting used to a new routine, where everything was planned for you – you didn't even think about what was going on. It was a routine. You'd get up in the morning, you'd fall out, they'd count you all off. Then they'd let you go in and have breakfast and then you lined up for a bunch of shots. This is before we got into the regular Army, we're just... We're about to go into training. And you know, you'd look down the line and you'd see about eight doctors, four on each side and as you walked by, each one plugs another needle into you. Everybody's walking along, stripped, you know, everybody's running around naked, waiting for uniforms and everything. It was quite an experience. In any event, from there I was transferred from Camp Upton NY where I stayed for about two weeks and after they got through inducting us and giving us all our Army serial numbers and our clothes and all that sort of thing, I was sent to Fort Benning GA for basic training, which was an 18-week course for those of us who were just coming into the Army, similar to what they still do today. Boot camp or whatever you want to call it. The Marines have boot camp and so forth. We called it basic training at the time. Fort Benning was the infantry center at the time, and also the airborne center. That's where they were teaching men to parachute, and also to use gliders and so forth. So, it was a very interesting experience because most of the cadre we had or the people who were our sergeants and so forth, had been in action at one time or another earlier in the war. They were older men. Most of us were 18-19-year-old kids. It was quite an experience. I mean I thought I was in fair shape because I had been swimming when I was high school and so forth, but I'll tell you, reality... Talk about reality. I mean, my tongue was hanging out most of the time. I was totaled. And I mean some of the things we had to do were tough. If you weren't in perfect shape, they were going to get you. I mean we had to climb over walls by going up ropes and all that kind of stuff and I'll tell you, man, some of that stuff. If you didn't make it up, if you fell back down, then you just kept struggling until you made it. But the food was great. We were fed beautifully. Oh yeah. Great food, yeah. But of course, then, in those days, I mean we weren't in action and we had regular mess halls. So, I went through the 18 weeks of basic training. That's basically – I'll show you my company, the company I trained with – and infantry basics. Anything else about the training aspect or the initial training?

I: What was the hardest part of the training? What was the hardest thing that they made you do, you really struggled at?

HAD: 50-mile hikes with a full field pack.

I: How much did those field packs weigh?

HAD: About 45 pounds. Plus, your rifle and your helmet. And you know, you weren't used to doing that. First, they didn't take us on those right away. We started doing running and different exercise, calisthenics, and they brought you up to it. You didn't try to do that the first two weeks but then, about halfway through training, we'd go on these overnight bivouacs. You know, we'd take our tents and packs and take them out and we'd march 50 miles to where we were going to go in the swamps. The bugs, the chiggers and all the other stuff that went with it. We'd pitch our tents and we'd go to sleep. Then, just to make sure we were on our toes, about two hours after we went to sleep, somebody'd blow a whistle and say, "We're under attack! Get your butts out of bed. We've got to do something about it. Get in line." Well, okay. That kind of stuff. And then of course, there were bugs, we were in GA, and [unclear] chiggers and snakes.

I: Snakes.

HAD: Yeah.

I: What did you do to keep entertained?

HAD: Prayed. [Laughs.] When we were in camp, we had weekends. We were allowed to go into town on weekends as long as we didn't screw up. If you didn't toe the mark, if you weren't marching the way they wanted you to, if you didn't do your drills properly, if you weren't doing well on the shooting range, then you'd lose points. You would not be able to go into town. They'd take weekends away from you. And of course, we were going into town just to get away from the place. And you know, usually at our age, we used to go into the dances in the different schools and the things they used to have for the servicemen – that was always fun. Then we'd go in and have our beer and everything without being supervised, you know. But a lot of times, we lost the weekend. It could be just one guy screwing up. If you didn't cut the mustard, they made you pay for it. And the reason they did it was, they said, "You've got to act like a team. You depend on each other. You're going to depend on the guy next to you and the guy on the other side of you to watch your back and your front and your sides. That's the way you're going to live from now on when you get in combat." So, there wasn't anything wrong with the way they did it. It was brutal in a lot of ways, but they never physically abused us. They acted like they were going to, sometimes. [Laughs.] Any other questions about the training?

I: What was it like to enter German territory?

HAD: Well, let me tell you, I'll get there in a minute because there's something in between. I was very fortunate – as I got through with basic, basic training, the Army had what they called the Army Specialized Training Program and based on your scores in high school, your grades and a test you took that the Army gave you – if you hit above a certain score and they thought you were a candidate for college, they'd send you off to college because they figured when the war was over, they would need a lot of engineers to help rebuild cities and bridges and everything. It was all going to get destroyed during the war. So, I got selected to go into ASTP. Instead of going into a regular infantry unit, I was sent up to Lafayette College in Easton, PA. They picked the courses. I had no choice. They just said, "You're going to become an engineer." I said, "Okay, if you say so." So, they put me into an engineering course – math and physics and so forth. So, I spent the first three months after basic training in the Army Specialized Training Program in Easton, PA at Lafayette College. Got into NY every weekend and Philadelphia – oh, that was fun. We had a lot of good times in there. Again, lots of gals around, you know, we had a lot of fun. I mean we had many, many dances. We had a great time. I even got home a couple of times during that... You

know, sometimes, you didn't get home for maybe a year, but I was, all I had to do was hop the train. On a weekend, I could run home, see my folks, and come back, but then of course, I had to give up my weekend in NY. But that's the way it is, you do what you do. Well anyway, everything was going along famously. We were eating great. That was a great college. We were eating like college kids. There were still civilians on campus. So, anyway, I recall the shock I got one morning when they called us out for reveille, and they said, "Gentlemen, the ASTP program is being dissolved." "What? I like it here." In any event, they were getting ready to invade Europe and they needed infantry. They needed whatever you were. A lot of people that came into ASTP were master sergeants. They had rank. They took them from every branch, artillery men, medics, all kinds of different people. And these people were very bright and all of a sudden, they found out the program was canceled and they were all in the infantry. Didn't ask us where we wanted to go. They just said, "You are all in the infantry." The guy said, "Wait a minute, I was in the Air Force." Air Corps at the time, it was under the Army. Somebody else said, "I was in the artillery. I don't know anything about an invasion." "You'll find out about it." So, we all got shipped to different units. So, we left Lafayette, Easton, PA, very mixed emotions in the spring of 1944. I was assigned to Camp Claiborne, LA, to the 84th infantry which was the Lincoln. The patch was a rail being split by an axe, called the Abraham Lincoln Rail Split.

I: So how old are you right now?

HAD: I'm still eighteen. [Laughs.] You know, a year hasn't passed. Ok, now I'm going to the serious training so if you want to ask questions about that, go ahead. Now I'm with an infantry unit that's getting prepared to go overseas.

I: So, first you went through your basic training, right, and then you went to college at Lafayette and now you were stationed at LA getting prepared to go...

HAD: Overseas somewhere. They didn't tell you where.

I: What was a day like when you were stationed in LA?

HAD: Well of course, it was even more rigorous than basic training because these guys were serious. Most of our cadre were sergeants and so forth and had been in battle before in one place or another. Most of them were older than we were. They were like in the 26-30-year range. 30-year-olds, master sergeants and so forth, had been around a while. Our lieutenants, some of them were seasoned, had been in combat, and some hadn't and were just out of West Point or just out of school themselves. So, there we were, and a lot of our cadre, again when I say cadre that's our boss, sergeants and so forth, were southerners. Most of us were Yankees. He said (in a southern accent), "Okay you boys, you're going to learn something down here. We're going to kick your butts till they're red if you don't get going. You guys come down from the north," he said, "We're going to show you what it means to really get into the act." So, we had a lot of fun. It was warm. It was sweaty. It was worse than swampy Georgia.

I: So, it was good times.

HAD: We'd go out on these 50-mile hikes and we'd go on maneuvers. And when we went on maneuvers, we'd travel lightly sometimes. We'd get out, have a little pup tent, pitch it, one night I remember sleeping like a log. I was tired. Man, I was tired from marching. All of a sudden, I'm getting wet. Well, there had been a thunderstorm up the crick and we were in a crick bed and the water was running through our tents. [Laughs.] Along with the snakes and whatever else. I'll tell

you, that was something. That got me out of there fast. And then the other thing was the food was different because they had to bring it to you. You know, they used to cook on the run. The kitchen group in our company, I was in K-company, of the 3rd battalion of the 335th infantry regiment of the 84th infantry division and we had our own cooks. And those guys really worked their butts off for us. I mean, anytime they could feed us – they brought us hot meals through the worst kind of weather.

I: What were the meals?

HAD: We were fed well. You know, we'd have steak, we'd have mashed potatoes, we'd have vegetables, we'd have bread, we'd have all kinds of supplements, like lots of chocolate, things like that. Good substantial meals because you're burning a lot of energy. And you're young, and you're putting out a lot of energy so you've got to get a lot back in. And then they served us... They also had water with us, they carried the water. You can't move without water. You don't have water, you have a problem. That's worse than not eating. And that's another thing that they used to surprise us with, was the marches, where you couldn't have water. You had to empty your canteen when you started. You weren't allowed another drink until they got you where you were going. But that was again to steel you for what was coming. You didn't know what you were going to run into, so you had to be prepared for it. Well, it was interesting because now when you went into training, you know, we'd get there and then we were in action and they used to fire live rounds over us or you'd go under these fences and so forth, and they'd say, "Don't let anybody stick their head up." They fired the machine guns over the top of our heads so you could hear what a bullet sounded like going over your head [makes clucking sound]. You hear them and you know you hear them like that, they were close. If they went [makes swooshing noise] they were a little further away. But if they went snap, like that [snaps his fingers], they went right by your ear. I'll tell you.

I: Ever miss?

HAD: No, they kept them [unclear]. I didn't see anybody killed in training. But we had to slog through mud. We had to crawl on our elbows and knees, and you had to take the rifle with you and your helmet. Couldn't lose that stuff and that would be on there and you had to stay under this barbed wire. And if you caught your clothes on it and got hung up on it, man, what a mess. You could get cut up and a lot of... But anyway, we made it. And then we'd get out in the field and they'd tell us we were going over this hill. We'd take that hill and they'd be firing live rounds over us, artillery rounds. Now, that will be a little bit tricky because once in a while one might fall short. We didn't lose anybody, but we came close. And then, so I mean that's the kind of thing we went through and it just got more and more rigorous as time went on because they were getting us ready and they had to get us ready fast because the invasion in Europe was only a couple of months away. They landed, I believe, in June, by June, about June, we were on our way over to Europe. We didn't know where we were going until we got on the boat and they took us all over the country so people didn't know where we were going. They put us on trains and they took us to the west coast and they took us up towards Seattle and they came back down south. We were crisscrossing the country for three days to get to NY to go to Europe. And then after we left there, we were issued khakis originally, so we all thought we were going to Japan, right? They told us, "Don't tell your folks or anybody where you think you're going. Shut your mouth." Then after, on the trains, halfway to NY – that was fun, we had the old choo-choo trains, you know, saw a lot of country – they switched us to the old wool, the old proud wool. I mean we knew we were going

where it was colder. So, we got to NY, finally, and they took us out. We went to Fort Dix, NJ, which was an embarking point for Europe, especially. We were waiting for a convoy. During the war, the Germans were using their subs to sink munition ships and troop ships if they could. So, we were on one of the large [unclear] liners. It was equivalent to something like the Queen Mary. It was huge and there was going to be like 15,000 of us on that one ship, our whole division practically. So, we found the way out of the harbor to meet with the convoy. What happened was they used to get everybody together and then they'd zigzag across the ocean so the torpedoes couldn't get at you. They had escorts, destroyer escorts, take them out, protect your ships. It was a very foggy morning. You couldn't see. I'll never forget this. I was standing on the side of the deck to get some air and I'm looking and I said, "What's that ship doing?" There's a ship plowing right at us and I mean at speed. We were trying to be drifting. We were just – you'd hear all the fog horns. [Makes fog horn noise.] "What's this guy doing?" I said, "He's coming right at us." All of a sudden, all the sirens went off. So, as I said, I was astounded. What's that ship doing? I started hearing the horns and sirens and I noticed the ship was suddenly hard left. He was going to the port fast and he was heading right at us. I said, "He ain't going to make it. He's going to hit us." But luckily, he skimmed up the front and he got just where the front of our ship was. Now we were huge. He looked like a little toy in the water. He was a tanker, loaded with fuel. He hit the front end of our ship and it peeled the side off of the boat, just like a sardine can. And they went about another 100 yards and down it went. I don't think we saved any of those guys. I think they all went into the harbor and then it blew up and luckily, it didn't... We lost our fresh water, you know, drinking water. So, they had to put back into port to get that repaired before we could get going. Meantime, the convoy left. So, it took them about three days to fix our water supply system. Then they put us back on the boat and he put up a head of steam and he shot across the Atlantic as fast as he could go. But it was a fast-moving ship and then in the right places he had to zigzag to make sure. We didn't have any escorts. I'll tell you, we'd get like this. We're all alone out there, you know. But we had some air escort from the States that we when we got near England they came out and picked us up with the aircraft again to protect us. We landed in Liverpool. We stayed three weeks in [unclear] in England. Didn't get much chance to see too much of England because I was on KP duty one morning because I overstayed my night in London and came in AWOL, you know, late, so, I had to pay for that – they put me on KP duty.

I: What's KP?

HAD: Kitchen police. You know, you help and you make the food, peel potatoes, wash the dishes, all that stuff. And, I was assigned that morning to light the heaters. What they used to do was they had like a garbage can, full of clean water, in which we heated it and then, when you were done, you had mess kits over there, aluminum mess kits, where you put your food, through the line. When you wanted to clean them, you dipped them into this tank of hot water to clean them off so that they were sanitized. So, I'm lighting these things and I'm poking the taper down in this one and I forgot with how they were putting some sort of gas or something, propane. I poked and it didn't light. I said, "What's the matter with this thing?" I said, "I'll get this thing going," so I lit the taper again. In the meantime, the gas had started and it triggered the... The whole thing blew up in my face. There I was. I said, "Man, I'm lucky I didn't get burned." Right? So, I'm starting to set the table and the guys are coming in to eat. Finally, one of my buddies, I remember Bernie [unclear], "Herb, what the hell happened to you?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Where are your eyelashes, where is the front end of your hair?" I said, "What are you talking about?" I went over to the mirror and of course, I was burned back to here [motions to top

of head]. My glasses protected my eyes, but my face was all red and blistery. But I was in shock, I didn't feel it. So, the next two weeks while we were still in England, where do you think I was? In and out of the hospital [unclear] wounds so I didn't get all scarred up. So, I didn't get any more time in London or anyplace else until we got a new ship and headed toward France. Then we were, of course, not in the original invasion, but we did land at Omaha Beach. We still went into the fancy docks they built for us. Then we were in action. In France, we were suddenly facing the Germans.

I: How did the French treat you?

HAD: The French? Well, they were wonderful. French people. God, we were liberating them. The Germans had occupied France for – since what – 1941-ish? I forgot, when the heck did they blitz through there? Hitler went into Poland in '39 and then he took on... England declared war. Heck, he threw the French, the English and everybody off the continent, I think the first year. I think it was one year he bombed them, then that was what, '42? By '43, before we landed there, I can't remember the exact dates, he had thrown them all off the continent, so Germany was supreme all the way from Norway down to Italy. So, now we had to go invade to get back. When I got there, the Germans had been pushed off the beaches, of course, and we were going city fighting, city to city and let me tell you something, I never saw anything like that. The carnage, the wreckage, there was, it was the buildings [unclear] except for a few churches, one brick was on top of another, the slaughter, women, kids, everybody and soldiers. It was tragic. If war [unclear]. We always said the last war we're in was the war to end all wars, so what are we doing fighting again? But in any event, to make a long story short, I did see Paris on a truck because the French liberated Paris. And of course, we were getting wine all along the roads. The women were happy to see us. And the wine was being passed and we were throwing the Germans out. They were very happy. So then, we got up to a little place near the German Siegfried line. We had cleared out the Netherlands and quite a bit of France and we were about to invade German proper. Now time's flying by, now this was the fall of 1944. We were sent in to relieve a portion of 28th infantry division, the Red Bucket, I think it was the 28th or 29th, called the Red Bucket. They had been on [unclear] some time. So, we were sent up to relieve them and they used to, you know, they'd come out of the foxholes and we'd go take their places until we were ready to launch another attack and an amusing incident, I'll think you'll like this. My Sergeant, a fellow by the name of Sergeant Offits, a big old Southern boy, a nice great guy, great guy, he kept me alive a lot of times, but we're rushing, we're going up to get these foxholes and it's dark. We didn't think the Germans saw us. The Germans knew the 28th was moving up. They spotted us. They waited a little bit. They had moved out and we were starting to get through the foxholes when they fired over us some star shells and lit up the whole battlefield. It all turned into daylight instantly and then they started throwing the artillery around us. So, here's this, the 88th fire coming in at us, pow, bam, whammo. Offits said, "Get in that foxhole, Herb." So, I'm running. He said, "There it is, there it is! Get in." And I jumped to get in, but I had a full field pack on because we had just replenished all our ammunition and I got stuck in the opening. My feet were up in the air like this and I'm hanging down. He's pushing on me and I'm not going anywhere, you know. He said, "Don't worry, I found a place." Then I heard him and the word came out, started with "s" and then the firing stopped and I said, "Hey, Sergeant, where the hell are you?" He said, "You won't believe what I jumped into." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I hit a latrine." You know what we used to do? We used to dig trenches so we could defecate and urinate so we didn't go in the holes and stuff. You know, you'd go out and drop your pants and do your stuff with your pants

down. He jumped in one and he was covered with it. I said, “You ain’t coming in this foxhole.” He said, “I’d better,” he said, “You’ll never forget the day you made me do this.”

I: Oh, my gosh.

HAD: Now, he didn’t get a change of clothes for God knows how long. Once you got dirty, once you’re in the mud... We had just been off the lines and gone back and got all clean uniforms and showers. We were, you know, sometimes you’d go two or three weeks before they’d give you a break. And then we have to go back to this point, constantly change our socks because you’d get wet and you’d get trench foot if you didn’t get those wet socks off.

I: What’s that?

HAD: It’s like leprosy of the feet. It’s awful. So, what they’d do is, another laugh, a laugh a day, – I can remember the fun parts, too – they’d come up and say, “Here’s your socks. Come on, change them. Get out of that hole. I want to see you change them.” So, you take off your boots, pouring water out of them, take off the wet socks, throw them away, put on the dry socks after you’d dried your feet, step back in your wet boots, lace them up and get back in the water.

I: What?

HAD: The idea was so that you didn’t want the socks to start rotting on your feet, because then your feet start to rot, too. So, that’s why they did it. But it made so little sense, you know, you’d say, “What am I doing [unclear] standing back into the water.” Of course, the boots weren’t waterproof, so that [unclear]. But then, to make a long story short, my turn in action was about to end because we were near the Siegfried Line. We were sent on an evening [unclear] to go up and capture the town of Geilenkirchen and break in through [unclear] and knock out part of the fortress of the Siegfried Line and we’d be entering Germany. And the day before we went up, two days before we went up, our 333rd infantry division or regiment, 334th, there were three regiments in each division and ours was the 333rd, 334th and 335th. We were in reserve the first two nights. The 333rd tried it one day. They got knocked back. The 334th went into it the next day. They got knocked back. They said, “Well, you’re the fresh guys, you’re next.” So, in the middle of the night, I’d say about four in the morning, raining like you wouldn’t believe, pouring. And we’re in a sort of rolling farm country and there’s beet fields, a lot of beets – that kind of stuff. We’re walking in, finding one and I heard the Sergeant say to the Captain, “Captain Smith,” he said, “I don’t see that church tower.” He said, “Well, it should be around here someplace.” He said, “I’m on the compass heading.” We couldn’t see the church. How could we see it? It was pouring. I said, “Let’s keep going.” He said, “Yeah, but we’re getting further away from the action.” Why, we seem to be going away from it instead of into it. Well, we were all getting a little nervous and, all of a sudden, the sky lit up. Star shells and here we were, down in an area, like there were rolling hills around us. We were down in there and just about to go up another hill. Lit up and we hear this German say, “Hey you guys, you’re in trouble.” [Laughs.] And then we were surrounded by Germans. They were on every side of us. We were walking through their foxholes. They didn’t do anything. They just ducked down and let us go. We walked through. We saw what looked like empty foxholes. We weren’t going to use them. We had to keep moving. And then they popped up behind us and then they said, “Why don’t you make it easy on yourselves, guys? Give up.” Well, hell, give up, hell. Right? Well, we all hit the mud and started digging. I remember every time I lifted my shovel, I’d hear one of those [makes clucking noise] right over my head. Because they had the high ground and they were spitting down on us and I was, at that time, I had

the Browning automatic rifle. Do you know what that is? It's an automatic – it's like a machine gun. It takes clips of 21 rounds of 30 caliber ammunition and you can get it off with one shot like [makes shooshing sound] or you can go [makes click, click, click sound]. And a lot of times, we did it one at a time because any time the Germans saw an automatic weapon, they'd use mortar on you. They saw anybody with an automatic weapon, right on top. So, in any event, I squeezed off a few rounds and finally, they were coming down the hill and then I opened up. Of course, then I had to move right away because I knew something was coming in and pretty soon... There was about 30 of us up there and one by one, they were knocking us out. My Sergeant said, "Let's move over here," he said, "We'll go up this way." God! He stood up. They moved in on him. This was the end of the war almost for me, because they came down the hill and they told us to surrender and we didn't want to. We kept firing as often as we could and I was reloading, jamming another cartridge into the BMR and all of a sudden, I hear this voice, "Raus," and when I look up, there's this Dutchman, with a schnauzer in my face and I said, "Well, I could kill him and he's going to blow me to hell, and I said, "I guess I'm going to be a live coward instead of a dead hero." So, I got up [puts hands in the air] [unclear]. He had me. Eleven of us came off the field. That's what was left of us. Everybody else we left back there was dead or badly wounded. Believe me, there was the day, the clothes I wore that day I had on me for almost three months because, before they were changed and, I'll tell you, I stunk. I hadn't had a shower. I hadn't had a bath. I hadn't cleaned myself. I mean I was just a mess. So, they walked us back and luckily, it was the regular German army that captured us, so they didn't shoot us. There were a couple of SS guys on the way as we were rolling away from the battlefield. We could see some of our GIs getting closer to us, like if we just stayed there for another two or three minutes, they got up the hill, they could have got us back because they were coming. The Germans were rushing us to the rear. The SS guys would say to their German buddies, "Hey, don't fool around with those guys. Let's just get rid of them." You know, knock them off. Luckily, the guards we had, the guys that were taking us, said, "Get your asses out of our way. Stand back." So, we went. Another tragic thing I saw was a German sitting in a trench. He was degutted. His stomach was in his hands. The German with us just went over and put a bullet in his head [unclear]. Then, it didn't end then. Because now we're hungry, we're dirty, we're wet, we're demoralized. What are we going to do next? They walked us through Düsseldorf after a 1000 plane B-17 bomber raid and the streets were littered with kids and women and people who were cremated in subways. Their homes were demolished and all I'm telling you, if any of you think war is fun, forget it. I lost a lot of buddies. I cried a lot of tears. But you know what, I never met an atheist in a foxhole. Somehow or another, all of us ended up believing in God because who else was on our side? I'll tell you there were lots of nights in foxholes, I said, "Mom, come and get me and take me home." So, I survived it. Prison camp wasn't too bad. I was treated fairly well. I wasn't abused by the Germans. We didn't get enough to eat. I lost – I went down from 180 to 132 pounds by the time I was liberated in April. The Russians liberated us at the Alba River. The reason we couldn't gain any weight was because we were eating German vegetables – kohlrabis, rutabagas, carrots, and they were all fertilized with human manure. We weren't used to that. Everything used to go right through us, so we didn't hold our food. They did give us great, great amounts of bread, beautiful bread. We got meat once a month. We couldn't keep it refrigerated. We didn't have a refrigerator. And I was very fortunate, I wasn't kept at the main prison camp, Stalag II-A at Neubrandenburg, because we went to what they call work commanders. Since I spoke some German and understood more, I was given a group of 19 other GIs and we went out to a little town called [unclear]. So, I got to church every Sunday, believe it or not, after that. While I was waiting for the war to end. We were building

barracks for Russian displaced labor. The Germans were bringing in Russians from the Russian front to help them build Messerschmitt engines, things like that. So, when I was there, during that time, cold, hungry, dysentery, everything else, I saw my first jet, German jet. The first time, "What's that?" flying over us. It only stayed up a few minutes. But they were terrors while they were up there. And, Franklin Roosevelt died while I was in prison camp on April 12, 1945. Then the Germans decided with the Russians getting closer and closer because the Russians were coming from the east towards us, the Americans were coming from the west towards us and the thing was getting narrower, the two guards had decided, they were from the Russian front... They had some terrible experiences, too. Anyway, they decided we better head towards the American lines. They didn't want the Russians to get them because the Russians were very angry with the Germans, with good reason. We headed for the Alba River, where the Americans were headed. You won't believe it – we got one day away. We stopped in a barn to rest and the Germans got us some food packs to go. We'd finally got some Red Cross packages. We didn't have any guns or anything. And the Russians were coming and what do you think they were shooting at us with? You know the Bell Aircobra, P-39? Did you ever hear of that? Made in Bell Aerospace out here in Niagara Falls? I think we had a cannon. Who knows? Here's these Russians, they couldn't tell us from the retreating German army, we were all going towards the Americans, right? And they were swooping down. I said, "What the hell are you doing? I'm from Niagara Falls. What are you shooting at me for?" The Russians, of course, they couldn't tell. All they wanted to do was, you know, the Germans still had a lot of horses that pulled wagons and stuff, was create terror in the ranks, and the people running, okay, just keep moving, keep moving. So, anyway, to make a long story short, we got to this part and all of a sudden, in the middle of the night, I hear this, "Raus." The Russians were there. They overtook us. The two German guards that got us, luckily back to where we were, I saw them, they were headed east towards Siberia. I said, "Hey, why don't you take us up the Alba River?" He said, "You don't want to go up there tonight." "What the hell's the matter?" He said, "Look, let us feed you." Then he got some chickens and those chickens, they ran right through us. [Laughs.] But in any event... And they danced, and they had the vodka [unclear] and that just about killed us [unclear] and the reason they didn't want us to go up there was there was a little town between us and the river and they just lined up their rockets and they just demolished that town. There wasn't anything... Just like they did to us, they did it back to them. They burned every Russian village when they left Russia so as they came into Germany, the Russians were burning every German village they saw to make sure they didn't forget. Next day, they put us in the army, what they used to call those things that used to cross the rivers, they float, you know, they have wheels on them too, they go on the ground and they can go into the crick and come up the other side. Well, anyway, they took us up in those, took us to the bridge over the Alba River, said to the Americans, "Here's some of your buddies." Boy, we got out and kissed the ground. So that was my tour in the army. I spent a month in France while they put some weight on us, because we all looked like we came out of a Holocaust camp. And we went home and got home in June. After a month of family, I had 60 days leave at home, had a great time, saw some of my buddies, some of the guys I graduated with were home on leave. Went up to the Lake Placid Country Club for two weeks for R & R as we got into our new uniforms so we could go to Japan and fight some more wars. Of course, Japan was still fighting. V-E day was done, but I was at Lake Placid in August of 1945 and I was there the day V-J Day came and I got down and kissed the ground again. I don't need those khakis. And then I ended up at Fort George Meade and they transferred me to Quartermaster Corps. I learned how to type, pretended I could type for the general, so they gave me a sergeant's rating and I was training other guys that were

about to go into basic training and giving them tests and stuff and then I was discharged in December 1945. Since I had been a POW, I had enough points to get out and I went home graciously and fast. And I'm waiting to go, right? And the last tragic thing that had to happen to me, Thanksgiving Day, I was supposed to leave the next day for home, we got bad turkey. We all got stomach ill. We were in the hospital [unclear]. They let them thaw or something. They had been frozen and thawed. So, I finally made it home and I swear, it was great. So, the Lord protected me. My Mom saw me again. You know, they had a home front disaster because they found out in December of '44, they got a telegram from the War Department that said I was missing in action. They didn't know what happened to me. They didn't know I was a prisoner until they got one of my letters that came from Germany. Because the Germans let us fill in cards and they used to fire them in mortars over the American lines or they'd give them to the Red Cross and then they'd send them to your parents. So, after getting a telegram from the War Department saying, "Sorry to inform you that your son is missing in action, etc. etc. etc." I got copies of all that stuff if you want to see it. It said, based on the letter that you received from your son, we'll assume that he is alive. I said, "Gee, that's nice." [Laughs.] But in the meantime, see, my parents didn't know where I was. They thought I was dead. So, it was tough for them. You know, the rations hurt. You know that during the war, meat was rationed, gasoline was rationed, you had to have tickets to get stuff, you know. It was all to help the troops and like, cigarettes. That's what hooked me on cigarettes. I didn't smoke. I didn't smoke in training camp, nothing. I got to Europe and I was getting candy and I could trade for, different things that I could trade for candy and things, and all of a sudden there wasn't that stuff around anymore so they started dumping cigarettes in our holes, free. I'd walk a mile for a Camel, Lucky Strike [unclear] is going to war. They dumped them in, so one day I said, "I'll try one." What a mistake. I ended up with five bypasses. [Unclear] I never should have started smoking, but... Now, go ahead, ask any questions that you want, any stuff you want to see?

I have some pictures of when I was in training which I could show you.

I: I'm going to stop the tape.

HAD: [Looking over photograph albums] ...who sent my mother a note and said he had looked over the battlefield and since they didn't find me, all they found was my canteen and my Browning automatic rifle, he assumed I was still alive, so he did write her and tell her. Here's our Thanksgiving menu, that was our Christmas menu down there. That was our Company Commander. This lists all the different people who trained us. Our names are in here. Dressed up to do some imitation women stuff, dancing stuff. Here was the chapel, we used to go to Mass. There was some of our mortar firing exercises. That was my company in Fort Benning. We're all in there, a lot of my friends.

...the cannon and the nose. So, I mean, you know. Some of the things I did. By the way, did you know that Bell Aerospace built the first jet to fly in the United States? There it is. We disguised it at the plant by putting a propeller on it, so people thought it was propeller driven, but actually it was a jet. How 'bout that? Test pilots and so forth. There's one of the early twin jets, you know, we were trying to find ways of getting... There's the XB [Unclear], you know the one that goes straight up. It ended up over Cornell Lab. Let's see what else. An ICBM with ten multiple atomic warheads. They weren't getting it off tonight. Luckily, it did. [Unclear] I also have a release here. Tell me the kind of questions you were going to ask.

They also asked me to fill this out. My service, of course, was in England, Europe, the Rhineland, Central Europe, the United States. I had the Good Conduct Medal, I had the American Theatre Service Award, The European African Western Service Award with two victory stars, WW II Victory Medal Ribbon. I received a combat infantry badge and I also got a Bronze Star.

This is me. These are the different medals with the battle stars on them, the number of battles I was in. That's the combat infantry medal. That's my marksmanship medal. This is my Bronze Star. There they are.

I: Incredible.

HAD: [Shows photographs] [Unclear] And then I saved my stripes as I got promoted, first I was just a private, then I was a ...

I: Do you still talk to anyone?

HAD: There's still guys I still correspond with.