

**John M. Canale**  
Narrator

**Jim Regan**  
New York State Senator Patty Ritchie's Office  
Interviewer

**Interviewed on June 7, 2012**  
**Oswego County Legislative Office Building**  
**Oswego, New York**

JC: John Canale, Veteran

JR: Jim Regan, Interviewer

JR – Could you state your full name?

JC – My full name is John M. Canale – that's M for Michael.

JR – What branch of the service did you serve in?

JC – I served in the Army of the United States of America.

JR – What were your dates of services?

JC – My dates of service actually started beginning in September of '42 and when I was enlisted I was not called until April 23<sup>rd</sup> of 1943 and I was discharged in October 5<sup>th</sup> 1945 and was back in college the next day October 6<sup>th</sup>.

JR – My name is Jim Reagan I am conducting the interview. I work for the State Senator Patty Ritchie. We are here at the Oswego County Legislative office building. Mr. Canale when were you born?

JC – I was born on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, of 1924, I was actually a New Years Baby, but I didn't get any gifts. The guy that followed me did get the gifts.

JR – Where were you born?

JC – I was born in Oswego, NY 13126. Right down here a short distance: The Wallace Bookstore, where that sub shop is up on the second floor. It was the Wallace Bookstore.

JR– What was your pre war education?

JC– My pre war education was 2 years in college. In fact, they took me out of Oswego State Teacher College in April of 1943.

JR – Were you drafted?

JC – No, I was enlisted in September '42. I was told that if I enlisted, they would not take me, but otherwise I would be drafted before I went in April '43.

JR– How did you hear about Pearl Harbor?

JC – I heard about Pearl Harbor when I was in College. I was actually in session at the time studying to be a teacher and that's when I heard about Pearl Harbor.

JR– What were you doing when you heard about it?

JC – At that time, as I recall, I was in a class.

JR – So what were the circumstances in the class that you would hear that Pearl Harbor occurred?

JC – Well the general reaction was that's terrible. Looks like we're gonna be called in. (chuckles)

JR – You were saying that from Fort Niagara you got sent where?

JC – From Fort Niagara I went to Camp McClellan, Alabama for 18 weeks. It was basic training. And then from there I went to Camp Blanding in Florida where I became a (unclear) man. I was an instructor of men and I had to teach them how to take a rifle apart - the M1 rifle apart – put it all together and then do it blind folded. Then from Camp Blanding Florida, they sent me to Camp Shanks, and then from Camp Shanks I went to Ireland.

JR – When you were sent to Ireland, when about would that have been?

JC – That would have been around – the reason I can remember – it was about August the 23<sup>rd</sup> of 1944, that's the day – I didn't realize at the time – that I was married on the same day in 1952.

JR – So you get to Ireland and then what happens?

JC – Well when I got to Ireland I was very, very happy because they had my favorite doughnuts and coffee. I felt very happy about that and of course – let's face it – I was very scared too because I knew I was definitely going to go into combat. From there they

flew us in a helicopter over the English Channel into France and on October 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1944, during WWII, I was wounded in the first battle. And I do have this report right here.

JR – Now before we get to that – In June, when D-Day occurred where were you at that point?

JC – That was June 6<sup>th</sup> of '44, well actually at that time, as I recall – now my recollection maybe not that great now – I may still have been in the United States, I was not overseas. I'm glad I didn't go into the battle of D Day but-

JR – But what was going through your head when you found out the allies had landed and the invasion had begun?

JC – Well, I'll tell you the honest truth. I was glad that I was not there but I knew that subsequently I would be in a battle and of course this Battle of the Bulge was the greatest land battle that was ever fought according to Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Britain. So while I missed the D-Day, I still think I was very, very lucky, in a sense, to get in on the Battle of the Bulge.

JR – Now from Ireland – How did you get there?

JC – In a helicopter.

JR – A helicopter?

JC – Helicopter

JR – And how many men were on the helicopter?

JC – At that time there was two other men one on either side of me, and unfortunately both threw up. I had helmet (chuckles) I had to help one guy, he used my helmet. He was so upset he threw up into my particular helmet. The other guy started so I gave my helmet to him and they both threw up into my helmet.

JR – So where did the helicopter take you?

JC – They took us right to a little village by the name of Lorraine. And that is the first battle that I was in on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1944.

JR – When you got off the helicopter, what did you see?

JC – When I got off the helicopter, what I saw was the enemy. Actually we had to face the Germans and they were across the field.

JR – So when you were getting off the helicopter you could see the Germans from the helicopter?

JC – Well yeah, because they were ready for us.

JR – And were they firing at you guys?

JC – No, at first they didn't because I was at a great distance, but once we got up close enough they fired upon us.

JR – So when you got off the helicopter, was there a unit there that you were joining?

JC – No, I was a staff sergeant and I, actually I had 12 men as a squad leader, and I led them against...

JR – So were they arriving in other helicopters?

JC – They were there before me.

JR – So you rejoined your unit?

JC – I joined them for the first time.

JR – So you were given orders to attack the Germans?

JC – That's right.

JR – And how long a time period between when you got off the helicopter did you go into combat?

JC – Wasn't too long, I don't recall, but it wasn't too long I was into the battle either.

JR – So your commander tells you, take your men, your first time in combat? What's going through your head as you lead your men into fire for the first time?

JC – Well, I was very, very scared. In fact I thought I was going to die immediately (chuckles), that's how scared I was. But the point here that I like to make, it wasn't too long after we started into the battle that I was wounded in action. So they had to take me out of there. And of course I don't know who took my place, but someone took my place. I was wounded in the left wrist, but the bullet came from a burp gun shell. You ever here a burp gun? (Use of gun sound effects) That's the way it sounded. It hit my wrist at an angle, had it hit me directly I would have lost my left arm. From there, don't ask me why I don't know why, they put me in a foxhole for that night. Can you believe

that? And I had to put my left hand up in the air – that’s the wounded arm right there and I had a phone here. All night it rained and I had rain up to my chest – right here - and the phone rang, faintly of course, and I answered the phone and the guy on the other side of the phone said to me. “Sergeant Canale we would like to send you to Officer’s Training School and then from there we would send you to Japan.” I don’t want to tell you what I thought (chuckles) I just said to him, in a nice way, “thank you sir,” and I hung up. Now the next morning they took....

JR – Why was that? Wouldn’t you want to be an officer?

JC – (unclear) I would have to go to Japan. I don’t like heat. I’ve always liked the cold weather.

JR – What time of year is this in Europe?

JC – This would have been October 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1944 and at that time it was quite cold. I can stand the cold weather, but I can’t stand the heat. So I was very glad that I was put into the army where I didn’t have to go to Japan. That’s the reason why I refused to go into officer’s training school. My wife incidentally was a second lieutenant and she was over in Folga, Italy. Every morning for my breakfast I had to salute her as a staff sergeant (chuckles) little bit of a pun here (chuckles).

JR (chuckles) – You turned down a chance to go to officer training school?

JC – Right?

JR – We all know that it’s the sergeant’s that actually run the army, so what happens next?

JC – What happens next is that I actually had to be operated on, October the 4<sup>th</sup>, the next day in a Paris hospital and I can still remember looking up to the ceiling, here, for three days. I don’t know why it took them so long. They had to take all of these pieces of shrapnel out of my left wrist. I always felt as I looked back on that, “why would it take them so long?” But, I must have had so many pieces of shrapnel in there that they had to go in there very, very slowly and so forth. Also, while I was with them, they checked my teeth. And unfortunately I wish I hadn’t met the dentist, he ruined two of my teeth, one on the lower set and one on the upper set. They are still missing. I have had those teeth replaced in the meantime. But, I wish I had been able to file a claim at that time because it has cost me a few dollars, not a lot, but enough to talk about it.

JR – So then what happened? After you get out of the hospital, where do you go next?

JC – Well, I was very happy to report that for few days they gave me a three day pass. So a few of these guys and I ran around Paris. We had a very, very good time. And shortly thereafter –

JR – So what's the feeling in Paris at this point? The allies had landed, they've advanced, and they've liberated Paris. What's the thinking in Paris at this point and the war is far from over but at least now the allies have come and Paris has been liberated.

JC – We'll at that time, of course, I had a great feeling of (unclear) because we actually had defeated the Germans up to France. Little did I know though that subsequently beginning on December 22<sup>nd</sup> of 1944, I was going to be in the greatest land battle because the pyramids.

JR – Before we get to there, you're in Paris, you have a three day pass, and you're in the city of lights, what is the feeling of the people in France at the time? About what's going on?

JC – Well the people were very happy, of course, actually we did go to a few bars, not to study (unclear), but they do have a few brews and we met a few people. They were very happy the Americans actually freed Paris.

JC – And then another little story a buddy and I were – if you know anything about Paris, I never knew too much about it but, in the back streets of Paris they have these narrow streets. I was going along with my buddy, I don't even remember his name now, but all of a sudden I was talking to him and I didn't see him. So when I saw him the next day I said, "Well what happened." He said "I better not tell you," so we just surmised what happened. He probably had a good time (chuckles).

JR (chuckles) – So it was a good experience, they didn't mug him. (chuckles) Then what happens?

JC – Well, then after that of course, I was sent to Swansea, in Wales, from Paris France and as I recall....

JR – Swazia.....

JC – Swansea (spells out)

JR – What's that?

JC – I was sent there because I needed further hospitalization. They did not think I was ready or health enough.

JR – So that’s back in England?

JC– Yes, Whales is a part of the British Island.

JR – So yes, that’s back in Great Britain. Go ahead.

JC – Right, so anyway, while I was there at the hospital I went all away around that war. They had these different guys in the beds, they had white sheets, pristine sheets and they all told me jokes. So I went back to the doctor there and I said, “you know doctor, these guys here have not lost their sense of humor.” “But he said, you know sergeant, what they have lost, - their legs.” He said that they lost their legs from the knees on down. I’ll never forget that story every day that I get up, and I can walk, I think about those men who lost their legs. But then subsequently, let’s say around December the 15<sup>th</sup> – See the Battle of the Bulge started on the 16<sup>th</sup>. But on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the doctor came up to me and he said, “You know sergeant, I’ve got some good news for you.” I said, “well what’s the good news?” He said, “we’re going to send you into combat.” I said, “what?” He said, “look an old beast you are, you weigh up to 185lbs, you eat everything in sight.” I said, “your right.” I was beginning to break out in warts; I wish I had a picture. I had broke out I was so nervous. I was as nervous as a cat. He said, “I think we’ll send you into battle. I think you’ll be better off than here because I believe ultimately you’ll probably weigh 200lbs and you’ll probably have a heart attack and we’ll lose you.” (chuckles) So I went in the battle and, let us say, I got to Belgium. It was around Antwerp, Belgium, and the 16<sup>th</sup> of December – but I had a break between the 16<sup>th</sup> of December and the 22<sup>nd</sup>. I was not sent into battle, and for those six days, I have often said to any of the men when I tell this story and anybody that listens to this story.” “Gee for six days they got along without me, why don’t they continue to get along without me?” (chuckles) So anyway, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, I actually went into the battle in Belgium near Antwerp. Now, I am glad you are asking these questions because I was actually going to read into this, but I would rather have you ask me these questions than read into my report.

JR – Sure, so here we are, December 22nd, what are you seeing? What’s going on in this moment as you find yourself back with the unit?

JC – Alright, are you talking about when I started into the battle on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, around Antwerp –

JR – Yes.

JC – Well actually, believe it or not, I still was a squad leader of 12 men. I had to lead those men into battle. In the first battle in Belgium, I don’t remember –

JR – Now this is a different unit of 12 men than you were with when you got wounded, right?

JC – Actually, as I recall, they were the same twelve men.

JR – So they sent you back to your old unit?

JC – Yes

JR – OK

JC– My same unit. I had two scouts. One guys name was Earnest Rich and the other guys name was James Maud. So I said to Ernest Rich, the first scout,” Private Rich, the enemy” – because I had to tell him that we were moving across the field in this direction. “What I’d like to have you do, is go out and Private Maud will be with you.” This is what Private Rich said to me, he said, “No Sergeant, I want you to go out first, I want to see how you do it.” (chuckles) So actually, I had to go out first, ahead of Ernest Rich. Then, I was shot at a few times, but I was lucky that I wasn’t killed. I came back and I had the two scouts go out, Maud and Rich. Incidentally, Rich, just about two or three months ago, I found out that , from his daughter, he was killed in a one vehicle accident. He was on his way to the hospital, down there in Iron City, Tennessee and somewhere along the line he actually had some kind of attack, he had trouble breathing. He was in a one vehicle accident and he lost his life. I just found that out recently. In my records, I have a couple of letters he wrote me, On September 9<sup>th</sup>, and on September 20<sup>th</sup>, about his recollections of the war. I don’t have those with me, but I guess I should note he was the only guy out of that squad that really ever contacted me and I was very sad when I found out that he had passed away. But did you want me –

JR – So here we are, its December 22<sup>nd</sup>, you’re back with your old unit, what are your orders? What are you told to do?

JC – The orders are to move forward toward to the enemy, now –

JR – So at this point the Battle of the Bulge has been going on. The Germans had launched a surprise attack. It’s snowing, right?

JC – That’s right. There’s snow. You have snow up to your knees. The battle lasted for six weeks. We lost approximately 91,000 troops. But could I go on?

JR – Sure

JC – I like your questions though, but –



JR – That’s okay, this is about you, not about me. Don’t worry about me.

JC – Alright, well, I’m not concerned about you (chuckles).

JR – (chuckles) I understand.

JC – You’ve led me up to this point. How much time we’ve taken so far?

JR – We’re doing good. We got lots of tape.

JC – Alright. Now, you asked me about December 22<sup>nd</sup>, and I figured, when I was in the battle, after I had a chance, in-between battles, what I did. I sat down and I wrote out a report. This is a little bit of bragging on my part. I don’t think you’re going to find any better that did this. I can document where I was, the names of the cities, and so forth. If I went over there today and tried to find these places, even if I went to where these places are I bet I could never remember where I was. It’s just so far long ago.

(Starts reading)

“But on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, at approximately 6pm, my battalion was on the left side on the border between Echternach and Middleshaw. The Assault Battalion was moved by truck to assemblies, areas North of Henstew. Companies E and F,”... And I was in company F,”... formed assault units of the second battalion. They drew heavy artillery fired as they attempted to cross the line of departure. Over in the second battalion areas, the same heavy shelling was in progress as companies E and F started forward through the woods. At the same time, a force of approximately 200 Germans were moving in the attack, directly toward company F, the company I was in. We faced one another across an open field.” Now did you want me to continue reading this?

JR – Please

JC – On December 23<sup>rd</sup>

JR – But wait. So you’re looking across the field and you see these 200 Germans, what happens?

JC – I’m going to tell you what happened. (Starts reading again) “On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, this is the next day, the second battalion - “I was in the second battalion” – of the second platoon. The second battalion then advanced under heavy small arms of artillery fire, which encountered at a point 400 yards north of the (unclear) road. The leading element of company F, ran into enemy infantry who were extremely well deployed in depth and supported by self propelled guns, mortars, and rockets. Successive barrages of shells, exploded in the mist of our advancing men. The forward line of company F, soon

became untenable and orders were given to the men to extricate themselves by infiltrating back to their original positions. The beleaguered troops withdrew, and brought a few frightened prisoners with them. Thus, ended the worst of the day's ordeals of fire and death. Company F continued to receive heavy mortar fire on their am positions, interspersed with occasional shell fire of heavier type near Acume." Now did you want me to continue on?

JR – So what your saying is, your unit had gone into battle, you guys pushed back a little bit, but they are continue to drop mortars on you and other shells? What's going through your head at that time? What's the feeling of you and your men?

JC – We'll were very scared because, (chuckles) we didn't know how long we were going to last. In fact when I look back on these things, that I'm giving you today, I don't know how we every got through this.

JR – But you did.

JC – Yes.

JR – What did you say to your men? You're the sergeant, they are looking to you for stability and leadership, what's taking place here?

JC – Later on in my life I became a coach of athletics. I was a varsity coach in baseball and basketball. I gave them the same spiel that I gave my ball players when I coached later on in my career as a teacher I said, "a winner never quits and a quitter never wins. When the going gets tough, the tough get going." That's what I told my men. Whenever we had a chance, for example on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, Company I and L on the Saar River near Echternach, we were in the back lines and we enjoyed ourselves. But I'd rather go back to December – unless you had another question?

JR – No, no

JC – On December 25<sup>th</sup>, it's Christmas Day.

JR – Oh

JC – I want to tell you what I was thinking about on December 25<sup>th</sup>, before I read this. I thought about the choir at St. Mary's church here in Oswego and how we sang the mass, "Adeste Fideles ." I thought about all those guys that actually I sang with. Practically all of them are deceased today. But that's the first thing that went through my head. But of course, naturally, the very first people on my mind were my mom, dad, brothers, and one sister. My mother's name was Catherine. I always called her beautiful Catherine and my

father was Albert. He was the strictest guy on earth. I could tell you a little bit more about that later. But I had a brother Michael; he was a P.O.W. during the war. He was in the air force. I had a brother Benjamin, a teacher for 34 years in Fulton, and I had a brother Joseph. Now, of the brothers, my brother Mike, or course, went overseas, and I could tell you a little bit more later on on that. My brother Benjamin never went overseas. My brother Joseph did go overseas during the Korean War in 1950. But I'd like to read this Christmas Day battle. This is where we were very happy, even though we were very sad, but glad. (reads) "Christmas Day, Battle of Wise Veterans"... I like it the way they say that, Battle of Wise Veterans, of course, but I'm really bragging a little bit here.".... Battle of Wise Veterans of the 10<sup>th</sup> infantry, looked over the snow covered terrain on this section of picturesque little Luxemburg and read General Patten's yuletide greetings and unique prayer for favorable weather and marveled at the timely break in the ominous grey ceiling above them. The haze and fog of Ramstad's dazing and dangerous offensive, which impaired allied countermeasures in the air, suddenly lifted. Christmas Day dawned bright and swarms of fighters, our fighters, and (unclear) droned overhead, tracing the sky with an intricate pattern of vapor trails."

JR – Now, just so that people can understand. Prior, to the sky parting, because of the cloud cover, the Army Air Force was unable to provide support to the troops. So why was it so important, when you saw those fighters in the air, the flyboys flying above you, why was that important to the troops on the ground at that moment?

JC- Well try Jim, to put yourself in our place. We actually were in a situation where we couldn't make any moves. And of course, once the planes came over and dropped the bombs, we were able to make it further in into the battle. Now on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, and even on 28<sup>th</sup> we had a break. They sent us to the rear lines. Well for those three days, I'll never forget the good time we had. Whenever I had my men to myself I always let them enjoy themselves and I used to sing them a few songs. I could sing a song for you. I'd like to put this on tape because these three songs have the same ending, which I use in school. Fold your arms, (kissing sound) kiss yourself on the two cheeks, but that had nothing to do with these men. But, the song goes like this; - you want me to sing the three songs?

JR – Sure

JC – Alright, I hope that you enjoy this. (points towards camera)

JR – Sing one of them.

JC – Alright. "The doughnuts that they give you, Jim

They say are mighty fine.

One fell off his head, killed a pal of mine.

Oh I don't want no more of army life...." –

And I look up – ".....Gee mom, I want to go home."

When I sang that for my students, at the Oswego High School and Oswego Middle School, this is what I tell them, "When you go home tonight and you see your mom, you go over to your mom and ask her the question, "Mom, how was your day?" Then, you tell her that today you had a little man with big ideas. Now I know I'm a little man, but I don't know whether I have big ideas. And tell them that I said to you, that, you hug your mom with all your heart and soul, kiss them twice on the cheeks." In June, 2009, after our graduation party at the campus center, I was in my cap and gown. I go to all those graduations now. I was walking down to my car and I saw this lady chasing me. I wonder why (chuckles) she was chasing me. I said, "gee I didn't do anything wrong I don't think. " She said, "You know Mr. Canale, I'm glad to meet you. My son came home this year and put his arms around me, kissed me twice on the cheeks and he said "mom, I love you!" She said, Mr. Canale I was glad that I was able to tell you that because you made my day, my month, and my school year with my son." I never did find out what her name was. I thought it was none of my business. If she had given me my name I could have remembered. I don't even remember the student. I always remember that story. The impact that you have on the students in your teaching. But getting back to – when I was in our timeout, behind the lines, at least two or three miles back, - some of my men of course like Cognac. The Cognac that they drank was so strong you could put it in a cigarette lighter and light their cigarettes. Of course, those days I smoked a little bit too. I wish I had not done it, but I did smoke a little bit with my men. Unfortunately, some of those guys drank too much Cognac. So let us say that they were inebriated. To use a fancy word. Well one day at a time, when I didn't know that the lieutenant was going to show up, he came and I saluted him. He said, "Staff Sergeant Canale. I'll give you a few minutes" he said, "I'll be right back to inspect your ranks." They did that from time to time, even when you were having time off. I got these twelve men and they're inebriated. So, I had to think, "how and am I going to do this?", because he is going to come back shortly. So I said, "alright you six men." I pointed to them, "you go to that wall, stand against the wall and lean into one another. So you won't fall over." So one guy, of the six men left said, "well what are we going to do sergeant?" "I said, we've got it all figured out. You six guys (chuckles) lean against them and you lean in toward one another." And they did that. Lieutenant came in (John raises his hand in salute), "Yes, sir." He looked at them (and said) "excused". And after he left all of those guys fell over. (chuckles)

JR – (chuckles)

JC – So here's a case in point where in a sense I might have been court-martialed. I mean those guys are not supposed to be doing that heavy drinking. And I really did not pay that much attention because what I did, I went more and less on my own. When I was on my own, I proved one thing of all men, men cry. I cried, by myself. But, I left the men alone; let them do whatever they wanted to, which was probably a big mistake in a way because it gave them too much freedom. But I said to these guys after, I said, "look it," I said, "after we leave here we have to go back in the battle." And I had it figured out, because I wrote (begins reading) "When we went in the battle on January 1<sup>st</sup>, through January 18<sup>th</sup>, the first 18 days were on the Saar River from Galsdorf to Ricedworf inclusive." Now, the message I gave to these men is, "remember men, if we ever get any more time off, don't repeat this," Once in a while we did get time off and they did not repeat and make the same mistake. Men in battle, learn never to make a mistake twice. All give you a good example. When you went out on reconnaissance, to find out where the enemy are at night, you took turns. Like maybe Monday, a few of these guys would go out, Tuesday a few more. Well, whenever I went out, we all learned on thing. When you come back to where your men are, they ask you these questions: (whispering) "What's your I.D. number?" I would say "12140262." "What's the password?" Let's say it was combat. I would say, "Combat". If you didn't remember those two things, he had it right, you were a dead duck, even though you were a human being. I'll never forget and I'll always tell my students this, "when you come to school my dear young lady..." I call them young ladies and gentlemen, "and you make a mistake, the teacher gives you a chance and you're still alive. But, if you went into battle which is, H-E-L-L, and you made a mistake, you were a goner. So, consider yourself lucky and I always tell them this in class that, you are now, whether you believe it or not, in heaven on earth. Why do I know? I've been to H-E-L-L and back." And I try to teach those stories to my students. I have probably, well my students right now Jim, I have to brag a little bit – they have a Facebook, Canale Fan Club List. The last time I checked with a student by the name of Nick, I said "Nick, how many names do we have now on the fan club list"? He said, "You know Mr. Canale," he had the exact number, "1,047" but I said, "look if our job is still not done. We've got to get 1,500 on there because there are 1,500 students in the Oswego High School." Also, while I'm talking about that, I also made a YouTube. At the end of a chemistry class, I was a substitute teach; I always use the last 3-5 minutes at the end of the period not to take away from the instruction. And I saw this kid, he had his camera. I said, "time out" I said, "what are you doing?" He said, "I'm taping you. Is it alright?" I said, "sure". So I sang a few songs and I told a story and the one song or the one story I'm going to tell you right now is a story I'll never forget. When I was in

Bissendorf, Germany - it's a very small village in central Germany of 641 people; we checked it out on the computer when I got home – we were walking down and are men, 6 men on one side and six men on the other, and I notice these Jerries. We call the Germans Jerries, have this wonderful meal. Now you've got to remember were two weeks into the Battle of the Bulge this time. When I left the hospital, even my men were well fed wherever they were. I was at 185 pounds. Within a couple of weeks after eating beans and drinking water, I was down to about a hundred pounds so I said to my scout, one of my men rather, Carl Hass, I wonder if he's still alive. He could speak better German than the Germans. So I whispered to him "I want you to go in their Private Hass and tell those Germans who are having a sumptuous meal to throw their rifles back and stand upon their toes with their hands clasped and keep that position, because if they don't we'll blow their brains out." Those are my instructions. I figured if I'm going to go in there, we're going to make sure those Jerries are going to do what they're told. So we took them prisoners. I had a couple of men....

JR – Now, just back up for a second. You were saying they were having a meal?

JC – Oh a beautiful one.

JR – Were they in a house or....

JC – They were in a house.

JR – So your unit had snuck up on the house?

JC – Yeah, we were clearing out both sides of the street.

JR – So you're clearing out the streets and you get to this house. You saw through the window or....

JC – We'll we could see into the windows, yes. But at a distance too, we had pretty good eyes. And if we had to use binoculars, we had binoculars.

JR – So you sent your scout and your scout gives them these instructions. So, what happens?

JC – Let's back up a little bit. He really wasn't the scout, I misspoke and said scout. He was just a member of the squad. But whenever I had to have any interpretation I was

lucky. I don't know how many staff sergeants; squad leaders had somebody in their squad that could speak German. And I figured he could do just as well as the Germans. So what happened was this. When I walked in – jeez they must have felt I was ten foot tall at 5 foot 1 they looked at me and said that little man – I directed a couple of my men to come in and marched them out to the outskirts of town. They always took the prisoners of war and put them inside of a linked fence and there were always a couple of our Americans and they kept them prisoners. From there on, that was their job. He didn't have to worry about them. But, this is the best part of the story. Then, our twelve men – we always had a couple men out front of the apartment, or the house, and two men in the back to make sure no one was going to come up on us. We went in; of course I had to switch these men out front and back to make sure they got something to eat. We had meat, potatoes, and we had some salad (in my language italia saliva). And then we had some little bit of wine. But, like I warned them, I said, “look, I want you to have a little of wine here, but don't make the same mistake that you made with the Cognac, back there.” I wanted to make sure they remember that. “Oh sergeant, don't worry about that we just had enough meat, potatoes, and so forth.” So then from there of course we left Bissendorf and we went on and I can get on with the other part of my itinerary here.

JR – Go ahead.

JC – Maybe, what is your name now?

Robert – Robert, sir.

JC – Robert?

Robert – Robert – Yes sir.

JC – Robert, we didn't really give you a chance to ask any questions.

Robert – I can wait sir.

JC – Ok, but I like, Jim, your questions. Because, when I came for this interview, I did not think that I was going to be asked so many great questions. You made my day really. Also, you made my interview much easier because I thought “oh well I'll just bring that over there and read it for the record,” but, it's working out beautifully.

JR – I'm enjoying myself, you know. How about you Robert?

Robert – Yes sir.

JR – We're enjoying this, so what happens next?

JC – Well I'll tell ya, after I'm gone, whoever picks up this tape and listens to it, I would speculate that they're going to enjoy the tape.

JR – As long as you tell Patty I did ok, then, that's all that matters. (Laughing)

JC – Ya? I'll definitely tell her that (laughing). I would never tell her anything else because you've done a very expert job as far as I'm concerned. Now....

JR – Thank you.

JC - .....continuing on, (reading). “On January 1<sup>st</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup>, just to repeat myself, the first 18 days were on the Saar River from Galsdword to Ricedworf inclusive.” For a long time, I want you to know that I wanted to get a map and find out where all these places are. And some day, if I get enough time, I'm going to do that. So the next time, maybe if I meet you, and you want to interview me, I'll have that map but I don't have it today. “January 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Fulcrin and on the road leading to Walsdworf, also at Furrough Herpscroft, Tondovan, Entondough, Bastindword Road, and Bastindword just across the river on the right flank. Here we cross the river in rubber boats – surprise. I've got to tell you this story, why it's a surprise. “Before we crossed the river.” – and we crossed twelve rivers. “We crossed more rivers than any army unit in the history of warfare.” And that is a fact. “In the darkness of early morning, January 18<sup>th</sup>, the second and third battalions began the (unclear) crossing.” Now my big job was I had to carry one of those pumps. We had these rubber boats that were deflated. So my big job was – I thought it was great – I had to pump up the rubber boats. With twelve men I actually always had to have two boats, with the oars. And as we crossed from one side of the river to the other; and best example of this would be when we crossed, for example, in Frankfort. I like to think of Frankfort in this crossing; from the west side to the east side. As we were going across all of a sudden a flare would go up. When a flare goes up, you can look up and you can see all of the lights blurring, more or less, up there. If you moved let's say I was moving my oar.

JR – So its night time?



JC – It was at night time.

JR – And your making an assault on the other shore and hoping not to be detected and suddenly, I take it the Germans had fired off a flare....

JC – That’s right.

JR - ....to see what was doing on. What goes through your head at that moment? When you realize they can see you.

JC – Well what goes through your head is that you don’t want to make a move, because, if you make a move, it’s shown on the silhouette of the sky. Let’s say I was ready to move my oar, and I did, then they would send in a bomb and blow us up. I really never had that bad experience. My men, well I always try to train my men well, and they were trained well, so they knew that when that thing went up, the flare went off, if a guy had his right hand here, or whatever, that’s where he remained. So, what we did, - I’m glad that I’m able to tell you this story about Frankfort. I always thought about Frankfort as a hotdog, something that we eat, but it was very far from that. – As we crossed; we had to go across this bridge, but before we did, I noticed a guy on a bicycle on the east side of this particular bridge. He was going this way we’ll say. While he was going this way, nothing happened in the way of any bombs or anything. But, then when he came back in the opposite direction, that’s when the bombs dropped in. So what did we learn from that? When this soldier was on the bicycle going this way and no bombs were dropped. I would say to my men the first chance I got “when this guy gets back here after all the bombing and he starts going in this direction, that’s when we start going across the bridge.” So as we were going to cross the bridge, this guy by name of Acker, his name was George Acker, he was a private and he had a BAR Rifle.

JR – Browning automatic rifle;

JC – Right.

Robert – 50 Caliber right?

JC – What’s that?

Robert – 50 Caliber

JC – Right 50 caliber. So you know a few more details. Anyway he passed me on the way, he actually beat me over the bridge and on the way by and he kind of laughed at me. Like saying “you know sergeant, you’re not very fast after all” and all I had was an M1 rifle. But anyway, on the way across the bridge just as we got to the east side, right in this – well I don’t know really what it was – kind of a little part of a bridge that had a root over it, we saw this gentlemen. He was a true gentleman, he was our captain, his name was Kuborack and he’s from Auburn, NY. I often thought about visiting, I’ve never done it, to see if I could find him or if his wife was still alive I’d like to speak to her. But he died, he was our captain. Naturally it was very sad, but you were taught never to stop because you are sad. You always taught to keep moving. If somebody died around you, you step over, but keep going. So when we got to the other end of the bridge, we of course actually continued on into battle. But I thought that in that battle, even though the Germans killed a lot of our men in that battle in Frankfort at least we had one up on them, by the way we out smarted them, when they were actually going to take us out before we went across the bridge. So that’s the story of that. Let’s see is there anything about that. I can’t think of anything else on that. But, at the bottom of this report, before I go on, I actually have said (read), submitted by John M. Canale. “Company F, second squad, second platoon, 10<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment, 5<sup>th</sup> division, 3<sup>rd</sup> army under General George Patton.” Whom we referred to as blood and guts. But I have a little story to tell you about General Patton. We had a little pun about him. Blood and guts - our blood and his guts.

JR – (Unclear)

JC – WE always brought that out. Of course we got a laugh out of that. But naturally, I never met him and certainly I would have never told him that, because I knew I would have been in deep trouble.

JR – Yea I think so.

JC – Very deep trouble. Then, I continue on at the top of this page. (reading)” River crossings and assault boats as scheduled. “ he word boats was misspelled as boots, but it should have been.... “River crossings and assault boats as scheduled. The Saar River was a division shore with a second battalion.” But here’s the good news that on January 19<sup>th</sup> that city of Bissendorf that I was talking about in the story of the meal that we got was taking on January 19<sup>th</sup>. Actually I like your question “How did you feel?” Very very happy.

JR – Now were you part of the units that were sent to relieve Bastogne?

JC – No, but, I'm glad you brought up Bastogne because have you actually interview Harold Blake yet in Fulton.

JR- No I I'm going to go see him after this.

JC – Let me tell you something, you're going to meet a grand gentleman. Just recently he's had two falls. I've been talking to him about a couple at Belgians that have written me. One guy – but I don't have an email so he's been emailing for me. But I think you'll enjoy him a great deal. He was at Bastogne, which is the turning point of the war in my opinion. You see, I could write a history book. Maybe somebody would say, "How do you know it's the turning point of the battle." I'll tell you why. When, and Harold will probably tell you the same story, the Germans in a sense, I hope I'm not being unchristian like, but they weren't very smart, in my opinion. When they fought for Bastogne, they fought by flanks. They would fight in the north flank and they would lose. They fought in the south flank and they lost. They fought on the east flank and they lost. They fought on the west flank against the Americans and they lost. Had they fought on all flanks and then circled the Americans at the same time we would've lost Bastogne, which was the turning point of the war and today we would be speaking German: "Achtung!" and I use that in class which means attention. If the students are not listening sometimes and I always try to know whether my students are paying attention. If I don't see the whites of their eyes I tell them, "If I don't see the whites of your eyes my dear students I know you're not paying attention. So I'll say "Achtung!"

Robert – I know Mr. Blake very well he's a lost brother of mine.

JC – He is?

Robert – Yes he is. Mr. Blake is one of the finest gentlemen.  
(Unknown chuckles)

JC – And when he interviews Harold Blake, I'm going to tell you something. Whenever we have our meetings of the Battle of the Bulge Association, which we have held at Bridie Manor for about ten years, we'd meet at Bridie Manor which is managed by Larry Lombardo, who was one of my students at (unclear) Park School. When I had trouble with discipline he'd help me. But anyway, - and I hope that Larry Lombardo calls you, incidentally I did call him to contact you.- So anyway, let's see where we're going to get

back to, Bastondworf was taken. Then I don't know whether you should have me read all of this, if you like.

JR – Well lets – we've gone on and hour now.

JC – Alright

JR – Were you guys aware when the Battle of the Bulge was over with?

JC – Oh definitely.

JR – How did you –

JC – I'll give you....

JR – Go ahead

JC – I'll give you a good example, some of the men that you're going to interview will tell you about the Ramagen Bridge. The Ramagen Bridge was put up by our engineers. We had to put up Pontoon Bridge to go from one side of the Rhine River, the west side, to the east side. Once we crossed that bridge, the Rhine River, we knew – all use the term – we were on easy street. Even though there is no east street, we knew we were really home. Then from there we went all the way through Germany and I ended up on the Czech – Austrian border. I figured about 10,000...

JR – Leonard Benatia was at the bridge.

JC – Right so he probably have you more details. But anyways, once we got across that bridge, I felt that we were on easy street and from there I ended up on the Czech-Austrian Border and I still remember the name of the village, Winterburg. (Spells out) And who's the first guy I saw in Winterburg? I saw this guy going up and down this rolly hill in a red roadster, jeez, we knew that the war was over on May 8<sup>th</sup> of 1945. The Germans had surrendered and on May 8<sup>th</sup> of 1945 we ended up on the Czech-Austrian border and the first guy I met was the mayor of Winterburg. So I ran over to him and I introduced myself.

JR – So he's in a red roadster. You guys are walking or in vehicles, or what?

JC – No, were actually walking at that time.

JR – So you see this red roadster coming toward you?

JC – Yup.

JR – So at this point are you aware that the Germans have surrendered?

JC – Oh yes, we were notified that the Germans had surrendered. I don't remember how we found out but we knew that the war was over. So, we were the happiest warriors in the world.

JR – So as this roadster pulls up, what happens?

JC – Alright as he pulled up I ran over to him. I was so happy that we had won the war. We had defeated the great Panzer division. Have you heard of the great Panzer division of Adolf Hitler?

They were supposed to destroy us. In fact I was talking to one of my best friends who was a chairman of the social studies department at the high school John Jay Haggerty. He had this report that the Germans thought that we were lazy Americans, that we wouldn't have the guts to fight them and they would destroy us. Guess what? We destroyed them. So when I saw the mayor of Winterburg I said, "Sir", - I kind of saluted him a little bit – I said, "Dear Sir, my name is John Canale, I'm a staff sergeant of these men here." I said, "What did you think about the fact that we defeated the great German Panzer division of Adolf Hitler?" He says, "You know sergeant, you made our day. We were so happy that the Americans defeated Adolf Hitler and Mussolini and Hirohito, because if you didn't, Adolf Hitler would have made the world into all white men and if you were a colored guy or whatever, a Jew, you would be destroyed." That's basically the conversation. So at that time, little did I know I was going to run for mayor of the city of Oswego in 1995. After I was in Ottoman for 20 years in the third run, of course I lost. In the results, I was third in the number of votes. But of course I only spend about \$5,000 of my money. The two guys that I ran against spent \$100,000 but to make a long story short, this is the way I did it. I took the results put them upside down, now I'm number one. The city of Oswego were the losers. The students of this school district were the winners. I always tell the kids this story. How lucky I am to be back with you. Had I won as the mayor, my wife was very happy that I lost because I probably would have moved a bunk in down there at city hall. I can still see myself down there.

JR – So what was your feeling when you heard that the Germans were surrendering? Prior to the news, what had you been seeing that tipped you off that things were going well.

JC – Well I'm not going to get into all of these days here, but as I start off with you the beginning of January through – I've documented up to about March 30 – let's go to March 30. (reading) "Frankfort was first about to be cleared, April proved to be the earliest month of all, until we ended up on the Czech-Austrian border of Winterburg when the Germans surrendered in Rees, France, on May 7, 1945 at 2:40pm." May 8<sup>th</sup> became what we call VE Day, victory in Europe. So the answer to your question is that between the time that we crossed the Rhine, even before, we were quite content that we were winning the war.

JR – What were you seeing that was convincing you that you were winning the war?

JC – Because we were moving so fast on the ground.

JR – Once you guys pierced through the German defensive and began moving in to the heartland of Germany what was the great Wehrmacht doing?

JC – They were destroyed and I'll tell you what happened. I can still see them. They got on tanks and they were running away from us. Some of them didn't move fast enough so in my opinion as I recall, hundreds and hundreds of prisoners. We of course, as I told you before, what they do with those prisoners. They actually walk them off to a certain area and they incarcerate them there. But no, they were so devastated – and don't forget the main highway there. I'm trying to think of the name of the highway. Maybe –

JR – Autobahn

JC – The Autobahn. On the Autobahn vehicles could probably move upwards to 100mph or more. So these guys figured they didn't have any real vehicle except tanks. That's the best they could do. So naturally we caught up with them and took them prisoners. I wish you could've seen the look on their faces. They were happy soldiers that the war was over. They didn't look at us as lazy not having the fight in our bodies to defeat them. They saw us as warriors that knew how to fight and we were not lazy.

JR – As Germany's collapsing and their surrendering to you and then you find out that the country has surrendered and the war is over, or the war in Europe is over, what are you and your guys, what's going through your heads?

JC – We're very very happy. We knew that the war was over that now we'd be going home. What they did with us. – But what I was saying now, the way that we got to camp

Lucky Strike in Lehavre, the harbor, they put us on cattle cars. They were used for cattle and I wish you could have smelled some of the feces and the urine that was used on those cattle cars. Anyway, we had to ride on those cattle cars. I forget how many days it was between the time we left the Czech-Austrian border and we went back over much of the land we had traveled before and ended up in the Lehavre. But there is one story that I like to tell about Lehavre, that really makes me sick. When we were there, there were duds that we didn't know about. Unexploded bombs. Once in a while, a dud would go off and some of our men were killed. They never got home. I always think about those guys. Then from Lahavre, I can remember getting back – let's see in my notes here. Let's not even look at the notes. I can remember getting back to the United States of America and I went to different places like camp McClellan Alabama, a few other places. Finally, I was sent to Indianapolis, Indiana and that's where I was discharged in , Indianapolis, Indiana.