

**Mark Kishton (MK)**  
**Narrator**

**Wayne Clarke (I)**  
**Michael Russert (I)**  
**Interviewers**

**Interviewed on August 27, 2003**  
**Colonie, NY**

**I:** This is an interview at the Beltrone Living Center, Colonie, New York, the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, 2003, 2:45PM. The interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke. Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth?

**MK:** Mark Kishton, born in Youngstown, Ohio.

**I:** And when?

**MK:** September 7<sup>th</sup>, of course my record shows September 10<sup>th</sup>. I really was born September 7<sup>th</sup>, but I go by September 10. My social security and everything goes by the 10<sup>th</sup>. So, I'll say September 10, 1916.

**I:** What was your educational background before you went into service?

**MK:** I went to a school in Youngstown, Ohio, Chaney High School, and during the depression you see, I kept going to school but I staggered grades. Some of my grades were eleventh grade but then I quit to go to work to make money to eat because depression was depression and everybody was striving to live.

**I:** Do you remember where you were and what you remember your reaction was to Pearl Harbor?

**MK:** Oh, Pearl Harbor, I didn't pay much attention to military goings on. Not in those days, I was younger, you know. I didn't pay too much attention to it. I paid more attention to my life and my livelihood.

**I:** Were you drafted or did you enlist?

**MK:** I was drafted.

**I:** Where were you inducted?

**MK:** I was inducted in Fort Hayes, Columbus, Ohio.

**I:** And where did you go for basic?

**MK:** Fort McClellan, Alabama and they nicknamed it the Alcatraz of the South.

**I:** Why was that?

**MK:** Well, things were pretty rough there; the drill sergeants were rough.

**I:** Did you have mostly southern drill sergeants?

**MK:** I think so.

**I:** How did you get along with them, being a northerner?

**MK:** I had no problems with them.

**I:** So that's where you stayed for all of your basic training?

**MK:** It was in Fort McClellan, Alabama.

**I:** And you went in the service when?

**MK:** Dates, you know are too hazy for me. I think it was '41 or '42.

**I:** Did you receive any specialized training at all?

**MK:** None at all. But I spoke different languages, you see, and I thought perhaps I would get into the Intelligence Division.

**I:** What different languages did you speak?

**MK:** Ukrainian, Russian, Polish. I was fluent. I speak Ukrainian fluently and the others I can get along in.

**I:** So, you didn't go into Intelligence then?

**MK:** No, they discouraged me.

**I:** When did you go overseas?

**MK:** Well, basic training was 17 weeks and I came home for 10 days and I went to Camp Patrick Henry, the swamp. We stayed there for a week or two until the ship came, and from there we went right overseas.

**I:** Were you assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry right away or were you a replacement?

**MK:** No, I went from Patrick Henry, we went to over in Africa and we stayed on the dock for about four days waiting for a ship to come.

**I:** Did you go over in a convoy or a single ship?

**MK:** A single ship. The USS America. As a matter of fact, somebody, the word got around that there was a submarine following us, and the ship was going zig zag. It took us ten days to get to Africa.

**I:** What did you do – you just stayed on the ship while you were there?

**MK:** Yes, I stayed on the ship.

**I:** And then where did you go?

**MK:** From there, we went to Iran, disembarked, we sat on the dock for about four days, waiting for another ship to come pick us up. When that ship did come, we got on the ship and we went past Sicily and right to Naples, Italy. But we couldn't get to the dock in Naples because the Americans bombed ships, you know, and the ships were laying on their sides and we couldn't get to the dock. So, they put planks from one hull to another and we had to walk on those planks to get to the harbor. Then we stayed there for a while and then I got on an LST and they had ducks on the LST and we were loaded onto the ducks and we went straight to Anzio.

**I:** Were you in the first wave?

**MK:** No, I was in the second wave.

**I:** The second wave?

**MK:** On Anzio.

**I:** Could you tell us about your – that was your first combat?

**MK:** Well, that's when I started hearing the guns. Of course, we got to Anzio to the harbor and we were loaded on the ducks and the LST opened its big doors and the ducks came out and what happened after that is very hazy. I'm sure we got on the ducks; of that I'm sure. The ducks got onto the beach, you see, because all of us jumped off. We had those cargo nets and we tied them down. And as I came down, I was probably in the last of the boys that were going in, and as I was going, there was a dogfight, airplane, dogfighting, and one came right at me. I didn't know what the hell to do. It's a Messerschmitt, you see, and it had both of its guns on both sides and the machine guns were working you see. And I'm walking here and I see that son of a gun, and I said, "What the hell's he shooting at me for?" A single man, that's crazy. You don't shoot a single man and waste all that ammunition on a single person. If there was a group of people, yes, that's a different story. But not on a single person. I start running. There's a wall there so I start running toward the wall. Lucky thing I didn't jump into that wall because the guys, when they had to go, you see, that's where they went. But I backed off there and I went and I joined the group. This was later in the day, shoot daylight and I got up to the group and whoever was going to take us to our specific companies. "No, we can't take you now because it's too bright and the Germans are in the hills." You see the mountains there and they got those binoculars, Zeiss, like a binocular and they can see a fly and they weren't too far away. We penetrated about five miles. We were up here but they could see us anywhere we went. So, they said, "Well, we won't take you to the front now, because it's too dangerous. We'll take you, we'll put you in a spot and we'll keep you in storage for a couple of hours, and in the evening or in the morning we'll take you to the front. We'll take you to your respective company." So, they loaded us up on trucks and they took us towards the swamps.

**I:** Were you under fire at all during this whole time?

**MK:** Yes, you see those airplanes were dogfighting.

**I:** Did you have any 88s firing at you?

**MK:** Yes, yes, 88's, but the worst thing was the Messerschmitts with the machine guns. They put us on these trucks and they took us and we went past the house that Nero lived in. Nero played the violin...

**I:** Yes, yes,

**MK:** While Rome was burning. We went past it and we went to the swamps. Now, it was evening already and we got to the swamps and the sergeant said, "Well, okay, you guys find a spot where you can bed down and we'll call you when we're ready to go." This is the swamp! So, where are you going to find a spot to sleep in in a swamp? But anyhow, I found a clump and I laid down there; I laid down there for fifteen, twenty minutes and the sergeant said, "Okay guys, rack it up." Rack it up means get all your

stuff and get ready to go. So, we racked it up and started walking to put it back on the trucks and took it back to where we came from. And there, they call it where we were going, to the respective company that you're going to join. I was assigned to Company G, but we didn't go right away. We went to the night [unclear], well evening, and then we started walking to our companies. My company, the first sergeant was there. So, he told us what platoon we were going to and all that. I was assigned to the third platoon, but I didn't stay there very long because they needed a couple of guys at company headquarters. And I was an older person, you see. I'll tell you about that later. There was a colonel that told me – in one of my purple hearts, the colonel asked me, "How old are you?" I said, "I'm 27." He said, "What are you doing in the infantry?" I said, "I don't know but they put me here and I'm doing what I have to do." He said, "You don't belong here." I said, "Tell them that." I said, "Well, where should I go?" He said, "Well, you could have gone to the artillery or something like that where older people go. But not in infantry, not on the front lines." I said, "Well, I'm here and I'm doing what I have to do."

**I:** You must have been one of the oldest guys in the unit then.

**MK:** Well, yes some of the officers...

**I:** Outside of the officers?

**MK:** I was on the older edge. I was 27, but...

**I:** You were talking about being assigned to the headquarters company.

**MK:** Yeah, the headquarters company. I went to the headquarters company and the first sergeant, he said, "Okay, you guys dig here. Dig yourself a foxhole." I saw a foxhole that was partially dug. I said, "Well, I'll take that, its partially dug so that will help me out." So, I start digging there. By the way, I was one of the champion foxhole diggers. I had one of those shovels, [unclear] shovels, I had a pickmatic and I had an ax that I could shave with. I was digging the foxhole and I saw a big cartwheel, a big ox cartwheel not too far away from me. So, I dug myself a hole and I'm digging and now it started to rain. A very, very cold, cold rain. And I'm figuring, "Hey, hurry up, and hide yourself and get yourself covered over." And I started smoking then, too, because there were shells falling, you know, and I got nervous and I started a new habit, I started smoking. I said, "Well, let's get going, and you'll smoke and you'll cover yourself in the rain and it won't be on you." When I dug down about two foot, just enough to get below the level of ground, then I got that cartwheel and I put it all over and then I put a shelter half on top of that and then I put all the dirt on top of that and then I was crawling around. I got all the grass, you see, to camouflage it, I put the grass on it. There were no trees there because it was all flat, but whatever was there, like green stuff, I put it on there to camouflage that. Then I got in a smoke.

**I:** How long were you in Anzio?

**MK:** I was there for about four months from beginning to end. I came on Anzio right after they made the invasion. I was in back of the invading group and I wouldn't say that I was too far back. I was there with them, but in the rear part of them. When I got off the LST and I saw those airplanes shooting and, as an afterthought, I knew why they were shooting. They had the ammunition dumps there you see. But some idiot put a hospital right alongside the ammunition dump. What they were doing, they were

shooting for the ammunition dump, but they were hitting the hospital too. There were female nurses that had Purple Hearts too because of that. Then later on, they dug down deeper for the hospital to get the patients below ground level but that didn't do much because they could shoot at us any time they wanted to. And they could hit us too.

Then I got to my foxhole and I [unclear] and the first sergeant came back again and he said, "Come here, you guys, you, you, you, you," four of us, and he put us in front of the CP, to guard the CP. He was thinking of himself. This was even before the night was over and he put us out there and said, "Start digging here." So, I start digging and the first sergeant said, "Were any of you guys salt water corporals or salt water sergeants?" and nobody answered. Nobody volunteered. Everybody kept quiet. You learned that in basic training, you see, never volunteer for nothing. So, nobody said nothing. Well, he came and he said, "You're a sergeant." I said, "I don't want to be a sergeant." Well, he said, "You're a sergeant." And he walked away. So, I said, "So, be it." But I kept digging because I wanted to smoke again and I didn't dig a long-slit trench, I dug a round hole because it would be a smaller target, you see. I dug right straight down, it was about eighteen inches in diameter and then I dug [unclear]. It took me about two hours to dig it, but I dug it. Once I dug it, I covered myself with my raincoat and I was smoking cigarettes. Then about an hour or two later, the sergeant says, "Okay, you guys come on out, go back to your old hole." So, I went back to my old hole, but I kept digging, I dug it deeper. The rain was very cold. It didn't snow there but the rain was very cold. And when I left the States, they issued us summer uniforms. We're here and the rain is cold and everything's cold and we've got summer clothes, so you froze. Anyhow, he put us back in the old hole and I'm digging, digging, digging, you know. As we were coming to the front to our company area, you see, we were all issued gas masks and another thing, we had those canvas spats. That's the first thing that went. You could tell which way we went; you'd see spats and gas masks discarded. Nobody wanted to use them. They're not going to use gas. So, they threw the gas masks – too heavy. But I used my container for future use. The container that the gas mask came in, I kept that because that was – water couldn't get in. So, I kept that all the time. I made my hole deeper and deeper and better but now the water's getting in there and it's getting muddy and the water's coming through. So, I got out and patched it up really good so there wouldn't be no water leaking because I had to stay in there. And I dug myself a seat. I sat down and I smoked. But you can't sleep on the front lines, not with all those shells exploding or machine guns. And I was sitting in the foxhole and I heard those bullets. They're like an airplane sonic sound, when it hits the sonic barrier. A bullet does the same thing and it sounds like popcorn – bup, bup, bup. Every time I heard one of those, I was down...

**I:** So, after Anzio, where did you go?

**MK:** Then there was a break out to Rome. We got to Rome and my company stayed in the Carabinieri barracks. That's like the American FBI. They called them Carabinieri. We stayed there for three weeks, two or three weeks. The guys thought they were going to stay in a garrison in Rome. But it wasn't so. We stayed there for three weeks and they said, "Okay, you guys rack it up." They took us to a little village south of Rome and west of Naples for amphibious training. So, we had amphibious training there. The name of the village was Pizzoli, and we had amphibious training getting ready for southern France. So, we stayed there for about two to three weeks. One thing that happened in

Pizzoli -- our captain went back; he was from Tennessee; he graduated from the University of Tennessee. He was a young fella; he was only twenty-five years old. I could have been his father, but he was very smart, very good. They called him Cross Country Warthog, because he never stayed on a road. They had good roads [unclear] we always went cross country. We went to Pizzoli for amphibious training, and one day the sergeant said, "Fit your tent in a little pup tent. Fit your tent anywhere." So, I pushed my tent right here and some idiot came around and pitched a big tent right there for officers' mess. So, one day the sergeant came to me and said, "Did you ever do waiter's work?" I said, "Yeah, I was a maitre d'." And he said, "Well, how would you like to do this -- we're going to have a going away for the captain because he's going back for R&R to the States." I said, "Yeah, I can do it." But he said, "You have to do everything my way; I'm the boss." I said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." "You tell the cooks whatever you want; they have to listen to you." I said, "It's a good deal." I set up the tents; I set up the tables; I set up the dishes and the knives and forks and everything. Everything was perfect. I said, "When is the dinner?" He said, "Well, tonight." I said, "Good, let's get started." So, I told the cooks exactly what I wanted. He said, "Yeah, yeah, do it." I never did it before in my life. [Laughs] But I had an idea what it was all about because I used to play in an orchestra and I was around banquet halls, nightclubs and stuff like that. So, I knew how to do it. And I knew what a maitre d' did. So, I had an idea so I did it. I told the cooks, "Now, all you guys stay out of the tent. Don't come in the tent until I call you. We have to set the dishes up, the forks and knives and all the stuff." "Well, okay." "And when I call you, you guys come and you get the food and bring it in. But before that, I'll get all the officers and seat them down according to rank or what the first lieutenant or second lieutenant, you know, they take preference And the executive officers. The captain sits here at the head of the table. The executive officer sits over there, this guy sits over here, your first lieutenant sits here. I told everybody where they were supposed to sit. You come in and you sit down. And when we're going to bring the captain, I said, "I'll holler, 'Attention'". Everybody stands up, because that's the way they do that in the military, you know. When the ranking officer comes in, everybody stands at attention. So, all these officers were sitting around and I see bottles of whiskey, the best -- Canadian Club and Hennessey's -- they had a Hennessey, a type of whiskey

**I:** Scotch?

**MK:** Scotch [nods head], Hennessey scotch and Four Roses whiskey, the best on the tables. I got glasses by every one of them because we're going to have a toast, you see. Everything's all set, you know, and the dinner's ready, but I said "Don't come in until I call you." They said, "Okay." Everything was all set up. The captain came you know. I told the Captain, "You follow me into the dining room." So, I came to the door first and I hollered, "Attention". All the officers stood up. I said, "I'm presenting Hugh E. Wardler." I made the announcement. Everybody stood up. The captain came in, and he followed me. I pulled a chair up for him and he sat down and all the other officers sat down, too. Now, we have to have a toast. The executive officer, I told him to make the toast because I poured the whiskey for him, whatever they wanted, the Hennessey, the scotch, the whisky, or whatever. And they made the toast. He made a little speech -- he made a toast. Then the captain sat down first and then everybody else sat down. Then they started pouring the whiskey. Then I told the cook, "Now, we're going to start

eating.” I said, “Bring your plates in. The captain gets his plate first, the executive officer next, and then everybody else according to rank.” The sergeant was there and he was smiling like crazy. “You’re doing a good job,” he was telling me, “You’re doing a good job.” That’s why I’m a born maitre d’. They’re bullshitting then, talking, you know, they stayed there for a couple of hours. The booze was going down and I said, “What am I going to do with the rest of that booze?” He said, “Do whatever you want.” He said, “I don’t know, do whatever you want.” So, when the party was all over, I got the empty bottles. They weren’t empty but they were way down. They put their tent right next to mine. I said, “That’s all right.” I got the bottles and I put them right under the tent, my tent, so when this is all over, half the bottles were in my tent. I said, “Well, the sergeant said do what you want.” I took that for granted and I grabbed the booze and I poured... I mixed them all up and put it in one bottle and all the other guys were drinking it too, not only the officers but the GI’s, so everybody was getting a little nipsy. So then, the first sergeant came in and patted me on the back and said, “You did a good job.” I said, “Well I was a maitre d’.”

**I:** Were you in the invasion of southern France?

**MK:** I was in the invasion of southern France. That’s a different story. We got on an LCI – Landing Craft Infantry – and we got on it and we jumped the gun. I think we jumped the gun because we left port a little too early. Now what happened with the invasion – everybody was supposed to have a rendezvous. They were supposed to be offshore, maybe about -- I don’t know how many miles away off shore they were supposed to be, but they were supposed to be offshore. And, just for in round figures, I’d say maybe about ten miles offshore, you see. We waited and waited because our boat was a little early. We were close to the island of Corsica, so they dropped anchor there and a bunch of us got into a dinghy boat or whatever you call them, and we went to the beach in Corsica. We stayed there for about an hour and we came back. Got back on a ship and we stayed there for I don’t know for exactly how long, and the LCI was in the middle hole. I was in the middle of the ship and the first sergeant was up there. There was a stairway going up, steps going up, and the first sergeant was on the top of the steps and I was down below. We stayed there for a couple of hours waiting and waiting for somebody to blow the whistle. Then I heard the motors revved up. I said, “This is it. We’re going in now.” Everybody’s pointed toward the beach. All the ships probably collected themselves and everybody’s on standby and everybody’s ready to go. Well, I heard the diesel motors rev up. I said, “Yeah this is it, we’re heading out.” I’m standing there and the ship started going and when the ship started going, I heard all of this shooting. I heard these rockets and I didn’t know what the heck it was. I never saw, I didn’t know what a rocket was. So, I climbed up the steps and asked the first sergeant. I said, “Is that ours or theirs?” He said, “That’s ours.” I said, “What are they?” He said, “Those are...,” not rockets. I forget what you call them. Well, they’re the same as....

**I:** They’re like rockets with a lot of tubes that are fired together, yes.

**MK:** Yes. And it was going over like rain. I could see white streaks of like foggy and all and it was like rain. There was so much of it. I didn’t figure... Those Krauts don’t have a chance, there’s too much of it. Then the ship was revved up and we’re going and our boat, we hit the beach and our ship hit an octagon shaped mine. It was an octagon shaped mine, but these mines were all tied together, see, and the whole front of the LCI

was opened up like an orange peel and then the two sailors on either side – are you familiar with any of that?

**I:** Yes.

**MK:** The two sailors on either side, they're on the gangplank, you see, and when you hit the beach those two gangplanks come out and the sailor's there and he's got a bucket of sand or cement and he's got the rope. So, he jumps off when the boat stops. He jumps off of the gangplank and he runs out with the bucket of sand. He goes to the shore and then all the GI's when they jump into the water, they're supposed to grab hold of that rope and pull themselves to the shore. But I looked up and I was up there by the first sergeant already. I said, "Are we ready to go?" and he said, "Yeah, we're ready to go." I started following him and he jumped in the water. I jumped in after him. He said, "I can't swim." I said, "Neither can I." So, we're both in the same boat. I said, "I can't swim either." He said, "I lost my helmet." I said, "Don't worry about the helmet." I said, "There will be a lot of helmets on the beach; you can grab any of those helmets and put it on your head and keep going." He got to the beach. I said, "Grab ahold of the rope and pull yourself to the beach." So, he grabbed ahold; I pushed him and he grabbed ahold of the rope and he got himself to the beach and so did I. And, of course, the others were following us, you see. I was always in back of him. We got to the beach and now everybody said, "Get off the beach; don't sit on the beach; get off the beach." Because they have to be zeroed in. You have to get off the beach, so everybody's crawling to get off the beach. And I happened to be a rifle grenadier at the time. The sergeant said, "You're a rifle grenadier today." I said, "Okay, what does a rifle grenadier do?" He said, "Well you'll find out when you get there." So, I got the rifle, but I got the grenades and the grenades are heavy; a pack of grenades, four grade, and I had them tied on to the belt.

So, we got to the beach and somebody said, "Rifle grenadier upfront, rifle grenadier upfront." And that's me. I said, "Okay." Down, I went, because I crawled up. Everybody's crawling. I crawled up the beach. I said, "What do you want?" He said, "You see that swamp over there?" I said, "Yes. What about it?" He said, "Shoot around in that swamp." "And how in the hell am I going to do that?" "Just shoot, that's all." So, I got [unclear]. You don't use the M-1 with the rifle grenade. You use the old 03 and 06 World War I gun and you use the blank cartridges. There's no steel jacket; it's blank. I got that; it's in the gun already. He said, "Shoot around into that swamp." So, I got it and I fixed it up and I put the grenade on. And another thing about the grenade and the gun – the M1 rifle has a sight on the tip of the barrel, see, so you can't put a grenade on it. It's got to be an 03 or an 06 rifle so it will accept the grenade. I had that rifle you know and I put the grenade on it and I shot. There were seventeen prisoners came out of the swamp. They brought them and they were marching them down toward the rear. And I'm walking alongside of them. One of them swore at me in Ukrainian. I said, "What did you say?" He said, "I didn't say nothing." I said, "I understand what you said because I'm Ukrainian and I understand you. You better keep your damn mouth shut or somebody will put a bullet right in your head. Make you kneel down and you're dead. So, don't act so damn smart. Now you're going to the American side and they'll treat you right if you keep your mouth shut and you do what you have to do. Otherwise you're dead." "I didn't say nothing." "I understand what you said. 'Я позымію.' That means I



understand.” And I gave him a hit with the butt of the rifle. I hit his shins. I said, “Now keep quiet.” He said, “I didn’t say nothing.” I said, “You better not say anything.”

Then the sergeant gets ahold of me again. He gives me all the shit details. He said, “Come here. You’ve got to go down this highway.” I said, “For what?” He said, “You’ve got to go down that highway and contact the 45<sup>th</sup> infantry division. They’re on the right of us. They landed too, but on the right.” I said, “Okay, but...” He said, “I have confidence in you. You can go alone.” I said, “How about giving me another guy, me and another fellow go about it?” “No, no, no; you go, go.” So, I said, “Okay,” and I went.” Now I have a machine gun, a Thompson submachine gun and a carbine, an officer’s carbine. So, I went down the highway; I’m going all alone. I walked and walked. I must have walked a mile. And then I see it. A gang of people coming up the road. I said, “What in the hell is that?” So, I walked and the closer they came, it was FFF – French Freedom Fighters. They were walking down and there was one man in front of them. So, I’m walking too and I’ve got my machine gun. So, I’m walking and they’re coming. The closer they come, the more I recognize the man in front. It was a priest. He’s got a collar and everything, and he came right here and he said, “Êtes-vous américain?” and I said, “Oui, suis-je américain,” and, “Voici le drapeau américain.” [Points to flag on left shoulder]. I talked to him in French. And I said, “Here’s the American flag. I’m an American.” He said, “Well, we’ll be looking for you.” I said, “Well, I’m looking for you too. I’m looking for the American 45<sup>th</sup> division on the right.” He said, “We didn’t see nothing.” Then he came close to me and he had his hand open and he had a small gun. He had a small Spanish 25 pistol and he’s giving it to me. I said, “Why are you giving it to me?” I said, “You see I have a mitraillette. I have machine gun? Mitraillette. I have a machine gun and I have a carbine. I don’t need that, you keep it.” He said, “No, I’m a cleric. I’m a priest. I don’t handle that stuff.” I said, “Well, I don’t need it either. It’s too heavy for me.” But he gave me that pistol. It was very nice, right in my hand, and I put it in my pocket. The whole gang came up and they’re drinking [unclear]. [Unclear] is vodka, apple jack. Everybody’s drinking. “Have a beer, hey, come on [unclear – in French].” I said, “[unclear] not for me. I am a soldier and I don’t drink.” He said, “Come on, drink.” Everybody’s drinking.” I said, “No, no, no, I’ve got to go.” I asked the cleric, “Did you see any American soldiers over here?” He said, “No they must have landed somewhere else.” I explained to him in French, “I’m looking for the 45<sup>th</sup> infantry division.” He said, “No, I didn’t see them”. I said, “Okay, well if you didn’t see them, I’m going back.” So, I went back to where I came from and I’m looking for my company. There’s nobody there. And so, then there was one GI there and I said, “Where did G company go to?” “Oh, they got on trucks and they went.” Now I’m all alone here; what the hell am I going to do? “Which way did they go?” “They went up this road.” I said, “Okay, I’ll follow them.” They got on trucks and went. I said, “It’s going to be tough for me to catch up to them if they got on trucks, you know. They’re going fast; they’re not monkeying round with no stragglers or anything. They’re not marching; they’re motoring.” I said, “Well, it’ll take me a long time to catch up to them because I don’t have any transportation.” So, I [unclear] rides, they were trucks that were hauling ammunition from the boats to the tanks so I got one of them; I chiseled a ride with one of them. I finally caught up to them three days later and they had gone a hundred miles already. I finally caught up to G Company and I saw the first sergeant. He said, “Where were you?” I said, “Where did you leave me?” I said, “I was

exactly where you left me.” Then he threw that magic word at me, “Do you want to get court martialled?” I said, “Yeah, court martial me and send me back to the States and I’ll get out of this mess.” I said, “You sent me all alone here right down this road and then you take off. What am I supposed to do? You leave me all alone in the...” He said, “Get back to company headquarters and keep quiet.” And that’s it.

And then we got to a town by the name of Aix [spells Aix] and there was a big fight there. There was a sergeant that was liked by everybody in the company. His name was Emilio; he was killed. It was raining there. This was in France. It was raining there. He was killed right on the road. The sergeant... And he was laying in the road. The sergeant came and said, “Hey Kishton, do you want do something?” I said, “No.” He said, “Come on. Emilio’s laying in the road and somebody’s got to pick him up and put him in a jeep so they can take him away.” I said, “Well, you’ve got the GRO, grave registration.” I said, “That’s their job. Why the hell should I do that?” “Hey, come on, come on.” I said, “Okay sergeant, I’ll do it under one condition.” He said, “What’s that?” I said, “Get me a bottle of whiskey and some cigarettes and I’ll do it. And a new uniform. When I go there, I’m sure he’s going to be loaded with blood, blood is still going to be oozing out and I’ll get my uniform all bloodied up.” I said, “I want a new uniform and a bottle of whiskey. And, another guy because I can’t pick this guy up; he’s too heavy.” He said, “Okay.” They got the bottle of scotch; a bottle of Canadian Club. Me and the other kid, before we went to pick him up, we were drinking and we got boozed up a little. “Where’s the body?” Well, he’s laying right there in the gutter. So, we picked him up and threw him on a jeep. This guy, the machine gun must have got him you know. He was like a sieve. The blood was still leaking out. We picked him up and put him on the jeep. I went back to company headquarters and that was it. The sergeant said, “You did a good job. You did a good job.” I said, “Well, I had a little help with the bottle.”

**I:** So, you went through southern France. Where did you go from there?

**MK:** From Aix province, we started up the Rhone-Rhine Valley and we went to a town by the name of Montélimar. But before we hit Montélimar there was a stretch of highway. I don’t remember the name of it. It was too long ago and I don’t remember all those things. But it was a stretch of road and the German 19<sup>th</sup> army was retreating because they were losing ground and they were retreating. The air corps caught them and they bombed that end and they bombed the back end. Now, on either side of the highway there were ditches, you know, deep ditches and when they bombed the front end and the back end, the Germans couldn’t do anything, they couldn’t go forward; they couldn’t go backward either. But for eleven kilometers there was nothing but dead horses, burned out tanks, burned out trucks and trailers like we have in the United States, these trailers that farmers haul hay on – a four-wheel trailer – all of that was burned up on the highway. Dead horses... For eleven kilometers... The air force bombed the front end and back end and they strafed them and they kept strafing everything until they killed everything. While they were strafing, the third division was on both sides of the road, like in a shooting gallery, puff and that’s it. We destroyed the whole 19<sup>th</sup> army. The German 19<sup>th</sup> army. And we kept on going north. We traveled about 100 miles in one day.

**I:** So, you pushed them into Germany?

**MK:** Well, they were retreating and we fought at Montélimar and then we started heading for Nancy, France at Strasbourg because there was a lot of space there between Montélimar and Strasbourg, but there was an incident at Strasbourg that I can remember very good. We got to Strasbourg and we got close to the Rhine River. There's a bridge going across the Rhine River. Now the tank – the 756th tank battalion was assigned to the 30<sup>th</sup> regiment, you see. I was looking, the tank was standing right... There was railroad bridge there and there was the road. There was a German soldier that ran off this railroad bridge and was running down this road and the gunner on the tank, he hollered at him to, "Halt, halt, halt," but he didn't halt. So, this gunner got on the machine, a 50-caliber machine gun, brrrrrrrr. And he riddled him like a sieve. Then to make matters worse, the tank driver went right over his body. So, we asked the tank guy, "What the hell you shoot him for?"

My company went to Nancy, France. And the guys they had their pup tents you know, but I got to be a mail clerk. I wasn't the mail clerk – I was just helping the mail clerk, maybe because I was older, you see, they were going to give me an easier job. Then we stayed with those people about a week, a week and a half. The sergeant came back again and said, "Rack it up again." "What for?" "Well, we're going to hit the Krauts." Now they were preparing for crossing the Siegfried Line and they had training and they equipped all the tanks with bulldozer blades. Then we were going toward Frankfurt, Germany and then at some other little villages there, there was one village in particular where they had a sanitarium. It was a big hospital there. I'm trying to think what the name of it was. We played softball there. It was good resting spot for us. We were going towards that... There were 70,000 patients in that hospital, German patients. It was a sanitarium. When we got there, they kicked all the Germans out and the GIs used that as a hospital of their own. There was 70,000 people there.

Then they went across the Rhine River. That was a hellhole. The water was high. This was early winter. The water was high and they had pontoon boats and in one boat there was a priest. He was a Chinese priest, but he was a Catholic priest. He was Chinese, but he was a Catholic priest. He drowned. They got the tanks across finally and they went toward the Siegfried Line. They had the dragons[unclear] but with the bulldozer blades in the tanks, they got through there in two minutes. That didn't stop them one bit. As a matter of fact, there were some civilians... Now I'm learning to speak German. I still speak German pretty good, enough to talk with street people, and there were civilians that were laughing. I said, "Why are you laughing?" "Why am I laughing? It took us three months to build that. It took them three minutes to destroy it." But they got fighting all across the Siegfried Line. Then we headed for, going toward Nuremburg. And now the captain says, "Who speaks German?" I stuck my hand up. I couldn't speak German at all. "Do you speak German?" I said, "Yeah." We never had any fresh vegetables and stuff. The captain said, "Why don't you go and see if you can get some fresh vegetables from the people?" I said, "Sure." I said, "But you've got to give me some trading material. Otherwise, you're going to go to those people and take anything away from them for nothing. You give me some trading material and I'll go." He said, "Okay, what do you want?" I said, "Give me some cigarettes and soap and matches, something they can use, you know, every day." Matches were hard to get and soap was unheard of. So, he gave me that and I said, "You've got to give me your jeep, too because I'm not

walking.” He said, “Okay, here’s the jeep.” I said, “And the jeep driver.” I said, “He’s got to come with me.” “Okay.”

So, we’re going and I came to a... We/re going along this road and I’m looking for the farmhouse and I’m looking up and there’s an old woman. She’s crying. And I said, “Warum weinst du?” I said, “Why are you crying?” She said, “Ich habe mir den Fuß geschnitten.” She said, “I cut my foot.” I said, “Wie?” She said, “While I was working in the garden, I must have stepped on a piece of glass and cut my foot.” I said, “Das ist nicht gut.” She said, “No.” I said, “Why don’t you go to the doctor?” “[unclear] transport.” She said, “I can’t go because I don’t have no way to get there.” I said, “Would you come with me if I take you?” She said, “Ja.” I said, “Okay.” She was an old woman and not very heavy. So, I told the jeep driver, I said, “We’re going to take this woman to the doctor’s.” And I asked her, I said, “Where is the doctor?” She said, “Auf dieser Straße.” She said, “On this road.” I said, “Okay, I’ll take you to the doctor.” So, I picked her up and took her to the jeep. We took her to the doctor. We started going down this road. She said, “Ja, ja this way, this way.” I said, “Okay.” I see a gang of people there in front of the house. She said, “Ja, this is the platz.” This is the place. We got there and he stopped the jeep and I picked her up and I’m carrying her to the doctor’s office and there’s a lot of people. I said, “Achtung, achtung, get out of the way because this is an emergency.” And I carried the woman into the doctor’s office. She was an old lady and she reminded me of my mother. I carried her into the doctor’s office and when I came into the examination room, you know, everybody went on the side and the doctor came in. “What’s this?” I said, “The [unclear].” The doctor said, “What’s the matter?” I said, “She cut her foot.” She had rags all around her leg, but it was all swamped with blood. They got her right away and put her on the examination table and took care of her very quick. The doctor pushed everybody aside. This comes first.

**I:** I noticed that you’ve got a couple of Purple Hearts. Were you wounded prior to this part?

**MK:** I have seven of them.

**I:** Seven Purple Hearts? You were wounded seven times?

**MK:** No, I wasn’t wounded seven times, but I was in the hospital seven times.

**I:** So, you helped this woman out.

**MK:** And the doctor’s tending her very close and then the doctor called me into his private office. [Unclear] I said, “What do you want?” He said, “Come over here and sit down”. I sat down. He said, “Just a minute.” He went into his private locker and pulled out a bottle. He had a couple of glasses there and he gave me a shot of something that looked like Kahlua. I drank that and it tasted beautiful. I said, “How about the jeep driver?” He said, “Yeah, yeah.” The jeep driver came in. He gave him a couple of shots. Then the doctor said, “You’re a very good man, you’re a good soldier; you brought this lady in.” I said, “Well, she reminded me of my mother.” He said, “Das is gut.” The jeep driver came in and we’re all drinking. He said, “Here, take the bottle.” So, he gave me the whole bottle.

**I:** So, were you able to get vegetables for your...

**MK:** Yes, every place I went to. Of course, I just didn't take the vegetables. I said, "You give me the vegetables and I'll give you matches or I'll give you cigarettes," and the cigarettes they'll take and they'll sell them, you see because that's how they make it. There's something that I skipped on Anzio. Can I go back to that?

**I:** Sure.

**MK:** Okay, retroactive, we're going back to Anzio. I wanted to tell you about an incident that happened to me on Anzio. I had a bad tooth that was very bad. So, one day I went to the captain and I said, "I've got to go to the dentist." He said, "For what?" I said, "My tooth is bothering me and it's hurting like crazy." He said, "Well you don't have to go to no dentist. The dentist will come here." "Are you kidding?" He said, "Yeah, the dentist will come right to your foxhole and he'll fix your tooth up." And I said, "Okay. I can't do nothing about that." So, I'm lying in a foxhole one day and I hear somebody hollering, "Kishton, Kishton, Kishton." I said, "Yeah?" He said, "Do you have a bad tooth?" He said, "Well, I'm the doctor. I'll fix it up for you." I said "Okay, let's get started." So, he came right to my foxhole. There was another kid with him carrying something that looked like a portable [unclear] machine and that was the machine that made the drill go around. He was on that thing like a bicycle thing. He came and he said, "What tooth is it?" I said, "Right here." [Points to front tooth.] He said, "I'll take care of it right away." I said, "Okay." But the shells were falling. Artillery was falling and he said, "I'll take of that right away." He was right by my hole and the corporal had set up the [unclear], the machine for the drill. And the doctor said, "Which one is it?" I said, "This one right here. You see it, it's halfway gone." He said, "Okay open your mouth." He got that drill and started drilling me and he's drilling and drilling and drilling and it's beginning to hurt me, you know, and he's a captain. I said "Doctor, you're hurting me, you're torturing me. I know I got a bad tooth, but can't you use a little TLC? Let loose of that thing once in a while to give me a little breathing room. You must have hit a nerve and that hurts, that hurts worse than the bullets." He said, "This is the front line, I have to do it fast. This is the front line." I said, "I realize that. I've been on this front line two-three months already. I know that this is the front line. But you have to take and let this thing cool off a little bit. Don't just keep drilling with no end." He said, "Yeah, yeah, I'll take care of it. I'll do a little better now". But he went back again and the same thing, he kept drilling, drilling and he hit another nerve. And I was ready to jump through the ceiling. I said, "Doctor, take care, take it easy." He said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." He went back in and I grabbed his hand and I pulled his hand away. I said, "Let the damn thing go, I don't care about the tooth." I said, "Don't put that drill in my mouth again." He said, "Are you sure?" I said, "I'm damn sure." And I put my hand – I had a pistol – and I put my hand on my pistol. He said, "Oh, when you put it that way." I said, "That's exactly how I put it." I said, "Keep the hell away from me now. You're hurting me worse than the bullets." I said, "Don't touch me again." He said, "You sure?" I said, "Positive, get out of here." I said, "Get your stuff and get the hell, get away from me; don't touch me again." This was a captain that I was talking to. I shouldn't be talking to an officer like that, but he hurt me. "You're torturing me, you know." He said, "Well it's got to be done. This is the front line." I said, "Get out of here." So, he packed up and they both ran that way. And that's it. When I got to Germany, in Castle, Germany, this was a year or two later and I spoke good German then, and I asked the people and I said, "Is there a dentist around here somewhere?"

And they said, “Ja, ja, there’s one right up the street here.” I said, “Good, I’ll go pay him a visit.” But I’m jumping the gun, I’m going too far forward, but this is what happened in Castle, Germany. I went to this dentist. I said, “Are you a dentist?” He said, “I’m a dentist.” He said, “What do you want?” I said, “Look at my tooth. This tooth is no good and it’s hurting me.” He said, “I’ll repair it and I’ll fix it up.” I said, “What is it going to cost?” He said, “Nothing.” He said, “Only one thing. You’ve got to write a letter for me.” I said, “To who?” He said, “You’ve got to write a letter to my brother in Wisconsin.” I said, “I can’t do that.” He said, “Yeah.” I said, “Well, maybe I could. I’ll write a letter and tell him that you’re feeling fine, the war went through here and everything’s all right.” So that’s permissible. But I’m not allowed to disclose positions or anything. Because what happened in Castle, Germany, because the Germans with their B1s and B2s they bombarded Coventry in England, and they destroyed the city. So, in retaliation, the American and Canadian and English Air Force went over Castle for thirty-five minutes and they leveled it. There wasn’t a brick standing. There was a lot of people that went into their bomb shelters in their homes. They went into the bomb shelters because the airplanes were bombing and a lot of those people went into the bomb shelter and they never came out because the bombs they used [unclear] on those buildings. They were trapped in the bomb shelter. They couldn’t get out. From what I heard, there was 30,000 people got killed that way in Castle, Germany alone. I know that’s an exaggerated figure, but that’s what I heard.

**I:** How many Purple Hearts did you receive?

**MK:** Seven. Oh wait, I got everything. Could I go to my van? I have a history book. I talked to you about a history book, didn’t I?

**I:** Yes, I remember you talking about that.

**MK:** I have a history book and I have decorations that were given to me in Fort Polk, Louisiana. It will take me a minute to get them.

**I:** Why don’t you wait until the end of the tape and then we could make some copies?

**I:** Where were you wounded and when?

**MK:** Different. I don’t know the exact dates but there’s one that I hesitate to talk about, because there was a kid that was with me -- he was my buddy for the day -- he was like this, he got killed and I didn’t.

**I:** I see you got the Bronze Star, too. What did you get the Bronze Star for?

**MK:** Everybody in the Division got the Bronze Star.

**I:** Okay. Now you mentioned that you received four Bronze Stars, did you?

**MK:** I was a sergeant for eight hours, I told them to shove it.

**I:** But it says here you received four Bronze Stars or Battle Stars.

**MK:** Battle Stars. I got ten Battle Stars. I have a newspaper and the newspaper will show you... I got written in the newspaper, but it’s a ... I belong to the Third Infantry Division Society and they publish a whatchacallit every month and on that it tells you how many Battle Stars you got and I got ten of them.

**I:** So, you served through until December of '45?

**MK:** That's another story. December '45 what happened was we're in Castle, Germany, you see and I was in the mail room sorting out the mail and a sergeant came by and said, "Hey Kishton, you want to go home?" Now that's pretty stupid [laughs]. Who wouldn't want to go home? He said, "Well hurry up because there's a truck waiting for you." I said, "Okay." I got all my stuff and I threw it into my duffel bag and a truck is outside waiting. I got on a truck and they were taking us to Marseilles, France, because that's where the boat was going to be to take us home. I came home with the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. I came in with the, well I don't know I wasn't assigned to any outfit when I came [unclear] but coming home, I was assigned to the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and...

**I:** Did you go home with any of your friends that were...

**MK:** No, we got home by points, depended on how many points you had. I had 85 points. The sergeant said, "You want to go home?" I said, "Who wouldn't? I got 85 points already. I should have been home already." He said, "Hurry up the truck is waiting." So, I got on a truck. We went to an airport. They had C47s waiting for us. We got on a C47 and this pilot was going to make a shortcut so he was going over the Alps and this C47 was chugging along, chugging along – it must have been one of the older ones. I swear that when we were going over the Alps if I opened the door, I could hit the top of the mountain. That airplane just barely made it over the mountains. So, we finally get to Marseilles and there's a Repo Depot, they call it, replacement depot. So, I got into that replacement depot because I had a souvenir gun. Everybody had a souvenir and the word got around that you could take the souvenir home, but you couldn't take any ammunition home and you can't take a live gun. You have to take the pin, the firing pin, you've got to take that out and you could take it. I took my firing pin out. I had ammunition. [Unclear.] Then the word got around that you can't take ammunition on board the boat. You've got to get rid of it. Okay, there was a latrine there, you see, there was all rats running around the latrine. So, they toppled over the latrine. The rats scattered around. The guys with their guns, they were shooting off all the ammunition. They were shooting at the rats. They were having fun shooting at the rats. Finally, they got rid of all the ammunition. There's a lot of GIs that had little dogs. You're not allowed to take a dog on board either. They had these dogs and they got them drunk. They fed them whiskey. They had whiskey on a plate and the dog would lap up the whiskey and the dog would keep quiet. So, a lot of these guys, when they were going on board, they covered them over with [unclear], they had the dog right here [points to chest] and the dog kept quiet. They brought the dog from Europe to the United States.

**I:** When were you discharged?

**MK:** I was discharged in 1945, Indiantown Gap, PA. What happened, that's another story. What happened is we were at Fort Meade, MD and we were being processed and then they took us from Fort Meade, MD to Indiantown Gap, PA. We stayed there for about three or four days while they were processing all of our papers. Finally, they got through with that and one night, Christmas Eve, they said, "Okay guys, rack up, we're going to the railroad station." Okay, we went to the railroad station. I'm with the group. Now the train came, PA railroad, the train came and everybody got on the train and I was kind of the last one. So, I'm waiting to get on, and the conductor says, "That's all,

no more room. No more room.” “You must be kidding,” I said, “You know what day this is? I called my people from the Fort and I told them I was going to be home today. And today’s Christmas Eve.” I said, “I’ve got to be on that train.” He said, “No more room.” I said, “There’s got to be room for one. You get off and I get on.” And then I’m handling my gun. The gun was useless; it wouldn’t have done anything. But I had done like a John Wayne. He saw me fooling around with the gun. He said, “Oh, when you put it that way, yeah, there’s room.” So, he said, “Make room for this guy.” So, they put me on a train. I got on the train and they lifted me up. They picked me up and put me into the baggage rack and I stayed there until I got to Newcastle, PA. Then the conductor said, “Youngstown’s the next stop.” So, I came and I got off the train at Youngstown and I’m looking at the station and there’s nobody there. I told them I was coming home but there was nobody there. But then there was black taxi driver. He said, “Hey soldier, where are you going?” I said, “That’s a hell of a question. I’m going home.” He said, “Where do you live?” I said, “Not too far away from here.” He said, “You want to go home?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Come on, I’ll take you.” So, I told him where to go. He took me home and everybody’s sleeping. I said, “Where in the hell are they at?” And, oh, the black man said, “Yeah, there was a gang of people here but then they were waiting, waiting, waiting and then they went. And our train had a little trouble, you see, there was some disturbance on the road, something happened. My people were waiting, my wife, my in-laws, my mother, my father, everybody waiting, but I wasn’t coming so they figured something happened and they went back home. They went back home and the black man brought me to the house and I went and I knocked on the door and my mother-in-law came and she said, “Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, Christmas Eve.” Then my wife – we were married one year and I went in the service – then my wife came down, everybody, we were celebrating all night. But this guy told me, “No room”. “Room for one more,” I said, “You get off, I get on.” He saw me touching my gun. He said, “Oh, when you put it that way, yeah, there’s room.” I knew there would be room. I said, “Get off.” He said, “I can’t do that. I’m the conductor.” “Well, you find room for me or else.” That’s it. I got on.

**I:** Well thank you very much for your interview. Thank you.