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Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke
Interviewer**

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ACG: This map is in the book, my book over there, but this one's enlarged a little.

WC: Okay. All right, we're rolling again. Where did you go next?

ACG: Where are we? Orleans? [reads from his papers]

WC: Yes.

ACG: A minor battle anyway. And we kept going. Lots of little towns, lots of small towns we ran through. Sometimes we had to find a road or something that was not blown up or had big holes in it. Our next battle was at Troyes, T-R-O-Y-E-S. That was on the 25th of August. Then we headed east and north and captured a number of large cities without too much trouble. The Germans always left rear guards just to slow you up so their main forces could retreat without being wiped out. Now we were as far as Troyes on the 25th of August. We were still traveling. Some places the CCA [Combat Commands] and CCB were quite a ways apart. We ran into lots of battles. The Germans stopped here and there. So we had a battle in Luneville, L-U-N-E-V-I-L-L-E, and there was a battle in [unclear] and [unclear], Metz, [unclear], Robecq. In this area, once in a while we ran into troops. They were holding us up.

WC: Did your unit suffer a lot of casualties?

ACG: On top of that, we ran out of gas. Our fuel ran out and we were delayed. We just couldn't move without fuel. There were times we were sitting on a hillside siphoning gasoline out of one armored car so we could keep the radio going in our car, because you had to keep communication. We managed to keep the radios running. At that point, we reached the 7th of December. And then we stopped. Some infantry outfit was moving and attacking towards Germany. There were two infantry outfits that were moving in on Germany. The armored division pulled out. We pulled out for whatever, rest, gasoline,

that sort of thing. At that time, lots of... since it was the 1st of December, some of the enlisted men were becoming officers. Lots of training. It was now a change of month.

WC: What happened? Were a lot of the officers being killed off?

ACG: No, no, there were various pieces. Some of them were killed and some of them...like our executive officer, got transferred. He got a captain's commission from a first lieutenant and he became commander of the 2nd Troop. The commander had been...I don't know what happened to him. He might have advanced or he might have been killed. But we lost our officer that was riding in our car. Let's see, one, two, three enlisted men became commissioned, got their second lieutenant's job. And then they took over our platoons. They replaced the officers that were in the platoons. They got miscellaneous jobs. They replaced guys that had been killed or wounded. Three of them took over. We only had three line platoons, and they had new officers take over those platoons. The ones that were in the platoons took over other jobs. Two of them got back with us. One of them came back with us to replace our guy that had been riding with us. Sergeant Hodges [?] was a staff sergeant. He was in charge of one of the platoons and he broke down. He had been scheduled to become first sergeant. First sergeant was made Second Lieutenant. Two other ones, Herndon and I forgot his name, but anyway, three of them got commissions and took over our three platoons. Then we got one man in our car. One of the officers had to take over our...I forgot.

This was all happening and we were converting. We convinced our commander and officers that we should have a half-track as a command car and get rid of the two-car bit. It was wintertime and it was getting cold and the armored cars got cold. [laughs] We convinced him because the supply sergeant had a half-track. Fifteen people can ride the half-track. It was an infantry-type thing to carry infantrymen, with a half-track door in the back. We convinced him that it would make a good command car. Then you only needed one car. We had extra radios because our radio mechanics and our radio man, the guy who fixes our radios normally, and I can't think who everyone is. Whenever they ran into a knocked-out vehicle, they stripped it. The mechanics stripped it for stuff because you never got supplies or extra parts. They were delayed and delayed and delayed. So the radio mechanics and the radio men stripped down every knocked-out car they ran into. If the radios were any good, they took them. So we had a lot of extra radios. We convinced them to make the half-track the command car. Then we wouldn't have to have so many radios. We carried extra radio operators in the same car. Besides, it was a lot warmer because there was a top on the half-track. [laughs] This was all going on in the first part of December. We had two platoons on the line. They were keeping communication between two infantry divisions that were attacking into Germany. They were attacking

from an angle. These two platoons between them tried to protect it while the protection places were getting longer and longer. It came to the point where they couldn't talk to each other. There were guys in a hole trying to hold on between these two infantry divisions that were advancing into Germany and making a wider and wider area there in between them.

Hodges broke down. He was scheduled to become my first sergeant. Our first sergeant was normally back in division training all the time. We never saw the first sergeant at first unless a dinner came up to you. They made him a lieutenant, but I don't think he should have. And then two other guys, real good at it, who were platoon sergeants, got commissions. Now this all happened the first part of December. The first, second, third of December. When the information reached you. Of course, we had a good warm spot to take the half-track, but you got to put the radios in there. It took a little while. We knew how to do it because we knew where the bolts were that were designed to start with. They had the holes in the right place so you can clamp your radios in. We had extra radios. It took a little while. We made a command car out of it by putting two AM radios in the same area, plus two voice type things. We had a lot of communications we manufactured. Because we didn't have many people who were going on this half track. [laughs] And this was...oh, meanwhile, we got called out of the line. We got called back in these infantry outfits that evidently got stopped in their attack into Germany because there was an invasion. The Battle of the Bulge. The Germans were attacking at that time. Of course, our troops got pulled out because we were going to head in, we had to go a long way away. We were one hundred twenty miles away from Bastogne. A good one hundred twenty miles away, and a good number of our troops were in action. So they pulled all the troops out, and we headed towards Bastogne in the area that was being attacked. We had to get our troops lined up and personnel. We got pulled out of the line and we sat around for a night or two. We were CCA, we all went through, but CCB, Contact Command B, got on the road to the Ardennes, where Bastogne is. It must have been early in December anyway, or middle of December at this point.

WC: Then you followed them in?

ACG: We headed into the area of the Ardennes.

WC: What was that like there when you arrived?

ACG: We just...oh, I know I am not helping here. Anyway, we took a day or two to get arranged. The 1st Combat Command, CCB, went first on the road to Bastogne. And then we got on after the CCB. After that was the CCR, which was the reserve. So we didn't get on until well after dark of December. [struggles to recall, counts off days] On December

21st, we got on the road and headed for the Ardennes. All overnight. All night we traveled one road. The whole division there. Of course, we had now had a half-track. [laughs] We no longer had our armored cars. We had a half-track and a couple radio operators to help us.

WC: Now what happened once you reached the Ardennes?

ACG: We got into Luxembourg. We traveled all night. We're not traveling very fast. Because there's only one road and it was dark when we hit it and there were no lights on any car and it was just plain dark. You could tell it was the road you were on because the road was dark and the fields were covered with snow. So you stayed in the dark spots. [laughs] You were only traveling maybe five, six, eight miles an hour. Our driver got tired. He was beat after a couple hours of driving, so I took over the driving of the half-track. The most I ever drove the half-track was once in a while I went up to the motor park in Pine Camp and moved a car so I could use the radio someplace else. I never got it out of second gear. Then I got a job in the middle of the night to drive this half-track because our driver was tired. After four hours, I would say he was beat. So I drove the half-track. I probably drove forty miles in four hours. I was following a six-by-six truck which was good. It didn't have lights on, but things you could see if you got close enough.

WC: Right, the blackout lights.

ACG: If you got close enough, you could see them. But I was driving a half-track, and the half-track is not a real speedy vehicle, especially when you can't shift. You got to really double shift like a truck. Got all kinds of things down in there where you disconnect your track and your front-wheel drive and track on the rear. Driving a track was like driving a truck with your emergency brakes on all the time. So I was going maybe at the most ten miles an hour most of the time. [laughs] And that truck ahead of me would take off, and then by the time I got the darn half-track going at any speed, all of a sudden that truck would show ahead of me. Of course, we were driving dark. It was dark. No such thing as a light in the distance or anything like that. I don't know how far I went. I was getting and going. If I ever got ten miles an hour, it was probably going pretty fast for me. We got into Luxembourg City on the 21st. There was a bar room and all of us in our headquarters company went in and bunked in the house. They had a one lane bowling center. So the guys went to sleep in the bowling alley, foot to foot, you know. It was warm there. This must have been the 21st of December. Then in the morning, we separated. The next night, we slept across the street. We took over a part of a house. Then that was the 22nd. Then on the morning of the 23rd. No, I lost it. Well, anyway, I lost my time here. As we moved, we still weren't sure what was going on. We

knew there was a battle going on because we were going this way and all these people were going the other way. At this point, we were traveling spread out, combat thing. And all these people were coming the other direction, walking, riding, anything they could ride. [laughs] But anyway, that must have been the 22nd. [struggles to recall].

We ran into somebody...oh no, we were riding with radio silence. We rode with radio silence for all this time. Most of the time we rode with radio silence. That means when you followed your guys up front, you had to be able to see them. So every time you got to a wooded section, the command car had to close up so it could see the guys ahead of them. This must be the 22nd. We ran into a river of some sort. The bridge was out. We were in a slightly wet area, so we were pretty close to our guys ahead of us. We saw the troops ahead of us. If they gave us a signal, we ran up and talked to them. Of course, I had to go to the bathroom all the time. You were always sick. But anyway, I had to go. I was dismounted for the moment. While I was gone, they lifted the radio silence because...oh no, wait, they didn't lift it until while I was having my movement, a rifle shot went through and I didn't pay any attention to it because somebody dropped his gun. But then something big came through and I had to hurry a little and move around behind the tree. Those were the opening shots of the battle to relieve Bastogne. We pulled out. We didn't have any problems because by the time I got back to the half-track, I was only a few feet away from it. Silence had been lifted and we opened our radio so we didn't have to be so close to the front. We pulled back with the half-track and the rest of our headquarters to the corner with a bar room and a couple of houses and stuff like that and settled in there. We got in a house where it was warm at times. Of course, the radio operators had to operate outside during things. They had to operate in the half-track, and even though it had a cover on it, it was still cold. No heaters in these things. But those were the opening shots of the battle to relieve Bastogne. They didn't shoot at me, but those were the shots.

WC: What happened next?

ACG: It was the 22nd. My timing in here might be____

WC: That's all right. We don't need the exact dates. You relieve them at Bastogne.

ACG: The German troops were around Bastogne. We were in contact with the troops, but they were back in the woods on the other side of the river. We had gone back to an occupied area. It was not a town, it was just a crossroads to the bar room and a few houses and stuff, where I went and the rest of us. We operated through the 22nd. The other CCB ran into problems too. They couldn't get across the river. And somewhere in there they committed the CCR, the vehicles that were in reserve. Some of them were

beaten up. But they activated the CCR and started another front to try to find a way to get across that river and into the Germans. By now the Germans had surrounded the town. This was the 23rd. We were running into the 24th, which is Christmas Eve. It was Christmas Eve and my radio broke down. And you had to keep the communication. I opened it up and tried to change tubes and I couldn't find out what was wrong with the darn thing. But we had an armored car with a radio that was supposed to have been tuned up. That was part of the deal, you know. In case you lost one, you got another car with the radio tuned up because you had to keep changing them once a month. If you lost a vehicle with a radio, they had to change all the frequencies. Everybody changed frequencies if the vehicle with the radio was captured.

It was Christmas Eve and my radio was [broken] and I couldn't get that fixed. Our repairman had been working so hard, I didn't want to work with him. So I shifted over to the armored car. It was only maybe from here to across the street. The armored car was supposed to have their radio all tuned up to the higher headquarters. I got in that thing and it hadn't been tuned. And it was quite a set. You had to open the whole front of it. You tuned the receiver easily enough, you just had to dial. But to tune up the transmitter, you had to take the whole front of the [unclear] 34.23 off and you got to shift some little clips around the coil to tune the thing. Then you had to put the front back on. And in that armored car, it was not easy. Anyway, the thing hadn't been tuned. Whoever was supposed to tune it, hadn't tuned it up. Of course, I was the communications sergeant. I got the communications sergeant's job in the shakeup. Because our communications sergeant made the first sergeant's and then I moved into the communications sergeant's job. It took me a while. It just took a while. You had to start the motor. You had to keep the motor running because you were using lots of power. You had to start the darn thing to keep the battery charged up. I finally got it tuned up and going. I went on the air to let them know that I was back in and that I was the communications sergeant. I went back on the air and called all stations. Then what did I do? Oh, I had to wait. Nobody had an article. You could send O's and that was urgent. If you sent a bunch of X's, you got the air regardless. Anybody else that was on the air got off if you sent a bunch of Xs. That meant enemy contact. An O meant urgent. So nobody on the air started. Obviously, enemy contact meant you got the air. Nobody else had it. I sent O's and took over the air. Of course, it was Christmas Eve. [laughs] I was all tuned up. I sent O's, urgent, urgent. An A-S meant wait on your code. I sent O's, urgent, wait, wait. My watch, of course I didn't know whether it was right or not, said twenty four hundred hours. Merry Christmas, I said, was my urgent message. [laughs] Of course, the other operator picked it up. Of course, I let them. I ended with an X, and they answered. They answered me, Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas. [laughs] I sent this Merry Christmas to higher

headquarters. Then all night long, the rest of the other guys wished each other Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas. [laughs]

WC: What happened after Christmas?

ACG: All the operators throughout that area were just wishing people a Merry Christmas. At twenty four hundred hours, Christmas Eve.

WC: After Christmas, what happened?

ACG: Well, by Christmas they were still battling. CCI resumed. CCA and CCB were still stopped, they couldn't move. CCI broke through. CCI found a way to get across the river. They attacked some Germans that were around. There were evidently relatively few at that particular point. This was the 26th of December.

WC: Okay.

ACG: The CCI broke through and made contact with the troops that were surrounded in Bastogne. They were holding Bastogne down. This was contact from the outside, from the south. So that was the break, then the cars crossed. We spread out and held the road that the CCR had set up. They have a picture of that road. The only opening was that one road going into Bastogne. They defended that one road with tanks and infantrymen dug in all along the road just to hold them. Trucks rode that road, brought supplies into Bastogne, brought the help, and brought the guys that were wounded out.

WC: And they asked them to surrender and they refused, right?

ACG: Yeah, but the battle went on for quite a while. The Germans took over a long while before they decided to...but Bastogne had been saved and had enough ammunition. Of course, then the weather cleared and they could fly. Up until this time, it was cloudy. The aircraft couldn't fly. The Germans flew, but the Americans didn't fly. One airplane from Germany came over and dropped a bomb once in a while.

WC: Where did you go after Bastogne?

ACG: [struggles to recall] Bastogne was broken. They were pushing out of it. The Germans were being pushed back. We were part of the... the whole Army was pushing, not just trying to push out of Bastogne. Eventually they just pushed the Germans back into Germany. It took quite a while. We pulled out. We got the Germans back. Of course, there were other people. The First Army was pushing. A lot of pushing. Got to push back. We pulled out, well, a week and a half later, maybe___

WC: So you're probably into January at that point?

ACG: The 3rd or 4th of January. We were pulled out and went into a rest area. Actually, we pulled out and no longer fought. It was not our battle anymore. We pulled back into... we were still in Luxembourg, just outside of Luxembourg City. We went into, I don't know, a rest area I suppose. It wasn't a long period.

WC: And then where did you go next?

ACG: We stayed there for about a week. And of course, you know, got fixed up. We were beat up here and there and got ready to move. We pulled away from anywhere near Bastogne. That was done. We headed into Germany, well, towards... At times we were just in Luxembourg. You had Belgium in there too. Eventually we reached the German border. It was only a couple days after.

WC: What kind of reception did you receive in Germany? Were the civilians friendly towards you?

ACG: No, the civilians were not glad to see us. I mean, they were fighting the war. It varied. No, I mean the German people were evidently still backing their troops. Anyone you ran into.

WC: Did you guys have problems with snipers firing at you?

ACG: No. I got something. [looks through his notes] You asked me. I lost track of where we are.

WC: You said you crossed the border into Germany.

ACG: [sorts through papers looking for something] Oh yeah, now Luxembourg. Not much, we were just moving, moving. Well, the 12th of January from maybe the 23rd of January. Minor attacks, but we were moving fairly fast.

WC: Whereabouts in Germany were you, do you recall?

ACG: We went through Rittersburg, Bitburg, Kyllburg, Dahn, Mayen, [unclear]. How about Koblenz? Oh, that was where we hit. We hit Koblenz on the 8th of March. There was a river there. Oh, we were on the Rhine.

WC: At that point, had you passed any concentration camps or anything?

ACG: Yeah, we did later. After we crossed the Rhine.

WC: Now, did you liberate any POW camps with Americans?

ACG: I got pictures of them. You know, there had been talk about these concentration camps, but nobody had ever seen one. We were the first ones to see Ohrdruf. Ohrdruf

was the first. It was a carryover from some other one [Buchenwald] that had too many victims. [?] 51.58 [directs question to someone off camera] You got the pictures of the concentration camp?

Gaeth's son: Yeah, there's only a couple. They're pretty gruesome. There are two separate pictures.

ACG: Ohrdruf was the first one that people really saw. As far as the Americans or British [unclear] 52.31 The Russians ran into them.

WC: Were you involved in the liberation of Dachau?

ACG: I forgot. [looks through his papers]

Gaeth's son: I don't believe so.

WC: Ok.

ACG: Okay. Oh, come on, you got lots of them.

Gaeth's son: Not of Dachau though. These are of Ohrdruf.

WC: If he can hold those up if you like, and I can zoom in on them.

Gaeth's son: You want to show them these pictures, Dad? There's only two.

WC: If you just hold them up in front of you, I can zoom in on them. Did you take these pictures yourself?

ACG: [shows photographs] These are two separate pictures.

WC: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt? Do you remember that? That was a little before the war. I think that was in April when Roosevelt died. Do you recall that at all?

Gaeth's son: Dad, do you remember where you were when President Roosevelt died?

ACG: No, not really. No, I don't. I think it was a night I can't remember at all, really. Didn't pay any attention to it.

WC: I think you said you were up till March. You were looking at your sheet. I think you were up to March of 1945. You were in Germany. What was the name of that concentration camp?

Gaeth's son: Ohrdruf. O-H-R

WC: While you were on the move, did you ever capture any German soldiers or have any of them surrender to you?

ACG: No, I don't recall. I never reached a point where I had any contact with German prisoners? Other than the ones I had in [unclear]. 56.55

WC: Did you ever encounter the Russians at all?

ACG: Yeah, we ran into Russians when the war ended. We were in Czechoslovakia. We got to Pisek, Czechoslovakia when the war ended and we stopped there. I had a lot of issues with German prisoners after the war was over. Well, thousands and thousands and thousands of them came through at Pisek, Czechoslovakia. I got a picture in the book of the thousands of prisoners at Pisek.

WC: What was your impression of the Russians?

ACG: Oh, the Russians were really friendly. We had no problems with the Russians. Except that they wanted to take the German prisoners. The German prisoners thought they were safe if they came through our lines. These were occupation troops in Czechoslovakia and other parts. All the Russians were fine people. I had no problem, no question with them. We got stopped. We were getting close to where the Russians were. This was earlier on, the war was still on. They stopped us and wouldn't let us...they didn't want Patton to cross the...oh, I forgot the river's name.

WC: I think it was the Elbe River, wasn't it?

ACG: Yeah, the Elbe. They wouldn't let us go up to the Elbe and across. They didn't want the Americans. So they sent the Third Army down south towards Czechoslovakia because they didn't stop. If they had left Patton alone, he would have crossed the Elbe. That was the reason they stopped us and they let the First Army take over then. And they, of course, stayed on the side and let the [unclear] 59.46 do the crossing. Patton would have crossed. But instead, they sent us...we were leading Patton's Army at that time. They pulled us out and sent us down to Pisek.

Tape skip

ACG: ...we are back in April. [looks at his certificate]

WC: Did you want to talk about that at all? I mean, it's up to you.

ACG: Yeah. Here is the Certificate of Merit in April. I was a private. Do you want these or I can hold it from here.

WC: Yeah, let me zoom in on that. What did you receive that for? It says, in recognition of conspicuously meritorious and outstanding performance of military duty.

ACG: That's the only time I was a private. I got busted the first part of April. I'm trying to think of what I did to get busted. The war was going. Our company commander had a tendency to drink. He was pretty good before the war, but during time there he began to drink a little bit. The driver and myself and the other... there was a contact going on. We were close enough, one hundred or two hundred yards, we used voice. The company commander was out in a jeep somewhere and he was yelling. He was complaining because he had run into some Germans that were holding him someplace. He was complaining why there were Germans there. [laughs] We actually hadn't reached that. The Army hadn't reached that point yet. We had contact with our platoon and we were talking to them. [gestures holding a telephone] Just picked it up and did your talking. I knew I was going to have to re-tune my radios. DeFalco [?], my assistant, when I was still a...oh, I had to be a sergeant, but that doesn't matter. I just took the T [?] 1.03.21 off. We couldn't contact [unclear] 1.03.22 because he was holding his microphone down. His microphone was closed and nobody could operate or talk. If you held the microphone button down. Well, when we got a chance to go out there and talk to somebody, he was out there complaining because some Germans were down there. He ran into some Germans. [laughs] He went out in the Jeep. The platoons were reporting to us that they did such and such a thing and we weren't keeping contact with them. But the company commander was out in the jeep and he kept there. Well, DeFalco gave him a hard time. I was using proper procedures to try to quiet him. But anyway, when he came back, he complained and he called me up. We were in a German house and he was up there to go to bed. He decided he wanted to sleep. We were in a German town. He just went up to bed. Well, he called me up there. He sent his aide. He had a driver who also took care of bedding and stuff. He called me up there and he busted me. He busted me at that point. This was the first part of April, maybe the third, fourth of April. He busted me down to the rank of private. He called me up there and said I was busted. When I went back down, the driver, and our other radio operator got mad. They went up and they talked to him and complained because I had been busted, so he busted both of them. [laughs] But then within two days, I got shifted back to the radio operator in the mechanic's armored car. They shifted him over to my place, gave him my job, gave him my command. I was head of communications at the time.

WC: Did you get your rank back?

ACG: I went back to the mechanic's car. I just got the job there. Of course, we were all close together at this point. They had a liaison guy, O'Driscoll [?]. He was liaison since the beginning of our landings. Things you couldn't send by radio, you had to have somebody come carry the information.

WC: Right, like a courier.

ACG: You got to keep in contact with them and then he gives the code. The liaison got in trouble. He had to go to the hospital and then we had to replace him. They needed a replacement, but they didn't have a replacement who could read a map. I had just been busted, so I became the liaison. [laughs] O'Driscoll had to go to the hospital. He had been involved with some girl and he had to go to the hospital, so I was liaison. I replaced him. They gave me a driver who outranked me. [laughs] After I got back to the CCA headquarters, the guy complained to me because I didn't have my stripes on. I didn't have my stripes on because I had been busted. He didn't really know what to do? They wouldn't let me sleep with the noncommissioned people who had stripes and stuff. I had to sleep with the drivers. The next day, the first day I was over, they had a meeting. They had to wait for me because the drivers were down the street. They had to wait for me to show up.

WC: To give the briefing?

ACG: Because I was with the reconnaissance outfit, you had to gather instructions for him first because he was the first one to move out. I thought it was funny. [laughs] All these guys sitting around, captains and first lieutenants. They had people down there who were staff sergeants and I had no stripes at all.

WC: Did they give you your sergeant stripes back?

ACG: I got two. This was April. I got this thing here in April. This has the April date on it. So, as of April, I stayed down. Then I got the first month, which was May. And of course, the war ended then. I got a T/5.

WC: So the T/5 was a sergeant?

ACG: No, T/5 would be a corporal rating, corporal pay. Then I got a T/4 back the next month, but then that was May. The war ended May 8th, so I got a T/4. When the war ended, I was a T/4. I picked up my T/4 on the 1st of May.

WC: What was it like when the war ended? Was there a lot of celebration?

ACG: No. Not for us, as far as where we were. We were in Pisek, which is practically on the German border. We got an area to occupy. We went on as occupying troops. So there was no communication. These were German prisoners.

WC: Was there any talk about sending you to the Pacific?

ACG: Not us. The 4th Armored was scheduled to be troops to...what do you say... constable?

WC: Occupation, you mean?

ACG: Yeah, yeah. The 4th Armored was disbanded and became the occupation troops. They disbanded the 4th Armored while they were still in Germany. Because we shifted with enough time for discharge.

WC: Yeah, you must have had a lot of points, didn't you?

ACG: Yeah, I had. I shifted to the 9th Armored. The 9th Armored was scheduled to go back to the States and be broken up.

WC: When did you go back to the States?

ACG: Well, the war ended. They were discharging people in the States. So I didn't go back until— well, I was transferred to the 9th Armored. And when the 9th Armored went...of course the 4th was not going back. They stayed as occupation troops. But of course they called them constables, I guess. Well, I went back to...oh, I forgot.

WC: Did they send you to Fort Dix to be discharged?

ACG: No, I went with the 9th Armored. When they went back, of course I went back too. I ended up at Fort Dix. We landed down in Virginia and then there was a trek. We took the train to wherever. My destination was Fort Dix. Other guys went to other places.

WC: Were you discharged before the war ended in Japan or after that?

ACG: The war with Japan was over. That was the reason that they were discharging troops in the United States. The war was over in Japan.

WC: Do you remember when you got discharged?

ACG: If I can find it. [looks through his papers]

WC: That should be it there.

ACG: The 25th of October 1945. I started on the 14th of May 1941.

WC: Once you were discharged, did you make use of the GI Bill? Did you go to school, or did you buy a home on the GI Bill?

ACG: No. Oh no. I worked in a factory before. I worked in Remington Rand before I went to war. I took a railway mail clerk's examination in 1936. I took that, and that was still around. So when I came out, out of the Army, I went to work for Allan Herschell in North Carolina, an amusement outfit, because Remington Rand wouldn't pay me what they were paying me when I went to war, which was fifty cents an hour. [laughs] Allan

Herschell offered me a dollar. So I went to work for them. I worked for them for a very short time. Then I got a notice from the government on my railway mail service. They had filled a number of the jobs on the railway mail service.

WC: Was that Railway Express?

ACG: There was a McCormick bill thing that gave anybody that was passed up his job. So I went to work in the Railway Mail Service. And not only that, I got a jump in pay. You got back your rating, whatever they hired, you jumped him. Anybody who had a lower score, you got ahead of him, the guy you beat. So I went to work for the Railroad Mail Service within two months after I got out.

WC: How long did you work for them?

ACG: From then on, I worked until 1972.

WC: You say railway mail service. Was that the same as the Railway Express?

ACG: No. This was strictly a postal job. That was strictly the postal office.

WC: Oh, I see. Okay.

ACG: It replaced the Pony Express. You mentioned that in the beginning, the Railway Mail Service replaced the Pony Express. Because they sorted mail on the train. It was entirely by itself. It didn't belong. Of course, it took them out of business.

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WC: Did you join any veterans organizations like the VFW?

ACG: I joined the American Legion. I pay my dues and I go sometimes.

WC: Did you stay in contact with anybody you were in the service with?

ACG: I had very, very little with Walter Neace. I contacted letters and I just... I don't know, people went out and got married. Actually, I really didn't keep track for any length of time. Now, some of the guys I kept contact with for, oh maybe three or four years. But that would be it. You just wonder. Nobody local was in the outfit with me.

WC: Did you ever attend any reunions from the unit? Do you know if they had any reunions?

ACG: Shortly after the war, we had a few reunions. We had one in Watertown. The division was discharged from Europe. I mean, the 4th Armored Division no longer existed after the war was over. So I kept letters with a couple of fellows, but that's about it.

WC: You've got some photographs. Do you want to hold some of those up and explain when and where they were taken? Your son has got some photos set aside.

Gaeth's son: You want to show them these, Dad? I can get more.

ACG: They can't pick them up.

WC: Well, you can hold them up one at a time.

Gaeth's son: Wanna start with that one. That's an early one.

ACG: In order?

WC: No, I mean, whatever you'd like to hold up is fine.

ACG: You just want them like that? [shows photograph of himself and his wife]

WC: Yeah. Hold them up for a few seconds so I can zoom in on them. Is that you and your wife in that photo?

ACG: I think so. I didn't look?

WC: Turn it around and look at it.

ACG: Yeah, that's Emily. That's on Easter Sunday 1943. Oh, I didn't tell you. When I was in the desert. I had a lot of things in the desert happen. And this was____

WC: You can put that down.

ACG: It was Easter Sunday in 1943.

WC: Whereabouts was that, do you recall? Was that over in Europe or in the States?

ACG: Well, definitely in the States.[shows photograph of two soldiers and tents in a desert] They have a tent up there.

WC: Okay, you can drop that down.

Gaeth's son: Is that at Pine Camp?

WC: It looks like it could have been out in the desert somewhere.

ACG: This is Pine Camp. One of those Sundays that I spent away from Tonawanda.

WC: Well, that's a nice one. Do you know where that was taken or when?

ACG: [shows photograph of himself and his wife dressed up] That was my second day in the Army. That's the girl I married.

WC: Okay.

ACG: This is Pine Camp, winter of 1941-1942. [shows photograph of himself in an Army coat]

WC: Is that a captured German flag?

ACG: [shows photograph of four soldiers holding up a swastika flag] That's somewhere in Germany. That's a half-track behind there that I rode in for quite a while. They are Hammond [?], [unclear]. 1.24.15 You don't want the names. DeFalco, the other radio operator.

WC: Whereabouts was that taken, do you recall?

ACG: [shows photograph of himself in olive drab uniform sitting on the ground] That was 1943 in the California desert.

WC: You can put it down.

ACG: [shows photograph of two soldiers on rock formations] This is the making of *Sahara*, [film]. Even though it may look like the desert here.

Gaeth's son: That's Humphrey Bogart standing up there.

WC: That's a bigger version of that other one. That's nice.

ACG: [shows photograph of himself in an Army coat] That was the first winter in Pine Camp, 1942.

Gaeth's son: I don't know if you can get in close enough on that one.

WC: Yeah, I should be able to.

Gaeth's son: That's liberating a town in Czechoslovakia. Says liberating Strakonice.

ACG: Oh, can you focus in? [shows photograph of a city scene]

WC: Yes. Just hold it up right in front of you and I can zoom right in on it.

ACG: Strakonice, Czechoslovakia. That's about ten miles out of Pisek.

WC: Okay, you got any others there?

ACG: A couple days before the war.

Gaeth's son: There's a lot of them. I didn't have anything else showing my father.

WC: All right. Okay, well thank you very much. Oh, was there anything else you wanted to add or ask?

Gaeth's son: Anything else you want to add, Dad?

ACG: I don't know. My award here is in April, when I was a private.

Gaeth's son: It was just unfortunate timing.

ACG: I don't know. [reads certificate]

WC: All right, well, thank you very much for your interview, sir.

ACG: I hope. I can't remember things.

Gaeth's son: You did pretty good. You did very well actually.

WC: Yes, you did an excellent job.