

**Frank J. Forcinella
Veteran**

**Mike Russert
Interviewer**

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New York State Military Museum
Saratoga Springs, New York**

Q: Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth, please?

FF: Frank J. Forcinella. Date of birth was February 11, 1925. I was born in Rensselaer, New York.

Q: What was your educational background prior to going into service?

FF: I got drafted out of high school. I was in Fourth Year High. That's where I was. My birthday was in February and I got the notice a month or two later that I would have to be inducted into the service. It came in May. I had to go into service in May.

Q: Did you get to finish high school?

FF: No. I didn't graduate until fifty years later. [unclear] 1.06 High school was the last year I was in. We had a couple more months to go. I was called into service at that particular time.

Q: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

FF: I was listening to Jack Benny on the radio. No television then. The radio was upstairs. Jack Benny happened to be on when they announced it. I didn't realize then. I think I was in the second year of high school at that time. We had a good study of that when we went to school. That's where I was. It broke into the Jack Benny program. That is the part I remember.

Q: So you were drafted?

FF: I was drafted.

Q: Where did you go for your basic training?

FF: Down to Kentucky. The Kentucky, Tennessee border. I think today it is Camp Campbell. It used to be Fort Campbell. That's where we went. We started our

basic training there. I was with the 20th Armored Corp. We learned all about the tanks and the trucks. We learned how to drive. I started driving up here on this land. This was all farm land. I drove the truck. I was about fourteen years old. I used to come up here; my cousin lived across the street down below. We had a job here working on Saturdays. He told me how to drive the truck. You didn't need a license unless you were on the road. That was my first thing. But then when I went into service I realized after that I wanted to be the driver. But by asking for it, you knew you wouldn't get it. But it was the next best thing; learning how to do the tanks. They were definitely different at driving. They had the arm things going. It was very interesting. I couldn't drive the trucks until later on. And then we got into everything that pertained to the armored forces.

Q: How long was your basic training?

FF: It was about a year. I was eighteen. I used to hear, at that time they didn't send people over unless you were over eighteen. The minute I turned eighteen they had the plans of the D-Day operation and we...they busted us apart and we became replacements. To fill in. That's where we were. We were learning about infantry treatment and they also taught us about hedgerows at the beginning.

Q: When did you go over to England? You went to England?

FF: Yes, to England. From there, we went on an English ship that took about seventeen days with a zig zag course.

Q: Was it a convoy or a single ship?

FF: There was a little bit of protection; it was a little bit of a convoy. But they had to go back and forth and it took us seventeen days. I remember that. The first week, we were so sick it wasn't funny. You threw up and you thought about killing yourself. I did not realize that seasickness was that bad. You reached for the railings and you were always throwing up. And you can't eat anything. One of the things that I will tell you. We had mutton and spaghetti for breakfast in the morning. That was an English ship. We didn't realize it was eating like that. We never ate like that. Most of us were sick. Whether they lost anybody on this boat, I don't know. They might have. There were so many, we didn't keep track. Only of each other if we were close by. It was very interesting. After seven days, we were alright. We swung around England and went to Liverpool. We landed in Liverpool.

Q: Do you remember what date that was?

FF: No, I don't.

Q: This was before D-Day, you said.

FF: Yes, it was before D-Day. Because on D-day, we were in England. We had to go over there and join the crowd after they took over the whole front. They had room for us because we were going to be replacements. They almost knew they would need as many as they could. We didn't replace anybody on D-Day until they had other replacements. Because they were infantrymen and we were tankers. At that time, it was almost all infantry work. There were no tanks. When General Patton came, that's when we changed our ways. You had to be with the tankers, be an infantry. It was done like that. Whatever they needed.

Q: So you were under Patton?

FF: General Patton. We joined him in July. We were on D-Day. After D-Day, we landed there.

Q: So you landed on D-Day itself?

FF: No, not on D-Day. It was D plus six or eight. I got the exact time. The bodies were still in the water and all that. A lot of those people, when they landed on flat boats, they actually drowned more than got shot because they had the packs on and all that. If they didn't put the boat in enough, which they couldn't because of concrete, whatever, and they wanted to get back out. So a lot of the people lost their life by drowning in the beginning. Their bodies were still there when we went. We landed on Omaha beach; got to carry a lot of that in. The only story I can remember there is I thought Omaha beach was a big mountain. But when we had our fiftieth anniversary, we were there. Then we were there on the sixtieth anniversary, but we were there with the family at that time. But when we had the 50th, we saw that. A lot of people were there around the D-Day anniversary. I think it was the fiftieth but it wasn't the exact day. We all looked at it and actually it was just a hill. I thought about it, and I know the reason why. The reason why was we were carrying these things, packs and everything else, all loaded up. We had to carry our things in because that was our life. Living with this twenty-four hours a day. Camping, tents, whatever.

Q: Did you go in as a replacement on that day?

FF: All of us.

Q: Were you assigned to a unit before you got in?

FF: No, they wanted us to train a little bit more on the hedgerows and it seemed like they had other replacements, too. They must have landed right after D-Day,

maybe day one or day two. There were a bunch of them waiting, and then we were waiting. They wanted us to get a little more training. [They] knew that we came out of the armored corps. Actually, there weren't too many replacements for that. Not there. Later on [they came]. That's the only thing I can figure out what happened there? I don't know. They were waiting for D-Day, actually, for us to change, and then we changed.

Q: When you went in on D-Day plus six, where did you go?

FF: Omaha beach. Up top where they took the land. And there I remember us getting the training. They wanted us to get a little more training. And they kept us there. They kept us there for two, three weeks, stuff like that.

Q: Could you hear the front? Could you hear the action?

FF: No, not actually. No, not too much, because at that time, I think it was [D-Day plus] six or eight, I don't know which one. The shelling was over at that time. But they did have the boats all coming in with supplies with all the balloons on them...

Q: What kind of boat did you go in on? Landing craft or an LST?

FF: LST from England. They brought us in on that. That was a rough ride because the ocean was pretty rough there. I can imagine D-Day. What a job they had. They actually brought us right in. We didn't get wet or nothing, and we had to take all these packs out. It was raining, cloudy. I don't remember the sun ever being out there. Not at all.

Q: When were you finally assigned to a unit? Approximately?

FF: I don't know. We were going into the St. Lo area. That's where General Patton...it was in July. We were assigned probably in June. I don't know. I didn't hear about it. But all of a sudden we were with the 3rd Army, and that was with Patton's group. We joined the 5th Infantry Division. They were looking for a lot of people. They had a battle somewhere in France there. That's the outfit we joined right there.

Q: So you stayed as infantry? You never went back into armor?

FF: No.

Q: Even with your training?

FF: But I asked to drive. I figured this out, that was a mistake. Army-way or your-way. There is not a your-way. [They asked] You drive? [I answered] Yeah.

[They said] No, this is the army-way. So that's how I learned about volunteering for anything after that. You can't say you know something you do, they ain't going to change it.

Q: Did you ever have any encounters with Patton himself or ever see him?

FF: No. I saw Patton from a group where he was talking to a group of people, congratulating people. We got through about three-quarters of France, where we're aiming for Metz with the 5th Infantry. And that's when I saw him, he had the pistols. One of his generals. I got a story about that. Anyway, one of his generals. We were walking on the French roads, hedge hopping, they called the hedgerows. They were dangerous because they were so big and stuff like that. The Germans always had the corners covered. And then towards the middle, we knew this, too, as we were training, but still it was rough. I met a general there. Of course, he was way back, and he said, where are you going? I was leading that because I was One Scout. You have two scouts. For a while, I was One Scout. [The general said] Number One, where are you going, soldier? I said, I really don't know. [General said] What do you mean, you don't know? [I said] I don't know. They're the same. We're going here, we're going there, and that is it. [General said] We'll see about that. [I said] Do whatever you want. [laughs] So, what else can you say? I learned that lesson, too.

Q: When were you first in combat?

FF: I can't remember the exact day. It was in July when we made the breakthrough.

Q: Early July, mid-July.

FF: Very early July. Very early. When Patton joined, it was very early. That's when we got our experiences. I had to tell you about that first day in combat, not knowing too much about combat at the time, except what we were supposed to do or what was expected that we might get. One of the things I learned there was, you got to pay attention to orders. Well, we had a young fella. We were all trained together, so we all knew each other. The first day in combat, we were going into the woods. It was close to dusk, and it was sort of getting dark. They told us to build some foxholes. Building the foxholes was all right. Except for one guy, a young guy. I was eighteen myself, but going on nineteen, and he was like I was. He got shot right in the head with a sniper because he had a cigarette. They said no cigarettes, no lights. Naturally, he couldn't wait. See, that's what smoking does. Of course, that taught me another thing. You learned with these experiences. Bad as they were, there were good things that came out of it. One of

them was smoking. They used to throw us cigarettes every two days, like, two cartons. Especially when you're on a combat line. Especially when you're in combat. I tried it but [motions throwing it away]. I didn't go for it. So what we had to do is switch. You probably heard the story with the guys with the chocolate who didn't smoke. You heard it, and that's what I did. Here you go. Cartons at a time.

Q: So you traded?

FF: Yes, we traded. They used to give us, like, two cartons every other day if they could reach us. Okay, something like that. But I didn't smoke. After what I saw, I wouldn't smoke anyway. I didn't care for it. There was more to it than I [just not] wanting to do it [smoke].

Q: Do you ever use cigarettes to trade with the people in France or anywhere?

FF: The cigarette. No. The reason. We never really got to give them the cigarettes. I did give them chocolates, because they traded for cigarettes, we did hand that over. I never got a chance to trade cigarettes. Well, I didn't have them anyway. I got rid of them the minute I got them. That was part of the deal there. But there were a lot of things you learned in combat. It's a rough sport.

Q: Now, what kind of weapon did you carry? The M1?

FF: M1. Yeah. We learned on the M1. After the year was up, they concentrated on us to be that. So that's what we learned. Eight weeks. I think we had eight weeks there. June, July there. A couple in England and then we had that.

MF: How much time were you in combat consecutively?

FF: Kentucky and Tennessee. Fort Campbell. I was there for almost a year. I went in service in May, the end of May, and then we were leaving there. Somewhere between May and that middle part there, all our division was broken up, and we became replacements.

Q: How much time were you in combat from the time you went in around St. Lo?

FF: St. Lo was our first breakthrough.

Q: How long were you in consecutive days in combat?

FF: Before we met General Patton, you mean?

Q: No, when you joined him. How long were you in combat?

FF: We joined him right there, in the St. Lo area, and that was the beginning of the breakthrough. They were standing still at that time. France was just like an island.

Q: What was it like fighting in the hedgerows?

FF: The hedgerows were right around the farmland, and they're all trees and stuff like that. It was hard to get in and out of them. They were actually little hills, not like you see here. Right. And it was tough going in, tough going out. But it was a safety thing, too, because they couldn't see you. So there were benefits from it. But you had to know where they were. And they had to know where we were. But when you're on the offense, actually, you got one strike against you because you got to go, they don't. That was always a puzzle to me. I'll tell you a story about that one later about what happens. We're still in France.

Q: Well, talk about your reaction going through France.

FF: The hedgerows were the beginning. That was the beginning. At that time when we joined that fighting part of it, a lot of France, that whole section, was already cleared up a little bit as far as our troops were concerned. They were on the way to continue going; that was the idea. But then they had that line where it stayed, the St. Lo breakthrough, they called it. That's where they hung up for a while, and that's where our action really started there. From there on. That was when they bombed. That was the most planes I've ever seen. It was like three thousand [planes] bombing. We had mess kits. It was around lunchtime when they came. We had mess kits. They popped up and they gave us some food with mess kits. Bounced all over the place like thunder. Quite an experience that was. That stayed for about a few hours. A few hours with planes in and out. A lot of them. We never saw so many. In our division we lost our general there and a few other officers. So that taught you another lesson. No matter who you are...

Q: Did you have a lot of replacement officers?

FF: No, they were officers for the 5th division, our division. They lost other officers, other divisions, but we lost ours. A couple of them right there, a couple of main ones. So from there, that was our takeoff point. From there we continued through France. And our first action was actually on this side of Paris. Though I shouldn't say. We aren't too far in yet. But there was a good experience for teaching what goes on in real combat. And they had artillery going at that time and we had ours going too. In France, you have to deal with going in and getting shot or not getting shot and stuff like that.

I want to tell you about this line that we had. It always amazed me how the emperor came in line across. It always amazed me because when we learned our machine gun training one of the worst things to have would be a clean sweep with a machine gun. To have that benefit of shooting that end to this end, right to the middle. I don't know. To me, I was [still] learning anyway. I was just out of school. So naturally I was in the learning phases. Wasn't that I had nothing home or anything else, but it always amazed me about that point. I wonder why we had to go across this way when the machine gun was there. You didn't have much of a chance. Now it didn't occur to me. The reason why I like to mention it is because two soldiers of mine that were doing this got killed. One got killed in the head, named [unclear]19.52.

This other fella, a small fella, got hit in the neck. The guy on this side, the guy on the other side got hit in the head. What happened to me was I couldn't hear anything for about two weeks. All I heard was that they fell. I didn't fall. So I knew that I must be all right. What happened there was that we were in this line. That bothered me more. I don't see how we should be doing that.

Q: Was it spread out?

FF: Yeah, we're spread out, but not that much. You're close to each other. A foot or two. To me it didn't make sense. That's like answer for suicide to me. That's one of the things that I said. I didn't think we should be doing that. In fact, I brought it up in some of the training classes that we had. But we didn't have much training after that. The training was there. That combat gives you the training of how you survive. And how you survive; I don't know how we survived. There's only one fellow left that I was in service with and he's in Massachusetts and he happens to have cancer now. I talk to him once in a while. I send him some of my books here that I have, 5th Division reunions, all that and he enjoys them. He's the only one left that I knew out of the company itself. That's the only one that I can say.

Q: You mentioned in the form you sent in that basically every day you were just wet. And your feet were wet all the time.

FF: Yes, most of the time.

Q: Did you have extra socks?

FF: They gave us some extra socks once in a while when they could get there. A lot of things they just couldn't reach. It was a muddy time. Whatever. Trucks got stuck and tanks were always stuck. Stuff like that. Whenever they could get there. That's why you got the jeep. Used to run pretty well. Yeah, they gave us new

socks, but the shoes were still wet. Your feet were always cold. I haven't got to the Battle of Bulge yet. That's where the extreme cold weather was. So we're heading towards Metz. Metz was a city that was occupied by fortresses around it, I think they had seven or eight. But we finally got there. We went through a few cities in France, but the big one happened to be Metz. You couldn't take that. That was never taken by any army at any time. Metz, M-E-T-Z. We went in there. They were telling us what to do and everything else. I should tell you that we lost some of our other people as we went towards Metz. Replacements came in but we never... we got right back to where you were. Like, if you had twelve squad, squad itself, you had ten, maybe eight, maybe as low as five. Because when we moved like that, the replacements didn't change that quickly. You had to wait to get back. By the time you got back...

Q: So you were always undermanned? Your unit was always undermanned?

FF: Mostly. Undermanned? Yes. Always undermanned. Because you lose them either to injury or stuff like that. Coming back to it, we saw them once in a while only when we came back off the front lines. Once you're on the front lines, you never go back unless for rest or something like that. That's one of the things. That's what made it a twenty-four hour day every day. In fact, combat is so rough that I mentioned this in another interview. [unclear] 23.35 A guy told me, you told a big story there. I said, the only reason why I said it was, I've never heard it all the time. If these people that start these wars could only spend about twenty-four hours on the line, they would change their views drastically.

One of the things that happened, the reason why you said that is because the shells were going all the time, the sound is terrific. You couldn't sleep or stuff like that. You thought you could, but what you really did was doze off. You know, dozed off standing up. I couldn't believe a guy could doze off standing up at the rifle. Doze off. That's all you could do. That was the only type of sleep you could get. You're sleeping on the ground. You know what I mean? Unless you took the houses of the cities, then you're inside and outside. But most of the time it's outside, foxholes. In the woods, you felt kind of safe. The only thing that bothered most of the people was because if they had artillery or mortar, what happened was the trees came down, the limbs and everything else. You run to them, stuff like that. We were in a foxhole once. I will tell you a story about that one. Next to us, the tree landed right on them and they got killed. But we were on the branch part of it but had a heck of a job trying to get out. We had a defensive line at that time that was close to Germany. You could get killed either way, artillery and everything else. But how you escape this, it's hard to say. Even today I couldn't even tell you. In fact, I never talked about the war anyway. My sons, wife, they

never knew really what I was in. And then I realized when I went to the fiftieth anniversary, veterans talk to veterans. From then you get the story. They understand what you're talking about. If you start talking about something that happened like us now for you fellows, because you're in on it, you do know, you guys know exactly what's going on. Because if you hear these stories, you can't help it. So you hear these stories about it, the veterans themselves. Then I found out that most veterans do not talk about it. They don't want to talk about it. I was in that position myself only because I had to get it out of my mind. What happened to me was when General Patton wanted us to see the Holocaust, a lot of the prisoners were all bones and stuff like that, of which we had to save here and there. But the Holocaust was something that was way, way unbelievable. We never heard about it. In fact, it was towards the end of the war, we knew something about it. We saw these big trenches with lime in them, and we didn't know what they were. Well, they were taken off. They must have been prisoners. They thought it was prisoners. It wasn't. It was kids and women and all that. That was the hardest thing to take when you see it. Needless death to us. We weren't brought up that way.

Q: I know we're getting ahead, but how many camps did you liberate?

FF: We liberated a couple of camps. The Holocaust one we did not. Somebody else ahead of us [did]. One before that we did, but it was empty. They ran and stuff like that. One of the camps we liberated was outside of Frankfurt, Germany. It was a women's camp. That's what it was. And what they were doing. Because you probably heard this super race. You probably heard this super race, they used to call them. And what they were doing to the woman was they had blondes and blue eyes, and the men had to be the same way. I don't know if they should have been blonde. But the woman that we saw, they were in each cell in Frankfurt, outside. We had to watch that until somebody could relieve us. Because when we were on the front lines, you had to wait and see that it was clear for people to come. Well, at that particular time in that prison, I think we called it a prison. But call it what you may.

Q: Were they German women?

FF: No, they were anybody. But most of them were German, yes. They were talking German, so I assumed that. But they didn't all look German, but I couldn't tell. We couldn't talk. We couldn't speak the language. We were waiting for Margaret Bourke-White. I think that's her name now. Life magazine. Do you remember her?

Q: The photographer, the reporter.

FF: We were waiting for her before we could go, leave her for somebody else. Because she wanted to report what was going on there. That was a big thing. It was a brick building with brick walls around it. But when we opened the doors, we were the first there, I guess. Nobody else was ahead of us, so we knew we were the first, but we didn't know exactly what it was. As we opened the doors, the girls in there all screamed like heck because they were told that we were going to kill them. They had a lot of propaganda. They believed everything they were told. That's the only thing that came out of it. But that was no good to see because they were scared to death of us. And we did learn German, [unclear] 29.08, stuff like that, a couple of things. But it didn't do any good and they didn't believe us anyway. Because propaganda actually, after a while, you believe it. That's what happened there. They were so long in propaganda, they didn't know anything different. So that was one of the ones. But the Holocaust one was interesting only because I brought my family over. I got to tell you about this because not too many people know. The sixtieth anniversary. That was only a couple of years ago. I wanted them to see the Holocaust. We went to Poland, to see the main one. They couldn't believe their eyes or the stories they heard that came out of it. You could be part of history or something like that. Because as Ken Burns said, the high school students, you know, are out of this. They didn't learn it. I said, we learned all about the Civil War.

After that, we learned about World War I. My father was in that. He talked very little. He was an engineer working on a railroad. But that's all. We learned that. [In researching] World War II, Ken Burns found out that not many were not learning anything about it. He started asking questions about it and they had no answers. They thought that Germany and Russia were together. And very interesting to hear him talk about it because he does educational programming for public television. So that's why he got involved with War II. That's how it came up, the history of it. I'll tell you a little story about that, too, while we're at it.

When I was working way back, it seems to be way back now, but it wasn't that far back. A guy in this gatehouse, he mentioned Hitler, Adolf Hitler. A guard [mentioned him].

He said, do you know him? I hadn't heard his name for a long time. [I said] I heard of him myself, but I didn't think you would. I didn't think you were that old, you know.

He said his father had a lot of stuff, and he read all about him. [I said] You did? Is that how you learned? He said yes. [I said] You didn't learn this in school or

nothing about World War II? [He said] Very little. I said, well, let's see how many kids really know this. I called them kids because they were younger than me and they were coming out to the gate house. We asked about twenty-five of them right out of Rensselaer here. [We asked about twenty-five of them before we got a man that knew who Adolf Hitler was. It was a very interesting story because I couldn't believe it. And then the other guy couldn't believe it either. But it happened to be a black man. The twenty-fifth, he was a foreman. He was down at the warehouse. [I asked] how he got to know this story? We asked everybody here coming out of the gate house. He said he read the history of World War II, and he picked up all the stuff that occurred. He said my father had some stuff too. That was how he learned. Then from there, when Ken Burns mentioned it, I knew then that I knew exactly what he was talking about. Nobody was learning anything about World War II too much.

Q: I'm going to go back to when you were moving through France and tell us a little bit about The Bulge. Were you given winter gear before The Bulge at all? Did you have any kind of winter gear? Winter clothing?

FF: No. What happened there. Patton was so mad. They were getting some stuff like rubber boots and all this. It was very cold. We had nothing. I don't know if you know anything about the raincoat, that little piece of vinyl they had. That was extremely cold and it stiffened when it's cold, so you couldn't use that for anything. Maybe the wind, maybe a little rain. But no, we didn't have good clothing at all. That didn't come until much, much later. But the Battle of the Bulge is a story in itself. That's actually a war that was completely different from all the rest.

Q: In what way?

FF: It was extremely cold, for one thing. And another thing was, they didn't have enough troops there. Our Patton's went up to battle. We were not in the Battle of the Bulge.

Q: Yes, I know.

FF: We were in the Frankfurt area at that particular time across from [unclear] 33.58. We were going house by house, house by house. I don't know if you heard of a bangalore. Those were used to go through walls. And they didn't live like we do here; you can break the walls down [on houses here]. But not their brick walls; you cannot. We went room to room, and we were very glad to get out of there, but we didn't know what we were getting into. The Battle of the Bulge. It wasn't called

that at that particular time. We had to go up north. It took us about less than twenty-four hours. We made it up there.

Q: Now, with you being infantry, did you ride in the tanks or did you ride trucks?

FF: Trucks. Yeah, all the trucks. Red Ball Express. You probably heard of it. See, the black people, they were the drivers of that. And one time we were going towards the front lines and they heard the artillery. You can hear artillery usually about twenty to twenty-five miles away, depending how much they're shooting or whatever. They always seemed to be going, one side or the other. The guy said, "That's enough for me, man. I'm stopping, and that's it. You guys are going to have to walk." I said, gee, that's about twenty-five miles. [He said] I don't care how long it takes you, just walk. So that's where we were left. [laughs] And then by the time we were there, we were dead. Because we had packs and bangalores. During the Battle of the Bulge, I had more than I should have had. I always wore maybe one or two. And then you had the grenades. You probably heard how they dressed up with this stuff. I put on four. That time I thought I had to have more because Battle of the Bulge was very rough. More ways than one. When I got down [motions getting ready to shoot], I couldn't get up any more with the big heavy pack. [laughs] I had to take them off, throw them out, and that was the end of that. Two from that night or one, that was the [unclear]. 35.53 [laughs] It's just something you learn. I tell you, we learned something every day. Anyway, when you're up there like that shooting and all that stuff, that's really rough.

Q: Now, when were you wounded?

FF: Right there. The Battle of Bulge. Right after that. It was a month after. January 18th was the first time. Up in here. [points to area between shoulder and collar bone] I got a big hole. It was up in here.

Q: Do you want to tell us about how that happened?

FF: Yes. I'm going to tell you that story. The story was the guy that came back, we were going to make river crosses. Patton used our division for river crossings. I think one time I read twenty-three, and another one says twenty-four. One river, we crossed it twice because it's zigzagged or something. They said we crossed that one twice, but he used us for crossing rivers mostly. After a while, they started using us at each river as we went along. A fellow just came back from the hospital. He got hit in September, and this was January 18th, and he came back just about a month ahead of time. Somehow the Germans were on this side of the river and he saw them. This guy could pick up prisoners in a flash. He was knowledgeable. He smelled something or heard something, whatever. But he picked up prisoners

very easily. He didn't kill them or anything like that. He said, will you do me a favor? Bring these guys back. They were shooting at [unclear] 37.29 coming down. Because as you went back, that's what you didn't want to do. Go back because the shooting is all going back there because they didn't want anybody coming up this way. Helping out crossing the river. Like we did. I said, it's okay, go ahead. [laughs] So I started climbing up the...there was a mountain. There was a mountain. I got hit in the morning. About six a.m. I had time. I used to have a watch after I got one from a German who died. A nice one. Nice phosphorus watch. You could see the time, night and day. That's how we picked up a watch.

But trying to get back to that. When I got hit, what happened first was I didn't know I was hit. Okay, I had the prisoners and all and stuff like that. I was sitting in a foxhole. The only place I could get hit was this way, anywhere here I could get hit in a foxhole. [motions from waist up] You couldn't get hit there. [motions below waist] I suspect it was a mortar. I'm not sure. I had the shrapnel and it was in there [points to shoulder collar bone area], and they took it out and they gave it to me. And then when I was home, I lost it. Well, we lost our house, too. Went by the sides. I lost everything there that I had. Whatever little I had, I happened to have that. The doctor gave it to me. I didn't feel it at all. The only thing I felt was, because it was so cold, I felt blood here. The blood was here. What the heck is this? All the blood. Then I realized. There was a lot of action going on. Shelling, hollering, hollering for first aid men, just like I had. It's the same thing. I had to holler for first aid myself, and it was well taken care of by the guy. I had the prisoners in front of me, and they started running away. The reason was when I got hit here and I had the gun, I couldn't hold the gun. [motions dropping the gun] They could have killed me right then and there. They could have killed me right then and there. All they cared about was escape, and that's what they did. [unclear] 39.44 The first aid man was taking care of somebody who had an injured leg. Then he patched me up with the sulfur and drugs, whatever it was. He asked, can you help him? See that he gets back to the first aid. Remember now, this is about six in the morning. The dusk is just in the beginning. I said, yeah, I'll help him. [I asked] What's the matter with him? [The doctor said] He only has one leg. Can he put his hand on your one good shoulder? I said, yes, I'll take him. So we started and they kept shelling all the time. We were in the woods which was helpful because they couldn't see us. But by hitting those trees, you could get killed any minute. They just kept shelling and shelling, shelling. But we started limping along. I said [to him], you could stop anytime you want. I'll stop too, and take a break a little bit. But the quicker we get out of here, the better it would be. This is six in the morning. The time we got there after climbing up this

hill, the first aid was way, way back after the hill part. By the time we got up there, it was twelve at night. That's how long it took us to go because he couldn't walk. He was limping. I got operated on about two a.m. at that particular time there. That's where I got hit the first time. Second time I got hit in my leg.

Q: Tell us about the first time. How long were you in the hospital? Did you go to England for hospitalization?

FF: No, no, no. Back in France for about four weeks. Four weeks or so. Nice care. It was a nice building. That's where I got back in shape.

Q: Did you go back to your unit or were you reassigned?

FF: At that particular time they were advocating to go back to the unit, if you could. If you could go back to it. Naturally you would because these were the fellows you trained with. They knew what we were doing, and we knew what they were doing. And that was very important.

Q: So they must have been fairly deep into Germany by the time you got back.

FF: When I got back, yeah, it was towards March. Towards March. But it was still cold. Very cold. Actually, I can't say much about the cold weather because I missed some of it myself. I was there for a month. That was bitter, bitter cold. And when they went over the sixtieth, it was interesting because we had the same weather that we had sixty years before. Same exact weather. They could tell you that. The families that went. I want to tell you about that little part with that. So I don't forget to tell you.

I was going to pay all the plane bills for the veterans. This was the Battle of The Bulge anniversary. It was very big because we lost a lot of soldiers there. That's the most they lost from any war they ever had, apparently. I was going to take them all. First of all, I wanted them to see what we went through. On the fiftieth anniversary, the people treated us beautifully, like kings and queens we were. They paid for the hotels that we had all the way through. But on the sixtieth anniversary I wanted to bring my family. I didn't have any idea of that anyway. I wanted them to go with us so we could enjoy it together. We were going to go in the United States plane, if they could get one at that particular time. They couldn't get one because they got to get the Battle of The Bulge letters and all that. They asked [President] Bush at the time. He said, don't you know there's a war going on here? That's what we got back, the letter. I had the letter, and that was it. Now when the Belgians heard about it and Luxembourg, these two countries know everything that happened in World War II. Actually, the kids

have learned this. They like the United States so much. Belgium. You kind of remember those two countries, Belgium, Luxembourg. Luxembourg is where I got hit, by the way, the first time. But I forgot to tell you that. We were on the way to Germany. But they took the bull by the horns when they heard about us and that we couldn't get over there. It was only 225 veterans that were signed up for that with the families. A lot of people brought their families, wives, whatever. The Belgians heard about that and they said, we will bring our military planes over and pick them up. We were pretty well set with the family to go. They were going to do that with their families. But then the secretary of defense or something was worried about insurance or whatever, he stepped into the picture and he stopped the families from going. Not the veterans. Veterans still could go on their military planes. They would bring them over, bring them back. Not only was it that good, the part was everything; we paid nothing. Everything was taken care of by them. Now, what I'm saying is the military planes and everything else. We were involved with these people and they took care of everything. Luxembourg and Belgium. They paid for all the veterans, including the family stuff we had, where we stayed and everything. We had a police escort all over. It was one of the best tours that we've ever had as far as the military was concerned. To get that response and to get exactly how we felt. That was so good. That was such a good feeling. And they made up for it. More than made up for it. But that, to us, was a good feeling. I wanted to remember that story because you're not going to hear about it very much. There were only 225 of us. And most of them are probably gone by now. Over two years ago. A lot of them were very old then.

Q: Where were you wounded the second time?

FF: Second time was in my leg. It wasn't bad, the second time.

Q: When was that, approximately?

FF: That was about March. It said on a discharge, March.

Q: You must have just gotten back then.

FF: When I got back, it was four weeks of hospitalization. Then I had about a week to get back to my unit. About five weeks from January 19. That brings me to about March. That's how I came up with the idea that it was close to March. Somewhere there. I got that. You want to hear about that one, too?

Q: Yes.

FF: That one there wasn't too bad. In fact, the third time I got hit again. But I didn't go back. And I want to tell you this story because it's tough. It's tough to

think about what's right and what's wrong. The second time when I got hit there, I didn't stay. I just stayed overnight. They patched it up and everything with the medicine, the shots that we used to get. So you get in shape very quickly if you're lightly hit. If you get that way. After you're okay, just so you're okay the next day, or whatever it was, you got to go back. [I asked] What are we doing? Riding or what? How are we going back? [They said] Oh, no, you have to walk because we're close to the combat zone. So there we are, walking to get back to the unit. There was another guy that was in the 5th with me. I didn't know that, but I met him. I asked, where are you going? He said he was going back to the 5th. [I said] Well, so do I. So we'll go together. That same day we started walking. We didn't have any guns or anything anyway, because if you get wounded, you can't take it with you. So that's out. We kept walking. Now, as we walked. [We asked] Where's the 5th? The next day or whatever, we slept on the ground. We slept in barns. Guys were up there with the pitchfork. I thought, we're going to get it. [laughs] We didn't tell them we were there. We slept anywhere you could sleep. And it took us about a week to find it. About a week. And I mean, this was day and night now. We did have some K-rations, but if we saw something in the barns or something to eat, we ate. We drank naturally from pure water if we found any. We got the canteens full. That's all that kept us going. So it took us about a week. No matter where they were, they were there, but then they were gone. [Soldiers said] We can't tell you where they're going. Military secrets. So this is what we were up against. We were alone, we didn't know what the heck to do. We didn't know if we're in our area or their area. We didn't know. We didn't know what happened. We saw military vehicles and every time we saw a jeep or something else, [soldiers said] well, they were there but they were somewhere else up in this other town. Now we didn't have any maps or anything. Where the heck is that? We heard nothing. Very well. Now the reason why I'm telling you this story. The third time I got hit, I did not go back. The reason why I didn't go back was that I said, the heck with this. I ain't going to spend no time like that. The hell are you going to get killed? You might as well get killed somewhere else. Not there. Trying to get back to your outfit.

Q: Where were you wounded the third time?

FF: The third time was also in the leg.

Q: Same leg?

FF: Same leg. Must be when I was shooting that gun I had this leg first. I don't know.

Q: When was that approximately?

FF: That was two weeks after. I just got back and then I had to go back.

Q: Were you shot with a bullet or was it shrapnel?

FF: Well, that you don't know because they were shooting and you got shrapnel. I really don't know that unless you catch it. This one was caught. This was all shrapnel in here. [points to shoulder/collar bone area] That was in March there. I decided I was not going back. And I wasn't the only one that decided that. There were a couple of other guys who really got hit in the face. He had this thing around his neck. They were in bad shape. I didn't care about me. I'll be better. When you go through that experience the third time, are you going to go back like that? Not knowing where you're going, no guns. When you get hurt, hurt, you don't have nothing and they don't take you. This driving around like you see today was not there. Sometimes it was. Sometimes I think when a unit was there for defensive purposes, then they knew then you could get a hot meal, too, sometimes. But during the Battle of The Bulge, Christmas time was actually a sad part for all of us. They did let up a little bit, but they made sure the artillery was still going. That's the first time on the line that I heard prayers. I have never said this before, but boy, somebody was saying prayers there. And it was. I knew the religion myself. In fact, that's what I think helped me.

Q: You received two Bronze Stars and a Silver Star.

FF: That's right. The Bronze Star, one of them is the Combat Infantry Badge. I don't know if you know. You know that? That was Ernie Pyle. You probably heard of him.

Ernie Pyle. He's the one that fought for the Combat Infantry soldiers. And when that badge came out, we gained, like, ten dollars a month. You got to remember, that's a lot of money. When you get twenty-one, you get ten more extra. That was a lot of money. But that was what it was for, the one bronze. The other bronze and silver....if you want to get to that, we might as well. Do you have time?

Q: Sure. That is why we are here.

FF: The Presidential Citation is a big thing here also. Not only the Battle of The Bulge that we're talking about. But the Battle of The Bulge had the weather element twenty-four hours a day. Living on ice, wet feet, like you just said. How did we do it? How did we live? You know what I give credit to? I give credit to them shots that we used to get on both sides. [points to top of both arms] A little bit here, a little bit there. I know they had penicillin. That was a real wonder drug at that time. That's what they gave you here. They gave me penicillin. And what

happens is you actually get better before you're better. You know what I mean? That's what happened, they said. You get good. It was a good medicine. Still today. Now where are we here?

Q: Well, you were telling us about the Silver Star.

FF: Silver Star, right. Silver Star was the lieutenant that brought us in and what that was. We received the Presidential Citation. Our company, Company E. that's all it was, involved with the tank destroyers and tanks and trucks, whatever equipment they got. Germans were coming out of France, coming back to Germany is what they were doing. And we had this little bridge, but I didn't realize. I thought it was some wood or something. I never realized how small it was until we went back for the anniversary. I said that, is this what we were fighting for? Well, the reason was, they had their tanks and they wanted to get their tanks out. To get the line there. That little town it was. A very little town. We saw it during the fiftieth anniversary, and also saw it during the sixtieth. And it was a big barn where we stayed. The barn came about. Our lieutenant saved our lives, really, and the story of it, I got it in my little magazine there. So I read up on it a little bit before the Ken Burns deal, and it talks about actually what happened there. The lieutenant brought us in. We were outside in foxholes, and there was barbed wire, and there was barbed wire around and all that, right? He brought us into the buildings. The one we had. We had corner buildings, and our tanks were just down the road. [We had] just a few. That's all there was. They had a triangle road. That's what it was. One there was going down this way, turned to the little town, very small town.

Q: Do you remember the name of the town?

FF: Ceret Nied [?] or something like that. I've got it written over there. We can get it that way. I will give you the name, actually, the way it really is. He brought us in. It was during the daytime. The book says six combat returns they had from them that they shot. Now I forgot what they call that. Counter-attacks. They had six in the book. But this guy who had those prisoners, he just died a couple of years ago. He was a good historian, as far as remembering where we were, what we were doing, all that. And he said it was eight. I believe it was eight, too. I think they counted one that was later on at night, about three o'clock or so in that area. But he brought us into the buildings, the shell buildings. There were farms and a couple of buildings. He only had a Company. A company of infantry men. That's all we had. So he divided us up. A squad here, squad there. I was upstairs. I was upstairs with three or four other guys, three or four other guys downstairs. And when they started shooting, we could see out of the windows, but you couldn't

stay there. There were no windows. The roof that we stayed on had all big giant holes in it, which means they lost a roof. They shot mortars in and they were shooting artillery, but the mortars were the ones you got to worry about because they just exploded down and right in. Which meant we would have gotten killed, all of us there, on that second floor. And the first floor had the windows. They shot through them. But they had barbed wire in the front. The reason why I say this is because in the morning, when it had daylight, I didn't realize that in front, where they were coming, they were all hanging over the barbed wires. That morning. We saw a lot of death here in this Presidential Citation thing. We saw a lot of dead bodies.

But then there was another story about this, too, that really amazes me. I like to tell it once in a while because it took me about fifty years to start talking about. But it isn't that I remembered. You got to blank it out. There's stuff that we knew had to be blanked out, no matter what it was. As I say, veterans talked to veterans. They talked. They didn't talk otherwise. That's what happened. So that night, about three in the morning, I say three, because there was no way to tell the time. I don't know if I had a watch then or not. Probably not. Somebody might have had some time. It was around three in the morning. We heard the Germans. You heard the German feet. The walk that they had. The sound with the big boots. We heard that. We didn't know what it was, though, at first. But they were singing. We looked out, there was hardly no moon, but we could see flashes because of the artillery going off. They were coming down, a whole bunch of them, and they're marching on the road with the boots going up and down, up and down. That's what they were doing. All of a sudden. We didn't want to shoot because we knew the tank. The tank was down below us. They had these tanks down there, down by the buildings. Whether they knew or not, I don't know. Must not have been. But I think they were trying to scare us or something. It didn't make sense. That next morning, down by the bridge, they waited for them till they got down by the bridge. Because we had other soldiers down there, too, on guard. That morning, when they said we had to go, they had other troops taking our place to stay there. We walked over that bridge there. That's the most bodies I've ever seen blown apart. Head over here, arms over there. Holy Jesus. Gangly looking. Awful, awful to see that many. And to me, that was a suicide. That was a suicide. But you'll never read this. I don't know why. It is not in there; it was never told, I guess, or something like that. But they all got killed. The tanks. When they started going, they all died. But they maintained their marching feet. They maintained through the years and everything else, whether they were trying to scare somebody, I don't know. This was after the counter attacks, eight

of them. This was in the morning, they decided they're going to do this. That's the only thing I figured. They were singing the German anthem. I think that's the one they sing. It scared the hell out of us. We didn't know what the hell was going on. There were no radios at that time. Didn't have any radios and stuff like that. Couldn't figure it out. But this is an interesting story, because actually they committed suicide. All of them. All of them. And then we had to go look at them. And then [we] looked at that bridge, it was a small bridge, it wasn't a big one. But because of the tanks that they wanted to get out, they needed that bridge. And that's where the Silver Star came in, right then. That guy put us in for the Bronze Stars, too, but we never heard about them, really. I'll tell you the sad thing about those medals. That squad we had was the one that really deserved the medals. They were all dead when we got these. They were all dead. They all died never knowing. They knew we're supposed to get medals, but when you lose your lieutenant, they bring the papers back. The sergeant that was ahead of our squad, him and I were close. He came from New Jersey. He said at least he put us in for something anyway. He got hurt or something, whatever happened to him. And then when they brought the paper so he could sign it, it wasn't there, forgotten about it. But for some reason or other, when I asked for the medals, because our house burned, we lost my uniform and everything else. That's what they said I earned. I got the paper over there. So that's how we got it a few years later, about fifty or so. But, hey, at least we got it.

Q: We are going to stop and go to another tape.

FF: Because that distinguished badge stays with the service, no matter what.

Q: We are ready again. The last time you were wounded, you said you didn't go back to the unit. Where did you go?

FF: I did not go back. No.

Q: Where did you go from there?

FF: Just continued fighting.

Q: You fought, but without going back to the unit, you went back into combat?

FF: I went back to first aid. See, you could go back to first aid. The second time I did. Once I had to go through that baloney to try and get back.

Q: So you just went in with another unit and didn't go back to your original unit?

FF: No, I went back to the original unit, but it took us a week, the second time I got hurt. The third time because I had to leave the unit and I didn't want to. We

were moving at that time in March, pretty good in Germany. They were on the run, but they were still fighting.

Q: That's why it took you so long, is how fast the front was moving.

FF: Yeah, well, that's what happened. I didn't go back the third time anyway.

Q: Where did you go?

FF: The third time?

Q: Yeah.

FF: I stayed with the outfit. I told you we had a guy, remember? [He was hit in] the neck or something. He should have gone back, but he didn't. His face was all. He said he wasn't going back there after I heard what you guys went through, the two of us. I said, I'm not going back no more either, unless you die, [get] killed or something like that. That was the last time. That was in Germany. The other was in Luxembourg. And that's it. How we survived this, it's hard to say. If you take the time element from when we started in July to the endpoint, which happened to be May the following year, May 8 I think it was when the European theater stopped. To survive that year, what any soldier did or did do there at that particular time is amazing to talk about. Because, like I say, I was referring to that twenty-four hour deal with politicians, whoever. Starting a war, to me, is the worst thing you could possibly do. Anybody, I don't care who it is. I hated to see Iraq that time. They had it in the United Nations. [They] shouldn't make war so easy.

Q: As your front moved, did you end up in Austria?

FF: Czechoslovakia, if you want to hear that one. We're up in the mountains. War just ended. And we were walking up into the mountains of Czechoslovakia. There was snow up there. May 8, I think it stopped. The next day I think we're up the mountains. May 9 or 10 up there. And that's where it ended first. But while we were there, down below, the trains were running and everything else. I said, I wonder what happened here. How come they? No war here? The whistles were going, you know, the train. What the heck happened here? It's only two days. How could they get trains to run? But Czechoslovakia wasn't bombed that much. We just ran through it. Germans were on the run at that particular time. So it actually wasn't bombed much. But the people were just as if they were living every day. We were up there, but the war was over. It was like two days. Two days we were up on top of the mountains, all full of snow.

Q: Did you ever have any encounters with any of the German people? The population? **FF:** Yes.

Q: What were they like?

FF: German people, most of them were good people. Most of them. You do have the...I got to tell you a story, though, about those German people too. About a soldier. The people themselves were very good. You got to know what happened there. These people were under propaganda. And as I say, after a while, this propaganda, you come to believe it, especially if they have nothing to counter against it. Here we do, we counter. It's hard to believe anything like that happened. It's tough. It's really tough to talk about too, for that matter. But a lot of good people. There were a lot of good people. In fact, when I got hit the first time, a German nurse was taking care of me part time. Then they had cooks. They're using some of the German people, those who became prisoners or helpers or what. I don't know what they were, where they came from, but they were good. Some of them were very nice people. You can't blame people there. Some you can, because you have gung ho people everywhere, so some you can.

Q: You must have been taking a lot of prisoners as you were moving in through Czechoslovakia?

FF: Yes, at the end. Yes. The bad part there was stopping the Germans from coming from the Russian side. Because that was a deal they made of which we didn't know, but they wanted to go to the United States side. And we had orders to send them all back. So they came in with tanks, and I had a good chance to ride some vehicles at the end of the war. Tanks and trucks. I got back to driving. We had to send it back. What a sad thing that was to do. Here these people wanted to give up and we had to send them back. We got orders, no more.

I have to tell you about that story there with that German you were talking about. We were talking about The Battle of Bulge. They used German soldiers who wore American uniforms. You guys probably heard of it. I know that's well known. Well, to see these guys like that is hard. You don't really get to see them all. But we did learn at that particular time what words to say like Babe Ruth, Yankee stadium, stuff that they wouldn't hardly know anything about. That's how you could cross them. But what was bad, what Hitler did there was bad to me when I saw it. The SS troops had their emblem [tattooed] here [points to upper arm/shoulder]. How do you get rid of that? Some of these guys were SS, acting as American soldiers. They did capture some.

Q: You actually encountered some yourself?

FF: Yes, we did. This one here we did. There was a hill. We were up there going towards it and the [German] guy shot a guy inside, one of the [American] soldiers in the stomach, a soldier. But the [other soldier] guy didn't realize it until he saw it. He [American soldier] said, what are you doing? [The German soldier said] he's just hurt. [American soldier wonders] How could he be hurt? He says he's inside here. So he figured it out. He took him out. He took the clothes off. He saw the SS right away. So he killed him right there. We saw that one there. We saw another one with a jeep. But they took off. They took off because they started questioning where we were going? And stuff like that. So they took off and we didn't catch them. That was another illustration.

Where's this other illustration? I want to show you something so you guys will know. You ain't going to believe this story nowhere either. It is about a little guy, a lieutenant, who came out of West Point. I got to tell you. because I used it for the other. He came out of West Point, he was a small guy, very small, very small. He had all new uniforms on, new maps, things and binoculars and all that sort of stuff. We were going to go to the woods.

We knew what we were going to do. We had tanks that were going to support us. And we knew this too before. He showed up in the morning. He was with us for one hour and a half. Just to show you how life is in combat. Sometimes you last, sometimes you don't. But anyway, he was telling us, we met him. Glad to meet you, lieutenant. Okay, what's your name? We were on the line for six months here. Six months on the line. If you're on the line for six months, sometimes you can't make it six days. Six months. Got all that kind of experience. What's your name? He started getting a little smart. Hey, we're all ragged. He's got a nice uniform. Not for long he wasn't. But anyway, he asks all these questions and then all of a sudden he said, you guys will follow me. Me and the sergeant worked together on everything. [We were] thinking about what we should do and what he's going to do. Knowing that we couldn't talk to him. I learned a lesson there that I have never forgotten. He said, you guys will follow me. So we said, okay, we knew what we were going to do. We didn't know what he was going to do. You couldn't talk to him. He said you got to wait for the orders here. Oh, yeah, okay, we'll follow you, just go ahead. He started going. He couldn't wait, couldn't wait to go. [He] Got shot by our own troops. The reason was, like I said, we're with tankers. I knew what the tanks would do or how they would shoot. They shoot the [unclear] 1.10.48 to the woods. If he got too far up he would get killed. Especially when they opened up and that's what he was doing. He started getting up. Hour and a half is all he lasted. And he was going like this. [motions for others to follow] What we were doing, you know what we're doing. Hey, the opposite. He's

going like this, come on. And we did the opposite. We said, go ahead. We knew what we were going to do. We weren't going to get too far ahead of the tanks. So there he is. He was up there all by himself. Then he starts double-timing. We were loaded with all kinds of packs like he was and he figured we're going to double time. We're lucky we could walk in combat, we just didn't get anywhere too fast. In an hour and a half, our machine guns and the tank opened up and shot tracers, down he goes. My guy, the guy, he's dead now, too. The guy said, I have to go get the maps again. We lost a lot of lieutenants, I hate to say that, but we did because they're actually leading. But by leading sometimes you're in a dangerous state. Well, this guy here, I knew right then and there that he wasn't for us. He didn't last long. That was it. And this other sergeant, as I say, he said he had to go get the maps again so we know what the heck we're going to do here.

There again, remember I told you about the line across the front lines? That's what we were doing. Same damn thing. A German machine gun will cut you in half if you go slow with it. It will cut you right in half body wise. We saw a couple of those, too. Sad, sad things. But that's part of that deal. I didn't want to forget that little story I learned then that sometimes it's better to listen. Of course, now I don't. But I don't have to now. I'm retired.

Q: At the end when you turned the Germans that wanted to surrender to you back to the Russians. Did you ever encounter the Russians at all?

FF: Yes, we did. They would drink vodka. Vodka was their strong drink. We met them.

Yes, we met some of them. And the guy gave me gasoline. Gasoline, sometimes. He had some gasoline in a tank somewhere. He said this is the closest thing to vodka. He was looking for vodka. The two guys, it was two of them. They took that [motions drinking quickly]. If you ever had a match, he'd have burned up. [laughs]. They took it. They didn't get catch on fire? No, they just couldn't breathe the fumes from it and everything else. And the other thing was. That was where a lot of German equipment stopped in our area. They dropped them off, scooters, all that. A lot of German equipment. As I said, I did get to ride a lot of that. I did my riding. After the war was over.

Q: Did you stay in the Army of Occupation at all?

FF: No, we were going to head to Japan. That's the reason why that third one became important. The third wound. You have so many points. I just missed it. I don't know why I was short.

Q: Why didn't you get a third Purple Heart? You only have two.

FF: I asked for it. They didn't believe me. I showed them the mark, the little mark there today. No, because they thought then that I wanted it for points, which I did, but they would believe it. No. I'll tell you another thing. One of our guys shot himself in the foot. They called me back. Between his toes, but I didn't know that. I was in a foxhole and he was in a foxhole, but he came out and he started shooting. I had to get called because I was with him, but I didn't see how he got shot or anything else. They called me in, right off the line, and questioned me about it. I didn't see a German because we were in the woods. They could have been there, I don't know. So I started to defend him. Naturally, that was one of my reactions. Hey, we worked together. The last thing to come out of it was this. He said, for your information. They're back there and I'm up here with shots going on. I ain't worried about him or nobody else. On his shoe were all powder burns. I said, what? Powder burns? [They said] Yeah. Don't you know what that means? I said, no, what does it mean? He wouldn't tell me. So that's another good story for you there. Have I got any more stories? I forgot some of them, I know.

Q: You were in the hospital one time for four weeks. Did you ever have any other R & R?

FF: Well, we got R & R with the division. That's all. Not for injuries. No.

Q: Besides the four weeks in the hospital, did you ever have an R & R? Or see USO Shows?

FF: Coming back you mean? No, no, absolutely not.

MR: Did you ever see any USO shows at all?

FF: USO shows, yes. Oh, yes. Big Crosby. He was there. Bob Hope, Marlene Dietrich. Remember her? You know what she used to do? She played the saw. First time I ever saw that. But Bob Hope was wonderful. Jerry Colonna. USO shows, yes. They used to take us anytime we stopped, actually, if a line stopped for a while or something to catch up or whatever. Then they'd bring us back to see the USOs, and they were very good. Bing Crosby got lost in France once. Somehow he got lost. He was in German territory, but somehow he got out of it. They don't know how he got out of it, but he did. That was something they mentioned as it's going along.

Q: When did you return to the States?

FF: When did I return? [thinks about it] May something. We stayed there. I got discharged in October. We came back with the idea that we were going to go to

Japan. I was home in August, so we had to come back right after that. We had to stay in that line for a while to push the Germans so they wouldn't come at that time in that area. So we must have stayed there at least two or three weeks, at least that. Then we came back here and they gave us a furlough. July and August and that time. I was home when the atom bomb went. I was glad that happened. It saved us from there. I was only short a few points from not going.

Q: When were you discharged?

FF: Camp Atterbury, Indiana. But we did go back down there, though, down where we started. Somehow the 5th Division landed there. The 20th Armored was there. We were with the 5th. We landed there after the war was over. We were there, and then I got discharged from Indiana. After that, a railroad road trip.

Q: What was your reaction when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt?

FF: That was sad. That was very sad when he heard that. We couldn't hardly believe why he died. But he did have polio, I guess, stuff like that. It was very sad when he lost him.

Q: How about when you heard about the death of Patton? How did you feel?

FF: Blood and guts Patton? Yeah. Well, the blood was ours, the guts were his, which, you know. But actually he was a good military man. But he was military, really, twenty-four hours a day. Just think about The Bulge, our people. He said, I'll get him up there in twenty-four hours. You know what? He was certainly right. That's what we took. All night long. Cold, very cold. Snowing.. And then they relieved Bastogne a little bit. Some of his troops got there before we did. The jeeps thought they could get there quickly. So that was one good thing he did there. But actually, when it came to tanks, I don't think nobody knew what he knew about that. Most generals don't get into the tank part of it like he was. He was always in it. He was part of it, and that was his belief. General Patton, I got to give him a lot of credit. [unclear] 1.19.34

Q: After the war, did you use the GI bill at all?

FF: No.

Q: How about the 52-20 club?

FF: What is that?

Q: It was like unemployment insurance. \$20 a week for 52 weeks.

FF: No, I went to work there, down at General Aniline/ B.A.S.F., down here in Rensselaer because they had a lot of jobs going. At that time when we got out, there were actually a lot of jobs. And one of the things that's interesting for me there was this. When I was looking for a job, they said, you work outside. Well, down there is a dye stuff factory. When I was a kid I saw people come out of there all yellow and all that. All the colors. I can't work there, it's too much, but my cousin worked there, and he talked me into going there. But the girl that was there lived up by church, and she knew me down there. I said I can't go in that building. [She said] I will take care of you. Don't worry about it. She knew there were going to be openings in the warehouse. That would be better for me, which was good. She called me about a week later. They did have the warehouse. They were going on a six day schedule, so they needed more people. So that's how I started. That's how I came back to it. In the meantime, they had a lot of women working and they were trying to get them out of there. Because that was not good for them to be working there with the dye stuff, colors, poisons, all that stuff. They did get them out, most of them. Most of them all got out. From there it was [unclear] 1.21.09 And that's where I met my beautiful wife. Here. Right there. She was working there. That's where we are forevermore.

Q: Did you join any veterans organization?

FF: My father was in service. And my brother was in World War II. He volunteered. And my other brother was a Korean [War] veteran. He's got Parkinson. The other one died. And my father, naturally. So we were all veterans. All the men in our family were all veterans actually. Turned out to be. I got drafted. I don't know if I was going to volunteer, but they were talking about it. I had an idea myself to go that route, but I don't know. We did join most of them. But the American Legion, he wanted to make sure we were in it. What he liked about it was the parades. What I didn't like about it was not being in the parades. I like to see them. That's my part. So from there, The Battle of the Bulge, the 5th Division, American Legion, I got them all here. I got to catch up to them. Then I send them to my guy that's sick. That's the only guy I know left out of World War II. I still am in those outfits? Yes.

Q: How do you think your time in the service changed or had an effect on your life?

FF: I think it made me better.

Q: What ways?

FF: How I lived through it. I couldn't understand how you could live through that. You know what I mean? My wife is religious. My mother was religious, too. I always carried the medals and everything else. To me, I think there's Divinity. That there's a God, and that's it. That was my faith. And the only time I ever heard the guys pray was Christmas. Because there was shelling. We got our Christmas around New Year's. We couldn't get off the line because that was The Battle of Bulge time. I had faith. That's what I had, and I'm glad I had it. I still have it today. It made me a better person. I hope it makes a lot of other people better.

Q: Okay, if you just hold it like this in front of you. Wayne can focus on it. Just tell us who these people are. If you want to start on that side.

FF: [holds a tri fold frame] This is me here.

Q: When was that taken?

FF: This was taken right after the war. I don't know how long after? Maybe five months. Six months. That's when I had the uniform of which we lost. When the house burnt.

Q: Who's in the center?

FF: The center is my younger brother. He's living down at Resurrection Home. He has Parkinson's disease. We do take him out.

Q: And he was a Korean War veteran?

FF: He's a war veteran, yes. He was in during wartime.

Q: Korean. The Korean War. You said.

FF: He didn't go to Korea. It was at that time. He was listed to go to Japan, but one guy told him he didn't have to go, so he landed up in Germany.

Q: What is his name?

FF: His name is Ronald Forcinella. And this other one here is my other brother, younger, a couple of years younger than me. Joseph Forcinella. And my father [unclear] 1.24.38

Q: We wanted to see your medals, too.

FF: Here's the one I wanted to show. That blue one here. There's The Battle of the Bulge. Have you ever seen the book?

Q: Yeah, we have a pretty big library at our museum.

FF: Yeah, you must have. These were the women we met. Village stories during the war. These are ones we got at the sixtieth [reunion]. They had the pictures from the old gate. That was Belgium. Belgium and Luxembourg. That's not my division book. I thought that was it. Boy, I had that. I wanted to show you the covers. It's really a thing. I've done it a couple of times, reading about it, and it's really a really good story. Both sides.

Q: Being you were there.

FF: Yeah. That helped us out. I don't know what happened to my other book. I was using it. That's probably what happened.

Q: Why don't you show us your medals?

FF: All right, that's part of them.

Q: When was this photograph taken? [points to a photo on the wall]

FF: 1946.

Q: And this photo here?

FF: That was after I got out of service.

Q: [camera shows dog tags] Are those your original dog tags?

FF: Yes. See the cross there?

Q: Yes.

FF: I contributed a little bit of that to that. How do you survive this? You're in the middle of it. People down. You're not. You know what I mean? Something like that. I got more medals than that now, though, because of the sixtieth. That ran up to the fiftieth. That did. That was the fiftieth.

Q: Okay. Thank you very much for your interview.

FF: Thank you. I should thank you guys for doing something that's really nice to do.

