

Wayne M. Harris (WMH)
Narrator

Robert von Hasseln, Interviewer (I)
Wayne Clarke, Videographer

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Culver Road Armory
Rochester, NY

I: This is the interview of Mr. Wayne M. Harris, on 1 March, 2022, Culver Road Armory, Rochester, NY. Interviewer is Lt. Colonel Robert von Hasseln. Videographer is Mr. Wayne Clarke. Mr. Harris, tell me a little about where and when you born.

WMH: I was born on December 28, 1925.

I: And where were you born?

WMH: In Pittsford, NY.

I: Did you grow up there?

WMH: Yes, I did.

I: Tell me a little about your family.

WMH: I had a brother and I had two half-brothers and a half-sister. We grew up in a rural community. That's how I would describe it.

I: What did you family do?

WMH: My father was an attorney and was a very active attorney, and my mother stayed at home. I think that was pretty common at that time. And I, of course, I went to school.

I: And you were in school when the war started?

WMH: Yes, I was in school when the war started.

I: Do you remember what you were doing or what you were thinking when you first heard about Pearl Harbor and the beginning of the war?

WMH: Well, I felt that the war, before Pearl Harbor, felt that the war would expand because I did quite a little reading. My father got books that were quite knowledgeable, for instance, Europe in the Spring by Clare Luce, and as a consequence I wasn't too surprised at Pearl Harbor excepting the manner in which it happened. I felt that we would become fully engaged. The question was whether we could defeat a nation like Germany.

I: Did you think that was problematic at the time? That we might be not able to defeat Germany?

WMH: Of course, in retrospect, you'd say no, but you have to measure it with the time then and they had been successful in everything that they had undertaken as far as their military was concerned and they had done it in such an innovative way, a new way, that the military people here, the consensus was it would be very, very difficult. At that time and frame when the war started, our army as far as equipment was concerned was non-existent. Even at the time when I

Museum

went into the service, our equipment was excellent but nobody underrated the Germans as far as the soldiers were concerned and his ability to fight. So, I felt that the undertaking was one that we should do and we had to do, because the world would be changed completely if he wasn't eliminated. The freedoms we have today would not exist and you could almost look down into the future and see that as an absolute must that we must... I think that anybody that underrated what was going to happen and was going to be committed to combat made a sad mistake because I felt that it would be a monumental task. And I think it turned out to be that.

I: How did your life change in Pittsford after Pearl Harbor?

WMH: I think it didn't really change other than I think there was a great commitment by people. There were people in high school who made the little planes for recognition that were turned over to the government. War production became a thing everybody was involved with, particularly the women because as the classes in high school came to graduation, all the male students left for the service. There were no male students. We had a very large commitment in this country to manpower being in the service and it's my understanding that it's higher than any other nation on a percentage basis. So, I think that people got to fill in earlier. I can remember helping my brother who was in the first world war as an air raid warden and, fortunately, we never had any problem over here but we still ran through the tests and stopped vehicles and acted in a very efficient way as if there was going to be one or if there was one. I can remember too, that the first donations of blood were just then taking place and I can remember giving blood when I was a junior in high school. It started in this area – the blood donations. So, those were, I think, some of the innovative ones. The other one was that, as far as classes going anywhere for trips, those were all eliminated. When the person graduated, the pre-graduation trips were limited usually to a 50-60-mile radius from the school.

I: Let's talk for a moment about being an air raid warden? How did you come to do that?

WMH: My brother was an air raid warden and he needed... He had a big area to cover and he needed the help. I was 15 at the time, and I said, "Fine, I'll be glad to help you," and people that were involved with the program were happy with that. I think I was mature enough to handle it. My father had recently died at the time I was 15, so I thought I was pretty mature and it worked out that way.

I: Did you really think there was a chance that the Germans might bomb upstate NY?

WMH: Well, I thought it was highly unlikely excepting for the work that Kodak was doing. As it turned out, of course, at that time we didn't know that they were doing the proximity fuses, but I'm sure that that was some of that information must have filtered on through anybody with intelligence. So, it was an industry that certainly contributed a great deal because the proximity fuse was a marvelous advance and one that really affected the other side immeasurably because of the way you could detonate that and affect your infantry.

I: Let's also talk about, what did you expect to do when you got out of high school? Before the war, did you have any expectations?

WMH: Well, I think I was just... No, I didn't because at the time the war started, I was 13, so I had not really any thoughts at the point in the game because my father was still alive and I thought I'd be talking to him. I had two half-brothers to talk to, one of whom was also an attorney, but I had not made determinations at that time.

Museum

I: And now, as graduation grew closer, what did you expect would happen? What were you thinking?

WMH: I wanted to go into the service because my brother, he had gone into the service earlier and he was wounded at Anzio and so I wanted to go in at the first opportunity. I therefore went through high school in three years. I asked if I could do that and my marks were pretty good. They let me take my junior and senior year the same year, provided I passed all the tests, which I did. And at that time, I asked to go in the service and so went to the draft board and as soon as I graduated, they inducted me into the service.

I: Did you have a preference of service?

WMH: I wanted to go into the infantry. I thought that I'd probably get overseas faster going into the infantry than any other service. I did, once I got in, have a chance to go into the paratroopers. But when they told me the extra training that was necessary, the three or four months, I decided not to go that route.

I: Tell us what happened after you were inducted.

WMH: We shipped down to Camp Blanding in FL and we trained there in the infantry to go and fight in the Pacific. And of course, we were shipped to Europe.

I: Were you with part of the 45th Division at that time?

WMH: No. This was just a training, that was all training area and you never got designated to a division until you actually came from the replacement depot to a particular division. How they ever designated – I think it was probably the one that had suffered the most casualties.

I: Now, at Camp Blanding in FL how did you know you'd been trained for duty in the Pacific?

WMH: Because of the topography and also the defenses that you had to breach and they were all palm and they were in the ground and there was no training for house-to-house fighting and the emphasis was obviously on fighting in the Pacific.

I: So, how did you go from Camp Blanding to Europe?

WMH: Well, when we completed the training and were being sent to ship out, we were told we were going to Camp Kilmer in NJ. We went to Fort Meade first in MD, from there to Camp Kilmer. We were told that people were needed in Europe and we were being shipped there.

I: And where did you land first in Europe?

WMH: We landed in Le Havre. The harbor was still. They couldn't get the ship to shore or to any docking because the Germans had sunk ships in the harbor. So therefore, you had to go down the landing net and you learned to go down the landing net by going down the landing net. Nobody told you how to do that. It was difficult, I think, for some people because you had to go down the landing net. It was a little rough that day. So, the landing craft that you were going to go into, you had to time it when it came up on a swell and then jump into it along with your equipment and duffel bag.

I: What would have happened if you missed?

WMH: You would have been crushed against the side of the boat.

I: So, what happened after Le Havre?

WMH: We went into Le Havre and then we were told we were going to stay overnight. We did not. We went right down to a train which was commonly known as a 40-and-8, 40 soldiers and 8 horses, and were put in those cars which was actually, I think, probably the worst thing they could have done with the replacements, of treating them in that fashion because it was the beginning of January and there was no heat in the cars. There was nothing but straw in the cars. There was no light in the cars. So, what everybody did in the car that I was in – they started to pull the wood off the inside of the car and started a fire so that they would have some heat in order to survive. Then the first opportunity that they stopped the train so that people could get some relief, we had designated in the car who would go for wood and who would go for metal parts so we could build a stove and by almost the end of that day, that is at 4:00 - 5:00 in the afternoon, we had a stove going in the thing, which didn't heat the car completely, but made it a whole lot better than it was before. We had wood from the fence posts they'd ripped down and carted into the car and created that fire. But when we did finally get to the replacement depot, we had two people go off to the hospital with frozen feet, so you lost some of your manpower, right away, before you ever got anywhere, by reason of the transportation. Now, it may have been absolutely essential, I don't know, but it seems to me, that with some little effort it could have been made such that, and I'm not talking about amenities, but it could have been done more intelligently so that you didn't lose manpower right on the trip from Le Havre to Epinal, where the replacement depot was.

I: Were you traveling with people you had gone through training with?

WMH: Two of the people I'd gone through training. One of them had the frozen feet that was taken back to the hospital, and the other was shipped to another division other than the one I went to and lost his leg about three weeks after he went into combat.

I: What was it like at the replacement depot? What were you thinking?

WMH: The replacement depot – I was there a very short period of time and the best thing that happened there was that they gave me a piece of bread with some butter and I was able to heat it over a stove, kind of an iron stove and it was wonderful. The taste of it. I guess I was up there maybe an hour, an hour and a half and they came and said, "Okay, you're going to go to the 45th Infantry Division, 157th Regiment. They need you." So, I went by truck there, and they left me there and I waited to go up and I was told at that time that I went to the 2nd Battalion headquarters, I'm supposed to be replacement for G Company, that they were in a very hard fight with the German Ski Division. I sat outside the battalion headquarters. It got late in the afternoon, and I noticed people running in and out. One of the officers came out and said "They've been surrounded. You can't go up there because we are losing the whole battalion and we've got to get out of here or the Germans are going to overrun us." So, he said, "You're going to ride on a fender on one of the trucks. If you see a German, you're supposed to shoot the German. You've got to hold on to the front of the truck while you're riding on the fender. We're going to leave." And that's exactly what happened. I rode on the fender of the truck. We must have driven for a couple of hours. Fortunately, the roads were very slippery so they couldn't drive very fast so I could hold on to the grill of the truck while I still had the M-1 rifle in the position to be able to shoot it. But when we stopped that night, because we hadn't been issued anything other than the boots we would have worn to go to Japan, my feet were in pretty bad condition. They felt like pieces of wood, because they were just leather boots and we didn't get replacements for a good three to four weeks to replace those boots. But I got through that and was ready to go the next day.

I: What must you have been thinking – you'd just arrived and already the unit is bugging out?

WMH: Well, no, it seemed like the only logical thing, everything seemed logical. I had played sports when I was in school and it seemed to me that this wasn't anything insurmountable. It's just something that you had to flow with and had to try and use your intelligence to survive. So, we eventually fell back for another couple of days. They said, "We'll get a new company." But mostly replacements in to form a new company. There were a few people that had been on the line before that came aboard. None of the Indians who originally comprised the 45th Infantry Division from AZ – there were none of them left. We never saw them. Mostly people from NJ and NY that started that particular company. After they formed the new company, then we were shipped to frontline positions which really were winter positions which we were basically holding on because of the mauling that we had gotten in both at the Bulge and in our area, which came much later than the Bulge.

I: Now, what area exactly were you in?

WMH: We were in Alsace. We were in the area that was near – could I look at my book just a second, I'll be able to give you a much more exact... It's a book I wrote mainly for my family and it shows the area – but Ruppertsweiler and Strasbourg – we were in that general area which is a rolling... And Saarbrücken, which is a rolling country like the southern tier of NYS. That's the way that you would characterize it best.

I: So, the topography looked familiar to you – this rolling terrain.

WMH: Yes, it did and it obviously, I had hunted that terrain and it's easy for a few people to hold a lot of people up. You realized you had to be very careful because there were lots of ways that you were exposed to the Germans if he was wily and they were. They were excellent troops. We were told that people that were captured, some of the people who were captured by the Germans from that battalion that I mentioned to you, that were the four companies, were captured by SS mountain troops. They were tied to trees afterwards, hosed down with water and froze to death. At that point in the game, I made a determination I'd never be captured.

I: So, you're in the area of Alsace, Strasbourg, up on the line. What was your daily life like?

WMH: The daily life was basically trying to survive. We got into holes. It was one of the most bitter winters they ever had in Europe and it was a bitter winter over here. The holes were five feet or so in depth and usually covered with logs and then with some pine boughs over that and then maybe a shelter half. That gave you some protection, but the problem was that if you got warmed up at all, the snow would melt and when the snow melted it would go into the hole and then therefore you had a blanket to sleep with, you wouldn't be able to lay down. You might be able to wrap up with a blanket but the blanket usually wound up being wet. Your biggest concern... So, if got two to three hours of sleep a night, that was a lot just because it was so difficult to sleep under those bad conditions. Last night, when it was really snowing here and very cold, I was thinking how happy I was to be able to sleep in a bed and not be outside again because that was a very difficult, hard time. The way you kept, what you did was, to try and change socks each night and you would dry them by putting them next to your chest. You'd put them inside and that would dry the socks out and they would at least dry out overnight and hopefully be okay to put on the next day so that your feet, you were trying to preserve your feet. I did get pneumonia. I went back to the doctor and he gave me an aspirin which I threw away because I thought that

Museum

was kind of an insult to give somebody with pneumonia an aspirin, and went back to the line and stayed on the line. Blood came up and I did ultimately damage a lung substantially but I stayed on the line with the fellows and they would carry things if we had to move any distance for me. So, I got right through that, but it was important to stay with your friends because you built that bond and if you were going to leave then you were going to affect people in an adverse way by leaving. So, I wasn't going to leave.

I: How did you learn how to survive in the cold when you were had been trained to be in the Pacific. Who taught you?

WMH: I think that what happens is you have to use your own ideas of survival and what is going to be the most logical thing and it falls into the category for infantrymen of reducing weight. By reducing weight, that's a critical thing. You expose yourself more to the elements. The first thing you've got to do is throw away the overcoat, which I did, throw away the pack, which I did, throw away the bayonet. I did that. Throw away the gas mask and put everything that you own into the gas mask case and that gets you down in weight. Now it gets you down in weight. In the book, I wanted to check and see how much weight I was really carrying, so I got from the government, through another officer that I know quite well, the exact weight for each piece of equipment, including your underwear. I totaled that and I was carrying 79 pounds and that was to me a maximum that anybody should carry in combat to be able to keep moving. Well, what did that entail not having? It entailed not having a coat and it entailed not have any kind of sleeping thing to sleep in, not even a blanket. Then, when you get into the front line and you've got to scrounge a blanket somewhere and live in that kind of conditions, you just try and survive in any way that you possibly can. And you try and heat because you couldn't have a fire during the day time and you're trying to warm it up and drink some coffee during the daytime and watch and talk and, of course, you're watching during the hours that you're on. I was trained as a machine gun and so you're on the machine gun during that period of time. At nights were pretty horrendous, but you still had other people. They depended on you. You were doing your two hours and you had the responsibilities and lives of those people in your hands. Couldn't change a [unclear] shot of that.

I: Did you have to fight off the cold and sleepiness? Was that on your mind at times?

WMH: I don't think that you had to fight... You couldn't sleep, so that you didn't really have to fight off that. I think you had to try and just devise ways – slap your hands, put your hands in your pockets, stick them underneath your armpits, move your feet up and down, scrounge around, hope the time went by. You just did anything to survive and hope your changing your socks the way I described would protect your feet enough so you wouldn't get trench foot, and I didn't and that's what you did. The food, that was another problem. Couldn't eat C-rations because they gave you dysentery and you couldn't have dysentery being on the front lines. If you do, you're liable to get killed. You could eat K-rations, but you could only eat the breakfast and the lunch. The supper was no good. That would give you dysentery too. So, you had two meals of tuna fish size canned food plus a terrific chocolate bar that was in those rations – that's what you had. So, you lost weight like crazy, but that's okay because it made you even faster than you were before.

I: What were the Germans doing during this time?

WMH: They were doing patrols like we were doing patrols and that's all they were doing during this time until we finally attacked them in March of 1945. But they were – they didn't... At least, where I was, they didn't make any real concerted efforts. It was really a patrol type thing. But

still it made you aware that they could come through at any time because it was a kind of a mutual exchange where they would come and if they ran a patrol – and they ran a good patrol – you could wake up in the morning and have a couple of people dead, left there, just as a reminder that they'd been through.

I: So, in March '45 you went on the attack?

WMH: That's right.

I: What was that like?

WMH: It was like Private Ryan, but extremely confused. We were told that it would start with a big barrage by our artillery and that we were to follow the man in front of us. It was an extremely dark night and they had laid a wire for our company and if they followed the wire, then the company would get to the German positions, the German trenches, and be able to attack as a group. Well, we started out, I followed the man in front of us. When it got light, there were approximately six people in front of me, so I passed the word up, "What happened? Where's the company?" and the word was passed back down to me, "Well, we got separated from them and we're following a German wire." And we arrived at the German trench following a German wire. Fortunately, the trench, the portion that we got to, had been evacuated and left very shortly after that. We did meet up with one of our tanks and that tank was happy to see us. We were happy to see it and we decided to go in an easterly direction and we'd probably be able to connect up with a company. When we moved in that easterly direction, we were going through scrub terrain and we heard a tank coming towards us. And that, of course, is an infantryman's... You're always concerned about tanks because you think about getting run over by one of those and you don't carry things that really stop them. We didn't have any bazooka person around. Well, the tank, we saw it through the scrub, and it saw the tank we were with, so it fired on the tank we were with and it missed, fortunately. Our tank fired back and missed that tank. The other tank fired at our tank again and missed, fortunately. And our tank fired back and missed too. And our tank turned around and decided it was going to go back, so we followed it back. Some of the people that I was with threw their rifles away. They were so traumatized by this tank exchange and not wanting to get run over. We retained all of our equipment, the machine gun, the ammunition, and everything else, got back to the trench that we had started from, just after which a sergeant from the company appeared and said, "I'm glad we found you fellas. We're over here and we'll take you over to where the company is." Then we went over to the company and then the rest of the day we spent clearing trenches out. We later learned that the other tank that shot us was an American tank. So, that impressed me, is that you could have utter confusion and you have to react and you have to keep your equipment, but anything can happen. We found out that when we got back to the company that we'd lost two officers, been killed. One of them was the machine gun officer, the fella who was in charge of the machine guns, which I was, and the sergeant that was in charge of the machine guns. So, for the rest of the war, this fellow that I was with, by the name of Mo Kaiser, and I placed the machine gun, made all the determinations of the machine gun, because there were no officers. That's what happened on the beginning day of the attack.

I: Take us forward from there – this is in March of '45.

WMH: The next thing that we did was because we were planning to be in the second wave of going over the Rhine, we knew we had to get through the Siegfried Line. When we got near the Siegfried Line, we said, "We're going to be in reserve. We're sending up a part of the battalion to

try and get through a limited area of the Siegfried Line.” So that one of the companies was at, because I had a friend there, they went up and they fought all day and they didn’t get through. So, the word was, you’re going back the next day to get through the Siegfried Line. I can remember walking up a big hill. I can remember, spread out before me, seeing the dragon’s teeth and the gap that had been blown in the dragon’s teeth, so that they could get some tanks through it. We went to a big trench and replaced the company that was in there and were told that we were supposed to jump off about 8:00 in the morning and we should lay on top of the trench and be set to go. There’s going to be a big barrage. In front of us was a big woods and they said that the big fortifications of the Germans were beyond that. So, the barrage started and then I noticed a couple of what I thought were short rounds coming in. Short rounds are ones where the artillery for some reason, your own artillery drops shells on you. Well, it turned out they weren’t short rounds and it became apparent almost immediately that the Germans had started to fire their artillery at us where we were, only they had the precise location because they had that all calculated way beforehand. We received a lot of artillery and fortunately, I wasn’t affected, but some people just disappeared when the trench was hit. The person would be there and then, afterwards, when the shelling was over, they were gone. There was no trace of the person. When the shelling was over, we went forward, went into these woods and encountered a very large tank trap that was probably 20 feet deep by 40 feet across. None of the tanks could get over that so, we had to get across it to secure it so that they could bring up bulldozer tanks to fill that thing to get the tanks over. And we did go across it, slide down, come up the other side. Then we got into an artillery barrage because the Germans had seen that we’d moved there so they were trying to drive back our infantry and it was quite effective. One of the people near me was hit. He was an older fellow that had children. So, I went over and laid on top of him so that he wouldn’t try and get up and run while this barrage was going on, because his injury was to the knees. What, I don’t remember whether it was right or left knee and I knew that if he could just hang in there, he would have an injury that would send him out of combat and he would get home. When the barrage was over, a medic came over and took him back. We had lost the company headquarters in the barrage and the company commander. What we saw when we got to the tree lines in front of us was the last fortifications of the Germans which were very large concrete bunkers. We had practiced before to try and take those by having shaped charges placed on the doors. The disadvantage to that was that each one of the bunkers there would be able to shoot at the door of its adjoining bunker so there were no dead spots on that. We had 100 yards of absolutely open field across to get to those emplacements. The emplacements were bigger than this room. Each one of them was bigger. And inside they would have bunk beds that were like ships of canvas that would come down. They had a kitchen and, of course, the gun ports. We were told that they were going to reduce those forts by firing artillery at them. They fired the artillery at them and they didn’t reduce the fort. They were going to skip bomb them and they skip bombed them where planes would come down. It didn’t affect them and then they said, “Well, we’ll knock them out with tank fire.” And they fired them, and it didn’t affect them at all. So, we had the 100 yards to go and they said, “You’ve got to go take them now.” At that time, I thought there was no possible way to survive that. To go across the 100 yards. But I did and so there’s no question that the good Lord makes things happen to go that distance. And when we got to there, the [at 39:07-39:31 tape is garbled and skips words] we got to the fort ... we got off ... by a piece of shrapnel from one of the guns, German guns that were firing and fortunately the shrapnel ... and not me, and I have that shrapnel because it would have killed me or seriously injured me. The helmet protected against that. When we got to where the fort was, then we had found that one of our people who was trying to engage the other fort with

a BAR had been shot in the arm. The BAR actually was broken; it had been hit. Because they had a 20 millimeter in that fort and they had a machine gun.

Tape break

WMH: Just to go on with what I was telling you, that this fort was active so that, the one that was adjacent, and so in order for our people to get to the door with some kind of shaped charge, what we did was to set the machine gun up and it was this machine gun was converted to a bipod, not a tripod, because we could get more firepower with that type of machine gun. You have more machine guns to a company. Mo Kaiser was operating that that day. I was shooting my M-1. We engaged the aperture of that fort and I can remember the bullets striking at a distance in front of us from the fort and walking towards us and thinking, you know, "We're either going to win this or lose this, in a big way," but that fort stopped shooting when maybe the bullets were striking 10-15 feet in front of us, so we had apparently effectively closed up the aperture with our firepower. Right after that, we were told that our people blew the door, the adjacent fort was captured. We were told that, it was late afternoon, that there would be a counterattack, so we should be prepared for that. And when we looked at what we had to stave off a counterattack, we just kind of laughed because there were approximately 8 bullets left for the machine gun and I had two clips left – well, that's 16 rounds. So, we wouldn't have lasted any period of time. Fortunately, the counterattack never came and we were, when they brought the ammunition up, we were through the forts and I was pretty happy because I was alive still.

I: At that point, did you remain on the line or did you come out of the line?

WMH: No, we never came out of the line. The only place where you got out of the line was you either were killed or badly injured but there was no way that you were going to get ... In fact, from the time that I was overseas until the war was over, I think had three showers. That's pretty unusual, because most of us were used to showering once every two days and certainly, when I was growing up, you either took a bath or you showered and so to go that period of time is not something you would do in a normal situation but there was no way in combat that you were going... First, there were no facilities, secondly, you're not going to take your clothes off to do that. The next unusual thing happened is we went into this major town, Zweibrücken, and it was the first big German town that we had run into. When we came into it, there was nobody in the town. And it was so eerie. When we were searching houses to... There was food on the table. We couldn't believe what had happened. What could have happened to all these people? Three or 4,000, 5,000 people? Where are they? We got a call that we've got a convoy that's been struck by... A German convoy of troops that's been struck, that's close by, the air force and we should get over there right away. They brought regular 6x6 trucks up. We loaded onto the trucks and I said, "I can't believe we're going to go to the battle in 6x6's". We went up to a grade and drove through fields and finally got to this bluff and got out of the trucks. And went over the bluff. There was this convoy that had been struck by the air force and it was a horse drawn convoy in part and there were horses killed. There were all kinds of vehicles. There were Germans shooting at us. But we started down the hill to take the convoy, which we ultimately captured, but as we were going down the hill fighting the Germans, out of the side of the hillside came this great group of people and these were the women and children from this town. They intermixed with it, so it was trying to keep them away from the Germans when you were capturing the Germans and those people were so scared. They'd been told stories that we would kill them. As it wound up, after

we captured the Germans and it was just getting dark, our Sergeant came round and said, "Have you got any food because these people do not have any food?" So, what rations we had we gave him, of course. So, we wound up with nothing. At least, it went to the people. So, again, it was like Private Ryan, one of those things that you just, just react, it was so unusual.

I: After Zweibrücken, how much longer was it until the end of the war?

WMH: A long time. A long time in experiences. The next place we went to was the Rhine and we were supposed to be in the second wave. Fortunately, the first wave had gone through the experience with very little difficulty, and so the boats, which were about 20 feet long that we were in, didn't have any problem except that the Rhine was in full flood. So that even though the sailor who was operating was very good, he still had difficulty getting across the river. I was amazed about that because if there had been real resistance, it would have been a great loss of life there. So, I'm surprised they really didn't make the effort to hold that. From there we went to a fort town called Aschaffenburg on the Main River and that was one of the fort towns that Hitler had designated would never surrender. It was the Easter Week that we went there, the Monday of Easter Week. We went into that town and they had more Germans troops in the town than we had soldiers attacking. We had about 4,500 people that attacked the town. They had originally 30,000 but they sloughed off some of those troops to other places, so they wound up with something in the neighborhood of 5,000 and they had blown the walls between the cellars, so when you attacked and cleared a place, you really hadn't, and they shot the first aid people. So, it was that house-to-house type of real bitter fighting. On Good Friday, I had somebody killed alongside of me and on Easter Sunday, I had somebody killed alongside of me. And the way the town was ultimately taken and finally captured was that they got the commanding officer, who had hung a German officer for even considering surrendering, and when they got this German commander, they said, "We're going to walk you around town with your headquarters and you're going to be in front of one of our tanks, and if anybody fires on us, we're going to blow you away with the tank, so you're going to tell everybody to surrender." And that's exactly how the town surrendered. But it could have been bypassed and if it had been bypassed, in retrospect, then I think there would have been a lot of lives saved on the American side. But I can understand that in taking that, it was important to show that you were not going to let anything that Hitler did deter the winning of the war and winning it unconditionally. But what it did do, it produced a number of people from the media coming, and I can remember one of them coming up to our machine gun and said, "Would you please run out there so we can take some pictures?" And at that time, it was some of the bitter fighting. We said, "You know, if you want to watch us from a distance, you can, but don't go out there yourself or you're going to get killed." It was a very difficult fight. From there, we went to attack Nuremburg and there were three divisions to take Nuremburg. That was another house-to-house fight for Nuremburg. It was a city that had been reduced because of the bombing, but you still had to take it by fighting house-to-house. That ended. They said some of the divisions will parade here. We were picked for parading. Apparently, they felt that our division had a pretty good record and they wanted us to push on to Munich because they didn't want any of the Werewolves to develop any fighting. They wanted to defeat Germany as quickly as they could and as rapidly as they could, so they said, "What you will do is get on tanks, hang on the side of the tanks. You're going to go down the Autobahn. And when you get shot at, then you get off and fight. This is a breakthrough so you go as fast as you can." And that's exactly what we did. We got on the tanks, hung on the side of them and when the hull got hit by shells, by rifle fire or by some other kind of fire, you jumped off and, with the tank, then you would attack whatever

type of possession, town or whatever it was, that had fired at you. Sometimes at night, you would be pulled back to defend a unit like the artillery which didn't have soldiers to protect it against Germans who would attempt to attack this spear point of our group that had broken through. I can remember going back to protect an artillery group and they kind of laughing at us and that night there was 30 - 40 Germans who came down to attack the artillery group and we captured them and next day the artillery and that night were extremely happy that we as infantry had come back there because they would have been wiped out. When we got down to closer to Germany, then we got to the Danube River. The Danube River, I thought it would be simple to cross because we were close to now the war ending. It was obvious it would, but what we did was to put ... The company put three boats across. These boats I've described 18 feet to 20 feet long with men in them across the river and as they were getting across the river, a machine gun, a German machine gun, fired on them and sunk the boats, and the people were getting [unclear] in flood. They were swept away in all of those three boats that people were lost, and I was told by our Lieutenant to go and knock out the machine gun that had done that. He said, "You can pick some fellows to get the machine gun." Well, it was across the river. And so, I picked a couple of people. I thought the only way we were going to get that machine gun was to try to find a spot where you could down into the river in some way and be able to shoot. Because I'd pretty much pinpointed where it was. It was at the base of a big tree. So, I got the fellows and we kind of walked up the river and we found some cattail area and was able to go up the cattails and pretty much cross from that. I just said "When we count to three, we're all going to shoot at that one spot. And if you don't shoot well, we're not going to be here because there's no cover in cattails. He's going to be able to sweep us." And fortunately, I think we all shot pretty well because the machine gun never answered again. So, we went from there to Munich and when we got to Munich, we didn't have to fight into Munich, but one of the strange things happened when we got to Munich is, after we had gotten into the city, part of our division had gone out and taken out Dachau. Dachau is immediately adjacent to Munich and I saw the first group of these people being brought in and I thought, "It's not possible for those people to survive because of their physical condition." Of course, many of them did survive and went on to Israel and helped that nation fight and achieve its independence. I was so impressed with that, that I went to Israel - I'm Scotch, I'm not Jewish. We went on a military tour and with the Israeli military and I was so impressed with that country that I wrote a piece about it which is in the book that I've given you.

I: Well, let's cover a couple of things because we're running down on time.

WMH: Sure.

I: Where were you when the war ended in Europe?

WMH: Munich.

I: What were you thinking when you first heard the news?

WMH: Well, we were told we're going to be the second wave to go to Japan. I was applying for that. I was asked to come to the intelligence and reconnaissance for the division and I did go with them and I thought the fight for Japan would probably be as bitter as it was in Germany.

I: Tell us about, briefly, what happened after the war. You came back...

WMH: I came back and was discharged. I wanted to go college and become an attorney. When I came back, I was married my second year in school. I was fortunate to be able to take advantage

of a program where you only had to go to college two years and you go to law school if your marks were good enough. So, you actually cut the seven years to five years. With working you could get through, so that's exactly what I did. I got through two years and went to law school. But I had determined that I try and do something to improve things. So, I got involved in the environmental movement when I came back here and did it on a scientific basis. We classified all the waters in this area. We got the classifications high to protect people. I created a laboratory to do the testing so we never said anything that we couldn't absolutely prove. We presently have a... The laboratory exists and we have educational material for students for grammar school, middle school, and high school. They're sold throughout the country. It's a not-for-profit. We do testing. We just got done last year testing the barge canal. As far as I know, the first time it's ever been tested. We'll be back there testing again. We've tested all of the streams. We tested on a biological basis and a chemical basis so we've got that kind of knowledge. In the years past, we closed the atomic reprocessing plant which was the only one that existed in the country with the exception of the one down in TN. We closed that here because it was doing so much damage. We had a big fight over that. We've also taken over, we've got a group that has taken over a hatchery in this county and the hatchery – it used to be run by the County, but they couldn't afford to run it anymore – and we're raising brown trout and we're raising steelheads. We are in one of the County parks so our customers – there's no charge of course – but the customers are children, retired people, and handicapped people. They can come to the park and fish there for nothing. Again, the steelheads go out in the lake. They stay out there for a couple of years. They come back and spawn here and when they go out, they may be 6-8 inches long. When they come back up from spawning, they're 20 inches long and they're wonderful game fish for people. I'm pleased about this – what we've attempted to do from an environmental standpoint.

I: What about family? You got married.

WMH: Well, I got married, had six children, one of which died and then two Korean daughters, so I have seven children and they're all great. Just one of them doesn't have children and we're a very close family.

I: Still a practicing attorney?

WMH: Still a practicing attorney.

I: Before we conclude, we'll give you the last few minutes for any other thoughts. Anything when you think back to your time in WWII in combat that particularly stands out?

WMH: Well, I think two things stand out and I think that they're poignant today and that is that I would say the most important thing to survival is first, most important thing to survival is, people should teach their children how to shoot. There is no way that the military has the time to teach them how to shoot. And if they go into combat without that knowledge, they tend to not shoot, they tend to be afraid, they tend to move around, they have no idea and they don't have any confidence and I've seen time after time people get wounded or killed by reason of that. So, it's incredible to me that when we teach them how to swim and we teach them about protecting themselves, using antibiotics or whatever, that we don't teach them how to shoot which is the very chance to give them to survive. The other thing is, I think, trying to instill in people into not having them carry too much weight because too much weight will mean that person is going to die. One of the replacements we had come in had his coat and he had a pack. When I saw him, he was asking, "What should I do?" I said, "Throw both of them away." He threw away the coat, but he

wouldn't throw away everything in the pack. So, he came the next morning, he came to me and I said, "You've got the pack. Throw it away." And this was the time we were hanging on tanks and he wouldn't do it. So that very day, we had to jump off and fight and he couldn't run very well because he had this lumbering thing. He tried to get it off and he was shot. I don't think he died, but he was badly wounded. Just because of that. I see today in pictures of some of our people supposedly going towards combat over in Afghanistan with crazy loads. You never put people into combat that way and I hope that isn't what they anticipate, but I think that that's a very key factor. I think that the other thing is in the second World War, we made sure the infantryman had the best weapon. That is the grand rifle. But today, we're giving them a very poor rifle in the caliber, 223, is ridiculous. It's a weapon that you wouldn't go bear hunting with. You couldn't knock a bear down with it and you can't knock a man down with it. It's an excuse and it was done by McNamara, a person who was doing it to have it economical because he could issue it to all of the branches. But the infantry needs a rifle that will stop a person and will penetrate things and still have that round do damage.

I: Anything else you'd like to add?

WMH: I think that's it.

I: Thank you.