

**Pincus L. Friedman
Veteran**

**Robert von Hasseln
Wayne Clarke
Interviewer**

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Q: Mister Friedman, tell me, where and when were you born?

PF: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1924. I'm now seventy-seven years old.

Q: What part of Brooklyn were you born in?

PF: Williamsburg, Brooklyn. There is a rather strange oddity. It was sort of a maternity home on DeKalb Avenue. And strangely enough, many, many years later, my mother wound up in an old age home which was two doors away from there.

Q: Tell me about your family.

PF: I'm married. My wife is from Britain. She is Welsh. We were married right after D-Day in 1944 in Cardiff, South Wales. I was with my unit then. It was in the chemical warfare service. We were stationed right outside Cardiff. Which is now the capital of Wales. And we'll be celebrating our fifty-seventh anniversary next year. I have two daughters and two grandsons by my oldest daughter. I'm very, very happy to say that I got the opportunity to dance at the wedding of both my grandsons. If I would wish anyone well, I would wish that they could have the same experience.

Q: What about your mother and father?

PF: I'm glad you asked me about that, because I want to dedicate this particular interview to two men. One is my father. The other one is my Army buddy who was killed alongside me in Germany during the war. My father, Jack Friedman, was drafted into the Army in February 1918. He was wounded and gassed in August, 1918. Sent to the hospital, returned to his company. He was in the 77th Infantry Division. Then he was wounded again in the arm by a machine gun

bullet in the Meuse-Argonne on November 1, 1918. And for all of that anguish and agony, he got zilch, nothing. I don't know if they were awarding Purple Hearts at that time.

Q: Not until 1932.

PF: There you go. So he never even got that.

Q: But he was in the 77th, huh?

PF: Yes. Company M.

Q: Company M. So he wasn't with the lost battalion, was he?

PF: No. At one point in time, I felt that I was following in my father's footsteps up to a certain point. Because when I went into service, they sent me out to Camp Yaphank, Long Island, which is where he had gone to. After that, of course, we diverged. But then when I went into the infantry after the Battle of the Bulge, I was hoping that whatever happened to me then would not be a replica of what happened to them. Being wounded twice, and gassed once was enough for one family.

Q: So when did you enter the service?

PF: I entered service in January of 1943. I hadn't reached my nineteenth birthday at that time. I wasn't scheduled to go, but some of my friends had already volunteered. So I said I wanted to go with the next group that was going. And then I was sent down to Camp Sibert, Alabama, to take my basic training. I was in the chemical warfare service. Now, the name of our company, and I say this with a smile, was the 111th Chemical Impregnating Company. That was the actual name of the company. After a while, somebody thought that this was a bit too suggestive, which I'm sure everybody would agree [laughs]. And it was changed to Chemical Processing Company. In essence, our mission was we were essentially a laundry company. Our job was to take the clothing, impregnate it with certain chemicals against chemical warfare, against gasses. We were one of two such companies in the entire European Theater when we went overseas. Fortunately, of course, they never had to use our services.

Q: How did you end up in the chemical warfare service?

PF: That's where I was placed after I took my Army test. After a few weeks, I went into the ASTP Program [Army Specialized Training Program] at the University of Alabama, but then suddenly it shut down, and I was sent out back to my old company. We left Boston in October of 1943 and landed in Liverpool. Then we

went down to our base in Wales, and that's where I met my wife shortly thereafter.

Q: Now, what was your training like in the chemical warfare service? What did they train you on?

PF: Oh, they trained us. Great reliance was placed on the various poison gasses that we used. We had charts. In fact, I have one at home, which specified your mustard gas, chlorine gas, things like that. During the training, we experienced interaction with several of the chemical smoke companies. They were mostly black soldiers at that time, those companies. We had this special training for how to defend against it, how to identify the various gasses. Then the actual work in the laundry itself was setting up. My classification was as a tumbler man. I used to operate one of these machines where you put the clothing in, and the chemicals would get into the clothing. When they came out, they were very stiff. I don't know anyone who ever wore it really. It was there if it was needed. No one ever knew what would happen in that respect.

Q: Did you all feel that there was a chance that the Germans would use chemical warfare?

PF: Oh, absolutely. There's no question about that. Everybody had the same feeling. Especially when things started to go bad with the German, with their losses, etcetera.

Strangely enough, we had set up our laundry outside of Cardiff, and we were using German prisoners of the war to do most of the heavy labor. That was our first contact with them. From what I could see, they looked very well fed and taken care of.

Q: Did you ever have any reservations about working in chemical warfare after your father had been gassed?

PF: No, I never did, because it wasn't like we were going to be sending out the artillery with smoke and poison gas or shelling with poison gas. We were so innocuous with what our task was that I never related anything like that to my father being gassed.

Q: Well, tell me about Wales and how you met your wife.

PF: Oh, yes. Well, we got off the ship in Liverpool and were marched right onto a train. They pulled the shades down on the train. We had absolutely no idea where we were going. Rode along in the darkened train. Finally, after, I think it must have been about three hours, we got off. We looked at the sign, and it said, the

name of the town escapes my mind. Anyway, we asked the local station master, who was on the platform, where are we? He said, Wales. Now, everybody to this day, I think it's true, knows that there is Wales. But where it is and who they are and what it means, very few people know. I consider them to be the most unknown part of the entire British Isles. Now, of course, there's a lot of people who come from Wales. My wife is still very, very much Welsh in spirit, and I've adopted a great deal of that. We've been back several times. She has family there and friends, and I consider it to be a wonderful country. I met my wife at a Red Cross dance. I was nineteen years old and I was smitten. That's the word you can use, very much so. Actually, as it turned out, this is a bit of a digression. Out of my company. A company is roughly, what, one-hundred-fifty men? Something like that. There were five marriages while we were there, which is really a lot. I was smitten, and I wondered. I asked her to marry me, and that was a very, very difficult thing. Number one, the most important impediment was I was underage. Underage being that if you weren't twenty-one, you were underage. I had to get a letter written by my father to say that my wife, if she ever came over would not be a burden, that she would be taken care of. I had to bring her to be interviewed by my captain. He had his headquarters in a Nissen hut at that time, and I brought her down. I was not allowed to be present there. And then it had to go up through the chain of command. To General Eisenhower's headquarters before permission was given. I was sent off on detached duty with a unit. We were going around to the various troops that were massing for the D-Day attack or going over to France.

We set up a tent and ran them through with their gas masks. We set off the tear gas in the tent and run them through as a training method and various other things. And I saw a good deal of that part of the country, western England and Wales, and traveled around.

In fact, we went to Swansea. It was bombed terribly. Swansea was bombed. Cardiff was bombed. They were big port cities. Cardiff was at that time the largest coal exporting city in the world. And South Wales is a big coal country. I was most fortunate that my wife had the experience of being bombed out of her bed. She was actually thrown out of a bed.

It was a phosphorus bomb that landed in her room. I don't have to tell you about a phosphorus bomb. Very difficult to put out. You're not supposed to put water on it. Sand is supposed to be thrown on it. The day we were married was a Saturday, and it was eleven days after D-Day. We were married in the city hall in Cardiff in a civil ceremony with a friend and one of my army buddies as witnesses. Then we went on the train. Her older sister lived in London. We went up there and we spent the weekend there. Now, if you were in London during the

war, at that time of year, they had what was called Double British summer time. And that meant that it didn't get dark till about eleven o'clock at night. It was done by design. I always remember that. We were sitting with my new sister-in-law. Her husband was home on leave. He was in the forces and having a drink. And I was waiting for it to get dark to get home and get her to bed. This was my honeymoon night. [laughs] But that's only a little funny. I overstayed my leave. When I came back, I was put on an extended KP duty as a punishment. But I lived through that.

Then we went over to France in July of that year, landed at Utah beach, which was really something to see, even though it was like a little over a month after the original D-Day landings. Of course, Utah beach was not the one that took the heaviest punishment like Omaha did. Then we went into an apple orchard right outside of Cherbourg, and we set up our camp there. We wound up finally building our own huts out of whatever we could, permanent positions. We set up our laundry, and we had the POWs come in to do the work.

Q: Were you still doing the chemical impregnating or basically just laundry?

PF: Yes. We were doing the chemical impregnating. We also did regular laundry, but that was only a sideline when it was needed. That was of secondary importance. I admit, very frankly, that I didn't have my heart in what I was doing at that particular time. I was newly married, my wife was just across the channel, and it was a very difficult time for me emotionally. I was there from July until the Battle of the Bulge started. They started to pull our troops from the rear echelons to make up for the losses in the infantry divisions. I was shipped to Reims, which is west of Paris. We had a tremendous camp there. Tremendous. To get some infantry training. After all, you know, time had passed, and this was already, let's see, 1943, 1944. Almost a year and a half after I first arrived overseas. There was one particular incident that I always remember. One night, we must have had some bad food, the entire camp. We think it was bad beans. Anyway, in the early hours of the morning, the lights went on everywhere, and everybody rushed for the latrine. It was just a mass exodus. I heard with great dismay and horror that two guys had actually fallen into the latrines. You know what they were, they were big trenches. Tremendous. Anyway, I always remember that. Another thing I remember about that camp was in the evening, listening to a German prisoners-of-war singing. Very, very haunting and moving. You could hear them. They sang [the song by] Lily Mullane [called] *Underneath the Lamp Post* in German. It sent shivers up and down your spine. After that, I went and I joined my company, B

Company, 94th Infantry Division. Patton's 3rd army. Now, the 94th had a very, very interesting history. You want me to go into that?

Q: Yes. Go ahead.

PF: They landed in Britain in August of 1944. This was after D-Day. They did their maneuvers and everything. They came over on the [ship] Queen Elizabeth, the old Queen Elizabeth, as a matter of fact. They landed in Britain. They were there for, I think, a couple of weeks. Then they were sent over to France, and their mission was one of containment. There were two ports, Saint Nazaire and Lorient, that had tremendous submarine pens for the Germans. This is on the west coast of Brittany. It was decided to bypass these two ports and not attempt to take them. But they had to be contained and that was the mission of the 94th Division. They suffered some casualties, and they were there for mortars, and they had patrols, and they had contact with the German troops that were there. But then the Battle of the Bulge. They were going to be relieved. This is another very, very interesting story. They were to be relieved by a unit. Strike that. I don't remember who they were to be relieved by, but as it turned out, the 66th Division, which was called the Black Panthers, was embarked on December 26, the day after Christmas 1944, to cross the channel and to join the forces. I think it was Bradley's army. They were on the [Belgian] Leopoldville. That was the ship that was sunk in the channel with a loss of over seven-hundred lives. This story did not come out until many years after the war. In fact, I have an article that I cut out and brought with me from the local paper that was just in the paper just a while ago about this tragedy. They were sunk and the devastation. So they became the ones that relieved the 94th Division in their duties around that perimeter. I joined the company in the early part of January. We were assaulting an area that was called the Siegfried Switch and the Saar-Moselle Triangle. This was a kind of meeting of the two rivers. The Germans had their Siegfried Line, and this was sort of a connection point at that particular line. It was very, very hard fighting. In addition to rivers, you had heavy woods.

And the second part of my dedication is to this young boy who was my buddy for a very short period of time. I was a bazooka man. He was my assistant. We were advancing through the woods through some wooded areas when we started to take extremely heavy shelling. Now, I don't know. Anyone who's been in contact knows what it is to be shelled when you're in the woods. Not only do you have the shell fragments, but you have the fragments from trees, which can be just as devastating. That was when I found out what an impact a weapon like the German 88mm had. That gun was absolutely overpowering with its strength and

the power of how it threw its shells out. Just in the sound alone. You can always tell when an 88mm was shooting at you. We were trying to dig in. The ground was very hard. He was alongside me. All of a sudden he said, I'm hit. And he fell down face forward. I was very, very upset. Because, number one, I couldn't see where he was hit. I was looking and we were being shelled. It was a very, very tough experience. Then the word came back, fall back, fall back. We just had to fall back on our lines. I tried. I wanted to lift him and carry him out, but I was afraid that if I did, that would be the end of him. I went back, got back to our lines. We were in a pill box in a bunker. I told my lieutenant what had happened. I said, I wanted to get some of the German prisoners and see if we could go back and get him. We started to do that, and it was just impossible to go through. We just never got to him, never found out. And I never found out at that time what had happened to him. In 1996. Well, let me say this first. In February of 1946, I wrote a letter. I had the address of his hometown. His name was Gerald Vanden Bosch. Now, Vanden Bosch is a Dutch name. He came from Holland, Michigan. That's the tulip capital of the USA. I'd written a letter to his father, to his parents. I had their address, Rural Route two, Holland, Michigan. I wrote a letter in February 1946. This was a month after I got home. I got a response saying that they had not heard anything about it, about him. This was in March of 1945. [Not] until October, they got the final word that he was killed on that day and he was interred. They were asked whether or not they wanted to bring him back. They did bring him back. They had a ceremony back in his hometown. He was very happy that I was able to write to him and give him the knowledge of what happened to his son at the last moment.

Fifty years later, in 1996, my wife and I went out to Michigan. She has a family out there, a niece and a family. And I had just an acute impulse that I wanted to contact the family and meet with them, or at least have some contact with them. I thought my job would be very easy. The name Vanden Bosch is not Smith, and it's not German. Gee, that shouldn't be too difficult. Vanden Bosch can be spelled three ways. It can be spelled with two syllables, with three syllables, or just as one name. And then through my daughter, who had a friend, who had a friend with a computer, was able to generate a list of names in that area. She came up with six pages of names of Vanden Boschs, which made it almost impossible. There wasn't a Rural Route two anymore. The address was not good. I called up the local National Guard there. I called the YMCA. I called the church, but I had no success. Then somebody suggested that I write a letter to the newspaper in town and see if they could help me. I wrote a letter. I have a copy here which I sent. And they were kind enough to publish a story in the paper saying I was seeking

information or trying to contact his family and gave my name, my address, my phone number. And sure enough, I got several responses. I heard he had a sister. He was eighteen years old when he died. Eighteen [said with emphasis]. The one who helped me the most was his sister-in-law, his oldest brother's wife. She had all the family records and everything. And to this day we've corresponded. I still have it in my mind. I'd love to go out there and see them one day. I think that I feel very good about what I did pursuing this. Just as I felt very good about the way I pursued and made this tremendous effort to get married. It was not easy. It was most difficult. When you're nineteen years old, you can do a lot of things.

Q: Now tell us about after you went to the 94th Division. How did the rest of the war go for you?

PF: After we broke through the [Siegfried] Switch Line and crossed the Saar River, we were part of the breakout toward the Rhine River. It was absolutely a fantastic experience. We were mounted on trucks and we were going hell bent for leather. At one point, our company was briefly attached to the 10th Armored Division. And we were just going, passing through towns. You saw the white sheets hanging from the windows and you looked at some of the soldiers that had been captured. They were babies. They were sixteen, seventeen [year old] boys. I think we even saw some women in uniform at that time. At night, we stayed in any place we wanted to. We just threw the people out of their houses and slept there overnight. And then when we hit the Rhine River, we stopped. Our division stopped. Our mission was a holding mission at that time.

What was created was the Ruhr Pocket. The Ruhr Pocket was a tremendous encirclement. We were on the west bank of the Rhine River to prevent any troops escaping out of that pocket over there across the Rhine. And we used to send nightly patrols over the Rhine. Now let me go into some length about these patrols. These patrols, as it turned out, were something like a man who was waiting on death row for his execution. That's how dangerous they were. The Germans had mined the opposite bank of the Rhine River and we kept sending patrols. We were ordered to send patrols out, for what reason, it was hard to fathom. Maybe to estimate the strength of the enemy. I really don't know. But all sorts of stories were floating back to us about what these mines were doing. We went across the river at night. These were night patrols in a little boat, and you didn't know what happened. So when your turn came, we went down to the river and the lieutenant was very frank with us. He said, look, we're going to cross the river. When we hit the other side, we'll take a look around then we get right back. Unfortunately, one of the guys in our group there started to blubber and cry and

got down on his knees. I felt very, very sorry for him because he just lost complete control, and there was no way that he was going to go into that boat. In any event, we crossed the river, paddled across, and landed. And the lieutenant said, I need somebody to wiggle up ahead and see what's going on. Get on your belly. To this day, I don't know why I volunteered. You know, you learn about volunteering in the Army. That's an old story. [smiles] Looking back at it now, I think I was really pumped with adrenaline. Absolutely pumped, and I volunteered. I started to crawl forward, and I was maybe twenty to thirty yards away from the group by the river there. I had my bayonet and the scabbard, and suddenly I felt something holding me. I reached out my hand, and it was a wire. It was a tripwire. I couldn't see anything. I was feeling along the wire, and suddenly my hand hit a prong, a metal prong that was sticking up. I immediately recognized what it was. It was a mine that was called the Bouncing Betty. This was planted in the earth with the spokes sticking out. If you stepped on it, you lost your foot, you lost your arm, you lost your life, possibly. I touched it very gingerly, and I tried, and made an immediate retreat, going back. Trying to make sure I went back the same way I crawled up. I told the lieutenant what I'd found. He said, okay, fine, let's get into the boat, which we did and got back. That was one of the more harrowing experiences I had.

Another one was actually shortly before that. I was very much taken by some of the experiences that were encountered by our troops during the Gulf War. They referred to what is called friendly fire. I experienced friendly fire, and I know how devastating that could be to anyone. We were approaching a wooded thicket, heavily wooded, on a skirmish line. Suddenly, somebody saw some movement in the woods, and somebody opened up with his BAR-Browning Automatic Rifle, and immediately the entire skirmish line started firing into the woods. It was just a mass reaction. You're walking, you're in Germany, you didn't know what was ahead of you. I didn't shoot. I was not directly on the front line. I was right behind the front-line guys. And then suddenly I heard my sergeant saying, cease fire, cease fire. He was yelling at the top of his voice, trying to get them to stop, to cease firing. We were firing on our own troops. We didn't know it at the time, of course. I never found out who was killed, who was hit or who was what. But I can certainly say to this day that anyone who experienced something like that, you never forget it.

Another experience we had was advancing out of town at dusk, running behind one of our tanks. You loved the tank if you were running behind it and you were facing enemy fire. That's your friend, you want to stay as close as possible. We

were bedded down overnight in this particular town. And word came down. We were warned to not congregate outdoors. Don't form a group anywhere. Unfortunately, the next morning, some guys did. They just got careless, whatever it was. And the Germans lobbed mortar shells right into them. Another devastating situation.

So I had my fear. I consider myself very lucky I was never wounded. The closest I came to that was actually when I was in the apple orchard in Cherbourg. We were out in the truck, and I was riding the front cab down near the beach, near the water. Suddenly we struck something with an explosion. The whole cab of the roof came down on top of us. The guys on the back of the truck were actually blown off the truck. We had hit a mine. There were mines all over the place. Everywhere you went in France, in Germany. I look back at it now and I laugh because, you know, gee, I said, are we entitled to the Purple Heart? I had a cheek that was blown up, and I wasn't sure whether or not I was entitled to anything. But I let that pass. I guess that's about the closest I came to having my ticket punched.

We wound up on the Rhine River. After the encirclement was complete, our division was responsible for liberating some very large towns. Trier, Ludwigshafen. We were involved with that. And then it was April, the war was over. We were going to Dusseldorf for occupation.

Q: Let's hold there. We have to switch tapes. Tape two. Interview of Mister Pincus L. Friedman. Mister Friedman, you were telling me you were with the 94th Division in Europe in 1925.

PF: Yes. And we were at Dusseldorf. It was probably one of the best experiences I had during the war. My company, the area of occupation was right in the heart of town. We picked out a modern apartment building. I was, at that time, the company interpreter for the captain. The reason I was the interpreter was because I'm Jewish, I speak some Jewish, I don't speak German. But I thought I was better than anybody else, you know, making myself understood. We went and rang all the bells in the lobby. People were poking their heads out and [asked], what's going on? I gave them one hour to get out, to vacate their quarters, their apartments. The only thing they were allowed to do was take their bedding and linen with them. Everything else had to remain. And that's what happened. That was company headquarters, and that went on in various buildings. From what I could see at Dusseldorf, which is on the Rhine River, it was a beautiful town. But bombed to shit to hell, but not that badly. There were

still some wonderful parts, luxurious parts, very nice. They had one main street called the Konigsallee, King's Alley, which was like a sunken street with trees and everything. They had bath houses along the river. All very nice at one time. I had my own room. I had a private bed. It was delightful, it faced out on a courtyard. My job was to keep the captain happy. My captain was a wonderful guy. He was from Hawaii. His name was Joe Wancio. He had only one thing on his mind after the fighting stopped. And that was women. He was a great pursuer. He took me along on his various joints together with our executive officer, who was also a very nice guy from New York, I believe, Lieutenant Bloom. And we were out with various female ladies of the area. Some of them were very nice, some of them...unfortunately, he got hooked up with one woman. Her name was Hilda. She spoke English better than I did. And her only thought was to get somebody she could latch onto to get over to the States. That was my first contact also with German civilians who would come to the door at various times with various things. And I formed an opinion then, which I still hold to this day. I found them to be the biggest hypocrites. Not one of them would acknowledge any of the atrocities that occurred. They just didn't know about it. They were following orders. The usual story that you hear about the Germans and the German population, and I was subjected to enough of that to find them in great part, it was true, absolutely true. Then, unfortunately, came the partition of Germany into different occupation zones. Our area in Dusseldorf went to the British. We had to get out. Where were we going? We were marched onto the train. This was in August, 1945. No, it must have been July. Because August is when the atom bomb, which is another story. It was July, so we were there for a couple of months. There was lots of crying and sobbing at the railroad station by many women there. And we put on the boxcars and we went. We weren't sure where we were going to land and end up. We went through Nuremberg, which was really blasted. The worst town I saw for damage was Aachen. It is one of the first towns you hit when you went into Germany. In French, it's called Aix la Chapelle. But that was flattened completely. Anyway, to digress. Went through Nuremberg, and finally we wound up in Czechoslovakia. That's where we were, right by the border, near the Russians. We were partly in the country. This was my first taste of real country life. And not only life, but the smells that come from country farms, which I'd never experienced before. I learned how to dance a fair Polka.

Had several interesting experiences. We had a great deal of contact with DP's. DP's were displaced persons. These were not the concentration camp victims. They were displaced persons. There were thousands of them all over Europe from all different countries, and they all were looking for one thing. They wanted to get

out, to get somewhere where they could start their lives again. And it was really very, very pitiful. Some of them were highly educated. I made contact with one man who was an artist. He came down and he sketched us. He sketched fellow soldiers. I have it at home, the portraits he did. He wrote to me. And he wanted to come to the United States. Everybody wanted to come to the United States, to the land of promise. I don't think it's changed that much in the world, in certain parts of the world.

In the middle of August, word came down. Class A uniforms, dress parades. We were trucked down to a big open field, and it was a quite hot day in the blazing sun, the sun was really hot. And we were standing there and we were waiting to be addressed by General Patton. General Patton was coming out to address the troops, and we were standing there. Finally, they gave the word. At ease. The smoking lamp was lit. "Smoke 'em if you got 'em". And then in the distance, we heard the sirens, and saw the motorcycles coming. We saw the jeep with the big four stars. And there he was riding in the jeep. He had a helmet liner, the shiniest I've ever seen in my life, with the big four stars in front. He was wearing his two pearl-handled pistols of course. And with his buddies. When he got out of that jeep, he was ramrod straight. Just incredible. And you looked at him and you said to yourself, everything you ever heard about this guy you could believe was true. He got up on a little platform. He started, and he said, come on you sons-of-bitches. Come forward. Nearly every other word was a curse word. Why he had to say that, I don't know. I guess that was his own thing. But that was some experience, just being there a few feet from him and listening to him address the troops. He was praising us, all of that stuff. Of course, a few months later, in December, that horrible story. Everyone remembers the motion picture *Patton* with George C. Scott. But I don't know how many people saw the follow up for television showing how Patton died. The accident that occurred in the car and he wound up in the hospital. His neck was broken. But I believe to this day he's still buried over there in Luxembourg. I don't think they ever returned him to the estates for burial. I think he's buried out there in the military [unclear] 46.34 Listen, we were all very proud in the long run to say we were part of Patton's army. Blood and guts. Your blood, his guts. [laughs] That's the expression.

So there I was in Czechoslovakia. I was a sergeant. I went. They had a victory day parade in Pilsen. Pilsen was, of course, famous for their beer. I never got to Prague. But I was sent on detached service with one of my officers. [unclear] 47.21 They had this victory parade. All the units. It was just a marvelous parade. Wonderful experience to see all the various divisions and corps and tanks and

everything. Artillery marching down in Pilsen. A victory parade. In September, the word came down about the points. I was way up there. I'd been overseas for almost three years. No, not three years. Yes, 1943, 1944. Two years plus. I had my points, and I was in the first group to go.

Now, this is something. I've told this story on occasion. I did not know how to drive a car or drive a vehicle. But there was an advance party that was going out to go from Czechoslovakia to France to the camps there that were used for the embarkation to go home. They were going by truck and jeep. I was twenty years old. Nothing fazed me. I went into the company headquarters and said I needed a license. He said, what can you drive? I said a jeep. What do they call the trucks? The four-x-four. So he checked me out. I was checked out on both of them. Never been behind the wheel of any vehicle. All right. We set off. Two sergeants and the lieutenant. The sergeant was driving the car. Lieutenant was sitting alongside. I was sitting in the back and watched that truck driver shift. And then I said, gee, I could do that. I can do that. I can get behind the wheel. We stopped for lunch. [He said] okay, Friedman, get behind the wheel. Let's go. Oh, boy, that's a different story. [laughs] I'm riding up on a road, a narrow country road with a stone barrier on the side of the road. And all of a sudden, there were sheep that crossed in front of me. Well, to make a long story short, the jeep winds up on its side. The lieutenant's head goes through the windshield. And that was the end of my driving experience. He was out. It fell over on my side. But I wasn't hurt. Neither was the other side, thank goodness. We wound up on the back of the truck for the rest of the trip and I didn't know what happened to the lieutenant. Anyway, we got to this camp, Camp Lucky Strike, outside of Le Havre. Whole lot of camps out there were set up for the returning troops. After a few days, troops arrived, came in on box-cars. We ran down to the railroad station. I was trying to find out what happened to the lieutenant. The train was coming in. All of a sudden I saw a head peeking out the window with a big bandage around his head. It was the lieutenant. And Oh, God, [I exclaimed] "I'm so happy to see you!" Please, you know, I was thrilled that he wasn't in a concussion or something. He was okay. That was that experience.

Then I had the chance to get a seven-day pass from the camp. This meant that I would have to leave my company because they were shipping out. But, you know, I wanted to see my wife. I hadn't seen her. It had been eleven months since I saw her. And that's a long time after you had been married for just a short time. I went across the channel, came back. My records were misplaced, but luckily they found them and I was shipping out, going home. I was attached to a unit of the

101st Airborne, the paratroops. Now I had and have a lot of respect for those guys. The paratroopers were jumping out of planes and out of gliders as well. I wasn't doing that. But unfortunately, some sour experiences. They sort of...they did look down their noses a bit at me as a poor old GI infantryman, you know, a grunt. And I said to myself, gee, though not all of these guys were jumping out of planes. A lot of them were cooks and what have you, and they never fired a rifle in vain. But, I let that pass. They were entitled to their boots, they were entitled to their scarves, and so be it. So, I feel that in some way I had a little piece of that 101st, the airborne troops. And then we were on a victory ship, the Wilson Victory. Everybody was hoping that we would get back in time for Christmas, December 25. We landed on the day after Christmas here in New York, and that was that. Went to camp Fort Dix, New Jersey, then discharged, then home. Then, of course, I had to start the fight. Well, not exactly a fight. I had to start the process of getting my wife over here. Now, I must say, and I say this very unequivocally, Uncle Sam was very good. He brought my wife over. She came over on the Queen Mary. Queen Mary made two trips with war brides, two-thousand at a time from Britain. Just as an aside, let me say, I've done a great deal of reading and research about marriages in Britain between GIs and British. Of course, there were others. After the war, there were German war brides, etcetera. To this day, nobody, nobody knows exactly how many of these marriages took place. The number goes from anywhere from forty to eighty-thousand. Make your choice in between. They just cannot pin it down. There are too many different sources. There were church weddings, there were civil weddings, and they can't really pin it down. Well, there were a lot of us on the Queen Mary. There are many, many wives with children, really small babies. My wife came over. We were in Brooklyn. We lived in a small three-room flat with my parents. We went through some hard times, but we managed to get through that. My first daughter was born on December 25, 1946. She's a very, very fortunate girl. Her name is Doreen, and nobody ever forgets her birthday. But by the same token, you know, she's missing out on getting a present for both Christmas and her birthday. And my other daughter got blessed. She happened to be born on Father's day, the year she was born. They have been very good to us. And there you are.

Q: They both got married and had children of their own?

PF: Only my oldest daughter. My youngest daughter is divorced now. She lives down in Georgia. She's never had any children. But I have two grandsons of whom I'm very proud. My son-in-law is a stagehand. He works for Local One. He's here in New York, and he's a stagehand. He's the chief electrician at the

Ethel Barrymore Theater here in New York. He's sixty years old, and he's already talking about finishing up. When I hear that...see, that's what really makes the age factor come in. When I think of how old my daughter is. Oh, God, she's fifty-four. It's been a wonderful, wonderful experience with my grandsons. Their grandmother dotes on her two boys. After two girls, to have two grandsons is really something. It's nice. That's the way I would put it.

Q: So what did you do when you got back after the war?

PF: I got myself a job, and I worked for a company that was involved in what is called lease financing. This is a financier of the leasing companies, both automobile and equipment. And we wound up doing some very big things. We were leasing tremendous computers to various aircraft manufacturers, Rockwell International, running into millions of dollars. And I was with the company for about forty-three years until I retired in 1989 from one of their offices. And I've lived in Brooklyn all my life. Right now I live in a co-op on the sixteenth floor. I step out onto my terrace. I look to one side, I can see the ocean. I look to the other side, I can see the high school I graduated from. Not too many can say that. I consider myself a Brighton Beach Boy. Although now Brighton Beach is known for its Russian population, tremendously so. And I've had what I consider to be an interesting life in many aspects. Bear in mind also that the addition to the various difficulties I had getting married and being underage was the fact that I was Jewish and my wife was not. That presented some problems. Fortunately, my father, who is just one of the greatest men I've ever known, was always on our side. And I really dedicate anything that I've said today to him. That's how I feel about it.

Q: Did you have trouble when you got back after the war because your wife was not Jewish and you were?

PF: I really only had one experience with one of my circle of friends who made a very, very stupid remark at one time. In fact, it was so aggravating and stupid that I put it out of my mind. I don't know exactly what it was that he said. I lashed back at him. Other than that, absolutely not. I'm happy to say that most of my friends were...it wasn't anything that they gave a second thought to. My family, of course, was something. I can remember very clearly. My wife arrived on March 1, 1946. It so happens that March 1 is St. David's Day. Saint David is the patron saint of Wales, so that's the date we always remark on. That summer, a cousin of mine was getting married in the Bronx, and we were invited. And that was the first function at which my wife and I were present with other members of the family. First formal function. We were out on the dance floor and I could see

them, a bit of whispering things like that. Nothing over it, ever. My father was a saint. I have a younger sister, now down in Florida. Never, never had any problem whatsoever. At this point in time, after all these years, my wife, I would say, and I've said this to many, many people, I consider her to be more Jewish than I am. She's been surrounded by it for all these many years, and she's very strong for Israel. Oh, very strong right now. But she's also still very passionate when it comes to her homeland. We have been back there. We have friends there. I used to love to go to London, my favorite town. London in wartime was really something. I can remember going to what they called Rainbow Corner. Tremendous Red Cross place and I read a lot of books about it. I consider myself a fairly knowledgeable history buff about World War II and World War I as well. I'm glad I didn't have to experience World War I, because that was a bad war. It was really horrible. My father never spoke about it, but I have heard. I even have the bullet that was taken out of his arm, a machine gun bullet. Something that I'm very, very proud of.

Q: Let me go back and ask you a couple of questions. By the way, before, you talked about your father and the Purple Heart, that wasn't invented till 1932, but if you had your dad's old World War I tunic, it should have had the little wound chevron on it. That was the World War I equivalent to the Purple Heart.

PF: Did they have that in the second war? The chevron?

Q: No. No wound stripes. By then you had the Purple Heart. So if you got wounded, you got the Purple Heart. Actually, if your father had wanted to in the 1930s, he could have gone back to the Army and said, give me a Purple Heart.

PF: Oh, is that right?

Q: Yeah. Anyone who had wounds.

PF: Well, I have the medical records that would have substantiated that. I wish I'd known that at the time. But he died young, unfortunately. He was only 67.

Q: Well, he had been gassed. That tends to take years off your life.

PF: Yes, I would say so.

Q: Let's go back, and I want to talk a little bit first about something we didn't touch on. Brooklyn in 1941, 1942, 1943. You didn't go into the service until January of 43?

PF: I was in college. I completed a year and a half at Brooklyn College. I remember riding on the train. This was late 1942. I was on the train, and there

were some young girls sitting nearby, and they were whispering to each other and looking at me. I faintly heard, or I got the impression that they were saying to themselves, why isn't he in service? I'm a big guy. I'm not a midget. Must have looked quite healthy at that time. So that sort of hit home to me, and I remember it to this day. So in January, I completed my half term, and I said to the draft board, let's go. Take me in the next batch. And that's where I went.

Q: What was Brooklyn like in those early war times years? I mean, I've seen pictures of, like, anti-aircraft guns protecting Union Gas.

PF: I never saw any of that. If you didn't know it, there's a little museum at Fort Hamilton, New York. Have you ever been to Fort Hamilton?

Q: Yes.

PF: They have this little museum there. Fort Hamilton has a sister fort, Fort Wadsworth on Staten Island. They were the guardians of New York Harbor. They maintained this museum, which has relics of all guns. When I went there a few years ago, I saw something very interesting. I saw a photo display of Italian prisoners-of-war in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. I didn't realize that they were there. They were in Bay Ridge in that area, and it seemed that when the war ended, they could have gone back home. A lot of them elected to stay where they were and then married locally, which was very surprising to me. But there's a great deal of interest now. This weekend is the opening of the movie, *Pearl Harbor*. I am very happy to say that three years ago, my wife and I took a trip to Hawaii. I didn't want to go. I said, gee, I don't want to look at the beaches, scenery. If there's any reason for me to go, I want to go to see the Pearl Harbor Memorial. I looked at it and that was the point at which my life changed or turned or was guided. I can remember where I was, like a lot of people on that day, December 7, Sunday. I was listening to the football game. The Giants. I think they were playing the Redskins. The report came over the radio. My father was not at home; he was at work. I walked into my mother and I said, gee, you know, I'm seventeen. What does it mean? I didn't know what it meant to me, but I felt that it did mean something to me, even at that age. And then I graduated high school in June of 1941, last graduating class before the war. What I remember, I can remember was some of the scrap drives that they had in 1942. But I was really busy in school.

Q: Right after Pearl Harbor, there were some scares about the Germans bombing New York.

PF: Yes, yes, yes. There were all kinds of scares. Even Mayor LaGuardia came forward. He said he wouldn't be surprised if there was some sort of attack. Then

we heard the story about the Japanese sending over balloons with bombs and mines over the west coast.

Yes. You never knew what would happen. The Germans. We knew that the German submarine forces were patrolling God knows how far offshore on the east coast. They were there many, many times, I'm sure. I forget exactly when it was that we had the spy scare. When these spies landed in, I think, New Jersey.

Q: August 1942 in Amagansett, Long Island.

PF: Oh, Long Island. Yeah, August of 1942. There you are. So that kept the pot churning and then boiling and things like that.

Q: Do you ever remember any air raids, early in December? Blackouts? Sirens?

PF: The sirens. Lighthouses. Well, that wasn't an area. You mean the sirens going off?

Q: Yeah, there were a couple of days after Pearl Harbor, New York City thought it was under attack. Mitchell Field called up the city and told them that German bombers were on the way.

PF: I don't remember that. No. But I do know. Have you been at the Floyd Bennett Field at all out here in Brooklyn?

Q: A long time [ago] Yeah.

PF: Well, now, you know, there's a story in the paper that they have the unused aircraft hangers there. They want to use it for something else. I've been out there. They have a PX. There's a lot of open space. This Saturday, they're having an affair. They will show some World War II planes out there. I've been to several of these things. I enjoy that very much. As I was saying, my experience in going to the Pearl Harbor Memorial with my wife. Before you go there, you have a program, a movie, I think, about a half hour. It's nothing I haven't seen before with the program, but it's still very moving. The lights go off. They come up, and everybody's sitting in complete silence. Well, got on the tenders to go to the [U.S.S.] Arizona. Have you been on board?

Q: No.

PF: Got on. And I look around and I must say this, colonel. All I saw were what I thought were Japanese faces. The number of Japanese in Honolulu and in Hawaii is astounding. And I understand that they own tremendous amounts of the properties in Hawaii. I wasn't prepared for that. It hit me the same way it hit me with the fact that I really don't want to go to Germany. Because the idea of

spending my American money, dollars there in Germany, it just rubs me the wrong way. But it was a very, very moving thing. My wife was extremely moved. You look over the side and you can see the oil slick and the bubbles coming up and a piece of the undercarriage. She threw a lei into the water. And just for that alone, it was worthwhile. But I recommend everybody goes to Hawaii sooner or later. It's a wonderful place to visit.

Q: We had two more questions. One, the time you were patrolling across the Rhine and you hung up on a tripwire, you called them Bouncing Bettys. The Germans called them Schu-mines.

PF: S.C.H.U

Q: Yeah, schu-mines. What must you have been thinking at that time? I mean, I know at first you don't realize what's holding you up, but when you realize that you're that close to an anti-personnel mine—

PF: I recall that when I felt that little prong, I looked up at the sky and I said, thank you. That's what I felt. My next thought was to make sure that I was going back over the same route that I came up on. There was no other thought in my mind other than that.

Q: Everybody, every young man, when he goes off to war, thinks he's invulnerable and invincible.

PF: Yes, absolutely true. When you're at that age, you are invulnerable, invincible. Nothing can harm you, until you start seeing guys around you and next to you and what was happening to them. To say that nobody had any fear that they're fearless. The closest I came to seeing someone like that was a master sergeant in my company who I believe enjoyed actual combat. He carried a submachine gun. I'm trying to remember, was there more than just the Thompson?

Q: Yeah, there were other types too, there was Riesing.

Q: Could have been a grease gun.

PF: Must have been a BAR, Browning Automatic Rifle. Yeah.

Q: Or could have been a Burp Gun.

PF: He enjoyed combat. He reveled in it, and he was damn good. And I have a great deal of admiration and respect for him. That brings to mind another story. While we were in Dusseldorf in occupation, the word came down that one of the guys in our company had gotten hold of a German grease gun, the Schmeisser, the machine pistol. He got drunk and he was spraying and he hit some civilians.

He killed one and wounded a couple of others. They arrested him and I don't know what happened to him. One of those things that happened. It was very easy to get drunk. If you wanted to get drunk after the fighting was over.

Q: You must have had a feeling, though, after a while, you know, so many patrols, so many contacts with mines and watching, as you said, the people next to you, that you begin to realize you're mortal.

PF: Yes, there's no question about that. In analyzing my thoughts at the time, I have to say that out of that, you reach a certain point where the fear encompasses you. You've gone through what you considered to be escapes. How many more chances are you going to get? Three strikes and you're out? Or is it four strikes?

Q: Do you reach a point where you sort of just sort of shrug and say, if it happens, it happens?

PF: No, I never reached that point.

Q: Let me ask you this. Did the war change your life? I mean, you wouldn't have met your wife, but beyond that?

PF: Absolutely. All the way. My infantry division has a very, very strong association. Four times a year they have a paper. As a matter of fact, when we were in occupation in Germany, I became the company reporter for my company, and I had several of my stories published in their division newspaper. Very powerful. They have reunions every year all over the country. I've been to a couple of them. The camaraderie, the joy that men get when they get together, the things that you remember and the stories that they tell.

The only thing is when I go to some of these reunions, I look at the other guys and I feel that I'm a youngster compared to some of them. [laughs] A few years ago, one guy said...they were posing for a group picture. He said to me, boy. I had to get down, I was in front. He said getting down was easy, but getting up, oh, that was so hard. And I appreciate what he said. He knew that absolutely. The war changed my life. Yes. Pearl Harbor really directed my life from that point on and I met my wife, got married.

Q: We've got a minute or two left before the end of the tape. Is there anything else you wanted to add or talk about?

PF: Well, I want to say that I think that when I told my family about this procedure and this history, they've all been really thrilled about it. I feel like I've been privileged to be able to come and sit and talk about it. I hope that I'll be able to show so that some of my family can hear this and they understand. My wife

especially understands. The war started for her in 1939, and it lasted a good five years. She's been forced in that respect.

Her oldest brother was a lieutenant commander in the Navy. He went into service when he was fifteen years old and went through an entire war without a scratch. Saw everything all over the world. Right after the war, he was on a flying boat, a Sunderland. It crashed and he broke both his shoulders. Which I found to be quite ironic. But that's life.

Q: That's life indeed. Well, actually, it's been our privilege.

PF: Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you.

PF: And I certainly hope that you won't forget. If you get a chance, you can send me a copy of that.

Q: Wayne is our guy.