

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Question: You'd parachute in with 60 pounds of explosives.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: And the last jump he made was in the Champagne Campaign in the Southern France invasion. And I think you actually got wounded within a couple of days.

Answer: Yeah. It didn't take long to get yourself wounded or shot or dead. It was, I don't know. You know, when I think about it, that was 61 years ago. It's a long time ago.

Question: I know, it's got 16 years on my life, so my life plus 16 years, and I can't remember 5 years ago.

Answer: It's difficult. I've been out of the Army now as long as I was in.

Question: Is that right?

Answer: Yeah. '71 I retired. I was out 31 years, and it's hard to try to remember a lot of the action, either in World War II or the others.

Question: When you recuperated from your jump, from being hung in the tree, did you go back into World War II, or

Answer: Oh, yeah.

Question: Oh, you did.

Answer: Yeah, I was the, right after Normandy was pretty well under control of France, they came up with Market Garden. The 101st, 82nd and British Airborne units. I think that was probably on of the worst actions in World War II as far as I'm concerned. Because of one man's ego and that, he got a lot of men killed, particularly his own countrymen.

Question: And again, my history fails me. Who was the driving force?

Answer: Field Marshal Montgomery. He was a very, he was jealous of Ike being put in as commander of the European Theater of operations. He outranked, he outranked Eisenhower, actually. A field marshal was a higher rank, so that's why the United States went to a 5-star general, and MacArthur was the first, Eisenhower was the second, and Omar Bradley was the last one. And was the last of the 5s. That made 'em general of the armies. And only two men ever held, only two men in American history could wear any amount of stars they wanted and that was George Washington and Blackjack Pershing. They were called Generals of the Army, and they could have wore any rank. Market Garden was a disaster as far as I'm concerned. It got a lot of people killed very unnecessarily.

Question: I gotta adjust one thing here. Now did you, did you face the Herman Göring Division?

Answer: Oh, yeah. There in Sicily? Oh, Yeah.

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Question: Now what was that like?

Answer: That was murder. Infantry troops are not very good against heavy panzer division tigers at all, and Herman Going was the cream of the crop of the panzers. In fact, I believe, at the time of the Normandy invasion, Adolf Hitler was so insane, that he would be, go into a lot of tantrums if his field marshals or generals ever tried to contradict or suggest anything, and that is about the only way we really got a toehold finally in Normandy, is he would not release panzers without his permission, and he was suffering from such migraines that he kept taking sleeping pills and would not be allowed to be awakened for anything. And they had 5 panzer divisions in reserve, and nobody could get them released. Field Marshal Jodel Von Rundstadt none of them. Erwin Rommel tried to and he tried to get an appointment with Adolf Hitler to try to get to accomplish to get the panzers released and they just, he put him off. So it was in our favor that the panzers weren't released 'cause they would have annihilated the invasion of Normandy.

Question: Now when you went to Sicily they..

Answer: Yeah, they were there. The Herman Göring Division of panzers was there.

Question: And so, could see a... we always talk about our flyboys and they've got this different attitude. Did you see that this was a finely tuned war machine, here, these panzers?

Answer: Oh, yeah. They were, the Germans were always fantastic at weaponry, and their tanks, none of our tanks could penetrate theirs except in the rear, and you know, you don't really get in the back of a panzer if he doesn't want you to, or if there's place where he can't turn. And so his 88s could penetrate our General Shermans, which was our top tank just like a piece of cheese. We were, we did have one and George Patton, he was very disliked by the high command, the generals of the Army. Him and Ike never got along. The only one that liked him and stood up for him was Bradley, but Patton was a hell of a tank man. He loved his tanks, and he was an old cavalry officer, and. In 1936, General Douglas MacArthur was the Chief of Staff of the Army. He thought he was God, and he deactivated entirely the United States Cavalry. Got rid of all the horses, he was gonna butcher them all. Just shoot them, get them out of the way. At that time, the United States had two tanks. Both of them were left over from World War I, and Adolf Hitler had 4 divisions of panzers.

Question: And when you say two tanks, you don't mean two styles of tanks.

Answer: No, two tanks, period. Two tanks. That was the extent of the armored division. And of course, when they, in preparation of what was going on in Europe, and the difficulty we had with the Japanese government, it was just a matter of time, and so we did start producing more tanks, but none of them ever could match the tigers. The only thing the tigers had against them was they leaked like sieves. The gasoline was all over the place. So their fuel systems were really bad, but they crucified the British in North Africa, the Göring Division hurt us in Sicily, but and there was a few tanks, but not that many in Normandy. Market Garden, there was panzers there. That was one of the fallacies of Market Garden. Montgomery and his top general that was assisting with the Market Garden plans refused to tell anybody that the panzers were in...

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Question: What exactly was Market Garden?

Answer: Holland

Question: And what was the plan, what was their plan for Market Garden?

Answer: They were to hold and keep the bridges open. There was a movie made of it called Bridge Too Far. I can't think of the names of them now, but it was important to keep the roads open because the United States Army was pushing toward Berlin, and that was, we were pushing the Germans back, and Market Garden was supposed to be able to take and hold most of Holland which would've giving us a good access into Germany. And it was a fiasco, and the British lost a hell of a lot of men. Almost totally wiped out the British Airborne.

Question: And you said that was a matter of ego that drove that.

Answer: Yeah. He refused to let any of the, he didn't let any of the commanders of the 101st, the 82nd or his British Generals that commanded the British airborne units know that they had pictures of panzers in Holland waiting for them.

Question: Basically they walked into a

Answer: Yeah. Hell, they were surrounded almost immediately upon landing in Holland. It was a bad area, very bad.

Question: So it sounds like there are wars within wars.

Answer: Yeah. It uh. I don't care, when you get a bunch of different armies together, there's always, always conflicts between the commanding officers. The British are pretty well known for being arrogant. Don't get me wrong, they're damn good fighters. They've got a lot of guts, I'll say that for them. They've got one of the greatest military units today is the British SAS, and uh, but the SAS at that time in World War II were special services. That's what they were, their designation. And they were literally commandos, that would take the brunt of any conflict. But the Germans were definitely did not want to get war in their homeland, and that was what we had to do was break the Germans backbone so to speak, and once we started bombing Berlin and that, that was, you could see the end. And even the German high command could see the end. That's why they tried to assassinate Hitler.

Question: Were you back in, after recovering from your jump, were you back in the campaign before the Bulge occurred? After you recuperated from your jump at, were you back in the campaign before the Battle of the Bulge?

Answer: No, I never was back in Europe. I was attached to the 11th Airborne, and jumped in at Yokohama, right after the atom bomb.

Question: What was that like?

Answer: That was a piece of cake. The Japanese had already, we'd jumped into Yokohama because it was easier to land, the place wasn't as big as Tokyo was.

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

We marched into Tokyo, the Japanese civilian populace and the military soldiers would see us, just drop their weapons and turned their backs. They'd lost all face, they gave up without a struggle.

Question: What did Tokyo look like? Do you remember?

Answer: Shambles. Shambles. Like any city that's been under heavy bombardment. Very little left, just a lot of rubble. You've see pictures of Sicily and Italy, and even Normandy, you know, they got pretty heavily shelled for the invasion. There was battleships, heavy cruisers, light cruisers, destroyers, everybody was shooting at the Normandy beach heads and that, and a lot of the houses and homes that surrounded Normandy was pretty well destroyed, and then as they moved into Holland and up into Germany, we tried not to leave anything standing. Anything, you know, it's, I think.. you see fighting military people is easy. It's the population that you've gotta be so concerned with. You're killing a lot of innocent people, and that is a hard thing to take, because I know how I'd feel if somebody invaded Ireland. That's literally my homeland. The same with the German people. We had German soldiers from Germany descent, they were fighting where their parents grew up and destroyed it. The same with the Italians. And It 's a hard thing to contemplate, that you're literally destroying whatever. You've got ancient artifacts in Italy, in Rome, you know, it, the Coliseum and that, we tried not to do any damage to that. The American people and the armies, they tried to protect the Vatican as much as possible.

Question: So there were certain places or buildings that...

Answer: Yeah, we didn't want to destroy any of, but like I say, by the time we got to into Italy, the Italians were ready to give up. In fact, they turned on their own dictator, Mussolini. They hung him up by his feet. You know, they, he was, they flat didn't want anything to happen to Rome.

Question: The thing that also always amazes me is that sometimes some of these small villages you would go through, there was still a semblance of normal civilization. They are still trying to get their stores back up and running...

Answer: Right, right, Yeah. A lot of the small, you know even in England, London took a hell of a blitz from the German luftwaffe And, you know, life had to keep on going, and they did their best to keep life as simple as possible, or as real as possible. They tried to have stores, you know, food was sometimes you couldn't get food in like you'd like to, but there was their drops and what have you that kept the British from falling apart. If Hitler had been intelligent and listened to his field marshals instead of opening up on so many fronts, basically the Russian front, he could have wiped England off the map. Literally. So it was, you know, it's, it was good for us that he didn't, but you know, and the Germans by the time we started getting into Germany and bombing Berlin and Nuremberg and all that heavily, the German people pretty much had given up. They had no heart left, and a lot of the soldiers, we were pushing them back. They were under air attack even when they weren't fighting they'd be on the open roads with trucks and that, and I had friends of mine that continued through Market Garden and into the Bulge and that, they had 12 and 13-year-old kids on the front lines. You know, they'd depleted their armed forces so much.

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Question: Did that change the aspect of war when you look at dealing with the enemy being that young?

Answer: Not really, 'cause if they were shooting at you, you didn't give a damn how young they were. You know, when you're getting' shot at, you want to get rid of the person that's doing it, and it amazed a lot of the guys that I talked to after the war that went into the Market Garden and into the Battle of the Bulge that when they ran into the German troops and were able to defeat them, and they'd look at the dead as they went through, they were amazed and really hurt at how many young kids were actually in German uniform. So it was, you know, it was a very desperate attempt to try to keep the Allies from hitting Germany, but there was no way by that time.

Question: Is it hard, 'cause you talked a little about hand-to-hand, and I watched and studied a little variety of different wars, and I see if I were in the Navy and sittin' off coast, that would be a whole different experience. And then I look back and you go back into some of the ancient highland battles where I mean, it was broadsword and all that,

Answer: Right.

Question: And you were hand-to-hand. What...

Answer: Well, what I mean, hand-to-hand in World War II, we didn't have the great bayonet charges as they did in World War I, or they didn't have the hand-to-hand fighting combat that they had out of the trenches when they.. at the Argonne What have you, but they did have.. what I refer to as hand-to-hand as taking sentries out. You couldn't shoot them, you had to kill them, so you took them hand by hand. You cut their throats or you just threw a knife into them and what have you.

Question: But you're, I mean you're there with them. I mean, you physically touch them.

Answer: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Question: To me that seems like, I mean again, I think my mind would change real quick, either me or them.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: And it's gonna be them, not me.

Answer: Right. Well, you know, you took them out so that they couldn't give an alarm that could cost you a lot of men. We didn't have the greatest explosive systems like we have today with C-4 and that, but we had explosives and we had guys that would take out ammo dumps. We'd have to kill the sentries. That was primarily the job of the regimental combat teams. We were rangers, and we would have to do the situation as much as possible to keep ourselves protected.

Question: Now when you talk about adrenaline, that had to be, get the adrenaline...

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Answer: A real adrenaline rush, yeah. Because you gotta be so quiet. Don't ever underestimate the German Army. They were the elite, really. They really were. They were good, very dedicated soldiers, and it always surprised me, they always seemed to have such exceptional hearing, so you had to be damn quiet to be able to sneak up on them and take them out. And you know, it wasn't always successful. We lost a few men by trying to get one that was a bigger guy than the other, and he wasn't able to disarm him and kill him, but usually we did have some snipers. We did have snipers in our units of our own, and some of them had rifles that had a suppressor on it or silencer that would be able to take out an enemy at a distance. You still could hear it up close, but at a distance it wouldn't give your position away, but it was mostly take them out by a knife.

Question: I talked to a woman who was British and she was, a bomb had gone off behind her, in fact, threw her into the bunker, and she says, still today and her kids know not to come up behind her.

Answer: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Question: Do you carry things like that from the war?

Answer: Oh, yeah. I'm, like I say, I'm 87 years old now. I still won't, I won't sit with my back to a door, and unfortunately, see when I came out of the Army I became a police officer for 9 years with King County, and I still carry a gun regardless of where I go. So does my fiancé, we have, we carry guns. We have gun permits, and it's a hell of a life to have to do that, you know. It shouldn't be that way in this day and age, but it is, and I guess we have to just live with it. That's the way we did in war. We lived with the things that we had to do. Some guys couldn't handle it mentally, and they cracked up. I guess that happens in every war that's ever been in existence, you know. There's people that can take it and then there's some people that it just breaks.

Question: Again, my mind jumps around a lot here and this is one I forgot to ask, 'cause I thought about it.

Answer: ok.

Question: Superstitions. Paratroopers. Did you have superstitions?

Answer: Oh, yeah. It would happen like, how do I want to say it, you didn't, before a jump, you didn't drink. You didn't drink anything. You kept close to the unit people, there was a silent camaraderie there. You didn't, you know, you might see pictures of combat where they were all drinking before and all gung-ho, forget it. You didn't uh.. always tried to jump clean, and the way I, what I mean by that, if you're jumpin' clean, you can, like some guys play poker or something and they made a winning, they tried to lose it, 'cause they didn't want to try to jump with a whole bunch of money. Some guys would carry.. I knew a lot of Catholics that carry religious crucifixes and what have you. The, you always, a lot of the guys would go to chapel that night. We had chaplains jump with us. They were some good people. Damn good people. They were just regular guys, you know. They tried to relieve any anxiety that the troops had. But it was, it wasn't always easy. And you tried to sleep. You tried to get some rest before. You knew it was going to be an awful long day, or a long night. So, yeah, you had superstitions.

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Question: What was your best day you remember of, and I know that's kind of a weird question, but the best day of World War II for you?

Answer: The best day? Let's see. Oh, boy, that's a hard one to think of, because I had good days. Probably one of the best was my first Purple Heart.

Question: And what did you get your first Purple Heart for?

Answer: I got wounded over in Sicily. Not where I was incapacitated, but it was, I was shot.

Question: 'Cause you have...

Answer: I got 5.

Question: 5!!!

Answer: Yeah. Through the years, I've got a friend of mine that wanted one for his kid, and I gave it to him, and my, somebody swiped my Croix de Guerre from World War II, but someday I'll get another one someplace. I've got one from another war, but that.. it's always nice to have, but like I say, you know, in this day and age, all those medals and a dollar and ½ will buy me a cup of coffee.

Question: About \$3 today.

Answer: Yeah, actually, you're right, although I drink plain black coffee. Nothing fancy.

Question: What about your worst day?

Answer: I think Normandy would be my worst, where I saw my guys in my company being killed coming down. I think that's why I crashed in the tree, because I had my eyes on them being slaughtered, and not seeing where I was going and that tree came up awful damn fast. That was the one thing bad about the invasion of Normandy for paratroopers, especially the night jump, was, you didn't know the topography of the land. You didn't know if there was a bunch of woods here, how much free open space there was here. Our drop zones originally were pretty well mapped out because of the French Underground that kept giving us information, and even when we landed, the French had been given code words that took out German communications and all that. But, and they did help a lot of the guys that got separated from their units by helping them try to get back, but, seeing the F Company getting slaughtered coming down I think would be my worst experience in World War II.

Question: How close you were to the ground before you could, um, well, how high did you jump from? Do you remember what?

Answer: We were about 2,000 feet.

Question: So fairly low for a jump.

Answer: Yeah, you couldn't, 'cause we had to. We could see, there was a building that had been hit in St. Mere Eglise that was on fire and we saw that from

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

the air when we jumped. But most of the countryside, of course, was blacked out, just like we blacked out during the war here. The Germans and their populace did there. And so we could guide ourselves a little, but then when we were so far off course, the T-3 wasn't a very maneuverable 'chute anyway, and it, you get a cross wind or something, and we were scattered all over.

Question: Have you ever been back?

Answer: No, no I haven't. I would like to have gone to the anniversary of Normandy, but I just, I don't know. I haven't.. I went back to Ireland. I was in 1973. General Gavin asked me if I'd like to. The 82nd was doing a kind of a training mission with the Royal Irish Rangers, and I was able to, I was reactivated for 60 days, and I enjoyed that. No, I've seen pictures of everything. I've got, in fact, my adopted daughter, her daughter was on a field trip with her school over in Normandy and she brought me back some sand from Omaha beach, and I got that, but no, it. I think once there and having the memory of all that destruction. It's nice to see it rebuilt, It's just like Korea or anyplace else, you know, it, when I was in those places it was rubble, and we kept making it rubble.

Question: Do you think, that's kinda how this project got started, was history books tell us certain things, but from you personally, do you think that there's a message that needs to be left with generations what the history books don't have?

Answer: Yeah, you know, uh, talk is cheap in a lot of respects, but I think people in countries and governments are going to have to try to interface with each other to keep from slaughtering a lot of people, because you take today, you know, we had in North Africa and that, we had a lot of German Jews that fought with the British. They were instrumental in helping destroy Rommel's fuel depots and that, because they could interface and they were Germans. The Israelis finally got their own land, but they're faced every time they turn around with Arabs. And Arabs and Jews have hated each other since the beginning of time. This goes all the way back to ancient Egypt, when all they were was slaves. The Palestinians, I think, have a right to exist, but not to terrorize like they did. We didn't do it even in World War II. You didn't, we had spies, you know, from Germany and Japan and that, but the, we didn't butcher everybody like it is nowadays, and until that is settled, there's never going to be real peace in any part of the world. I believe that, you know, you can get a whole different bunch of people together that are different nationalities, different ethnic backgrounds, and what have you, and until a lot of the prejudices can be resolved, you're always gonna have conflicts just like we're now talking about Iraq. And, what makes me mad is that it wasn't resolved in the Gulf War. As a soldier, that was my estimation. I don't think they, the United Nations saying should have stopped us, No, you can't go any further and can't kill him, but he's still a problem. And he's going to be a problem as long as he's the head of the government. So, you know, it' 6 of one and half a dozen of another, Karl. I don't know what to tell you.

Question: You have an interesting perspective, and I'm going to jump...normally I don't ask people these questions, but we're looking at this project continuing on. You have a perspective of, and I'll try to use all the terminology: a war, a conflict and a military action. I think those are the 3 different terms they use, and I mean, 3 wars, but World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

Answer: Right. Well..

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Question: Is war, war, or were those 3 different, from your experience?

Answer: From my experience, Korea was a major war, and it was a police action, for the simple action that it was, from the auspices of the United Nations. They didn't want to declare war. It was more or less a police action. I served with a lot of different foreign units in Korea, and I enjoyed a lot of them, especially the Turks. I've done a couple of night patrols with them, and that was an experience I'll never forget, but, yeah. Vietnam, ok. I'll be frank. I was in Vietnam before the United States got there. I was what they considered a member of the first so-called A team, for the Special Forces. We were classed as military observers to the French Foreign Legion at Dien Bien Phu We got there in January in 1954. I was on my way back from Korea, and got bumped at Rogers Air Force Base in Honolulu. And so, I was, our 12-man team was assigned to General Guillon who was commanding general of the French Foreign Legion Airborne, and that was a hell of an experience. The French lost most of their airborne, totally. We were all busted up. We survived 57 days of absolute day and night shelling from the mountains that Ho Chi Minh had, and on May 27, 1954, we surrendered, and along with the French Foreign Legion, we were, General Guillon Said he would surrender his troops providing that the American observers could go back and be repatriated as soon as possible. And, Ho Chi Minh was, General Ho Chi Minh was a gentleman soldier. He was professional, and he said they, we weren't armed at the time, because observers were not supposed to be armed. But the, we went, when we got back and was in the debriefing, we tried to tell them to stay the hell out of it. Stay the hell out of Vietnam. We have no business there. The South Vietnamese, the people didn't really want us. They hated the French, although they did learn a lot of things that were pretty good for them from the French government, but the North was giving the South Vietnamese what they wanted, food. So they weren't really anxious for us, but unfortunately, the corrupt government of South Vietnam, they couldn't get us in their fast enough, and our people couldn't get there either. So, yeah. It was, I don't know, to me it was a war that should never have been, and yet they call the Gulf War and it lasted what, two months?

Question: On TV. Alive in your living room. Was it a different experience, and I know you don't like the word hero. World War II came back to hero parades, to be honored.

Answer: And I got spit on coming back from Vietnam. Yeah.

Question: How do you draw that difference? You were doing the same thing, weren't you? I mean, they were different war, and you said we shouldn't be in Vietnam, but weren't you doing the same thing: serving your country?

Answer: Yeah. I was doing my job as a professional soldier at the time, and I was Special Forces, and I made two tours in Vietnam as Special Forces, last with Phoenix Force. I was an assassin for the military. It's, it was a war that nobody here wanted, really. We lost a lot of kids, lot of kids died, but it, the people were tuned to war at that time, they had World War II, they had Korea 5 years later. It was just something that, and the country had changed. United States had changed. You had Civil Liberties Union, you had a lot of this Christian Unity, and it was a constant battle between all groups, what was right, what was wrong, and the poor soldier, he was. Somebody said one time to me that we were pawns, and our government was nothing but insane, and thoughtless, and what was it. But anyway,

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

uncaring, that we had to do whatever they said. And in a way it was true, it was true. Especially for the professional soldier. And I was a combat soldier all three wars, so I know, and you know, even in Nam, or Korea, we seen the shambles that we helped create. The North Koreans, of course, did a lot, but we did a hell of a lot. I was a Manchu Raider, the 9th Regiment of the 2nd Division. We landed in Pusan which was a hell of a battle, and going up the, into Korea itself, we got pinned down outside of (Tagu?) in 74 below zero weather. A lot of guys froze to death, so it was hell. The 23rd Infantry Regiment I requested transfer to from the 9th, and so then we were Bloody Ridge, Heartbreak Ridge, 201, they were brutal battles. Absolute brutal battles. I was wounded a couple times in Korea and I was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, which is the second highest decoration. I've got two, and you know it's, I guess they're nice to look at, but then when I sometimes see them I wonder if the whole damn thing was worth it. And my sweetheart and others keep saying, yeah. If it wasn't for guys like you we wouldn't be here. And maybe it's true, I don't know. All I was was a kind of soldier that did my job.

Question: So, is this statement accurate then? And it's a two-part statement: War is hell, but a war is not a war is not a war.

Answer: Right. That's true. Yeah, it, you know, war is hell, 'cause it's not, it's very easy to say, Oh, we're going to go to war, not giving any consideration to how much loss you're going to have, and I think that's the shameful part of it.

Question: Would you do it again? I mean, if you were to rewind history, and know what you know how, and it was in the 1940's again, you're out in Montana...

Answer: Yeah, I would do it again. I really would, but I would do it differently. See I turned down a lot of field commissions, and unfortunately, I got a majority dropped on me in Korea because all of the officers were getting killed, so I was a major, a battalion commander for 6 months, and I asked to back to my permanent rank, which was Sergeant Major, first sergeant, but I think I'd of gone ahead and taken a commission and tried to make it a better decision than I was able to as a sergeant. Oh, I was lucky, I had some good officers that if they had a question, they would take my experience of combat and listen, so that helped. And then I've had some that were gung-ho that get a lot of people killed.

Question: Here's a question, I'm being totally off the different realm, but it just came to my mind. When you think of World War II, does any song pop into your head? Music?

Answer: Oh, God, yeah. Hell, yeah. Remember, when I joined the Army, you know how much we got paid? They made a song of it. 21 bucks a month. Yeah, the Andrews Sisters and, oh, what the hell was it?

Question: Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree?

Answer: Yeah. Yeah, that and the oh, heck, it's been so long I forget them now. We still went back to some of the ones of World War I. Over There was a popular one in 1940, 41, 42.

Question: Do you remember Lilly Marlene?

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Answer: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Lilly Marlene, that was very popular. You know that song gave a lot of thought to a lot of troops, because, you know, it kind of gave a different aspect to the German. You know, the funny part about war, is you're programmed. You're almost like brainwashed, that you've got to hate these people. These people are gonna kill ya. Well, naturally, in any war they are, but they're not monsters. They're doing something either to protect their own countries, regardless of the insane leaders of it. They weren't, you know, the German people aren't all that bad. I've known a lot of German people. I even got a chance to talk to Major Pluskat Remember him? He was that bunker commander at Normandy that saw the invasion sittin' out, when his commander said, Oh, they don't have that many ships. He said, hey have and they're coming right for me! And he survived World War II, and they interviewed him about 5 years later, just before Kor.. I was in Korea, and I came back to the United States for a month, and I got a chance to meet him, and I told him that I'd been one of the troopers that jumped in at St. Mere Eglise. He was a very interesting gentleman. I asked him if he ever found his dog. He said, No.

Question: That's right. I remember that now. It is an interesting perspective like you said, that they are human and they're doing their job, and...

Answer: Right. Yeah, you know. Ah, you get a, you know, like in when the Japanese attacked us. You know Admiral Yamamoto wasn't that bad of a guy. He was a professional. He'd lived here in the United States, and he was attached to the Japanese Embassy, and he knew the people of the United States, and he had a lot of respect for them. It was Tojo The Emperor was just a figurehead. But General Tojo he was the bastard that wanted to start everything, and we were upset about Japan invading China, and they wouldn't withdraw. Roosevelt requested them to withdraw and they wouldn't do it. Uh, so it was inevitable that we were going to have a war with Japan, too, so there we are. We're fighting two fronts, Germany's fighting 4 fronts, and you know, it's, it was really in a way, a no-win situation for anybody. We had to drop an atomic bomb, for God sakes, on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and it just destroyed a lot of people, and really it didn't, now here we are, we're good friends half the time with Japan and we get a lot of things from Japan, and we trade and, you know, it seems like war is always might be hell at first, but it seems like people resolve their problems afterwards, I don't know. I really don't know. I was a common soldier. I'm not a politician.

Question: That was going to be my question. Do you think that common soldiers understand the political aspects of war?

Answer: No. No, history was always. I loved history. So I did that. I enjoyed kind of the why we're here, why are we being sent to this or that. I would suggest that our politicians be the first ones on the front lines. That would be my suggestion. Maybe they'd change their minds and not go to war so much, but we did our, even the kids that were drafted and what have you, they did their job for their country, and that's the best answer you can give. You know, they tried to survive a bad situation.

Question: I heard one veteran say that beyond doing it for your country, that when it came down to it in a battle, that you were doing it for the person standing next to you, for your fellow, the people in your group. The soldier standing next to you. He was saying that he heard one veteran say that not only were they doing it for their country, but for that soldier standing next to them.

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Answer: Oh, yeah. You protected each other's backs as much as possible. You know, you didn't, oh, we had some crazy commanding officers, you know battalion commanders that were gung-ho as hell, and they got a lot of people killed. A lot of good men killed. More for ego, that there weren't that many. We were briefed on what we had to do, and we would know that we would have backup from this division or that division, or what have you, so we were told like the paratroopers, both of the 101st and the 82nd, and they were, you take this position and hold it 'till relieved. And that's what we had to do, and it, a lot of times waitin' for relief could cost us some men. But it was what we were supposed to do. That's what we had to do. So, yeah, you protected each other as much as possible. And if you had good officers, you damn sure tried to protect to them.

Question: I won't ask if you had bad officers what you did.

Answer: Oh, yeah. We did. Unfortunately, we did. And some of them were in the high command, too. There's one I have absolutely no use for whatsoever. That was General Douglas MacArthur. I think he was a coward. I think he should have been reprimanded and jailed and prosecuted for leaving his men at Bataan and leaving General Wainwright holding the bag. And then when Truman gave MacArthur the Congressional Medal of Honor and wanted him to recommend the same for Wainwright, he refused, saying, He surrendered. I don't want that, so you know. I shall return. After the battle's all over, Sure, great, gung-ho as hell.

Question: I've heard different people talk about brass like that, and you know, they showed up for the photo ops, and, you know, after everything had been...

Answer: Yeah. We had some damn good commanders in the Normandy invasion, we did. The 21st, see, most of the time, the division commanders never went to shore. Always the assistant, which was the brigadier, and the 24th had Teddy Roosevelt, Jr. and he was a hell of a guy. Jimmy Gavin, who was actually, he's more well known as the commander of the 82nd because he was always there. He was out on the front line, but actually the commander was Major General Matt Ridgeway, so, but you had good commanders. Yeah. Ben Vanderboot Light Colonel, he was my CO and he was good. He worked the hell out of us, but he was good, 'cause he did it right with us, and any time a good officer will work right alongside, he doesn't tell them, Ok, you do this, I'll be here, and I'll make sure to see that you're doing it. No, they're right out there doing it with you. So that.. those were good officers.

Question: What did you think about Eisenhower?

Answer: ah, as a statistician, he was great. You know, he came up awfully fast. He was, I can remember when he was just a major. He was adjutant to MacArthur. Yeah, he came up, Eisenhower came up very fast.

Question: But he earned his respect, it sounds like.

Answer: Yeah, he did. He was, he cared. Patton, hell of a, hell of a man. War monger as hell. He loved his tanks, and but he was very bad about his men. He'd rather lose 100 men than 1 tank. And unfortunately, the brass hated his guts, too, except for Omar Bradley. Ah, but he was a good fighting man. He was a good soldier, there's no question about that, and he died properly. He died in the war.

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

He didn't wait and try to be something after the war. In fact, he would have been useless to the United States after the war. But, Eisenhower, he was a great statistician, and he gave a lot of thought to the men themselves, 'cause he came around a lot of times and would talk to the common man, the common soldier before Normandy, especially the Airborne, other divisions. He couldn't get out to the ships, of course, but it was a sight to see. You had to be there to understand the preparation for Normandy. When you got 3 ½ million men on ships that are sicker than dogs, been on the ships for 3 or 4 days. You've got men stationed all over England at staging areas, getting ready for this big push, and then had to postpone it once, and then it just got to the point where, you know, normal people here in the States couldn't imagine that one of the biggest problems was security. How to keep the enemy from knowing how much we've got, and so it had to be pushed off. You know, that was one of the big problems that Eisenhower faced.

Question: To hear people talk about the numbers, I mean, just the feat of getting that many vessels moving that way and then getting everybody in the air and at the right place and not running into each other.

Answer: Right.

Question: We talked to one gentleman and we interviewed him and he said he almost gave the invasion away because he was stationed in England, and he knew they were leaving. They told him to get ready and he went back to the pub where he'd been and they had a little puppy that he wanted, but it hadn't been weaned yet. So he wanted it, and they said No, you can't have it, and he said, I gotta take it, 'cause we're leaving, and he thought Oh, No, you know. Now Omar Bradley, now he was, he rose from an enlisted man, didn't he?

Answer: Yeah. Omar Bradley was a hell of a soldier. Now he was, he was commanding general of the first Army of, at Normandy. He oversaw the landings, and he unfortunately, had put up with the Omaha Beach travesty there, where everybody was pinned down, men were getting killed left and right. He was a lieutenant general at that time, and then he, but, yeah. Bradley was had gone up through the ranks. There were several generals that did that. Uh, but, and that makes a good officer. You can go to school at West Point and learn a lot, and unfortunately, this was what happened in Korea. The, there was no general officers from the Class of 50, 51, and 52, because all of them got killed. They sent them over as platoon officers, they just, the North Koreans, and then the Chinese saw them with that nice shiny brass deal on their helmets and that was the first ones they took out. Killed everybody. Yeah, sergeants were being made company commanders and everything else. I was made a brigade commander, for Christ sake, battalion commander. And I just didn't want to have to write letters to the guys that got killed, to their parents. So I, I was a good sergeant. I had, fortunately I had a lot of good officers that listened to what I picked up along the way, so that helped him and it helped us.

Question: What is your opinion of FDR? What do you think about him?

Answer: FDR? I respected him. You know, I was way out in God's country in Montana, so I don't know that much about him, as far as politics, but I know that if it was today, he'd never been elected President. The people of this country would never elect somebody in a wheelchair. But, I think he tried real hard to bring the country out of the depression. He started the program of the, what was it, the

John Allan

Tape 2 of 2

Question: YCC?

Answer: Yeah, uh, the

Question: CCC, Conservation Corps.

Answer: Yeah, Conservation Corps. They dressed him up in World War I uniforms and they, you know, they had the WPA projects going on and we always heard the part of that, We Poke Along. But, yeah, they served a big purpose at the time, because the country was in a hell of a shape financially. They had the depression, multi-millionaires were down to paupers. They didn't know what to do. It didn't bother us, because we had all the food we wanted. And if we wanted anything other than beef we traded for it, you know. SO it was I guess where you are to make a problem worse. People in cities, I can understand they were, they had soup lines and things like that. They, you know, they did their part. I guess one of the things that really always endeared me to some of the entertainment was Bob Hope. That guy, we looked forward to seeing, because we always knew he was going to be a nut and he was going to bring a good bunch of people with him, and it took our minds off the war. You know, we might have just come back from one hell of a battle, but there we are. We're laughing, watching Bob Hope.

Question: So you gotta see one of his shows.

Answer: What?

Question: You actually got to see one of this shows?

Answer: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Question: He was in all 3 with you, too, wasn't it?

Answer: He didn't make to many in Nam. For one thing, it was too dangerous for him, 'cause Vietnam, you didn't know who the hell your friends was. You could be getting your boots shined in Saigon and that kid was blowing you up. You didn't know who you were friendly with. The, you know, it's strange, when we went to Korea, when I did in 1948, I was, we were kind of an advisory capacity to help the police, to build up a police force in there. The Army itself, God that was a travesty because you had to depend on them to watch your back, and they were buggin' out. The minute a shot was fired, they were gone, but now they're one of the best armies in the world, so you know, things change. And it's kind of enjoyable.

Question: Well, thank you very much.

Answer: Thank you I appreciate it. I hope the kids get a kick out of it, because I believe I did, 'cause it brought back good memories and bad. But I, you know, I always try to be optimistic, I think things can get better. Hopefully in my time, but I doubt it. I think it's going to take awhile, but it, I think we're smart enough and have seen enough tragedy, and I think the people are waking up that we're not, you know we can be pretty vulnerable to somebody that's very determined. You know, 9/11 did, so you know, it's hell to be that way, but it's the way it is.

Question: Hopefully we have. Let me get you un-miced.