

## Arch Carpenter

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**Question:** Now your name is Arch Carpenter.

**Answer:** And I grew up in the sound area.

**Question:** Ok.

**Answer:** I was technically born in Mt. Vernon, my mother went from Arlington for the occasion and I've lived in Bremerton, Port Angeles, Port Townsend, Everett, Bellingham, went away to the army, Seattle when I went to the University of Washington and then.

**Question:** I'll have to excuse myself from the room because you're going to start talking about the University of Washington and if you notice the Cougar plates out here that's me.

**Answer:** Alright, I'm talking to you?

**Question:** You're talking to me now.

**Answer:** Alright.

**Question:** I guess to start out with the first question we cover is who you are but we already covered that and when I talked to you on the phone earlier you were born in Skagit County but you traveled all around because your father was with a grocery chain, right?

**Answer:** That's right. My father was a grocer, he was a successful young man and had his own grocery store in Port Angeles and he achieved a great success right in the year 1929 and of course when people stopped buying groceries in those days he lost his store at that time through the economic events that took place. He didn't have enough he had too much heart I guess so he never collected on the bills and people that he'd been serving groceries to for years he couldn't cut them off eventually he lost that store and became an opening manager for a chain of grocery stores, at that time Benjamin Franklin Grocery Stores. You don't see that around any more although once in a while you see a Benjamin Franklin Craft Store, 5-10 cent store or what not, but he became their opening manager so he would open stores in various towns, opened one in Port Townsend and in Port Angeles they had one and then Bremerton and around the area and that's what I remember and that's why I moved as many times as I have and I'm a real devoted Washingtonian because I've seen so many wonderful places in our state all around the Puget Sound.

**Question:** That was all during the depression was that?

**Answer:** Well depression, mostly depression times, my dad then went into bakery business, distribution of bakery goods and then became the plant manager of the Langendorf Cakes and Cookies Company in Seattle, actually it's a California company. But that was there local plant and that is where he retired as a plant manager from that so he went all through the depression and did pretty well. We were fortunate. He was always employed and we had a nice family life in those years. People that couldn't pay my dad for groceries provided a great giant swing in the back yard to work off their grocery bill. Didn't help dad much but us kids had a lot of fun on those swings.

**Question:** A lot different back then in the state wasn't it? A lot different time in this country.

**Answer:** It's amazing always to look back and remember the various high lights and you know we tend perhaps to look at the low points when we shouldn't.

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**Question:** Probably a lot of good things about background I suppose compared to today. Things are always busier it seems like.

**Answer:** Everything is relative I suppose. The good old days a lot of people say they never existed. I remember the good old army people talked about probably never existed either. They said it then, they say it now, the good old anything you have to view with a little suspicion.

**Question:** So then did you join the army, you were in high school when Pearl Harbor occurred?

**Answer:** Yes, I was in high school, I was a sophomore in high school on Pearl Harbor Day. I think amongst all the reactions a kid would have, almost sixteen years old, perhaps I was sixteen, there are a lot of kinds of reactions. A little bit of sorrow for the people that were at Pearl Harbor and the other people that were attacked in the Philippines and so forth. But mostly I think the biggest reaction childish as it may have been was that, my gosh I hope the war won't be over before. I'm going to be two years too young to fight for the country, two years too young that I'll miss it by that much time or not so that was the biggest thing I believe. People in my class in high school were concerned and some as soon as they were seventeen would get out and join the navy because the navy would take seventeen-year-olds and the army wouldn't and couldn't I guess by law.

**Question:** You had to be a certain age so you could go into combat didn't you have to be nineteen to go to a combat area?

**Answer:** Well, I don't really think they had that rule then, no, I think as soon as you got your basic training you were a full fledged soldier and certainly a sailor and got assigned to a ship or to a unit you belonged to them for a full duty.

**Question:** Did you talk to your parents about going in early and then signing for you or?

**Answer:** No, I knew I should graduate from high school and not try to take a short cut on that. And the army encouraged you to wait until you were through high school in those days as they do now. In fact it is difficult to get into the service in many cases without the high school education. You have to take other routes to get in if you don't have a high school education and even then it was important. So we all looked forward to graduation and nobody bought new suits because you knew you were going to get a khaki suit when you graduated.

**Question:** Do you remember when you heard about Pearl Harbor, where you were?

**Answer:** Yes, I was visiting my grandparents. I can remember I heard it first you know it was Sunday drive to Sedro Woolly where my grandfather and grandmother had a home. And I was just a youngster and the only thing to do around there was listen to the radio and I can remember I was laying on the rug listening to the radio on that Sunday and that I heard the news and I was the one that went over to the rest of the family like they had to come listen to the news and we drove home earlier than we would have. You know news a tense situation in those days and we didn't know how safe we were on the roads with headlights and like that. The first several weeks being near the coast all kinds of rumors were running rampant so we hurried home so we wouldn't be driving with headlights along the highways if that would invite some kind of air strike or something.

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**Question:** Were there a lot of Japanese-Americans, there must be in Sedro Woolly, was there a Japanese-American community there?

**Answer:** I don't know. I didn't know Sedro Woolly well, but in Bellingham there were several Japanese-American's there, some of them, I didn't know many, I knew one lovely girl in school who was a star student and a popular student, Takako Tunamatsu. My wife wonders how come I remember that name so well, well she was an attractive little girl, and my wife went to school in Bellingham too and she knows her well.. And uh.. but she was rounded up and sent to an internment camp with her family and left a great.. a great deal of quandary in one's mind and she's always remembered at our school reunions because she was such a wonderful girl and she went on to marry a fine fellow. They kept a little track of her after the war and and through the war. She went back to Chicago, she didn't live in a camp all the time, but back inland. A touching story.

**Question:** Did you speak to her after she knew the internment was going to happen or?

**Answer:** No, I didn't talk to her at the time. We've had a few letters early after the war. She's passed away now but she is remembered at every class reunion that we have. She is remembered not just as one of those who have passed away as many people are of course before too long I may be remembered there too maybe but she's remembered especially because she was so important to the class but was taken away for the last year.

**Question:** Did your class understand that or was there?

**Answer:** No, I don't think we understood it. I don't think we fought it either because of the emotions at the time.

**Question:** You didn't feel threatened by the Japanese-Americans did you?

**Answer:** Well, not the ones we knew, but it was a time there was a great deal of edginess and then as it went on a little, the Japanese invaded Alaska. Which is not very far in your mind's eye to the Pacific Northwest. That was a little later of course. But we can all remember when the war began and the mobilization began and our church in Bellingham, it was large, large church building, and the basement of the church held a whole rifle company of soldiers as they moved in with their combat gear and new M-1 rifles and things like that. Go to church and the downstairs was a military headquarters and of course people were glad to see them. My folks like many folks up there of course contacted them to invite soldiers out for Christmas dinner from the 7<sup>th</sup> of December until Christmas was very few days really and I think one of the problems was that we didn't have enough soldiers to go around. I know the soldiers that came to visit our house were a little uncomfortable because my mother was sensitive enough to take a good look at them and say to them have you boys had more meals today, and they admitted this was their third Christmas dinner they were going to because they were running out of soldiers and didn't have enough to make all the invitations so.

**Question:** So that was immediately after Pearl Harbor they moved soldiers up ?

**Answer:** Within days.

**Question:** So the government started immediately responding and fortifying and

**Answer:** Makes a big un-restful period for the civilians around. They are there for a reason. They must know more than we know, you know, so then at this time they were moving Japanese people or American-Japanese, Japanese ancestry moving them away so it

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was accepted as the right thing to do and I guess maybe it was. I don't know. Looking back on it we all tend to be ashamed of it now, and but decisions have to be made and that was one they made and it could have gone the other way perhaps. We know now that it wasn't.. they were no threat but at the time you don't know. I used to believe in Santa Clause too. If this goes for any young children, I still do.

**Question:** The time between Pearl Harbor and enlisting what were things like in Bellingham; how did daily life change for you?

**Answer:** Well, I think there were many things that I think did change. Of course the older boys were role models to the sophomores and they were leaving. All kinds of things happened. Some would come back after their training and strut around town in their uniforms you know and all of us would say, I'd look good in that uniform. Not old enough yet. They took the national guard out, they mobilized them, so no national guard for the armory they replaced them by coming up with a militia, a territorial company I guess and I was one of those that joined that so I had a uniform finally. It was a cover all situation with a cap and we did have, an amazing thing I suppose, we had automatic rifles, submachine guns, not the Thompson submachine guns, but a different brand of submachine gun that were issued to us and we had those to carry around. We had a parade every so often, a regular school parade, don't know that schools were part of the parade, and I suppose May Day or something like this, it wouldn't be summertime, July 4<sup>th</sup> or we wouldn't been in school, but we had you know 20 to 30 fellows from school armed with these submachine guns to sling over the shoulder and walk down the street.

**Question:** Did you perform any kind of security duties?

**Answer:** No we were training for that, but we didn't actually get into performance, but the thing I think is interesting is, before and after the parade we took these submachines to school and put them in our lockers and picked them up again for the parade and came in and put the machine guns away you know. And here today you got to be careful you don't have an extra large fingernail file to go near a school room or school property so you know that may be one major change in our life style.

**Question:** Was there a lot of everybody devoted to the war effort, paper drives?

**Answer:** A lot of things that pots and pans were always gathered, boy scouts, I was a boy scout and we had the regular paper drives but we'd all get involved in moving items. Most of us didn't drive yet, but I guess during that period of time we became 16-17 so we were driving to some extent and we would load and haul pots and pans and newspapers around. We also spent some time out planting fir trees, a little planting exercise to make a forest grow. There were a lot of things that were done under the aura of the war effort. Like savings stamps, savings bonds, used to buy stamps to put in there. And I can remember in Bellingham there was war bond drives. There was a group of military people that were there. They put together in some kind of carnival affair and you bought a couple dollars of savings stamps and you got to ride in the jeep. The jeep ride was tremendous. They would be afraid to do this today because there would be too many forms to sign and releases and too much liability involved, but I can remember this jeep ride as being more thrilling than any I ever had in the army. The guy that was driving the jeep was having a heck of a good time but he'd go down into gullies and up and down just like you would see them pulling something on a skyline jumping across. It was really fun. That was one of the things that we did, war bond drives.

And then of course it got closer and closer to graduation and we had to really make our plans and

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**Question:** Was your dad still in the grocery business at this time?

**Answer:** No he was in the bakery distribution management business now. I was the only boy in the family. My dad was not an old man, actually he was younger than most of the father's there. He'd been as a youngster in the boat business, in the Skagit Valley area there, they did have stern wheelers there, old paddle boats with stern wheelers, big large boats running up and around the canals and the portions around Anacortes, Stanwood, and other areas along there. They moved a lot of stuff. Now my dad was an engineer, a marine engineer, he wasn't high in the ranks of the engineers, his father however was. His father had been chief engineer on the boat line up there. He was chief engineer on the old English, that was the name of the ship I remember seeing that leaning over the bridge at Anacortes. I don't know if you've been to Anacortes but there is a large bridge as you go out from Mt. Vernon there, of course, it's a different bridge now than it was then but I can remember leaning over the rail on that bridge and watching the old English going underneath and my grandfather would be there with the Indians and waving back to us of course. My dad followed that a bit, not long, but long enough that he had a ticket and so he was I don't know how that contacted him, maybe the draft board, so he was flattered he was notified as a possible draftee and of course my mother didn't like that too much.

**Question:** Do you have sisters?

**Answer:** I have two sisters, one of them.

**Question:** So are they older or younger?

**Answer:** They are younger, I was the oldest.

**Question:** So when you did graduate to go into the military how did your mom feel about that?

**Answer:** She was a typical mother I suppose. She must have felt like other mothers. And then she found out after I went into the army I volunteered to go into the parachutes and that was a little unsettling for her. She didn't think that was the way I should have gone. She was proud too.

**Question:** When you got called where did you do your basic training at?

**Answer:** Well I got called to Fort Lewis. The first thing we did was go down to the bus station by the Puget Sound Power and Light Company building there in Bellingham. The ones getting on the bus I may have known 4 or 5 of them but these were reporting for particular time and place so they came from all over the area outside Bellingham as well as inside. We were all getting to know each other and had a bus ride down to Fort Lewis and at Fort Lewis we got issued our clothes and orientation immediately and saw all the films on better behave yourself sex life wise which was impressive. I know to most and after that period a group of us went to Texas and after a few months they gave a pre-induction test and you could choose to take this test or not. It was kind of something that promised a little more education and a little more direction to things and so there is college involved perhaps and what not so the group I was with was accepted into this army college program ASTP felt a little bit bad about this because it was a delay in coming to grips with the war but on the other hand I wanted to be an infantryman, I felt that's what I should be. Boy scouts, hiking, map reading these sort of things led me to want to be an infantryman I think and I went to Camp Fannan In Texas. It's in the eastern part of Texas, close to Louisiana, Camp Fannan, and took basic training

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there. It was basic training infantry wise but while we were there training they dropped this ASTP program because the army was filling up its ranks for anything in the future. They needed soldiers to go and finish the war in Europe, that I'm familiar with anyway, obviously in the south Pacific also so they didn't need to have a bunch of people in college. So the only thing to do then was to go ahead and speed things up was to go into paratroops because that was a decision they took you off right away, went off from there to Fort Benning, went through the parachute school there, graduated

**Question:** Had you been on planes before you were a paratrooper?

**Answer:** Well, yeah I'd made a couple of ten dollar rides or maybe five dollar you know in those days around the Bellingham airport there but I hadn't done much work with airplanes.

**Question:** At Fort Benning they give you jump training there?

**Answer:** Oh, yeah, that was the parachute school. DPS, D Parachute School. It was a great course, graduated in the last part of December of 1943.

**Question:** Do you remember the first jump you made?

**Answer:** Oh yeah, you don't forget many I probably remember every one of them and it's been a couple hundred I suppose altogether as I went back later and

**Question:** What did you think of that the very first time, were you in the Dakota?

**Answer:** Yeah, the Dakota, it's interesting you call it that because it is a British term for the C-47 because we call them the C-47 airplane and it's the same airplane the British call them the Dakota airplane, the DC3 commercially designed airplane but striped down lower unit. Yeah I remember that. When you make a jump you think of going down like that and you don't what you do is you step out in a 100-mile wind. You go back like that. By the time you figure out that things are going to work the parachute starts opening. Well I am going to go down now, but the first thing you think is stepping into a strong stiff wind.

**Question:** Think about the tail of the plane when you do that?

**Answer:** Yes, yes, you always think about that, that is an important thing not to have your parachute hang over. Your body position when you go out the door depends on where your parachute will open and that's why they train you so hard on jumping with the proper body position. Left foot out, swing your right leg up so the wind will turn you backwards and put your arms in so you don't have the wind flailing you one direction or the other. Tuck down your head and parachute supposed to open over your head.

**Question:** Were your parachutes different than the one pilots carry?

**Answer:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**Question:** Cause I talked to a Thunderbolt pilot who bailed out and he got dragged about 200 yards across a field and

**Answer:** After he went down the parachute was still inflated, yeah

**Question:** A frozen field

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**Answer:** Uh huh

**Question:** and I wasn't sure if he was untrained and had never jumped or if that's because his chute was different.

**Answer:** Well, it's a hazard, part of the training is in fact sitting in front of a great big propeller they have on the ground that amounts to a great big fan an airplane engine however that puts a big blast on your parachute and instructors or somebody pulled from the rank pull the parachute out and flip the propeller on and it blows you backwards and you have to escape from that thing by proper ways whichever risers are on the ground four risers from them suspension lines are attached. Some people called them shroud lines but that always gave you push ups because you don't want to use the word shroud when you talk about parachuting. So you grab the lower two risers and pull them in and pull them in some more so it spills the air out the top of the parachute so you don't get dragged 200 feet across the ground. But the parachutes themselves are in fact different too because they are hooked with a static line when they pack up the parachute and they have a string although we call them a different name; it is a better word than string.

**Question:** Rip cord?

**Answer:** No, it's not a rip cord its really string, twine, and they loop it a couple of times to make it just the right strength and then that's what's attached to the static line they call it that goes on where you hooks up on the cable. What happens is the cable is thrown to the back of the airplane, you go out the door, and of course that static line is still attached to the string attachment on the packaging of the parachute and that breaks off and your chute begins to deploy. One of the great tricks for the air force or air Corp crew master who is standing by to see that everything goes alright in there, when you push your static line of course that is your tie down to the world and just as you leap out the door he says is this yours? He has a dummy one that isn't hooked up. That's the last thing you see for a few minutes. Too late to do anything about it. That is one of the things you have to put up with.

**Question:** So after you left there, you had infantry training before?

**Answer:** Basic infantry and then parachute. I stayed for an extra 2 to 3 weeks at Fort Benning, maybe even 4. I've forgotten precisely for demolition school.

**Question:** Is that because you were a pathfinder. Did you know at that point you'd be a Pathfinder?

**Answer:** No I didn't really just that a certain number were selected out for demolition, some were communicators, and some hadn't been selected.

**Question:** Why did you get picked, do you know?

**Answer:** No, I suppose I thought demolition work sounded more dramatic than communications.

**Question:** Did you volunteer?

**Answer:** Yeah, you have to do that. I never really enjoyed demolition work.

**Question:** Did you practice with live explosives?

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**Answer:** Yeah, that is part of the training usually quarter pound blocks of TNT although we had training with composition C2 and so forth. It was an interesting course and I enjoyed it. There is a little bit of physics involved and how're you're going to plant charges and so forth and I liked that.

**Question:** So you had to go through the whole thing, had to use the, I saw like a tape measure used for demolition. Have you ever seen anything like that? It was for computing charges on structures?

**Answer:** Computing charges, no, well we did compute them. We had a manual on how to do that but not a tape measure that I recall.

**Question:** So you went through all that and then after demolition school and were you finished with training at that point?

**Answer:** I was finished with training and I went home for a week's leave or.

**Question:** Now your wife was from Bellingham was she?

**Answer:** Yes, we went to school together.

**Question:** So were you dating at that point?

**Answer:** Yes, we had gone steady for several years by then. She was 13 and I was 14 when we started going together.

**Question:** So did you marry before you left?

**Answer:** No, no. Didn't get married. She was in school. We had plans of course.

**Question:** An understanding.

**Answer:** Yeah, so after that week of leave I reported back to port of embarkation and went off to Europe.

**Question:** In that week's leave your family and girl friend knew you were leaving for overseas then?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** So how did you get back, did you go on a train or bus or how did you travel from home back to base?

**Answer:** Well, the only way people traveled in those days was by train. Flying was not something for PSC oh I wasn't even a PSC I was a private PVT so

**Question:** Did they all see you off at the train station?

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Was that a special leaving was it something memorable or?

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**Answer:** I think it, it is interesting that you asked that. I don't quite remember any; the village band didn't come out and play or anything. It was close family stuff good-byes, tears, and whatnot, but.

**Question:** Some mother's don't go to trains. I talked to some veterans that their mothers said good bye at home and didn't want to go to the train for some reason.

**Answer:** Yeah, I can imagine why that would be.

**Question:** So all through this time you are writing home to your girl friend and she is writing you?

**Answer:** Uh huh, I almost brought down a little picture of her and a lip print kiss that we have at home and we used them later on in other assignments but inside your steel helmet you had a picture pasted on one side and a kiss on the other side and I kept that all through that war and of course I turned the helmet in I kept the picture and the lip print and when I went off later to Korea I had the same set but I think probably I had a fresher lip print but a different picture.

**Question:** Was that a tradition?

**Answer:** Well, it wasn't terribly unusual. I didn't invent that but

**Question:** It was a special keepsake

**Answer:** And I took it again. I went to Viet Nam a couple of times, finally, and I kept those also because it seemed like it worked. You don't want to change many things if you're on a roll.

**Question:** I know when I was in the navy mail call was a great time or it could be a disappointing time. If you went up to get your mail and there was no mail you were disappointed because you had been waiting all week for the mail to catch up. And then the mail you did get, I still have the letters.

**Answer:** Is that right?

**Question:** Every letter I got in the navy. Worn out now cause you are lonely being over there. That must have been in your case in World War II where you went must have been even more precious to get mail from home?

**Answer:** Yes, the mail was great. I was one of the youngest kids in when they finally got settled down with the battalion I was with, I was one of the youngest. I got tired of being called chick but I was the one that got more mail than anybody. There was never a mail call, I probably shouldn't say never, but I got more than my share of mail. In fact, we got into a, my wife sent me, my wife, she was my sweetheart then, sent me a box. We in the family still laugh about this because we still have the book that was in the box. The box came and it had peanut brittle which I dearly love, did at that time however. It was a big box and there was two layers in it and everybody comes and hangs around old chick because he gets good stuff, and I was very generous with it and used up the whole top layer giving it to my buddies cause the bottom layer I was going to go back and have that for myself. I went back into the little hut, we were sort of in a haystack, not a haystack but a hay covered area next to the farmers hut, it was in France. And I took the wrapper off for the first layer and the bottom layer was a book and the book was Guadalcanal Diary. Not too many of us in Europe were too interested

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in what was going on in the South Pacific for a war story but I kept the book at home and it's in my library bookcase there. It looks a little tattered and torn and worn but its there. That was the peanut brittle that I didn't get.

**Question:** Would rather have had the peanut brittle I guess?

**Answer:** Actually I did probably enjoy the book but it's a better story that I had the book and didn't have the peanut brittle which would be forgotten now.

**Question:** Did anybody give you a hard time after you getting all that mail cause must have been people that just didn't get letters.

**Answer:** Well, no I didn't get a hard time for it. They'd moan little bit, oh another one.

**Question:** Well, kid you I mean.

**Answer:** I got a box of cookies when we were marshalling to go to the air born operation for southern France, that's where I invaded France and he got put in a barbed wire area and nobody theoretically gets in or out. Obviously there's a few administrative people that private's and Pfc.'s didn't have to know about I guess but obviously they had to bring him food and in this case mail. But mail had been curtailed, there wasn't any mail coming in, but by gosh they did get a package and somehow it did get in and it was for me and it was from my mother and she had made some cookies and it was a good sized box of cookies and that was the only cookies available to the guys. That didn't last very long. Everybody appreciated my mother doing that exercise. I guess looking back on it, I glory in the fact that I did get mail. I was always close to home.

**Question:** So when you left then you embarked from where, New York or?

**Answer:** Actually it was from Virginia.

**Question:** Norfolk.

**Answer:** Norfolk. They had several embarkation areas there.

**Question:** Was it a troop ship you were on?

**Answer:** It was a converted Caribbean luxury liner but it was so converted that there was no luxury left. I remember the latrine system was the old swimming pool they had on the for the luxury cruises to the Caribbean had been converted to a, the shower locker room and part of it had a wooden decking on it to make it a little bit level but you had to be careful cause you were walking down into the diving into the swimming pool and it was filled up with all kinds of people. In the bunks in the navy you know how tight they can pack those things, you have to be careful when you try to turn over in bed or you'd bump the guy above and he didn't like that.

**Question:** What time of year was it when you crossed?

**Answer:** It was May. Good crossing, weather wasn't bad. Fast crossing. I think it was four days.

**Question:** It wasn't just the one ship crossing by itself?

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**Answer:** No, there were 3 or 4 or perhaps even more in the convoy.

**Question:** Were they escorts or were you fast enough to?

**Answer:** There were escorts part way out and coming out to meet and hustle back and I'm not sure in the middle if a change off happened simultaneously whether we had a lonely gap there but nothing happened.

**Question:** What was your destination?

**Answer:** Went to Naples to the Bay of Naples, which of course was filled up with sunken and semi sunken ships already. That's it, that's the first war scene I was able to look at. This was really a war. To look at a harbor like Naples and to see battleships and steamships all kinds you couldn't tell what kinds some of them because they had the bottoms up in the air and standing and of course a lot of buildings destroyed. Very sobering. Very sobering. The fun part is over. I remember that, and from there I went to Sicily. The war had been over in Sicily a long time by, a while anyway. I went there for training some additional Pathfinder kind of training and then we spent a little time in Italy but no real battles. Then we went into the Marshalling area for the invasion.

**Question:** At that point you were getting trained specifically as a Pathfinder then?

**Answer:** Huh.

**Question:** Did you volunteer for that or did they just think you were a great paratrooper?

**Answer:** I guess I volunteered for that. Yeah. You know your friends do something and you do it too. You don't want them to do it if you didn't. You'd want them to come along with you whatever and there was a group of us did that. I wasn't seeking individual destiny or anything like that.

**Question:** And you all had a specialty, each Pathfinder?

**Answer:** Well, basically the one I was with was basically an ad hoc unit in fact the invasion of southern France was made up of largely air born battalions from Italy as opposed to the 82<sup>nd</sup> airborne division and the 101<sup>st</sup>. So we had units 517<sup>th</sup> regimental team was an airborne unit and there was a 550 and 551 airborne units or battalions and 509 battalions, that was the grand daddy of paratroopers. They were the ones that jumped in North Africa and subsequent jumps and some artillery, airborne artillery, that little 75-millimeter pack howitzers that they used.

**Question:** Now in the invasion of southern France, you didn't parachute in, didn't you go in rubber rafts?

**Answer:** No there was an airborne operation that led the way into southern France.

**Question:** So you would have gone first as a Pathfinder?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** So how many of you would have gone first?

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**Answer:** The Pathfinder unit had, I guess I don't really know, I have to stop and think. We split up in different airplanes.

**Question:** It's not like a big bunch of guys jumping. It's not like a large group of people jumping right?

**Answer:** No, at that time it's relatively small. The airplane was relatively full but I'm not sure how many jumped at what place. I haven't thought of that for awhile but

**Question:** That would be the first combat jump

**Answer:** Yea, that was it. The mission I had as a demolitionist was to blow down the telephone poles that had been inserted and to open places for glider landings and special glider landings. It didn't help the paratrooper much to have telephone poles with cables strung between them but on the other hand it was really an anti glider situation to make it difficult for a glider to actually land without.

**Question:** Was that nighttime or was that?

**Answer:** It was nighttime for the Pathfinders or I should say nearly dawn and then after light the gliders came in and then I wasn't associated with the 517<sup>th</sup> at that time. Part of our 1<sup>st</sup> airborne task force was the name of the group consolidated for that so I don't know what time the 517<sup>th</sup> jumped.

**Question:** That jump I assume you must remember. That must have given you pause to think that after seeing the Bay of Naples, and seeing war, and jumping behind enemy lines, cause you were really jumping behind enemy lines weren't you, did different thoughts go through your mind when you're headed there?

**Answer:** I have to say with maturity and all that and I've had some amphibious training through the years since then considerable amphibious training as a matter of fact but I have to admit as dramatic as it sounds and looks and is in some cases I'd go by parachute rather than landing craft any opportunity that I have. I remember in Korea I was a company commander in Korea and we had an operation there against the shores of north Korea, it may have been occupied south Korea, anyway it was up there where we'd be landing against the north Koreans, and I remember I have an avid picture with my steel helmet on and my Mae West gear on cause this was going to be an amphibious operation and it wasn't with the airborne unit it was with the 1st Calvary division and I had my, I was a lieutenant then, a 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant, above my 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant's bar a 1 chalked up there because I was #1 man in boat team #1 in wave #1 for the landing. Of course that sounds more dramatic than it is because there are a lot of boats side by side in wave #1 but to have it signaled on my helmet that I was #1 man in boat team #1 in wave #1 for the landing, I thought the paratrooping was not so bad. But then it turned out that it was a demonstration landing, we didn't actually hit the beach. We got into small boats and circled around and then got back on and what they were doing was decoying the north Koreans to make counter moves and attack them by air and that sort of thing. And we had two divisions worth of shipping. The intelligence people had built up the story that it was the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary division plus the other marine division from the United States. They had all our ships there and just our little regiment.

**Question:** When you jumped into southern France did they get you in the right spot?

**Answer:** Pretty much. Pretty much. We got to the right places and got our unit together. Did our anti telephone pole work.

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**Question:** So what are you wearing when you jump like that? What did you have with you when you jumped as a Pathfinder?

**Answer:** Well by being a demolitionist Pathfinder I carried TNT. You have demolition kits that are made for paratroopers, it was 22 pounds, maybe it is a little less than that. It fills up a little square kit like that. I don't know if that is 22 quarter pounds. It had to be 22 pounds on each foreleg. That makes a very good story because you sound like the wired man or something, but we you know, TNT is stable as opposed to dynamite or something like that that is so sensitive to being bounced or jiggled. Obviously there is a little bit of danger of a tracer bullet hitting it or something like that but it would be memorable to everybody but the guy who had it on. And we had some blasting caps in a separate little spongy box taped onto the ankle there and you know essentially that was it except for the other paratrooping gear which is your weapons.

**Question:** Did you carry an M1 or submachine gun or ?

**Answer:** I had an what we called an M2 carbine, M2, I'm sure that is right, which is a 30 caliber carbine, small weapon but the M2 part was for the airborne business had a folding stock that folded back against it so you wear it on your belt sort of like a pistol except it goes down to your knee, just above your knee (that's important). So that was my weapon and ammunition for that and rations and things that go in a sack. You wear the sack, musette bag you wear below your parachute reserve. You wear the main parachute on the back but there is a reserve parachute that sits in the front. Just below that hangs a musette bag fastened to the low bearing harness up here so when you take your parachute off and then you flip the musette bag back so it's a back pack and fasten it underneath. Kids could do that now easily. You know they carry all these packs to school but we had to do a little training to get that flip back just right. I forget just what else we might be carrying. Entrenching tool you either had a pick or a shovel or an axe, little hatchet. We didn't use those in our Pathfinding job but as soon as you got back you were no longer a specialist you were a grunt and then you want to have an entrenching tool. You want to have a pick because a pick is easier to carry than a shovel and everybody wants to use the pick. You can always get a shovel if you need it, lend them your pick. You learn those things finally.

**Question:** So you took care of your demolitions, then did you all form up the Pathfinders, try to find each other?

**Answer:** No it was back to the site so we was where our units was assembling. As soon as that was over the Pathfinders was a provisional set up that way so we went back to our units and performed our other duties that way.

**Question:** That was two months after D-Day?

**Answer:** Are you thinking of Normandy D-Day?

**Question:** Yeah.

**Answer:** I think it was August 15<sup>th</sup> something like that.

**Question:** Were you to drive straight through Europe. Is that what the plan was?

**Answer:** Well, yeah they did that but our particular units were small and not heavy duty units at that time so we stayed for awhile in that area holding the flanks of the invasion while

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the heavier flanks came to shore by boat and landing craft. 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry division was one, 45<sup>th</sup> was another. I've forgotten how many were involved coming forth. I think there was a French element there too and I don't know what else really.

**Question:** So they brought armor in and mobile Calvary?

**Answer:** And then they went up the valley to the north and met the other forces there and cleaned up that part of France.

**Question:** You must have been the first liberators a lot of French people saw then in that part of France?

**Answer:** Oh yeah, if you have to liberate someplace. Nice, and Grasse, and Caan are good places to liberate. I guess any place is a good place to liberate but it was.

**Question:** What was that like?

**Answer:** You know your heart goes out to people who have been waiting so long for liberation that you probably don't think of that ahead of time as much as you would other things. It's a case.. it's overwhelming to have people in tears throwing themselves at you, giving you what might be their last bottle of wine, we were told not to drink wine then but there were probably some exceptions, most of us were too young to drink wine then except there were probably some exceptions, so I remember that. I was a guest at a house, a home very few days after the liberation, in fact the day of the liberation of that area. We, after the big forces came forward we went off to the flank and we were in the town of Grasse which was famous for perfume, in those days anyway, much perfume was made in Grasse, and were walking down the street and a strange looking fellow in a beret, cape, wrapped leggings, hailed us and spoke pretty good English too. Asked what news do you have, what news do you have? And I had in my pocket a copy of the Stars and Stripes newspaper, you know the army newspaper there, so I was able to give him that. He was a French officer in World War I and he appreciated the newspaper and he wanted to talk to us and I had to get back. I think I'd gotten a pass to get into the town to get toothpaste or something like that that I had lost on the jump some way or other that's why I was there, but I had to get back. The company commander had given me permission but I knew I had to get back. He walked all the way with us to the camp in an olive grove. So he stopped and talked with the company commander. The company commander was French himself, our American company commander. French to the extent that he spoke French and I think he was born in France or lived there at one time. So this old gent got permission for me and my buddy to come to his house for dinner. I was one of the first that got to go into this town so that was great. He had two pretty little daughters, that was also very nice, so that was a real warm relationship for liberating.

**Question:** Do you remember that dinner?

**Answer:** Yes I do because my buddy and I sent up earlier our cans of C-rations earlier to augment their meal so they thought it was just magnificent. They enjoyed the C-rations. After all, their mother was a French cook. She made good C-rations.

**Question:** So whatever they had to thank you.

**Answer:** They had a lovely home. He was an executive in perfume business there. I don't know what his particular job was but.

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**Question:** On the drive through this area did you have a lot of resistance from the Germans, were they still entrenched?

**Answer:** Well, it wasn't as bad as we probably thought it was going to be and then the way its supposed to happen the lightly armed, uh non-vehicular kind of unit that we were. Our job was to open up and defend the landing areas, the beachhead as you say. And the other units move forward, heavier ones roll forward, the heavier ones roll the tanks off the tank carriers and the other vehicles off the appropriate ships. So they would herd along the head.. we had to round up and shoot some people and I remember one of my experiences there caused me to do some deep thinking. When we got into the first town there we liberated Le Muy. L-E space Capital M-u-y, no dot com. They had some Germans that were rounded up in the town and they were against the wall and a great crowd of people around them. And the people in the town would run up and, ladies would take a purse and swing at them in the head, go back into the crowd, somebody else would come out and. So we were in an awkward position. I understood that the German's were bad guys and these people had some grudges and they were taking it out on them yet we weren't too happy with the German's either but we had to stop that from going on because it could have become bloody.