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Question: We left off with your uncle in the Gestapo, your uncle in the German navy and uncle in the Germany army, and Otto you never saw him after the war was over, right?

Answer: No, he got executed by the Russians my grandfather told me. Otto Weis was his name. He was a major before the war but he got into the Nazi party. Nobody in the family liked him. He was very arrogant. I guess he made a good German officer you know.

Question: Did he fight on the Russian front did he?

Answer: I have no idea. Nobody told me. I think he was mostly a staff officer.

Question: Let's get back to, we got as far as Cologne in your advancing. At that point are you moving further into Germany or are you moving toward Czechoslovakia

Answer: At that time mostly north toward Belgium and Luxembourg, that's where the Bulge was you know. We got to clean up after that. As far as Czechoslovakia that came after Nuremberg when we formed back into a complete division up until that time we kind of split apart and were used by other outfits for support. It was nice being a division again. To see a whole division of tanks boy gives you a good feeling you know.

Question: How many tanks were in the division?

Answer: Let's see 27 tanks to a company, 3 companies to a battalion, 3 battalions and multiply that by 4 again and you're talking hundreds of tanks.

Question: Probably closer to a thousand tanks yeah. So what was happening in the war at this time after Nuremberg?

Answer: After we left Nuremberg I can remember going through the woods. I was always told the trucks and jeeps came behind us you know, they asked us if you go through the woods please don't use the same track as the tank in front of you go a little to the sides because our wheels aren't that far apart you know to straddle the dirt and everything so it kind of made it easier for him so he wouldn't get stuck all the time. That can be awful, so we tried not to follow the same tracks as the tank in front of us. We kind of made a road for them to go through the woods. I remember coming out of the woods at this time we'd been separated a little bit and came up on the autobahn and right in the middle of the autobahn in front of us sat this German Messerschmitt, the ME-109. And my tank commander says get rid of it, I says that's a beautiful airplane I can't ram that. I love airplanes. So we went on the other side of the autobahn in the woods there and checked it out. I climbed into the cockpit and I tried to start it. I couldn't figure out the German instruments, good think because if I'd of started it I'd be crazy enough to take off in that darn thing. Probably get shot down by my own people. Those were awfully hectic days. That was an indication of our attitude.

Question: Your tank group, did you lose people in your travels across Europe?

Answer: I don't understand what you mean.

Question: Did you suffer a lot of casualties driving across Europe

Answer: yeah, but we don't hear what goes on except within our own little community or tank company. In some of the other tanks, I didn't know some of the guys names, you know been together for years but you don't get together that much. Just your own crew. Your own crew is like a family. We know their history, backgrounds. My tank commander was a

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schoolteacher and our gunner was an engineer, I was a photographer, and some of the other were younger they just came out of high school some of them.

Question: So your part of the war is that tank.

Answer: That's it. I still like to read war stories because I didn't know what was going on even with our own division. I read the action report after the war about one operation was six killed and 38 wounded in one operation so that's the only thing I know. When we finally got to Pilsen not Pilsen but Czechoslovakia we had to cross Sudetenland. It's a corridor between Czechoslovakia and Germany which is about thirty-forty miles wide occupied by German speaking Czechs. And I think they were more German than Czech because I remember going through it and every window in every house had a sheet hanging out of it which is a sign of surrender and I'd never seen that before. They probably got the word down there we were coming through and they didn't want to get blown up. I never. We did hit the one building which was a schoolhouse occupied by troops and then that night I remember we got out of our tank and went into this house that had been hit by one of our rounds big enough to drive a truck through and I slept on a couch. When I was laying on the couch the next morning I looked out and there was a big hole in the floor I could see the rafters and on this rafter laid this little bag. I got a hold of it and it had coins in it, like old Roman coins, so I just shoved it in my musette bag and finally in my duffel bag and didn't look at it until I got back home in the states and I put it in another bag and I remember oh about 4-5 years later I saw all these coins scattered around on the ground. My son had gotten into it. I lost about half of them at least. I have no idea but I know they are collectors. Probably been there for God knows how long under the house when the house was built but that was in Sudetenland, probably a German, it's funny the house got hit by one of our big shells, made a big hole over the mantel behind the couch there was two figurines beautiful figurines, I guess Dresden. I said I wonder what happened to the people here, they probably got killed, I think I'll take them. There was a strict rule about looting we could not take property except a weapon or something like that but we were not allowed to take jewelry or anything like that. If it was a military watch, ok, but private watches no so we realized that and I felt badly about taking the figurines and the house would have to be rebuilt and I don't know what happened to the people that lived there but I sent the figurines home to my wife and we still have them and the things that I remember from then on were happy moments. From there on it was Czechoslovakia and when we came through the first town we stopped because somebody got hit up in front and we couldn't get through it was right in the middle of the road in this little town. And we got out and one of our crewman could speak Polish because he first name was Crobeeky and he spoke Polish and it was very much like Czech so he was talking to these Czech people and they come around us and while we were doing that this woman came up to me and cupped her hands under my face like this and she's saying something to Crobeeky and I said what's she saying, what's she saying? She says that you're the healthiest person she's ever seen in her life. I says, well poor woman under the German rule for the last five years they are probably you know restricting their diets and all the healthy men are off to war someplace. So I felt good about that, the first time in months. We weren't allowed to talk to women especially. About an hour or so later we entered the town of Pilsen and people were throwing lilacs on our tanks because they were in bloom you know and then flowers and waving at us, oh God this is great, what a difference, and guys were jumping off the tank every time I stopped, hey, get back here and as we got into Pilsen it was the same way. Pilsen is a good sized city, probably like Olympia and all of a sudden the German's started firing out of the windows with rifles. Occupation troops you know. And even the church steeple cathedral there firing out of there and we returned the fire with 50 caliber and its not a big gun but it does quite a bit of damage to a building and I can still remember tracers going down hitting building one side of the street and bouncing off the building the other side of the street and zig zagging back and forth. I can still see it in my mind but then we continued on and some

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Czech was saying, SS ten minutes, in Czech to this Polish crewman we had from United States, he says SS going that way ten minutes ago and then pretty soon the other guys SS five minutes we're getting close to them, I said SS I don't like that, we're a tank outfit, we'll have to fire on them, anyway, we finally caught up to them. It was a convoy leaving Pilsen anyway the back trucks had not only soldiers but women in it too, taking everything with them. And as we got further on we passed them and brushing against the trucks because there wasn't that much room in the road and got up further and they had German half tracks and why that happened, the lead vehicle broke down. The good rule is to put the worst vehicle in the back so it won't hold up the whole convoy. That's how we caught them. So we took them prisoner. Lined them up with the same routine disarmed them and one lieutenant when he saw it was the end of the war for him committed suicide poor guy. I got his buddies bayonet, officer, and had to continue on so first sergeant appointed one of the cooks to march them back to Pilsen which was three miles. Oh he was unhappy about that but he had no problem marching them back to Pilsen. He told us later when he got them back to Pilsen he got to this one building with all these Czechs with arms and everything. He said we'll take care of them you know, give them to us, ok so he took them. They took about five at a time inside the building. What they were doing. They take them up to the fifth floor and kick them out the window. He walked around the side, terrible, but he saw this old woman with a cane beating on these Germans. Cut that out. But that is how the Czechs were really angry about the Germans, the occupying Germans.

My division took over seven thousand five hundred prisoners that day from Pilsen. Yeah. The that part of the convoy had a panel truck that they had taken with them. It said (German) small arms and it was loaded with pistols and rifles and submachine guns. I picked out after I got my Luger and P38 I picked out a Schmeisser MP141 submachine gun which was a 38 but with a 20 round clip. The gun I was carrying was an M3 submachine gun and we called it a grease gun it was a 45 and when you fire it sounds like ra tat tat but a Schmeisser went zip zip. You think its one round and you have five rounds going off at the same time. But I loved that gun and carried it until the war ended in just a few days. And the war was supposed to be officially ended on I think the 6th of May but we had pockets to clean up after that.

As a matter of fact we went to this one town they would send a couple of tanks to a town to clean up and see if it was alright and I remember this little square and I saw this office building with two Nazi flags hanging in front of it like German headquarters or Nazi headquarters. So I parked in front of it the tank facing into a store window where I could see a German sitting down at a typewriter, a German soldier, I shut the engine off and we're all saying look at that guy sitting at the typewriter, what is he doing, he is probably typing up a request for a transfer. Other guy said he is probably writing a love letter to his wife, so he was typing and the guys got off the tank walked inside and took him prisoner. I was still sitting in the driver's seat and I could see him get up out of his seat, raise his hands in the air and we took him prisoner. Disarmed him. Poor guy. This was after the war was ended. So this went on for quite a few days, pockets all over the place that we had to clean up. And some of the German's were quite adamant they would go underground change clothes and be part of the populace so then there became a refugee problem. But all these German wives and families in Germany had no way of getting there except to walk. So the Czechs gathered up the women and groups of one hundred and put one Czech guard with them with a rifle to march them back to Germany and I saw this for days, these women and some of the old women were riding in baby carriages. I remember feeling sorry for this old woman and she had passed out on the side of the bank. We went up there and brought her some water and candy bar or something like that to help her out a little bit. The Czech guard that was with them didn't want that. He came up with his rifle so I cocked my submachine gun. No problem after that. This went on for groups like this for days and a lot of the men couldn't do that you know because they would be taken prisoner right away so they'd be traveling at night time and I can still remember seeing these women going through town with their high heels

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on but at the edge of town they'd take their shoes and stockings off and walk bare footed between town.

Question: So the war was officially over?

Answer: The war was over yeah except we still had pockets. The pockets went on for a good month or so and had to be cleaned up.

Question: So did you have enough points?

Answer: I had 87 points when the war ended and officially my division was disbanded. None of us wanted to be occupation troops. That was a bad word, and where we were stationed mostly around Czechoslovakia, Pilsen, (Karinhall?) was a famous place and a place where Goering used to go to rest. There was a special bar he went to. I've been there and after the war when I joined the photo outfit one of our duties was to photograph the war crime trials up in Nuremberg and always had about five photographers up there and we photographed the whole thing and then we also had to go out and collect atrocity pictures you know at the burial grounds for murdered Jews or prisoners you know. That was awful but we did it for a report for congress.

Question: Was it hard to comprehend that people could do such a thing?

Answer: Oh yeah. It is, like I remember during the war we went by this concentration camp and I thought it was an insane asylum because these skinny people were hanging on a fence with their fingers. They looked terrible. They had striped clothes on and they looked terrible. I thought it was an insane asylum so I didn't do anything about that because right next to it a tank went through the fence, they could have walked out but evidentially they were too weak to do anything. That was in France the concentration camp. The big one I saw was Dachau, that is near Munich, just north of Munich a little bit. Some of our elements helped liberate that Dachau and we had gotten pictures of all the evidence and all the things they did there and also got pictures of the escorted civilians going through to see because they didn't believe it.

Question: So you were a photographer then?

Answer: I was a photographer then.

Question: You know I think I've actually seen your footage I think because we went into the library of congress and one of them where they were bringing the civilians in to see.

Answer: They live right there and they didn't know what was going on.

Question: Do you believe they didn't know?

Answer: No, not all of them, probably not how bad it was but they knew.

Question: Yeah, the footage I saw the jeep was heading down the road and as these people were marching towards the concentration camp these young women were laughing like it was an outing and then when they got to the camp and were leaving it was completely different.

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Answer: I looked at that and I thought you know there is always this debate did they know or did they not know and I looked at that and these are people that didn't know what they were walking into.

Answer: No idea. No idea.

Question: So you also filmed in Nuremberg?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So were you there at the main Nuremberg trial?

Answer: We had to go shoot pictures of it, yeah. We would take turns you know get different assignments. They had at least five photographers at the Nuremberg trials.

Question: In the first Nuremberg trials who was the high ranking Nazi that was at it?

Answer: Oh yeah. Hess and Goering and all those guys

Question: Did you actually see Hess?

Answer: Yeah. Yeah.

Question: What did you think about them?

Answer: Well I thought they were arrogant in a way you know and like they were being mistreated or falsely accused. Just doing their job, like they all say.

Question: So after the things you photographed and the atrocities did they look like evil incarnate to you?

Answer: Oh yeah gee. Well, Goering committed suicide. They had those pills you know. In fact I think Hitler did too. Well, it's like that lieutenant the convoy we caught committed suicide when he saw that. He couldn't take it. Well that's not normal.

Question: Your best days of the war were in Czechoslovakia.

Answer: Oh yeah best days.

Question: What was the worst day that you had from the war.

Answer: I kind of wiped that out of my mind.

Question: Really.

Answer: Yeah, I remember frustrations and different things. I remember once you see behind the tank we had an ammo trailer and the wheels were about five feet high. It could almost ride upside down it was so big, but it could hold 125 rounds, of you know high explosives and I remember things weren't going right one day and everything was rush rush rush and the tank commander was I won't say the words, but it was hurry up or go faster, and kick in the butt more or less and jumping ditches and going around and hitting rocks, the ammo trailer hit upside down and gee that's not good you hit a rock or something we'd be all blown sky high and so how are we going to get that thing right side up so we had a (inaudible)

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going on, we had to do something and I was frustrated so I backed the trailer up to a bank a sloping bank and flopped it over that way of course the crew was a half mile away when I was doing that. It was a bad day for me, things were not going right. We had to find the outfit. That was not easy. Normally you can follow tracks you know tire tracks like most guys don't like to ask for directions, typical man you know but,

Question: Were you scared when you were involved in combat?

Answer: No, I was too busy.

Question: Too busy?

Answer: Yeah. I appreciate being apart of an armored division instead of being in an infantry division and being on the frontline all the time.

Question: Do you feel safer?

Answer: Well, yeah. Those days I would. Now days I probably wouldn't but those days being in the tank and being able to go across country, break through the line, get behind the line where it is safe or wait for the infantry to catch up or whatever. Those poor guys had an awful time sometimes because the German's fighting too.

One thing I remember come to my mind now, every time we saw a turn in the road up ahead and there was a bush or tree we'd put a round in it because inevitably there'd be a German 88, one of the wickedest weapons of the war. It had a very high velocity. Like I tell you about the three tanks that had the hole right through the turret right in one side and out the other the (inaudible) 74 and 75 couldn't do that it would bounce right off. The 88's which was made by Skoda works in Czechoslovakia had a very short life span I think less than 700 rounds and they had to change barrels. The reason for that was the taper the shell would go in 88 but as the taper got smaller it came out 77 mm smaller or something like that. Our gun had only a 3-mm taper. The idea of that taper was to seal that round off as it goes out the tube to get a higher velocity. Very high velocity. Now our barrels were good for three thousand rounds. Every time you fire a round you supposed to log it in a book so if it comes to a point where you have to change barrels you are ready for it. You can change barrels. And that is not easy. I've done it one time. Whew. On the 105 I brought it to the ordinance and I thought they were going to change it and they gave me the tools and told me how to do it.

Question: Being the driver you must have seen all those bends in the road and all those bushes before everyone else did. Did you ever see a German 88 sticking out of a bush?

Answer: Oh yeah. Sometimes most of the time they were abandoned by the time we get there. Fortunately.

Question: Did anybody ever take a shot at you with one?

Answer: Not us. No. Sometimes, most of the time they were abandoned by the time we got there. We see that bend in the road and one bush, one round right now.

Question: So if you ever saw one in tact it probably made you pucker a little bit when you saw that.

Answer: Yeah, oh yeah. See 88 rounds looked like a pencil they are long, real long, a big charger on it.

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Question: Did you ever see a tank hit by one?

Answer: No I saw the tanks that were hit by one.

Question: I hear that when they hit they sprayed molten metal throughout the interior of the tank.

Answer: The metal on the tank itself would be turned into shrapnel. It pretty much takes care of the crew.

Question: I don't think I could be a tanker being inside of a tank.

Answer: Are you talking about claustrophobia?

Question: That and fear you'd get hit and there is no where to go and there'd be a fire and I mean I would probably be thinking about that all the time. It's pretty small and seven people trying to get out one hatch.

Answer: Yeah, well the M4 tank you do have the escape hatch on the bottom. The driver has a hatch, the assistant driver has a hatch, the tanker has a hatch and the loader has the hatch except for the gunner he has to wait for the tanker man to get out. The M7 and M10's are like the tanker open on top you know they are open so you can just jump out if you get hit but

Question: Looking at the Germans how did you look at the enemy was it a country, was it a person, did you hate the German soldier?

Answer: I made two categories in my own mind of the Germans. The German drafted soldier was probably no different than we were but then you got the SS, these were the diehard killers you know and Nazi's and those to be respected and feared which I did. Of course I hated the Nazi's and what they stood for. I could compare them to the Taliban right now.

Question: So the SS troops when you ran up against them you thought there was more reason to fear the SS troops?

Answer: Were they more fearful?

Question: Would it be more fearful to run into an SS troop?

Answer: Definitely, when they had SS on the lapel boy. You show them respect and make sure they have no weapons on them.

Question: Today looking back do you hold any grudges against the Germans or anything as time went by?

Answer: Oh I don't think so I would hold more grudges against the Germans in Brazil than I would in Germany.

Question: The ones that escaped huh.

Answer: Yeah, that's the way I feel. That's where they all went.

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Question: Yep, except your uncle Freud?

Answer: Uncle Freud he went to Sweden?

Question: Of all places, I guess it was neutral I guess.

Answer: Sweden was neutral but the Danes didn't like that at all.

Question: He would have been a collaborator right?

Answer: He was a collaborator, he joined the SS, the Gestapo rather.

Question: The last three months of the war. What bad timing huh.

Answer: Oh yeah, I couldn't understand that.

Question: If he had waited three months and not joined.

Answer: Then he could have stayed in Denmark.

Question: Did your family members that were Danish that were in the German military why did they get involved do you know? Because Freud was Danish.

Answer: Freud was Danish yeah but he wasn't in the Danish military.

Question: I mean why did he, I'm curious cause he joined the Gestapo, was the one in the German navy was he a Dane also?

Answer: A huh.

Question: Was the family were they ethnic Germans your family?

Answer: No they were Danish, Danish blood, all the way through but I can remember my family talking about Freud. He was a good looking scam artist and he was a guy that took advantage of all the opportunities and I could see where he might have thought it was a good deal. He was an opportunist and he took it, but he and his family had to move out of the country or they'd have killed him, I know they would have.

Question: So when did you come home to the States?

Answer: I came home to the states right after Christmas 1945.

Question: Glad to be back?

Answer: I met my brother in California. He came back before I did because he had more points. He'd been over the islands for many years. I can remember writing to him from Europe. I was complaining about the cold weather and the mud and couldn't talk to the people and things like that you know and I'm saying there you are in the South Pacific, warm water, palm trees, hula girls, and he sends me a picture. He is standing in front of his air plane with some of the natives and they were some of the ugliest people you ever want to look at.

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Question: So you actually wrote back and forth?

Answer: We wrote back and forth, free.

Question: He was a pilot was he?

Answer: He was a pilot observation for the artillery, yeah, he was an officer. He got shot down three times in a little cub you know and when Korea started he flew an L-19, like a Cessna.

Question: Bird dog.

Answer: Yeah and he got shot down four times. Four times he got shot down. He sent pictures which I have here. Windshield blown off. Hole in the wing about that big. Tail section almost wiped out. He got killed over there actually.

Question: So were you proud of the time you spent in the service?

Answer: Was I proud?

Question: Of World War II, of what you did and accomplished?

Answer: Yeah, I'm proud of it, being a foreigner I'm special proud of it, yeah.

Question: That's right you're Danish.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: I guess only New Yorkers know you're Danish though cause I sure can't tell.

Answer: You can't tell?

Question: I saw you were from New York . It must have been something else to be able to speak the language.

There's a few veterans that could speak some German that we talk to and because they could speak they had different stories to tell mostly for interrogation and things.

Answer: Yeah, I wasn't good enough for interrogation but when we caught prisoners I was good enough to line them up and straighten them out and get them underway you know.