

# George Phillips

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**Question:** So I have it on tape is to get your name, first and last and the spelling so I can have it, so if you go ahead.

**Answer:** Ok. Are you ready?

**Question:** Sure.

**Answer:** Okay, George G. Phillips, P-H-I-L-L-I-P-S.

**Question:** Now I learned something interesting now I don't know if this is true or not, one of the vets told me ah, because I notice that a lot of the World War II vets, when they write something they'll put their middle initial, and the one guy said yeah, all they care about was your first name and middle initial because by the time they got to your last name...

**Answer:** (laughs) That and your serial number (laughs).

**Question:** You're kind of a, um, 'cause you went in actually, you were in before the war, is that right?

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** So what were you doing prior to the war? You got into what?

**Answer:** Well I joined the National Guard in 1939 because they used to pay a dollar a drill and that was big money in those days when gas was ten cents a gallon and so on. And ah, that sounded like a pretty good deal. We go to a drill and get a buck and ah, they paid every three months. Well that was fine and that lasted for a little over a year and then they, in September 16th, 1940, they federalized the National Guard. And ah, we were made, went from the 148 field artillery to 248 coast artillery and they shipped us up to Fort Warden and we were on, what, I think a ten inch gun up there. I had very little to do with the guns because I immediately went to radio school since I had some background in it. And I went there for six months and I liked it so well I became quite proficient at it, enough so that they put me in the main radio station, post radio station. And I worked for City of San Francisco, Fort Lewis, ah, Fort Ogden, Utah and so on. It was a real high speed net. Well ah...

**Question:** Were, how old were you at this time? Were you just still a kid or?

**Answer:** Yeah (laughs), I was starting to shave yeah. (laughs) Yeah, but I ah, somewhere along the line after a year or two in the service why ah, I decided that my girlfriend and I get married on the thing, and ah I had a radio shop on the post and I also did ah, skate boy at the roller rink and what not, you know anything to make a buck. So um I decided that \$54 a month, and I was a corporal by that time, and ah, it wouldn't make it, I couldn't get married. So I looked around for some way to get more money and ah, I decided I'd go to OCS if it killed me (laughs), and it darn near did.

**Question:** And OCS is?

**Answer:** Officer's Candidate School. And ah, I had my choice of two, three branches. I would've preferred signal but ah, I got the best next thing to equipment, electric radio equipment. And I went to Armored Force school, tanks, at Fort Knox, Kentucky and ah, I graduated in January of '43 and was sent to ah, Kentucky, to a post in Kentucky and ah, they assigned me as a communication officer in a battalion so I immediately applied for a

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communication officer's school and went there. And ah, that started my career in the, really started my career in the military.

**Question:** Still not married?

**Answer:** Yes I did. I went, I flew home and got married. In those days we flew about 5,000 feet high, bumpity, bump over the mountains. We, quite a trip, and then we got married and then we trained ah, and I was sent to Kentucky to ah, to a unit. And um, then ah, I was placed in a repot depot and ah, I was picked up there by an engineer outfit who wanted a communication officer. Now that was out of branch so I went along with the gag until we got overseas and then I, I looked up the former colonel I had and he put me back in appropriate branch. So...

**Question:** So when you say overseas where did you...

**Answer:** Oh, believe it or not I went over in the Queen Mary and ah, I didn't know for quite a while what ship I was on because we just came out of a black out in New York and into a hole in the side of a big ship. For some reason I kind of lucked out, they said everybody to the right, keep moving to the right but when they came to me, and I don't know whether I had black heads or what but ah, anyway, they sent me to the left and I ended up living with the anti-aircraft crew on the Queen Mary. And ah, we zipped across. One night we had a light appear on one side of us and a light appear on the other side and the old captain just gave her the throttle, and ah we zipped through. That thing would do about 32 knots so, it would ah, just about out-run a torpedo.

**Question:** Just about.

**Answer:** Just about, yeah (laughs). And when we got to Greenock, Scotland why, ah, of course there wasn't any docks to handle a ship that big, it was what 1,100 feet or something. And so we lightered ashore and went on a, got into a side loading British train, troop train, and away we went. And ah, I stayed in England for about six months and we were waiting for the build up and man they sure had equipment over there. It was a wonder it didn't sink the island, you know (laughs).

**Question:** I assume it was just active. I mean things just moving and...

**Answer:** Oh, it was turmoil everywhere. Ah, I didn't have much chance to cruise around, you know. I was the supply officer also so I wandered around picking up supplies and I got to see a lot of things. Then ah, our unit was biggoted, biggoted, a bigot at that time was a code word that meant you were informed of the forth coming invasion, had the information. Well I wasn't biggoted, I was a second lieutenant at the time and just about to make first lieutenant, and ah, I happened to be out on the road in front of the post at Martin Stacey, England, and ah, here came a convoy of tanks on ah, flat cars and they had tarps over them. And I thought, gee that's kind of funny, I mean, why do you cover up a tank? You know, you can tell what it is, the gun's sticking out there. So ah, one of the flaps was loose on the back and I looked under, it was going by, and I looked in as it was going by, and there was a propeller on it. And I thought, on a tank? So I, I ran into the S3, Major Treadwell and ah, this was 3rd Armored Group and ah, Major Treadwell grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and he yanked me in the room and he says "You never saw a propeller on a tank, do you understand?" "Yes sir, I understand." What it was, was a method of getting tanks ashore without having a 300 foot ship load 'em on the beach, see, and be subject to all the fire and ah, the artillery, German artillery.

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**Question:** So did they, were they set in something or they actually made amphibious tanks?

**Answer:** They were, they had floatation devices around 'em and the exhaust up. And ah it probably would have been successful except that we had about a four foot chop and they didn't fare too well on it. I never saw another tank with a propeller on it (laughs) after that.

**Answer:** I ah, the ones that were biggoted were sent over to Normandy. We landed on Omaha Beach and ah, we put the tanks in at H plus one which is pretty close to zero hour. And ah, I came ah, a short time later on a 300 foot ship and ah, when I climbed aboard that LST in England, Portsmouth, why I, they, we had been up since two, three o'clock in the morning, you know, getting in line and doing these things, and I was pretty tired so I ah, I had no idea when they were gonna kick off anyway. So ah, I went to the communication officer and I figured he'd be on duty and I could use his bunk, sure enough the only trouble he was also a junior officer. And ah, I got in his bunk which was the top bunk and there was about 18 inches between where you lay and where the top of the ah, that was, and of course I had to take my helmet off and I got up on the bunk and was just sound asleep, just really sawing logs, and the anti-aircraft gun went off. We were on the beach at that time. And ah, I hit my head, I had a bump on my head I could've hung my helmet on, you know. And I staggered down and I thought well I've got a candy bar in my, in the Jeep so I'll go in and get a candy bar and the ah. There was an air raid right then. And I looked out, they dropped the front of the, the tide was out, presumably enough to unload us, and ah, I, I was told to get that vehicle out of here now. They were scared of the gas, we had full tanks of gas. And ah, we pushed off and the ramp was steeper than normal because apparently there was a shell hole or something there. I don't know whether it was a fresh shell hole or an old one but anyway the ramp was too steep and I think the first vehicle off was a dental truck (laughs) the invasion of Normandy, yeah. But ah, anyway we got on the beach, we powered our way out of there all right, the bumper stuck but it powered out the hole.

**Answer:** And ah, we waited just momentarily for some of the others to start forming a convoy and we started taking off and I had no idea where to go. I wasn't biggoted so I didn't have any information about the area I was in, I was absolutely running dumb blind and ah, I saw some trucks leaving the beach and I figured, well obviously there must be a road. And I went up there and ah, the convoy stopped ahead of me and I talked to the driver and I said "Where's this convoy going?" He says, "To the front." "What kind of convoy is it?" And he says "Ammunition." (laughs) I didn't think that was where I wanted to go right then, so I looked over to the left and there was a little tiny faint flashing arrow pointing, you know it'd blink about every two, three seconds. And ah, I went over and looked at it and there was some American writing on it so (laughs) I figured it was ours. And ah, I went in maybe two or three hundred yards and all it was was a little pup tent and ah, I identified myself and he says "Well this is where you're supposed to be." He says, "Scatter your vehicles and camouflage 'em and ah, we'll take care of you in the morning." So we did. We put up shrimp nets that night and we got all ready. First thing in the morning here comes a ME109 down the beach, chugging up sand, you know. Scared the heck out of us. We hit the foxholes two or three times but that was all the activity there was.

**Question:** So it, you said that, so all these crafts are coming in dropping their fronts all these trucks are piling off and it's like being on the highway out here at five o'clock and not knowing where everybody's going?

**Answer:** No sign. About like finding this building D here (laughs). Just about the same.

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**Question:** Wow. Now did you have the faintest idea what you were getting into at this point?

**Answer:** Well I kinda had, from war movies, I had an idea of what war was. I hadn't had any, I had been in the artillery in the National Guard and we had fired 75's, so I knew it was a noisy little thing. And then we'd fired our 12 inches up there, up at Fort Warden. And incidentally you can see that shell going out, you could till' it disappears about 10 miles out.

**Question:** So the truck that you were driving, was it one of the...

**Answer:** I wasn't driving.

**Question:** Oh you weren't. But the truck you were in was it one of the like dual axle canopy trucks or what?

**Answer:** Jeep.

**Question:** Jeep. So it's just a old 47 Willys type Jeep.

**Answer:** Yeah but it was waterproofed. Ah, we had all of the vehicles waterproofed because we knew we might get wet. I didn't know how wet (laughs), but thanks to that hole I got lot's of wet. And they made us wear this gas proof underwear which was very itchy and was gas proof I guess, and ah, it was terrible stuff. We tried every way in the world to boil that stuff out of there and uh uh, we finally ended up throwing it away, you know.

**Question:** So gas, flammable gas proof hoping it wouldn't burn is that?

**Answer:** No, I think it's for mustard gas, or ah...

**Question:** Protect your skin then.

**Answer:** Yeah, we didn't know what we were gonna run into.

**Question:** You were at the point that you would take the mustard gas over the itch.

**Answer:** (laughs) I guess I was that desperate, yeah. I itched too long.

**Answer:** But ah, we stayed about six, seven weeks there on the, we lived in a place called Cerisy Foret. There's a picture in my memoirs there that ah, shows the terrible devastation. There was, there's Cerisy Foret had five roads coming into it and they later made it Victory Circle and had a roundabout in there it was so big. But the Germans ran interdiction fire in there. Interdiction fire is artillery fire that's ah, set out to ah, hit a road point or a junction where somebody might be, you know. And it's just a shot in the dark but there's a good possibility with all the traffic we had there'd be something there on it. Well, fortunately for us they were just about a hundred yards to one side of our CP otherwise we'd, we'd of been obliterated because that, well you could see the forest. There was nothing but stumps left. Eight inch is pretty powerful stuff.

**Question:** So when you got there was the forest still there? And then after you'd been there the forest was gone?

**Answer:** Across the street.

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**Question:** Yeah, wow.

**Answer:** Yeah, yeah it was completely, just like one of these loggers had gone in and cleaned it out. Yeah it was, that was quite a night.

**Answer:** We got strafed one time. The only casualty we had -- 'cause you can hear somebody strafing a long way away, and ah, he's down and he's relatively slow and we could hear the chatter of the German plane machine guns and so we dove, I had an underground, I had log covers over my foxhole (laughs) -- the only casualty was the lister bag, our water bag, it was above ground. But ah, we didn't have much activity until we started out of there. How far do you want to go?

**Question:** This is, you're doing fine, this is great. So you, where did you head then once you started leaving the beach and...

**Answer:** Well we went to two different places and ah, real estate started to become precious because we were sending more people ashore than we had real estate to handle 'em, you know. It's kind of hard to hide 'em in that little piece that we had. But we rapidly expanded enough and actually the landings weren't completely separate for quite a little while, I mean day or two. And ah, they finally joined up, then we got more real estate and more real estate. Well it was about, that was in June, June 6th, and in July ah, they had the Operation Cobra which was the ah, break out of Normandy. And what they did was to take some of the heavy bombers, 1,800 of them by the way, and ah, they picked an area, a town called Saint Lo, it was a fair sized town and kind of hilly, and ah, they, the 1,800 bombers hit it a couple of times. And the Germans lost about 80% of their command according to the commander of the German forces and that and the rest of 'em were pretty dumbfounded by it all.

**Answer:** And ah, that's when Patton came ashore, and ah, he'd actually been ashore for a while. And that's when he took off with a couple of infantry divisions and the 5th Armored division. And the 5th Armored started ah, up to the north and they swung down south first and then out to the east and then ah, straight north and put a, surrounded, enclosed ah, what they call Falaise Gap, little town of Falaise there. And the Germans just fought like crazy trying to keep that open because they were spilling troops going to the north on the thing. Well they finally got it closed and then the ah, 5th Armored ran about a hundred miles in eight hours (laughs), chasing them and just raising cain with them. The 5th Armored was the first ones to cross the Rhine, they were the first ones to be in Germany, fact they went through the Siegfried line. When they did hit it, they went right on through it. It wasn't manned, there was nobody there you know. They went on through and then they, we had a critical fuel shortage because now instead of being a short distance why we were two or three hundred kilometers away. And they had what they called the red ball express which was ah, supply units and they had one-way roads and they'd ah, 24 hours a day solid, just high balling it and ah, night and day.

**Answer:** And we were, we were, I should say that at that time I was still with 3rd Armored group, I wasn't with 5th Armored and ah, I'll tell you the difference in unit. Um an Armored group has separate tank battalions and they're an entity under themselves and it's typical application of a separate tank battalion is to attach it to an infantry division for reinforcement -- attack, defense, or whatever. Ah, the difference with a division ah, everything's organic, they're self contained within themselves. They've got their own engineers, their own ah artillery and of course tanks. And the 5th Armored division was unique in that they had what they called married companies. Ah company A of the infantry and company A of the tanks would fight together and when they would run into an obstacle the ah, company, infantry company commander would dismount some troops and ah, the tank

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company commander would get all his tanks all in position, and then attack as a force like this.

**Question:** Wow, that had to be just devastating.

**Answer:** Oh it was beautiful to see, beautiful to see really. And ah...

**Question:** Is it like, 'cause my perception of war unfortunately is movies, is it like you see in the movies where you're standing there and you're looking and you're able to watch all this going on and you're seeing tanks and ah, soldiers, or is it so spread out that it's really little pieces, or is it just this big mass of?

**Answer:** Not, I think, oh they do have mass attacks but a mass attack may be only one road wide but there may be a lot of roads. Now for example we'd go down the road on the ground and our combat command -- now a combat command is one-third of a division, there's combat command A, B, and R and the R's a misnomer 'cause I was in it, and R led a lot of the time -- but ah, the ah the combat commands would be tailored to whatever the attack the commander thought was necessary. Maybe it was to have more flank protection so they'd run people out like this, and take this road and take this road and just all you're doing is going down it until you run into something then all hell breaks loose because the, we had ah, when you're leading, like we led the 9th Army from the Rhine to Hannover and when you're leading you have air support, and we had four P-47's over us all the time. There were two being gassed and two on the way and two there, you know and then they'd just go like this the whole day. And ah, when we'd run across a problem if air was the best answer then we had a west point officer and a light tank that had air ground communications and he'd direct them in. And ah, being a flight officer he knew the best path to take by personal observation of it.

**Question:** Was that pretty good communication?

**Answer:** Oh it was good communication.

**Question:** I mean did you feel that you were in an environment that somebody was in control of or did, was there chaos? It sounds like there's good control.

**Answer:** Oh we had good control on the thing. Ah that was my job in CCR. I had about 30 radio operators but they were assigned to sections, you know. I didn't, that they were trained, you know. They fought clear across Europe to Germany and so they were trained and they were cryptographic operators, all of them, and ah, let's see I had a couple of wire teams and a message center and oh I don't know how many troops I had in my communications section. One of the things we had to do, ah, and my colonel insisted on it -- now bear in mind this colonel was I think one of the best and ah, he had fought in World War I, he had fought in... the Germans in Africa and now he was fighting 'em in Europe, and he was mad (laughs), too many Germans they keep coming -- so he was a very skilled commander and when I joined the organization I joined with the senior staff officers S1, S2, S3, S4 and myself as communication officer and he introduced himself and explained what it was that he expected of each one of us and ah, he had it all figured out, believe me. And my job was to cut communications and that was to prevent the Germans, it's just like our soldiers now coming through here, if they wanted to talk from this building to half a mile over there, they'd get on the telephone wouldn't they? Commercial telephone. Well that's what they had, commercial, they weren't laying any wires they had it, it was all in there, see. So my job was to get in the telephone offices real quick, send the operators home, pull all the plugs like that and nothing worked, and have a communication blackout. And so they couldn't ambush us. And it worked.

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I didn't know how well it worked until after the war. The ah, old colonel was so happy he gave me a bronze star for doing it.

**Question:** So you were, I mean you were really kind of front person there because you had to shut that down before they could...

**Answer:** Right. I, what we'd do, my communication sergeant and I ran into some, some real hairy situations but ah, what we finally adopted as standard procedure, there are, there's the recon out and there's aircraft overhead and there's a usually a piper cub artillery plane looking for something to fire at but ah, then there's five tanks and that's called the point and ah, it's ah led by a lieutenant platoon leader and ah, he's expected to run into trouble and generally he does, you know. If somebody fires at him and he ducks behind something, you know, and figures out a plan of attack. Well it ah, it got a little hairy at times but we would move up and just as we're approaching a town, and we'd move up right behind the fifth tank. Now one of the places that gave us the worst trouble was sniping. They'd snipe at us from the forest on the side. Well, ah, Colonel Anderson took care of that. He had the, there's five tanks each one has a 50 caliber machine gun and ah, they would spray continuously the forest with 50 caliber fire and a 50 caliber would go through a tree, you know, these small little trees like they had would go right through it. So hiding behind a tree wasn't gonna do you any good. And a 50 caliber is half an inch shell, you know, and that's a slug about that long. But ah...

**Question:** So you're, so you have this kind of group of tanks moving into the town and they're cleaning out the woods and all that.

**Answer:** They're spraying the woods right.

**Question:** Spraying the woods getting the snipers taken care of and again whatever's in front of them is hopefully retreating also...

**Answer:** Hopefully.

**Question:** And so you're in what, you're in this Jeep again still, or you're in something else?

**Answer:** Well, something has happened. As we approach the town I look for a big house because I would prefer somebody of prominence in that town. So I look for a big house and we ah, very quietly and carefully tell him that we want him to get on the Jeep and show us the Postamt The Postamt is the Post Office and in Germany the telephone office, same place. And ah, he'd sit on the front of the Jeep and it just so happened, now we didn't man the machine gun but there was a machine gun right at his back and it looked more ominous than it would because we didn't even charge the machine gun see. But ah, we'd go putting through the town and nobody ever shot at us while we're in that town. So it seemed to work, you know. We tried it on two, three towns like that and it seemed to work fine so we decided that we'd make that SOP and that's the way we did the rest of the war.

**Question:** That Yank ingenuity.

**Answer:** Yeah, that Yankee ingenuity. I'd go in there you know, and of course we looked pretty rough, we'd been pushing for several days you know, and ah, you'd probably get up about four o'clock in the morning or earlier. We'd be on the road by daylight.

**Answer:** Well, we looked pretty rough and therein lies a story, too. But ah, I'd go in usually the sergeant would kind of keep an eye out for anybody around outside. I'd a raus

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mitten, meaning get out, and ah then I'd tell 'em eintrag verboten, means entry forbidden. So go away and don't come back. Then we'd go back when we'd taken care of, pulled all the plugs and everything, we'd go back to the town square and kind of look for our troops. I'm not interested now, in the ones up ahead, I like the ones behind. So I go back and usually we have passed the town square, maybe not, maybe so. And ah, sometimes there's a mayor there, maybe with an interpreter if we're lucky, but ah, I'd try to convey it to him, he'd always want to know what we wanted and I'd say, "Bring all your guns to the town square, bring all of 'em to the town square." And ah, boy right now things are happening in that town. And ah, the first tank that came along and I'd have them run over the guns, see. And ah, you saw the picture of the tanks hadn't come in (laughs), this is the second wave of tanks. First wave has left.

**Question:** Now these are, this would be like you driving into downtown Olympia, kind of. I mean you're driving into villages and these are average every day people that live in the villages.

**Answer:** You bet. We hope, yeah.

**Question:** And you never know what you're facing but that's a lot of what you're facing is shop keepers and there were people with guns and things like that. But so now you're, that must have been a strange experience to be, I guess it's a two-fold. There's probably the fear but also was there some of, well these are just people, mother, children...?

**Answer:** Well, you kind of get a sense of whether it's hostile or not. They're all hostile you know, after all we're running down their main street but ah, oh, you get a, kind of a feel. If you go into a town and there are no white flags out and usually there were -- sheets and pillowcases and hanging out the windows all over the place -- if you don't have that and things are awful quiet, go through like heck and forget about cutting communications, you know. There's trouble there somewhere in the form of SS or something there, they're pretty fanatical.

**Question:** So keep on going.

**Answer:** So keep on going, you know, or skirt it or do something. But ah, I've been in cutting communications and ah, one time I looked up, you know how you felt with the earthquake yesterday? That's just exactly how I felt when I looked up there was about six Germans with rifles standing in the doorway right in front of me, you know. And I'm on my hands and knees (laughs), down there and the fear only lasted a minute because my sergeant was, like I say he kept his nose to the outside, well these Germans had been in a courtyard back with the animals hiding, and ah they had come in the house and were giving up but they didn't have their hands up (laughs), you know. But a moment later they came up like this and my sergeant was just waving 'em on.

**Question:** So when some of these villages you'd go into would you then stop for a while in a village and occupy the village for a while, set up communications, or were you constantly on the move headed somewhere?

**Answer:** Well we usually have an objective and the objective may be as simple as, as far as you can go, you know, because you don't know how long you're gonna be held up on a fire fight. You know, one 88 properly placed could cause an awful lot of problems. One of the things that ah.. I really admired this Colonel Anderson, when we were in Holland we were staging in Holland, staging is preparing for another maneuver and ah, one day the colonel came over to my quarters and said ah, or called me and said "Pick me up with your Jeep,



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we're gonna take a ride." So ah, I went over to headquarters and picked up the colonel and ah, we drove up to the, I think it was the Holland-German border and ah, when we got there, there was a poor, scared GI, young, I don't think he had taken his first shave yet, you know. And the poor guy, he come up and here's a bird colonel with his wings flapping, you know. And ah, he stopped us and ah "You'll be under enemy observation from here on." And the colonel says "Well we're just going down there a little ways." Well actually we went down there oh, I'd say two or three kilometers and over to our right were five American tanks all of 'em knocked out, all of 'em in a group. And ah, the colonel said "Well I want to go over there and have a look at those tanks." And he got up on each one of the tanks and he looked through the hole that went clear through 'em. And ah, after looking at the last one he says, "Well I want to go over there." And there was, there was something over there but it was just kind of a turnip on the ground as far as I know, a little bump. We went over there and probably about a thousand yards and here was a German 88. And it was in a what they called Optimum Gun Range, OGR, and ah, in air defense terms that means that it is the circle you put the guns so that they're far enough away from any target that they can get a full field of fire before they hit the target, ok. Well, we went over there and there was that German 88 and the colonel says "Ok," he says "I'm going to ask ah, for a set of maps along our whole route of advance for any of these anti-aircraft defense sites so we don't get surprised like this again." See. And so he did. He called for it in 24 hours he had the ah, aerial maps and he set up a photo interpreter truck right behind him and their job was to locate all these air defenses ahead of time.

**Answer:** We'd get up to defilade is where they can't see you, behind a hill or something and ah, we'd be in defilade and we'd roll our artillery up and they'd move to the side across there, lay in their aiming stakes and start laying artillery on 'em. Well the difference between an 88 and an artillery piece is ah, the artillery piece is a high trajectory, the Howitzers have a high trajectory. The 88's were an aircraft gun and they had a flat trajectory. So ah, you could sort of get in, out of their range of fire ah, by getting under the fire. But they have another advantage which we have too, but an aircraft round has a time fuse on it. In other words they're made to, if plane is coming over at a certain elevation they know the distance to that elevation and so they can set the timing on that so it'll explode right, and the plane runs right into it. But ah, we took care of the 88's that way. We're good too. Saved a lot of lives on the thing. I wasn't in the front more than a few minutes at a time (laughs).

**Question:** I was gonna say, do you know why he picked you to go out on this little sight seeing adventure?

**Answer:** Well we were starting to establish a relationship. We had done a little pigeon hunting together and later on he taught me how to tie flies and ah, I went and got the roosters (laughs) so he could tie 'em. And ah, we, he, one time he called me in and said ah, this is after the war, "Why don't you go out and find some good fishing spots and we'll go work 'em over." Well in the meantime, the old boy had ah, got himself a German, I think they call it a seep, it was a floating Jeep. And he (laughs), and his driver would putt around the pond. As far as I was concerned it was a damn nuisance (laughs) 'cause it would disturb the fish. We caught fish. I'd go and find the lakes and streams and stuff and we'd go fishing together.

**Question:** Now this was after or during the war?

**Answer:** After, after. Yeah our relationship during the war was strictly business between he and everybody, you know. Wonderful man, wonderful man.

**Question:** And when did you, when did you encounter the V2 facilities?

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**Answer:** Well, after the war we had ah, just before the end of the war we had gone up to Wittenburg. Wittenburg is famous because that's where Martin Luther pasted his proclamation on the front door of the church. And it's right on the banks of the Elbe River. There was a huge, there used to be a huge bridge going over there, they blew it. We kind of wanted it but they blew it. And ah, we were told to stay there, we had plans on forcing a crossing on the river. Well, Eisenhower said no we're not going to do that. And ah, he said stay in place for a couple of days, we stayed there. And then there was a Von Clauswitz, a contemporary division that they'd put together up north up by the Hannover area that ah, was starting to cause a little problem because you get a lot of troops together they're gonna cause problems just 'cause there's a lot of troops there. And so our whole division headed up that way and took care of that, about a day or so. And the war ended then. I think I was at Salzwedel Airport when it happened. Incidentally, there was an ME 262 which was the first jet I'd ever seen up there. I got pictures of it.

**Question:** Flying or did you see it on the ground?

**Answer:** On the ground.

**Question:** Wow.

**Answer:** The German planes kept coming in to the airport out of gas, you know. And I kept trying to find a robot camera which was in the left wing of the Focke-Wulf 190. But ah, I found the holders and I found the case they came in but I never found (laughs) the confounded robot camera. But I'd meet 'em coming in you know, run out there with a Jeep and see, no camera. Never did get.. big beautiful lens on 'em, oh man.

**Question:** So the war's over and German pilot's still coming in and you're out there driving with a Jeep to?

**Answer:** Yeah. (laughs)

**Question:** See that's kind of the surreal aspect of war, one day we're at war, the next day we're not.

**Answer:** Well you know they told us when the war was over we could drive with our lights on. I hadn't seen a light on for maybe 16, 18 months, anywhere, at all, you know. Little dim flashlight, you know, they got a deal that blacks out all the light on those Army flashlights. That's about it. And when we were in convoy and after dark we used they're markers, radioactive ah luminous that they have in the vehicles, they're spaced so that you can tell your distance, they have little marks and you can tell their distance. Ah, one time I was ah, I had problems being in convoy like I was, floating back and forth, because ah, our unit, our headquarters was always behind me, somewhere. Well when it got dark, you know, I could contact them by radio all right but we didn't want to necessarily give our positions away either on it. And ah, I had to kind of inquire around. Have you seen the headquarters or CCR? But one night when I was creeping forward jumping between tanks, you know, and half tracks, and the ah, half track ahead of me stopped and something told me to get out of there now! And I, and I was in the left lane and the tank behind hit the half track ahead. Boy I tell you. War is hazardous to your health.

**Question:** No matter who's coming at you.

**Answer:** Yeah.

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**Answer:** But we had some wonderful adventures and I inherited a wonderful group of very well trained people and I think they were more worried about me than I was about them because they had no idea of my communication background. When they found out why, you know. I used to have radio repair shop when I was up at Fort Warden and ah, fact I was going into that business when I got out but no money in it.

**Question:** What was it like when you finally saw the V2's and the tunnels and, was that pretty...?

**Answer:** Oh, ah I started to tell you that we hung around up there by Salzwedel for ah, oh two, three days and then we were told to go down to the town of Nordhausen. Well the town of Nordhausen they, the colonel sent advanced attachment down to take a look at it and it had just been hit by about 800 British bombers just a couple of weeks before. And ah, incidentally they killed about 800 plus ah, prisoners in the camp which was too bad but you don't know what's down there, you know. Just like airplanes, we shoot 'em down and sort 'em out on the ground (laughs). But ah, we were sent down to Nordhausen where there is a V2 camp, it's called Camp Dora and ah, the town was all beat up so we came back to Ellrich which was about five kilometers ah, north. And we stayed there and it was a beautiful little town in Harz Mountains, you know, beautiful deer hunting, oh man! I went hunting all the time. But ah, when we first, when we first landed there we bought a bunch of (several?) German beef. We ate pretty good. And ah, then Eisenhower figured we were eating up the cow herds of Germany, you know, so we had to quit buying the cow herds. I thought well I'll do what I can, so I went deer hunting (laughs). Man they had deer everywhere, gosh.

**Answer:** But Ellrich had a V2 plant and ah, I think they had ah, oh I don't know, two, three, four tunnels that went in and you got a map in there of... And the ah, the Camp Dora I didn't have much to do with.. but I guess it was a lot worse than the Ellrich camp. We had a lot of the prisoners that were in the area that they had turned them loose, the Germans had turned the prisoners loose. Now this was, they were both work camps and they had specialists there, electricians and ah, all kinds of specialty people that would put those V2's together. So it's not a death camp, it isn't like some of the other ones in Poland area. But ah, these guys were pretty vicious and pretty mad. They'd been made slave labor for several years and so if we didn't confine them, just turned them loose, they'd kill Germans, you know. Didn't seem to make much difference who either. So I remember one night I was in a, we had a oh, I don't know 40, 50, 60 of 'em and ah, in a building that had apparently been a hotel and ah, I was standing guard outside. I was by myself, there's no problem. I was carrying my 45 inside of my tanker jacket and ah, so you wouldn't even know I was armed. I found people would get real nervous if you were armed so ah, they seemed more friendly if you didn't show any side arm. So ah, I was standing there on the porch and somebody said it, now there are Russians, Poles and they said in English, "Vat would you do if we just walked away?" I tell you, it was just like that earthquake. Combat fear hit me in the belly, you know like that, and I jumped off that porch and pulled that weapon out and cocked the thing and I says, "We're trying to get you to your homes, you know, and some of us aren't gonna make it if you try that." And ah then I called for corporal of the guard and we got somebody else there, too. But ah, yeah you can understand their hatred, you know, and I can understand why they're doing it, but we couldn't prevent it, on the thing.

**Question:** Well that's interesting, that you always hear about the devastation like Dachau and all that but not the other extreme, and that's it that here they are they've been like you said slaves for this amount of time.

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**Answer:** Oh yeah, yeah. They ah, I understand that they had originally, they had originally had the slaves living underground and so many of 'em died of TB and other things that... and I think that's what those bones were, the picture of those, that big pile of bones out there, I think that's what they were. But ah, they were skin and bones.

**Question:** So their job, these slaves were, they captured them, selected who had the knowledge and now brought them in to make the, the V2, to fight against their own countries.

**Answer:** Right, right. One time I was ah, we had been in combat, I managed to get myself in every major battle in Europe (laughs) -- I got credit for every one -- but ah, we had ah, oh what was I gonna tell you...

**Question:** I had asked about them having to build the V2.

**Answer:** Oh, we were stationed in a town, we had pulled out of Herten, no not Herten it was another fight, we pulled out and went into a little town and of all things, of all places we could've picked it was right in direct line between the launching site of the V1's and their targets. And ah, they came over about every 15 minutes, there's a one ton warhead going over, not a shot was fired (laughs), give it to a neighbor (laughs), you know. Well there were planes up there that'd run 'em down. They traveled a couple hundred miles an hour, they had a wingspan probably about the width of this room and, they had a big ah, pulse jet on the top, they had louvers on the front that would open to get the air, combustion air, close insert the fuel, fire. And so it actually went through the air like this and was the noisiest thing you ever heard. Um, I stayed in the military in one form or another for 28 years and ah, I was in anti-aircraft so I've had the basic and advanced AA and guided missile courses. And in one of those courses they showed us a pulse jet and ah, they had a, they had a rocket sitting right outside that we'd shipped over here (laughs) that's what we shipped, those and engineers and everything, but ah, they had a model of that rocket and it was about this long. Man and I'm telling you, it'd bust your eardrums, and it was inside of course but, man that thing was noisy. I could've dug a foxhole before that thing came, you know (laughs).

**Question:** Was the facility where they were building the V2's, when you saw that did you think this is a pretty state of art facility or was it pretty primitive, I mean did you go oh boy, I'm glad we got control of this?

**Answer:** Well it's pretty awe inspiring. I had seen one fired, being in armor we're usually hanging around in the front somewhere and we were on one side of the river, and I don't remember what river, and they, see they could just bring 'em in on their carriage and then set 'em upright and fire 'em right there. So they could fire 'em anywhere. It's a pretty versatile weapon. Accuracy leaves something to be desired, you know. It's not a pinpoint target and it ah travels about ah 2,000 plus miles per hour. So and there's no defense against it. We did have one land in our area and ah, it, there was a captain doing some paperwork in a half track and we just pulled into the thing, and that thing hit and not too far away and it completely covered the half track with dirt. Made a hole about 50 foot deep. Blew a guard up on the second story of a building and deafened him. That's it. I mean how much does a V2 cost and what damage did it do? Course in Britain it did you know, in the town of London they could do a lot.

**Question:** Because they had all the buildings to hit.

**Answer:** Yeah all the buildings and everything. But there's no defense against 'em on the thing. But just imagine if they had a nuke warhead on 'em, you know. They were playing with heavy water up there in Norway.

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**Question:** Now you, it sounds like as you went along and came in you were capturing Germans?

**Answer:** Oh yeah, did we ever.

**Question:** Now so what do you do when you capture a German, I mean, you're on the move and do you drag them along with you or what do you do with German prisoners?

**Answer:** We send 'em to a POW camp. There's troops behind that ah, have been brought over for the purpose of running those things, you know. And ah, they're not battle experienced and that, oh they run a POW camp, of course we had our own MP's that took care of 'em. They'd ah, at the front ah, you get 'em back as far as you can, get 'em out of our way so we don't have to shoot 'em, you know, for, because they are as anxious to get away as we would be and ah, no use making any more casualties than necessary.

**Question:** Were we, for all intent purposes, were we pretty humane in our treatment of the...

**Answer:** I thought so. I thought so. The only Germans I know that were outright shot, were those that parachuted in, you know, and I really don't know what happened to all of 'em but ah, I understand there was some that were shot. But ah, they were in American uniforms, they raised cain, and now we had ah, we had a pretty good sized area and they dropped 'em in that area. And they would turn road signs around, you know, particularly disturbing. You come to a road sign and hey, it's supposed to go this way but it's pointing that way type thing, you know you (laughs).

**Question:** That's pretty smart I mean to...

**Answer:** Oh yeah, they, I remember I was up to Corp headquarters getting the SOI and SSI for ah, for the forth coming period and ah, those are communication documents that establish all kinds of things, cryptographic setups and frequencies and channels and all of that. And I went up there and we got the word that the Germans had just dropped some paratroops in American uniforms so immediately the alert was heightened and ah, it was icy cold, oh man it was cold. You could hardly stay on the crown of the road with a four wheel drive and I had several kilometers to go to get back and ah, I remember I came out of the gate of fifth Corp headquarters and ah, was stopped and the ah, guard came over and he put his icy hands down my neck (laughs), like this. Now, there was a, now I don't know whether he's American or German you know, this is the confusion, and ah, I had my 45, I was pointing at his belly but he didn't know that, but I had a, his partner had a grand pointing right at me, you know. We could've had a shoot out there, at the OK Corral right there.