

Frank Wokojance

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Answer: Frank Wokojance, but in the army to save all that problem everything that took place I was Woko (woe-koe), that was my name.

Question: So everybody would know you by Woko.

Answer: Yes, sometimes Wokko, you know, Wokko, but everybody knew me by Woko.

Question: You were in which branch of the service?

Answer: The army.

Question: And did you enlist or drafted?

Answer: I was drafted, yeah.

Question: And what did you think? Were you excited to go in?

Answer: I was waiting to go in. I told uh.. I was working, well I was working at the navy yard in Bremerton and when you quit up there you have to explain why and I was heading for New Mexico to work for the Santa Fe Railroad. So I told them, well he told me you ought to be in the service, when it comes my time to go I won't get out of it, I'll go in, and that's what happened. When I got my call I was working for the railroad and they said well we'll get you a deferment, the dispatcher says we'll get you a deferment. I said once I told a man that I would go when I was called so I says, I'm gone. So I didn't have no qualms at all.

Question: How old were you?

Answer: Eighteen.

Question: So just a kid like everybody else?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Now you ended up being a scout?

Answer: Yeah, see my reason for that is I come from.. I spent a lot of time, I lived here in Washington, I worked here in a logging camp as a little kid you know but I come from Colorado and my best years of my life was in the mountains of Colorado at 7000 feet I hunted, fished and trapped. I was a professional skinner. You know I worked for the fur companies in the winter when the snow was too deep to run your traps and I would skin their furs that the ranchers brought in. Like you know coyotes and badgers and anything they shot. They got a lot of mink, the farmers raised mink on the sidelines because they had a lot of cattle you know, dead cattle to feed them, so I skinned hundreds of mink and I stayed there as a watchman, so I stayed there in the fur companies office on a cot, did that in the winter times and had a good time.

Question: So you had pretty good survival skills I mean outdoors?

Answer: Oh yeah, I was out fifty degree (below zero) weather and skis, you know, a little bit over extension, guy shouldn't have done it, but I figured I could take it, didn't give it a thought. Was one time dad was worried about me he said, was ten o'clock and I wasn't home yet and it was over fifty degrees (below zero) so. But that I the main thing it was in a mining camp, coal mining camp, and it was tough times, really tough. As far as work was concerned

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in the winter they couldn't get the coal cars through the passes you know to ship the coal.. and then in the summertime there was no demand for coal because it was warm.. there was no demand for coal, Denver you know so. But what induced us you know.. sort of hardened me up I seen a hard life.. but one night in January let's see, January 27th – 29th of 1942 the mine blew up and killed everybody in it so it was a gas explosion. My brother in-law worked.. just worked there for about a year and he was killed. My dad was on day shift and so he didn't get it, just swing shift, killed 34 men so I had to help identify them. They took me down to the miner's hall you know, friends of mine and asked me, because I knew a lot of the guys, sort of like a mascot. I'd go fishing with them, I knew all the good spots and everything. But that is why we left the coal mines and we went to Washington.

Question: Boy that had to be hard to go down and identify those people?

Answer: Yeah, I mainly of course I mainly identified my brother in-law and the guys I knew but some of them you know you couldn't be sure of because they was charred and shriveled up from the heat, you know a terrible lot of heat in a mine explosion so it was, I was ready to go to Washington.

Question: Did that prepare you for what you were going to see in the war?

Answer: I think it did, I think it did yeah. Because it didn't seem to me that it phased me much in the war you know after some of the major battles and stuff you uh... there is a lot of stuff you know.

Question: You sailed out of the US to, did you go to England first or where did you?

Answer: We landed in Scotland, Greenwich, Scotland, Greenwich they call it, down in the Firth of Clyde between Ireland and Scotland and we had to go north because the French liner we were on. It was a French liner, manned by British crew and the.. it was loaded down, it was loaded down. We had I think 900 WACs on it, military women you know, and uh. But the food was terrible, all it did was induce seasickness and I had a man who was in the top bunk above mine.. they put bunks in every place they could two and three high this big soldier he was on the top bunk and I was on the bottom and boy he'd go up and he was a big man and he'd eat too much and he'd get sick and he'd come down and then it'd be coming down from the bunk overhead and I'd be covering up my head you know.. and finally I lost my temper, I couldn't hold it too long, I gave him heck. If he wouldn't eat so much he wouldn't get so sick all the time you know. I said it in a little different terms you know, but it didn't help. I spent most of my time in the top in one of them life boats, them donuts way back out there someplace and it would rock over and I could see everything, I could see the whales, porpoises and everything like that. We went north from New York because the German's were after us, submarines, so we went up off the coast of Greenland and then swung over in the North towards England and Scotland there in the north, we made it up there but it took us seven days.

Question: So you were right in the thick of it on your way over there already having the German's after you?

Answer: Yeah, they were after us early. They was.. when we left went over there Isle de France, the liner, then we stayed there, we didn't leave there until after the invasion started. They had already cleared the beach and was up on top. It was the 10th or something like that we went over because we were earmarked for the replacements for the casualties they lost on the beach. We had strict orders. I mean I.. I had my regular orders, the corporal had them in a steel box and he told us I was a replacement in the armored infantry, I was a scout. So

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when we left England we was on a liberty ship but I don't know the.. I don't remember the name of it but we got hit. Just three ships in convoy and we got hit that night and we'd just got on the boat in the afternoon.. late in the evening, and the German torpedo boats moved in and they sounded general quarters, everybody below deck you know.. you've heard general quarters whistle, and we could hear the pings and the big thuds you know to the hull of the ship and then after a little bit they called all clear you know. So I climbed in the basket we had all our gear in them we'd eaten and we was on our way to France you know and the luggage basket up above while the guys stayed down below, they played cards just a table and luggage will I get a good night's sleep up there really went to sleep, slept good and in the morning came down and went on deck and asked one of the merchant seaman I says uh.. what happened to that boat behind us, there was three boats and it.. the seas were running high and running in troughs you know deep bows and we was pretty close together, what happened to the guy behind us cause there was only one boat back there he said it wasn't the guy behind us he said the guy that got hit was behind us it wasn't the other guy. He was in the middle of three boats, the one behind us they sunk it. It was German torpedo boats you know surface boats they zoomed in and that was before that was on our way to France. So then it calmed down naturally and it was running just about high tide then and then in the morning I noticed as we got closer to France got sort of flat and oily, it was low tide, just timed right, low tide and lots of boats, ships, everything imaginable going into the beach and by gosh the tide changed again and when the tide changed again it was just like a storm and trying to get off them boats on them landing nets and get down them LCI's you know was a rough job.

So anyway we managed to get down, not very many of us. They had to call off landing operations and one of the guys that was going down the landing craft with me was a big Indian fellow from.. we called him Chief, he was from Oklahoma. He was a Cherokee Indian and him and I hit it off real good you know. He was trying to hold that landing craft next to the ship by holding onto that cargo net and it was slamming him all around.. and finally he yelled drop! And everybody dropped, they dropped on top of him about ten guys or twelve but one guy missed it... he went down between the ship and the landing craft. We just shrugged it off, figured we'd never see him again. We were pulling away from the boat and I just happened to glance out to my left and there was one of these ducks going by with a cargo net full of supplies and the guy at the back end just reached out and this guy came up to the top of a wave this guy reached out there and just drug him right straight in. Boy was he lucky.

We got into the beach there and got up on one of these barges. Well the tide was coming in. It was a sunken barge, we thought the thing was floating, LCI just run up on it, it was sloped. And tide was coming in pretty fast by then and we had a cat walk running from the end of it.. the high part of it over onto the beach. There was already waves breaking over the cat walk so we had to get off fast. We was waiting actually for some more guys to come in because in that box that (inaudible) had was some more orders and he didn't have all the men there see. Some of the guys left and I never did see them no more after. And then we got onto the beach there was six of us and got into a bomb crater at the edge of the water and spent the night there. And I was watching this big ship, it was a battle ship right off behind us underneath the bluffs there on the beach the big bluffs it was hiding behind it was either the Tennessee or the Arkansas, I don't remember now. But he would go up and, just ease up slowly up behind and I was watching him because every time.. every so often we'd get a terrible barrage of artillery come in.. German artillery you know. I thought my gosh and watched him.. it seemed like he'd get even with us and every time.. he's just turn around and head back to where he'd come from and then he'd let go broadside with them big guns of his sixteen inch guns or whatever they were and boy the black smoke would belch up out of that thing and he'd scoot over behind and the Germans would open up and come in on us the whole time so I knew when we was going to get it all the time by watching that big ship doing that that American ship. Then that night at 7 o'clock the American's left and come the

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German planes and they started dive bombing and stuff at the ships and they'd get some on the beach too you know. And they fought pretty good I think I might have seen one get shot down is all because we got in an argument about that the next morning he was talking about how many planes we shot down and I was arguing with him and they said wait a minute Woko which raid are you talking about and I said the raid at 7 o'clock. Well Woko there was another raid at 11 o'clock, that's the one we're talking about. I'd slept through it.

Question: That always amazes me to hear that. Here you are your first battle and it seems like you'd be just wetting your pants, but yet you're sleeping through.

Answer: Well, there was one Mexican fellow there with us and he was sitting up on the beach. The tide was getting close, kept washing stuff up, cases, bodies and everything was washing up on the beach. There boxes of rations they had a new ration, they called it the ten in one they called it. There is enough food in one box for ten soldiers for one day or one soldier for ten days, it was a new thing they just developed for the invasion. Well, he was so loaded up and we had so many boxes of rations stacked around we just made a wall around that bomb crater there. We'd take out what we wanted and leave the rest there you know but he took everything he could get and looked like a camel the next morning when we started up the hill you know. But talk about there was this one guy his first day there of course. In the afternoon you could see the guys next to the hill and they'd get up and run like hell over to another hole and then they'd get down and they'd be carrying a cup of water or a cup of coffee canteen cup you could tell it was something to drink anyway and they'd run over there and back and forth it was the 29th infantry. The 29th got hit hard and that was what was left of them you know they was waiting there to get their bearings and get more replacements and stuff for them and this guy with me was a big Jesse Owens was his name from Tennessee. And he said Woko I don't like this out here we're too much out in the open he says.. let's go over with the infantry and dig in. Well I was always stupid as far as pride was concerned and I told him I says them guys landed here before we did and if we go they'll think we're cowards they'll think we're scared already so I'm not going over there so consequently none of us went over. We stayed there together until the next day anyway didn't see each other anymore.

Question: When you got to the beach was it just chaos, I mean did you have the faintest idea where you were going or what you were doing?

Answer: Well, the main thing we hit the beach, we knew we had to go inland and we were looking for the nearest hole I mean we knew right fast to get in below ground level so we picked out a nice bomb crater because the shell crater wouldn't be deep enough. It was a nice bomb crater and we got down in it and spent the night that way.

Question: Was the beach?

Answer: It was tore up all to heck, it was you couldn't tell which way except it was full of holes.

Question: Were there jeeps and things like that that had been destroyed?

Answer: There was just junk, you couldn't describe what it was originally, you know what I mean, it was pretty well torn up. Jagged pieces of metal. Big pieces you know. They'd been hit pretty good and it was hotter than heck that day. We started up that hill and the dust was boy powder thin, and by gosh a truck came up the hill and gave us a ride up to the top, 6 x 6, boy we sure liked that. So in the next couple days we managed to locate the outfit we were supposed to get into and we made it.

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Question: That always amazes me too, you hit the beach and you're scattered, how you can work your way back in and find your outfit.

Answer: Well, we was looking for an outfit we had never been in before, see, so nothing was familiar to us, to me, cause guys I hit the beach with, I never seen Chief anymore, that Indian, I hoped he made it, but looking for the command post for the 41st armored infantry and the corporal there was familiar with it and you know he didn't know where it was or anything but he got directions and knew a hell of a lot more than we did so that's where we hooked up with the 2nd armored division, I did.

Question: Does fear play a factor in a situation like that or can you disassociate and get rid of the fear somehow?

Answer: Well I feel sort of guilty about that because I don't think I was scared enough, I mean, I didn't take that much caution at first until it penetrated to me that I might be a little better off a little scared and cautious you know, so that's the way it went from then on I mean I didn't worry about nothing a waste of time. You knew what you'd have to do and you knew how long you was going to be there until it was over. I had been sick in the hospital in England a little bit because we landed in England they come up with some kind of a deal where they'd give us English food and the English got the American food. Well I had enough of that on the ship where I couldn't eat that boiled pork, fat pork, and so we lived in tents, 52nd replacement battalion and we lived in tents up on the top of this hill near Bristol and Bathe and we were there quite awhile before they let us go into town, but in the meantime we signaled an old farmer, you couldn't walk across a field, no trails, no shortcuts or nothing, you got to stay right on the regular side walks or streets because if you got off the trail and take a shortcut on the grass then they'd charge the American government. Charge you right there and that was it, bill the American government for it. They didn't need a fence up at all I mean that's the way it was so I seen this old Englishman at the edge of the field over there and I signaled him to come over and he says I ask him you got somebody that would wash some clothes, wash some clothes for us, yeah he says sure, so gosh I said pay him so much, he charged us so much you know, it wasn't much to wash and take care of our clothes, so this went on for awhile a week so we says got the idea can you get us something to drink, beer, yeah sure he could. Well he started bringing these jugs of beer. He had a little wagon and he'd bring them crock jugs of beer in and boy we'd get in that squad tent all of us in there and the Indian next door in his tent and boy we would really enjoy the beer. We wasn't noisy about it because we knew that'd get us in trouble see but boy we sure drank a lot of that English black beer in them jugs then he'd haul them away but the residue would be there sometimes and the dregs was out and we got caught on that deal but we didn't get into trouble. But before we got caught I said what about some food? Can you give us some food? He thought it over and he said he'd find out so when he came back later the next day he said how about meat pies? Oh boy, oh boy that sounded perfect so he came in with meat pies and they was like turnovers you know with dough on the outside and the inside was chopped up vegetables and pieces of meat in there. Boy oh boy with that black beer we ate and it was really good you know so we thought that was it we had everything. So I happened to go in town they gave us leave to go into Bristol so we went in there and my buddy went into one of them taverns they have a name for them, pub, we went in there and there was a big row of guys sitting there you know old timers they knew how to drink beer we didn't know that much about it but we asked him have you got some beer for us it don't make no difference what kind it is its all the same and then we asked him what about food, what have you got to eat, so he asked what do we want, well how about meat pies, geez everybody started laughing along the row all these guys sitting at the bar, didn't seem to be any soldiers in there just these sailors these merchant sailors and they laughed to beat heck and so did the bar tender said well we've been getting meat pies so we dropped that point because we didn't want to

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make fools of ourselves anymore you know. So happened to pick up a paper a few days after that and by gosh it said a big article in there said they'd arrested some people they was going down to Bristol Bathe and catching these wharf rats and they was making meat pies out of them and selling them and oh I don't know how many wharf rats we eat but that was it I got mad. I turned them in. I turned them in because the guys would ask me, and I thought I knew everything you know, you know how it is with soldiers and everybody would ask Woko what is them, what kind of meat is that, and I said well to me, it had those tiny bones you know, and I said it looked like squirrel and I said I ate a lot of squirrel and gravy and that's pretty good you know in Ohio when I was a kid everybody used to go squirrel hunting you know must be squirrels. It wasn't squirrels and on top of it nearby were these burial mounds from the time when they made they had the plague over there they just pushed the bodies and pushed the dirt up so they'd be a mound. Fifteen or twenty feet high and cover quite an area and they was just full of holes just like Swiss cheese and we would sit on them mounds because they was raised and better than sitting flat on the ground and we'd eat our lunch, they'd give us a couple of sandwiches we was training see and we'd throw all our wax paper because we knew it'd be gone the next day because of the rats that was in there and that is part of what we was eating, them guys were back in there where the bodies were and skeletons you know and they lived in there. Well I got sick after that some kind of. They thought it was appendicitis, I thought it was appendicitis but I didn't say nothing about them rats because truly I thought I got poisoned a little bit there but I survived ok. I wasn't in the hospital very long just about a week long enough for them to bomb the heck out of us. They bombed the hospital and the nurse she was there by my bed all the other guys laying around but she was up by me trying to console me and I thought what is she doing here why doesn't she go help some of those other guys, I wasn't even scared see, my light was swinging back and forth and one of them long cords came down from the ceiling see, boy they are really shaking us up.

We got over to France we started moving around different spots, so many soldiers there, and they more and more, and I always thought every soldier is a soldier he is going to get out and fight but there are actually only about one fourth actually out on the line and the rest is support troops and so when the I says to myself after seeing all that, by god let's get this war over fast and get it done. With this many soldiers I didn't have no worries at all I felt like it was going to be an easy show. Well if everybody gets five Germans that would take care of it I mean hell it was all it, so I was going to be my five and then it'd probably be at the end then, over with. So that is what my goal was, five German's five prisoners I wasn't planning on shooting them, I just wanted to account for them so I remember when I got my first one he could have got me too, there was four of us and the Sargent didn't go.. he says you two, no there was five of us, you two men take the lower part of the ridge and you two men take a little higher and I was the odd man out he says you go up to the top of the hill and get down Now the snipers are along in the stretch from the bottom to the top, that side of the hill, so root them out and I says well who is going with me, well that was a stupid question to ask because right now he thought I was scared and that's what I didn't want conveyed I says, he says, well you're going by yourself, you're a scout aren't you? I said yep ok so that is the way it was. So I went up to the top of the hill and was scooting along and creeping around through the brush and I thought I knew all the angles and I went too far out a little opening about 30 feet across and I sort of blundered out and had to work back and I worked back into the brush and I knew I made a slip and I was expecting to get shot anytime you know. And I got back in the brush and figured I'd circle around it and come down above it see because I heard a stick break over across a pretty loud break somebody stepped on a stick while I was doing a circle around there I broke a stick myself which I didn't like and finally the German soldier he was over there in the brush.. over there in that clearing watching me, he got a little nervous because he figured I was sneaking up on him see and I seen something white waving a white cloth waving so I walked out on the edge I hollered for him to come out and he surrendered right there no trouble he threw his helmet and his gun away, that's what they do

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first, but he had been wounded, lower right buttock on the upper thigh you know right back here and he had a white rag part of a sheet or something wrapped around that and the other part was what he was waving when he come out. Well I took him down the hill. I heard some shooting down below me but I took him out because that's all I was going to go into that brush while they was shooting and they got the rest of them. I took that one down to my hole down by the hedgerow and he was shaking to beat heck.. he was just scared, I don't blame him a bit you know and I was always compassionate person anyway and I figured I'll never change from being compassionate so I went and fixed him a cup of coffee. Got the primus stove out heated up some water and fixed him a canteen cup full of coffee. While he was drinking that I seen this.. seen something.. seen somebody sneaking by the hedgerow there and the guy kept going.. he'd walk a ways.. he'd stop and look.. looked behind. He looked like he was a little bit scared he was a soldier.. an American soldier you know and he got down and I kept watching him I figured he was going to come down and see me no problem. And that German soldier was drinking that coffee just shaking and I wanted to calm him down some he looked just like a farm boy to me and he just didn't look like a fighting man to me. So it was a lieutenant, a second lieutenant come up there and I'd never seen him, he wasn't from my outfit and he stopped just like he was dumbfounded and he said to me.. soldier coddling prisoners you know, coddling prisoners.. you know what that means, and I says, no sir, I'm not coddling prisoners. I says I'm only treating prisoners like I want to be treated if I got captured. I just told him plain and simple. I made a resolution right then that I'd go right through the war and always treat the other guy like I'd want to be treated if I was a prisoner and that's the way I treated my prisoners right through the war and I had several big fights er run ins with American soldiers but I had one rule. Nobody beats Woko's soldiers.. Woko's prisoners and that's the way I went right through like that.

Question: Did you speak any German?

Answer: I learned to speak it pretty good. I could pick it up fast. Of course I didn't pick it up until I got to Germany you know, I just said a few words, they gave us a book, like comrade surrender and put your hands up and all this stuff, but when I was in Germany I got so I could pick it up pretty good.

Question: So with this kid you didn't have any?

Answer: No, I didn't have no. My father and my grandmother they was born in Austria, out of Vienna, my dad was and they spoke German around the house all the time to my grandfather and my grandmother maybe that helped me a little bit, then I couldn't understand when they was talking either so.

Question: As a scout what was your number one job?

Answer: Number one job as a scout was doing everything they told you to do. It didn't make no difference. If you didn't go with a lieutenant or an officer it was just about the same set up as the scouts in the old days you know. You went uhm.. if uh.. Like for me I was with a colonel, lieutenant colonel and we'd go to contact other command posts especially if we was on a fight on a move, like we were attacking the Siegfried Line you know, we'd have to push up and a lot of night work. And when we didn't have any officer.. for instance my officer got killed on the Siegfried Line, I wasn't with him very long, he was a first lieutenant a hell of a nice guy and so I went alone you know and it was a hazardous job because you'd run into road blocks and nobody knew where the roadblocks was. You know there'd be infantry here and sentries and then a road block all the way behind, everything was blowed up.. the towns you know. When you're (inaudible) you'd better have your ears open because when you hear that word halt, stop and halt then you'd better stop then. So I had this situation there on the

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Siegfried Line. Well it was up there I lost the lieutenant. And he was in love with a first aid canteen girl and of course I wasn't interested in women at all was the last thing. And I'll never forget he said to me oneday well we got a good job today. He says.. and he said I ain't going to tell you what it is and we took off and went behind the lines and by God there was one of these canteen trucks back there and it had three women on it and we was directing them up the Siegfried Line and the guys was in the pill boxes up there the captured pill boxes. And they are allowed about six soldiers or so to come down every few minutes you know to that canteen there and serve them coffee and donuts and we set up and picked out a spot a good location see. And when we headed back to get them set them in position well he rode in the canteen truck with the girls. He fell in love with this one little canteen gal and he was madly in love with her so we set them up there and I don't know how many days and they pulled out and in the meantime me and the lieutenant was on the run and it was at night and god damn we had a German plane came over and he dropped real low and I was just trying to look like this here and looked up, and then I seen stars that was it. And the lieutenant was turning up wide open because it was broke off right at the front end where the engine sit and the lieutenant reached over and turned off the key and we had a little light and we looked around and I could see blood running down his face. But my arm was really giving me hell, I had broken my hand, but I was lucky, because the stretcher rack up front was made out of 2" angle iron, it had drove up through, up through the dash and up through like this right up the elbow and ripped my shirt and my jacket just into 3 strands, just like this here and never even scratched me. Ripped them from the elbow up here. Lucky.

Question: Real lucky.

Answer: Anyway they made me go back to the hospital to get my arm in a cast to heal up some and I raised hell with them and told them I didn't want to go back because I could get by with it just carrying it around in a sling. No, you can't do that because that's against regulations and all that stuff. So I finally.. I said I'm going back I'm not going to stay here. You do and you're going to be court marshaled.. the guy in charge of the hospital. And I said well I thought I ain't going to telegraph when I'm going to do it, but I'm going to do something I ain't going to let anyone no it. So we recuperated there and drove out to go to another hospital of all things, they took the cast off and it's healed up, got to go to a rehabilitation center hospital, it was further up away from the line you know, Belgium, Hasselt Belgium so I said I didn't say nothing I went along with them and I thought I'll keep my mouth shut and then make my move. Got up there and the driver didn't know where he was going and he had a whole load of these wounded guys on there and I was in the back of the truck and he says you guys is this the right road going to Hasselt. Yep I said, we captured this country when we came through here, it's the right road sure, so by gosh he took off, he kept going that direction, he kept being more doubtful each time, finally when he went through Maastrich Holland, you know he just went through it and I knew it was north and he was heading up the Siegfried Line right where I wanted to go and by gosh he stopped and some guys engineers doing something work building something for a supply depot or air field and he stopped and asked one of them and that was a mistake, you're going the opposite direction you're supposed to be going. I didn't offer no comments, I knew what was happening, I could hear him so the truck driver backs off and was turning around and I hopped out of the back end. And I had a little ammunition.. bazooka ammunition bag with items in it you know socks and stuff. They threw it out to me and that was it I was on my way back to my outfit. I hitchhiked. I was smart enough to get to the supply depot and then I went.. followed a supply truck right up through and the last few miles I was up there and I'd.. I'd been walking quite a ways and I was walking I knew where I was going and there was a horse out there in the field.. and I thought by God I'll just get him and ride him and I went over and pulled the barbed wire down and got it down where I could stamp on it and got it down where I could get the horse through there. It was a nice horse a big horse and I didn't have no bridle or nothing

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but rode horse I knew how to handle him he was one of those tame ones see and I rode him the last way and then when I got down to where the the pill boxes started where my buddies were and I just slapped him and he took off and ran the same way he'd come. But I did hear the lieutenant was killed on the next run, Lieutenant Worl was killed, and then a few days later the Red Cross girl come around looking for me, wanted to hear about it. They weren't married, see they was engaged. I hated to tell her but you know it happened before you know.. I told her but that was a way on. But you know when we broke through there's an article we called it the little angel of Normandy and it is written down on the papers that your buddy has. And uh.. she got run over, she was a sweet little girl, but the story is in that page, that paperwork he got, I don't want to talk about it but anyway when the day I remembered that we had been gone and I figured the war is going to have to get over with. Got to get started because we couldn't be holed up here in France all the time so by gosh they called us out for a briefing that night and they says well tomorrow is the day, tomorrow we go down the road to St. Lo and I was really glad to hear it. They said get all your ammunition drawn everything you're supposed to have and everybody make sure every non-com officer make sure that every man has his mattress cover, they called them mattress covers but they were body bags and every man carried one. So I figured well that would be good to take that off my mind to get off that girl so we was jumping off at 0630 the next day for the Battle of St. Lo and that was the bloodiest battle of the war too, it was worse than the beaches but I wouldn't want to say (inaudible) about the beaches but we didn't have no big gun support like the big ships or anything like that you know. And the German's had circled Normandy in a ring of steel, the panzer's had held back and hadn't committed themselves see that was Hitler's orders until finally they ringed the Normandy pocket they called it with the panzer's. And so this has probably never come out yet or they don't say it.. I read it and I know it happened too. The English tried to break through and break out of the Normandy pocket twice and each time they was beaten back and that was over towards Caen, towards the channel actually a little west north of us and they couldn't break through. Finally they left it up to us to try to break out so that was the battle that was coming up, Operation Cobra they called it. Now it is contrary to the stories you read now because they called that the "break out" and all this stuff but we called it the Battle of St. Lo or the St. Lo Breakthrough and it's still in my old papers that way. And so the plan was before 0630 we'd jump off the line of departure. The line of departure was were the friendly troops end and the enemy troops begin. So we was ready they came over after the bombing 1500 planes was supposed to go in and bomb this quarter and the road was running actually east and west almost through St. Lo the main road. And they would bomb.. a saturation bombing they called it and they would bomb it and then engineers would be right there behind them and artillery would be lifted because they didn't have no artillery when they was bombing either, so engineers couldn't work you know with artillery around so they, we was supposed to fill up the holes. They gave us the orders right there that night they says anybody that holds up the column when we start through there's only one way to go and that was through and you could not stop or if you obstructed the column you could be shot right on the spot that's what they said. And the vehicle you were on could be pushed off the road, rolled off the road, well we didn't go very far after the bombing, bombing the hell out of things and then the bombers pulled back, engineers was moving in, we didn't go very far and we was moving forward and by God the MP's started flagging us down on the road, the MP's was directing traffic and they was flagging us down and directing us off on another road that went up around a side hill on the right and around a sort of a rim of a hill just like a natural amphitheater and there we were right on top and we could look right straight down to the left and there was a church down there. And right there behind the church and on the side of the church there was shuttles trucks coming in, small trucks and jeeps and personnel carriers and stuff and he was hauling in body bags and already there was a whole field down there, the lower part of the field was white, they was American troops that was killed when their planes bombed, bombed their own troops see, they don't tell that all the way like it was, but I seen it right there and they says well the reason we didn't

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want to tell you guys, it'd lower morale. I don't know I didn't feel like it would lower my morale I would just have felt like I had more of a duty to do. Then you know and we was sitting there and we found out they was still hauling them when we went back and circled around the hill and came back down again on the other side of them that there was over a hundred and some said just under two hundred was killed there. And these was the guys that was in forward troop positions, it wasn't the guys that was coming in like us. We dropped down into that thing. It was a battle I'll tell you, it was hell is the only way I could describe it. If you ever think of hell, boy that was it cause it couldn't get any worse, you know. The ground had raised up there is a certain phenomena they call it the ground had raised up with all the bombing shells earlier and had raised this dust up until it was like a fog only it was red because up above the sun was shining through it. It would blind you. You couldn't see very far. It was terrible and then on top of that the smokes the tanks were burning and on fire and exploding and my god we was hollering and that poor driver old Leroy we was hollering at him back, back, back up for God's sake, back up, we'd go down the street and there'd be a pile of rubble there and there'd be a tank burning, on fire, exploding ,you know ,and then some tanks were burning and guys were hanging out of the turrets you know out the doors up above and the smell was horrible and smoke all the time and I thought God it won't never get no worse than this so I just figured, you could see some troops running different directions but we lost our direction we didn't know where the hell we was going just down in that town. Boy, that town was pulverized. That driver he was buttoned up see but we weren't you know he was buttoned up in his compartment there and he just had slots to see course he didn't have nothing over his head and so he had more back seat drivers than he ever had in his life boy I'll tell you right now trying to tell we could see a lot better than he could see up on high like that telling him where to go everything was blowing up everything, lord it was awful, and then finally you could hear the machine guns all around you, you couldn't tell where the German's was or nothing see, but I could tell because the submachine guns, the German burp gun, they was going so fast just brrrp, brrrp, brrrp, just so steady just increasing all the time and then I could tell when we went through the main line of resistance you know they started to die down they started being a little more sporadic you know, the submachine guns that they had, they called them the burp guns, you know, the machine pistols and so we went through and the German's started to move back a little bit to the edge of town where the farm houses was you know along there, we went off the road. But before that when we was driving through this cloud of dust and turmoil and like I say nobody was supposed to head back, the only ones could head back was motorcycle riders and out of the dust come this motorcycle rider and he was goin pretty fast and we hit him with the front of the half track and knocked him and he went I bet ten feet in the air and he came down crashing down we could hear the motorcycle rev up and we didn't know who he was he happened to be one of our riders and but when we got to that farm area then the German's had set up the panzer's all along the perimeter out there in the hedgerows so we left the half track behind this big German farmhouse and some of the guys went the other way and I got mixed up and separated and I went to the left side of the house the German's were out this way on the left side of the house and I got down and there was a ditch running.. a shallow ditch running up to the German position see. There was so much stuff flying around.. through that brush and stuff that I just got down and started digging a hole, that was the only way out. I couldn't tell what to shoot at because I was all mixed up, and I got down and was digging this hole and in the meantime I didn't see them but a battery of about 4-5 guns had moved up on my left, right behind me a ways, of 105 howitzers and with all that noise I didn't know they was moving and they moved right up there hell just a little ways behind me to my left not very far and boy believe me I was digging there and all of a sudden they let go and the concussion of them guns and being a little forward of them like that just about knocked me, I lost my senses a couple of seconds there, you know. And I thought by God what is that now, with all this other stuff, and I seen them, it made me feel better seeing them there, but just about then a truck came with reinforcements pulled in behind by our half track and they says I could hear they was new

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guys you know course I felt like a veteran by then that was the first battle I was in you know but I felt sort of sorry for them because I heard their platoon leaders hollerin, rifleman here, rifleman here, machine gunners here, machine gunners here, trying to line them out because going down this ditch where I was and that's where they went but before they left they got over there by me and the artillery let go again and I only had my hole down about eight inches it was a lot of roots and stuff there and hard to dig. Roots and sod you know, and my god they stacked up almost clear up to my waist in that hole, they was way above ground, they was stacked up there, I told them I says well that is our own artillery, boy they was sure glad to hear that. We had the planes over there, of course then the thunderbolts went into action just out away from the town so the tanks got positioned the thunderbolts were coming in, you know the P-47 dive bombers. They would come down, there was trees right over there and they'd go behind them trees and I'd swear that they weren't going to come up and each time you'd see one and think it was going down lower and in that case see you can't use artillery only on direct fire on the ground. You can't use it because you can't have it lobbing in because you'd shoot down a plane or hit a plane maybe so that's why the artillery was shooting ground targets you know there. And boy that was a hell of a time you know but still.. still I had all my guys on the half track none of them got hit you know and I felt like I was real lucky and so then I heard somebody yelling Woko we're moving up, Woko, we're moving up, that's the words I heard and I came around there and half track was already starting to move and I ramble up over the side, we had a back door to them but usually we had it blocked off with rolls of all kinds of junk, rations, water cans and everything you know, got up in that half track and I could see it was headed up towards the road and I knew we'd have to turn left on the main road up therer and go towards the German's there and you know the funniest thing happened. I get up in the half track and I sit down and I could see out of the sides there and then I didn't remember anything no more, I must have had a mental block or something but I was scared because the guys would think you're brains are a little bit scrambled because you're shell shocked you know so I didn't elaborate but the deal was I don't remember anything after that point, I never could remember. The next thing I knew we was out on the road and the main road and I felt like a million dollars, I'll tell you I never felt so good in all my life, like I was floating on air, and I was sitting in the half track and I was aware of the soldiers sitting around me 4-5 of them in the half track there in the back and I didn't want to say anything because I just didn't want to break the spell. So I just felt so good sitting there and the air was so fresh like there had been a light misty rain and we was moving down the road and everything felt so perfect. And then we pulled up and stopped and there was a tank pulled up on our left and just at that time.. I was coming out of it then and I was getting alert and aware of what was going on and I heard some planes.. German planes, they came up above and circled, evidently, and then I looked off to the right and there was a house on fire there and we were just on the edge of the yard of the house and every so often chunks of wood would fall off and flare up and throw out some light across this little yard there and this plane came around and circled and the a guy in the tank everybody said you could hear guys hollering don't look up, don't look up, hold your fire, hold your fire, and all like that and the guy in the tank, in that turret.. the ring mount you know, he let go with the machine gun he said he seen the shadow of the plane going over. That was it.. killed a lot of men cause that plane circled right around and started coming in on us a bomber and he had cited for the house that was burning right on the right, marked the target for him, the house was burning right there. So when he dropped the first one and I heard the second one coming and I knew where the rest of them was going to go, they were directly on us, so I leaped out, my buddy I said let's go, we jumped out of the half track onto the hard cobble stone pavement or whatever it was and we headed for what we thought was a hedgerow over to the left a little bit and there was a jeep sitting there, but it wasn't a hedgerow it was a hedge on one side and a jeep on the side we was on was just a hedge, that was what was around the yard, it wasn't a hedgerow just a hedge, except where the main driveway went into the house. and it was on the opposite side where we were. And by God I come down

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and I dove underneath the jeep and I told my buddy, he was by my back, lay on your side, lay on your side, because if you lay on your belly and the bomb hits close or something like that you'd bust your guts so he did, his name was Hopper, his name was Potter, him and I was planning on trapping in Alaska when the war was over. We'd sent for maps and stuff like that. He had, he was from Minnesota and we were going to go up there after the war by gosh we was going to live up there and homestead and trap and anyway we got underneath the jeep there and he was against my back and my left side and when the rest of the bombs come.. the last bomb hit where that burning house was. Stoked up the fire pretty bright you could see real good just like a light and then there was just total silence after that and I felt around I had some chunks hit me there and stuff like that and I felt around for something wet for blood you know and I had some dirt on me you know. I was ok and I said to my buddy I says... Potter how are you doing are you ok, he said, I can't move, so I got out from underneath the jeep and like I say it was pretty light there then and I grabbed his feet and drug him out and he was hit real bad in the back, he was laying on his left side and he got the shrapnel, I didn't. He had one piece about that far by his backbone about 3" and the other two, he had two other pieces, I ripped up his shirt and I could see the light reflecting on his back and I wiped it off with his shirt..the blood and it was pink like blood and that indicates you're hurt on the inside instead of outside if its real red they tell you what to look for and it was pink I could see and it was seeping out fast and he had three holes in him and he couldn't move. So right now I holler medic and I didn't hear no other sounds and I holler medic and by God two or three I know it was two medics popped out of nowhere, I don't know where they come from. Along that column there they come from that direction. They looked at his back and they says well, and they gave him a shot of morphine, and I didn't know how fast it worked but by God it worked fast because you'd better tell him good bye because he'll be out of it right away and I told him good bye and he said so long Woko.. His back was paralyzed. He lived. He was in England. I got word from him he was in a hospital back in England but that wasn't the worst of it either I looked across the yard there where the light was shining you could see crumpled twisted bodies of the other soldiers laying there so I seen one guy stagger out of the brush in the light he was a captain from some other outfit and he was holding his wrist and his hand was blowed off here hanging with some muscles here.. like this and he asked if I could help him but god I couldn't help him you know. And I didn't have nothing to tie it up with, I just told him to hold it up above his head with his other hand, hold it up there and holler to beat hell for a medic and he was there he came out of the light there and he started hollering for a medic there.. but then I heard another guy hollering and cussing to beat hell and he came down and he was a major. Whose halftrack is this, get this on the move, you're blocking the whole column that was part of the situation the column had to get through. We had to get as many troops through there as we could. So he, I said they're all dead over there, and he said where is the driver, I don't know maybe he is dead too, so the crew was all dead over there and some other guys too and uh I didn't look at their face to see which one it was because then by gosh as luck would have it Leroy Harrington the guy from Texas the driver popped up out of nowhere and the other little guy that was with me he was a scout too.. he came up so we had two of us and a driver left there in that halftrack, the other guys got hit too. When we got on that track boy that Major was madder than heck and when we started moving well I got up to the front end of it put my arm over the my right arm over the anti tank gun barrel.. and I could look right over his head and I could tell him little eye hole he had that little square slit.. so I was giving him directions so we was going down the road and I could barely see a glimmer of that road and I'd say little right, little left, little right, doing real good, as a matter of fact we were moving along pretty good, I felt pretty good about it and all of a sudden just like turning on a light switch everything lit up just as bright as day there must have been fifty or I don't know how many machine guns opened up right by us, right in the middle of the road, crossing across the road tracer bullets just lit up the whole area just that quick we'd run into a German ambush the German SS, they'd ambushed the outfit ahead of us and then they were chopping it off right where we were see, right there and

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the tracer that's one thing the tracer saved us right there, just a split second deal and if we'd have went another couple more yards, because the tracers are already up to the front of the half track and I heard Harrington, he let out just one word, Woko, just like that and I says left 90 degrees, I said left 90 degrees, and there was a hedgerow right there, hedge on each side, just like a black hole, just like a target, and right into that we went and in a couple of seconds we was out of the way of the fire you now. We went down there a hundred yards or so and we stopped now and what in the heck are we going to do now and we could hear German's running around in front of us, this led into a farmhouse, we heard German's in front of us and they was sitting there, they had a big gun down there they was shooting off well I wanted to get them and Harrington he was in charge. I lost one halftrack and I'm not going to lose this one he said I lost one half track and I ain't going to lose this one, he says just wait, wait so we waited all night. And by God and we were in between the lines just like this here a hedgerow on each side and the Americans were on one side and the German's on the other, the American's back the way we come and boy they were really scrapping it out back and forth, everything was going over, both directions over that hedge. And then later on the German's pulled out down the lane by the farmhouse and they left all their boxes of ammunition there, I remember I went down there. Then we still didn't know what the heck the score was we could hear vehicles moving back down the road that we took off so we had better see if they are friendly or enemy you know well we went back and by God they were friendly troops so we got out on the road a ways and before long we run into our outfit and there were dead German's laying all over the place right there where. They had a machine gun and they got to shooting the whole deal was pretty big. They was part of the section of the.. the command section of the headquarters of the 41st armored infantry regiment headquarters section. That's what I worked out of too see. And we got the presidential citation for that. I was reading about that in the paper today but we sure knocked the hell out of everybody because I felt we were lucky going through St. Lo you know and not.... knocked the hell out of all the guys I knew while I was there you know they was about all killed in that place.

Question: I guess everybody is different but how do you, because you're dealing with all sorts of issues at that point, here you are a young kid, you are seeing friends, people you know and people you don't know killed, you are seeing the enemy killed, there is I assume the fear of you being killed, maybe not, I don't know maybe you.. what goes on, because it sounds like chaos, because its dark and stuff and who knows what is where and

Answer: Well, it's just it's just everybody's different, I think that's why they are making mistakes now because they are not leaving it up to the individuals own feelings. They are trying to guide him, counsel him through everything like that and sometimes his own common sense is the best protection he has see. When we fought up through France, you know after that we fought in Mortain And Barenton. We got trapped over there, part of my outfit did, and I watched the planes come in and the planes were dropping supplies to them, most of them got into the German's lines too you know, it was a bad battle, Mortain and Barenton too. Then we hedged over to Elbeuf On the Seine on the Seine River down towards Caen, down towards the channel there. The English 8th army was on our left flank and the Canadian outfits was there too, right with the English. Well we made the attack across the Elbeuf The night before we pulled into this high ground above the river and the town.. and the German's acted like they was all targeted in because you open up with a what I call, they have a different name for them, what I call screaming Mimi mortars, the rocket mortars you know. And by God, they hit from zero right in on us again and more guys got hit. I could hear them screaming for medics and help you know and stuff like that and I damned near got it. I was digging a hole I got down pretty good, and believe me every time a barrage came in I'd dig a little deeper. I was going to dig one so I could lay flat in it you know but before morning it was down like that (gestures) you know. Well, anyway one of them was delayed action you

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got to watch for that but I didn't I was in a hurry to get my hole dug and so they held barrage in, they was close, and then that was it so I started digging and by god wham, another went off delayed action like you know just didn't detonate sooner, and my God thump right by my head into the dirt, I was able to duck a little bit by instinct or something, I laid there for a little while and then reached up that hole at the top of where I'd dug out, well I burnt my hand, right by my head. In the morning I looked and fell off the bank and fell down into the hole and there was a piece of shrapnel about a half inch thick and about two inches square and I was lucky I just didn't get it, next morning we jumped.. we captured Elbeuf. When we were in France the smell was so bad.. because when we went through there we was up against fighting at St. Lo, St. Denis le Gast And Notre Dame de Cenilly Little towns out St. Lo and the German's were fighting and there was a panzer SS and they was fighting hard and they.. there was a second panzer division and a 17th panzer grenadier division not division but regiment. The panzer grenadier is just like the armored infantry, the eyes and ears of the tanks, they can't blunder everyplace they have to have some direction you know so that's what we did a lot of time we directed. Anyway the smell was so bad, the whole countryside everyplace you went there were bodies rotting and everything was dead and I remember my buddy, there was a whole dairy herd at Normandy, he says to me Woko, Woko, what's them things out there. What in the hell are in that field. I look and there was a black and white dairy heard out there all dead. They were laying there with legs up, upper legs sticking out stiff, all puffed up you know, bloated. I told him, I said them's cows, cow's hell, I know cows, the only cow he's seen is on the Pet Milk thing or something like that. Them ain't cows, I seen cows. He is from Brooklyn. I said, yeah, they are and I said you watch they bloat up then they blow, as the skin breaks through, you can see this green fog come out of it, gas you know, then they slump down. Awful smell. There was times when they was fresh the guys used to cut a chunk out of the hind quarter and try to roast it. I think a Frenchman gave me some of that one time and it tasted ok but anyway, it smelled so bad.

This is the comical part of it the old sergeant he was the supply sergeant he said Woko do you like southern fried chicken. I said I like chicken, I guess southern fried is just as good. Well the next time we see live chickens he said we're going to have us a big feed he said. How does that sound to you? Well, it sounds good to me. He says ok, as soon as you get a chance now. I said ok, it wasn't two days later we ran into a chicken coop a bunch of live chickens so I plunked about five of them with a carbine you know and I put them in a gunny sack in the luggage rack on the side of the half track and you know the smell of everything around dead they had to have emergency to pick up bodies, grave registration, so every available man had to be called on to load bodies and parts body parts and to get them together, in the mattress covers they always had to get the same parts you know arms you had to put them in the mattress covers all in one piece. My buddy I know he got hooked but I happened to be on assignment some place else and I didn't get into that. Usually they didn't put me into something like that anyway they needed me all the time to get me going here and get me going there and it stunk so bad everything in the landscape so driving down the road we put these chickens in the luggage rack and we didn't get that night off a peaceful night that we planned on where we could cook them and so we'd drive down the road and say oh God don't stop here, pull up a ways, it'd stink to beat heck you know, finally we kept doing it and we got out of the dead bodies no heavy fighting there and we'd better get them chickens out sergeant said, Woko we'd better get them chickens out, Jesus I went back out there and I got that gunny sack of chickens off there and it was terrible. Nothing smells worse to me not even them bodies. I said them chickens ain't no good no more. Not any good anymore. They are rotten they stink you know. So that was the end of our chicken fry. We did have a chicken fry later on when we got into Germany but that was France. When we left Elbeuf after we captured it we turned it over to the Canadians and got a receipt for it and started north to drive straight to Berlin. Patton was over there working someplace to the right around Paris. Well we run out of gas. We had a whole army strung out for miles and we didn't have any gas. We just pulled over to the side of the road and that's how it was. If the German's would

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have counter attacked then well then they'd have lost the army. They could maneuver and knock our tanks out fast you know and it took four or five Sherman's to take one Tiger, that was the ratio. They could out maneuver and get them. It took that many and the German's knew that too. We all knew it. There is a lot of stuff that didn't come out about that too. It was just a mistake of not getting the gas where it was needed. For instance Patton is making all kinds of headway over here give him everything he needs but you can't go that way and the officers that were with me and the officers I was around I was around officers a lot you know they didn't like that and they told me right out they're going to wipe out the whole darn army just to please Patton. So that's never been said. I'm not criticizing Patton you see what I mean. It's just the way the army was I mean there was times they didn't use good sense but overall we had the best damned leaders than any other country had. Our officers were good men and they went about their business. Didn't talk or collaborate they took care of it in a businesslike manner and we had a lot of confidence in the officers of ours they were damned good. Just a few of the young ones the lieutenants and stuff usually the first or second lieutenant didn't pan out that good but overall I sure liked our officers, we had some damned good ones, our generals were good too. We went up to, we finally got gas, and we drove up to, we was the first American troops into Belgium, 82nd (inaudible) battalion, we crossed later on we got the Belgium Fourragere For that one deal, another deal we got a bunch of German's in, but as we pulled up into northern France we strung out on the road, we was liberating towns and they were throwing a lot of flowers and vegetables and everything else at the halftracks and boy they'd hit you with one of those great big apples and knock you off the halftrack. I asked a couple times I wonder if they're glad to see us or otherwise you know. We had to wipe our guns off all the time.. splatter on.. Throw tomatoes at you... Splatter on the guns. Well, we just pulled out of this one town.. we stopped, I was talking to three French women there and up ahead at a little town named Orchies France and we was fixing to capture that and these three women were there with their bicycles loaded up... refugees you know and they was going back to this town driven out of it and they was headed home you know when the war was going the other way they had pulled out and now they was going back in it. I told them I says why don't you guys wait I says and take your time and let us clear that town first I said. And they said the Germans told us.. the boss, évacué, évacué, they're gone. They was telling us that, well you should let us go into town first, they could understand good English, while we was doing that we was riding point for the combat command which we did a number of times. We'd be the forward troops right up front the first halftrack, roughrider halftrack with several jeeps in front of us and the tanks would be behind. And the tanks were getting held up behind us in that liberation deal coming through the towns back behind us see.. kissing the girls and running along and getting a bottle of wine from them and that stuff. So one of the guys on the half track said.. made a statement and he said it casually, he says what in the hell are them limeys doing on our right flank they are never where they are supposed to be, Canadian and English you know, I liked the Canadians I talked to them some of them occasionally you know butted into them and he said God Damnit, he was cussing, I happened to look down I had my field glasses and I looked around and looked through the trees. On the opposite side of this little field there's timber sparse not real thick and God I looked and just about the time I looked there was a little clearspot there and a big German half track towing an 88 millimeter gun loaded with Germans and I could see the big Maltese cross on the side of it you know and I said to them there and everybody was lolling around you know. And I says limeys hell they was camouflaged vehicles see that's why we mistook them for the limeys because we didn't have camouflaged vehicles and the limeys did and the German's did. So I says limeys hell them's heinies and boy the fighting started. And of course we was just a small group in the point riding advance and I grabbed a bazooka and another guy grabbed some ammunition and the rest of the guys got out of the half track and lined up against the stone wall there and we headed out. I seen this barn sitting out in this field to my right a little bit and there was a house right up close to the road so I went by there, went through the yard of the house and was heading for that barn I wanted to get

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down there where I could have a field of fire you know out in front of me in case the German's.. I figured they'd be attacking us you know come circling around towards us in that spot down there by the barn some timber coming around there, a belt of timber. I got down there with those guys and it was a poor spot, it was the worst spot I could have picked, by the time I got there the damned barn was sitting down in a swale and I couldn't see the German's where they were. Well I couldn't walk up in that field and get them because sure as I did they'd catch me right out in the open and that was it and I'd be done fast. Just about then when I was thinking about my next move I was going to make I looked back to my left behind me where the road went by the house there and a Sherman tank came around, one of our Sherman's and he started out in the field there. And he couldn't see anything too, he was blind, and he come out and he stopped and was looking, I seen him stopped so I ran across the field to him and I told him and directed him over and told him where the German's were then he started forward and the rest of the tanks behind him followed and started spreading out. During that battle we got 165 armored vehicles.. in an enemy armored column we got 165, it's right in the reports of that thing. Took out I don't know how many prisoners but they were pretty well bloodied up poor devils. And so the next day or so they says well we did a good job, they're going to cook us a meal, give us a hot meal. So little bit of conflict on what was said.. anyway they got uh.. give us a hot meal so they sent these three or four other men. Lets see.. three four men.. there was four men.. they sent them sent them with a little half ton truck, small truck, full of water cans to get a load of water for the cooks you know. In the meantime I seen this other scout guy that had been down in France with me on that Battle of St. Lo there and I says, well what are we going to do, you wanted to do something all the time, you was keyed up so much you know, if you are dead tired you can fall over sleep in not very long so I said let's go scout that town, that looks like a nice town. So he says ok, so we just took off up the road hell there was no people come out down the nice wide street there, and we got down there and went around the corner and there was that little truck from our outfit we seen it and we knew it was our outfit and there was a café right off to the right there and it sounded like there was a good party going on in there. So we goes over and goes in there. Well I knew the guys every one of them, and one of them there was pretty loud and he had a big turkey cooked and he was having a big feed and that was our chance to get a real big meal but that soldier was acting so rowdy and I didn't have no authority but uh, I was just a private and so I says got to get out of here and get him out of here I says because he is going to get us in trouble, everybody in trouble, more than us because wasn't part of the detail. And so I says he is raising too much and it is looking bad for the people there, the Frenchmen you know they were so glad to see us and I didn't like to see him acting like a loudmouth and a heel you know so we got him out there across the street. That little vehicle was pointed the way we wanted to go there, throw him in the back and we was arguing about who was going to drive, one says you can't drive let me drive you're too drunk to drive, all this stuff, and he says, I ain't drunk, and while we was arguing just about that time I heard another vehicle coming and a truck come around on the street above us just a little ways a half block up you know loaded with Germans you know and I thought Jesus Christ here's the MP's with a whole load of prisoners and here come some prisoner's now and the MP's will see us I told them. They kept coming down and we was looking at them and we didn't see no MP's and they come up right beside us here driving pretty.. just a reasonable speed and I looked up and they was sitting up they're on the side on the rows of seats on each side and they had their ponchos on and potato masher hand grenade stuck down their belts and had submachine guns and everything... it was a German patrol, a German combat patrol see... and they looked right down on us and we wasn't any farther from here to that door from us see and I says well let's get them and they was already getting down towards the first corner and I says.. they was still arguing and I told one guy I says get your so and so in the back there he's driving so that settled that and so we took out after them. By God we chased them right through town. We picked up this free Frenchman, let's pick up this guy, maybe we could use him, tailgate, he had an armband on him.. a Free French Fighter you know, a resistance

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fighter, picked him up and just as soon as he got a good view of what we was up to he left us. He didn't want to get involved in that kind of a deal at all. I was telling the guys.. hold it up, slow down, I says we'll run into them on a corner and I got in back of the truck with one other soldier on top of the water can up where I could see everything but I was fully exposed too, driver right by me and I says slow down or you're going to end up killing us all. I says go around these corners slower. You know. And so we went through town square and the people would stick their heads out of the doorways and point which way the German patrol went so we got down there right to the square and oh boy the roads took off every which way, and there was a big water fountain there, and by gosh they went right straight across and there was a church there and boy he really stepped on it going across that and by gosh we came around and I thought boy when we go around the corner of that church we're going to run into something fast.. and I reached up and pulled a hand grenade out of my ring up here.. and I thought by gosh if he keeps going real fast when we go up to him I'll just toss this hand grenade. He won't be able to stop. We'll probably go by them, you know. And so I get the hand grenade and by God there they was right in front and I give that hand grenade.. the ring a jerk and he lurched that stupid truck and I dropped that hand grenade right down between the water cans in the back of the truck. Well by then we had to fight for our life. I grabbed the carbine and was shooting as fast as I could and wasn't missing either.. and they were shooting at us with their submachine guns.. but I had this elbow way high while I was shooting because I was waiting for that blast from that grenade to go up and I was trying to protect my face a little bit you know but we run them up on the street.. we literally over powered them. We was outnumbered because the guy by me he got shot right off the bat, that was in the back. He got shot in the toe. He was just getting his Thompson submachine gun up and down he went, right by me there. So it left only three of us to do the shooting because one was the driver and we had to do some fast shooting because they was shooting at us. Well, we got em, we got them all, and the boys came around there later on and my God they thought it was a major counter attack all that shooting going. We got uh.. six of the poor devils could stand and nine of them was in bad shape. And so the fight was over with then, we.. the ambulance was.. the first time we'd seen the ambulance, the ambulance was coming with its sirens and everything they picked them up, that was pretty neat, you know and the American troops started coming from all directions they thought.. wondering what the heck had happened you know. We lined up the German's but the truck was shot up so bad we couldn't use it to haul them you know we was going to load them on the truck there but it was hit bad. I took them down the street about a half a block and turned them over to an American outfit there some other guys and they gave me a receipt for them there but then we had to. Remember me telling you about not brutalizing prisoners, didn't want anyone hitting them see.. so I tangled with two guys during that episode that wanted to beat the prisoners. One guy pulled a carbine on me when I stopped him. He said he shot McKoviac.. Kalinoski. I said he just got shot in the shoulder, He'll go home you know. Well he didn't, he healed up and came back you know. Anyway there was quite a deal. They had a French photographer there taking pictures. He came out of nowhere there and one French guy slipped in and grabbed a gun out of a German's holster and I hollered at him. He didn't have no business doing that you know. And uh.. they were our prisoners. He took off running. There was a park on one side of the street and a row of stores on the other. He was running down there and I pulled up on my carbine and he was gone and to help him on his way I fired a couple of shots over his head I wouldn't try to hit him. Boy he was moving then. On that we got the Bronze Star the medal for it.. for it.. beyond the call of duty. We was outnumbered almost five to one you know.

Question: Now if I remember right you saw Stalin?

Answer: Yes I seen him in Berlin. We was in Berlin and we had the Potsdam Conference there and Truman reviewed us first, the troops first, we was out, they made us wear our hot

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clothes, blouses and (inaudible) and the guys were dropping along the road. They had all the tanks lined up and he was there and he come by he come by real slow by me but what was bothering me is there was a dead lady lying about fifteen feet back in the woods behind me in the brush smelling stinking so bad in that hot weather and I was watching him to see if his nose would twitch because he was bound to smell it you know but he didn't I didn't notice anything. When Stalin came by we was on the edge of the autobahn, I was on the opposite side of the autobahn and he come by with his riders he had about forty-fifty motorcycle riders in red capes behind him behind his half track he was in a white halftrack with that white uniform on with gold buttons you know. He was up there.. my buddy and I had a fifty caliber machine gun right at the edge of the brush there where the brush grew over the edge of the roadway. Covered down in the woods because a.. the people going up the paths, they're walking paths and was going up to see what was going on the civilians you know so we had to keep them away keep them down there. But we fought in the Siegfried Line. Oh geeze, I had a damned close call on the Siegfried Line, I remember, we were getting ready to for an operation.. a joint operation in the northern end of the Siegfried out towards Gelsenkirchen We was going to have a joint operation with the English and the Canadians because we were in tank country. Where the tanks could fight open plains and the cold mines around had these big peaks of overburden, peak them up like a peak, but had no place to put the stuff, looked like a bunch of pyramids around you know. So this one town we was in they was shelling us everyday, heavy artillery all the time it was bad and a night battle come through, one came through there around 9 o'clock at night. You should hear tank battles.. Boy they are vicious when you hear them because it is BANG bang.. BANG bang. It's the shells hitting you know gun goes off and the shell hits just that quick. There were several hundred tanks involved in that battle. And they was trying to break through this big long plain that run right through the lines and come in behind us just a little bit behind us once or twice and I thought by God they are going to get in behind us and cut us off but they just didn't make it. Tanks were out there (inaudible) well I knocked out tanks in the field so they told me.. we got a very important job for you Woko. Send somebody down, send me up to the command pos. He said, tomorrow morning we want you to go back, you remember that factory back in Holland that we captured, and I said yep, I've always had a good memory, if I seen it I remember it, they knew it too, well partly underground, one floor was operating just on ground level below the ground about 8-10 feet. I said yea I remember it. They said well we want you to take a run in there, morning early, first light.. it's set up as a communication center now. We want you to take these.. we'll have a whole load of walkie talkies it is very important because our radios so many they turned in.. different platoons ,command centers didn't have any more walkie talkies they was all damaged or dead youknow. And we got to get them replaced before we join this attack with the British you see so just come in the morning and the jeep will be all loaded and all ready for you. Ok, I thought.. my mind was working already. I thought well I'll just go back there and swing by one of them farm houses back there in Holland and I'll pick me up a couple of eggs and I had a couple of cans of pork loaf in my c- rations my k-rations you know and I'll have me a meal. I was hungry and I was skinny you know, not enough food, so I had it all planned. I was glad to get away from there anyway because they were shelling constantly and all you were doing was covering up and ducking down all the time you know and getting down into someplace for protection. Well anyway as we went back I left a town and there was a side road went right back up and hit a main road at the edge of town. Everything was, oh it was a beautiful morning, the sun was up, got up to the main road and I was thinking about the pork loaf and them eggs I bummed from them you know from the Dutch people there and. I just got on the main road and I looked to my left I could see a heck of a lot of burned out tanks there and stuff and what was left of the tanks where they had a tank battle a night or two before or two nights before and I could see then where the battle had taken place and by gosh the German's spotted me. They were on top of one of the slag piles. We knocked them off of that slag pile before and I.. on one of the other ones knocked them off of there, P-47 come in and knock them off well they'd just slide down to the bottom

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and then they'd come up again at first chance you know. Well they come up after dark and then they was there in the morning. That's what they'd do, they'd direct some fire then scoot back down there, well just got up to the top of the road and boy I heard a swoosh, swoosh, swoosh you know the artillery coming in there was a whole battery of them let go and boy they hit the center of the road in front of me and it felt like it was riding in a boat when that jeep rocked and I let it go its own way, went right off the road about a 45 degree angle, right over the embankment you know the road bank.. and then out then I.. it was guidiing just right because there was a shell crater hole there I just straddled that hole and I rolled right out on the left and I wiggled underneath the jeep and got in that shell crater. Well, the German's they was watching me see there was no question they was watching every move I was making so I was careful, I didn't move around under there, I could move around and make sure I had the wheels between me and that pile, I knew they was on that pile of slag and so I stayed there awhile and what in heck am I going to do I was trying to think how was I going to get back on the road, I had to get them radios back. You know, I couldn't run back to the edge of the embankment and hide along there, go back to town and get back to my outfit, just leave the road when I had some cover and go back to my outfit.. then boy I would really get chewed out or my reputation be down then so I didn't see anything leaking on the jeep so if anything hit it it didn't do no damage and the tires were up and no water leaking out of it so I thought well I'll just go up along the edge of the hill and I'll go right down and keep that embankment and a bunch of snaggy trees from where they'd blown off from the fighting and big tall stumps and give me a little protection and I could go right on down there then and I was thinking boy that's the way to do it but then I looked and right up on one of those trees hanging close to me was a sign and it was hanging down on one wire like this so the sign was long you know.. and I could look on there and see what it says MINEN, and then I looked down further there was another sign there and I was in a mine field you know and the mine fields for tanks it had to be tanks and that's them big ones, I was going to bring some papers over. I had some diagrams of tanks, different kinds of mines. I had a folder, secret folder, I had it in my map tube you know, but I left them home. I don't know if they'd be worth anything to you or not, but I thought well, I have to use my head and I thought well I'm not going to do that because if I hit one of them mines and the ground wasn't disturbed down that way, it was a little bit disturbed where I come down, maybe shells exploding around, so I went down but it wasn't disturbed and I thought nothing has driven through there and I'm not going to be the first one either you know. So I thought well the only way I can do it, I seen my tracks where I'd come across that soft dirt where they come over the bank in the back, I thought well I'll just back up on that road and I was under the assumption possibly they thought they had me which they did and they would maybe looking the other way or maybe they wouldn't be up on top of the pile because they had knock me out. So I got in and by God she started right up and I put her in reverse and boy back up the hill I went just going to beat heck right up on the road and just started forward and they let me have it with a barrage right in front of me. I could feel it that jeep getting hit just like someone getting hit with a bag of rocks you know and I was committed.. there is no way I could get out of it then I just floor boarded it and the damn jeep hesitated and jerked forward and I just got forward just enough that the next barrage hit right behind me and then boy I just floor boarded it all the way through and I wasn't getting the speed out of it and the jeep would start missing every so often and I just kept my foot right down I didn't let up on that gas one bit because I figured well I ain't going to gain anything that way I might die and that would be the end of it. I got down to the the intersection.. other intersection and I looked back then and the story was there, had big signs there with skulls and crossbones, extreme danger, this road under enemy observation, I took a left there to get to where the factory was and I went down the road just a short distance and I seen the engineers with a truck they was loading mines, big tellermine, big German tellermine, they had them stacked up on that truck like pancakes, right up on top of the seats, they were really over loaded, boy, I'd hate to drop them, I wouldn't load them up like that, I just thought of that. Well I waved at the guys, and they

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always stop you always do that everybody waves on the front I mean it is something there, it satisfies them getting the answering wave you know, so I waved, they must have known I couldn't stop because that jeep was missing... I just get by them it must have been just seconds when there was a truck coming from the opposite direction, a 6x6.. you know two and a half ton truck and my gosh we all practically met at the same time the guys picking up the mines, and me I went by a little bit just a few feet, then the truck was there and the guys were waving out the truck.. it was a load of reinforcements coming up, and by god then it happened.. there was a terrific explosion. Jesus Christ, it sounded like a thousand pound bomb or more, I mean it was tremendous and I could see stuff flying back up over my head and I looked around and there was nothing back there.. there was no truck there.. no guys picking up the mines or nothing they was all gone. They got their wave in though you know, their last wave.

When I got down to communications and turned it over, they said was you in this jeep, and the jeep was riddled with shrapnel, and all the water was out of the radiator was why it was missing and it was froze up. It'll never move again from where it is right where I stopped. He says don't worry about those radios he says.. we'll get them back just go back you just get some rest. I says you'd better send a patrol back and see what happened. They heard the explosion and I told them about it and I says later on an officer came down there and he says well Woko, I told him my name was Woko, they're all dead, killed the whole bunch, the truckload of troops and everything, over thirty, so every soldier I seen on that road that day was killed. I felt sort of bad about it but they said they got a hold of headquarters my outfit and they says order another jeep and I can bring it back for me to rest up there and in about three days a new jeep come in and that wasn't the end of it then, it was just starting. I just drove off with a jeep heading back and I hadn't sand bagged it yet they said when you get back to your outfit have them guys sandbag it and put sandbags in for mines. You know they put sandbags in the floors because it does protect you some. It might flip you up in the air but wouldn't go through as easy. By God there goes a jeep down the road and it was from my outfit then of course I knew who it was it was Colonel Lockhart and I'd been on a couple missions with him and we stopped there and he had this other guy with him that screwed up one time after that and he damned near got me killed but he says Woko I want you to take me and go down into Belgium. I've been promoted to Chief of Staff for the 9th Infantry Division and it's a promotion, if he was lieutenant colonel, he'd be getting full colonel's deal, he says, I says, well sir, I want to transfer this stuff, no, no, let them take it back, just leave it, go with me, I didn't have much gear except my carbine and ammunition, lost my mess gear, got in a hurry and I took the other jeep see. We got clear down there in Belgium and by the (inaudible) Forest where we come in there and the old general come out to me, with his scout car with his siren, you know, me this beat up jeep I was in, a vagrant coming into the headquarters of a general, the colonel got in the scout car with the general. Well we got in there and they was nice says well Woko you go down into the kitchen. The general said was about time to get some chow, time to eat supper, ok, I went down there and I didn't have no gear with me and that is the difference between rear echelon troops and front line troops. I went in there and went into the kitchen and they had a theatre and they was eating in rows and seats you know.. and I says who can I borrow mess gear from.