

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

**QUESTION:** So you headed back towards Aachen thinking you had already taken it?

**ANSWER:** It was encircled, it was isolated, but we had troops east of Aachen And we got there and all of a sudden guys started dashing out in the road in front of me flagging me down, flagging me down. They said where are you heading, I told them where I was heading well you can't go through here, he says the front line is right there at that building right there, see that white building up there at the corner, that is the front right there he says. And I could see the other guys hiding behind stuff there and with their guns you know and stuff so I just turned and went back and made a good enough loop to get back to Holland. I got up there and.. it took me about two days. I stopped up there.. and I hadn't had anything to eat for a couple days and I come through this town in Holland and the people there was real nice and I had a bunch of prisoners there and they'd invited me down to eat dinner with them at their house. There was a girl at the gate. I was in a school yard with a whole bunch of prisoners and I was watching them and so when I got off, turn them over.. MPs came down and loaded them up there was about seventy well I told her, she told me directions to their house and everything, nice and clean, went down there and had a nice big meal. Boy, oh boy, did it taste good. That's when I had prisoners. So I thought I'll stop there on the way back and I'll have me a big feed. Well I got up there and stopped at the house and sure enough they was glad to see me and they gave me.. Dutch people you know they gave me a good feed and I just went to sleep.. I slept all that night and next day I was so groggy I said I'll stay another night I need the rest anyway and I stayed another night. I didn't spend no time with the girl nothing like that involved she was a real nice girl everything was respectful you know.. but I did like that meal. There was no meat it was all vegetables they didn't have any meat but I got back to the outfit and guy come around and says hey Woko, the captain wants to see you, Captain Stryker. Well so I went up to see him so I know him a real nice guy, Captain John Stryker, and he says well Woko by gosh I got a job to do. What's that?. I turned you in missing in action he got a radio report that an American from the 2<sup>nd</sup> armored division 41<sup>st</sup> infantry was trying to get through the line so took the wrong road again someplace up above that was the end of me see, I had you down missing in action, now I'm going to have to change that ain't I, yeah I said guess so. And he got killed after that too, nice guy. And but it was quite a deal. We had, when we went in.. when we was up there in that area after and we pulled the attack with the English and we won. I was gone and I come back when the battle was done. I was trying to locate the outfit again my regular attached outfit. I'd been on assignment so. I remember this little town and the fighting was going on and the fighting slacked off and I was in this town and I didn't want to go up further because there had been some heavy fighting and I didn't know where I was going and I'd blundered to locate my outfit so I just sit in this house and I was sleepy and I leaned up against the window face so I could see up to the corner, see if anything come around the corner a couple blocks up. Leaned against the window casing the window was broken out but I could see good, and all of a sudden I dozed off and I woke up.. and I heard music. Believe me it was fabulous music it.. around the corner.. it was British.. I think members of the black watch and they were.. had their band and they was playing, boy there is nothing more impressive than that and they was playing the Colonel Bogey March, Bridge on the River Kwai, tears was coming down my face, to be woke up to something like that. Then we got lined out again and we moved down to Holland and we said.. our next advance would be across the river. Before that we made a run for the Rhine and we was up with the British on our left flank and we was up on the road heading for the Adolf Hitler Bridge we wanted to get that one across the Rhine, you probably

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

heard of that bridge. Anyway we was breaking up over the brow of the hill and down below us was the Rhine and on the right was running we could see it quite a ways to our left was a bunch of trees and a town down there. Just as we broke up over the brow of the hill we was coming down the rest of the column was ahead of us tanks and stuff we wasn't riding point or anything but we was later on. But we broke up there and we came under artillery fire.. shells they just had that open side hill just lopping us away. I told the driver I says we wasn't supposed to be going that way but the road forked off to the right, take the right, get out of here, we didn't want to get involved in something down there where the artillery.. was no place to hide see. So we took off.. we broke right over the hill and there we was right up above the Rhine, and the road just angled down the ridge right down to the Rhine River and there was nothing in front of us, no fire nothing. We drove down there and he stepped on the gas he was going down along the Rhine and I expected fire from across the river any minute and I guess they was too surprised to see us cause he was going as fast as that halftrack could go, we was headed along the river there and up ahead we could see the upper structure of the bridge of the Adolf Hitler Bridge and we just got down to it we was going to be the first guys on because there was no other vehicles around. And an engineering outfit, one of our engineering outfits had made it to the bridge, and they had taken some of the explosives off of the bridge, but not near enough and the German's still had control of the bridge see. So we come down there we seen a bunch of guys we was just going to take the left turn onto the bridge a 90 degree turn, it wasn't over 100 feet to the bridge and we'd be on it see. And boy by gosh the engineers were running across flagging us off you know flagging us off to beat heck and he was running across the road to the buildings on my right there so we went right straight by right around the corner, the next right hand corner, right there where these buildings was, and believe me, they blew the bridge.. the Adolf Hitler Bridge, and boy it really.. we knew what happened. We had about a half of block between us, we took that right there so we was well protected right around the corner, all those brick houses there you know. Boy they blew that bridge sky high. So that was the end of the Rhine crossing at that time for us. We moved down south and they told us we were going to cross down there lower.. we crossed the Ruhr River and we would make a Roermond I don't know if you heard of Roermond and Julich or not. There is a town named J-u-L-I-c-h, Julich It was right down there on the Ruhr R-U-H-R Ruhr, and we was going to make the attack that way and then cross the Rhine which we did later on. But we got down there and they said now we're getting a rest here. We're going to have a break and get reinforcements and supplies and they told us right out you can have about six days off, relax, do what you want to do, oh my gosh, the guys wanted to play cards and everything really good news but he says Woko we got a job for you. I got it again, you know, then he says, later on they called me in, well you got to make a run, I can show you the papers in there that I got to make a run where it shows the conditions and periodic reports. Every night I had to head for the general command post D2 and deliver the reports on the front along the action that took place and the prisoners and all that stuff all along the front. And so I located.. I had a little trouble locating it at first you know back at the command post. They had.. you had to use your instinct you'd go someplace where there was supposed to be a town wasn't there no more was all blowed up, you lucky if could find a sign hanging down with the name of the town on it you know and really I'll tell you I don't know how I found my way, I could never find it again, I don't know how I got around, I just don't know, I could never figure that out. Anyway I located them where they was located. And so I talked one of the guys into taking a run with me sometimes, I says why don't you take a run with me, ride shot gun, one of the guys in my outfit there, oh ok Woko and then he would never do it again, he wouldn't do it again, he says no sir

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

he says.. I'll tell you on that run we'd go and the guys were all jumpy and the German intelligence and they dropping some paratroopers or some such for intelligence purposes and it was real hectic there they couldn't figure why see. So and of course I had first hand knowledge of intelligence. This one deal here when they said you take the run and I got back there and try to get my buddy but hell you'd stop at these guard posts on the road or roadblocks and they'd think anybody out in the middle of the night especially if its raining or anything like that has to be the enemy, it has to be the enemy, it aint going to be.. no American would pull a stupid stunt like that they didn't realize there was activity all along the front at night you know communication back and forth it had to be that way because you couldn't do it in the daytime be seen and stuff so they'd stop you and if it was the infantry they'd usually have the rifles with the bayonets on them and they'd stick them over and they'd slap the flat part of your cheek with the flat part of the bayonet just like this here and then have the point right here by your Adams apple see boy I had a 45 underneath this combat jacket and it would be all cocked.. and everything and I'd be waiting there and they'd ask me the password. You had to know the password, the password came out about 3 o'clock everyday right about that time. If you went out someplace without knowing the password it could be life and death that easy. So I'd give them the password but I'd be waiting for the countersign and say what's the countersign you know they had to have the countersign then if they didn't know the countersign that was it I'd squeeze the trigger see. Several times I had my hand was tightening up because they was pulling that stuff.. pull that bayonet slap me on the side of the face and stuff like that and aggravate me and I'd usually tell them I'd get mad see and they.. they never knew I had the 45 at their chest you know. Cause I'd say well knock off the BS, I'd say it pretty rough you know but it was a critical situation all the time getting through because the Germans had laid traps you know they stopped vehicles on the side of the road just like guards and killed Americans or anything that was just part of the war you know so it was tough enough. So to top it off the German's were getting intelligence.. picking up for the Battle of the Bulge for the big counterattack see. Well I had went.. before that previously they sent me down to G-2 Division of General Intelligence to pick up Lieutenant John Bausch and he was to go.. I was supposed to bring him back to the outfit and he was a Dutch army lieutenant and he was in full uniform when I got there. Bright robin egg blue, well I had to take him down the road where a sniper had taken two shots at me two days before see and I just hated to do that because he stood out.. you could see him a half a mile away you know but I did I went down and I got him back to the outfit. And they says now Woko take S-3 that's supply, and fix him up with a uniform, a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenants uniform and make sure you get the bars for him and I went down and fixed him up. Well he was a member of the Dutch underground you know and so I went with him to the meetings a couple of meetings, the underground meetings of the resistance fighters in Holland see, and at each one of the meetings he'd tell me, I couldn't understand all the stuff what they was talking about. I'd sit there and drink coffee and smoke cigarettes. I tell you it'd just about kill me right there and so anyway he'd come back and tell me all lies, all lies. He'd say, Dutch SS.. the Dutch SS were the collaborators working for the German SS you know. The two times I went with him that's the way it was. So now events were happening pretty fast so then when they sent me down there to take those reports in you know the periodic reports, G2, well like I said I had a guy go with me and later I was going by myself. This one time I went down I had already taken about four trips and I come in and and they would.. I'd gone down about four times and I'd cross this bridge in southern Holland a wooden bridge and there was about five men on it and they told me at first they was Dutch Resistance Fighters, underground see. And I had no reason to doubt that. One of them guys was real nice he spoke perfect

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

English, real nice, heck I'd talk to him and we'd talk about fishing like that and the other guys would stand around and wouldn't say nothing. But I thought boy I'm going to get acquainted with that guy and after the war we're going to get together that was my plan and what a nice guy and each night I'd come in about four nights and he'd say Private Woko how are you doing today and I'd, Private Woko, you know first name, you know, this is a nice guy you know, well the last day on the run, I was at S-2 getting my orders and he says oh by the way Woko we have to tell you something, you know where we cross the river down there, well it ain't much of a river it looks more like a creek to me he says well, several officers come in, he said well the Dutch underground will have a roadblock there at that bridge. I says well that is nothing new, I says, they've been there every night all week and they looked at each other and laughed you know and I thought what's so funny about that you know. They says well Woko we have to tell you that wasn't the Dutch underground it was the Dutch and German SS. They been stopping me you see, that's what they were. I got mad a little bit you know, well they said Woko, I know how you, I knew you was going to get mad, but you was probably safer than you think because they didn't want to reveal who they were but now we know who they were. Well that night I went to D2, I come back and they was, I'd met the new guys on my way to the bridge, they were different guys and they couldn't speak as good of English and so I went and I was coming back and I wasn't far from that bridge and I could hear a rumble I couldn't figure the jeep was just idling a four cylinder you know and I was going along there and it was dark always dark, I could see in the dark, I liked that dark, and so I could hear that rumble and by gosh it seemed like it was louder and lower and higher and I stopped the jeep right in the middle of the road and I got out and I got down as you normally would and I put my ear against the wet it was wet.. cold.. the stones you know, and boy I could hear it, I could hear the rumble and they was tanks on the move and we'd encountered this a few times on patrol. When we didn't know where the German's was and our front was fluid you know and the Germans would be here and several hundred here and several hundred here, tanks all over that's the way it was all over in France and Belgium. Anyway I could hear a rumble and then I could tell it was getting louder all that time. I thought Jesus what could be coming and heading southeast. Coming down from, the north, you know heading southeast. It couldn't be our tanks. I was aware.. I was close enough to intelligence to know I even had the papers, it wasn't our troops and by gosh the Germans wouldn't come through, they'd have to break through our lines and I hadn't heard of no big battle, I was close enough to hear you know. So I thought I'm going to leave that jeep right there in the middle of the damned road I didn't know where to go to anyway, there was a creek running right down parallel to the road ones that they was on the bridge where they come down wasn't very far from where that creek was. So I went and got my.. took my hand grenades.. took my extra hand grenades out of the jeep and I loaded up and put my stuff and my map tube didn't have that much with me. And I got up, there was a little stone wall, next to the bushes in the road and I got up to that and put one foot over the stone wall so I'd be ready to go fast and I had to wait and identify them before I run, because by chance it might be Americans or something and they was getting closer and closer you know where I could hear them I didn't have to have my ear to the ground and a lot of them and a lot of tanks and then by gosh I thought I'd better head out now I don't want to crowd my luck and get down there next to that creek I can go across the creek and they wouldn't get me at all you know down there. I could get around good in them places you know. I had one leg over the wall and then I heard something, It was a noisy squeak and squawk. They'd run into a rough spot up there in the road evidently artillery tore it up a little bit. It was the bogey wheels of Shermans. They make a squeak and squawk. They make more noise you can always tell them by

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

them Bogey wheels and that's what it was. There was no mistake in my mind because I never did like the squeak and squawk from them Sherman tanks. So I though by gosh its Shermans it had to be so I waited there. And I saw flashlights flashing back and forth, they was walking them through the officers and stuff. It was tanks and I could see them and they got down to my jeep, and of course I could hear them talking and I knew they was American, and I heard them sya here's a jeep 2<sup>nd</sup> armored division, what in the hell is that doing here they said and I said over here, I said, you know, over here. They couldn't figure out what I was doing here, they finally identified me and they were a real swell bunch of guys. It was the 7<sup>th</sup> armored division heading south for the battle of the Bulge, heading for the Ardennes And I didn't even know they'd attacked and they told me all about the attack. They told me the German's broke through at Ardennes and that they were going down there and they were right up by us just a little north of us see and I thought they didn't say anything to me when I left the command post you know must have really been keeping it a secret, but anyway they hauled out the coffee, big canister, tankards of coffee you know in five gallon cans. Boy I couldn't move. I was blocking the road as a matter of fact I pulled into the brush as far as I could get next to that wall, they asked me to do that, but they were a swell bunch of guys. All from the 7<sup>th</sup> armored division and we had something in common because we'd seen them around in the battles before. So I was there until 4 something just breaking daylight until the end of them could go by. It wasn't the whole unit it was the advanced unit and they was going for the battle down there but when I got back to my outfit then about daylight they said they was getting ready says we would be moving south. Before long a couple of days we had some more stuff we had to get real bad you know so then we moved south into the battle down there.

Now what we did was this we got down there, it was about 100 miles we had to go through the snow, we seen a lot of these flying bombs going over you know, they sound about like the Model-T running on one cylinder you know and we wanted to shoot them down but they wouldn't let us do it cause it would disable them and they would fall close to us you know and we stopped in the snow there and had dinner I remember that.. when they come over a lot of them that time without. Then we went down there into Belgium and we stopped and had a command post set up but we was right in line of them flying bombs, they was shooting in another direction. Liege Or someplace in Belgium. Liege was always getting it so we had to move because if they'd run a little short of gas or one another they'd go on us, it was too close as it was, boy they were really you could see the explosions and everything and hear them so we moved out of the line. The next day we started moving east. Field Marshall Montgomery was put in charge of allied defenses in the Bulge, so but Montgomery said absolutely we was not to attack yet see. So we were ready to go we were rested up we were just keen like razor sharp soldiers and we were battle hardened soldiers I mean we had lots of training, lots of battles and so we said anytime you leave an army like that sit it's the worst thing you can do. If they are ready to fight put them in combat. So anyway we started advancing in, we were headed for the northern spearhead of the German counter attack was heading for the Meuse River. And they was on the north end of the attack. It was the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army, the German 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer army and so we headed for them. And we got out on the road and I remember the day we was there we was riding point I had to be riding point again that was the first one. We looked back and you can see them tanks like big giant snakes winding around through the snow you know behind you and ever so often they'd run up their engines when they had a chance to burn the carbon out of them you know. And they was winding around behind us and we stopped at this hill because the jeeps in front of us were stopped and they were looking over this ridge at the head of this little valley all snow covered and

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

everything was covered with snow there but there was some black timber below us there wasn't any snow on the trees but the black timber on the ridge there on the hill they were looking at that. And I looked with my glasses to see what the hell they were looking at. Then one guy from the jeep came up to me and said Woko look through your glasses and just look at one spot where you see snow and then see what crosses across that what object is coming across there because this whole timber was moving just like ants, just like looking at an ant pile, you couldn't pick out anyone. And so I looked and I couldn't tell what it was but I knew there was something there big, and a lot of them. So couple of Sherman tanks come up on the right just a few feet and boy they swung around and their guns dropped down you know cause it was downhill for them and they are just like logs started coming down threw up them rooster tails in the snow you know real impressive you know. So just about that time then they pulled up there.. looked down the lower part of that valley they were coming out of the valley into the snow we seen some men come out and by God I think they identified us before we did them. They come out and was waving their hands and yelling.. and they was the army that the Germans had pushed back and they was retreating and that was the most glorious moment of the whole war right then. It was the most inspiring. They come out thousands of them came out of the timber and they was cheering giving us three cheers one right after the other they come up by us and each one that came by us had to shake hands shake our hands.. and there was tears in there eyes and we'd shake hands with them and the only thing they'd say to us was give them hell... give them hell. They'd see that's the hell on wheels outfit they'd say, give them hell and they even.. you never seen a more braver bunch of guys than them guys the way they come out some of them didn't have no guns they throwed them away they was too weak to carry them and they'd come out and one guy I'll never forget him he was wearing a stove pipe chimney sweep hat one of those black tube things and he had his helmet under his arm and he would get out where the snow was packed where the guys were stepping on it and he must have been from Brooklyn New Jersey and he'd do a little jig and then take a big bow, then tip that hat down and make a bow and he did that all the way up that valley ever so often you know and let me tell you something we was ready we had a strange feeling just like we was floating on clouds and we was heading for battle and there was no army and we felt this way in the world that could stand against us that's how we felt, we felt like we were just floating. And we were armed to the teeth and inspired 100% for battle. Now even the battle hardened soldiers that went through a lot of campaigns in North Africa and Sicily and all of us when them soldiers come up with tears in their eyes we had tears in our eyes too there were tears on our cheeks and if that ever goes down in history there was never a more glorious moment than that to see a retreating army and then right there we were their saviors they could sleep that night. we told them you guys can sleep tonight cause they knew damned well we'd be between them and the Germans. They'd lost all there.. I seen one jeep and it had a bent axle it was going like this. And so we did, we hit that 5th Panzer army and we turned them 2<sup>nd</sup> Panzer division was one of the members of that.. we fought them in France at St. Lo. Then on Christmas Eve night, I'll tell you another miracle.. Christmas Eve night, we'd lost contact after we hit the Germans.. we lost contact with the Germans. Then we was in this rock shelter in a little stone house like at the edge of a Belgium town. And there.. lets see.. seven of us in there and so there again it was Christmas Eve so I'd saved up a couple cans of pork loaf from my K rations. So we was in there with the sergeant and the sergeant says well I knew in that kind of case they don't sent me on patrols they need me and they needed me the next day to go on the other assignments you know, for liaison assignments and stuff like that with the other units involved in the attack and uh so.. we was in this shelter and it didn't have

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

windows in it, it had old linoleum on the floor you know the old fashioned linoleum and it wasn't laying flat it was all wrinkly and like that and it was cold it was below zero it was very cold in there but we.. I didn't feel cold, we had a tablecloth so we put a bench underneath the tablecloth and lit a couple candles under there and we had a little old primus stove you know. Took it off the halftrack and brought that in. And so the sergeant come back in he'd been down to the command post and he says well, we're going to send out a patrol we gotta go out on patrol. He says, Woko, you and he told this other guy stay here. We're going to go, the sergeant and four other men, we don't have to, this is not a combat patrol, we got to get a hold of a body, get a hold of a prisoner, to find out the score on the Germans. Where were they and how strong they were and all this you know. Normally I figured.. I assumed the way the rock shelter was. Usually if the German's were up above us they'd have their Panzer Grenadiers would be spread along the edge, they'd have their listening posts below that, and then back in the timber a ways would be the tanks. So I figured that is what they'd have to go through and I told them that maybe they can pick up a guy that uh a jar of change, guard or something, heading for one of the listening posts and bring him back that maybe it'd be a little easier you know. Well they took off and we'd wait there and then it was gettin late dark, I figured they should be back and opened up the door a little bit and we'd hear machine guns and.. I'll tell you it was so realistic you could hear machine guns but there was no machine guns, it was snowing steady, there was no machine guns, but you're imagination and you knew they'd be into battle and you expect it so much you'd be hearing machine guns all the time. But anyway and so finally I don't know how many times we went to the door, we'd douse the candle, it was underneath and it didn't put out much light it was down you could walk in the door and almost not see it you know so we'd go to the door and by gosh we finally we heard some thumping at the door and in they'd come. Well they didn't say nothing and so right now I expected them to say something, so I said well.. what in the hell happened, well you wouldn't believe it Woko if we tell you, well I wouldn't huh, well what happened, well I'll tell you, we went out and by God we ran into a German patrol, ten men.. and they captured us.. took our weapons and then turned us loose, and then they come back. They couldn't be bothered with us they says they had their hands full and they knew it was Christmas Eve and it was a gift so the sergeant he left and went to get weapons for the guys and that's Christmas Eve 1944. So we fought through there and I had the opportunity a couple of times why I played a part in each battle.

The pleasure in the fight to me was if you could save a life. I knew you had to fight to protect yourself and to protect the other guy you know your buddies but we was at Mormont, Belgium And we was going to attack another town up a ways and I was going to be on the first bunch that go into the town so the guys come around and says Woko would you if you get to town for God's sake get us something with a roof, a shed, anything, with something over our heads because everybody was freezing their feet and everything like that, it was a bad time. I says I'll do what I can. I'll be up there first so we started going up a steep hill to this little mountain town and the road saddling.. saddled steep and dropped off to the right side on the high side of the road dropped off to an icy bluffy canyon right down masses of ice and everything and we was up there and we kept sliding to the left. With the halftrack we was on the high side and we stayed up there but there was a tank on my left coming up and I already seen a Sherman slide down to the little part of the road and he made it up when he got to the rocks and stuff. But this other tank was sliding and I was watching him because it was a nice tank a newer model and he had a flash hider on the end of the barrel which the other tanks didn't have and it was a streamlined model and the barrrel didn't look like it was more than a 57 millimeter you know. And I thought well God new tank they must have, I was looking for a tank with a 90

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

millimeter bigger than the German's you know so I was watching waiting for him to go because I knew it was so steep that our guns were pointing up like this and he wouldn't be able to drop his barrel and line it up until you get up on top and then he could line his barrel up with the target. I was sitting in the halftrack watching him, concentrating on the tank and I heard an awful scream a blood curdling scream, it was a death scream, and I looked at the same time over my shoulder like this and right by the half.. well just 20 feet from the halftrack was a woman standing right at the high part of that bluff where it dropped off. Of course I didn't even see all this I just saw her standing there holding her bicycle. And I jumped off the halftrack and I lit on the hard stuff, I remember it was jarring on my feet, but I was to her in about a second and I grabbed the bike and pulled it back over. She had a sack of corn behind the seat on the bike and she wasn't a big woman and the baby was sitting in the basket on the handlebars and she was losing it. You know how it is when you hold and get no footing at all and going overboard, and she was screaming, she'd have lost everything down that canyon and I naturally she'd have killed her baby and probably herself you know, by God I grabbed a hold of her.. and I felt awfully strong and pulled her back up and got her started away from that edge you know and by God she was crying hysterically and I remember she threw her arms around me and kissed me thanking me and then the guys yelled, Woko, we're moving and we started up see into this village. Well, the fighting didn't last too long and I was looking for a spot for the guys and I seen I was at the far end of the town, first one up there see, we were at the outskirts, the German's were gone then they'd already retreated we'd already pushed them out. And then I thought well I'd better go back down, I had to find a place and I could see already that other troops were filling up all the sheds, they had their shoes off already, and their feet was wrapped in bandages and stuff like that and there was one house that set right over in the middle of this field, it must have been the mayor up there. Most of them didn't have a house like that. He had a big picture window there and it was made out of brick sitting right out in this open spot and houses all around. I thought well this must be the town leader evidentially. I got over there and by then there were four dead German's in it and they were frozen and the machine gun was sitting right by the window and a sandbag there and they'd chopped a hole in the hardwood floor, two of them, down there and two of them on top and I couldn't haul them out and make room for my buddies in there you know. They were too heavy as heavy as I was you know. So I went back up by the road then and my buddy was there with a halftrack, there were only three of us. And so I went and there was a house sitting there and it was all boarded up and I had looked at that thing and it just didn't look like.. it was boarded up, ramshackle looking two story house you know all boarded up and by God I went over let's try this, it's the last place I told my buddy and we went into the door way expecting German soldiers you know and looked at the foot of the stairs coming down right there right and there was a German machine gun belt and ammunition so I knew they had been there so I says you take the upstairs and clear it and I could hear him up there clearing and I'll clear the downstairs. So I went in the kitchen area and I couldn't see much. I had some German flashlights we'd capture all the time we'd throw them away they were square about four inches square and we'd throw them away and I always kept several in my pocket you know. So I went over to the door in the far end of the room and I opened up the door and I thought well I'll throw a grenade in and I thought Jesus..then I'll ruin everything if we have a good place to sleep you know. So I opened up the door and I shined my light around and to my left was a stove in the corner and to the right was a bed sitting there laying there, a long cot you know, and something laying on it, something on there and I could tell something.. it was a body, that's all that could make that kind of shape you know, a blanket over it so I went over and I didn't see



## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

any breathing you know and I stood off for awhile. And I got right up close to it and I didn't see no breathing and I pulled back and there was a dead civilian laying there, dead see, stone dead I think he was half frozen. He was all frozen but we thawed him out when we built a fire in that stove I'll tell you. And then so I went down to get the rest of the guys and said this was our spot so I went down along the way and I seen them they was in a shed down there and I says by God come up the hill I got a spot up here, we got a big pot bellied stove and boy lots of wood. I checked on the wood see and there was cords of wood stacked out there. It was snowing all the time and I knew there was some bodies stacked in the cords of wood you know piles of them and they'd been snowed on already, it was snowing all the time, so anyway but a couple of piles were wood. So anyway I got the guys and they had a young German soldier laying up against the wall there by them and I said well what are you going to do with him and you know they didn't have nobody collecting prisoners you had to take care of them for awhile so.. and one guy was always quick on the trigger anyway he says take him out behind the shed and shoot him before we leave, I said wait a minute, I was a private but believe me I was the most independent private you've ever seen, I mean nobody bullied me around I don't care who they was. What I thought was right my convictions.. by God I stood up for them. He says he's got a pair of GI boots on anyway,. Well hell if you didn't have any shoes on and if you get a chance for the enemy shoes you'd be a damned fool not to. Anyway he has GI boots on so I went over and looked him over and he was looking up at me and I took my foot and stretched his legs out pulled them out there so I could see his feet and he had GI boots on, but they were new, and I says well I says them boots are new, that is a sign you got them from a supply train he didn't get them from another GI see. And I says so I can't say he took them from a soldier. They came into town after I did so I asked him where are they collecting the prisoners at. He says right down as you come into town that church down there, its on fire, smoking but its not burning, the German soldiers were in it a bunch of them and up towards the pew the front end there where it comes up from the regular floor and it was burning there and they was keeping it going. Half the roof was gone but they still had a little shelter there and the heat and by gosh I says ok I'm taking him down there. I says I'll be right back and I'll tell you them where we are and I took him down there and after he got down there he appreciated it I could see it in his eyes, after I got down there and the other prisoners there and you could see it, his eyes they didn't look very good at first he might have been able to understand when they was going to kill him you know. WellI had good feeling that night, I slept down by the wall there by the heater and the dead guy was laying over there, but you now I had saved three lives that day and that is a better feeling than anything. I saved his and I saved that woman and the baby.

And when we come out a funny thing happened, when we cleared that house in the first place I got over to the door and my buddy was coming down the stairs and I heard a squeak and I happened to have my revolver in my pocket, I had it in my pocket like this and I pulled out the revolver automatic 32 and I looked over across the room and there was somebody standing there and they was real white in the face and I thought Jesus Christ where were they when I come in, it was a women, and then I looked.. underneath the stairwell there was a door in the corner a natural place for it to be and it went down in the cellar. The whole family was downstairs. The dad was down there but he was wounded real bad and he died and then that was the grandpa up there and this girls dad was down there. And so we got some potatoes down there, they had plenty of them. I got a kick. I really enjoyed it. The guys come and fixed a big meal. They even bummed some bacon from the supply sergeant and they cooked all this stuff up and made pancakes and then they come right in and served it to me. I got a big kick out of that, just a good thank you

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

you know it. So further on after we moved in we went up on the hill the German's had moved and they had a burial there. The whole hill was covered with crosses, real ornamental crosses, they were usually white boards with black lettering you know, most all of it Maltese crosses and all that stuff, they are shaped like that iron cross is you know, they was a whole bunch of them dead ones up there, they'd buried them in that hard ground up there.

We moved on and this was all the Battle of the Bulge fight. They told us there was a ridge up ahead of us. German's had this ridge and it was really cold, it was really cold. They says well you guys if you can capture that ridge by tonight you'll have a warm place to sleep. How's that. Hell, the German's leave you can have their dugouts, and so that is an after thought you know, but that's what happened we did. The German's moved out ahead of us and by God we put enough pressure on them so they pulled out. We chased them off of the ridge and so we moved in up there and nobody notified anybody that we was further than they expected us to be. We was all on this side hill and the command post was up there. I didn't know at the time where it was but I found out later on where it was. They said well.. I got out right away and the snow was two feet deep anyway or better and I had to get down to the ground but the ground was frozen solid and I was going to get the shovel and the pick off the halftrack which I did a lot of times. I could dig faster than those little entrenching tools you know. And it was solid. I'll tell you right now. I got down to the ground level and (inaudible). Well the German's started shelling us in between and hurried us along, we was trying to dig a hole the rest of.. I was foolish I made a mistake I should have went right for one of them dugouts right off the bat but the troops are jammed in there and everybody is breathing and half the air you breathe is carbon dioxide from somebody else's breathe see.. and I can't stand close quarters I got to have my back to the wall and the front open, that's just the way I always was. So they filled up, everybody filled them dugouts up they was just jammed full and so here I was out there in the cold, I never seen nobody else out there and I was moving around. They shelled us there for a while there and then they stopped so I was in earnest to get my whole dug and I couldn't make it. I chiseled down about 2" and I couldn't make it in that hard ground. I went to see the demolitions man, we'd pulled a few escapades before, TNT you know, and I was no blaster or demolitions man, but I'd taken enough training in it you know that I could do it but I got a couple blocks of TNT off of him. He said now remember, make sure you set up everything before you touch those wires to the halftrack battery. OK, I got down and I packed snow on that thing, I thought boy oh boy I'll have a nice little hole here. I can at least get my feet in, get it started and get down where the ground was soft you know I could dig some more. Boy, I set that charge off and it was just dusk you could still see a distance visibility was still you could see a little way. And blam that thing went off and I goes off and I go over.. boy I was surprised because them German's seen that little spiral of smoke come up and they let go of their artillery again. I didn't tell anybody that, I kept that to myself. I'd get really chewed out if I mentioned that you know. We thought things were about gone. I didn't know what was going to happen now. I was just stumped the German's got a few rounds in they didn't do much that time and then heavy shelling started coming in again and they were air bursts exploding over your head and I thought Jesus. Earlier I thought when them shells come in you know they hit the ground the German shells.. laterally they'd go off and shrapnel would have to go through a wall of snow on each side slow it down so it wasn't affective you know like that. And even if it blowed up chunks of frozen dirt it still wouldn't hurt you much unless it hit right close to you. So the shells started coming in and they hit down below me, it was overhead and I could hear the shrapnel hitting the ground and they started walking them up the ridge. And hear again I heard something wrong, I heard the

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

guns going back, they was coming from American lines, they was coming the other direction. It was a crystal clear night and I could hear them and see the flashes going off back in our lines. They didn't know that we had captured that ridge and I started up the hill to try and find the command post because they was right over us, right over me, and I'll tell you it was a risky business and I figured I was going to get it any time. And I got up to the first dugout and I says where is the command post, where is the command post. And it was just like the guys were all down in there the mouth of the.. the throat of that hole were it went down it was all.. the frost was that thick from their breaths you know. A couple of guys just had their feet down there so they wouldn't freeze inside of that. I don't see how them other guys could breathe. They was in the dugout. I went straight up the hill, straight up the hill, got up to another dugout. I says where is the command post, where is the command post, you know hard, and they thought the damned shells were coming from the German's see and they says, lieutenant, man up here says we're getting shelled by our own artillery, I told the guy. I says them air bursts are from our own guns, and he says this man up here says the artillery is coming from our own lines. Ah he says, Jesus Christ that's a lot of baloney. I says Lieutenant I says come up here right now and see for yourself and boy he come up there and just about that time it was good timing and boom boom boom back in our lines and then the shells exploded. God damnit sure enough. Down that hole he went down inside there and I could hear that crank box you know rrrrr rrrrr rrrr boy he was really turning that thing up. I just left and went right back down to the hole I started and a strange thing happened. My dad told me if you go to sleep when you're real cold you just don't wake up no more see. In Colorado I was out in 50 below zero and he used to tell me never sit down and get comfortable. This was a case I felt so warm, I sat down, I wrapped a blanket around my feet and my boots and I opened my laces a little bit and lay back against the snow and I thought Jesus. I felt warm, I felt real warm, I felt just perfect, and I thought well hell what difference does it make you know. I thought I remembered what my dad said if you go to sleep when you're well you don't wake up no more. I thought well it didn't make a hell of a lot of difference to me, I thought well I feel good now, I don't care what happens later and believe me I slept like a log and don't tell me somebody wasn't watching over me I'll tell you. I woke up in the morning and I could hear the tanks and halftracks starting up around and I was fine. I think I froze my feet there, but they didn't have no feeling in them anyway so they didn't hurt any. So after that the guys told me, I told them about the first lieutenant, I didn't know who he was I said in fact I didn't know which command post it was I didn't recognize any of my officers he said yeah we know all about that there's a lieutenant that is going to get the medal for that he's going to get a medal for stopping the friendly fire, it was all over. I didn't say anything I said I'm the one that did it though. And we went and whipped the.. you know, we finished the Battle of the Bulge and moved back then went over to the Roer River and we attacked across at Roer Monde and a little place named Jülich, it was a medieval fortresses of Jülich I don't know if you've heard of it, walls were twelve foot thick, well we captured that and they put up a pretty good fight, we captured that and it was a supply depot, a German supply depot, and they had cheese, tubes of cheese in it and God was that stuff good. And so we got pretty well cheesed up I mean we loaded up on cheese and then we went over to the Rhine and we run into a Volkswagen plant, that made Volkswagens, those little bugs you know, and boy everybody had them a Volkswagen, I don't know how many got cracked up and got killed though. I mean the whole division, you know I mean they was going down the streets and they was so loaded down with soldiers that you could see a string of sparks behind them just like they were jet propelled you know. They put a stop to that right away. We captured them big towns like Düsseldorf and Mülheim and

## Frank Wokojance

Tape 2 of 3

Essen and Dortmund and all those big towns. And Cologne were I seen that Cathedral that famous cathedral. And then we went up and before we crossed the Rhine we hit a winery up there that made wine. Boy we went down and took our cans, there were three kinds of wines I was telling the guys, I didn't know much about wine, but I knew what my Dad.. used to make a little wine, he was an Austrian you know. So we filled three cans, five gallon cans full. Dumped the water out and then we took the other cans and we ended up somebody took the other cans down and got their wires crossed and filled them up full of wine. There we was all, we had was gasoline and wine and we had to drink wine for I don't know how many days there until we could get some good purified water you know but we had to drink it when we were thirsty, had to drink a little swallow wine. I got tired of it though I didn't want any more wine after that, we crossed the Rhine at about 2 something in the morning, I think it was 2:30. We were making the bridgehead, well the English was always up in the north doing something. They had a habit of shining floodlights at the clouds, and that'd give them light down below they'd bounce off the clouds. And it worked pretty good we didn't do it but we used their light sometimes you know.