

Note: Mr. Garofano's and Mr. Evans' names are verified; unable to determine if "Stroup" is correct for interviewee #3.

Interviewer: All three men served in the 502nd, served in the same platoon together.

Mr. Evans: G Company.

Interviewer: G Company. And, Mr. Garofano, could you tell me a little bit about your background, when you were born.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, boy. I was born in Saugus, Mass. April 29th, 1915.

Interviewer: Were your parents immigrants, were you second generation?

Mr. Garofano: My parents were both from Italy, mother and father, they came over when they were children.

Interviewer: Mr. Evans, when was your birthdate and some of your background?

Mr. Evans: My birthdate was November 11th, 1915.

Interviewer: Mr. Stroup?

Mr. Stroup: I'm the youngest of the group. I was born 1920 in Edmon, Pennsylvania, which is his home (gesturing to Mr. Evans).

Interviewer: Did you have a military upbringing, or did you have a farmer's upbringing? What kind of work was your parents taking to?

Mr. Garofano: My father was a pattern shoe cutter – he made patterns for shoes, and that's what he did all his life.

Interviewer: So the Great Depression never did affect you all much?

Mr. Garofano: The Great Depression, it was bad. We'd just built a new house. The banks folded up, we had a hell of a time, a hard time to support the house and the family. Had it rough. Can I go on?

Interviewer: Yes. Go ahead.

Mr. Garofano: All right. I get out of high school, I didn't graduate high school – one year enough, I joined the CCC, the Civilian Conservation Corp – I don't know if you remember that. I went in the woods, I went to Montana for six months, Bozeman, Montana. In six months they shipped me back to Massachusetts to (Broomfield?) Mass., where we got thirty dollars a

month. Twenty-five dollars we sent home, five dollars we kept a month for ourselves. Then after I come back, there was still no work anywhere, anywhere, everybody's looking for jobs, I joined the merchant marine, I made two trips in the merchant marine, oil tankers. Then I got a job in (indiscernible). In the meantime I had joined the National Guard, I was in the Combat Engineers. Then I got that job in the (idiscernible) and the war broke out while I ws still working. I had to leave the job in the (?) and from '39 on I was in the service. From National Guard, then went into the Airborne, I transferred to the Airborne when they first started it. There was no division, no 82nd, no 101st, just a couple of battalions. That where we met, the whole bunch of us.

Interviewer: Mr. Evans, could you set there and tell me of some of the work that you did before the war and how your life was affected by the Great Depression?

Mr. Evans: Well, my dad come from Wales, he had a trade in the tin mill and came over and got another job in the tin mill over here, then there's the Depression and he had to move around the area, you know , for different jobs, because of the tin mills going down, and I graduated from high school in '33 and I got a job in the steel mill. And I worked there, we were making shells for France. And so they capitulated and they put an expert in all that equipment, so I was eligible for draft then. And I was drafted...

Interviewer: The mill closed because of...?

Mr. Evans: Well, some parts of it closed, due to the hard times. That was before the war started.

Interviewer: What kind of money did you make in the mill? Do you remember?

Mr. Garofano (laughing): A few peanuts.

Mr. Evans: When I started in the mill, I made \$2.75 an hour. Working 10 hours. I was making five cents an hour more than the labor. I was the clerk. But that didn't last too long, because I got drafted after that.

Interviewer: And Mr. Stroup, what kind of background workwise did you have?

Mr. Stroup: I was pretty much like Frank (Garofano). I went into the CCC. Stationed at Virginia, and then I left there and went to Arizona. And, surprising , we had a volunteer, we had reserve officers, were commanders of those units.

Mr. Garofano: We did too.

Mr. Stroup: We did close-order drill, voluntarily, after duty hours, to learn.

Interviewer: So you're doing military acts, while you're in...

Mr. Stroup: Volunteer, it was volunteer. That's when the draft first started.

Interviewer: So this was after the draft, this was about what time?

Mr. Stroup: This was in '39. And so I learned a little bit about close-order drill then. But I got out of there and I went to work for my uncle, who was a roofer and tinner, and Bill was making a damn fortune compared to me, because I only made 40 cents an hour and then war broke out...(laughing)

Mr. Evans: I was working for a bigger outfit than you were.

Mr. Stroup: The war broke out and Bill and I went to, actually we went to Fort Meade, Maryland. And then from Maryland we went to Camp (Merrill?) Georgia, took our basic, joined Airborne, went to Fort Benning, jump school together, end up in the same company together, and fought in the whole war together.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you were at and what you were doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, I remember. We were on our way back from (maneuvers?). I was in the National Guard at the time. And we were down in Rhode Island when we heard the news that the war had broke out. Our base was – Camp Bed was Massachusetts – I was in the National Guard then. We were going back when we got the news, we were in Rhode Island at the time. And we went back to (Edwards?). From Edwards I transferred out into the Airborne, I seen a big ad in the Recreation Building, join the Paratroops, more exciting, more money and all this, and I said, that's for me, and off I went.

Mr. Evans: You got rich, eh? (laughter)

interviewer: Mr. Evans, where were you at at the time of Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Evans: Well, when Pearl Harbor started, I was working in the steel mill. And when that come out - well, where the hell's Pearl Harbor? I didn't know anything about Pearl Harbor, I'd never been out of Pennsylvania. No way I knew where Pearl Harbor was.

Interviewer: Now, Mr. Stroup, where were you at?

Mr. Stroup: I was at home, I believe it was Sunday morning at that particular time, in December '41. And it was just two months later I was in the service.

Interviewer: Now, with you two, Mr. Stroup and Mr. Garofano, you were in the CCC together so you all actually - was that the first time you had actually travelled, outside of your state or outside of your town?

Mr. Garofano: It was the first time I was outside the state. I went to Bozeman, Montana, like I said, and back to Brookfield, Mass.

Interviewer2: What about the tankers?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, that was after I came back from the CCC. I was on board tank - I got my papers as merchant seaman, made two trips and that was it.

Interviewer: So you actually got to travel a little bit before the war, right?

Mr. Garofano: I didn't travel much, I was on board at sea, all the time, on the ship. The only travel I made was when I was in the CC's. Outside of that, just aboard ship, going to Texas, Corpus Christi, Texas.

Interviewer: Mr. Stroup?

Mr. Stroup: I was rather fortunate when I was in the C's, because I got stationed in Arizona and while I was in the C's, I hitchhiked into Los Angeles, San Diego, spent a week on the floor of the Grand Canyon...

Mr. Garofano: Oh, you had a ball.

Mr. Stroup:.. stuff like that. (nods), while I was out in Arizona. As a matter of fact when I got discharged from the CCC's, I hitchhiked back to Pennsylvania. In those days, you could stick out your thumb and get a ride.

Mr. Garofano: That's right, that's right.

Mr. Evans: Anybody'd pick you up.

Mr. Garofano: I hitchhiked a trail up from Broomfield back to Boston and all those trailers that carry cars? I was going up a hill, I jumped on it and I opened one of the doors and got in the car. Went all the way to Boston with it.

Interviewer: From there, you were in the National Guard? Now, how exactly did you end up in the military? Did you enlist?

Mr. Garofano: How did I enlist in the National Guard?

Interviewer: Yeah, but from the National Guard, how did you get into the regular army?

Mr. Garofano: I just transferred over. I didn't transfer...they...I just...I just asked for a transfer.

Mr. Evans: They did it for you.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, they did it. I just asked for a transfer to the Airborne. Fortunately, I wound up in Benning. First I had to go to Devens and Camp (Croslin?). They shipped me all around the South before I got to Benning. At first, this other fellow and I, from the same town, they put us in Army Intelligence School. Can you beat that, putting us two in Army Intelligence.

Interviewer: Did you have to take a test for your transfer?

Mr. Garofano: ...this was at Camp (Crosby?) Yeah, and they (indiscernible) dot-dot-dash, all that baloney...oh, gee.

Mr. Evans: Morse Code, eh?

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, the Morse Code and reading maps for all these...oh, we tried to get out, but we finally did, we'd been about three weeks in it.

Mr. Stroup: When you were drafted, they put you through a series of aptitude tests to find out what you were suited for. I guess I was suited and Bill was suited for the infantry, 'cause that's exactly where we ended up.

Interviewer: Well, some of the guys, from what I understand, scored well on the intelligence tests, but to fill the bodies for the infantry, they went ahead and shipped them to there and sent them to Officer's School. Now, did you ever see that happen?

Mr. Evans: Ninety-day wonders.

Interviewer: Ninety-day wonders, was what they called the infantry?

Mr. Evans: No, the officers who went to training.

Mr. Stroup: OCS.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Mr. Garofano: Know why they put us in Army Intelligence, I think. We were both Italians, see, and we were at Edley at the time. I think they figured that they were going to use us over in Italy, somewhere.

Mr. Evans: (laughing) Interpreters.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, that's what I figured. That's what this other kid and I said.

Mr. Evans: Winetasters.

Interviewer: Now, Mr. Evans you were drafted?

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you were 1A?

Mr. Evans: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: What kind of status were you? Were you...

Mr. Evans: (laughing) I was in perfect health and when we couldn't make any shells or 105's for France, I was automatically pushed ahead. My number was 932, something like that. I had a little draft number. And I went, I didn't have any choice, you go.

Interviewer: About when did you get drafted?

Mr. Evans: '42, January '42.

Interviewer: And Mr. Stroup, how about you?

Mr. Stroup: Well, surprisingly, I tried to join the service in 1936. All the services put together, totaled about a half-million people, a half-million men. And they wouldn't take me - I was sixteen years old, but you could get in with consent.

Mr. Evans: Parental consent, yeah.

Mr. Stroup: So, I couldn't get in. I wasn't in a hurry to get into the service, but I got drafted in January. I was a picket fence then, when I retired I was still a picket fence.

Interviewer: And, after you got your transfer over into the Army, could you tell me some of the things you went through before you met these guys?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, boy, oh, boy. (laughing)

Mr. Evans: We straightened him out.

Mr. Garofano: I went through so many things, I don't know, I can't start to tell you. I don't know...(looking to others) Help.

Interviewer2: Give him a ballpark, what kind of things?

Interviewer: What kind of things as far as military stuff?

Mr. Garofano: I don't know - I'll tell you one thing. That was stupid in my estimation. We were up in the...oh, I'll tell you something that really happened to me that I'll never forget. We were going to Normandy. I was a grenadier, see, I used to shoot grenades from the rifle. We were on the plane, and I was supposed to be the number 5 man out of the plane. And on the way out I was supposed to trip the levers and release the bundles out of the planes, see? Well all my ammunition was all my grenades and so forth. And they jump with a rifle. The sergeant of my squad, Sgt. Clemons, he was supposed to be last man out of the plane. I was number 5. For some reason, he asked me if I'd change positions with him. 'Cause he said he wanted to be in the middle of the squad when he landed, so he'd be in the middle. So we swapped and Sgt. Joe never made it, he died. I think I heard he died on the jump. I jumped last. If I went off number 5, it could have been me that got killed instead of Joe. That's one episode.

Interviewer: You're talking about the Normandy drop? Which drop are you talking about, Normandy?

Mr. Garofano: Normandy. That's one thing. I could go on forever, telling different stories.

Mr. Stroup: I remember a story about Frank when somebody got the drop on him. Frank used to have a speech impediment, a slight stutter. And he approached me one night and told me he had a couple of hot dates in Fayetteville and would I like to join him.

Mr. Garofano: (laughing) Oh, Jesus.

Mr. Stroup: I says that's fine. So we pack it up - break restrictions!-go to Fayetteville and we met the girls -

Mr. Evans: That's North Carolina.

Interviewer: This was at basic training?

Mr. Stroup: No, Fort Bragg.

Mr. Garofano: I brought him out on a date.

Mr. Stroup: So, we get down to the train station where the girls are gonna meet us. And we start walking down the tracks - there was a one-way street one side of the tracks and one-way on the other side. We're walking along and all of a sudden some guy jumps out and he says, "There you are, you slut! And he goes "Bam! Bam!" and starts shooting. Hit the one gal in the leg, which is Frank's date...

Mr. Garofano: We weren't supposed to be out of camp, either!

Mr. Stroup: Well, we vamoosed pretty quick. The guy took off, the police came and they took the girl to the hospital and we went back to camp. That was our hot date.

Interviewer: This all happened before the war, during training?

Mr. Stroup: No, no, this is...

Interviewer: This is after the war?

Mr. Garofano: We were at Bragg at the time.

Mr. Evans: After jump training.

Mr. Garofano: After we graduated (indiscernible)

Mr. Stroup: This is the hot date that Frank and I had.

Interviewer: Would you all tell me something about things, the physical things you had to go through during your training, and how they prepared you for your jump school? Before jump school, not just jump school - we'll do that in a minute.

Mr. Garofano: During jump school?

Interviewer: Before jump school. All your basic training, the...

Mr. Garofano: We went through the regular infantry training.

Mr. Stroup: Thirteen weeks. They didn't have such a thing as AIT.

Mr. Garofano: And I went through that crazy school that they tried to get me in, you know, the intelligence school...but, we all had basic training. Thirteen weeks.

Mr. Stroup: We didn't have any special training prior to going to Airborne school.

Mr. Evans: They had to teach us how to march and everything. We were all practically civilians. We didn't know how to march in formation, four abreast, or two or one.

Mr. Garofano: No, no.

Mr. Evans: We didn't know anything about that, they had to teach you that.

Mr. Garofano: All our training, all the good training, was while we were in the Airborne. Boy, we learned everything, how to do everything.

Interviewer: Now, when actually did you three meet up together, or the two of you together - how did you actually meet in training?

Mr. Garofano: I think we all met together in the frying pan area.

Mr. Evans: (indiscernible) met in camp, we were in Georgia. We took basic training.

Mr. Stroup: (gesturing to Mr. Evans) We took basic together. Went to Airborne school together.

Interviewer: Mr. Garofano, how did you meet up with...

Mr. Garofano: No, we were all in the same outfit, I think, we all went to the frying pan area at one time.

Mr. Evans: Yep.

Mr. Garofano: We were all in the same group that graduated.

Mr. Evans: Same outfit.

Mr. Garofano: I mean, I didn't know them at the time, but we were all there at the...

Mr. Evans: You're all strangers when you come in there, right, and you got to get to know the guy, you don't wanna know this guy, you wanna know that guy, just like in college, there's some guys there you don't want no part of, the next guys you're buddies with them, it takes a while to get to know a guy.

Interviewer: What did you actually think of each other when you first met them? Mr. Garofano, what did you think of Mr. Evans before you met him?

Mr. Evans (laughing) He probably didn't know me.

Mr. Garofano: I didn't know him too much, but during the war, during all the time we were together, we became real close, real buddies. In fact, he was the closest friend I had.

Mr. Evans: You know what they say about magnets, two opposite poles attract, we were just attracted and got along good.

Mr. Garofano: If he was in trouble, I was in trouble with him, and vice-versa.

Mr. Evans: Up until now (laughs)

Interviewer: All of you took your Airborne school at Fort Benning, Georgia, right?

Mr. Stroup: Yes.

Interviewer: Now, you said you learned everything you needed to know at Airborne school - what were some of those things that you felt it was important to know before you went to the war?

Mr. Garofano: Well, we learned how to pack chutes - parachutes. We learned all about jumping, how you jump, and we done a lot of training- running and exercises and all kinds of...

Mr. Stroup: I think that was the biggest thing of all was the physical.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, training.

Mr. Evans: And getting used to your weapons.

Mr. Garofano: Long marches...

Mr. Stroup: Being in physical condition.

Mr. Garofano: Without one canteen of water, and so thirsty you would drink water from the ditch there where the dogs were marching along with us. We did a lot of marching, 28 miles a day or something like that or more.

Mr. Evans: I remember the frying pan area...

Mr. Garofano: Oh, terrible.

Mr. Evans: ...where we marched with gas masks on our face.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, that was terrible...

Mr. Stroup (shakes head in agreement)

Interviewer: How long would you have to march with the gas masks on?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, we'd go half an hour.

Mr. Evans: We'd go out and stick 'em on for a while...

Mr. Garofano: You could hardly breathe in them...

Mr. Evans: And you'd keep them on until he told you to take them off! We didn't get any choice.

Mr. Garofano: It was a tough thing, breathing in a gas mask while you're running and training.

Mr. Evans: You know, they were training us for war. That's how we were trained, was for war, I could kill somebody.

Mr. Stroup: Funny thing about it, when I look back on it, the people who were training you had no more idea of what was going on than you did.

Mr. Garofano: It was all new to them too.

Mr. Stroup: They were just as green as we were.

Interviewer: Now, the officers that were training you, were they - had they served in WWI or anything like that?

Mr. Stroup: Wwho do you think trained us? Sergeants. We didn't have officers training us.

Mr. Evans: Noncommissioned.

Mr. Garofano: There were all these nice, strong husky guys training us.

Mr. Stroup: Sergeants ran the Airborne school. Jump school. They had a commander, but they were the instructors.

Mr. Evans: They did the work.

Mr. Stroup: They did the work, totally. You didn't see an officer.

Mr. Garofano: I remember, after a day's work training, we were so tired and so - that we used to go to the PX - we used to buy those Coca-cola bottles, I think 10 cents a bottle, take and drink three of those bottles in no time flat. So thirsty and dry.

Mr. Stroup: When we went to jump school, we had flying staff sergeants flying our planes. They finally commissioned them as warrants then eventually commissioned as 2nd Lieutenants. But when we initially went in and did our jumping, we had flying staff sergeants.

Mr. Evans: Yeah, Airborne, it was a new thing then, to everybody. Even the people teaching it.

Mr. Stroup: And they had some terrifying - when I think back, the terrifying training...when we got pulled up - the 1933 Chicago World's Fair is where the tower started from, the 200 foot towers? Well's that's how Airborne got started in their training. They had one part of the training where you laid down on a gym mat, and they pulled you up...

Mr. Garofano: They strapped you first.

Mr. Stroup: ...just like this (raises flat palm upwards), and you're looking down from this mat.

Mr. Garofano: Horizontal.

Mr. Stroup: And that little mat finally becomes about the size of a postage stamp. 200 feet up in the air, you're looking straight down like that.

Interviewer: They let you horizontal flip? Face down?

Mr. Stroup: Just like that.

Mr. Evans: Yeah, looking down and down.

Mr. Stroup: And then you pull the ripcord, and you had a ball in your hand.

Mr. Garofano: You had to change hands.

Mr. Stroup: And you had to change hands.

Mr. Evans: You had to keep that ripcord and bring it in your hand and bring it back down with you.

Mr. Stroup: if you dropped it, they took you back up again. And this wasn't fun. And the instructor would be down..."Is that high enough?"..."That's plenty high Sarge". Further up you'd go..."Is that high enough?" Take you all the way to the top. Believe me, you were suspended by inner tubes, truck inner tubes, rubber inner tubes. That's was what broke your fall going down.

Interviewer: How'd they pull you up?

Mr. Stroup: Just like this (raising palm up)

Interviewer: Just rope and pulley? I mean, what kind of machinery did they use to get you up?

Mr. Garofano: They had a machine that...

Mr. Stroup: I don't know, I don't know.

Mr. Garofano: They had a machine that (moving hand in circles)

Mr. Evans: A pulley on it.

Mr. Garofano: I think it was a gasoline machine or something that lift you up.

Mr. Stroup: But they did away with that. Had a couple of fatalities. The inner tubes busted, so they did away with it.

Mr. Evans: During training, a lot of the fellows would break their legs. Never done - you know, on landing.

Interviewer: Did they practice the landings before they took you up in the towers?

Mr. Evans: Well, we would jump off of 15-foot platforms.

Mr. Garofano: That's it.

Mr. Evans: Then you'd have to hit the ground, you'd have to make a flip and tumble.

Mr. Garofano: They'd learn you how to fall when you landed, how to tumble.

Mr. Evans: Tumble to take the pressure off your legs and things, so you wouldn't break them.

Mr. Stroup: The Airborne eventually went to parachute landing falls, PLF. But when we went through school they taught you tumbling, you tumbled, either forward or backward...

Interviewer: Head over head?

Mr. Stroup: That's right.

Mr. Garofano: They're different today, they don't...

Mr. Stroup: No PLF, you tumbled.

Mr. Evans: And they'd use trampolines, too, for that.

Mr. Garofano: While we were in training there in the frying pan area, we were in tents and they made a night jump, and a couple of guys landed in the Chattahoochee River, I remember that.

Mr. Stroup: Four of them.

Mr. Garofano: You remember that?

Mr. Stroup: Four of them drowned.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, and they pulled the guys out, mud all over them, dead, drowned. They had just paved the road for us, the tents on either side, and I guess they thought that was the

river. And they missed that and, no they thought the other thing was the river, and they landed right in the river, see, not the road, they tried to hit the road, but they landed in the river.

Mr. Stroup: Chattahoochee.

Mr. Evans: The moon would be down there shining on that, and you'd think that was water, and it could be the cement highway.

Interviewer: Now, I understand you had to make five jumps to qualify as a parachutist.

Mr. Evans: Yeah. You packed your own chutes.

Interviewer: You packed your own chutes...

Mr. Garofano: The first five.

Interviewer: During your jumps, you talked about this one group making a night jump. Did you make a night jump in your training?

Mr. Evans: Yeah, a night jump, yeah.

Mr. Stroup: We, the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, was the first unit ever to make a night drop, which was in Robinson Field, on the Alabama side of Fort Benning and our commanding officer was George (Van Horn?) Moseley, Jr., and he was out there with a damn flashlight in his old Dodge - "Put them goddamn lights out! Put them lights out up there!" Everybody has those lights, trying to find the land, to come down.

Mr. Garofano: Called him the Yankee Colonel, up from (indiscernible).

Interviewer: (Indiscernible)

Mr. Stroup: Maybe June or July of 1942. The whole regiment made a night drop.

Mr. Evans: But, you didn't have a chance to get scared or anything. You stood up and when they put the green light on, you hooked up and out the door you went, one light after another.

Mr. Garofano: We were never afraid.

Mr. Stroup: Bill, you're mixed up. They didn't put the green light on until you were ready to go.

Mr. Garofano: The only time I was afraid...

Mr. Evans: We were always ready to go. We didn't need no red light.

Mr. Garofano: The only time I was afraid was when we were in foxholes. At nighttime, the mice and rats used to walk around and fall into your foxhole. They used to frighten me to death, the damn things.

Interviewer: So you all never were afraid of jumping out of a plane? Even after looking back, looking up, seeing what you just jumped out of?

Mr. Garofano: No, no.

Mr. Evans: No, that was the least of our worries.

Mr. Stroup: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: In basic training, were you all aware of the tactics you would be using during war? Did you realize that you would be jumping behind the enemy lines?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, yes, we knew that. They told us that.

Interviewer: Before or after you joined the Airborne?

Mr. Garofano: While we were training.

Mr. Evans: Well, you had to volunteer to get into Airborne.

Mr. Garofano: You knew you were going to do it anyway.

Mr. Stroup: You weren't told anything - you volunteered.

Mr. Evans: If you were scared, didn't want in it, then you didn't have to go.

Mr. Stroup: (Indiscernible). If you completed the training, then you got the information. If you didn't complete the training, you got transferred out and you didn't know anything about it.

Interviewer: Did you feel like it was a good weeding out process? Getting all the people that weren't fit for the Airborne out?

Mr. Stroup: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, yeah. A lot of people never made it.

Mr. Evans: Absolutely.

Mr. Stroup: You'd be surprised that some men, maybe yourself, I don't know, can't stand height. You understand?

Mr. Evans: You want guys you can depend on. Your life depends on them and their life depends on you.

Mr. Stroup: (indiscernible)...30-foot tower...

Mr. Garofano: A lot of folks on the tower, the minute they sent them up they start screaming, let me down!

Mr. Stroup: And it's nothing about your manhood; they just can't handle height. There are people like that.

Mr. Evans: You know, some people can't even climb a ladder to do a little painting or something. 250 feet, you're gonna get scared, don't go up.

Interviewer: Can you all remember when you completed your Airborne training?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, yeah, 1942.

Mr. Stroup: June the 5th, 1942.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, '42. Somewhere around there.

Mr. Evans: (indiscernible) Five weeks, four weeks?

Mr. Stroup: Somewhere around there? It 's June the 5th, 1942.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, would have been June '42, anyway.

Mr. Stroup: I got my diploma hanging on the wall at home. Look at it (indiscernible)

Mr. Garofano: I got mine there too.

Mr. Evans: Mine's in a suitcase.

Interviewer: From the Airborne, the three of you were put in the 502nd, G Company? After Airborne training?

Mr. Garofano: No, no. There was no divisions at all.

Mr. Evans: They were just making them up.

Mr. Garofano: There was just a couple of battalions. And from a couple of battalions, they made up the 82nd and the 101st at one time. And they sent some to the 82nd, some to the 101st.

Mr. Stroup: The 101st was not activated until August of 1942. In the meantime, we wore a patch, it was red, white and blue, called Army Ground Forces, until August of 1942. That's when General Lee made his famous speech...

Mr. Garofano: Oh, yeah, "Rendezvous With Destiny."

Mr. Stroup: And it happened to be on the Alabama side of Fort Benning, at Robinson Air Force Base, Robinson Field. That's when we got our patches in the 101st Airborne.

Interviewer: So that's when you all were commissioned into the 101st?

Mr. Stroup: (nods) August 1942.

Interviewer: When did you all get commissioned for the 502nd?

Mr. Stroup: That was...

Interviewer: Same day? Or was it later?

Mr. Stroup: No, no. We were G Company, 502nd. In a parachute infantry regiment, but we didn't belong to a division.

Interviewer: Okay. So you were 502nd before.

Mr. Stroup: Yes.

Mr. Evans: (asking Mr. Stroup) They didn't have enough men to make up a division, did they?

Mr. Stroup: No.

Mr. Garofano: There were no divisions at the time.

Mr. Evans: They were making them as they graduated.

Mr. Stroup: As they graduated, they started...

Mr. Evans: ...to get enough men.

Mr. Stroup: And, we went from a quadrangle division, which is a straight infantry division, to the triangle division...

Mr. Evans: A lot of guys didn't want no part of it. They failed and they'd go somewhere else.

Mr. Stroup: ...which is three regiments to a division. All your old armies used to be four divisions to an army.

Mr. Garofano: We were half the men of a regular infantry army division. Like, a regular division with 24,000, we were 12,000.

Mr. Evans: We had small groups.

Interviewer: Now, I understand there was some maneuvers - there was the Tennessee maneuvers and there was the North Carolina maneuvers. Did you all get to participate in either one or both?

Mr. Garofano: Yeah.

Mr. Stroup: Right here. Right down here in Lebanon, in Carthage. Took off from Evansville, Indiana, flew at treetop level, till we got down here into these valleys, shot up to 1200 feet and dropped. (To Mr. Evans) If you recall, when we dropped, we were surrounded. There was tanks all over the damn place, running around the field. This is interesting - our regimental commander, George van Horn Mosley, Jr., came down here prior to the maneuvers to buy or purchase - rent, I should say, land for us to drop on. Really, they had to pay the farmers, and they had to have large enough acreage for a division to drop - or a regiment.

Mr. Evans: That's a lot of people.

Mr. Stroup: He comes down here in his old colonel's uniform and, lo and behold, he gets caught by the Red Army...

Mr. Evans: (indiscernible word) ...the Red and Blue Army.

Mr. Stroup: ...who was already here, and they follow him to every farmhouse and the farmers thought, well, they're going to have an Airborne drop here, and that's what we're doing. So, when we came in, they were waiting for us. They got tanks, they got...and they wiped us out as far as maneuvers were concerned. Gave us two hours to get out. Do you remember that?

Mr. Garofano: I remember. I remember another jump we made from North Carolina, from Fort Bragg. We jumped and I remember coming down and there's a corral. This was way out in the country. I think a lot of what, Indians had lived around there and had homes. There was two big donkeys, whatever they were, and I was heading right for that corral, right in the middle of it. I'm trying to get out, I figured they'd get excited and start trampling all over me. But they ran right for the corner and they stayed there. And I landed right in the middle of the corral.

And that was just a jump. And I remember one kid, he hit the roof of a building, he knocked over the chimney, and he had to sign papers for the government to pay for that chimney.

Interviewer: So even in the maneuvers, if you ran into anything civilian, even if you were renting the land and tore up anything, you still had to pay for it?

Mr. Garofano: Over in England, we had to pay for land over there. For all the damage we done, all the land we used, and everything.

Mr. Stroup: They had a damage control officer...

Mr. Garofano: We paid for everything (indiscernible).

Mr. Stroup: ...I don't know who that was. I think even today they have damage control officers assigned to units. I think that's what they're called.

Interviewer: Can you remember, overall, how big were the Tennessee maneuvers? I mean, did it cover just the Tennessee Valley, the Cumberland Plateau?

Mr. Garofano: I don't know how big that was.

Mr. Evans: Well, our group would cover a certain area then somebody else would have another spot.

Interviewer: And, you'd jump over cities and stuff like that? I mean, stay away from big cities?

Mr. Stroup: We didn't get near Nashville.

Mr. Garofano: Well, see, it was close to Nashville, because...

Mr. Stroup: Well, Lebanon is not far.

Mr. Garofano: ...while we were on maneuvers, I got chiggers. You know what chiggers are?

Interviewer: Oh, chiggers, yes.

Mr. Garofano: They get on you, and you cannot get them out. This fellow and I, named Stevenson, we went to Nashville, because I told my sergeant, Sgt. (indiscernible) that I had a girlfriend in Van Buren, Tennessee. I don't even know where it is, he gave me a pass, Bill Stevenson and I, and...

Mr. Stroup: Teddy, Teddy Stevenson.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, and I had chiggers so bad they were driving me crazy. I went to a drugstore, and the druggist told me to go in the back room and strip and he gave me some salve, I put it all over me, didn't do a thing. He says why don't you try a steam bath - this was in Nashville - and so we headed up there. In the meantime, there's three guys - I guess they were from the armored force - they were ahead of us, walking ahead of us and they kept needling us - oh, the Paratroop's in town (indiscernible) helmets on, and all this baloney. Between the chiggers aggravating me and them needling me, I walked up to the biggest guy, a staff sergeant, one punch, I hit him right in the jaw. He landed - to this day - he was out cold. I don't know if he got a concussion or what. And Stevenson grabbed me, he says "let's get the hell outta here before the MPs come". And that was one episode in Nashville with chiggers, and on the Tennessee maneuvers.

Mr. Evans: I was going around to these farmers and buying kerosene oil from them that they used in their lamps, I had chiggers, put that all over me, but it burnt like hell.

Mr. Stroup: Yeah. I was covered.

Mr. Evans: Too strong.

Mr. Stroup: Everybody was covered.

Mr. Evans: You had to use something. You couldn't take them.

Interviewer: How did they prepare you for hygiene - taking baths, brushing teeth, stuff like that when you were on these maneuvers?

Mr. Evans: If you fell in the creek, you got wet, and that was it.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, they didn't teach you anything about that. I didn't know anything about that.

Mr. Stroup: One of the things that...so different in Airborne than other units...

Mr. Garofano: You were lucky to take a shower.

Mr. Stroup: They had shower units that followed divisions so men could take a shower once in a while. You didn't have that crap in the Airborne.

Mr. Garofano: You had nothing.

Mr. Stroup: If you got some water and...

Mr. Evans: They didn't want to soften you up, they wanted to toughen you up.

Mr. Stroup: ...filled your helmet up and took a bath, that's how you took a bath. Or if you got into somebody's house and they let you use their bath, why...

Mr. Garofano: I got to tell you a good one.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Mr. Garofano: When we jumped in Normandy, see, I got separated from the main company, these fellows here (pointing out the others). I jumped in St. Mary (?), I don't know if you've heard of it. All right, they were about eight or ten miles away from me. And so, we're trying to get organized to get back to the company. We took that city - town, there was a town, a village - and the Germans took it away from us, we took it again, they took it again. And, finally, we got a group together, some lieutenant, I don't even know his name. But this (indiscernible) who was with me, Joe Bennett, he was with me all the time, and we're heading back to where the main company was, and I was the point man, leading. All of a sudden, I'm walking, I walk over some rotten wood, and down in a hole. You know what the hole was? Septic tank. I come out full of s-h.

Mr. Stroup: The "white wine".

Mr. Garofano: All over me. And, oh, what a time I have. For three days I was like that. Till we got back to the company. And Joe Bennett, they left Joe Bennett with me to pull me out of the hole and the company kept going, I mean the group.

Mr. Stroup: I never knew this until last night, and I can't believe that you went three days...

Mr. Garofano: I did!

Mr. Stroup: ...with that crap all over you.

Mr. Evans: (indiscernible) stop for you...

Mr. Garofano: I didn't have another uniform, and, then later on they tell me, I remember I had boils.

Mr. Evans: He had carbuncles all over his ass from that stuff from the septic tank. And Mike Bellamo (?), when we got back to the camp...

Mr. Garofano: They were cutting them out.

Mr. Evans: ...was pushing them out, and getting them out of his ass, them carbuncles. And boy, they were big.

Mr. Stroup: I remember that.

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Mr. Evans: Well, that's where he got them.

Mr. Stroup: I thought they were boils.

Mr. Evans: Oh, no, it's from that damn septic, or grease pit, or whatever the hell it was.

Mr. Garofano: When I fell in that hole, at that time I had the rifle with a bayonet on it, and I went down with that. Lucky I didn't land on that damn bayonet.

Interviewer: From Fort Benning, how did you all manage to get to England? Did you go to New York and take a ship over? How did you get there?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, long stories. You tell him that one.

Mr. Evans: What it'd take? A month to go over?

Mr. Stroup: Twenty-four days.

Mr. Garofano: I'll tell you what happened. We started out with a big convoy from New York (indiscernible). Big convoy, oh, tremendous and it was dark at night and they told us, no lights, no nothing, don't even look up because - we wanted to see the Statue of Liberty before we left. I seen it. Well, anyway, we're out...

Mr. Evans: I never did see it. I haven't seen it yet!

Mr. Garofano: ...we're out three or four days and the ship...

Mr. Stroup: Broke down.

Mr. Garofano: ...broke down. It started shaking all over and everything. Well, they left us. The convoy kept going. They left a French corvette with us, that's a small little ship. They (indiscernible) into...

Mr. Evans: Like a little destroyer.

Mr. Garofano: ...Newfoundland...

Mr. Stroup: St. Johns'.

Mr. Garofano: Newfoundland, St. John's Harbor. Way up in the Labrador area? We're on board ship, they send divers out to fix it, whatever it was. And I guess, yeah, after about four or five days we went out again, the same thing happened, they took us back and they sent us up

toward a camp called Signal Hill, up in Newfoundland, where there were big towers, radio towers. I think the 5th Engineers were operating the radars and stuff and we used to go up one day on the ship, one day up in the camp, back and forth, back and forth. And then one of the ships that started out on the convoy to go to England when we first started, named the Ericsson, came into Newfoundland, picked us up and they couldn't put everybody on the ship, they left some groups there. We went down to Nova Scotia...

Mr. Stroup: Halifax.

Mr. Garofano: Halifax, Nova Scotia. And they loaded the ship up with food or whatever they were doing. We're there maybe four or five days - after that, five days, right across, no escort, no nothing, the Ericsson. We landed in Liverpool. Oh, the first ship was called the Strathnaver. It was a captured German ship, passenger ship. Broke down.

Interviewer: Were you all overcrowded on the ship?

Mr. Stroup: (indiscernible) 9,000 troops.

Mr. Garofano: I don't know.

Mr. Stroup: (to Mr. Garofano) You know it was overcrowded. You slept in the galley one day, you slept on the decks on other days.

Mr. Garofano. That's right. One night you were on deck, the next time you were in the galley in a hammock.

Mr. Evans: Yeah, hammocks between the beds. The cots that they had in there.

Mr. Garofano: Between the...in the kitchen in there.

Interviewer: How did you all keep your sanity on the trip over, with all the stops you all made. Did you all sit there and play cards?

Mr. Garofano: No.

Mr. Evans: What I used to do was, I had these quarters, and you'd make rings out of them. You just hammered them until and, just kept hammering them, maybe take you (indiscernible) or two, and then wring them up, and you got a ring. Smooth it all out.

Mr. Garofano: (pointing to Mr. Evans) This fellow, Bill Evans, he was sick all the whole trip...

Mr. Evans: I was no sailor!

Mr. Garofano: For three days, we were looking for him. We didn't know if he went overboard or whatever. We didn't know where he was.

Mr. Stroup: He was sick.

Mr. Garafano: He was up in some cubbyhole, somewhere.

Mr. Stroup: He was seasick in the Hudson River, waiting to take off.

Mr. Evans: Coming out of both ends!

Mr. Stroup: Deadly sick - green!

Mr. Evans: But I survived it.

Mr. Stroup: Frank, I think that you got your memory on that Strathnaver is a little screwed up.

Mr. Garafano: On what?

Mr. Stroup: When we went into St. John's, when we left there we went back to Halifax on the Strathnaver and they put us...

Mr. Garafano: Oh, no, we didn't take the Strathnaver. We went out again, and we broke down again.

Mr. Stroup: They put us on two American ships at Halifax.

Mr. Garafano: Oh, no. I don't know about that. All I know is I was on the Ericsson. Because they couldn't put everybody on that one ship.

Mr. Stroup: That's what I'm saying.

Mr. Garafano: Yeah. Well, I didn't know about the other one.

Mr. Evans: I was too sick to care who was going where. It didn't make any difference to me.

Interviewer: Upon landing in Liverpool, where were you all sent to marshalling stations there? Did you all go to regular camp before you got sent to a marshalling station?

Mr. Garafano: Some of our group was already in England. it was 35 days from the day we left New York to when we got there. When we got to Liverpool, some of our outfit was there, the band and everything, boom, boom, boom, they're playing the music. They put us on trains and brought us to camp. I believe we went to Hungerford.

Interviewer: So when did you actually land in to England? How close to D-Day was it?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, it was a year or so.

Mr. Stroup: Nine months, something like that.

Mr. Evans: We had a lot of training.

Interviewer: So you all trained again after you...

Mr. Garofano: Oh, all we done was train there. Jumping...

Mr. Evans: Trained in England.

Mr. Garofano: We trained all over...

Mr. Evans: We never stopped training.

Mr. Garofano: We went all over England, Wales, everywhere.

Interviewer: Practicing jumps more and all of that?

Mr. Garofano: Everything, everything.

Interviewer: Fun hearing about D-Day and all the big buildup that the American army had already done. I mean, what was your sentiment about that? How'd you feel about what was about to happen? Did your emotions change? Did you notice more things?

Mr. Garofano: We didn't know anything about it. We didn't even know what they were building up the... all the ships and the people...all I know that, that they went out once and they come back, I think I remember hearing that, they came back, they started the invasion then something happened and they came back.

Interviewer: They came back because the weather was bad.

Mr. Evans: Well, the weather was too bad.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, yeah, one day was cancelled because of the weather, that was it.

Mr. Evans: They were originally going on the 5th. And you can tell then because you get the best meal you ever had in the army, on the 5th, because we thought we were going to jump. And they cancelled that till the 6th, and we got another good meal, the only two good meals. I was ready for a good meal after being seasick all that time.

Mr. Garofano: And I'll tell you what, you know why...when we were getting aboard the planes to go to Normandy, we were at Newberry, I think it was Newberry.

Mr. Stroup: Newberry Common.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, and it was fenced in, we couldn't get out. And every day they'd show us the overlay maps of where we're supposed to go, what we're supposed to do, and trying to teach us what to do and everything. And I think I remember one guy got so sick and tired of hearing it, he kicked a model village and everything with his foot. He kicked and broke it all up. And that day, Eisenhower came to our ranks, but he didn't come to our company, he came to the 502 but a different company.

Mr. Evans: No, he came through G company, he came right past me.

Mr. Stroup: He came to our company.

Mr. Garofano: Did he? Well, I didn't see him.

Mr. Stroup: He talked to me for five minutes.

Mr. Garofano: Did he? And he came to our company and he told us to, do a good job and all that baloney.

Interviewer: What did Mr. Eisenhower say to you (to Mr. Stroup)

Mr. Stroup: It's very touching.

Mr. Garofano: Was he cussing?

Mr. Stroup: Touching. He asked me...see, we did not have name tags in those days. So - I'm a private or PFC, you know. He asked me what my name was, where I was from, what I did in civilian life, and I told him I was a roofer. He said, oh, you're used to heights then? I said not necessarily. He said, how old are you and I said I was twenty-one. He said, do you like to raise hell? And I says I like to raise as much hell as much as anybody else and not get caught. And he says, well son, you can raise all the hell you want to tonight and nobody's going to say a damn thing. And he moved on, that was it.

Interviewer: Mr. Evans...

Mr. Stroup: Oh...

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Mr. Stroup: (indiscernible) the news and all these other people taking pictures. And then the...I noticed on TV about two weeks ago -History (indiscernible)? - Odom is being interviewed and so is Cole, Colonel Cole.

Mr. Evans: Yeah? Who interviewed Odom?

Mr. Stroup: I don't know. I just got a glimpse of him as he's being interviewed.

Interviewer: Colonel Cole was your commanding officer?

Mr. Stroup: Battalion commander. This golf course is named after him.

Interviewer: And he was a Medal of Honor winner.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, he got a Medal of Honor. He got killed (indiscernible) bullet in the head.

Interviewer: I interviewed Bob Jones and he was in, I believe, H Company...

Mr. Evans: (nods) H Company.

Interviewer: ...with Colonel Cole.

Mr. Stroup: Yeah, we knew him.

Interviewer: He was close to where Col. Cole actually passed on.

Mr. Stroup: Well, we all were.

Mr. Stroup: I'm sure you know what happened. He was putting out (indiscernible)panels and we were getting strafed by our own planes.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, that's when (indiscernible).

Mr. Stroup: No, I'm talking about at Best.

Mr. Evans: Oh, at Best.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, oh.

Mr. Stroup: He went out there to put panels, or smoke grenades - I'm not sure which, I think it was smoke, really, smoke grenades. Smoke grenades which identify friendly troops, and that's when he got it.

Mr. Garofano: I remember (indiscernible) battle up in Holland. That's where I got the DSC up there, up in Holland. You know what the DSC is?

Interviewer: No, what's the DSC?

Mr. Garofano: The Distinguished Service Cross. I got a copy over there, if you want to see it. John, show him that copy there.

Interviewer 2: And Bill's got a similar one, I'm sure. Bill's got, Stroup's got every one.

Interviewer: Now, going back to your meeting with Eisenhower, you said he walked by you. Did you actually get to speak to him?

Mr. Evans: No, I didn't. But (to Mr. Stroup) you were on the same...

Mr. Stroup: He did actually stop and talk to me, Bill.

Mr. Evans: Yeah, I say, he stopped and...he went right by me, but he was right in front of me when you were lined up.

Mr. Garofano: I seen him walk by, but I wasn't that close to him.

Mr. Evans: He was viewing the troops (indiscernible).

Interviewer: On the plane over into Normandy, what was some of the motions you were going through, with all the flak and tracer bullets exploding around..?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, geez...

Mr. Stroup: We were talking about that last night.

Mr. Garofano: I'm gonna tell you about what happened to me on the way over. There was a lot of flak, the plane bouncing around a lot, and like I said, I was a grenadier, I was supposed to jump #5 man, and trip the bundles on the way out and that was my job. Sergeant Clemmons was (indiscernible) he was supposed to be last man out, but somehow or other he wanted to jump #5, my spot. So we swapped. And because I was supposed to throw the levers and release the bundles with all my ammunition and equipment. He jumped fifth, and I never heard another word from him - he died. He got killed on the jump, I heard, I don't know.

Mr. Evans: I pushed my bundle.

Mr. Garofano: Actually if I jumped number five, it could have been me that got killed. So, actually I think he saved my life. Joe Clemmons, Sgt. Joe.

Interviewer: Now was it twelve to seventeen jumped out of the same plane, yeah seventeen people on a plane - twelve men jumped, was that correct?

Mr. Garofano: That depends on the squad.

Interviewer: Or was it your company jump out of one plane or did the company split?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, no, multi squads.

Mr. Stroup: You had eighteen men to a plane, C-47's. Nineteen was the max. Eighteen was...

Mr. Garofano: See, that's why I landed so far away from the company because of while they're jumping, the plane is slowing down. The first guys all landed over the (indiscernible) I landed out in no man's land, out in the city, Sainte-Mere-Eglise.

Interviewer: (To Mr. Evans) Now, where did you actually get to land?

Mr. Evans: While we were going across, Stroup looked out and said, "look at all the lights, Bill,". I looked out, hell, they ain't lights, they're shooting at us.

Interviewer: You two actually got to be in the plane together.

Mr. Garofano: (to the others) I don't know if you were on my plane or not. What plane were you in? I don't remember you guys.

Mr. Stroup: I don't knowt exactly what number I was on. I wished I had brought it along, because I have the jump manifest from Normandy, which I got from Bellamo (?). I wish I'd brought that along. The whole manifest for the whole company; who was on each plane, the number of the plane, everything else.

Mr. Garofano: All planes were numbered.

Mr. Stroup: But we were in the same plane. He (pointing to Mr. Garofano) was not in the same plane with us. He (indiscernible) Sainte-Mere-Eglise, I landed where I was supposed to land, Saint-Martin-de-Varreville.

Interviewer: Can you remember what your assignments were? I know some men got stuck with security assignments where they gotta come back.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, sure. They all do. We were supposed to take the three causeways at Saint-Martin-de-Varreville and some other towns there.

Mr. Evans: These causeways go down to the Channel. The (indiscernible) highway. To the English Channel. We had to clear them so the 4th Division could come up there. Clear all the guns on them out of there.

Interviewer: And what was your combat experience there? Clearing the causeways for the 4th Division to come up?

Mr. Garofano: They were there, I wasn't.

Mr. Stroup: The town was captured.

Mr. Evans: Me and Bellamo..I guess it was you and who else? (indicating Mr. Stroup)

Mr. Stroup: Sandine (?)

Mr. Evans: I was a machine gunner then, and we went up to one of these gun emplacements and there was two 82nd Airborne guys up in the trees with their parachutes caught in the trees and these Germans there had shot them and they were still hanging there and these Germans were hiding in their dugout. And we went around there and got them out of there and some more 82nd Airborne come by. And those were their men that they had killed so we give these - I think it was four or five prisoners to them guys to take care of and do what they wanted with them. I assume they killed them, I don't know why they would -- well, we weren't taking prisoners the first day.

Mr. Garofano: No, they told us no prisoners.

Mr. Evans: You couldn't do nothing with prisoners. You didn't know where you were and who was near you or anything.

Mr. Stroup: No prisoners, standing order.

Interviewer: Could you tell the difference between an American machine gun and a German machine gun at that time?

Mr. Evans and Mr. Garofano: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: You knew the difference before jumping in?

Mr. Evans: The sound of those.

Mr. Garofano: Theirs would keep going. We just shot three bullet or four bullet blasts. But they kept going on and on.

Mr. Evans: We had to conserve our ammunition. We didn't know when we was going to meet somebody (indiscernible).

Mr. Garofano: The Germans probably had water-cooled 30 caliber - we just had the regular 30 caliber, you couldn't fire it too often, because you'd heat up the barrel. So you had to shoot in bursts.

Interviewer: Now in your landing, you landed in your squads, right?

Mr. Garofano: Squads? (laughs)

Interviewer: Well, I mean you were spread out, you were in Sainte-Mere-Eglise. What were some of your experiences there, getting back to your company?

Mr. Garofano: I'll tell you what happened. We landed just outside the city, right outside. There were different (indiscernible). I didn't know a lot of...the only fellow I know was one guy, he was on my squad - my company, Joe Bennett, he was in the mortar squad, he was a sergeant. We took the town of Sainte-Mere-Eglise, these vagabonds, I call them, we're going through the town, and a bunch of Germans come in, they drove us out. In the meantime, the next day, we took it over again. They drove us out again. the next day, we took it, and I went in this house, I guess it was maybe a German house, this house was...Germans were living in this house because they had a small (indiscernible). I found a tin box full of money, French money. Remember I told you guys? I didn't think it was any good because they had given us invasion money. So I was giving the money to everybody and I kept some of it. I found out later on it was worth 500 dollars! Oh, and while I'm in the house, I opened the closet door, a back-room door and there's two paratroops face down, with bayonets in their backs, dead. Oh, one of the guys, there was a cheese factory there, I remember - some guy found - he went in there and they must have paid off the cheese workers the day before that we landed there. He found the payroll, all the money. The guy today, I don't know what happened to him or what happened to the money, but then we formed a group trying to get back to where these fellows (indicating the other two) were, about eight miles down the line. Joe Bennett and I were together. I'm the point man leading off. I think I told you before, I fell in a septic tank and that was it until they get back to the company. For three days I didn't get back. I remember Sergeant (indiscernible), he's got a black book he kept. For three days he had me nonexistent or whatever it was.

Mr. Evans: Lost at sea, eh?

Interviewer: Like you said, you sat there. You all three met up there when you got back. From there, where did you all go? Did you go back to Holland?

Mr. Garofano: We went back to England.

Mr. Stroup: Thirty days in Normandy and then back to England.

Interviewer: In England, did you feel like you were getting a rest between all the action or did you think you were going right back into the fire?

Mr. Stroup: (indiscernible) we went right back into training.

Interviewer: You went right back into training again?

Mr. Evans: We had another jump coming.

Mr. Stroup: We had a jump that was slated for Belgium.

Mr. Garofano: They cancelled several jumps.

Mr. Stroup: They cancelled that because the tanks had (indiscernible) and we go back into (the marching area?) to go into Holland on the 17th.

Interviewer: How long did you actually stay in England?

Mr. Garofano: About thirty days.

Interviewer: It was thirty days in Normandy and then how long did you stay in...

Mr. Stroup: After we got back from Normandy?

Interviewer: After you got back from Normandy, how long did you stay?

Mr. Garofano: In September, we left in September to jump in Holland. So we went back, we jumped in June, July, August...

Mr. Evans: September...

Mr. Garofano: A month and a half or so.

Interviewer: Did you all get a bunch of new recruits while you were in England?

Mr. Stroup: Yeah. In August.

Mr. Garofano: And I'll tell you another thing. In England, when we get back from Normandy, Eisenhower got us all out in a big (indiscernible) the 8th Air Force and us, all the Airborne, and he reamed them out, oh boy, for dropping us all over the countryside in France. Right in front of everybody.

Interviewer: Was there any resentment between you all and the Air Force for doing that?

Mr. Evans: We never had any words with the Air Force.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, no, no.

Mr. Evans: That was the pilots that he was reaming out. That was the pilots he was reaming out. They didn't drop us in our drop zones.

Mr. Garofano: When they seen the flak, I guess they got excited and they throw the green light. When they throw the green light, you go. Well, you don't know where you're at, but you go.

Mr. Evans: Those pilots were as green as we were.

Mr. Stroup: But in the long run, it was probably a blessing that's the way it happened.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, 'cause they figured there was more, more men landed than actually there was.

Mr. Evans: Confusing to the Germans and it was confusing to us, 'cause we didn't land where we were supposed to land, most of them, and nobody knew where the hell they were.

Mr. Garofano: There was men everywhere.

Interviewer: Now, I actually heard that in preparation to jump into Normandy, one guy told me that you were sprayed with powder? And he had (indiscernible) stuff on the soldiers. You got impregnated with...

Mr. Garofano: Oh, yes, yes, impregnated.

Mr. Evans: They impregnated our whole uniforms.

Mr. Garofano: ...our uniforms, so the gas wouldn't get to your body.

Mr. Evans: Oh, that was awful hot. It closed all your pores up, you couldn't get any air in there.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, it stopped breathing through the clothes.

Mr. Evans: The sweat would just run down the...

Mr. Garofano: They sealed all the pores on the clothes.

Interviewer: Was that the powder that you're talking about, or just the spray they put on the uniform?

Mr. Garofano: No, it was a spray.

Interviewer: Now, before you all jumped into Holland, what was the things that you all heard in your marshaling area as to your objectives to the Holland Campaign?

Mr. Garofano: The Holland campaign? I don't know.

Mr. Evans: Well, the British was in charge then. We had to deal with them.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, oh, Montgomery was in charge. General Montgomery, the English general, it was under his control.

Mr. Evans: It was (?) his section.

Mr. Garofano: Actually, what we were supposed to do, the 101st, was take out Eindhoven, the first city over the Belgian line and hold it and hold the bridge and keep the road open so Dempsey's -- with the English -- his armored force could come up. But they were four or five days late or something, I forget now, and we kept trying to keep the road open so they could work their way up. Finally, they did, but it took them a long time to get to us.

Interviewer: Now, the Holland jump, from what I understand, was a lot more organized and everybody landed in their zones they were supposed to.

Mr. Stroup: It was a daylight jump, that's why.

Mr. Garofano: It was a daylight jump. Beautiful jump.

Interviewer: And did you feel that, compared to the Normandy landing, the Holland campaign was a lot easier?

Mr. Evans: Well, we learned a lot. (indiscernible) than in France.

Mr. Garofano: I'd say I done more fighting in Holland than I done in Normandy, actual fighting.

Interviewer: Was that just for the sheer fact of trying to hold the road open?

Mr. Garofano: That's me - I don't know about others.

Interviewer: So you all weren't actually together in Holland?

Mr. Stroup: Oh, yes.

Mr. Garofano: Yes.

Mr. Stroup: Same company.

Mr. Evans: We were all a company again, with our replacements.

Mr. Stroup: Same platoon, same squad.

Interviewer: Now were you all in different platoons or squads, or were you...

Mr. Garofano: Same squads, either first or second squad, that's all but the same...

Mr. Evans: Same platoons.

Interviewer: Now what was some of the things that all three of you had run into in Holland? I mean, what kind of encounters did you have with the German army?

Mr. Stroup: The Germans were, even though they were in the position of retreating, they were better equipped.

Mr. Evans: They could fight like hell. They were good soldiers.

Mr. Stroup: This particular town that they keep referring to, Best, would have never never been a battle had they not had 320 millimeter rail guns.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, they were cutting the trees down like nothing with them.

Mr. Stroup: That's the thing that saved the Germans from being overrun almost immediately. But they held it and then when we finally turned it over to the British, they lost it, and recaptured, and lost it, and while we were up in the Battle of the Bulge, they recaptured Best, the English did. But our mission was to (indiscernible) that road network all the way from Eindhoven to Nijmegen (?).

Mr. Garofano: We were supposed to keep the road open - there was one main road from Eindhoven to Nijmegen. the only road up there.

Interviewer: And, after your Holland campaign, where did you all go to next? You mentioned the...

Mr. Stroup: Mourmelon. Went back into training...

Mr. Garofano: Went back in the rest area.

Mr. Stroup: No, we went back to Mourmelon(?). New training area. Went back to training and (indiscernible)

Mr. Evans: Well, that was rest from what we were doing before (laughing).

Mr. Garofano: After Holland, we went back to Mourmelon, yeah. We were there not too long, in fact, one of our companies had to leave and went to Paris.

Mr. Stroup: That's right.

Mr. Garofano: And we had to leave on trucks to get out in the Bulge.

Mr. Stroup: We got to Mourmelon in November and left in December. So we were there about a month.

Mr. Garofano: That's right. That's when the Germans broke the lines - they went through two or three divisions, American divisions. And they throw us in there.

Mr. Stroup: When Bill got drunk and tried to attack (indiscernible) messed up his knee.

Interviewer: Who got drunk trying to attack what?

Mr. Stroup: Stowe.

Mr. Evans: We were having a football league, is what we were having. Inside the Smith barracks.

Mr. Stroup: These barracks had brick floors. He messed up his knee.

Interviewer: So did you still get to participate?

Mr. Stroup: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did they put you on inactive?

Mr. Stroup: No.

Mr. Evans: Nobody knew it. I wasn't supposed to be drunk.

Mr. Stroup: We went on a little excursion - Frank, you was with us.

Mr. Garofano: On what?

Mr. Stroup: We went to Lormon(?), Legrant, La Petite, and we got in line for the house. And the line never moved. Because the cooks were taking all the food to them.

Mr. Evans: That's where you and I (speaking to Mr. Garofano) had them big pieces of...

Mr. Stroup: Salami.

Mr. Garofano: Salami, salami.

Mr. Evans: A guy picked us up in a truck and got in the truck and you had two big pieces of salami about that big. We threw them out of the truck and we drove far enough, let us out and we went back, picked them up.

Mr. Garofano: And I'll tell you what happened to my salami. I put it in my barracks bag, and I figured in Normandy, when we get over to Normandy, we'd eat it. But the bags came over by water, on ships. When I got my bag, it must have been in the water, that salami was rotted, all my clothes stunk and everything else. I couldn't use the salami, I wasted the whole salami.

Interviewer: Now you were at the Bulge, fighting, right? You all participated in the Bulge? And what were some of the things that happened there?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, Christ, so many things happened there...

Mr. Evans: (to Mr. Garofano) You fought the war yourself at the Bulge. I was lucky, I got wounded at the Bulge.

Mr. Garofano: He was in the hospital there most of the time. Stroup, were you up there with us?

Mr. Stroup: Oh, yes.

Mr. Garofano: Up in the hills there?

Mr. Stroup: Weren't you up there Bill?

Mr. Garofano: No, he was in town.

Mr. Evans: I was in the - by the regimental CP (?). There was a rifle range there and they put all us walking wounded in there.

Mr. Stroup: But I mean before-you did get wounded at the Bulge.

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Mr. Stroup: And that's when they put you...

Mr. Garofano: No, he got wounded at the town, in town, right Bill?

Mr. Evans: No, we were out on both sides going up this road when I got hit.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, but that was in town.

Mr. Evans: A tank came down. Right out of town.

Mr. Stroup: That's right.

Mr. Evans: 'Cause I got a picture of the farm (indiscernible) and got a buddy took a picture of that farmhouse that I was in. And it was right next to where I was wounded, and he gave it to me.

Interviewer: So how did you get wounded?

Mr. Evans: There was a tank...

Mr. Stroup: You were setting up your machine gun.

Mr. Evans: ...coming down. Yeah. This tank was coming down the road right out of a fog bank and shooting his machine guns right down the middle of the road, and there's tracers down there, so when he stopped shooting the tracers, we ran across the road and starting setting the machine gun up on the other side, where there was a better spot. Well, we didn't know it, but the tank man could see us and we couldn't see him due to the fog, and he let one go at us, and there was three of us here, and he hit me in the left leg and spun the hoe(?) around and spun the skim hoy (?) around and I had to leave then to go the aid station and I don't know what happened to the other two guys, they stayed there, 'cause it never hit them. The concussion knocked them down. But shrapnel from the tank hit me in the leg, and we didn't have any first aid stuff, so I had to go back to the aid station.

Interviewer 2: What did you see while you were at the aid station?

Mr. Evans: Nothing. They took my gun and I think my boots and everything.

Interviewer 2: How about the Germans?

Mr. Garofano (to Mr. Evans): Tell them about when the Germans came in for you, to surrender.

Mr. Evans: Oh, I wasn't at the aid station when the Germans...that was near the regimental when that Jeep come in with the white flag with those big Germans in 'em. And they came in there to get General McAuliffe to surrender. That's where he told them "Nuts" and...

Mr. Garofano: We were surrounded at the time.

Mr. Evans: ...they didn't understand this "nuts" thing. Well, actually he swore at them, I guess, but the way his aides interpreted it, he said "nuts". It looked better on paper than the cuss words that were used. And he turned them down, of course, and they started back to their lines, because they come in under a white flag.

Interviewer: What was the name of that city?

Mr. Garofano: Bastogne. In the meantime, the Germans were so close to us with their tanks and everything, they're playing all the American music for us, they're telling us to come over their lines, they'd treat us like royalty, and they're telling us that our girlfriends back home were shacking up with all the (indiscernible) and all that baloney. And I'll tell you that episode when we went on that patrol - Bill, you were with us - to a little village called Recogne (?). We were up in a high area, the village was down below. I had five men with me, I was the leadoff man, five men on each side of the road, on each side. There was only one road, dirt road, and it was dark, midnight. And we were supposed to go down and harass them, they said. Can you beat that? And I heard a German yell "Halt!" The minute I heard that, I hit the ground. He starts firing, blasting the gun. I get him, see, I got the machine gun. But in the meantime, the three out of the four guys with me, so the one guy left, I sent him back, to go back to the company area. In the meantime, I'm out here alone, these guys on each side of the street are throwing hand grenades and shooting rifles in the middle of the street, and I'm in the middle of everything. And so I got out of there, I got out of there quick. We went back to the camp area. You (indicating Mr. Stroup) were on one squad.

Mr. Stroup: Sam (indiscernible) was on one.

Mr. Evans: When I was wounded, they sent me back to a church, and put me in this church. Then they bombed this church. So they had a halftrack there, and the officers put five of us in this halftrack. It was mounted with a 50-caliber machine gun, they took that off, it had a Red Cross emblem on the side of it, and he wanted us to go out and see if we could get some aid for, you know, some medical supplies. We started down the highway and there's a bunch of guys jumped up and started shooting at us, with American uniforms on. Well, we didn't have no gun mounted then, so we just kept on going. Then we got down about a quarter of a mile, some GI waved us down, said you can't go any further, they've mined the trees, they're gonna blast 'em. You know, (indiscernible) up the road. So we turn around and come back. Before we come back, we mounted this 50-caliber machine gun and started back, we was gonna shoot them guys that was shooting at us. But when we get up there, they had already left. But they were Germans, they weren't Americans. But they had our uniforms on. And we come back then to the rifle range near the regimental CP, and that's where they kept us.

Interviewer: This was also at Bastogne?

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you all remember who was there, what divisions were there? Was it just the 502nd?

Mr. Stroup: No, no.

Mr. Garofano: No, it was only G Company. Where I was, anyway.

Mr. Stroup: No, the whole division was...

Mr. Garofano: The whole division, but they were spread out.

Mr. Stroup: I don't know how many units...there's a lot of units that were with us at the 101st, but all you ever read about is the 101st. There had to be...

Mr. Evans: They were attached.

Mr. Stroup: Yeah, but they were there, is what I'm saying.

Mr. Evans: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Stroup: There were fusionnaires, there were artillery...

Mr. Garofano: There was one division, one unit was (trapped?), it was colored. The colored - the 10th Armored - one unit from the 10th Armored. That was the only heavy equipment we had, until they run out of ammunition. The 10th Armored, a colored outfit. They were helping us out, the only one there. And I'll tell you another thing, Lt. Stafford was in charge of the squad at the time. He sent Bellamo and myself in this house, this big mansion house. It was between our lines and the German village down below called Recogne (?). We went in early in the morning before daylight. We're supposed to go up in the top of the attic, which was all bombed out and stay up there and make a map, an overlay or something, of what the town had, what kind of tanks, how many tanks and how many trucks and all that stuff. Which we did. We stayed in that house all day. It was coming dusk and we're coming down from the attic to the second floor. It was a big, big, rich home and we're down on the second floor and there was a big main stairway and one off to the side. And we hear voices and they're all Germans, talking. So Bellamo and I, we faced the main stairway, we crawled as low as we could, we laid out all of our hand grenades and we get our rifles ready and everything. The minute they started up the stairs, we see this much of them, we heaved all our grenades at them, emptied our rifles at them. We got five of them there, and I don't know how many got away or how many there were altogether, and we said now how the hell are we going to get out of here? And the snow was up to our bums there. So we run out and I says, well, I'll go out first and I'll look around and see if there's any out there. So I run out and jumped over a - there was a wall there, all full of snow on the other side, and I didn't see anybody. I waved Bellamo out. The minute he come out, he started running - bing, he got hit in the shoulder, see. But he got over there with me, we went back to the company. Went back - all the guys are saying, what the

hell are you guys doing, having a war all by yourself there. And that was one episode that happened there.

Interviewer: And can you all remember how long you were under siege at Bastogne? (Indiscernible) the time you got surrounded, when you got relieved?

Mr. Garofano: (to others) How long were we there? I don't know.

Mr. Evans: We were there until they broke through.

Mr. Garofano: (indiscernible) General Abrams. I don't know how long it was, I got no idea.

Mr. Evans: We had no calendars.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, I'll tell you up in the Bulge, there at the time, there were no planes coming out to help us at all for seven or eight days. Foggy and snow, that's all we had. And the last day, about the seventh day, the sun come out and dried us out. The planes come over, American planes. They were knocking off tanks, left and right all around us. And we had panels out, you know, to show our lines, red panels. our planes dropped one of the bombs right in our CP. You remember that one? You remember that one? (to Mr. Stroup) It killed (indiscernible). And I don't know how long we were there though.

Interviewer: Was that because of the tactics of the Air Force? I mean, evidently - were they just dropping bombs, just not consider...

Mr. Garofano: Well, they didn't know what the hell they were doing, that's all. We had panels out to show where we were, red panels, we had to set them out, to show where the land was, but there were so many planes, they all come out at once because they hadn't moved for seven days, the planes, because of the weather. And after that, they dropped us - remember the Christmas day that they dropped us? They give us turkey, the whole works. By plane, they dropped it. Turkey was the Christmas dinner.

Mr. Evans (to Mr. Stroup): Did you see any pictures of those guys going out for the supplies? One of them looked like Bill Conklin to me. Did you notice? It was in all the magazines.

Mr. Stroup: Could've been...I don't know. But it's not likely.

Mr. Garofano: But they were knocking off tanks left and right, all around us. Black smoke, all around us. And another thing, up in the Bulge, those tanks, they had the motors going half the night because I don't think they had antifreeze or any (indiscernible) to keep them warmed up. One would start, the other would start, one would stop, and one would go. You'd figure they'd come at any minute, the whole bunch of them at one time. You see a lot of guys, we had souvenirs, we figured we were goners then if we're captured. We were burying everything, all the souvenirs...

Interviewer: What kind of souvenirs had you picked up?

Mr. Garofano: Pencils and (indiscernible) and things, daggers and all kind of stuff.

Interviewer: And when the 4th Division broke through and you were relieved, where did you all move on from there?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, yeah, then we, we kept going, that's when I got those two prisoners, I was leading the squad and we made an attack, and, oh, when we were pinned down, my rifle froze on me. Oh, I got so frightened. I started banging and banging it, till I get it working. And just ahead of us, maybe thirty feet or so, comes a bunch of (indiscernible). There were a couple of Germans in (indiscernible) hand grenade, they come out with their hands up, then we move in, we took the quartered area, captured some Germans, and I remember this kid, this kid called Skin Hoyer (?). We had loaded him up with all the ammunition, the machine guns and everything. He was a big kid. So I came to one of the prisoners, I said, Skin, this is your ammunition to carry. His face just beamed, he was so happy. And that's when Coon and Hoyer got hit by shrapnel. I'm the last man out of the foxhole. And they're dropping - I guess it was shrapnel that hit 'em. (indiscernible) yell for help, and I go over there. And I went up and I get the - I mean, to the CP, I told the lieutenant to send the aid men down. And I never seen those guys again till years after the war was over. But they made it.

Interviewer: Now, did you say you got wounded around that time?

Mr. Stroup: Yeah. I'm trying to figure...Christmas Day, I was there New Year's Eve when they played all the record players with Bing Crosby.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, remember that? Oh boy. I got a couple pieces of shrapnel.

Mr. Stroup: The third or fourth of January, I got wounded.

Mr. Evans: (to Mr. Garofano): We went down to Buchenwald after that. By train, remember that?

Mr. Stroup: (indiscernible) they continued.

Interviewer: So were you inactive then?

Mr. Stroup: I was inactive then.

Mr. Evans: (to Mr. Garofano): You know, where all the skeletons were. Them guys in the ovens.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Stroup: The times they're talking about, I'm with them. And I got wounded on the third or fourth of January. They moved out, they moved into an attack phase after I was wounded. The whole division did.

Interviewer: Both you two were together after this and when you moved into the attack phase?

Mr. Garofano: After the Bulge I didn't see Bill until we get up to (indiscernible). Right Bill?

Mr. Evans: We went down in that train together (indiscernible)

Mr. Garofano: That oval (?) train? With the sides?

Mr. Evans: What they used to use for horses and men. We rode in them. And Buchenwald was one of these camps where they killed all these people. In the ovens.

Interviewer: Concentration camps.

Mr. Evans: Yeah.

Mr. Garofano: The ovens were still warm.

Mr. Evans: We stopped there. There were skeletons all over the place, and men.

Mr. Stroup: After January, after relief when Patton broke through, did you not go into an attack phase...

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, we did.

Mr. Stroup: ...of fighting? That's before you went to Buchenwald.

Mr. Garofano: That's right.

Mr. Stroup: Well, that's what he wants to know.

Mr. Garofano: That's when my rifle froze on me and I banged it.

Mr. Evans: See, I wasn't part of it then. I was still in the rifle range. No weapon, no clothes, nothing.

Mr. Garofano: No, you were still in Bastogne then, I think Bill.

Interviewer: So what did you see at Buchenwald, at the concentration camp? You saw all the skeletons and everything, but did you have an idea overall of what the Germans had done?

Mr. Garofano: A lot of dead people, skeletons. The ovens were still warm.

Mr. Evans: Big troughs, and filled with skeletons.

Mr. Garofano: You know, when the war was over, actually, the poor prisoners, I seen several on horse and wagons, there must have been fifty on one wagon. the wagon (indiscernible) and they're trying to get back to their country. There were so many refugees and prisoners that the government had to stop them from travelling at daylight and let them travel at night, there were so many trying to get back to their homes, and so forth, so the Americans could move during the day...

Interviewer: Had the Germans already moved all the prisoners that were still alive?

Mr. Garofano: No, they moved them all out, most of them. I didn't see no live ones.

Mr. Evans: Well, they didn't...they left them. The Germans moved off. They didn't want nobody to know they were doing that stuff. (indiscernible) kill them (indiscernible).

Interviewer: Did you all have to sit there and take a survey of what all the Germans had done there at the concentration camp, or did you all go ahead and move on to the next city?

Mr. Garofano: No.

Mr. Evans: We moved on to wherever the hell we were going.

Mr. Garofano: We kept moving so damn fast. We didn't know from one day from the next where we were gonna be.

Mr. Evans: And they didn't tell you anything. They never told us we were going down to that place where all those people were dead.

Mr. Garofano: We used to move so fast, when we go through a town or something, they give each squad a house to live in, and another squad another house and so on. You kept going like that.

Interviewer: And how'd the civilians take to you taking over the house?

Mr. Garofano: There weren't many civilians. They had all left.

Mr. Evans: And a lot of the houses that were empty were empty from the collaborators and the people would let you know those people were this and they collaborated with the enemy.

Mr. Garofano: And you'd see a lot of bald-headed women. You know what they were? They were collaborators with the Germans.

Mr. Evans: And they shaved their hair off.

Mr. Garofano: They were running around with bald heads.

Interviewer: Is that the only way you could remember telling a regular German citizen between a spy, a collaborator?

Mr. Evans: Well, we had cards that we weren't supposed to talk to any of them.

Mr. Stroup: No fraternizing.

Mr. Evans: We all carried a little card. We weren't allowed to talk to them. We were combat troops, and they was afraid we might give them some information. All we wanted to know was, where was the wine and whatever. (laughs) The brass don't see it that way.

Mr. Stroup: The bald-headed women he's talking about were fraternizing with the German officers and the German army and it was their own people were the one that shaved their heads, not the Americans. Their own people shaved their heads to identify them as collaborators.

Interviewer: So, were they telling what the American troops were doing? Which way was it going?

Mr. Garofano: They were collaborators before we even...they were siding with the Germans, helping the Germans do things that...

Mr. Evans: They did the same things in France, too.

Mr. Garofano: All through Europe, France, we had collaborators doing the same thing everywhere. Siding with the Germans.

Mr. Evans: Hanging around the women (?). So they were going to give them information about the Americans, whatever they had.

Mr. Garofano: Like every city and town, they (indiscernible) the mail, they'd call them the Burgermaster (?). A lot of those people were sympathizers with the Germans. You couldn't tell them anything.

Interviewer: As you said, you kept on moving. About how far would you move a day? Would you go fifteen, twenty miles...? Did you all do it all by truck, or did you do it by foot, truck and both?

Mr. Garofano: Most of it was foot. The only time I remember going by truck drive was when we went to the Bulge. Otherwise, we used our feet all the time.

Mr. Stroup: The Airborne didn't have vehicles.

Interviewer: So basically, you walked from the Bulge to...how far did you all get into Germany before the end of the war?

Mr. Garofano: Oh, we were in the middle of Germany, we were right up almost to the Swiss border.

Mr. Evans: We were in Munich when we were in the Russian's territory. Remember, we had to wait there? Because we were in the Russian territory, and they wanted them to go into Berlin first, and that's why we had to stay there, in that sector.

Mr. Garofano: (indiscernible) we were up in Berchtesgaden.

Interviewer: The Eagle's Nest?

Mr. Garofano: And one time we're twelve miles from the Swiss border at a town called Kempton.

Mr. Evans: When we got to the Eagle's Nest, the war was over.

Mr. Garofano: In fact, Bill, when we at Berchtesgaden, he was a guard over Julius Streicher, one of the top Nazis.

Interviewer: What was it like to guard one of the Nazis.

Mr. Evans: Well, he was a war criminal. We had to guard him until somebody from the (indiscernible) come down and spoke to him and then they got him out of there.

Mr. Garofano: And put him in jail.

Mr. Evans: They hung him eventually.

Interviewer: You guarding Streicher, was this at...

Mr. Garofano: This was after the war was over.

Interviewer: But I was wondering, was this all done at the Eagle's Nest? How much time - did you actually get to see the Eagle's Nest?

Mr. Evans: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: you went through it?

Mr. Evans and Mr. Garofano: Yeah.

Mr. Garofano: In fact, in one place, both sides of the wall was full of liquor. And they had trucks loading...they said they were going to give every company a certain amount of booze, but...

Interviewer: Nobody ever saw it?

Mr. Garofano: I don't know who got it all.

Interviewer 2: You caught Streicher somewhere else, right?

Mr. Evans: Up in a farm up in one of them hills. I was guarding his secretary more than I was guarding him (laughs).

Mr. Garofano: He was getting pretty friendly with the secretary.

Mr. Evans: They let her go, though. She didn't know that much. That guy from (?) was Jewish, that major, and he talked to her, and I was talking to him after that, and he said oh, she don't know nothing. They didn't even want her, so she stayed at that farm.

Interviewer: Now all three of you, I mean, you were wounded, so you got a Purple Heart, and you said you were wounded at one time, and you had shrapnel...

Mr. Garofano: I got two Purple Hearts.

Interviewer: You got Purple Hearts. What was some of the medals you all won? First, Mr. Stroup.

Mr. Stroup: Well, they're too numerous to mention. I got 22 awards and decorations.

Interviewer: And you served basically through - when did you get out?

Mr. Stroup: 1964.

Interviewer: '64. When were you out of Europe, inactive?

Mr. Stroup: In Europe, I got Purple Heart, Bronze Star and two Oak Leaf Clusters, President Unit Citation, four Battle Stars with an arrowhead, of course Combat Infantry Badge, that's about it.

Interviewer: And you said both of you got about the same thing?

Mr. Garofano: We all got about the same thing.

Interviewer: How did you get your Legion of Honor badges?

Mr. Garofano: This was in Best, in Holland. I climbed over a little hill, there was a little barb wire fence, maybe about a foot high, and I climbed over that. One the other side, I had a Tommy gun at the time. There was a whole bunch of Germans lined up there, like in a low area, and I just ran, up and down, up and down. All of a sudden they threw their hands up. They said there was about nine I killed, maybe ten or twenty, I don't know. Then some Germans in the house - there was a railroad crossing - they started firing at me. And I crawled up along the low land, I threw a hand grenade in the house and a bunch come out of the house with their hands up there too. So I made a clean sweep of them.

Interviewer: How many people did you take prisoner in that?

Mr. Evans: 93

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, I'd say at least 90, 93 or something. I don't know. There was a bunch of them.

Interviewer 2: Can I ask something?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: With the background of this, maybe you two - 'cause I know I wanted to ask you about Carentan - you and Bill, the background was Colonel Cole being killed. Maybe you could just start there and then why you guys moved out ahead of the company. How did it happen?

Mr. Garofano: Well, this was up in Holland.

Mr. Evans: Well, like Bill (indicating Mr. Stroup) told you, Cole was hit by a sniper and killed him up there.

Mr. Garofano: He got hit in the head.

Mr. Evans: Then General Taylor come down and talk to us.

Mr. Garofano: Yeah, he was right in back of me. I sent back the first prisoner to Taylor. I was out front, and just ahead of me was a German. And he didn't even move, so I get him, and I sent him back. and Taylor must have been - this was just when we started the attack. And Taylor, I think, grabbed him and brought him back, maybe wanted to question him. And from then on, and that's when I climbed over the little hill and gathered up them Germans. The

whole company was making the attack at the same time. But I was on the extreme right end, the last man out. Bill, I think, was next to me (indicating Mr. Evans).

Interviewer 2: What did you do, Bill? Because we don't have your citations.

Mr. Evans: Practically the same kind of thing.

Interviewer 2: You were in close combat?

Mr. Evans: Oh, I went around to the side door and got them coming out of there. They were just streaming out of there. I brought them over to - I don't know what it is - it's not a causeway, but a...

Mr. Garofano: Lowland, like a...

Mr. Evans: The tanks were coming up at the same time. We were ahead of the tanks. We were supposed to wait for the tanks, and...

Mr. Garofano: We didn't even see the tanks.

Mr. Evans: ...and we didn't wait. We just come right on up.

Interviewer 2: Why? Taylor told you to wait for the tanks and then take the...

Mr. Garofano: We didn't even see the...I didn't even see the tanks.

Mr. Evans: We just took off. Well, they were English tanks, they hadn't got there yet.

Mr. Garofano: Ah, they're always late.

Mr. Evans: We just decided we're not going to wait for them. So we went up.

Interviewer 2: I just got one more...Bill, you must have got the Bronze Star for - is that Carentan?

Mr. Stroup: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: That's another example of guys taking the lead when things are falling apart. Maybe you two can just say something about that.

Mr. Stroup: Oh, at Carentan...

Mr. Garofano: You guys were at Carentan, I wasn't.

Mr. Stroup: If I had the literature knowledge to write a book, I would have loved to have written a book about - and called it "Four Rivers to Cross", and ending up at the last river on the road to Carentan, where we got stopped. And when we got hit with the airplanes that night, the night before. In any case, the following morning, well, maybe four o'clock, all night long the Germans, you could hear them pulling up their tanks and horse-drawn ammunition and stuff like that. The next morning, our battalion, Col. Cole's, moved out, crossed this river on foot and went up both side of this road. No sooner had the last man got across, all hell broke loose. It's all the Germans were waiting for. Every man was across, we had no covering fire. In comes the artillery, in comes the mortar, the tank fire, machine gun fire, and we're laying on both sides of the road in what you would call the gutter. And I said to Bill and Mike Bellamo, "I'm goddamned if I'm going to lay here and die or get killed. Let's move". And Bill was a machine gunner, and I was the assistant, and Mike Bellamo is our assistant squad leader who's in charge of machine gun emplacement. And we moved out, out of this gully, out into the flat land and started firing. And we fired and moved, and fired and moved. I think, I don't know, but I really think, that this was the basis of the success of the Battle of Carentan, because everybody was in a gutter.

Mr. Evans: Pinned down.

Mr. Stroup: Pinned down. Would not move. They couldn't fire, and they're in single fire. And we moved out to the flank and started fire and movement with our machine gun and finally our first sergeant joined us and as a result of that he got the Distinguished Service Cross, the company commander got the Silver Star, and Bill and I got a Bronze Star.

Interviewer 2: You got put in for a Silver Star.

Mr. Stroup: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: I don't know if it's true, you got put in for the MOH and the other.

Mr. Stroup: Whether people are aware of it, that during that time, there were allocations made as to how many top line decorations could be awarded to a unit. This sounds awful strange, but that's the gospel truth. We were allowed to have four Silver Stars in our battalion.

Interviewer: Is that the reason you got a Bronze?

Mr. Stroup: And numerous Bronze Stars, and one Distinguished Service Cross. I'm talking about Normandy, I'm not talking about the whole war, I'm talking about Normandy.

Mr. Garofano: Oh, I can't see that.

Mr. Stroup: Well, that's true.

Mr. Evans: Well, that's their rules.

Mr. Stroup: That's true. That was the rule.

Mr. Evans: You fix them rules in Washington. You don't have nothing to do with them.

Mr. Stroup: Who do you know that got Silver Stars? You got Clements and (indiscernible) Jones.

Mr. Garofano: I know Clements did, he told me he got the Silver Star.

Mr. Stroup: And the only one that got a Distinguished Service Cross was Odom. And he gets a battlefield commission.

Mr. Garofano: He gets a DSC?

Mr. Stroup: Yeah, from this action, I'm talking about.

Mr. Evans: From Carentan.

Mr. Garofano: I wasn't there, see.

Mr. Evans: Well, we were there (indicating Mr. Stroup).

Mr. Stroup: Well, we all got wounded. That was the end of that.

Interviewer: And that takes us up to the end of the war, right?

Mr. Stroup: The end of the war.

Mr. Evans: As far as we were concerned.

Mr. Garofano: That was about when most of the action was over with.

Mr. Stroup: One little story, and then you can close. Because I can always remember this and it's - the war's over, this is a different time. We're at Mourmelon, and this is before the Battle of the Bulge, in the month that we were there. And this particular night, I know Bill Evans was there, and I was there, and Frank was there. But we go into this town of Mourmelon Le Petite, and get stoned. And on the way home, here comes an MP up with a Harley Davis '45 that had to be as long as this bed and wanted to know if we wanted a ride. Now, I don't know when you got on that motorcycle, but there were five of us on that motorcycle.

Mr. Evans: Who was on the handlebars?

Mr. Stroup: Me.

Mr. Evans: I was there behind you.

Mr. Stroup: A bottle of champagne in the hands, I'm on the front fender of that motorcycle, arms around the handlebars like this, going over this potbellied stove and I'm laughing so damn hard because I know I'm going to get run over. And he finally stopped. But there was five people on that motorcycle and the driver. And took us three miles back to camp. And that's when we got in our football game...

Mr. Evans: It's a good thing he took us back, too (indiscernible).

Mr. Garofano: Now I'll tell a good one that happened to me. My specs on what I did in the service - I was listed as a truck driver because I was in the Engineers at one time and - anyway, we're in Mourmelon, we just come back, and I get sent down to pick up a truck to pick up some prisoners and take them down to Mourmelon Le Petit, the little village, and bring them to the granary - they had to work in the granary, where they'd grinding the corn, and rats are running all over the granary there, and - let them work there - at dinnertime I'd have to bring them back to the stockade - they were prisoners, see - American prisoners, and I'd pick them up again, bring them down after dinner, and after dinner, I says, the hell, I went downtown while they were working - a little village, right in the town. And I'm drinking wine there, so I go back, I'm feeling good. So I tell all the guys, hey, the hell with them, let's go down to the village. Well anyway, I bring the guys down to Mourmelon Le Petit, and we're drinking wine. Well, there was a little old lady, said "no more, no more", so I got the gun out, I'm pointing at the lights there so I'm going to shoot all the lights out. So she brought more wine out. So jeez, the guys are all stiff, I was stiff. I goes back, I drop them off. One of the guys - they were our guys, he says, Garofano, what the hell did you do here? They're all stiff. Well, anyway, I left the truck there and I went back to Mourmelon, you know, to the barrack. But anytime they had to use a truck in my company I was called, because I was a truck driver, listed on the specs. A truck driver and carpenter, I was listed as. When we went back to Mourmelon, they had me building tables for the - to eat on. I was listed as a truck driver and a carpenter.

Mr. Evans: Yeah, I remember you (indiscernible) the Jeeps - putting the sides on. A carpenter too.

Mr. Garofano: That's all from what I done before I joined the Airborne. They had that on my record.

Interviewer: Is there any more stories that you can recall? You probably could tell stories all day long, but do you got one any favorite?

Mr. Garofano: I could tell you things that are not - that I couldn't say on the record.

Interviewer 2: Only Evans was never in trouble.

Mr. Garofano: This guy was like a saint.

Mr. Stroup: Yeah.

Mr. Evans: I'm glad you guys finally realized it.

<end of interview>