

Lew Painter

Interviewer: I'd like to begin just by introducing yourself.

Mr. Painter: My name is Lew Painter and during the war I was in the 10th mountain division. The division was formed up in Camp Hill, Colorado and trained there too and then moved to Camp Swift, Texas for maneuvers. And then on to Italy and I have the map of Italy there if we want to get into that at some point in time. But that's to begin with so you can ask questions.

Interviewer: Could you tell me a little bit about what you did before the war?

Mr. Painter: Before the war I was working in an electrolytic zinc plant and similar to but not as high tech as the one in Clarksville, Tennessee. I started in that plant as a laborer and I guess when I finally ended up I was general manager plant. But in between I was moved up through the ranks of operator, swing operator and foreman and so on and I was at the foreman level when the war broke out. And when of course I had been through this before but when the war broke out there was no necessity for me to go into the service because the zinc industry was a defense industry. And what that meant was that you were presumably more valuable where you were then where you would be in the service. But as time went on I decided that really I was missing out on something. So I had them cancel my deferment and was immediately then inducted into the service. Which I went into in Saint Lewis County and there I was assigned to the Army. You had some kind of choice you know and I just chose the Army instead of the Navy. And at that particular induction point I had to make kind of a decision their advice as to which branch to go into that turned out to be in the artillery. The training for the artillery was in Camp Roberts, California. And which is a wonderful part of the country if you've been there. And training there was a place very close to oh gosh what was the name of those little bitty towns. Well Hunter Liggett was the area that they trained in but kind of mildly rolling hills and wonderful California weather. And that was a three months training session there. And during that period of time I kind of gravitated to what they called forward observer group. And forward observer groups always move with the infantry because they were with the infantry to call back fire commands to the guns and then they of course would fire on the enemy. But while I was in that position I finally came to the conclusion that I couldn't get into the officers training core because they were all filled up and no need for them. And so I looked around for something that just might be what I call fun and what I found out was there was an outfit being formed in Camp Hale Colorado and it was called the ski troops. The only problem was you just couldn't say that you wanted to go there. You had to volunteer and you had to bring with you what people thought you could stand that kind of climate. So that came through and I took office at Camp Roberts not Camp Roberts, Camp Hale which was about 8,000 feet high in the Rockies in Leadville fairly close to Leadville which was close to 10,000 feet. And it was winter time when I made that trip move left the railroad station by a ski trooper and a very tuff looking guy but very well set up. And he took me to Camp Hale which was probably 2,000 feet away from the station and then the station itself was pretty small and this guy got me set up. And when we got there everything seemed to be pretty dead no movement anywhere. I could see things were lined up and we may have some pictures in there. But any event I needed clothing and equipment then I asked which one of the buildings was I supposed to go to and he said you don't go to any of the buildings because the troops were in the field. And when the

troops were in the field well everybody sleeps outside. And so I said where is that and he said out there in that open area probably one or two foot of snow out there. So I just had to lay my equipment down in the snow pulled out a sleeping bag and climbed in the sleeping bag and got woke up the next morning kind of in icy cold water cause it soaked the sleeping bag. And so from then on I just waited until the troops came back and then we had to decide which particular position particular company and I think I ventured to the 10th mountain division it moved it's artillery on mules. So when you moved forward the infantry marched forward and the guns came up behind them and I think it was 6 mules per gun. And the guns were broken down where you would put the barrel on one the wheels on another and so on. And you had a unit there could be set up in about 6 minutes there to fire. So from then on it was maneuvers rather than what you would call basis training. The skiing instruction was over with and so I didn't get in on any of that. The equipment that I was given to move on in that kind of snowy condition were snow shoes and the snow shoes in my case there were two types of snow shoes. One would about as high as that camera as yours and the other were what they call bear paws which were about this shape and about this wide and you just tromped along in them. Which when you maneuvered in that country it was totally impossible to move without skies or snow shoes you'd go deep in the snow I tried it once or twice and you know you would have snow up to your chin you know just flounder. You'd be gone in no time at all trying to move like that. So any event that was the main purpose up there just seemed to formularize yourself with your equipment and figure out how to stay alive. Brutal temperatures down to 35 and 40 degrees below zero. And I can remember some of those marches that we went on one in particular I guess the whole battalion was out in the field at one time and we had marched all day long and we came to a group of trees there were some trees there pine trees and then we just kind of set up camp there. Setting up camp meant that you dug a hole in the snow about two or three feet deep so that you could just dig a place out and fill it with some pine bowls and put your sleeping bag in there and that was that was where you stayed for the night. Except for this particular case I no sooner had that dug crawled into my sleeping bag and the orders came to move out. I never even got to sleep over night there and then we started marching again. And it was all straight up into the mountains.

Interviewer: Did these dugouts did they keep you any warmer?

Mr. Painter: No they didn't keep you any warmer you were out from the wind that was about it you know. You mean snow in the bowls and the hole in the ground?

Interviewer: Yeh I just wondered if the reason why you had to dig the hole.

Mr. Painter: No otherwise you'd do it the way I did it the first time you'd melt you way down in the snow. But any event we started off it was pitch black but in this particular maneuver they were breaking train of what they call snow weasel and this thing was kind of built like a tank but very very small painted white and the tracks would kind of beat the snow down and troops would come in behind that with the mules camels and so on. But as time went on every now and then this weasel would break down you know have to be dug out again and started up again. There would be long breaks so you're just standing there in the middle of and people began to freeze their feet you know. And then the order came down from the general that time said keep moving nobodies supposed to stand still keep

stomping up and down so you can keep your blood circulating so you don't freeze your feet. I don't know how many people froze their feet that night there was a lot. But the order came down keep stomping and if anybody freezes his feet you will be court marshaled. Kind of a rough outfit you know. And that went on I guess way into the night and finally they just decided to call it off until the morning. And then you just lay where you could find, no more trees we were way above the tree line by that time. And I can remember getting into my sleeping bag and my boots were frozen to my socks. It was not a very comfortable situation. But then that was the sort of thing we went through we went through various sort of maneuvers up there. But the concept of how you did it was pretty rough. So I guess up in that area we went through the basic maneuvers I learned how to use the radio call commands down and so on. And eventually winter came to an end and when it did they ordered the entire division to Texas. That meant that you went down to Texas where it was hot you know. A lot of the soldiers had a bad time down in Texas I didn't I was born in Texas.

Interviewer: Did they issue you new equipment for the weather change or were you still carrying your winter gear?

Mr. Painter: Yeh all of your ski troop equipment was taken away and you were just given normal khakis and fatigues and that sort of thing. And it was just kind of big I guess whole division treatment you know the maneuvers to prepare you for the action in Italy. We finally had heard that's where we going to Italy. So I guess we spent maybe three or four months in Texas then we were shipped to Italy. And if you want to bring that map over I'll

Interviewer: What do you remember from the trip across the Atlantic?

Mr. Painter: Well first at that time they were sinking the troop ships so that sort of thing was happening a lot of ships were sunk. At this point in time the British and the Americans had been successful in their campaign in Africa and they had already invaded into Sicily and into Italy itself and began to march up the North more populous part of Italy. In my particular case all of this thing had been covered through here and fighting was in what they called the Athenians to us they were little bitty mountains compared to

Interviewer: So where did you land do you remember?

Mr. Painter: Where we landed was first in Naples and probably we spent maybe a week in Naples and no kind of military maneuvers we just there ready for more transports. So we had some free time and part of it was I was able to go down to Pompeii you've hear of Pompeii. And that was a very interesting things to see Pompeii was an Italian city that was wiped out I guess probably the time of Christ you see. And so very little time spent in Naples.

Interviewer: You spent a week in Naples?

Mr. Painter: About a week in Naples and then from Naples we took just one of these tram steamers it was a coastal steamer it was a terrible ship dirty very dirty smelled. And we went from Naples past Anzio where there had been very very fierce fighting in the Anzio area a lot of people were killed. They

were trapped on the beach and the Germans were on the high ground and just wiped a lot of people out. And then we went up here into Leghorn and it was winter up here and we were put on jeeps the mules were with us but they were disembarked on another ship. Incidental there were something in the mark of five or six thousand mules assigned to that division five or six thousand. But went by jeep up in to the Athenians and then of course the fighting was there and we were pushing from that point on towards the Prow River and the Alps were up in this area. So the game plan for our division was to fight our way through the Athenians across the Cole River and on up into the higher country here. So most of the fighting I saw was in the Athenians and there was still fight across the Cole River and fighting continued across this area and when we hit this little town called Malchasin the war in Europe ended at that particular period of time. So all of my fighting experience was in this general area. During that period of time I spent probably at least 90 percent of my time with the infantry and not with the artillery. The artillery was back there behind me but we were moved with the infantry and instructed back. The experiences there were amazing the trouble was trying to keep alive and not the weather conditions themselves. I guess we had maybe a month or so of snowy weather then most of the time was pretty good weather. As far as my experiences there I guess I ended up with two bronze stars.

Interviewer: Would you mind telling how you received those?

Mr. Painter: You know I was never quite sure why I got the bronze stars the decision you know our officer would give I can't think of anything that special trying to stay alive mainly. But there's no question about the German troops my feeling was they were the best that you could be. They had their won ski troops and they were very good fighters. Because the type of war where it was just one mountain after the next. You'd take one mountain and when you did that there was always another one behind that one mountain by mountain you fought your way up. I was never wounded but I was I guess completely knocked out my enemy fire because I was reported as killed in action. The last that they saw of me I was laying beside of the road with a bunch of infantry. I don't remember the incoming fire that took me out but when I came to I was just covered with bodies' people on top of me. I had to push my way out of that I guess probably 15 or 20 soldiers were killed at that time. So it was just luck on my part. One of the interesting experiences it's kind of funny really we were up on one of these mountains and we'd just taken there was just a group of four of us climbing thins mountain by our self then we were calling down fire on the next mountain. And we had just arrived there and we were all digging fox holes for protection and I heard one of my comrades there he yelled to me we were at different spots you never want to get too close together here in your fox holes. And he called out to me he said Lew you hear something and I said no I didn't hear anything my hearings not too good anyway so no sound for a while and he said Lew you sure you didn't hear anything no I said I didn't hear anything and about five minutes later he said Lew get over here with your carbon. I grabbed my carbon and dashed up the hill to where he was and this was a sergeant he was standing there with an entrenching tool in his had held like it was a riffle you know and there was a German soldier in front of him you know and he had his riffle and his P38 which was a German pistol, I'll show you that in a minute, and a couple of what they called potatoes mashers that's the German type of hand grenade. It looked like a potatoes masher and they'd keep it in their boot or their belts he had about three of those so he was holding up this German soldier with his entrenching tool and the German soldier was trying to aim his riffle at him. So in actual

fact there was really no danger the German could have taken the whole position if he had wanted to. And so I had to come up and disarm him and one of the things I disarmed him of was his P38 which I have. Now this is a P38 I'll take this out of here. But that is a German P38.

Interviewer: So you disarmed the German and you managed to keep the gun all these years?

Mr. Painter: I managed to keep the gun. The fact of the matter is from the time I left Italy I had I think 5 pistols all together.

Interviewer: Five pistols?

Mr. Painter: Five pistols this is interesting too this is a belt that they wore of course.

Interviewer: Do you have any idea what this is?

Mr. Painter: Yeh God is with us, turned out it didn't work that way.

Interviewer: And what happened to the other pistols?

Mr. Painter: The others were not picked up on the battle field we had captured the division captured a big dump and there were pistols all over the place. And I got three Berettas brand new Berettas still with the original grease on them. Then there was one release pistol I picked up just laying there on the battle field. It was kind of funny the war was over but then they came out with an E-deck you know. And that was everybody who has captured conditions you know was supposed to turn it in and nobody ever did. Never a single gun was turned in to my knowledge anywhere. Then they'd have another E-Day they kept reminding you that you had to turn in these guns. Finally when they came out with the third E-Day if you do have any guns you have to have them registered and then we will give them back to you then the guns came flowing in. I had all of mine listed there serial numbers and so on. But the three brand new Berettas over the years they've all disappeared I don't know where they went to. Moves or robberies or whatever I was just left with this.

Interviewer: It's got an interesting story with it.

Mr. Painter: Oh yeh a comedy.

Interviewer: Have you ever fired that pistol?

Mr. Painter: Oh yeh I guess I did that firing here in Clarksville for the first time. I mentioned this like that zinc plant here in Clarksville I was in charge of the original design and construction and the start up and the operation so I was fully in charge of the whole thing from start to finish. Final title I think was Executive VP and Chief Operating Officer of that. And it was as I say like the one in East St. Louis only much more modern and the one in East St. Louis went way back in time but the original cost to renovate that plant put it into existence was I think something like I think it was about 8 million dollars. When we built this plant in Clarksville it was 150 million dollars. And about the same touch now how did I get off on that.

Interviewer: That's fine I always like to ask people what did they do after they got out of the service.

Mr. Painter: Well what I did when I got out of the service was to go back to that same plant and same job I had was there waiting for me and then on in that operation I was just progressing bit by bit forward you know. At one point in time at that time I was what you call the department head in the tyro metal portion of the plant and the company that I was with made a deal with a company in Utah to build and operate a uranium plant. Uranium of course was at the end of the Second World War so I was with that operation for about six years. I went into that with the top job you see never changed no place else to go. And that went on for six years until the company I had been with sold.

Interviewer: Going back to your time in Italy do you remember what your first experience in combat was like?

Mr. Painter: Yeh I remember that fairly well it was I guess one of the fairly large mountains that was taken there and we move forward as a group of four of us we moved forward to match up with the infantry and then we got there the place that I had arrive was right at the top of this hill mountain and the Germans were fairly littered around the area. And the captain from our outfit I guess had gotten out there somehow before we did and I could see that it was probably his first taste of real combat you know. Had a pretty white face I thought you know so up there it was just kind of consolidate the position and then almost immediately move forward that was kind of down the hill to get to the next mountain. Of course the Germans had always occupied these places and new exactly where everything was and then they would be on the next mountain with their guns zeroed in on the trails so we took off with the infantry and I guess we was moving fairly close together too close I think we were no more than five or ten feet apart and we exposed the infantry and they landed I think it was probably a 88 shell that landed and probably about two or three men were in front of me and pretty well blew them apart and knocked me down didn't put me out. And then we just continued on from there it was a pretty heavy experience. And we talked about these mules the mules really were never really used except as carrying cannons what they were used for was to carry the division forward with the guns and to carry the dead back. So you would have two strings of mules' one going forward and one coming back with the dead. So that was the first action that we had there and there were many many more of course that was the first. But I remember the one of these little classes one of these little boys asked were you ever afraid and I couldn't ever remember really being afraid. You just did these things you know you got a little nervous from the statistics you know but not everything else. So that was that was the mountain fighting there and they finally got through the mountains and there was the Pole valley in upper Italy and there was pretty sharp fighting on the crossing of the Pole River but the Germans by that time were moving back pretty fast. So you'd just be going forward and you'd see littered Germans lying beside the road and that sort of thing. Gunning places blown up and but it was in such close pursuit there was one time and I don't remember many details about this but there was one time when the two columns got mixed up the Germans retreated and I was in the dark you know going forward when they found out that the enemy was amongst us you know. So they just gave up and that was that. The Pole Valley crossing was a little nerve racking because the German guns were in position you know kind of appose that but there was little apposing the army at that point. But later on as we crossed the Pole plain and started moving into the smaller mountains again towards the Alps then there was some pretty sharp fighting at a town

called Mount Chaisley. And that was on Lake Garda and incidentally that particular town was very close to another town across the lake there where Mousaleanie and his mistress I guess were finally killed by partisans and strung upside down and hung over the ledge. And I can remember the Italians showing me these pictures you know and expecting me you know to be so happy to see that. It didn't strike me that way. I never did pick up one of the photographs either. But in that area of Mount Chaisley well we were still moving forward and the Germans kind of in the hills now you see and zeroed in on us so it was fairly fierce fighting and the division split three ways one of them stayed up in the mountains to the right one of them went through one group went through a railroad tunnel and the third group on the left which I was with crossed Lake Garda and then all three prongs moved forward. But the ones that took the tunnels got into really bad trouble. They were marching advancing through the tunnels and the Germans had their artillery aimed straight into the tunnels. We lost a lot of people before the other ends came together. But the war did finally end in Mount Chaisley. And after that happened we were sent clear to the Yugoslavian border and the purpose of that was to prevent the communist forces moving across trying to take over part of Italy. And our job was to stop them and I can remember I can remember an officer called this meeting together and said you know now the Poles are confronted with these communist coming across the Yugoslavian border and he said you want to remember they wear red scarves with kind of blue sowing on the edge then he said maybe it wasn't that maybe it was red scarves and blue trimming or vice versa. He said I guess the only thing we can say is that if they shoot at you you shoot at them. But nothing ever happened they just gradually faded away and I guess we stayed up there about three months. A beautiful little Italian town Carkenta and I guess about five or ten miles from the border. And while we were up there I guess they decided they had to keep the troops occupied so it was another volunteer thing if you wanted to volunteer for training on glaciers you could do that or course I had to volunteer for that. But that took us into Austria and in Austria I guess one of the highest mountains in the Alps there this particular place and the mountain was called Goolsclotter and it was trailed this glacier down into the valley and what we would do was go out on this glacier and climb down in there crevasses' and climb up these ice cliffs. It was kind of thrilling I wouldn't call it dangerous but it was thrilling. Part of the deal there was that there was going to be what they call a mass climb Goolsclotter. And that would be the whole group which at that time was about 30 or 40 people up there. We were occupying a camp set up by the ski troops German ski troops so we were using all of their equipment to do the climbing and the rope and so on. And that's some of the equipment there.

Interviewer: Why don't you describe it?

Mr. Painter: This is what is called an ice ax the use of that tool war to climb on ice that means you would use this to chip out toile holes on the ice. And one other use you could put it to if you were on an icy slope and you wanted to go down the slope you could kind of squat down on your boots taking off the crampons and these are called crampons and they are used to walk on ice.

Interviewer: So you would fit these over your boots?

Mr. Painter: Yeh you would tie those over your boots and you could very comfortable walk on ice without slipping at all. Then coming back if you wanted to go fast you would take the crampons off and

squat down and use the ice ax as a break. If you wanted to go a little faster release the tension. There were three of us that decided we were tired of climbing the glacier and decided to climb the mountain. As it turned out we got to the top I got some pictures over there. We were the only ones to climb Goosclother. And when we got back from that climb there were order issued and that was

Interviewer: See which one is that? Are you in one of these pictures?

Mr. Painter: Yeh this is me here this is me over here this was an infantryman here that's me.

Interviewer: How cold was it?

Mr. Painter: Oh that wasn't bad it was freezing of course you know compared to Colorado Rockies it was nothing. It was ice but it wasn't 30 below zero. So that's where I got all of this stuff. At the end they said anything you want take it. So gosh it was the whole sale stripping of the place you know. People were taking skies. For myself I took these two ice axes and the crampons and a little pea tons you know pea tons? Pea tons is when you're climbing on rock or ice you can hammer it into crevasses you see.

Interviewer: Is it like a stake?

Mr. Painter: Yeh but just bare rock you would drive it into a crevasse and hang on to that. So many how we al left there and the orders were to go back to Japan head for Japan. Japan was still in the war.

Interviewer: You were scheduled to go back to the United States before hand right?

Mr. Painter: Yeh it was a delay in route in other words the destination was Japan and guess they figured that the Tef Mountain was good enough the hills or maintains over in Japan. But I never got there. Actually the war ended when I was in St. Louis, Missouri which was where I lived. Al of a sudden the war was over. So I went on to Colorado that was one of the places the division was coming in again. I guess I spent three months there waiting for the war in Japan to end you know totally end. That's about it.

Interviewer: When you were in Europe what kind of kind of personal items did you keep with you?

Mr. Painter: Personal items?

Interviewer: Like letters form home.

Mr. Painter: Well there were letters from home of course that I had and so on and so forth. I can remember my wife at that time sent me two daggers. What she envisioned I guess as combat when you had one had on a dagger and it never quit came down to that and I think I finally ended up just giving them away to some people that came into the division. I guess that's about it, any other questions?

Interviewer: I'm going to check then and I'd appreciate it if you would show me some of the pictures that you drew.

Mr. Painter: Had training so he turned out some pretty interesting stuff.

Interviewer: So were you trained to draw?

Mr. Painter: Myself no I just learned along the way. I never did come up to his standards. This one I drew of myself and that was in route to Japan

Interviewer: So this was after your tour in Italy was over?

Mr. Painter: That's when the tour of Italy was over and the war in Japan was still going on at the time I did that on the East Coast when we were probably a week on the East Coast before we took off.

Interviewer: So is there something behind this expression on your face?

Mr. Painter: No I just looked in the mirror and drew it. But I guess that's the way I looked at the time. This is on the glacier there I had some of my stuff laid out.

Interviewer: So how thick was the ice?

Mr. Painter: Oh maybe at that particular place where we climbed maybe 500 feet something like that. One of the things you had to watch out for on that sort of thing were what they called crevasses you know a crevasse is a big crack in the ice where it will just open up. One interesting thing this group of three of us that climbed Goosclother we had reached the top and were coming down and we were trying to make time because it was pretty late in the day and we were using this technique that I talked about where you take off your crampons and just use your ice ax to break yourself slide down the ice. One of us not me but one of the three he got to going too fast e wasn't breaking properly you know and all of a sudden he just looked like a cartwheel ice ax just going in one direction and rolling down the face of that icy slope and I guess the only thing that saved him was he hit a crevasse which was not a big one you know about so wide and when he got into it he was able to get his arms on both sides and just hang into it until we got to him and pulled him out. Of course there very dangerous you could fall maybe 100 or 200 feet down those things with it slowly getting and just crush your self.

Interviewer: And you volunteered for this.

Mr. Painter: Then you'd be there for eternity. Now here's one of his the fellows name was Coil and this is up in the Rockies.

Interviewer: So would you just draw these in your spare time?

Mr. Painter: Sketching? Yeh in my spare time. And that went on in Italy just in our nap sacks carry some paper and you could sketch. These again were his sketches. We all hated the mules.

Interviewer: Did you ever have to take care of them?

Mr. Painter: Not me I some how got out of it. That was bad bad news. But I'll tell you one thing this was down in Texas and as I say there were 5 or 6 thousand mules taken down to Texas with us when we went down there. And there was no use for them at all really not much you know maybe a few. So that meant that most of them were out on what you would call a picket line. And they'd stretch out God knows how long all those mules side by side tied to the picket line and so I was sent out there one time to wash the mules and check on how they were tied to the picket line. So I was out there all alone and at

that time it had been raining a lot and these mules had been there about a month or so and then the rain and they'd be stomping up and down and so it was just a sea of mud and horse manure or mule manure terrible at best. But I had to get into the picket line itself once and do that and I had to get my body through these mules and that was not easy to do now I'd get in there and I'd bang one on this side and one on that side and finally one of the mules raised his hind leg and slammed it down on my foot. Actually just tore the leather off so here I was with this mule standing on my foot and I just hammered trying to kick him myself and get him to move and he just wouldn't move. So finally I worked myself loose by then I was so mad at those mules I took about ten steps back you know took a running kick at it and when I did the mule moved and I missed and I kicked myself right off my feet down in that slush. The mule's revenge. This was the fellow that was the artist here.

Interviewer: What are these letters from home? I know this looks like a telegram. This is just a change of address I guess I don't know what this is here. I was living at University City at St. Louis at that time. These are one of the first ones I made.

Interviewer: Which one?

Mr. Painter: I think I did both of these. And I kind of labeled this one. This was another soldier. This was the top sergeant and I tell you now sergeants in that outfit were really really tuff people. This is this was Carl I did this of my friend. Carl I think he was a sergeant big big tuff guy I remember when the march was on in Colorado you would finally get to a place where you could stop and I would just drop wherever I was and he'd just stand there with his pack on jogging up and down to keep occupied. But he got killed in Italy artillery fire. This was a forward observer team and this fellow was the lieutenant in charge.

Interviewer: Do you know the name of the people?

Mr. Painter: They were myself here this fellows name is Miller but this fellow finally ended up president of the 10th Mountain Division group of veterans. But he's now dead.

Interviewer: Do you still keep in contact with some of your buddies?

Mr. Painter: A little bit but that only happened very recently what in the last three or four years something like that. Finally got back in touch and joined this little group that meets here and there you know around the United States and the ones with enough money go to Italy.

Interviewer: Have you ever been back?

Mr. Painter: Oh I've been back but not on one of those I been back a number of times. So I saw some of the old places and I went back to Tarshental a town we ended up in on the Yugoslavian border. I had some very very good friends over there Coil and I would go into that place and have dinner with some of the Italian people and one trip I made back there I drove and almost like a flash back I was passing buildings that were semi destroyed and I thought by now they would have cleaned up this mess. But what I found out was that there had been a serious earthquake I even have a book that covers that and destroyed a good part of the town completely. This was my wife at the time. This I think I had just one

leave of absence when I was over there. I took just about a week and went back to Rome and saw the sights. Gergunson he started out just a private like the rest of us but he ended up a first sergeant. When the unit began to break up he took over that job. This is one of my paintings here or sketches. This was as I say we were with the infantry most of the time really usually separate from them a little bit but in this one case this infantry man lived with us in huts you know we were in so I sketched him. He was I guess a fellow that had been through pretty bad things badly wounded. And he looked it too. One of my sketches this I think was coils.

Interviewer: What are these playing cards?

Mr. Painter: Playing cards yeh.

Interviewer: Did you play a lot of cards in your spare time?

Mr. Painter: Practically none no I just thought they looked good. I don't know who this was. This man committed suicide. Why I don't know he did. This was when the war ended in this little town and I painted this or sketched this from a hotel we were that we stayed in.

Interviewer: So this was your hotel?

Mr. Painter: No this was almost next door to it you know. Look out the window and see this old castle. Now again this was the lieutenant that was with us.

Interviewer: What did you think of your officers? Did you think they were well trained they knew what they were doing?

Mr. Painter: Yeh I thought so. I will say this I didn't really think he was the bravest man I ever saw. I can remember one case we were up on this mountain we had been there for a couple of days and I was on the radio and the order the order came through on the radio to move forward to the next mountain. So I passed that on to lieutenant Marshall here and nothing seemed to be happening and finally I went from my dugout back to his and I said what about that order to move forward he said let's forget about it.

Interviewer: He wasn't in a hurry.

Mr. Painter: He wasn't about to move forward. But I a very fine guy. That's equipment that I carried there. When it came to you know equipment that you carried the weight you carried I guess the normal pack would be about 90 pounds that you carried on you back.

Interviewer: And you had to climb mountains with this on your back?

Mr. Painter: Yeh and I tell you I didn't think you could do things like that but you were just going up these hills and carrying these tremendous loads and it's all you could do to get enough oxygen to survive and just straining to breath as much in as you could. Yeh this is what came out of the newspaper about Mousaleenie.

Interviewer: And this is where Mousaleenie was killed right?

Mr. Painter: Yeh I guess that's it. I don't know did you l've got some pictures here. That was the 10th Mountain Division there. The way the ski troopers dress. You had white suit of clothes that you normally didn't ware unless you were on an actual maneuver in the snow. And that's kind of a campaphodge sort of thing.

Interviewer: So you would blend in with the snow and the ice?

Mr. Painter: Yeh And if there was ever a sight it was to sit there beside of a trail and see the infantry go by on skies just totally soundless you know swishing by. This is a monument here I think that's in Fort Drum.

Interviewer: Looking back on things to you ever wish you would have stood in a different line at the recruiting at the induction station?

Mr. Painter: No I was after it was all over I was satisfied but while it was going on I wished I were somewhere else because that's some of the most rugged training I've ever seen. As I say Italy was just a cake walk compared to Camp Hale as far as conditions were concerned. This is German equipment here and that is an 88 mm and those are probably one of the more feared weapons n that war the 88s. They were a line of sight sort of things so the Germans could have their placements and just fire fire at the Americans just a shooting gallery. So it was probably one like this that took out the batch that hit me. This book was published I think when I was out of the country so I didn't get in on any of this personally. Oh the Leaning Tower of Pisa we got to see some sights. Saw that on the way back from Goosclother to part of dismemberment in Italy. But I did get to go up in the tower.

Interviewer: While you were in Italy how much leave time were you given?

Mr. Painter: There was only two leave times that I remember. One was a very short one maybe two days something like that. Time to go into this one little town they were putting on I remember the Italians were putting on a kind of an Opera and this is the first time I ever saw an Italian Opera.

Interviewer: Could you speak any Italian?

Mr. Painter: No that's been on e of my problems you know I've worked out in the world in a number of places spent I guess three years in Tiland and never learned that language I tried but it's extremely difficult and I spend I guess five or six years off or on in Brazil and Peru but never learned that language.

Interviewer: When you were in Italy how were the civilians that you were around? Were they friendly to You?

Mr. Painter: Oh very friendly see by the time we got over there the Italians had surrendered they were out of the war. And they fought with us they had what they called these partisan groups and they acted largely as guides you know. But I can remember being in some of these Italian villages and seeing some of these partisans come marching threw the town sort of formation singing these songs you know and dressed to the hilt you know this Alpine decor they call it. And the people that lived in Torshell everybody was friendly actually we were rescuing them from the Germans really.

Interviewer: I'm going to I'm just going to ask one more question and then we'll wrap this up but I always like to end by asking if you had to go back and do it over again would you still sign up would you still you know quit your job?

Mr. Painter: I think so. I think so. There were times particularly when we were training up there in the high Rockies I wished I was anywhere else in the world other than up there it's very very difficult.

Interviewer: You feel like it made you a better person coming out of it?

Mr. Painter: I think so I never regretted signing up for anything. And I don't think I would have been any further ahead as it turned out. As I said when I came back from overseas I got my old job back and ended up in charge of the whole plant in the process they were also sent me to Harvard.

Interviewer: Was this part of the GI Bill or was this part of

Mr. Painter: No it was the sort of thing it was called it was a Harvard Business School Program. And it was conducted for executives actually the thing was designed for people that were on the fast track to a presidency and unfortunately I didn't quite make it to the presidency but it was nice to have behind me and it served me a good stint at other jobs I had.

Interviewer: Okay well thank you.