

Interviewer: I'm here today with Mr. McCord and he's going to tell us a little bit about what he remembers from WWII. But first let's start early when were you born?

McCord: I was born July 7, 1924 and I was born right over here in Rigby about a half a mile from here.

Interviewer: So you were born and raised in Rigby Tennessee?

McCord: Well in Hickman County, we moved around. But that's where I was born was in Rigby.

Interviewer: Did you ever leave Hickman County?

McCord: Oh yeah, yeah I did when I was young back in about 42 you know everybody wanted to go to Detroit and work. So I made a trip up there and worked awhile.

Interviewer: How old were you?

McCord: I was 18 then.

Interviewer: You were 18 when you went to Detroit, wow. What was your full birth name?

McCord: John W. McCord.

Interviewer: Well when you were 18 years old and you moved to Detroit what year did you say that was in?

McCord: That was in I guess 42.

Interviewer: So the war had already

McCord: It was going

Interviewer: The war was already going so you was a 19 year old were you worried about being drafted?

McCord: Oh man I knew my number was up just about it.

Interviewer: How did that feel?

McCord: It didn't feel good.

Interviewer: I would imagine. Do you remember the day that Pearl Harbor was bombed?

McCord: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Where were you?

McCord: I was at home.

Interviewer: In Detroit?

McCord: No

Interviewer: Was you still here?

McCord: In Hickman County. Do you know where Mill Creek Road is?

Interviewer: I do.

McCord: Johnny Crow Road

Interviewer: I do

McCord: Okay second house down on the left. You know that little place? Right there's where I was and our whole family was together. Of course neighbors came in when they heard some of the boys that was in the same boat with me you know we talked about that.

Interviewer: What were your feelings were you scared?

McCord: Well I don't recon we were scared but we knew we figured what would happen from that and it did. So we knew us boys knew that we were going to have to go in the Army.

Interviewer: You didn't like that did you?

McCord: We dreaded it. But when you have to do something you just have to make the best out of it you can.

Interviewer: Right how many you say boys how many boys were there?

McCord: Oh there was three or four that lived right there on the road of course.

Interviewer: And all of you were about the same age?

McCord: Yeah about the same age.

Interviewer: So when were you drafted?

McCord: I believe it was April of 43.

Interviewer: Were you still in Detroit?

McCord: I was in Detroit I came home and left from Hickman County though.

Interviewer: What were you drafted into?

McCord: Just the regular Army.

Interviewer: Just Army okay.

McCord: Just the regular Army.

Interviewer: Where did you have to serve basic at?

McCord: Camp Shelby Mississippi, hot place a hot place.

Interviewer: A lot of the National Guard units in Tennessee and around the south still serve their two weeks in Camp Shelby Mississippi.

McCord: That's right

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about basic?

McCord: Yeah it was a sandy place and real real hot and getting up and running that two or three miles every morning.

Interviewer: About what time.

McCord: Oh about what 6:30 or 7 o'clock somewhere around there I guess. It was pretty rough it was pretty rough. It was so hot that a lot of the boys would fall out you know.

Interviewer: Did you ever?

McCord: Never, no I never fell out. I'd keep dragging it wasn't easy.

Interviewer: Can you recall anything or remember anything in basic that really just sticks out in your mind?

McCord: Yeah I can an old boy was smoking a cigarette and he thumped it over and he had to dig I believe it was maybe a 6 by 6 and bury that cigarette butt. That was pretty rough.

Interviewer: That was the army way.

McCord: That was the army way. He didn't filed strip it he just when he got done he just flipped it out on the ground somebody saw him and he had to pick it up and dig that hole and bury that thing.

Interviewer: Six by six hole.

McCord: Six by six.

Interviewer: Did you ever have to, did you ever encounter anything did you ever volunteer for anything or be punished for anything.

McCord: No you just you don't volunteer for anything in the army. No you have to work KP and stuff like that, of course the wasn't too bad.

Interviewer: Tell me a little about KP.

McCord: Well it was just a lot of potatoes to peel, pots and pans to wash and a lot of that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: Does that stand for kitchen patrol?

McCord: Yeah kitchen patrol. I can tell you what I did on KP I guess it was Christmas of 44. We were in a safe enough position that they brought the kitchen up and I was gonna have to furnish a man for KP the next day. I couldn't pick me out a man so I went to work KP all day long on Christmas Day. Peeling potatoes and washing pots and pans, doing whatever come along. So I figured that was a Christmas gift to them.

Interviewer: So how long did you serve in or how long did you have to go through basic training maybe I should say it that way?

McCord: Let's see it may have been about nine weeks I don't remember just exactly.

Interviewer: Nine weeks in basic?

McCord: Seems like it was.

Interviewer: And what time of the year was it was it in the summer?

McCord: It was in the summer yeah. Went in in April so

Interviewer: You went in in April of 42?

McCord: Forty three

Interviewer: Forty three?

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: An about how old were you?

McCord: I was 19.

Interviewer: Nineteen, so you were going to turn 20 in July.

McCord: That's right.

Interviewer: So you were

McCord: No wait a minute I'm telling you wrong here let me back up here I was 18.

Interviewer: Okay you were 18 and you were going to turn 19 in July.

McCord: Yeah 19 in July.

Interviewer: But that was still pretty old wasn't it I mean for the rest of the men that were there.

McCord: Well we were all about the same age.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: Just about the same age. But there was two men that didn't have to go when I left. They had two volunteers and me and an ole boy by the name of Grady Neely got to wait until the next call and we had to come back and go then. So somebody took our place for a month or two there.

Interviewer: After your nine weeks in basic, not nine weeks, where did you go from there?

McCord: Let's see I believe I believe I had to go to Fort Mead Maryland, Fort Mead Maryland.

Interviewer: At Fort Mead were you getting ready to ship off?

McCord: Getting ready to ship out. We moved out of there at night come down on the coast somewhere I believe it was North Carolina in the woods. And then we left out of there at night so it was pretty good security there.

Interviewer: How what did you travel on, on the ocean?

McCord: Oh I believe they call them liberty ships. It was small ships.

Interviewer: Right liberty ships. So can you estimate or do you have any idea about how many men were probably on that ship?

McCord: Probably I don't know probably 1,000 somewhere in that neighborhood.

Interviewer: Right in there around 1,000 yeah.

McCord: I know I slept out on deck for a few nights until it got rough and then they run us down below.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about the travel over there. Did you get sea sick?

McCord: No no I never did get sea sick.

Interviewer: Did a lot of other men?

McCord: A lot of men got so sick man they wouldn't have cared if you would have thrown them overboard I don't guess. Pitiful

Interviewer: Is there any experience that you had to encounter with someone getting sea sick around you?

McCord: Oh yeah they was everywhere really. But I was lucky I didn't get sea sick.

Interviewer: So being at Maryland and being shipped off you went to the European Theatre then?

McCord: Right well we went to Oran North Africa.

Interviewer: Well I was going to ask if you were involved in Operation Torus but no

McCord: No

Interviewer: That was already past.

McCord: The war was over in Africa.

Interviewer: Right so you Africa it was all over with in Africa because this is 43 right now.

McCord: That's right

Interviewer: So what division were you with?

McCord: Thirty sixth.

Interviewer: Now were you with them at this time?

McCord: No I was just going in for replacement.

Interviewer: So you were a replacement.

McCord: In Company B of the 141st infantry 36th division. What I started to tell you about Oran we got off the boat and there was a big dump there you know. And one of the guys that was stationed there told us that they would have to shoot somebody about every night trying to get into the dump to get commodities. So you know that stuck with me you know I couldn't think about somebody shooting somebody trying to get something to eat.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: You know that bothered me a little. And then we got on a troop train, now this is going to be a funny part.

Interviewer: Now this is in Africa right?

McCord: Right in Oran.

Interviewer: You're in Africa

McCord: Got on a troop train going to Casa Blanca.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: And it well I guess you would call it cattle cars you know cracks between the planks. Anyhow I was just resting because I couldn't go to sleep this big ole fat boy he stuck that big ole arm out there on the floor and said boy put your head on my arm and go to sleep said we've got to have some sleep around here. I did and I slept like a baby all night long. That would be something that I wouldn't do now you know.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: But now

Interviewer: You slept on his arm.

McCord: I slept on that guys arm and appreciated it.

Interviewer: That was a pillow.

McCord: Yeah it was a good pillow too I'll tell you. I've thought about that a lot. Never did see that guy no more.

Interviewer: Never did.

McCord: But he was just a good guy.

Interviewer: So at this time there were a whole lot of replacement officers or replacement men all on one train going ya'll were fixing to be scattered.

McCord: Just a whole train load of us yeah.

Interviewer: And ya'll were fixing to be scattered to any division that needed you.

McCord: All different places.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: Yeah we went to Casa Blanca and it was just a few days before Thanksgiving. They fed us a big Thanksgiving dinner though we had turkey and all the trimmings there. Living in tents but they treated us nice there.

Interviewer: That was at Casa Blanca?

McCord: Casa Blanca

Interviewer: Right tell me about what did you do after Casa Blanca or what did you do while you were there in Casa Blanca?

McCord: Well

Interviewer: How long were you there?

McCord: Oh I don't know a couple of three weeks maybe. We'd just get out and drill go to shows first one thing and another. Of course it rained all the time so we'd just make the best of it we could.

Interviewer: What was the feeling like when you got on that ship in Maryland knowing that you were going overseas and leaving the states?

McCord: It was a bad feeling really because you know you didn't know what you were going to get into. I guess that was the worst thing about it you didn't know what you were going to do.

Interviewer: So a lot of fear?

McCord: Yeah you had fear you had fear.

Interviewer: Were you already home sick or had basic already got that out of you?

McCord: Well basic had done got that out of me I guess really really and truly. But you thought about home a lot you know I had a younger brother he was like most boys he was pretty wild. So you know I'd think about him a lot whether Momma and Daddy could handle him or not.

Interviewer: While you were fixing to go fight in a war you were still concerned about the family and everything.

McCord: Yeah especially him because he was, I was always pretty quiet you know I guess I was a Momma's boy but oh he was, he was a character.

Interviewer: When did you leave Casa Blanca?

McCord: Let's see we left Casa Blanca between Thanksgiving and Christmas. So it would be probably about the first or second week of December. We went from Casa Blanca to Naples Italy.

Interviewer: So you went straight to Naples?

McCord: Straight to Naples.

Interviewer: And by this time of course Naples had already been taken.

McCord: Right

Interviewer: It was a safe haven basically a lot of hospitals had already been set up some of the major hospitals that the men were going back to were in Naples.

McCord: Right

Interviewer: What did you encounter in Naples when you docked?

McCord: Well when we docked they sent us out in a field there like or a square there like. And they would take certain ones to different places you know we were replacements and I left there and went to Company B the 141st Infantry.

Interviewer: I'd like to ask you about that. Here you all were in a field or whatever at one place and all of you together there. How did they go about choosing or getting the men to go to the different divisions?

McCord: Really I don't know. Somebody would come around and they would say you come go with me you know.

Interviewer: You never knew if it was going to be you or not.

McCord: That's right but later on I would go back a lot of times and get our replacements. You couldn't do that now but I would go down the line and ask the name you know where he was from and I'd get Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia and I tried to get boys that was right out in the country. I figured if they was right out in the country where they could rabbit hunt they knew how to handle a riffle.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: And that's where I'd get our replacements. And our company commander liked the replacements I would get so I'd get to go back and do that again. I enjoyed that too.

Interviewer: Well okay so now you've been chosen one day, somebody has come up and they've picked you out of the crowd and you are going to go ahead and repeat it again you're going to be in?

McCord: Company B 141st Infantry.

Interviewer: One Hundred and forty first Infantry.

McCord: And I stayed with that until I

Interviewer: Through the entire war.

McCord: Through the entire war.

Interviewer: Where did you go first after you were in the 141st?

McCord: We went about best I can remember they were about 50 or 60 miles above Naples. I can't remember the name of the little place but they were back at rest. And they were the camp was kindly on oh I guess you would call it the side of a mountain. And I remember walking up a little trail and when you started off of it there was a bunch of packs broken riffles beat up helmets, biggest pile of junk you ever saw. And I began to wonder then what in the world am I getting into. And we were living in tents on the side of that mountain. Did you ever see a pan of gas on fire? You ever see it burn?

Interviewer: Right

McCord: Okay that's what we had for heat. It was cold it was cold had the top of the tent opened a little you know.

Interviewer: This was in the winter time.

McCord: Winter time right.

Interviewer: And you were in Italy.

McCord: It was cold and rainy. And I remember one thing that happened there. Did you ever hear of the million dollar mountain?

Interviewer: No I haven't.

McCord: Okay

Interviewer: I've not heard of that.

McCord: Okay they threw a million dollars' worth of ammunition on this mountain. And then they had to send the infantry in there to dig the gentleman's out. So it was a racket that night all night long. That stuck to me.

Interviewer: Now were you involved?

McCord: No I wasn't involved. We were in these big tents.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: But it was nearby.

Interviewer: It was real nearby.

McCord: We could hear all of the artillery.

Interviewer: So I guess what happened what happened to you, here you are you are in Naples you have been chosen you already chosen you know what division you're in you've seen all of these beat up helmets and all this stuff. And it's really kind of put the fear in you.

McCord: It's shocking kind of shocking.

Interviewer: When did you first encounter well go ahead and tell us what was your job what was your assignment?

McCord: I was assigned to the 4th platoon the weapons platoon machine gun. And my first job was carrying two boxes of machine gun ammunition 250 rounds to a box. I weighed about 139 pounds you know and then two boxes of machine guns they got pretty heavy.

Interviewer: About how much did they weigh about?

McCord: I don't know what a box of machine gun ammunition weighs I guess what about 40 or 50 pounds or maybe more, they were heavy.

Interviewer: And so you were carrying them to the machine gunners?

McCord: Yeah you have in a weapons platoon you've got two machine gunners in the machine gun section. Then you've got a mortar section you've got three mortars and that makes up the 4th platoon. And I was chosen to carry the ammunition for one of the machine guns. I believe he had maybe two ammunition bearers per machine gun they'd give you four boxes.

Interviewer: So did you work with did you work with just one particular machine gunner?

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: So you worked with this one particular man?

McCord: One particular machine gun squad.

Interviewer: And okay machine gun squad. And so you where were you getting the supplies, where were you getting the ammunition?

McCord: Well we had a we had two jeeps at that time in the company and had a little trailer behind them and that's where we had our extra ammunition, mortar shells and machine gun ammunition.

Interviewer: So would you have to run back to this trailer and get these things?

McCord: No you'd have them with you they stuck right with you.

Interviewer: And what about when the ammunition was gone?

McCord: They'd bring you up some more.

Interviewer: They'd bring you up some more? Okay so you were just there to help

McCord: Carry the ammunition for the machine gun.

Interviewer: And did you ever have to use any mules or anything like that in Italy to carry some things?

McCord: No but I saw a lot of that done. They had regular teams that would carry supplies you know when you'd be in the mountains.

Interviewer: Right be in the mountains.

McCord: Mules they you kind of felt sorry for them ole mules loaded down like that.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: Trails were pretty narrow too it was rough going.

Interviewer: To continue on with your job about how long did you have to do this that assignment in particular?

McCord: Oh I didn't do that but just a short time.

Interviewer: What caused the change?

McCord: Well we left there this camp and then we went to you ever heard of Repeato River? Repeato River it was a swift swift little river. Let me tell you about where we were camped before we made the river crossing. This was neat I can see that and I've like to see it again right now but it was an old home place I feel like maybe the house had burnt sometime. And there was a barn set right across from where

we were dug in, I feel like we were dug in either in the garden or the yard. And the road into that old barn was cut down I don't know something like oh I'd say three or four foot. Down on one end was a big oak tree right across from where we were dug in was another oak tree now that's what I see when I think about this place, it had to be a beautiful place at one time. And we were about I guess a mile from the front line not over a mile. But what always bothered me you would have to walk guard and carry a riffle you know up and down this old road and I after later on what really bothered me about it we was that close to the line and walking guard carrying a riffle on your shoulder that way. So you know that bothered me.

Interviewer: you had to carry it on your shoulder you couldn't carry it in a ready position?

McCord: No

Interviewer: Why is that? Army way?

McCord: That was just our company commanders way of doing it I guess. You know in the army you do what your told to do.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: And I tried to do it just to the very best of my ability.

Interviewer: Yeah but I could see where you would be a little leery of it.

McCord: Yeah I was leery but I did it. I did it but it was against my better judgment.

Interviewer: Right you had to do a lot of things against your better judgment I suppose.

McCord: Yeah but now do you want me to tell you about getting to the river?

Interviewer: Sure tell me, yeah that would be great.

McCord: The roughest part of the war, I'm being honest with you now. We didn't know what we were getting into see we didn't even know the river was down there. And about dark one evening they said okay get all of your gear together we're moving out. We started down this little trail to the river well we hadn't gone I don't guess we'd gone three or four hundred yards until the shells started coming in. Do you know what an 88 is?

Interviewer: An 88

McCord: An 88 you've heard of an 88?

Interviewer: Eight eights

McCord: That's a fast shell you hear it fall here and you're on the receiving end.

Interviewer: Yeah

McCord: Okay the first I guess what was the first shell come in

Interviewer: Are you talking about the 88 mortar shell.

McCord: Eighty eight it's a big gun yeah it's a big gun. A piece of this shrap metal just took one of the boys just his right shoulder off took it completely off. And I felt real bad for him I just had to go over and pet him you know and talk to him.

Interviewer: Right human nature.

McCord: Yeah I went over and talked to him just a little. But what really hurt was having to leave him but we had to leave him the medics were there so he had some company. But then it got worse and worse I remember one little I guess it was a little drayage there where you come across the trail there was a lot of rock and sand you know built place I don't know four or five foot wide there. And of course the shells I didn't tell you about the boats, let me back up just a little I'm getting ahead of myself. We had about 12 men to a boat six men on each side and we didn't know what river we were crossing until they showed us the boats then we knew we was. Okay these shells would hit in the boat some of them.

Interviewer: Right in the middle of the men?

McCord: Take all of the men. And we got to one point this was a bad point this was the little gravel place I was telling you about. There was just parts of men there in boats. And the officers and the sergeants platoon leader they were gathered up on each side there just pulling the men through. Of course you didn't want to walk over there but that was a bad part of the war.

Interviewer: Yeah

McCord: But that was rough. That was a hard way to get broke in.

Interviewer: And that's the harsh reality of it also.

McCord: That's right but anyhow we'll get on down the river.

Interviewer: Okay now so at this time you were not in the river?

McCord: No we were just going down to the river.

Interviewer: You were going down to the river?

McCord: On this little trail. They were I don't know probably a few boats that made it but anyhow the boat that we were carrying we had our machine guns over in it. And our ammunition and got down to the river, this was the swiftest river you've ever seen in your life. We got the boat in the water and the water just took it, it was gone. There went our machine guns our ammunition and everything.

Interviewer: Couldn't hold it.

McCord: Couldn't hold it.

Interviewer: And they hadn't sent engineers along

McCord: They did a little later.

Interviewer: Okay

McCord: But some of them men would get in the boat the infantrymen the riflemen. But that water was so swift that they couldn't make it they were out in there just well they drowned that's all there is to it.

Interviewer: Yeah so swift it took them.

McCord: So they called in the engineers then and they built this little pontoon just wide enough to walk across and what was left.

Interviewer: Were you being shelled the whole time?

McCord: Yeah being shelled the whole time. That was the roughest I believe I was ever in.

Interviewer: And what made it so I guess what made it so rough in one part was you couldn't see who was shelling you and you couldn't in return fire.

McCord: That's right that's right. Yeah that's exactly right.

Interviewer: Because if you could have seen who was shelling you and been able to return the fire then you could have had a counter attack. But without that there was no you were just there.

McCord: You were just there.

Interviewer: At the mercy of the Germans.

McCord: That's it that's it. That was rough that was a rough situation right there. In fact I guess it was the hardest day and night of my life. But they called in the engineers and they built this little pontoon bridge we went across. I don't know how many men went across but I was worried you know I didn't know what to do really. But there was two boys, me and two more boys, we was standing there talking wondering what, it was beginning to get a little day light just dusky you know. And we were talking well I took a bullet I know the guy thought I got shot in my heart but he got my arm. And

Interviewer: Sipper

McCord: Yeah and I went over to a little ole washed out place and couldn't dig a fox hole because there was too much fire going on. Anyhow I laid in that little ditch he picked my whole pack off my back with a machine gun just riddled it and my coat it was full of holes my canteen he got my canteen. And there was an ole boy I didn't know his name at the time but his name is Charlie Luther from North Caroline. He didn't know my name, I was boy, and along up in the morning he hollered hey boy he could see me apparently, you all right, I said yeah I'm fine, you hit, yeah I'm hit, are you hurt, yeah I'm hurt. And we had to stay there until dark and ole Charlie said let's get out of here, there was seven of us left, and we hit that river somebody said here's a road, it must have been from the pontoon that they built. And so we pulled ourselves across the river.

Interviewer: On the road?

McCord: On the road that was a good looking road.

Interviewer: And they had quit firing, did they retreat?

McCord: No they were firing at us they was firing at us.

Interviewer: They were firing at you the whole time that you were

McCord: The whole time we were running bullets were flying.

Interviewer: Did you ever feel or hear the closeness of a shell?

McCord: Oh yeah yeah

Interviewer: Several times

McCord: They were just buzzing right by you all the time. We run to the river it was dark so we just dumped in there this road that's what saved us.

Interviewer: Or you would have drowned just like the other men? Yeah but if you would have stayed there you would have been killed also.

McCord: Yeah that's for sure.

Interviewer: So you had to make that move?

McCord: Yeah we had to go we couldn't stay.

Interviewer: Now do you remember what area that was at? You named the river so.

McCord: It was the Repeato River.

Interviewer: Okay

McCord: Well now probably the next day, we might be able to look this up some way it might be in my book, but they had a truss for a day to pick up the dead and wounded. And this one ole boy picked him up a German luger and this German, now I've been told this I didn't see it, but he took that luger and threwed it back in the river. We'll look that up and see about that it was a one days truss that may be marked there at that spot should be if it isn't it should be. And I was one of seven that made it back.

Interviewer: All seven of you made it across that river?

McCord: All seven of us made it back to where we left from. And there was 20 some odd men left in the company.

Interviewer: Out of how many?

McCord: Out of four platoons about what 150 – 60 men or maybe 70.

Interviewer: Some 20 of you left?

McCord: Twenty some odd 23 – 24. And then we got a lot more in just like I went in as replacements. But now I held out we had a medic and he filled my arm with sulfadiazine powder bound it up real good and I made it until the next night before I had to go to the hospital.

Interviewer: Did the bullet stick in?

McCord: No it went just across my arm just across just a flesh wound.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: Didn't hit the bone.

Interviewer: So you had to go to the hospital, how long did you stay?

McCord: Oh I imagine I stayed in the hospital I don't know two or three weeks, it set up blood poison.

Interviewer: It did set up blood poison?

McCord: I had an arm you wouldn't believe. That was that was the Repeato I'd like to see that place again see what it looks like now. It would be some bad feelings though wouldn't it?

Interviewer: Probably would.

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: Especially what you went to.

McCord: That was a hard way to get broke in you know it.

Interviewer: That would be a real bad way.

McCord: But I was spared I was spared I'm thankful for that.

Interviewer: Were you at this time were you a Christian were you religious in any way?

McCord: No not really. I knew I knew because you know where old Tatum used to be?

Interviewer: Yeah

McCord: Okay I lived right at the back of it on that road and I'd get up every morning on Sunday mornings and go over to the church. Am I getting out of line here? And build fires and so you know I'd think a lot of times when I'd be lying there in the fox hole or something some guys praying for me over at Old Tatum.

Interviewer: Did that help get you through?

McCord: That might have brought me through I don't know.

Interviewer: It had to help.

McCord: It had to help because I would think of that oh especially on Sunday you know.

Interviewer: Now that you've encountered this you've went through this horrible event I mean you know you went through war now you are a veteran you know.

McCord: That was just one day and night.

Interviewer: Yeah that was just one day and night and you're a veteran.

McCord: Yeah from that.

Interviewer: You knew exactly what war could do.

McCord: I knew what it was.

Interviewer: And you knew what it was.

McCord: I was a harden soldier form then.

Interviewer: Did it really change you a whole lot?

McCord: It will either make you or break you.

Interviewer: So on this count it made you?

McCord: It made me it did yeah. Yeah I came back from the hospital and they gave me a machine gun squad from there.

Interviewer: They did? So now you are in charge of a machine gun squad?

McCord: In charge of a machine Buck Sargent. And I was hardened I well it's just like I said it will either make you or break you.

Interviewer: Right you had to do what you had to do to survive.

McCord: You had to do what you had to do.

Interviewer: If you didn't you wouldn't survive.

McCord: That's true.

Interviewer: You wouldn't be here today.

McCord: That's right that's right and I would help the boys out. Now when we'd get replacements in my men especially and others if I had a chance, but my men I would tell them what to expect, they didn't go in dumb like I did, I would tell them. And stay with my replacements all I could.

Interviewer: That's another question, how were the replacements and yourself as a replacement how were you treated or greeted by the other men who were already there?

McCord: You were treated good you were treated good. Our men they felt one for another. Like I say Texas outfield, Texas and Tennessee goes together real good.

Interviewer: Again you know you have the you were a replacement and now your recruiting replacements or getting replacements and their coming in for you. Your machine gun squad leader that's a huge responsibility.

McCord: It sure is you do the job.

Interviewer: Right that's a huge responsibility. Is there anything that you can recollect on or recall that maybe you wished you would have done something different in a decision that you had to make or might not be?

McCord: Yeah you learned by your mistakes.

Interviewer: And of course war is full of them.

McCord: War is full of them war is full of them.

Interviewer: You've got to remember you're only at this time your 20 or 19.

McCord: Let's see now at this time yeah at this time I'm just 19.

Interviewer: You're a kid.

McCord: Nineteen

Interviewer: You're still a kid yet you've become a man.

McCord: Overnight.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: Overnight

Interviewer: So of course you're going to make mistakes.

McCord: Oh yeah you're going to make mistakes. But I took care of my men yeah I took care of my men.

Interviewer: I couldn't imagine a 19 year old today being in a situation such as that.

McCord: Well see I grew up right there in the sticks and I knew what work was I've worked all my life, my mother was a worker and I'd go to the garden with her pick blackberries we done something all the time.

Interviewer: That's why you liked to recruit these southern boys wasn't it?

McCord: You're not kidding. Yeah I figured they were from the south they knew how to rabbit hunt and squirrel hunt and how to handle a riffle.

Interviewer: What were, tell me some of the things that really stick out on you that you remember about being a squad leader of a machine gun.

McCord: Well I'd always visit my machine gun. You don't stay right with it you dig in and it's over here but I would visit them three or four times a night see that they were alright. I kept in touch with them and I did that well right on through. It wasn't long until they gave me the section the machine gun section and I'd go from machine gun to machine gun at night that way you know. A lot of times if they were set up close together why I would dig me a hole between them so I could be handy in case. Another thing when I went to the company we didn't have guards on those machine guns. The average life of a machine gunner in actual combat is less than three minutes.

Interviewer: Less than three minutes.

McCord: Less than three minutes.

Interviewer: Is it because they want to take that machine gunner out first because he's doing the most damage?

McCord: That's it. So I would put a couple of guards on each machine gun, riflemen. I wouldn't put a machine gun out there unless they give me the men to guard the machine gun. I was bullheaded I know I was but I was taking care of ole John and my men.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: I kept a squad for a while then they gave me the section.

Interviewer: How long did you keep the section?

McCord: Until I kept the section on until the end of the war.

Interviewer: Did you really?

McCord: Yeah I stayed with machine guns.

Interviewer: I suppose you saw a lot of men go.

McCord: A lot of men a lot of men.

Interviewer: A lot of your men.

McCord: Sure did, you get attached to people.

Interviewer: I was going to ask you about that. Did you ever get a close friendship with someone that did get wounded and killed in combat wounded and had to go back to the states or wounded and left?

McCord: Oh yeah that goes with it that goes with it. Yeah you get attached to people I guess I'm probably the world's worst. But you get people that you depend on and they depend on you team work just like anything else.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: And our job was to furnish fire for the company. You know when they were taking a hill

Interviewer: You've got to cover them.

McCord: You've got to cover them. Start working at the top and work down that hill with your machine gun fire.

Interviewer: You know that machine gunners did so much damage.

McCord: They'd go after that machine gun.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: Yeah that was down in Italy. That was I believe it was the worst thing that I went through I think but I was green then and didn't know what to do. That has a lot to do with it.

Interviewer: You matured quickly didn't you?

McCord: Fast it don't take long, no it don't take long. And then we had some pretty good times, sometimes to I know once we come across a nice creek and they dammed it up and it had trout in that thing. And they had a little cabin built there and I was left there to take care of that part you know. Anyhow its winter time through this this was and one ole boy got to noticing them trout and he took a hand grenade pulled the pin throwed it down in there. Well here come some nice fish up and one ole boy pulled his clothes off and went out in there and got them. And we cleaned those fish hung quilts and things up over the window of that little cabin there you know found us some grease, salt

Interviewer: Had you a mess of trout.

McCord: And we had trout.

Interviewer: That was probably one of the best meals you had over there.

McCord: It was good eaten.

Interviewer: Did that remind you a little bit of home?

McCord: Yeah it did. And we were sitting around we found a candle that night and we lit it. We drowned it outside to see that no light was shining through the windows you know. This ole boy cleaned his 45 and it went off it blowed a hole by my foot I was chewing him a little you know. Directly he said why are you chewing me so much about that, I said because you missed my foot. So we had some fun along with it.

Interviewer: You had to make the best out of the worst situation.

McCord: Oh yeah you had to yeah. You'd go batty if you didn't.

Interviewer: Did being in the infantry and everything I know a lot of the infantry divisions took part in the landing and the battle of Anzio. Did you take part in that at all?

McCord: Anzio? We were supposed to make that invasion at Anzio but they let another outfit do it. Then we went it, they got pinned down and we went in and broke them out of there. There was a little town

Interviewer: Now this was in the spring of 44.

McCord: Yeah that's right and the best fortified little town I believe I've ever seen in my life by the name of Velintria. You ever heard of Valentria? Okay we hit it on one side and get throwed back and we'd go around and hit it somewhere else and finally we broke through then we were on the road to Rome. I don't know how far Valetria is from Rome. I can't remember.

Interviewer: It's not very far.

McCord: It's not too far twelve, fifteen miles something like that I don't really know.

Interviewer: It may be a little further than that, it's not very far from Rome though.

McCord: I know we walked from here, we walked a lot.

Interviewer: Right that's all you did you walked. After you got off the ship and got in Italy you walked the rest of the way.

McCord: That was it. But anyhow after we broke through Valetria we had a pretty clear sailing right on in to Rome. I walked across Rome.

Interviewer: Did you partake in the battle?

McCord: What's that?

Interviewer: Were you involved in the battle of Rome?

McCord: There wasn't any battle of Rome.

Interviewer: Well I mean when you went into Rome they were

McCord: Yeah we were involved back at Valertria all the way from Anzio to Rome.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: When we got up to Rome the last thing I remember seeing before we got into Rome there was an ole concrete sign there. And there was a dead gentleman laying right out in the edge of the street. I figured when I saw it probably he was a sniper. And somebody got him but there wasn't a shot fired in Rome not that first one we had clear sailing right on through Rome.

Interviewer: Now other divisions had already been through Rome though, right?

McCord: I don't think so.

Interviewer: You were one of the first?

McCord: We were one of the first. We were the first. Now the people in Rome

Interviewer: Is this about June of 44 you think?

McCord: Somewhere along there I don't remember just exactly.

Interviewer: Getting close to another birthday.

McCord: Yeah that's right.

Interviewer: Forty four which would have made you 20.

McCord: Made me 20.

Interviewer: And so go ahead and tell me about the people of Rome.

McCord: Oh they'd line the streets with glasses and wine bottles and they'd pour them glasses with wine and had it to you. Then run along the kids run along and they welcomed us in Rome. But in the upper part of Rome that what really the old Rome big columns you know, beautiful beautiful. That impressed me I still think about them every once in a while how pretty them big columns were just lying on the ground. I'd like to see that again I think.

Interviewer: See Rome

McCord: Yeah especially the old part the old Rome. It was just you know it was just all cluttered up from some war.

Interviewer: But you saw so much of history right there.

McCord: Oh yeah a lot of history right there.

Interviewer: Did you take a few days to rest in Rome?

McCord: No we went right straight on through Rome and run into the enemy. We set up a good line and then we got relieved and we come back I believe

Interviewer: Now the whole division?

McCord: No just our company got relieved.

Interviewer: Just your company?

McCord: Yeah and we got to go back for a few days' rest.

Interviewer: Now where did you go back to Naples?

McCord: No I believe we went back pretty close to Anzio.

Interviewer: Okay

McCord: Set up and rest there.

Interviewer: Of course they come and picked you up in trucks.

McCord: Yeah we rode back through Rome.

Interviewer: Thank goodness right.

McCord: Yeah that's when you get to ride. When you were coming back off of the line or going up.

Interviewer: So they rested you for how many days?

McCord: Oh just different periods of time. Sometimes you'd get a good rest sometimes it would get cut shorter than you would like.

Interviewer: Right, let me ask you this, this is kind of getting off of the battle and the trip but yet it is something that is very important to a lot of servicemen and that was the mail. You know v-mail and things like that you know at this time were you getting a lot of mail from home from the states?

McCord: Yeah they would always get our mail to us.

Interviewer: Even on the front line?

McCord: Even on the line yeah.

Interviewer: Did you get v-mail or did you get you know the little card mail?

McCord: No we'd get regular letters.

Interviewer: Regular letters.

McCord: Then later on we went to that little stuff. But for a long time we'd get regular mail.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: You'd get a package ever once in a while of course it would be bunged up pretty sharp by the time you'd get it.

Interviewer: But you loved that didn't you?

McCord: Oh yeah yes sir you looked forward to that mail.

Interviewer: That was another thing that really kept you going wasn't it?

McCord: And I'll tell you something about that guy that kept me going when we was back at Repeato River Charlie Luther. He was married had a couple of kids, I would make him write to his wife. I'd sit him down, you're going to write her a letter today. He'd argue with me but he would write it, he'd write it.

Interviewer: Why didn't he want to write it?

McCord: I don't know he just Charlie was a, Charlie I know saved my life lots of times, but he liked the bottle. And he just didn't want to write home.

Interviewer: Well you're so tired and everything else was it some of that?

McCord: No he just he just didn't want to write just didn't want to write. I'd just have to make him write but he would write after I'd get on to him hot and heavy.

Interviewer: Did you have a good liquor supply coming in?

McCord: Pretty good pretty good yeah.

Interviewer: And were a lot of the men hooked on their cigarettes and coffee.

McCord: Oh yeah

Interviewer: Can you recall a lot of that?

McCord: Oh yeah I was hooked on the cigarettes.

Interviewer: had to have a cigarette.

McCord: I had to have them cigarettes.

Interviewer: You know a lot of the men that didn't smoke they made a lot of money off of cigarettes you know.

McCord: Of yeah they did. The best cigarettes you ever had in your life you'd get under a blanket or something get under there and light it smoke you a few puffs somebody else would crawl under there and smoke them a few puffs. But I didn't have any better sense than to smoke.

Interviewer: That was the thing.

McCord: I smoked until my son got to wanting to smoke when he was a little fellow you know and I said it's time to quit.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: And I quit.

Interviewer: Well at that time you really didn't know the danger you know why you were in battle you didn't know. Everyone was smoking I mean that was

McCord: That's right that's right.

Interviewer: Some people that people that didn't smoke that was because they just didn't like it.

McCord: Just didn't want to had better sense. It was some life.

Interviewer: So they sent you in between Rome and Anzio and here you are resting and you're going back.

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: Where did you go back to?

McCord: Let's see I believe we went back to Naples and took amphibious training. We made the invasion of Southern France.

Interviewer: So that's what they were training you for the invasion of Southern France.

McCord: Now we had training for to go in at Anzio but this other I don't know how come we were to do it but some other outfit went in. Then we went in and broke them out. Yeah one thing I forgot the first night that we were at Anzio Axis Sally, we had men that done about everything, somebody had a little battery radio and we listened to her. And she said we know that the 141st come into Anzio today or yesterday or whenever it was and said we are going to push you right back out in the Mediterranean. She really done some big talking. And as far as I can remember that's the only time I ever heard her.

Interviewer: And when you heard her it was about you, it was about the 141st.

McCord: Yeah talking about our outfit 141st yeah.

Interviewer: A lot of people especially the infantry men and going through Italy you know starting in African and going out through the Mediterranean into Italy and things like that didn't have a clue what

was going on. They called the big show of WWII they really didn't have a clue as to what was fixing to happen as far as D-Day. And you, you had no idea did you?

McCord: No idea didn't even have a thought about it really.

Interviewer: And after it was all taken place in this time frame did you know what had happened? Did you realize that ya'll had just taken you know allies had just taken the beaches you know at Normandy and were going in and pushing Germans back?

McCord: Yeah that's right see that's the reason we made the invasion of Southern France you know the pressure.

Interviewer: So you knew this?

McCord: That was another front. Someone told me, now I don't know how true this is, but said they saw a film of the invasion of Southern France. Alright I'll tell you about when we went in to Southern France. There was a long long railroad trestle across a big hollow

Interviewer: Still see it today don't you?

McCord: I can see it I can see everything. Anyhow my mission was to go into the left end take the first draw to the left go to the top of the hill and start firing back on the beach. The infantry went in just below us up the beach and that's what I did. We took prisoners you wouldn't believe they were just working alive in those trenches when we started firing they hit the bottom you know. It was an easy invasion real easy.

Interviewer: No real forceful counter attacks or anything like that?

McCord: No I was dreading the back of the hill because of my back. See we went down under the crest of the hill following this little ravine up and I was worried what was going to come over that hill but nothing didn't come over it.

Interviewer: Did you ever know about the gun called Leopold?

McCord: Big railroad gun?

Interviewer: Uh huh.

McCord: Yeah I saw it.

Interviewer: Did you? Tell me about that.

McCord: And I felt the effects of it that was on the Repeato River too.

Interviewer: Okay tell me about that, that's interesting.

McCord: One of them shells come in and it would hit and it seemed like it would go down in the ground a quarter of a mile. And you would jump up and down in your well in fact I was just in a washed out place I didn't get a chance to dig a fox hole.

Interviewer: Is that the place where you were and the seven men?

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: And so they were firing the Leopold on you at this time?

McCord: That's right that's right.

Interviewer: Oh my.

McCord: Oh it jarred it was some gun. In fact I believe that's the only place that I ever encountered that gun but it was a big one. Yeah I saw that thing. In fact I will show you a picture of it.

Interviewer: It's an amazing cannon is basically what it is. Yeah it's

McCord: It was.

Interviewer: Let's get back to the invasion of France the amphibious invasion of France Southern France. So here you are you have already went up and done your job, your firing down you've got your men your squad or your division. You're firing down and easy landing?

McCord: Easy landing. Well now one part you know how you get on a little boat come down the rope latter and get on a little landing craft

Interviewer: Right was it a not a duck but a Higgins boat or something like that?

McCord: Yeah I call it a landing craft. Anyhow you get out and go in this big circle you know. This guy that was chauffeuring our boat he come back to the mother ship and thought he was going to hit it head on but he just rolled it down the side. That was the scariest part about that invasion I guess really you know.

Interviewer: And he had so much experience.

McCord: Yeah he did something wrong there. But he sure done that, we all fell over on one side I thought we were all going to sink. But anyhow he got it straightened out and we got back and got in a big circle you know until time to head in. That Southern France invasion we had it pretty good we had it pretty good.

Interviewer: Where did you go from there?

McCord: Do what?

Interviewer: Where did you go from there?

McCord: Let's see from Southern France we went on across France. We went through Italy through France, Belgium and Germany. And when the war was over I was at the edge of Austria.

Interviewer: Austria

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: What let me ask you this what year was, and I should know this, but what year was it that you invaded Southern France?

McCord: That was in

Interviewer: Forty four

McCord: Yeah it had to be in

Interviewer: It was in the fall of 44 wasn't it?

McCord: I believe it was we'll look at my book and it will tell.

Interviewer: So it was in I think it was it was in the fall of 44.

McCord: I believe that's right.

Interviewer: And man the war is getting close to an end now.

McCord: Yeah we're working on it now.

Interviewer: So here you are you're going up through here you're going through France and did you really have to fire another shot after that I mean or did they

McCord: We did yeah we did. We would have encounters all along the way.

Interviewer: Small encounters?

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: But you had so many German soldiers that were

McCord: They'd give up.

Interviewer: They were just giving up. They were running to you. They didn't want to be taken by anyone but the Americans.

McCord: Yeah we was talking about going to Brussels. That was I had a hard hard assignment right there. There was two big fields and they were expecting that was during the Belgium break through. I had a machine gun center of each one of them fields they were expecting paratroopers to come in. And my orders were not to let a one get on the ground.

Interviewer: German paratroopers?

McCord: That's right.

Interviewer: Yeah

McCord: I dreaded that oh I sweated that for I don't know three or four days but it didn't happen.

Interviewer: They didn't come.

McCord: I was relieved that was a hard assignment for a poor boy like me I'll tell you.

Interviewer: That would have been hard because they would have come in in vast numbers. And the thing about the Germans is they didn't land behind the lines or in front, they landed right on top of you.

McCord: That's right that's exactly right. Somewhere back through the line we were set up in the woods and this patrol and I come across this little hollow there come up the hillside where we were there and we thought it was our boys. They were dressed in our uniform and they were asking about talking about the World Series. And you know just having a ball and they said they had been out on patrol and of course they went on through. Then they went on back and they had dynamite in their packs and they done a little damage they got them but you know it was a bad

Interviewer: Did you ever encounter any of the SS troops or

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: The unlawful SS or some of those. Not those guys didn't give up easy.

McCord: Not easily. I'm sure I'm sure close to the end of the war that I captured a pair and what leads me to this I took a 32 and it's got a little swats sticker on the barrel. But you know they was giving up so much that we just fed them on back so I'm satisfied they were SS troops.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: They didn't as a rule they didn't give up like that. You could tell you could tell when you went up against them.

Interviewer: Right they were almost like Japanese as far as they were going to die for their country.

McCord: That's right.

Interviewer: And a lot of the SS men if they didn't die there in battle as soon as they got back they were going to die probably going to be killed.

McCord: That's true that's true.

Interviewer: I want to ask you this question. A lot of service men a lot of veterans are still upset to this day about it and it's about how well we all know that the Japanese and the Germans did not the Japanese especially but the Germans also did not go by the Geneva Conventions.

McCord: No

Interviewer: And the way they treated our prisoners were horrible. Now the way that Russia treated the Germans was even worse.

McCord: Oh yeah

Interviewer: However the Americans generally did treat the Germans by the Geneva Conventions and treated them well.

McCord: That's true.

Interviewer: Was there ever a time that you just thought why are we treating these guys like this why are we taking these guys back to the states why are we feeding them steak why are we letting them dance with our women over in the states. Why are we giving them things that we can't have why don't we just kill them all or give them to the Russians? Did you ever have anything maybe not that harsh but I mean a lot of men have had that feeling.

McCord: I'll tell you what we done. I've never seen one of my men slap one, hit one, or kick one or nothing like that. When they gave up they were treated just as kind and as good as they could be treated. The last two that I captured we were mopping up and I was wearing my crew up a little draw and there was a highway that went across. And there were two of them up under the bridge there and our orders was to shoot and ask questions later. Well I was walking along with my M1 you know how you would carry it on guard.

Interviewer: Not on your shoulder?

McCord: Not on your shoulder it was ready.

Interviewer: That's right.

McCord: And I saw them and this is kind of hard to talk about but I pulled the trigger and my gun didn't fire. I threw another round in the chamber and they jumped up and throwed their arms up.

Interviewer: Yeah right surrender.

McCord: That's where I got my 32. Anyhow they come down that bank well they looked hungry to me and I gave them

Interviewer: You gave them some of your sea rations?

McCord: I gave them my sea rations. Now to me to me when a man gives up that alt to be the end of it.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: Treat him like you want to be treated.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: Now that's my theory on it. And I've never seen one of our men rough one up or nothing like that.

Interviewer: Right you know a lot of veterans say, I never did rough one up but I thought to myself why in the world am I not. They've got my best friend over in a concentration camp or they've

McCord: You think about things like that.

Interviewer: Did you ever see any of the concentration camps the Germans had for the Jews and others? That was horrible wasn't it?

McCord: I've got a bunch of pictures now I accused Marie of burning them up, she has threatened a lot of years you know.

Interviewer: Uh huh

McCord: And they went missing and I can't find them. She says she didn't so I have to believe her.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: But I put them up somewhere I might find two or three but I've got a box. We had a guy from up in Maine he had a little photography outfit with him and he would take these pictures and develop them and give them to us. Anyhow we took this camp over it was worse than a battlefield.

Interviewer: Yeah

McCord: Out in the yard there was little bitty face you know and little bitty arms and little stripped uniforms and just laying everywhere and the inside was the same way. Well I noticed a spur had been built in a tobacco camp and I went around back to see what was going on and there was a box car back there and the door were open on it. You don't know what die wood is but when the blight hits the chestnut you know they cut that up in about five foot lengths and they would load it in box cars on that train. There was bodies in them box cars lying just like die wood in that car. And when we left there apparently some of them tried the guards on the camp I guess tried to get away and they took some with them. When one got to where he couldn't go they'd just shoot him leave him go on and they left a trail so I know about that.

Interviewer: You smelt the stench of death I mean I would imagine that place stunk for miles away you probably smelt it.

McCord: It was pitiful it was pitiful. That was

Interviewer: Did you see some of those gas chambers?

McCord: I didn't see the gas chambers. I just went in at the front door and saw enough and I got out and I went around the building.

Interviewer: And then you saw too much.

McCord: That's when I saw racked in those box cars like die wood.

Interviewer: Sad

McCord: It is sad. If I can find it I'll show you a picture or two. I think I know where a couple of pictures are. But I would like to find my box I've hid them somewhere. It's not old age doing this you know I just forget.

Interviewer: Yeah I still I'll tell you Hitler done a lot of things that you just don't even see how he was human you know to some degree.

McCord: Talk about that Belgium break through one of Hitler's right hand men Phil Marshall Ronstadt did you ever hear of him?

Interviewer: Yeah

McCord: Okay I was in the group, now I didn't see the guy, but I was in the group that went let's see I believe we went 50 miles behind the lines and got him at a little town by the name of Badtose if my memory is right. That was a pretty nice little trip.

Interviewer: So you helped capture him?

McCord: In a roundabout way.

Interviewer: Right oh you were there you were there.

McCord: I was there but I didn't see the man.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: I would have liked to have seen him but see it seems to me, I've thought about it a lot of times, it seems to me that I sat the machine gun up to guard a bridge in Badtose best I can remember.

Interviewer: Right it wasn't many bridges left.

McCord: No and I know we captured a truck load or two of SS troops coming in there. So that was a nice trip a scary trip but.

Interviewer: It was all a little scary.

McCord: We can talk about it now we made it.

Interviewer: That's right.

McCord: Yep

Interviewer: You know here you are you're in, you ended up in Germany went all the way to Austria. And you seen so much you've seen these camps you've seen all of this horrible stuff I mean all of the horrible things.

McCord: It was horrible.

Interviewer: You've seen all of the horrible effects of war. You've seen men that you've grown attached to who die right underneath you.

McCord: That's true.

Interviewer: And of course that had to change you in a certain way.

McCord: It does, I guess I'm more tender hearted now than I was when I came out of the army. It makes you, you get hard hearted you know. You built yourself up to it that you know that you've got to do it you know. But a lot of it seems like a dream now really, you learn to live with it you learn to live with it.

Interviewer: When did you know that the war had ended?

McCord: Oh let's see I knew when it was about to end.

Interviewer: Okay go ahead.

McCord: Now this we were dug in and nobody didn't have any matches, now this is crazy but an ole boy said I know there's some Germans right down the road there I saw them, said I'm going to go down there and get some matches. And he went down there and got some matches and we knew things was slacking up then.

Interviewer: Right he went down there without a shot fired.

McCord: Without a shot fired.

Interviewer: And came back and had some matches?

McCord: That's right he brought the matches back. But long before that not long before that maybe a month or so, an ole boy left one morning and nobody didn't know where he was. After a while well he came marching about 30 or 40 prisoners back. He'd went off in a hollow there and rounded them up and brought them back. He had them with their hands behind their head you know.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: We had some guys that would do just about anything.

Interviewer: You know after the war ended in the European front here you are you're not even thinking about going home yet because were they going to send you to act in the invasion of Japan?

McCord: Now we had a couple of guys you know after you had all of the experience if you would take it why you could have Second Lieutenant commission you know if you were an upright soldier. Anyhow a couple took it and they were gone to Japan so that scared a lot of us off we let it go we didn't take that deal.

Interviewer: You had heard about Japan and the Japanese.

McCord: What happened to them

Interviewer: And the death march and a lot of things like that.

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: You could only feel for those guys couldn't you.

McCord: Oh man

Interviewer: And you know they were over in Japan feeling for you too.

McCord: Same difference.

Interviewer: Right it's all war.

McCord: It's all war. War is rough.

Interviewer: So when did you know that you were going to get to go home?

McCord: I knew I was going to have to stay about six months before we would get to come home. And they gave us at one time you could take a furlough if you wanted to and they would get you to London or anywhere you wanted to go for a week. So I took me a furlough and went to London and I knew we were just waiting for our time to come to get to come home.

Interviewer: Add in the you told me earlier and I hate to interrupt but you told me earlier about something about Eisenhower.

McCord: Oh yeah

Interviewer: Add that in because this was near the end add that in.

McCord: I was telling you about that. We was having a big parade for Eisenhower and

Interviewer: Where was this at what city?

McCord: I can't remember.

Interviewer: Okay

McCord: I can't remember it was some park had bleachers. And I saw him setting up there but I can't remember where it was. We'll get my book down after while I've got a book.

Interviewer: Okay

McCord: Anyhow I had my duffle bag packed to come home and my company commander come around and he said I want to make you a proposition. Said I want you to go back to the company with me and come home as a company First Sergeant. Said I'd like to just walk down the streets of San Antonio leading our company in a little victory walk. I said sir I've been over here a long time I've got a chance to go home I'm going home. I said I appreciate the offer though. I went down on the French Riviera and stayed I don't know probably 40 or 50 days. I know the company beat me home I got my discharge all fouled up. They've got me that I served with anti-tank company and I never did try to get that straightened out.

Interviewer: Yeah

McCord: So you know that was my stupidity. But I served all that time with the 36th old Texas Tution.

Interviewer: And they've got you with some tank company huh?

McCord: Yeah now let me tell you a little bit about my platoon sergeant. He was a preacher, nobody didn't want to dig in with him. Well I liked his bible stories so I would dig in with that guy and oh he could tell you all kinds of bible stories and that was interesting to me. And he was just a good guy too but anyhow the guy got wounded he went to the hospital come back to the company drunk. And he drank anything then that he could get his hands on and I don't know I don't know what happened to him. I don't I haven't got any way of finding out. That's bothered me all these years you know.

Interviewer: Yeah

McCord: I really liked the guy.

Interviewer: Said he knew a lot about the bible.

McCord: Oh yeah he would tell me all kinds of bible stories.

Interviewer: Maybe he made it back.

McCord: I don't know I just don't know what happened to him and my book doesn't tell me.

Interviewer: No you know I know a guy that he had a good friend and he was injured and they sent him and he asked the medic the next day after they sent him to the hospital and the medic said oh man he died he died on the way. And you know what he got back it had been about ten years and he met him on the street.

McCord: Is that right?

Interviewer: That's right he didn't die.

McCord: I've only seen one guy that I served with he had the mortar section and I had the machine gun section. And he didn't have to but on the line he would dig in with me. Of course you know we always had a phone to the mortars and we got real we were just like brothers. I know one night we were in a little town there was a little creek run right through the town and after dark we got out in that creek and washed our uniforms. And we were sleeping in a bed had springs and mattress. We took our mattress off we'd take our pants and straighten them out good you know fold our shirt just like we wanted put them under that mattress. Next morning got up oh we were dressed up company commander never did question us nothing about it. We'd do anything but anyhow we got home well the first time he come to see me he was on his motorcycle and the only motorcycle I ever rode in my life. Anyhow he started back home it come a snow up in Kentucky and he wound up on a man's front porch he and his motorcycle. He said he just reached up and knocked on the door and the man come to the door and he said I want to use your phone. He called his dad and his dad come and got him hauled his motorcycle back and it wrecked. The next time he come in an old car. It wasn't long until he married our niece so he was year I don't know probably three years ago four, I haven't seen him since. He was living in Indiana then the southern part of Indiana. We were just like brothers.

Interviewer: That was great to have that kind of friendship.

McCord: Oh yeah

Interviewer: And somebody to make it back with you.

McCord: And after the war ole James and I were tangled up in course marshals that went on for a long time. That was rough.

Interviewer: What was all that about?

McCord: Well we had one guy in the company he left us down in Italy and we'd be back at rest no matter where we were in France or what have you he knew where we were. He'd come visit and they'd call the MPs and he'd get away. He did that all during the war I don't know what kind of fine he got out of it or prison sentence or what.

Interviewer: That was pretty sneaky. He had to have a lot of information to know where ya'll were.

McCord: Yeah he did I couldn't understand it. But we wouldn't be back at rest but a day or two until he would show up. Now I never could figure that out.

Interviewer: You know you were talking about the parade with Eisenhower and all of that did you ever meet Eisenhower?

McCord: I saw him setting up in the bleachers.

Interviewer: That's all you saw of him?

McCord: That's the only man that I've ever seen that was president. Eisenhower

Interviewer: Did you think a lot of Eisenhower?

McCord: I think he was a smart man don't you.

Interviewer: Yes

McCord: I do really.

Interviewer: What were your feelings with FDR?

McCord: Oh I liked that guy.

Interviewer: You liked Franklin?

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: How about some of the propaganda leaflets that he had dropped on ya'll. Did you ever see any of those that were dropped?

McCord: No I've never seen any of them but I've heard of them. There's lots of propaganda that goes on in war.

Interviewer: You know FDR was promoting a lot and saying a lot you know in these leaflets and I don't know if you'd ever received any of those leaflets.

McCord: No I never saw any not that I can remember. Now one of the things back on that Repeato River little ole airplane you know up there trying to spot the enemy. That joker would get down fairly close to us when we was in that field there. But I couldn't think of a thing in the world and I couldn't have got to it no how I was wanting a mirror you know to show him. But I dind't have that.

Interviewer: That's because you had lost everything hadn't you?

McCord: What they would do a lot of times you know with mountains they would get an enemy plane after them, you know they was just in this little ole cub plane, and they could get right down there and just cause that plane I know it's crashed a time or two. A couple of different times I've heard of that.

Interviewer: It's amazing what you have to do just in order to survive.

McCord: Oh yeah you can do a lot to survive. Sure can a man can stand a whole lot more than he thinks he can.

Interviewer: Yeah I've heard that. I've heard that from other veterans they say you can stand a lot more.

McCord: Yeah you can. I'll tell you about the best eating I ever had.

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

McCord: Alright I was set up in a farm house had a nice bed had a machine gun setting in the window. And we walked we was covering 30, 40 maybe 50 miles a day and I had blisters on each hill. Set up blood poisoning yeah and I had to come off that hill and the cooks had brought a couple ole garbage cans up

with steak and bread. I mean homemade baked bread, they could do anything. And I got me a hunk of that steak and a couple of pieces of that bread getting on back down to where they picked me up to take me to the hospital. That was the best steak I ever eat in my life.

Interviewer: I bet.

McCord: And I was running a high temperature.

Interviewer: I bet.

McCord: That was good eating. Barefooted I was carrying my shoes on one shoulder.

Interviewer: Your shoes they were worn thin weren't they?

McCord: Oh yeah

Interviewer: All the old rough and rock terrain through Italy.

McCord: I don't see how they lasted. They were I guess they were tough like us though. I'll tell you down in Italy these little mules they had a hard job getting supplies up on the mountain, that little trail.

Interviewer: They could go straight up though couldn't they?

McCord: Oh yeah they could do it, they could do it.

Interviewer: How were you okay when did you get back home? Can you remember?

McCord: November of 45.

Interviewer: November of 45.

McCord: November of 45.

Interviewer: Well let me ask you this. What did you think about Truman's decision about the atomic bomb? Do you think it saved a lot of American lives? Do you think it was a good decision?

McCord: I believe it did. I believe it was the only he didn't have any other choice really when you think about it the way I look at it.

Interviewer: Had you ever thought of something being so destructive as that?

McCord: Never, never in my life I never dreamed of anything like that.

Interviewer: What did you think about when you heard that it killed so many?

McCord: Well it made you feel bad. In one way but

Interviewer: In one way right

McCord: In another way you knew it had to be done.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: So you know I guess there is different ways looking at everything. But you know you feel for people regardless of who they are or what they are. They've got souls

Interviewer: And so you come back home November of 45 where did you have to go to when you got home?

McCord: Let's see we landed in New York. Yeah we got off the boat and they fed us a big steak there then we went to Fort Mead Maryland again.

Interviewer: Went back to Maryland.

McCord: And then I left Fort Mead and went to I believe Camp Atterberry Indiana. That's where I was discharged.

Interviewer: Wrongfully discharged.

McCord: After a long time.

Interviewer: Then you got back home.

McCord: Got back home.

Interviewer: And you were received well by your family.

McCord: Oh well I got off a land bus up at the corner started down the road to the house saw this ole tall boy coming to meet me coming up the road and it was my brother.

Interviewer: He had changed.

McCord: He had done grewed up.

Interviewer: I guess you had changed so much too hadn't you?

McCord: Well yeah quite a bit. A long trip.

Interviewer: Let's see you were, that was in November of 45

McCord: November of 45

Interviewer: You were 21, you turned 20 in 44 right?

McCord: Yeah I was 21

Interviewer: So you was 21 when you got back home.

McCord: Twenty one fast

Interviewer: And you must have shortly started courting somebody did you?

McCord: Yeah Maria was waiting for me.

Interviewer: When you got back home about how long was it before you found Maria?

McCord: Oh I don't know a day or two I guess I can't remember.

Interviewer: She was looking for a soldier boy wasn't she?

McCord: Yeah she was looking for a soldier boy she just wound up with me. That's what happened.

Interviewer: And then it was shortly after that you two married.

McCord: Yeah it wasn't long. Time just flew since then.

Interviewer: Did time seem like it was going by real real slow when you was at war?

McCord: Oh yeah yeah yeah

Interviewer: Over two years.

McCord: Yeah I've seen days that was

Interviewer: Almost never ending?

McCord: Never ending seemed like and then you had good days and bad days. They were mixed up there was just one thing about it you didn't know today what was going to happen tomorrow.

Interviewer: Is there anything that you can recall that you can think of that you would like to add that is just something that maybe just really sticks out in your mind?

McCord: No not really not really that I can think of right now of course I know

Interviewer: Later you will think of

McCord: Lots of things happened.

Interviewer: It's impossible to think of it all at once.

McCord: Oh yeah yeah

Interviewer: I've got one more question that I would like to ask you.

McCord: What's that?

Interviewer: What did you feel when you knew that Hitler had committed suicide?

McCord: I guess it was pride.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: You know really

Interviewer: That was a natural

McCord: I guess it was. See we were getting pretty close to his hideout at the end of the war.

Interviewer: You were?

McCord: Yeah we were going on after him I guess and they turned us and let the Russians go into Berlin.

Interviewer: How did the Germans react to ya'll when you went through Germany?

McCord: Oh they were nice they were nice. You know you don't hardly understand that but they were they were nice.

Interviewer: They knew they had been defeated right?

McCord: Yeah but they were they were real nice. We had one nice family I don't guess they were yeah they were right on the France line there. But they sent me out to scout a place for us to stay for a week or so and I went into this little village and I found somebody that could speak English. And he helped my you know locate the village we put up in and he said now I've got a place for you. An old man an old woman three daughters 18, 14 and 12. Well sure enough I put up there and they were real real good to me. And after that then one of our officers he fell for the 18 year old girl and so he talked the company commander into letting him have the jeep one night. And he come told me said now we're going to get the jeep tonight said that big tree down there he said you be down there right at dark said I'll pick you up. We went back to see that family and the two girls were gone just the little was there the 12 year old. They hugged us they were glad to see us.

Interviewer: I wonder where the two girls were.

McCord: They was out on dates.

Interviewer: Oh they were out on dates.

McCord: Yeah they were out on dates.

Interviewer: I guess a lot of the men they were lonely.

McCord: Yeah

Interviewer: Real lonely.

McCord: But they were real nice people. You run into good people everywhere you go.

Interviewer: That's right.

McCord: And you run into a slob every once in a while. I've always I reckon everywhere I've ever worked I've had a Pollock friend.

Interviewer: Yeah

McCord: Just one of them things.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: But just real good to you you know.

Interviewer: Do you feel that it was your duty and your job to do what you did? If you had it all to do over again would you do it the exact same way?

McCord: I would probably make some changes in it at different points along the way. I'm sure I would.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: I'm sure I would.

Interviewer: Do you have a regret?

McCord: No, I can't say that I have. I had a good platoon I finally wound up with the weapons platoon I had the mortars and the machine guns.

Interviewer: Oh you had both?

McCord: Yeah and the men all they were all good to me.

Interviewer: You recruited them.

McCord: Yeah really and truly.

Interviewer: You had all southern boys.

McCord: That's right I did I had all southern boys. One thing I meant to tell you. I went back one night, I shouldn't have done it I guess I knew it was against the law but I was going down this line and I asked this ole boy what his name was and he told me. I won't call his name, but anyhow I had his brother out on a machine gun on an outpost. And I don't know why I done it but I said come on and go with me. And we got back to the company with my group I took him I said come on you go with me carried him out there and that was his brother. You talk about hugging and kissing and loving. It went on you know what they was doing the next day?

Interviewer: Fighting?

McCord: Fighting they was fighting. I made a big big big mistake right there big mistake. One of them a shell hit a building and throwed a plank into one of them's hip, He was gone I don't know a couple of months I guess we the other one like to have went crazy while he was gone.

Interviewer: Right he was so worried about him.

McCord: Yeah and all of the hugging and the kissing come on when he come back and it wasn't a day before they was fighting again. But that's brothers.

Interviewer: That's right.

McCord: Oh my so there are some war causes some strange things.

Interviewer: Well Mr. McCord I believe we are finished I believe we can wrap it now. Is there anything that you would like to say as far as to wrap it up and end it?

McCord: Not that I know of all I can say is if anybody is ever caught in the same thing I was caught in is just do the very best you can with it. That's what I did and made it with a lot of help.

Interviewer: That's right. I know that I appreciate what you did for this country. You did so much

McCord: Well thank you.

Interviewer: And I wouldn't be able to sit in such a nice cool home such as this and be able to have the things I have if it wasn't for men like you.

McCord: It had to be done.

Interviewer: That's right.

McCord: It had to be done.

Interviewer: A lot of men lost their lives and thankfully a lot of men come back and you're one of those men that was able to come back. And you have prospered since and God has truly blessed you.

McCord: Yeah God has blessed me he sure has. I don't forget that either.

Interviewer: And I'm thankful for you.

McCord: And just our company turned over lots and lots of times.

Interviewer: I would imagine.

McCord: Me and James and Luther we were all real close and outside of us I don't guess there were five or six more men that made it all the way through. So that's cutting it pretty short.

Interviewer: You said the average life of a machine gunner was three minutes.

McCord: Three minutes.

Interviewer: In actual battle.

McCord: In actual combat.

Interviewer: Right

McCord: They'd send them after that. But we learned we learned to put men with them wands out there let them fly. Handpicked me you've got to hand pick your men for certain jobs.

Interviewer: Men that can take the pressure under battle.

McCord: That's right. We lost some good company commanders good company commanders. I'll tell you what done that too radio. Then jokers had them trails zeroed in and when they'd get on that radio to ask a question here would come them 88s. They built little piggy houses out of rock and if there was one of them nearby when you heard that buzz why you'd hit that house. I've run into one of them you didn't mind being nasty.

Interviewer: No you were just as nasty weren't you?

McCord: Yeah that's right.

Interviewer: Unless you found a creek somewhere.

McCord: Yeah we found them creeks.

Interviewer: Well I do appreciate it.

McCord: I dind't tell you about some river crossings.

Interviewer: Tell me.

McCord: The Mosal River. Did you ever hear of the Mosal River?

Interviewer: I don't think I have no. Is that in Italy?

McCord: No I can't tell you where it is now.

Interviewer: Okay

McCord: Not right of hand. But anyhow we went across this big field and we saw this tall guy coming with an old cap on and he come up and said where you going. The company commander just plain told him where we were going. We were going across the Mosal River. He said well you're going the wrong way. I happened to be up there where I could hear what was going on. Anyhow he said if you will let me I'll take you where you can wade across the river. And the company commander said well we haven't got anything to lose so he took us where we waded across the Mosal River just right up under your arm. Where if we would have went on our own we'd have been in trouble.

Interviewer: Now was this an American?

McCord: No he was I don't know he was.

Interviewer: Maybe a Frenchman?

McCord: Where is the Mosal River? France

Interviewer: I don't know.

McCord: I don't know either off hand. It's got to be in France I think.

Interviewer: Well it's got more of a French name doesn't it?

McCord: The Mosal yeah it's bound to be. But that was a nice little river that was nice.

Interviewer: Yeah probably a French alight or something like that.

McCord: You know come to think about it I might have his picture in my book. I'll show you my division book you'll enjoy it.

Interviewer: Great I'd love to look at it. I do appreciate it

McCord: That's alright

Interviewer: Like I say I'm very proud of you and I respect you for everything you did.

McCord: That's the only way somebody is going to know somebody's got to tell them what it was all about.

Interviewer: That's right.

McCord: I've told you a little bitty part.

Interviewer: That's right there's no way you could tell me every day of every minute of three years.

McCord: That's right.

Interviewer: That's so much.

McCord: But the most pitiful part I guess outside of seeing our own boys fouled up was seeing that concentration camp.

Interviewer: Yeah I would imagine.

McCord: That was a hard time.

Interviewer: I would imagine.

McCord: I'll show you some of those pictures too if I can find them. I ought to have two or three.

Interviewer: The concentration camps were bad I mean that was some horrible situations those people had to face.

McCord: Our boys as well as the Jews.

Interviewer: Torture

McCord: Torture that's what it was. Starved they were just skin and bones.

Interviewer: I do appreciate it and I think you so much.

McCord: That's all right that's all right I'm glad to tell you.

Interviewer: Thank you.

McCord: That way you will know.

Interviewer: And I'm glad that you've taken part of your time.

McCord: Well thank you.