

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH LEONARD MINCH

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Nicholas Molnar: This begins the second interview with Mr. Leonard Minch on September 30, 2013, in Whiting, New Jersey, with two ROTC cadets. Could you please say your names?

Titus Firman (TF1): Titus Firman.

Troy Furlow (TF2): Troy Furlow.

NM: Thank you, Mr. Minch, for having us again. I think, chronologically, we did not get to Italy, but we were at that point in the war, before we get to Italy. I am going to let Titus and Troy lead off the interview.

Leonard Minch: All right.

TF1: I actually listened to a CD of your last interview and you had mentioned that you were drafted before the war.

LM: That's right.

TF1: Then, you were stationed in Hawaii.

LM: Right. Well, I was drafted, and then, the war started. Actually, what happened, we were on our way to the Philippines, the regiment was, and we were supposed to sail December the 8th. We had our baggage loaded aboard the ship. An infantry regiment doesn't have a hell of a lot of baggage--an infantry company's got one vehicle and that's it. ... So, we canceled that shipment, that sailing, and we were in the Presidio, San Francisco, and we waited until the 13th of December. We later loaded on the USS *Matsonia*. There were three ships in the Pacific there on that line, *Monterey*, *Matsonia* and *Lurline*, and they were fast commercial ships, fast as a destroyer. We loaded on them and we sailed on the 16th of December. We didn't know where we were going. We thought we were going to go to the Philippines, but, after four days at sea, we saw the Aloha Tower [a famous tower in Honolulu Harbor] and we knew where we were. Most of us knew what the Aloha Tower was. So, we were in Hawaii. ... I was in Hawaii for thirteen months when I left as part of a cadre. Those couple [of] days before we sailed, we were in this Presidio, San Francisco. ... There was a little tavern right in the middle of the post and we'd be in there, drinking Miller High Life beer, and they'd call an alert and we'd, quick, pour a pitcher of beer around in a circle and gobble it down, run in the barracks, get our rifles and steel helmets and gasmasks, run outside, fall in, run up the hill into the cemetery. ... Everybody got themselves a headstone, leaned up against the headstone and went to sleep. ... That was the alerts. Actually, when the war started, ... we had been out on the town, in San Francisco, and I was in a bunk and there was a radio on a sill, the windowsill, and [we were] listening to music. ... All of a sudden, this guy breaks in and he's screaming, "Hawaii's being attacked," this and that, you know, and he kept screaming. So, I had a few words. I thought, you know, when I come in the Army, I was in for one year. I was in four weeks and they made it a year-and-a-half. I was in six weeks and they made it two-and-a-half years and, when I heard this business about the shooting and all and the attack, then, "*Oy*," I said, "oh, shit, I'm in the Army until this is over." [laughter] So, we get to Hawaii ... and it was really very poor training for us. It wasn't

physical and, basically, a lot of the training was poor. It didn't answer what the needs were. So, they added on this Cannon Company to the regiment and I volunteered and transferred over to Cannon Company. Well, the Cannon Company had two officers in it at the time. One was a redneck, who they finally took out of the company--they wouldn't let him take the company into combat--and the other one was a plain infantry officer. When they got a second lieutenant in who had been an enlisted man in the field artillery and had gone to field artillery OCS [Officer Candidate School], he took me aside and was teaching me how to fire weapons, how to sight them, how to have them parallel and everything necessary. I got special instructions, and the reason I did, you know, they have this AGCT, Army General Classification Test--seventy for entry into the Army, 110 for OCS, 120 for West Point--and I had 146. So, he pulled me out because of that and he pulled me out and trained me well. He trained me well. So, I was in the Cannon Company for about five months, six months, and they had a cadre and, all of a sudden, ... I was a private and I never knew that they made me a PFC [private first class] in December until I saw the orders publishing making me a sergeant. So, here I am, going from private to sergeant, and we come back to the States and the First Sergeant ties up with a girl and goes AWOL [absent without leave]. So, he gets busted, and then, there's promotions along the line, and they had a board, small board, not too bright, and there were three of us. There was me and (Hendricks?). ... He had come into the Cannon Company as a sergeant commo [communications]. He'd come from Penn's Neck, Penn's something or other, New Jersey, and what was the other one's name? (Marino?). He had been a corporal. So, we had an interview and I got the promotion. So, basically, I went from being a private to being a staff sergeant, platoon sergeant. So, we didn't get any training to any extent at all there. ... We should have gotten some good training. You can't get all kinds of equipment for when you're on a cadre, but you can get things like compasses and maps, and that's a very important part, is map reading. So, a funny thing happened there. ... We didn't get a pre-embarkation leave when we went to Hawaii and we were in Hawaii fourteen months. ... We come back and we ... all went on leave. I come home [for] the first time in two years and we were all standing up in there, in the barracks, and we were talking about what we did on our leave and how good it was, all except (Mac?). Mac was sort of a farmer and we said, "What about you, Mac?" and he says, "Well, I got a surprise when I went home." He says, "My wife had a little baby." Everybody was shocked and nobody said a word. We turned our back around. Finally, one fellow said to him, "Well, what did you say, Mac? What happened?" He says, "Well, I told her not to let that happen again." So, we, everybody, cracked up. You couldn't look at him when he said that, [laughter] but, you know, that's a common thing. That's--what would you say?--a military common occurrence. I was just reading Ann Landers' paper this very week [the advice column "Ask Ann Landers"] and there's a woman wrote a letter in. She said she had engaged with two or three other soldiers and she thought she was pregnant. So, Ann Landers said, "First thing you do, find out, are you pregnant?" but that's a sidetrack. Okay, we come back and ... we're in Camp Beale, ... California, and we're supposed to be on a cadre. Most of the cadre came out of the 27th Division, but the reason we didn't go to the 27th Division for the Cannon Company was because they didn't have any. The Cannon Company we had, ... the weapons we had, were condemned in 1936. They were British three-inch guns and the ammunition we had were all odds-and-ends that were left over. You know, a unit goes out on the range and they'd have, like, two hundred rounds and they wind up with seventeen rounds left over. That's what we got. They had terrible ammunition. The instruments were good. We had good instruments. So, we come back from Hawaii and we're supposed to be forming a regiment. Most of the other cadre

was from this 27th Division and we just sat there in California for about five months. Finally, they sent the Cannon Company up to Oregon, to Camp White, Oregon, where they were forming a new cannon company. So, we come in; there were twenty-three of us and they split us up amongst the three regiments, so that each cannon company in each regiment got six or seven men. ... Coming in as a staff sergeant, I was the senior sergeant there. So, as the senior sergeant, I did a lot of things, you know. I'd have to form the company for Reveille, form them for drill, take them out to the drill fields, start them on the drill. We never had an officer around during the day, never had one. They were always at some kind of a school, either as a student or as an instructor. So, that went on for, oh, six, seven months. That went on from September '43 until April '44.

TF1: Now, sir, when did you and your unit head over to Europe?

LM: Well, in ... about April of '44, we started for Europe. We came to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia--I think that's in Virginia, Patrick Henry--and we were there for a few days and we sailed on a very, very large convoy. ... When the convoy got off England, it split. A small amount of the convoy went to the Mediterranean, through the Straits of Gibraltar, and the rest of the convoy went to England. We went through the Straits of Gibraltar and went to Oran, French Morocco [French Algeria], got off the ship, onto trucks, and they took us out ... to the east, past Arzew, which was a French naval base, to a little town called Port-aux-Poules. It's about one street, two streets, and that's it. ... Then, we went up in the hills and bivouacked there and there as an old French fort there, that must have been built about 1850 or '60, just four walls. In the back was three rooms and the center room had two rooms above it--so, that made it a tower--had a firing strip around the wall with just limbs, ... less thick than my wrist, stuck in the wall and two boards on it, and the wall was crenellated, whatever you say, you know, all the way around. ... The gates were locked on it. ... You could go there and look at it and see it, just that one entrance, and the entrance is only big enough for a cart, a (fom?) cart. It wouldn't take one of our vehicles. So, we were there for a while and they wanted an addition for the MPs [Military Police]. We had an MP detachment in the regiment at that time of about seventy men. ... The Commanding General's office had come over. They had flown over and they were there. They were guarded by these MPs and water supply had to be guarded by them, and they wanted more men. So, our platoon fit right in with it. All we needed was one more sergeant. So, they just brought a sergeant over from one of the other platoons, William (Roebach?), who was a pure-blooded Hawaiian, could swim like a fish, and then, we went down and worked ... with the MPs. We were with the MPs for duty and we were attached to a company on the beach. They were engineers handling DUKWs, those motorized amphibious trucks. [Editor's Note: Mr. Minch is referring to the DUKW, commonly referred to as a "duck," an amphibious truck used to transport supplies to shore.] So, we were with them for quarters and rations and with the MPs for duty, and the quarters consisted of a piece of sand with a big rock on it. I always got a rock that faced toward the east, so that it would warm up in [the] daytime and keep me warm [during] the night. That was a funny thing there. You know, a lot of stuff happens in the world that you don't know about. I saw about three or four women over at a creek washing uniforms. So, I said to the guy, "What are those women doing there?" He says, "Oh, the guys bought them and they use them for this and that and sleep with them. They do laundry and do KP [kitchen patrol] and these guys sleep with them, but they own them outright." The Arabs sell their women when they're fourteen years old, they sell their daughters, and these guys bought them. I don't know what they did with

them. They moved--sooner or later, all military units move--but ... that apparently goes on even to this day in various parts of the world where women are bought and sold. ... One thing about that (Roebuck?), ... there was one one-day pass into Oran. ... While we were on that pass, they had done a little amphibious operation and he turned a DUKW over and everything went down in the sea, down in the water, all the men's rifles, their ammunition belts, steel helmets, everything went down, and (Roebuck?) skin-dived, brought every single thing up, except one man's rifle belt. ... The reason he didn't bring his rifle belt up is because the guy had an empty canteen and it caused it to float away. So, at any rate, after being there in North Africa for about a month even--and we got a very good course in mines and booby traps. The engineers gave us a course there, three, four days, and it was very, very good. ... Oh, when I was there in Oran on this one-day pass, I was in an off-limits area and I looked down the street and there's something going on and I walked down the street to see what was going on. Well, there was a big square open there, like the equivalent of about four football fields, and there was a straight line of people across there and a mass behind them. ... Between where I was and these people, I could see bundles of rags. So, looking at it, I saw why there's a straight line. You can't have people in a straight line, but there was a line of gendarmes [French policemen] with the batons and they kept moving them back, and I wondered, ... "Why don't those [people] just run over those gendarmes?" and I looked to my left and right and, every ... two or three yards, there was a rifleman who was a North African, ... the French Army. The French had two divisions of North Africans and these bundles of rags were people that these gendarmes had hit with their batons and knocked-out, cold-cocked. So, at any rate, we leave there and we go aboard the ship that was His Majesty's Ship *Samaria* and it had been a ship on the line going from England to India, a troopship. [Editor's Note: The RMS *Samaria*, a Cunard Line cruiser, was called to military service as a troopship in 1939.] ... We slept on the floor, on a dining table and on a hammock above it, and the whole crew were Lascars and these Lascars are black but with a different texture of their skin. ... The British used them a lot on ships and they used to serve us and we'd go in there, we had crazy food. We had British food. You know, they have fish for breakfast. We don't have fish for breakfast, but they did. ... These Lascars [would] be stirring up a pot of beans, sweating and dropping into it, big pots like that, and these beans were bigger than my thumbnail and every single bean had a weevil in it, every single bean. There's no beans that didn't have weevils in it. The whole top of the thing was covered with weevils. If you like cooked weevils, there's the place for it. [laughter] ... I think it was only three days from North Africa to Italy. We went into Naples and, in Naples, you know, they had a wharf open somewhere, but there were all these ships burned, turned over, blown apart, whatnot. ... We went from there up to a little seaside town; I don't know the name of it. I could look it up in that book. ... We were in this little town and there was--I guess it was going to be a college--and that was an assembly point and, at the time we were there, there was the, I think it was 334th Infantry Regiment. Now, that was the *Nisei* Regiment that was formed. [Editor's Note: Mr. Minch is referring to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, consisting of *Nisei*, American citizens of Japanese ancestry, which served in Italy.] It was formed of one battalion of RA *Nisei* that were in the Army when the war started and the rest of the regiment were volunteer draftees. ... They were volunteers. I was in Hawaii when they opened up the draft board for the *Nisei* in March and these young men would go to their draft board and the draft board would say, "Look, sorry, the quota's all full." They'd go to the next draft board, the next one, until they found a draft board without a quota, and then, they'd enlist. So, they were in there and ... we had an air raid alarm and this, they had a tunnel going, see. I don't know where the hell this tunnel went to. We

had this tunnel open, big open mouth, and we're running in this tunnel and I had these little *Nisei*, like, coming up to my shoulder here and we were packed in there. I mean, we're packed in there, until it's over. So, we're all set to leave to go up to Anzio. [Editor's Note: In Operation SHINGLE, which lasted from January 22 to May 24, 1944, Allied troops fought on the beachhead at Anzio, Italy, for months before breaking out.] ... The advance party from the 517th Parachute Infantry [Regiment] comes in and it's fellows that ... we'd been with in moving from Hawaii to the States, (Howie Scanlan?) and Warse; I don't know what Warse's name was. They were both from New Jersey. So, we get aboard these LSTs [landing ship, tank] and it's just a night trip. We go up at night. We get onboard the LSTs at dusk and go up to Anzio during the night and pull up to wharfs up at Anzio. ... You know, there's not much tide in the Mediterranean and three-story buildings, which are mostly residential buildings, are built right up to the waterline, just a street there, and a lot of it was blown out. ... We go in to land at Anzio and we go up in the field above there, which has a lot of brush on it. ... The very next morning, we were assembled and Mark Clark is there in the back of a truck and he's telling us, "Well, I've got my eye on you and we will push you as soon as we can." Hell, he knew what he was going to do to us before he opened his mouth, because we were on line the next day. [Editor's Note: General Mark Clark commanded the US Fifth Army in Italy.] We were attached to--there was two American divisions--the 36th and the 45th that we were attached to. ... This particular time, we were attached to the 45th. We went from that area, that assembly area, up to the front. ... I would normally have been in the last vehicle, but, somehow or other, the column got turned around and I was in the first vehicle. ... Remember, I'm always the senior sergeant in this company out in the field and they go so far up that we see riflemen deployed in the field. So, they stop us, finally. They told us, CO told me, "Just follow that jeep, follow that jeep," ... but they didn't know where that jeep was going and that jeep was going way up front. So, we stop and the truck was about to turn around and drive in a driveway. I told my driver, "Don't drive in that driveway. It might be mined." [laughter] So, he was a cowboy from Montana. You could see the white of his eyes when I told him that. So, we had to disconnect the cannon, turn the truck around and reconnect the cannon. We went up. We went back a few hundred yards and we went into a field of--not a field, but like a forest--tall pine trees and we're sitting along the edge of the road. My whole platoon is strung out. The platoons were small--just, when the two cannons were there, it was only twenty men. We only had about twenty men there. We're sitting along the edge of the road, you know, and I'm the tallest one and a shot rings out and it goes over my head, and I know what it is from serving in the pits. You know, when a shot goes past you, close, it doesn't go, "Bing-bang," it goes, "Crack," like that. So, a shot rang out and I said, "Oh, somebody accidentally fired a shot." "Bang," another shot goes out, "Oh, shit, somebody's shooting at us. I've got to do something about this fast." So, I jumped up and I had this one sergeant, he was going to shoot me the first chance he got. I said, "Well, he can have his first chance today," and I told him, "You take four men on that side. You take four men on that side. Let's go." ... You know, your mind has to work fast then. Your mind really works fast, and I said to myself, "I'm going to get out there in front and lead them, because I'm going to have to send men out a lot of times and I don't want them thinking that I'm sending them out and I was afraid to do the job myself." So, we go up the hill after the sniper. Well, I guess as soon as a sniper sees enough people coming, he's gone, he runs. ... We get almost to the crown of the hill and there's another patrol on our left and, fortunately, we didn't start shooting at one another. ... They see us and, you know, our clothes are still pretty clean and our boots aren't scuffed. We had the leggings and shoes--they weren't scuffed, the shoes were still polished. So, it begins a

big conversation, "Who are you? Where'd you come from? How long you been here?" and so on, so forth. So, this ends. We go back, and then, they take us back further and we're in a little cut in the side of the hill, the road, it's about one-and-a-half aisles wide and we park along it. ... There's a flight of stairs going up on my right and I'm curious as to what's up there. So, I get up this flight of stairs and there's a fence, and I'm conscious of booby traps. I lean over the fence, and then, I examine it very carefully. I examine the gate and it looks all right. I go in and there's a farm building on my left and, on my right, a house that looks like, possibly, a parking garage, like, one end of it is open and there's a door here and the door's ajar. So, I go over and look in and this place is the equivalent of--a open space--is the equivalent of about four parking cars, you know, about that size, and the whole floor is covered with dead bodies, dead bodies. There had to be anywhere from thirty to fifty dead bodies there. So, I don't push the door open, because, again, I'm afraid of booby traps. I'd go over and there's two or three steps up to this house and, again, the door is ajar. ... I look in and the floor has got about five or six dead Krauts on it and there's a table and on the table is a stretcher and there's a dead Kraut on the stretcher. So, I figured out that this was an aid point for Anzio. That's where they had collected their wounded, but they didn't make it, these Krauts. So, we go back to the ... trucks and some of the men want to go up there and see what's up there and I wouldn't let them go. ... I figured, "If they see all those dead Krauts, they're not going to be very happy about this business." So, we go and run through Rome--this happened just in the Appian Hills, just before Rome. We run through Rome and we get deployed on the other side of Rome and ... we fight into a place called Civitavecchia, "civita" being city and "vecchia" being old, "old city," and I didn't know it at the time, but ... deployed on the other side was this 334th *Nisei* Regiment [442nd Regimental Combat Team]. So, we go from there and we're more or less in the center of Italy and there's one small battle after another where we don't get engaged in them. ... A lot of places we deployed, we deployed one time and there was a big--it was the first deployment, I think--there's a big open field on our left, leading out to the sea, and the ground was very hard. ... We had three engineering tools on each truck, an axe, a pickaxe and a shovel, and I'd dig a slit trench about four inches deep and we got shelled there. Nobody was hurt. The only thing that happened was, when we were going to fire, somebody put a round in the cannon and they got it in a little crosswise and it jammed. So, to get that round out, what you had to do is open a breech, take out the propellant, stuff in a couple of empty sandbags, and then, go around the front and knock it loose with a ramrod. So, I figured, this is another one of those situations, "I'll do it myself," and I got a ramrod. ... See, if that shell would go off, it would just cut you in half, but I knew what the fusing was on the shells, so, I was pretty certain it wouldn't go off. So, I knocked it out and I gave the ramrod to the squad leader, the section sergeant, and I said, "From now on, you do it." So, we went many miles north without anything particularly interesting happening. The Germans fought a very, very good rearguard action. ... We would be on these little dirt roads and they'd open up with a few riflemen and a machine-gun and they'd deploy, and, when they deployed, the Krauts would have one mortar there and they'd shoot about six, seven shells, mortar shells. Meanwhile, we were trying to deploy around them and it would take us a day or so to deploy around--the regiment, not me--and, by the time they did that, those Krauts were gone and the same thing would happen later on. We got up to one section there and we were held up by a canal and we were in an olive grove in the morning and it was kind of wet. There was some rain coming down and you know that Italian soil is not like American soil. The topsoil is gone a hundred years ago and it's more or less very hard clay in the places. So, we're in this olive grove and the regiment is held up by the canal and there's some noise and I say, "Is that

thunder or shelling?" and I get up in my slit trench a little bit and look around. Nobody's moving. I say, "Well, it's just thunder." So, I laid down again and there's some more noise. I looked up again--all I could see was asses. Everybody was running down. I ran down and jumped in a ditch there and, when you jumped in the ditch, it had about this much water. Well, within half an hour, it had that much water, water was up to my chest, and I was digging. I had the engineer's shovel and I was digging sideways into this trench and I uncovered a snake's nest. It's a big nest like that, full of dead leaves and a loose snake. That poor snake had some chance. I chopped him in half with that shovel right away and kept digging, and the water got up to our chest. Finally, the rain stopped and the shelling stopped and the thunder stopped and we got out and dried out. The regiment, meanwhile, had found an underwater dam and they went across, a battalion, single file, walking across. ... When the Krauts found them on their flank, they just took off again. So, we went our way up until--I don't remember the name of the river, the river that comes from Florence--the Arno comes from Florence? ... The Arno, I think it is, and we were there for quite some time. ... Well, we moved there. We got into the mountains and that was bad, because we deployed a number of times, firing, and we got up as far as the Gothic Line. [Editor's Note: The Gothic Line was a series of fortifications built in the Northern Apennine Mountains by Axis forces in August 1944.] The Gothic Line was one section of their line across Italy, which was fortified. They took about twenty thousand Italian laborers and they dug an antitank ditch and they dug holes and made bunkers. They had bunkers three levels deep and, ... when we would shell, they would jump down in their bunkers and wait until the shelling was finished, and then, they would come back out and deploy in the trench. So, this was Route 65--35, 65, I don't know which. I can't remember, my memory isn't so good on that, but they had, at one place, ... a tank turret, with a tank gun in it, over a cement mound. ... We never destroyed it, but we did capture it. Guess what happened? We encircled it and they pulled out. We were going through the mountains one place after another. ... You'd catch one mountain and there was another one; you take that one, there's another one, all the way up. We're going into one area and we're going to deploy. I had jumped off my truck and was ready to deploy and there was two tanks right up ahead of me and these two tanks are shooting across a valley and somebody on the other side with eighty-eights is shooting back at them. [Editor's Note: Mr. Minch is referring to the German eighty-eight-millimeter artillery piece, an antiaircraft and antitank weapon.] Well, when the eighty-eights were short, they were hitting on the far side of the hill and, when they were over, they were hitting right in the area where I was and I had absolutely no cover. ... All I could find was a drainage area, about that deep, and I got down into that. I made myself as flat as I could, but I was scared as hell. You know, you're caught out in the open with no trench. So, after five or six shells, or less, they stopped shooting and we didn't deploy there. We went somewhere else. We got up to a place near Loiano and it was very, very muddy and we had our guns more or less on a little bit of a ridge with a road right behind it. ... It was like a pocket, like that, and they were shooting and going into the pocket, like that. It was some kind of a light artillery piece and the Germans had seventy-millimeter infantry cannons. They also had hundreds, if not thousands, of seventy-millimeter field artillery pieces that they had captured from the Russians and they were shooting in the air. ... Sometimes, these shells were ten, twelve feet away from me, but they were going into the mud so deep, they'd just get a spout of mud. ... They were only shooting at night or when there was a heavy fog across the valley, that we couldn't see where the firing was coming from. So, this one night, this section sergeant wakes me up and he says, "Broedloe's been hit." I'm down in the muddy slit trench. ... We'd take these cases that the shells came in, put them down in the

bottom, sleep on top of them. So, I say to him, "Is Broedloe okay?" Now, it's funny, this fellow's name is Rudolph W. Broedloe and the Regimental Commander has the same name. One is "L-O-E" and [the other] one is "L-O-W." [Editor's Note: Colonel Rudolph W. Broedlow commanded the 361st Combat Team.] So, when I get up in the morning, I find out that--I don't know if I found out that morning or the next day--that Broedloe was killed, and I felt bad about it, Broedloe. If I had known then what I knew later, I would've asked for Broedloe to be discharged from the Army as being an incompatible, because he was a very good kid, but he wasn't a soldier. I took him aside one time and I tried to teach him a little bit more about just plain the manual of arms. ... I'm talking to this kid with the [rifle], and not in a spiteful way or anything, and I see the kid start to shake and he's starting to sweat. I said, "That's enough of that. I'm not here to terrorize him. I'll just take him the way he is and let it go at that," but, if I had known [what I knew] later on, I would have asked the Company Commander to discharge him as incompatible. You know, you had funny things happen at different times and you can't phase them all regularly into a sequence. One time, when we were in Camp Adair, after we were on maneuvers--we went from Camp White to maneuvers to Camp Adair--we got in three sergeants who came from the Americal Division and had been fighting at Guadalcanal. [Editor's Note: Located north of Cornwallis, Oregon, Camp Adair was an Army training camp from 1942 to 1945. Camp White is located in the Agate Desert in Oregon. It was used from 1942 to 1945. Activated in May 1942, the Americal Division fought at Guadalcanal in October 1942.] All you hear about is the Marines at Guadalcanal, but the Army cleaned it up and it was the Americal Division that did it. ... This one sergeant didn't like me and I didn't like him, but ... I saw him with an attack of malaria and that's pretty horrible. One minute, he's shaking like hell and you pile on blankets on him, his overcoat, his raincoat, his shelter half, and, the next minute, his sweat is pouring off him. You're taking everything off him, taking his undershirt and dipping it in water and wiping him down. So, I don't know what happened to him, but he didn't go with us. Another one, a machine-gun sergeant, we started out on a march. We'd only gone about three, four hundred ... yards and he broke down again from malaria. The third one was a Sergeant (Holt?)--what was (Holt's) name? can't remember what his first name was--Normano. He was senior to me and he got sick and went into the hospital. ... Before he went into the hospital, he gave me the name and address of a girl. So, I looked her up, but we weren't very friendly. When I'd come back from that leave, I went to see (Holt?) in the hospital. He was in the hospital not for malaria but because he had VD [venereal disease]. So, (Holt?), again, disappeared. I don't know what happens when they disappeared. They get reassigned. ... Everybody who was in the Americal Division apparently got malaria, everyone. ... When they get attacks, it's real bad, real bad. So, I was at Loiana where Rudy got killed. We went up to another position and there's a town of Livergnano. Livergnano had these front of houses and there was a cliff and they were dug back into the cliff, the rooms. ... We went into one position over to the flank a little bit and, going in the position, there was three bodies there with shelter halves laying on them, American soldiers. It's the only time I ever saw dead Americans. We got into this position and we'd been advancing all these months, you know, and the Company Commander leaves us in this position, this big mountain over the side, Mount Adone, and they had a perfect view of us. ... There was a little mountain in front of them, (Mount delle Formiche?), and we're firing at (Formiche?). I could see my shells landing, which is wrong for an artillery piece. You're supposed to get indirect fire. You don't get up so [that] they can see you and you can see them. So, we were there for quite some time, long enough for us to build shacks between two of the guns. Two of my guns had shacks behind them, from the ammunition boxes. The ammunition come up, in

some cases, in a wooden box, and, when they come up in a wooden box, we used that wood one way or another. So, we're there for, oh, a good time, three weeks or so. Once they hit this Livergnano, they couldn't move forward. They couldn't take this Mount Adone, they couldn't move forward. We stayed there over the whole winter, but this one night, they got some ammunition and they shelled our gun position with something big. It was 155s--well, no, they didn't have 155s--they had 150s or higher, and I lost both my guns. We had about twenty-eight men in the company injured and the way they were injured were flash burns from the shells exploding, not from fragmentation. I had a medic that had just come in and I only had him for three, four days. ... I never knew his name, I still don't know his name, and he was a broken bone. He was wounded. He never come back, and one of the fellows that had served in Hawaii with me, (Hendrickson?), from Jersey, he was wounded. He got a big fragment in his hip. ... You know, we had an outer jacket, field jacket, we had a sweater underneath that, we had a woolen shirt underneath that, we had a woolen undershirt underneath that. If it hit you right here, you had a woolen underpants and cotton underpants and your regular pants and your belt. He got all that shit blown into the side, blown into him, and he never come back. ... Sergeant (Bull?), the First Platoon senior sergeant, he never came back, but, later on, it's funny, we didn't know anything about it and, only a few years back, I think four years back, we saw an obituary for him. ... He had been, somehow or other, transferred to France, where he was a security [guard] on a prisoner of war camp. ... Well, I have to go back a little bit. ... In December 1944, I got an infection on my face. I had about three sores here. You know, we're living on the dirt all the time--it's easy to get a bad infection. So, I went to the medics and they scraped them off and they painted my whole face here with iodine, full strength iodine, and, the next morning, I had one big scab all across the face. So, I got sent back to a hospital, which was nice. It had a floor in it, had heat in it and you got three meals a day, and there were nurses, too. What more could you want? Well, the nurses came around on the 23rd of December and they said, "If you're discharged tomorrow, can you get back to your unit?" I says, "No, I can't get back to my unit. It's on line." So, they said, "Okay." So, they come around on Christmas Eve and, you know, all officers got one bottle of whiskey a month--nothing for the enlisted men, not even a beer. The nurses came around and gave each guy a shot of booze. So, on the 26th, I was discharged and started up. I was in the what you would call replacement area, but just for the division, and we had nice tents, no floors. We had a stove, with no fuel, and it was cold as hell up there. There was about three feet of snow on it. You know, it was up in the mountains, about three feet of snow, cold as hell. Then, there was a Kraut airplane that used to come over and harass us and there's a big moon, the biggest moon I ever saw in my life. It was like daylight when that moon was out and the snow reflecting it, and this Kraut plane would come along. [Editor's Note: Mr. Minch imitates the sound of the plane.] It was a Ju 88. [Editor's Note: The Ju 88 was a German *Luftwaffe* plane, predominantly used as a dive bomber.] ... That's where I was, in that repple-depple. I was there three, four days. I hated it. What happened to that plane is, they had taken the antiaircraft units in Italy--one was a regiment and there were two battalions--and they converted the regiment to infantry. One battalion was kept as MPs and one battalion was--what'd they do with the third one? ... Oh, one battalion was kept as antiaircraft and they brought up one gun and, you know, this airplane was ... flying down valleys, you know. So, this gun was up actually above the airplane and the airplane come down one last time [laughter] and the quad-fifty [M45 quad-mount, a turret that held four Browning M2 machine-guns] took it down. I got back to the company and they were in line and there's about eighteen inches of snow where we are. ... I dig through the snow and I dig a slit trench, but,

unfortunately, I dug a slit trench--well, maybe fortunately--I dug a slit trench where there was drainage and it wasn't frozen underneath the snow. The ground was mud underneath the snow. So, I slept there part of one night and I got out. ... I used to get all the troublemakers in my platoon. I got them and it was simply a matter of handling them right, but they had, somehow or other, gotten a hold of a squad tent. I don't know where they got this squad tent from, and they got a fifty-five-gallon drum and there was a pipeline up through the mountains carrying gasoline from Leghorn and they got a section of this pipeline and they used the pipeline for a center pole in the tent. ... The drum, they drove some of these iron bars that we get with ammunition packs through for grates and cut an opening in it for the feed and another opening to take ashes out, so that this tent was quite comfortable, you know. The floor was made of the ammunition boxes and there was a shelf about that wide. So, I went in there and started sleeping on the shelf and this one kid, Bill (Slattery?), used to bring me breakfast in bed. He'd bring me a big dish, a big mess kit, full of oatmeal and a cup of coffee and a Spam sandwich. So, he'd bring me breakfast and I would wash the kit out and bring him supper. Lunch, we didn't have--maybe got a ... canteen cup of noodle soup, chicken noodle soup, which was very good. So, that's the way that went. (Slattery?) would bring me breakfast and I would bring (Slattery?) lunch, supper, and that went back and forth. A funny thing happened on (Slattery?). When I went to a reunion, they said, "We sent letters to (Slattery?), but they never come back, but you'd never get an answer." So, I said, "Oh, I'll check into it for you." So, I got information and got a telephone number and I called up. It was in Long Island City and I said, "Are you Bill (Slattery?)?" The guy says, "Yes, I am." I said, "Are you Bill (Slattery?) from the 361st?" He said, "No, I was in an artillery unit from Chicago." I said, "Do you know Bill (Slattery?) from the 361st?" "No," he says, "I don't have any idea who he is." I says, "Is there any other Bill Slattery's there?" He said, "Yes, there's another Bill (Slattery?). It's my son. He was in Vietnam," three Bill (Slatterys?) in the same place, but not the right one. So, at any rate, ... I'm in this tent, it's in the wintertime and I only get up in the morning to make sure that the two guns--they had two guns, each platoon sergeant had two guns--make sure the two guns are broken loose from the ice and that everything is in order. ... I see this executive officer coming across the field, "Now, what the hell does he want over here?" and he says, "The Company Commander wants to give you a commission." I said, "I'm not interested." He said, "All right." He goes back and he goes away. Meanwhile, I think, "Shit, this company commander, (Blissenbach?), he thinks God made West Pointers [graduates of the United States Military Academy] and officers." I said, "I'm likely to get myself transferred to a line company just for that." So, this executive officer comes back and he says, "He doesn't want to be commissioned." He said, "All right, okay." So, they forget about it. We go back. ... We're in Montecatini. That's a rest area that's a spa. Montecatini is a spa, a gambling spa, too, and it has the baths. ... This (Pearlman?) comes to me on Friday, I think it was a Friday, and he says, "You got any money?" I said, "No, I'm broke." He says, "What do you say we cut a game?" I said, "That sounds good to me, but I don't have any dice or [cards]." He said, "I've got dice and I know where there's a table. So, let's go cut a game." So, we go to cut a game and we can't get any game going, because it's about the third day after payday. So, Saturday morning, Jim (Brennan?), who was the mail clerk, comes in and says, "Hey, Minch, get up to regimental headquarters. They want you." I said, "What the hell they want me for, Jim?" says, "I don't know." All right, I go up there. I get dressed and walk up there and I walk in and somebody says to me, "Are you from Cannon Company?" I said, "Yes, sir." Someone else says, "He's got his chevrons on." Someone else says, "I've got a pocketknife. I'll take them off," and I'm going, "What the hell are they taking my chevrons off for?" and they say, "Okay, stand in line. The

three of you, stand in line over here. Stand in line there," and they say, "Raise your right hand." I raise my right hand, and then, they start reading the oath of office. ... When they started reading the oath of office, I knew what the hell I was there for. [laughter] So, I go back to the company, take my bedding out of the enlisted men's area and go where the officers are. First time up as an officer, "Tell him to go to the Second Battalion OP [observation post]." So, I go up there to Second Battalion. Second Battalion is in a big castle. Now, castles were stripped of all furnishings. They're cold-ass places and nobody tells me a damn thing. They just say, "Go, go with this group. They're going over to the outpost." So, I have a radio operator with me and I'm carrying the battery and I start out with them. We're going through about eighteen inches of snow and I poop out halfway there. I don't know how close this is. It really wasn't very close. I poop out and sit down in the snow and, finally, get up and go over and it's a house and there's, like, a sort of lean-to in a back corner, broken away. ... The building itself had been bombed and there's a big wreck. I'm in there, first night, going to sleep and there's a rafter going across in front of me and there's a big rat on the rafter and this corporal ... picks up this carbine. I said, "Don't shoot that rat. I don't want any rats running around half dead," and there was a side of beef hanging up above. You know, the Krauts didn't have good rations and they used to kill cattle and butcher it. ... The rats used to come and they'd jump up and sink their teeth into this carcass, and then, slide down. They had the whole side of the carcass looking like a bunch of threads. So, there were plenty of rats there, plenty of rats. At nighttime, when you're sleeping, they'd run across your chest, and then, you worry, ... "Will those bastards bite you in the face?" You're in a sleeping bag, but they'd run across your chest like that. I mean, ... talk about sorry things--I'm in there and I pick up ... a *Life Magazine* and I'm thumbing through it. ... This soldier comes over to me and he says, "Let me see that magazine," and he opens it up and there's a story about two sailors on leave. ... This guy gives them a lift in their car and they murder him for the car and they're to be executed this particular week. They're going to be executed this week and he says, "You see that man over there?" He said that's his brother, his twin brother. So, here's his twin brother, he knows his brother's going to be executed that week, terrible situation. So, I'm in this place and there's a machine-gun down the valley. You know, the house is here and the valley runs that way and there's a machine-gun down there, a nest. You can see where the gun comes out. They were underneath a house and they come out underneath this little dirt road and into this area and the stuff comes right next to our house. So, I want to shoot it and ... the Commander says, "You can't shoot there. It's in the Italians' area." We had an Italian group on our right flank. So, "Okay." Meanwhile, I finished that tour; go back, I come up again as a liaison with Second Battalion, rather than as an OP. ... I tell this tank guy--he had two tanks on the other side of this little valley--and I tell him where it is and we go up this little humpback, where we can go, and I point it out to him and he says, "I'll shoot it." So, I says, "Well, when you shoot it, let me know." So, he said, "Okay." So, he has to stay in this castle during the daytime, and then, he can go back to his unit at night. He calls me up and says, "I'm going to shoot it." I said, "Okay, wait fifteen minutes." He waits fifteen minutes, I go up and ... he shoots it and he had a good gun. You know, when you fire a gun sight by sight, you fire it and the shell comes somewheres else. It doesn't hit your target, but, then, you lay your gun the same way, the same sighting on your sight, but you look at the ... etched scale in there and you sight the same, exact same, and then, you look on your etched scale where this shot had hit, and then, you moved that point onto your target and you hit your target. Second shot, he blew it out. That was a good place; they did some good shooting there. Nobody told me where, I never had a map, nobody ever told me where the frontline was, but the terrain sort of dictated it, that it was a

long slope down from the German side. There was a cemetery at the top of the slope and ... in the front of the cemetery was a church and this church was a base point for all the artillery. You register on that and shift from there. So, I heard that a mortar had fallen into one of the companies. Well, you know, one of the things they never really pressed on you, you know, mortars have a limited range. They can't go forever and the longest range for a mortar is about four thousand yards, for a light mortar. So, you figure out about where the mortar hit and you make an arc--you can do it with your fingers, where they're about four thousand yards [away], two squares on your map--and you just make a half circle. You make that half circle, you look at your map and you look at the terrain and there's only [so many] places where you can hide a mortar. It can't be out in the middle of a field. So, there was a gully over on my right and, studying it on the map, studying those things, you could see there was a road that came over the hill there, one in front of this cemetery, one over to my left, but there was a little footpath that led down into that gully. So, I had to figure that's the only place that mortar's [crew] could be, is down in that gully. So, I had them fire one shot, white phosphorous. I never saw the shot land, but I saw that phosphorous come up out of the gully, fine. So, I had two guns and I just moved them twenty-five yards, fired a round, moved them another twenty-five yards, fired another round, move them another twenty-five yards, fire another round. ... Then, I extended the range twenty-five yards, fired another round. I worked it down and up, and then, I laid down and went to sleep, but, all of that firing, I never saw a shot explode, all down in that gully. I [was] laying down about a half-hour and the Corporal comes to me and he says, "They're carrying Germans out of that gully." I says, "Do they got a Red Cross flag?" He says, "Yes." He said, "It's two men carrying a stretcher. Somebody's on the stretcher and there's a man with a bandage around his head." I said, "Well, I can't shoot at them," and I went to sleep. That's where I made the mistake. I should have found out where the hell they went and I didn't. ... Coming on spring and we had this big Mount [Monte] Adone still on our left, big Mount Adone, and we're going to have this spring breakthrough, which was about [the] beginning of April 5th to 10th of April. ... I'm up in an observation point, a house, (LaRosa?). A lot of the houses have names on them and they have the name carved in a stone. What do you call those stones in the house? What kind of stone do you call it, you know, the stone that they build the houses around?

TF1: A cornerstone?

LM: Yes, the stone, and this house was (LaRosa?) and I'm in this house and I'm studying Mount Adone and I see what I believe to be a concrete bunker. So, I call a fire mission and shoot at the ... concrete bunker and it surprised the hell out of me how accurate these guns were. This is the first time I shoot at a point target, because I got a direct hit on it around about the fifth shot, but it didn't do anything. So, I called back to the Company Commander, who is at regiment, and I told him, "I saw this bunker here. We fired, hit it--it didn't do anything." He said, "All right." About an hour later, ... he calls me back and, in this house, there's quite a few officers doing observation. He calls me back and says, "Look around. There's a field artillery officer there. Show him the bunker," and, at the same time, somebody taps me on the shoulder and says, "You're from Cannon Company?" I said, "Yes," and I turn around and look and it's a bird colonel, you know, and he's got, I don't know whether they're six-inch or eight-inch howitzers. ... I give him the coordinates and the first shell falls short and he doesn't make any adjustment. The second shell isn't over--he's got a bracket on it. So, he says, "Well, we've just got to pick it up by dispersion." Well, he kept firing at it, one shell at a time. Finally, the seventeenth shell hit

it and blew the whole thing out. You see a puff of smoke come out of the vent of the firing edge. So, then, we took Adone and, when we were going in, forward, funny, I was in a truck and we're only going about eight or ten miles-an-hour. I passed a dead guy on his side and he had shorts on and he'd laid there all winter long. He's just--it's funny to say--it's like parchment skin. The skin wasn't broken, no rats or anything had gotten to him. I couldn't tell whether he was British or German, because the both of them wore shorts. So, we ... went forward there and we stopped ... in the back and the Company Commander put me in a church. There was a river in front and it had big dykes on it and he said, "We want to give the impression that we are going to cross here. So, shoot at anything that moves on the other side." "Yes, sir." So, I go up in this steeple; to start with, I'm scared shitless up in this steeple, because the steps are thinner [and] their supporter [seemed weak]. They're a board about seven inches wide and they're supported by a limb less than the thickness of my wrist, stuck into the wall. ... In some places, there's a lot of dust there. I don't know what the dust comes from, but I'm afraid that it's termites. So, I get up to the top and the Company Commander tells me, "Don't expose yourself. There's a sniper on the other side." "Fine." So, I get up there and ... there's a parapet right on this top of the church and the parapet is about eighteen inches high. It's too high to be able to ... lay down and look over and you sort of have to sit up halfway. ... I told my radio operator, "You stay down there on the steps. There's no need for you to come up," and I see some movement. I fired some shots at it, over there, and we're there and, all of a sudden, my body starts trembling and it just almost raises. ... What happened was, this bell--now, imagine a bell bigger than this room, you know, as high as this room, this bell was that high and that bell is only, like, six feet away from me--and they're ringing that damn bell. It's the strangest feeling you could ever feel. So, finally, that's over. We get out of there, we cross the river. We get up to the Po and there was one of these sights you only see in pictures. The Krauts had been pushed up against the Po River. They couldn't cross; the bridges had been bombed out, the ferries had been bombed out. There's a whole stream of traffic. There's a herd of horses, about forty, fifty horses, running in the field and this whole stream of traffic is burned out. There's dead men and dead horses in vehicles and wagons. You know, the German Army mostly moved with animals. They didn't move with trucks like we do. ... There's some dead animals there and dead men burned to a crisp in these vehicles or trucks, but it all must have happened within twenty-four hours or so, because there was no smell from death, just the smell from fire. That was it. So, we pull around that and get up to the Po and the engineers put a bridge across there, a pontoon bridge. ... We go across, one truck and gun at a time. As you go across, those pontoons sink down into the water and come up as you pass. We got across and we drove a long distance and we came to the--I think it's the Piave River. Now, the Piave River, in that area, had some fierce battles in World War I. The Italians lost seven hundred thousand men, dead, in that area and that's where Rommel made his reputation as an infantry officer, there. [Editor's Note: German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, then a lieutenant, won a decisive victory at the Battle of Caporetto on the Piave River in October-November 1917.] We get into this Piave River and we go about two, three miles up it, following a sandbar, get out on the other side and it's night and I'm shivering and whatnot. It's April, but it's cold and I decide that I've got to get out of this jeep. I'm in the jeep and the windshield's down. You can't put your windshield up. The windshield's down and I'm getting sicker and sicker by the minute and I think, "Hey, you've got to get the hell out of here, somehow or other." ... Then, I remembered, there was a truck in the rear of our column. We'd captured a German truck and ... it had just run out of gasoline and our mechanic was driving it. So, I got into this German truck and there was like two steps in. It was a big box truck and I sit there with my back

toward the rear of the truck and the front looking forward. ... Before you know it, I leaned back a little bit more; before you know it, I was asleep. I wake up, the truck's stopped, the sun is up and the driver's getting water. ... I get out of the truck and I can hear firing, small arms firing, up ahead and I say to the driver, "Where's that small arms firing? ... Is the company on this side or the other side?" and he says he doesn't know. He says, "I think it's on the other side." So, I'm standing there awhile and along comes a German officer and an old Italian with a rifle. ... This German officer walks over toward me and he says, "This Italian is going to kill me," and I says, "Yes, why is he going to ... kill you?" Well, at that time, within days, hours, we had learned about the death camps that the Germans had conducted and we knew pretty well what the Germans did in Italy. They had a system where they took forced labor and what they did was put a German officer in every *Carabinieri* office. ... They had the population on rosters and, when they would want a woman, they would tell her to come into their barracks, their quarters, and, if the woman said, "No," they'd tell her, "You got a father?" She said, "Yes." "You got a brother?" "Yes." "Would you like to see them go to Germany in a labor camp tomorrow?" "No." "Come into my office tonight." That's the way they acted, where they weren't actually physical. They used that kind of pressure. So, I didn't have any sympathy much for this here Kraut, because he was a well-dressed, well-spoken, well-educated man. You know, the Germans would send their sixteen-year-olds over to England for two years ... to finish their education and that's what this fellow had. The way he spoke, he spoke with a slight British accent, but very articulate. So, he says to me, "This Italian's going to kill me." I says, "Oh, yes, why?" and he turns around and speaks Italian and asks him, "Why is he going to kill him?" and he turns back and, in English, tells me, he says, "Well, he had two sons and one son was killed by the Germans as a guerilla and the other son was taken as a hostage and was executed." Well, I figured, "That's a goddamn good reason to kill you." [laughter] I said, "Let it up to him. Get out of here, don't want anything to do with you." So, this Italian took him away. About this time, a general pulls up and I walk over and report to him. ... He says, "What's going on?" I said, "I don't know. ... The road is cut up ahead." He's got two jeeploads of armed guards with him, about eight men, and I know some of them. ... They were men I served with in Africa, MPs. So, he says, "I need a CP [command post]." I says, "Right this way," and take him over to the priest's house. ... He went in there and he's talking to the priest and I'm sitting in a great, big chair, big throne-like chair, and of all the stupid things to be thinking, I'm thinking, "That priest is going to spring for cookies and wine, sooner or later." ... I don't know why I thought he'd have cookies. [laughter] I knew he'd have wine. ... I'm sitting there and ... thinking this and who comes running in but my Company Commander. I'll tell you, I really felt like an ass when he come running in, because he was all disheveled, you know, his pants was out of his legs and all. So, he leaves and I just tell the General, "I've got to go now. ... That was my Company Commander. I've got to go to my company. Good-bye." ... I had to walk past the antitank company. They had lost one man--one driver had been shot right in the head. ... I walk up to the company and, when the Company Commander sees me, he says immediately, "There's some men missing. Take a patrol and get them." "Yes, sir." So, the first one I think of is one of these friends that had served in Hawaii with me. ... He'd come as a sergeant and got reduced. ... I see him, he's down in this ditch; near the road's a big ditch, ... as big as this room, almost. ... He's shaking. I said, "Oh, Christ, I can't take him." I picked five guys, six guys, that looked like they were stable and we go out and the first thing we find is (C. E. Brown?) and (C. E. Brown?) is looking at a pistol he's got and he's got another one stuck in his back belt. I says, "All right, come on, (Brown?)." ... We start turning back toward the road and there's two of the soldiers from the company and they've got

one Kraut standing up and there's another Kraut on the ground. I say, "What's the matter with him?" ... This soldier says, "When he came here, he rose up and I shot him five times." "All right." So, he's pretty well mangled. So, about this time, I'm thinking, "What am I going to do now with this wounded man and this prisoner?" I've got the six men I come out with, I've got this (Brown?), I've got these two men. Then, somebody ... yells, "Krauts." So, when I had started out, I took a pistol from (Ed Zenetti?). He had a pistol, a German pistol. ... I had a Tommy gun, I gave him my Tommy gun, but, somehow or other, at this particular minute, I had his carbine, too. So, me and about two or three other guys shoot at these two Krauts. There's two of them. They've got packs on their backs. I don't remember if they had their rifle in the right hand or not. ... We shot at them, they went down; whether they went down because they were hit or they went down to escape the fire, I don't know. So, I'm stuck with this guy on the ground and I know that there's Krauts less than twenty yards away. ... I don't like to be in a group, because of this Schmeisser. You know, that's the equivalent of our Thompson submachine-gun, but it has a thirty-round clip in it, thirty-round magazine. ... It fires at a nine-hundred rounds-per-minute rate and it just goes [Mr. Minch imitates the gun's rapid sound] and it's got a line of all thirty rounds flying at you. So, I finally decide I'll just leave this here Kraut that's wounded there and send a medic back for him. ... So, we walk back to the company and, as soon as the Company Commander sees me, he says, "Get the company in march order." So, I start that. I load them all up, get them marching and we pull out. I completely forget about the Kraut. I don't know if anybody went for him or not. At that particular time, you know, the road had been cut. The company had a firefight there and the one medic, (Udder?), he was hit a second time. That was his second time he was hit. So, we pulled out and what are we going to do? I see it's twenty minutes to twelve.

NM: Let me just pause.

[TAPE PAUSED]

LM: So, we go on forward and we go to Gorizia, which is a town above, a pretty large town, above Trieste. ... The Yugoslavs, under Tito, who was a Communist, had taken over parts of Italy that they weren't supposed to be in. [Editor's Note: Josip Broz Tito was the leader of the Communist Party and Partisans in Yugoslavia.] ... The British, whose territory this was, had asked them to leave and he hadn't left, and the British sort of sucked in an American division. We had the 52nd British Division and the 91st American Division. ... These Yugos would be firing shots during the night and all and the rumor had it that they had gathered up about three thousand men, got anybody that wore any kind of a uniform at all, post office, fire uniform, police, anything. They gathered them up and they took them ... more into Yugoslavia and, supposedly, had killed all of them. So, the women were very much afraid for their selves and their children and their answer to that was to bring in an American soldier and let them sleep with them, let them sleep with their women. ... The American soldier would sleep with her. There'd be a knock on the door at two o'clock in the morning. He'd get up and he'd put his belt on and pick up his rifle and he'd go to the door and it'd be a lieutenant from the Yugoslav Army with a squad behind him. ... He'd want to come in and the soldier would say, "No, you can't come in here. [laughter] You can't come in tonight." ... The Yugos wouldn't press the matter; they wouldn't press it. So, that's how they ... took care of that. We had this one kid, (Wilbur E. Smith?). (Wilbur E. Smith?) was one of these uneducated, dummy kids that was very easily led

and (Wilbur E. Smith?), on the first inspection, was found to have a bottle of whiskey in his locker. Company Commander found a bottle of whiskey in his footlocker. Now, Wilbur had been told, if he brings any liquor into the place, the first thing he does is give me a shot and he was keeping it all to himself. So, the Company Commander took him into the latrine, uncorked the bottle and poured it down the sink. That was a little bit. When we were in North Africa, we were with the MPs and a bunch of us were drinking wine. The winery was right next to the MP station. ... Wilbur had a driver's license and was driving. I said, "Smitty, don't drive the truck back. Don't drive the truck back. Walk back. You've had too much to drink. Walk back." "Okay, okay." So, we all go out and we walk back to the beach. ... Wilbur drives the truck back and he hits a wall and he knocks the damn wall in on a French family that's sitting outside having supper, [laughter] but Wilbur did all kinds of things like that and (Wilbur, he slipped?). So, we're in Trieste, we're in Gorizia, and they decide to move the Yugos out. So, the Second Battalion goes up into the mountains and I had the Second Platoon at that time. I go with them and we sit on the place there--it was kind of fantastic. There were these holes in the ground and there'd be mortar baseplates down there and there was other holes, would have a tripod from a machine-gun bolted there and there were barbed-wire fences there. I don't know whether those things were there from World War I or World War II. ... The Yugos were pulling out and I decided, stupidly, that I would go and check their column. ... So, I had my jeep drive me down their column, oh, about three, four miles, and then, I said, "Look, it's all right going down, the soldiers are friendly, but, if I run into a staff, they're going to be Commies and they'll take me in." So, I turned around and went back, but, as I went back, I looked at their soldiers very, very carefully and I wouldn't have wanted to have to fight them. They were well-weathered, ... [their] skin was dark, you know. They'd been out in the woods for I don't know how long. So, we got rid of those Yugos. ... Then, I come home and I was on the ship the first day. ... I'm a second lieutenant and, the first day, my quarters are going to be in the brig; that's where I'm going to sleep, in the brig. So, they have this colonel who really hates second lieutenants, I think, and he has me standing at attention and he's laying the jobs on me, how, "You're going to be mess officer, you're going to be this officer, you're going to be that officer." "Yes, sir, yes, sir." ... While he's telling, I pass out. ... I'd never passed out before, but I've always had problems going inside to out or outside to in. So, I wind up, I don't get any of these duties; somebody else gets them. We come into New York Harbor and there's a WAC [Women's Army Corps] band there and they're playing *Sentimental Journey*. ... I'd heard of this song, but never actually heard the song. I recognized it. ... I felt very appreciative that these WACs got up about four o'clock in the morning to come out there and ... bring us in. So, I went to Fort Dix and I get up to Fort Dix and they said, "It's going to be five or six weeks before you can be discharged." I was on to get discharged. Everybody wanted to get dis[charged]. We were all draftees. So, they said, "You can transfer over to Monmouth, Fort Monmouth." So, for some reason or other, I knew there was a bus from Fort Monmouth into New York City. So, I said, "I want to get transferred." ... I come over there and, when I'd seen the doctor on the ship, he said, "You're to have your wisdom teeth pulled out." So, I went to the dentist and they pulled one wisdom tooth out and said, "Come back in three days." So, I went back to the orderly room and got a three-day pass and that happened the second time and it happened the third time. ... The fourth time, when they pulled the tooth out, it was impacted and they sewed it up. ... The sewing wasn't too good and the thing packed with food particles, stunk like anything when they opened it up, and I had to have that done with packing. So, I went back to my old job. I got a promotion. ... I went from twenty dollars a week to fifty-two dollars a week and you know

where the building is, where I worked. I worked in the Holland Plaza Building. If you ever came to New Jersey from New York by the Holland Tunnel, it's the building right behind you. I worked on the seventh floor in there. I worked there five years before the war, and then, I come back and started working there. I worked about five or six weeks and I just was disgusted with New York and I didn't like it. I decided to go back to the Army. So, I went to the recruiting office in Jamaica and the recruiter said, "Look, they're going to bring officers in as enlisted men, as, let's see, master sergeants, yes, master sergeants." He says, "Wait a couple of days or a few weeks and you come in as a master sergeant." I says, "Okay." So, sure enough, in about ten days, I got the letter. I went in as a master sergeant. The first stop was Fort Monmouth. I went and I enlisted in the Transportation Corps, went from Fort Monmouth to Eustis in Virginia. I wanted to get aboard the ships; what I wanted to do was get this assignment on the ship. You see, there's one or two soldiers and they were in the PX on the ship. ... I figured I can have a girlfriend in New York City; I can have a girlfriend in Germany. ... I'm running the PX, I can get all sorts of goodies. I'll pay for them, but I can trade them off in Germany for a lot more. So, I'm at Kilmer, waiting to go overseas, and I get called up to headquarters and there's this Captain (Robins?) and he said, "I'd like you to work as my report of survey clerk." I says, "Thanks, but I want to go on the ships. I don't want to have that." So, he says, "All right." So, I go back to the quarters. He calls me back the next day and he says, "I'll tell you what, you take this job." He says, "You know ... that job on the ship only comes up once in a while, very, very rare." ... He says, "You take this report of survey deal and you can have the first assignment that comes on a ship." So, I think a second or two and I realize, "Yes, how the hell many people are on the ship? There's only one. How many ships do we got? We've only got about three." So, I says, "Okay." So, I go in there and I'm a reporter clerk, survey. Well, what happens--well, do you know what a report of survey is? No; report of survey is a method of clearing property loss. It's either worn out, where you salvage it, or it's damaged or it's missing. ... On the report of survey, an officer is assigned to investigate what happened to it. On the post, only the post commander can clear up to a thousand dollars. Anything over a thousand dollars has to go to Army. So, I take this job and I'm sending out these things to offices. They take, like, three reports of survey and they come back in ten days and say, "I'm being discharged tomorrow. Here's the reports of survey I didn't get around to." "Fine." So, I read the report of survey manual and it says you can have a report of survey council. So, I recommend this council to this captain and he makes up ... this council and the council turns out to be the same damn thing. Meanwhile, I'm shifted out of the headquarters building into a barracks building and, in this barracks building, I have the mimeograph section for post-headquarters orders. I have four women and about eight men and the eight men disappear like snow on July 4th. Every day, there's another one being discharged. I wind up with four women there, but, then, they add on my duties. I am the report of survey clerk, ... I take care of forms control on the post--you know, somebody writes up a form, they have to check it to make sure there isn't one being printed that could be altered to use--and I'm the records disposition clerk. There's very few, when a unit has practically no records--in fact, there are no records that are permanent in the unit. They have the morning report, which they hold for one year, and then, they're allowed to discard it and there's nothing else, nothing else. ... There's no permanent records in the company. It's all sent to Washington, DC. So, I get another, ... I get a private in, who is very good. He and I are very compatible. He had served in Italy and First Special Service Forces. You know what they are? First Special Service, they set up a body of men that were American volunteers, ... half of them, and half were Canadians. ... They trained, I think they trained parachuting, and they also trained walking on snowshoes and

skiing, very, very highly trained. ... The object was to take this battalion and land them in northern Norway, with the intention of destroying a heavy water plant, and then, going over the border and being interned in Switzerland. ... For some reason or other, they never went on that mission and, having that body of men trained, they just sent them to Italy. Italy used to take anything. They sent them to Italy and they fought very much, very good. They're all volunteers, Canadians and Americans, and, after a big battle, they took them out and [re]-formed them. They broke up the unit; the Canadians went back to the Canadian Army. ... The Americans, some of them went to a parachute regiment, some of them went to straight infantry and some of them came back as trainees. ... This clerk I got was in that First Special Forces unit. So, now, what did I do after that? At this time, I met my first wife. I was in the mess hall and this good-looking woman turns around, a specialist, turns around, hands me a knife, fork and spoon and turns away. ... She talks to her girlfriend, very good-looking, too, and they, in turn, talk to this master sergeant, who I don't know. There's two barracks and they're full of master sergeants. There's about sixty master sergeants. So, two days later, I see this master sergeant coming out. I don't know him, I never spoke to him. ... I said, "Hey, I saw you with those two WACs, talking to those two WACs." He says, "Yes, what about it?" I says, "You dating one?" He says, "Yes." I says, "How about fixing me up with a date with the other one?" He says, "All right." He doesn't say anything, he just walks away. About three days later, he says, "I'm going out with the girls tonight--you want to come along?" I said, "Sure." So, I go along with him and we go to a little roadhouse and we have a couple of drinks and I go with the girl, Rita, out to the car and sit in the backseat. Well, I sat on one side in the car and she sat on the other side of the car and we talked and I liked that she came from New York City, too. So, we had another date and the same thing happened and, on the second date, I'd made up my mind, "I'm going to marry her." She didn't know it at the time, of course. I said, "I'm going to marry her." So, we were going out. We went to Highland Park, and then, we went to this Italian restaurant, had spaghetti. I was sitting across this ... table from her and, at the same time, I said, "What the hell is her name anyway? I can't remember her name." I called her, "Helena," and she just looks up and says, "My name is Rita." "Oh." [laughter] So, we were very, very compatible. I used to take her to the NCO [non-commissioned officer] club and we'd have a beer or two there. One of the sergeants I'd been drinking with--what was his name?--(Harvey?). (Harvey?) had been captured in Bataan; he spent the whole war in the Japanese prison camps. (Harvey?) was a very nice guy. He and I and Rita got along fine and, finally, I guess, (Harvey?) got shipped [out], Rita got discharged and we had made our announcement--not an announcement, an engagement--decided we were going to get married. All the time I knew Rita was only, like, about two months. I decided I was going to marry her the second date and it took me two months. Well, she wasn't too hard to convince, because she was a little adventurous herself and she didn't particularly want to go back to the life she had. You know, I knew where she worked. ... It was near Canal [Street] and Sixth Avenue, on the other side of Canal and Sixth Avenue and North Broadway. There's a telephone company building and she worked in that building. I knew where she used to go for lunch when they had money. Pay day, they used to go for lunch; there was a little triangle there and it had a restaurant which was more of a woman's restaurant, no men went there. She ate in there. So, we got married at High Mass in September the 7th, 1946. I was married to her for fifty-seven years, six months, ... fifteen days and five hours, married to her at High Mass and I was (rubbing them?) around when she died. ... When we were married, we lived in about six, seven places in New Jersey. You know, in 1946, housing was terrible--there's no housing--and we started out on somebody's side porch, had seven windows in it and one door.

... We went from there to--this was in Stelton, New Jersey--went from there to New Brunswick, where we had two rooms, one bedroom and one kitchen. You had to walk out in the hall to go from one to the other and it was a boarding house and there was a community bathroom. ... We went from there to a place where it was a duplex building, but one side had been modernized and converted and the other side hadn't. So, we were on the top floor of the other side and we had a kitchen that you had to go in the hall to get in the kitchen, then, the living room. You had to go through the bathroom to get to the bedroom. We went from there to Manville, went from Manville to University Heights, went from University Heights to Camp Kilmer, went from Camp Kilmer to Long Branch, Long Branch to West End, West End to Whiting. ... We lived in Whiting for about twenty-two years. In the interim, we had three kids, two girls and one boy. My own education, I went to grammar school, I went to junior high school, I took a commercial course in junior high school. I went from there to Newtown High School and ... there was a three-year agriculture course. Neither my mother nor my father had any education. They both worked when they were thirteen. ... My father was orphaned. ... His father died and he was the oldest of six. He and his sister had to support everybody. So, I wound up, like, just thinking, "Get a job, get a job, get a job." So, I took a three-year course in high school, an agriculture course--real dumbed down course, real dumbed down. ... That was the limit of my education, except, when I worked in New York, I bought the *Liberty Magazine* every week, five cents, *Collier's*, I think twice a month, ten cents, *Saturday Evening Post* once a month, fifteen cents. Besides that, I had read an awful lot when I was a kid, awful lot. In the summertime, I would walk a mile-and-a-half to the Jamaica Library, draw five books out, come home, read the five books and go back in. ... One time, I'd read all about every Indian chief in the United States. Another time, I'd read about all the privateers. I had chickens at one time; I'd get books out on chickens and read all about the chickens, would read about their diseases. Did you ever hear of prolapses of the oviduct, you ever hear of that term? Well, what happens is, when a chicken's laying eggs, its guts turns out, like that, and the other chickens will peck at that pink stuff and kill them. So, what you have to do is coat it with Vaseline and coat your fingers with Vaseline and shove their ass back in and that cures them, but I would read anything like that, anything like that. ... That was my education.

NM: I just want to ask a follow-up question regarding your time in Italy, since you were in Italy for so long.

LM: Yes.

NM: From what I have read, the civilian population was heavily affected by the war.

LM: Very much so.

NM: Could you talk about anything that, in your experience, comes to mind?

LM: Well, yes. We don't ever want to have a war in this country, never. What happens is that there's no food around, there's no work around and they've got nothing to sell. The only thing they've got to sell is, the women can sell their body. That's it, period. ... The only thing that soldiers are interested in is, one, sex, two, liquor, three, food, fourth, sex, five, liquor, six, sex,

seventh, food, eighth, sex, and that's about it. So, you don't ever, ever want to have a war in this country, never; keep it as far away as you can.

NM: Was there physical damage in the towns that you went through?

LM: Very much so, very much so. Our aircraft bombed the hell out of everything, yes. We had one place where we couldn't advance. They had dropped the houses down into the street and the Germans fortified that area. ... The biggest artillery piece we had was the 170, 170-millimeters, and that's only used to interdict way behind the lines. ... Our regimental commander got a hold of their observer and said, "You're here to fire and support us, aren't you? I want you to fire here." So, they put one or two shells in there and that cleared the Krauts out of there and we could advance. ... Meanwhile, the guy that did the observing and conducted the firing was disciplined for shooting. He wasn't supposed to shoot that close to us, but every place you went there was broken down by us, every, almost every, place. When we got over to Gorizia, on the eastern border of Italy, the northeastern border, there wasn't any ground fighting there, so, there wasn't anything. Everything south of the Po, we blew the hell out of, blew the hell out of. Almost all the churches, you see, the churches were always put on a prominent point, on a hill, and they would use that point for a base point, which means that all the artillery that can reach there fires on that and they'd measure their targets off that base point. So, ... those churches were always ... shelled out and bombed out, always.

NM: When you were in Europe, where were you when you heard that the war had ended and what was your reaction and the reaction among the men?

LM: Well, I had been transferred out of the 91st, because I had high points and the 91st was on their way back to the States to be retrained and redeployed. They were going to take the left flank of the invasion ... of Japan. So, I was with the 88th when the war was over, which meant nothing to me in so far as immediate actions, nothing. ... To the 91st, they were on leave at that time and they were told not to report back. They were discharged where they were. So, it didn't mean much to me. I was in the 88th and I disliked the 88th; they got a bad deal in the 88th. I got a company commander that gave me a very poor efficiency rating and it was very much prejudiced. They had ten points on it and he gave me a four-and-a-half on every single one of them. Now, he hadn't seen me much, because I'd come in to the company, I was there a day or two and I was sent down to--what was it?--Ostiglia, on the Po River. My platoon was spread up into three parts--one was up in Verona, one went down south in (Camposanto?) and I was in Ostiglia. So, he didn't see me. ... We were guarding, supposedly guarding, the Germans putting in the Rome-Berlin telephone lines under the supervision of the RSC, Royal Signal Corps, and we were supposed to be guarding them. I never saw any of these guys, I never saw any of those places. I used to eat with, I think it was an MPs group that I ate with, and the men ate there. We were in a civilian house on the second floor. ... I had about four or five men with me and they had one room and me and the platoon sergeant had another room and there's an old (slut?) across the hall, in another room, and, on the end of the building, there was a family living in there. So, he never saw me when he gave me this efficiency report. ... The second thing was, "Steadiness under fire." I'd never been under fire with the company. The efficiency report is from one to ten, so, he gives me a zero and figures it in. Now, the efficiency report is supposed to be one to ten, not zero to ten; so, it shows you that he was prejudiced. He was a college boy and he didn't

like enlisted men commissioned, I guess. I went from there to--I had a prison camp. Now, the prison camp is not a tight enclosure. ... The fighting was over and this was a headquarters and [it was a] headquarters company of a railway maintenance battalion. They maintained the railroad through the Brenner Pass. I was up in the middle of the Brenner Pass and they had a roundhouse. You could turn around the train, a locomotive, and repair it. ... They had one building that's filled with all kinds of supplies in there, unusual things. They had another big warehouse with cement in there and there was hundreds and hundreds, maybe thousands, of bags of cement in there and they had one or two ... prefabs [prefabrications] that they used for barracks. ... On our side of the road, the west side of the road, the place had been a brewery and it was about three stories on the front, on the Brenner Pass road front, and about one or two stories on the back and they had four tunnels, or caves, going into the mountain, where I guess they cooled beer. At this time, their one cave was full of gas, another cave was full of glass and another cave had tires and inner-tubes and one cave was unoccupied. One morning, this Kraut major and his interpreter comes up to me and he says, "Somebody has taken ... fifty-four inner-tubes and forty-five tires." I said, "Yes, how did that happen?" He said, "I don't know," and I said, "Well, let's go see it." So, I went into this cave and looked and, up in the top--the caves were about, oh, I would say eighteen, twenty-foot high--up in the top, there's a little, small opening there. So, we go out [of] the building and go around the back and there's a little bit of road in there and there's a big fence. Now, the Germans build a fence, they build it like this here, with the barbed wire. You can't get through it. You have to go up a hill and come down, and I look around there and everything I see is, there's a broken rubber band there, you know. They fold up inner-tubes and they cut out a rubber band from in the tube and put it around the (photo thing?). So, I can't see anything. So, I get the Major in and I say, "I've got to put somebody in jail, can't have them stealing things from here. If it's an American, I'll put an American in jail. If it's an Italian, I'll put an Italian in jail. If it's a German, I'll put a German down in jail." The German jail was down in Modena. It was for the *SS* and the *Polizia*. I says then, "I don't know who to put in jail. The only thing I can put in jail [is] Willy. Willy's the Supply Sergeant. Willy's got the keys. I'm going to put Willy in jail," and he said, "Oh, Willy didn't. Willy's loved." ... You know, he'd been with him a long time. He's a fat, old man. You know, all of these men are old and these aren't fighting men. You know, these are men that are anywhere from, oh, I would say, thirty-five to fifty or sixty. I said, "Oh, can't find anybody. I've got to put Willy in jail." "No, no, Willy didn't do it." I said, "I'll give you three days to come up with something. Otherwise, I'm going to put Willy's ass in jail. I'm going to send Willy down to Modena." "Oh, Willy didn't do anything." "Three days." So, the second day, they come in and say, "One of the soldiers said his girlfriend said she knew that the place was going to be robbed." I said, "Oh? His girlfriend knew this?" "Yes." So, I report this to the ... Regimental Provost Marshal and, next day, there's a lieutenant from the *Carabinieri* up there and called the German in, he gives us a name and we go down into town. It's like a circus. He's got a jeep. I've got a jeep behind him. Behind me is a jeep full of *Carabinieri* Blackshirts. Behind them is another jeep full of *Carabinieri* Brownshirts and we go into this house and the whole family is there. So, I can't understand a single word of what's going on. You know, they're rattling off in Italian. So, he chases the whole family out, just the father, and he talks to the father, and then, he calls the girl in. There's a girl about eighteen, nineteen years old and the girl says, "Yes, I heard it from my girlfriend that you were going to be robbed, that they were going to rob you." So, the *Carabinieri* gets the name of the girlfriend. He says, "Well, you don't have to come along." He goes and sees the girlfriend and he comes down the next day and he says that, ... "She says So-

and-So told her that our place was going to be robbed." So, there's a stream that comes out of the Alps there, [with] rocks in it, you know. The rocks are all smooth. They've been washed for a thousand years and there's these houses built up against the cliff there. So, we go over there and, no, the guy isn't there, but maybe he's up at this lodge halfway up the hill. There's a little cut next to my bungalow going up into the Alps and we go up there and there's a roadhouse there. We go in the roadhouse and there's two men there. ... It turns out, it's the father and the brother of this fellow we wanted. So, we sit down and we have a grappa with these people. There's four of us there, the *Carabinieri* and these two, ... this father and brother. They were really hard cases. They're hard cases. They say, "Well, he's not here, but we'll have him in your office tomorrow morning," my office, "at ten o'clock." "All right." So, we go away and, at nine o'clock in the morning, this kid comes in. He's about eighteen, nineteen, and he's scared, he's scared, and he talked to him and he doesn't give much information. So, the *Carabinieri* Lieutenant--he came at ten o'clock, the *Carabinieri* Lieutenant--the Lieutenant says, "Well, I'll take him in," and he takes him into the Palace of Justice, and then, ... he comes out the next day, yes, and he's got the information he needs. ... We take a truck and we go back toward the town and there's a house built up against the road. You go around the house and you can drive right into the back and there's my inner-tubes and tires and, on the side, there's about fifty bags of cement. So, I figured they stole them from my place, too, "I'll take those also." So, I get all the tires, I get the cement and all and go back and they sweat the kid out and he implicates about six others, six or seven others, and that's another place. You know, there's places where you screw up. The night before this happened, there's one house, about thirty yards up from us, and there's a little dog there and this dog is barking all night long and, you know, this is the Alps. I figured, like, you know, some kind of an animal wandered down there and it's barking at it, but it was these guys carrying out these tires and all. How they did it, I don't know, because this fence is terrible. They have to go up around it or they have to, somehow or other, get through it. They've got to go through brush [for] about a hundred yards. They've got to go across this river, which is about fifty yards across, and it's got all these round stones in it. You're likely to bust your leg trying to cross there, but they got all that stuff over there--the strangest things.

NM: While you were traveling through Italy, was theft something that was a common occurrence?

LM: No, not in Italy. I wouldn't say in Italy, because you had wartime soldiers and people were used to German actions. You know, they, Germans, didn't screw around. They killed people. People, you can't imagine how they just plain killed them, that's all. If something was wrong, like this one I told you about, this old man that had this lieutenant, this German officer; they had taken his son, his youngest son, as a hostage and just hung him, just hung him--and, you know, they didn't hang them [so] that they were not killed [immediately]. They used to put them up on a stool and a little tripod above, were run across wires around their neck and kick the stool out. They didn't ... have their neck broken. They were suffocated, terrible. ... The Italians knew that the Germans had treated them like that and they didn't bother stealing from us. When I was in Korea, that was different. [laughter] ... I had this one soldier come in to me and I used to do [a lecture] on three things--sex, theft and drugs. ... I used to talk an hour-and-a-half to them, but I got one or three guys in. It was a burden on me, but I used to do it. ... The last thing I would say to these people on theft was, "Now, don't forget, it's either on your person or locked. You understand?" "Yes." An hour later, this kid comes back in to me and he says, "Somebody stole

my watch." I said, "How did they steal your watch?" He said, "Well, I was washing my hands and washing my face and I had put my watch up on the shelf and, when I looked, my watch was gone." I said, "What did I tell you about keeping it on your person? You know, I can't do anything." I could've done something, but I had a certain standing with the houseboys, you know, had a certain standing with them, and, if I tried to get that from the houseboy and I didn't get it, I would lose all kinds of strength with them. ...

NM: You are referring to when you were in Korea.

LM: Korea.

NM: Okay. Could you pick up on when you were in Camp Kilmer, your time at Rutgers and go on from there?

LM: Right. I'd come back from Trieste. I had six years at Rutgers. I'd come back from Trieste and ... we were restricted [to base]. I was to be discharged and we were restricted. My family was in Manville, [New Jersey], and I hadn't been home in ten months, but Lieutenant (Reid?) had the ordnance course and I knew that Lieutenant (Reid?) used to drive through Landing Lane Bridge and through Camp Kilmer to get to where he lived. He avoided ... the city there, he avoided that city, and I called up Kilmer [meaning (Reid?)], I said, "Are you going to drive through here?" He said, "Yes." I said, "How about picking me up when you pass me? I'll be in front of the theater." "Okay." So, that happened two or three days and we were talking. ... I was talking, "How's things at Rutgers?" He said, "Oh, good. We're short an officer." "What is he?" "An infantry officer." "Oh, he's got to teach freshmen." "Yes." I says, "You know, freshmen's broken into ... two semesters. One semester's weapons, one semester's military history." I says, "I can teach weapons ... half a year, and then, we can, you know, split the classes in half. ... Your officer can teach military history, and then, switch, and I'll teach the other half." So, he said, "Okay, that'll be good." He said, "There's only one thing. Don't get discharged on a Friday. We can't enlist you on a Friday." So, I got discharged on Friday and I went over to Rutgers and got their carry-all. I still had my driver's license. I went up to Kearny [New Jersey] Shipyards. This was at II Corps Headquarters. I had to be reenlisted there. I reenlisted there and came back and I taught weapons for one semester, and then, we switched over and I taught weapons for the second semester, and then, they got that officer in. ... While we were assistant instructors, it mostly consisted of setting things up. You know, we would bring over the motion picture projector, set it up. You would thread the machine, run it, bring the sound up, focus it, stop the machine, rewind it, re-thread it. All the officer had to do was come in and flick the switch and everything was perfect and that's all we did. ... I only taught one year. When they taught weapons, ... both times in a rush, we'd bring over twenty-five rifles and we'd come in at seven-thirty in the morning. Other than that, you'd come in at eight. It was wonderful duty. It was regular house duty, like civilian duty, and there's one thing, when you're with a unit, you're nothing, no matter what your grade is--you're an enlisted man, you're nothing--but, when you're in a unit like the ROTC unit, there's about ten officers and about ten enlisted men and you're an individual. You know, you're treated as an individual. When my wife was pregnant and, when we had a baby, I'd say that we're going to have a baby, they'd say, "All right, take a week off," you know, no problems about it. ... Freshman and sophomore year, at that time, was required. Everybody took ROTC and the first year I was there was '47. Now, in 1947,

they split the Army Air Force to the United States Air Force and, in 1948, we actually split. These are pictures. I'd like to show you these pictures, because this is a good picture here, two of you can see this picture. Yes, there's one for you, too. If you look at this picture, the bottom man on the right is (Eddie Haw?). If you notice, (Eddie Haw?) has a Combat Infantry Badge on. Eddie Haw was captured in France and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner and the guy next to him is (Jim Galligan?). He's got a Combat Infantry Badge on. His favorite position was, when advancing, was to be the point man, because he said the point man, they'll let through and they'll shoot up the point squad or the point platoon. The next guy was ... a Reserve Officer that had just came to Rutgers. He wasn't assigned there and they gave him credit for his duty. The center man there, the short man, was Colonel (Adrian R. Brian?). He was the commanding officer. He had been the Inspector General for II Corps in Italy. The next man, I don't know by name. I think he was a signal officer. The next man, I don't know, but I don't know what kind of an officer he was, looks like he was an infantry officer, and the sergeant there is Sergeant (Markowitz?). He was an Air Force sergeant. Now, the man right behind Markowitz is (Therio?), Master Sergeant (Therio?), the chief. He was the Senior NCO at Rutgers. He had served in Siberia in 1918, and the man above him, that's on the left side, the top man, is John (Anderson?). He had to work a deal to get out of the Army and to take the test to be a State Trooper, took the test, was a State Trooper for two years and was murdered, right here in New Jersey. ... The man next to him is (Jenkins?). He was at Rutgers all during the war. He was a range sergeant and I'm the next man, ... you see me, that's the tallest man there, and the man right in the center, with the big hat, is Colonel, ... can't think of his name, but he's the Air Force colonel. Go down to that man right here, this man right here, he's Captain (Redman?). Now, mind you, this is 1947; Captain (Redman?), Air Force, right? ... In 1960, I'm coming back from Korea and I'm in the coffee shop at Hickam Air Force Base and who comes walking down the aisle and runs over to me but Captain (Redman?)? He's a captain in 1947 in active duty; how could he be a captain in 1960 and be on active duty? It's impossible, it's impossible. I don't know how it could be, but he was. He comes running over to me and he says, "Hey, Sergeant Minch," he says, "where are you going? I can get you a seat on any plane. I'm in charge of passengers." I said, "Thanks, I'm on my way home." [laughter] That was amazing, that was really amazing. Some of the other officers, the one all the way on the right was an Air Force sergeant. He was in there, apparently, all during the war.

NM: How long were you with the ROTC and where did you go afterwards?

LM: I was with ROTC for twelve years, altogether, six years, and then, I had ten months in Trieste, [Italy], and I come back and got another six years. In 1956 or so, they had added E-8s and E-9s [sergeant major and command sergeant major] in the Army, because they had screwed up the command of enlisted men, 1956, and, in 1959, they finally got around to giving a levy of E-8s and [E]-9s to II Corps, which ran the ROTC, the Reserve and the National Guard in New York and New Jersey. So, I was sent in. ... They just appointed me to go to take the board for E-8 and I was an E-8, and then, I had nineteen years' service and I could've froze in there and retired with twenty [years], but my ego was up and I wanted an E-9. So, I stayed in and, as soon as I was made E-8, I had orders for Korea. I was made E-8 in January, I had orders for Korea in February, but the orders were long-term. I didn't have to go over there until September and I had changed my MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] so that I was ... an Intelligence and Operations NCO. So, I get over there and I'm assigned to the headquarters, Headquarters

Company, First Battle Group, Seventh Cavalry, First Cavalry Division, and I get there and they just send me to Headquarters Company as first sergeant. So, that was very interesting, very interesting being first sergeant there. We go out for Reveille and there's a great, big rock, not high but big, and there's a big ditch in front of me. Normally, there's a trickle of water going through. When it rained--there's a big mountain behind us called Charlie Block--when it rains on Charlie Block, this little trickle of water turns into a torrent. I know what a torrent looks like. All of a sudden, the water is up like that and rushing like hell and the company's lined up, all in front of me, for Reveille and it was like something out of Hollywood. We used to have, there was a rock retaining wall there and, when the winter come on, the rats come out of the rice fields and there was a rat [that] used to come out every damn morning and stand Reveille with me. So, I got some rat poison, they had a box of Ritz crackers--why they had a box of Ritz crackers in the mess hall, I don't know--and I got some peanut butter and I made up some nice Ritz crackers with peanut butter and rat poison and put them in all these crevasses, and, a day or two later, there was the rat, dead. That was very picturesque. I had it knocked up there. If it wasn't for the fact that I was married, I would've reenlisted over there, stayed there. Actually, I had to reenlist when I was over there, one day. I come in on a Friday, on a Saturday, and ... the Battle Group Commander and my company commander had to come into headquarters and bring me up there and enlist me, on a Sunday, very interesting. Come out the first pay day, I come out of this little camp--this is Camp Custer North--come out of this camp and there's about forty women standing around the gate. I had only been there a few days and I say to them, "What are these women standing around here for?" forty women. He says, "They're all whores. They all come out of the hills on pay day. It's three or four bucks a lay on pay day, three dollars the rest of the month, and they're all here for pay day." So, the day after pay day, there's a third of them left. The day after, there's none. In town, we'd have two regular whores for the town. Prostitutes, all over the world, any place you have a bunch of military men, regardless of the Army, there's prostitutes, always.

...

NM: From my research on Korea in this time, there were often, near the US Army camps, camp towns, where there would be bars. Was there anything like that?

LM: No, I don't think they were set up for the Army. ... They had places, like, this town was Paju-Ri, [South Korea]. Paju-Ri was about 150 yards, north and south, and then, there's not even a turn, ... just another street, going to the--I guess that was to the west--and that went to Gyeonggi-do. Now, Paju-Ri only had a few shacks in it and Gyeonggi-do was the biggest city and we had the main recreation areas for the First Division, was in Gyeonggi-do. No, I never saw anything in particular like that, that I would think of. Of course, you know, basically, you don't get around much. You don't get around a hell of a lot. You were in your company area, you get what you can in your company area. There's always an NCO club and there's an enlisted man's club and an officers' club in your area. ... The First Battle Group had two camps, Camp Custer North and Camp Custer South. South had all the rifle companies in it. There's four rifle companies, and there was another small camp without a name that had combat support in it and, at Camp Custer North, we had a rifle company and Battle Group Headquarters. No, I wouldn't say there was much. There was nothing at all to do in Paju-Ri, nothing at all.

NM: You described a situation with a soldier who had his watch stolen. In relation to some of the things you have been talking about, was venereal disease a problem among the troops?

LM: Well, my speech to them, when they came in, is that, "Don't think about venereal disease as a situation. You are going to get venereal disease. It's not a matter of will you get it--it's just a matter of when you get it," and what I used to do is, I had a little slush fund, very small--everybody had to buy crossed sabers [the Cavalry insignia] for their head and buttons here and I'd make about fifteen, twenty cents on each soldier that came in--and I took the money and I used to buy condoms by the gross. ... They would come in a strip, about that long, and I'd tear them off and put them in a basket and put the basket in a position where the charge of quarters couldn't see it when the men come to sign in and out. So, they could grab a handful if they wanted to and you had all kinds of trouble with VD. ... Every time you got somebody transferred in from within the division, or within Korea, they were a problem, one type or another. I got this kid in from the band. He came from my neighborhood, I knew the exact school. He went to the school I went to, the grammar school. I knew the exact street he lived in and I could've walked down there--give me the address, I could've picked his house out. He had the clap [syphilis] six times from this one woman, six times, and he'd come in, I said, "You know, you're only going to get the clap in this company one time." He says, "Oh?" I said, "Yes, I'm going to get you a dishonorable discharge for unclean habits. What do you think of that?" and the tears started coming down his face. I said, "You get the clap one time in this company, I'm going to get you discharged for unclean habits."

NM: How long were you in Korea?

LM: Thirteen months to the day. That was the tour.

NM: What was daily duty for you like?

LM: Well, I had two clerks. One was a company clerk and one was a postal clerk and the company clerk was a Filipino boy, who was a junior in college in the University of Manila and his father had been in the Filipino Rifles and, when he reached twenty, his father told him to ... come to the States and get citizenship, and he did. So, all I had to do was check that morning report, that it was good, and I used to walk through the compound to see what was going on, if there's anything wrong. There was a fire pit there one time. I looked in there and there's a roster half burned with all the men's names and home addresses and I took it back to personnel and we had a little Scot warrant officer, cocky little bastard, and I read the riot act to him for throwing out something like that. "If you burn it, burn it, but don't leave it half burned like that," and I used to have fun with him. [laughter] Well, I'd come up there and walk through his personnel section and he'd say, "What do you want?" I'd say, "Just checking brass, checking haircuts, checking shoes, checking shaves, just the usual thing." [laughter] He couldn't say anything. Another thing I did with them, Company Commander said, "Give me three men's names for promotion." Well, how the hell do I know? I'm only there for, like, a month and, basically, you know, I've got people that are truck drivers, mechanics. I've got medics. I've got engineers. I've got three or four different kinds of commo men. I've got S-4 men. What the hell do I know about them? So, I get a couple of names, give them to him. It happens a second time and I realized that the one I give him, he is going to submit. So, what I've got to do, I can't possibly know all these people, so, I've got to ... change them to a number. So, I did. The guy got a point for each month in the military service--remember, these are only ... two-year draftees--he got

five points if he was in a position of corporal, ten points if he was in a position of sergeant and, if he had VD in the last three months, he's out. If he got company punishment in the last three months, he's out. If he was court-martialed in the last six months, he's out, and I got it all down to a list. So, then, I said, "Well, seeing the way this is, sooner or later, my company commander's a captain and a lot of the officers on his staff are field-grade officers, majors, lieutenant colonels and we've got two colonels. So, I've got to pass the buck, got to pass the buck." So, I make a committee. I take two other senior sergeants, and, I mean, they're senior, and myself and one senior sergeant drops out each month and is replaced. Well, each sergeant is like the two, three, four. The two is a fat hillbilly, a terrific sergeant, one of the best I ever saw. The three is a captain in the Reserves. The four is a major in the Reserves and I've got a commo sergeant. My commo Sergeant has got a DSC [Distinguished Service Cross] from Korea and he was in Korea. So, I have this all set. So, sooner or later, it happens--I get the Colonel's driver. So, they say, "What are you going to do with it?" I said, "I'm not going to recommend him." So, I don't recommend him. So, a couple of days later, the Company Commander--no, not the Company Commander, let's see, how did it work?--I get called up to Battle Group Headquarters and the Executive Officer wants to see me. The Executive Officer is the hatchet man on discipline within the regiment. He wants to see me. So, I see him and he says, "You passed over the Colonel's driver. How come?" He must have been talking to the Company Commander the night before in the officers' club. I says, "He didn't meet the criteria." He says, "What criteria?" I said, "We have criteria for promotion." "Do you have it in writing?" "Yes, sir." "I'd like to see it." "Yes, sir." I run down, get it, bring it up, hand it to him, and he's kind of shook up, I guess, by seeing this here, because it's got all these senior sergeants' names on the list. You know, he's reading this guy was here this month--there's about eight or nine sergeants on there. They're all the senior sergeants. So, he says, "Do you mind if I show it to the Colonel?" [laughter] "Yes, sir." What am I going to say, no? So, he shows it to the Colonel and he calls me back the next month and he says, "Thank you." That's all I heard. The next thing I know, the Colonel's driver is promoted. So, these sergeants come to me and say, "I thought you weren't going to recommend him?" I said, "I didn't recommend him." I said, "The Company Commander didn't recommend him, but he's the Colonel's driver. If you want to argue about his being promoted, you have to go and see the Colonel." [laughter] So, that ended that. ...

NM: It sounds like you would have been in the ROTC at Rutgers when the Korean War was going on.

LM: Yes, yes.

NM: Could you talk about how the Korean War affected your unit at Rutgers?

LM: Didn't seem to affect it at all, no. The only thing I would say about it, when I went to summer camp in 1950, I was made a platoon sergeant of ROTC cadets and I had the cadets from Davidson, Rutgers and VMI [Virginia Military Institute] and there was one older cadet from VMI who I spoke to as, more or less, an equal. He was maybe two or three years older than the other cadets and he had--as a kid of sixteen, he couldn't get in the Army or Navy--had gone into the Merchant Marine. So, his name was (Roosevaul?), I think that was his name. ... These guys, as soon as they were commissioned, they went to the officers' camp, and then, they were sent over to Korea, and he got the Medal of Honor in Korea. He got the Medal of Honor. What

happened was, his position was overrun by the Chinamen and he was in the dugout with radio communication. So, he brought artillery fire on the position and directed it, because the Chinks [Chinese] didn't know that these, you know, wires were live. That's the only thing I can think of with Rutgers.

NM: I was curious if there was any specific training, in the years you were there, geared towards the fighting in Korea, because I assume some of these officers were going directly to Korea.

LM: ... No, they all go to the basic course, and then, they get assigned to a unit, or could be overseas. My son went to the basic course. He was an engineer. He was a civil engineer and, after the basic course, he became a parachute trainee and, after that, he started on Ranger training. ... The first day in Ranger training, he was ... the first man out of a helicopter and landed and was gathering up his parachute and the first man out of the next helicopter landed right on his head and put him in a coma. He was in a coma for a week, and then, when he came out of it, they couldn't put him back into Ranger training. They only had ... two classes a year and that was the second class of the year. So, he went right from there to Korea. He volunteered for Korea.

TF2: What school did your son go to, sir?

LM: VMI, on an Army scholarship. My oldest daughter went to Our Lady of The Lake, San Antonio, [Texas]. She had a scholarship for, what do they call it, SAT, SAT?

TF2: SAT score?

LM: No, the Scholastic Aptitude Test, but what's the highest grade you can get in that?

NM: It was a 1600.

LM: No, no, not number, the title. It wasn't 1600 at that time. There's Letters of Commendation, and then, there's a higher grade than that and she got the highest grade. She had thirty-five hours' credit when she left high school and my son, he took the SAT course when he was sick and he got a Letter of Commendation and my youngest daughter was out of high school by the time that came around. My youngest daughter, ... she went to a Catholic grammar school and, when she went to high school, she came home with a schedule with two study periods. I said, "No, no study periods. Take it and do it over again," and she came home the next day with a different schedule with one study period. I said to her, "No study periods and, if he doesn't understand it, I'll send your mother up to explain it to him." So, that ended that. So, every summer, I sent my kids to some kind of school. They all had to take a typing course, first off. They all had to take typing course, and even when my son was a president of the company, sometimes, there'd be confidential letters that he would type up himself, but, getting back to Rutgers, all the time at Rutgers, I never once--yes, I did. I once met a fellow from Rutgers. My wife and I were at Fort Monmouth, going to the PX, and this lieutenant colonel walks up to us and he looks at my wife and he says, "You know, if it wasn't for your husband, I wouldn't be here." He says, "I was going to quit Rutgers and your husband talked me into staying." Another time, ... he's in the picture here, Captain (Darnum?), ... during World War II, he was in SHAEF

[Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] Headquarters and he was a West Pointer and they knew ... he was Infantry, they knew that they all had to have a Combat Badge. So, these officers ... in SHAEF would get transferred to an army, down to a corps, down to a division, down to a regiment--never come to the regiment. They'd be at division, but they'd be on orders for thirty days in the regiment and they'd get the Combat Infantry Badge, and he had his badge that way. It's quite dishonorable, in my opinion, and I remember seeing him at Fort Monmouth. He was still a lieutenant colonel and he was in finance, like a comptroller. That's what they called it. He was a comptroller, yes, and I think he retired from there. Other than that, I don't think I ever saw anybody. ... Yes, I saw someone in Korea, yes. One of the first sergeants in the Ninth Cavalry, I think, that was a recon battle group, ... I knew him from ROTC summer camp.

TF2: What are some of your fondest moments of being at Rutgers? Did you enjoy your time at Rutgers, for the most part?

LM: Absolutely. Yes, Rutgers was nice. Do you still have the Military Ball, sponsored by the Scabbard and Blade? They used to have a terrific Military Ball. You know, that was in the day of the Big Bands, in the 1940s, and they had this Big Band. We saw a lot of it, but enlisted men didn't go to it and they'd have this Big Band. They'd have the whole gym decorated and all the freshman and sophomores wanted to go, because they could get their girls in an evening gown and they could wear their ROTC uniform. So, they thought it was great. Another time, we got a colonel in and he came straight from Washington Headquarters and he was--let me just say, he was in-the-know down there. He was the one that arranged the Secretary of State's funeral and he came up here and he had *the* Army Band. Now, this is the band that doesn't travel, not the Army Field Band, *the* Army Band. He had them come up and have a concert at Rutgers. I went to it and you know who the singer was with the Army Band? Let me think--Steve Lawrence, was that his name? Lawrence. His wife's name was Edie Gourmet. That doesn't ring a bell? They were big shots in those days, big shots. ... I don't think you have that type of entertainment today. Do you? Do you have somebody the equivalent of Frank Sinatra?

NM: Not at Rutgers.

LM: No, I mean throughout the country. You know, you don't have those big names like that, Glenn Miller's Band, you know, the really big bands.

TF1: I remember seeing in a yearbook, I think it went back to 1963, talking about the Military Balls, they used to have Military Ball queens.

LM: I don't remember that, no. What else? There was something else I remembered about that. ... Oh, one of the students, when I was at the summer camp at Fort Devens, [Massachusetts], he had been the leader of the Scarlet Rifles. You still have the Scarlet Rifles, right?

TF2: They are called the Queens Guard now.

LM: No, the Queens Guard is the Air Force.

TF2: We work in conjunction with the Air Force now, as far as that goes.

LM: Oh, okay. When we had the Queens Guard, that was the Air Force, and the Scarlet Rifles [was Army]; the leader of the Scarlet Rifles, a nice, young man, regular Army commission and he became a light plane pilot. ... At the end of the summer camp, all of the officers and enlisted men from the cadre and all of the cadets come together and have supper at one mess hall and he was there at supper that night and, the next day, he took his plane up and crashed it and killed himself. He was dead. It was quite a loss.

TF2: Do you know anything about the Best Soldier of the Year Award?

LM: We didn't have anything like that, no.

TF2: We have been up in the attic of the ROTC Building and we have these old wooden boards that say, "Soldier of the Year." It goes back from 1960 all the way until ...

LM: See, I'd left there in 1960 and I didn't know anything about that. What else did they have there? ... I brought some of this stuff in here. These are the cards that I got. You know, the way I got into the Army, originally, was, in 1940, Roosevelt passed this law for military service. So, they had these draft boards and the draft board would send you a notice to go to a doctor for a pre-induction physical. So, you'd go to the doctor and you get this pre-induction physical, and then, you were on a list. Well, you had a number from the Federal Government and your draft board. I think my number was something like 163 and, when your number come up, your draft board would call you in. Now, my draft board called me in and I was drafted. I knew that--I had my bag with me. I was out in Jamaica. Do you know where Jamaica is, out on Long Island? ... It's in Queens, on Long Island. There's an elevated there and they gave me a nickel, five-cent piece. I could take the train into New York, into Penn Station, and, in Penn Station, there was two sergeants with lists and they check your name off the list and you went out to Camp Upton, [New York]. Now, I've got this card. This card is from Camp Upton and this card is from Camp Upton, too, and this card is from Camp Croft, [South Carolina]. ... I went from Camp Upton to Camp Croft. I was only [there] three days at Camp Upton. The basic thing that everybody remembers about it, at Camp Upton, was that you saw a film, a VD film, and a guy is sticking a needle in his arm and ... the blood is running down his arm. [laughter] Everybody remembers that one film.

NM: After your thirteen months in Korea, could you talk about the rest of your career?

LM: Yes. I'd come back from Korea and I was assigned to the XIII Corps, ... Gloucester, Massachusetts, to a high school ROTC. Now, high school ROTC has got one officer and maybe two enlisted men and that's a lot of work and there was no promotion. XIII Corps, you had to be in the position to get a promotion. So, I wanted to cancel my assignment. I went to II Corps and they couldn't do anything. I wanted to go to Fort Dix, [New Jersey], because I knew what their policy was. The policy at Fort Dix was that you submit a letter requesting consideration. Then, you take a test. Then, you go before a board. So, I went to II Corps and they couldn't do anything and I went to First Army. I had a connection up there. One of the men that had been in ROTC was up there and they said they couldn't do anything. "You have to go to Washington,

DC," and, shit, enlisted men don't go to Washington, DC, but I go in, said, "I'm going to Washington, DC, the hell with it. That's what I want." ... So, I took my son--my son's about seven, eight years old--and go to DC. ... We're in a motel and I say, "You don't let anybody in unless there's a fire," and so, I went in there and the Pentagon's a big goddamned thing. You can't imagine, no matter what anyone says, and I go in there and there's arrows all around, directions, and, finally, I come to this enlisted men's area and it says, "Enlisted Men," and I look in and there must have been a hundred girls typing, a hundred of them. They're all typing mimeographs for special orders and I'm standing there and I say, "Well, what the hell do you do now?" I don't know. So, a sergeant comes walking out from the side and he says, "What you looking for, Sarge?" and I'm about to tell him, "Mind your own business." Well, I decided not to. I said, "Well, I'm on orders for Gloucester, Mass., and I want to go to Fort Dix," and he says, "Gloucester, Mass., is a pretty good assignment." I said, "Yes, I know. I want to go to Fort Dix." He says, "Well, if you want to, come on in here with me." So, we go in this office. There's a warrant officer and there's a girl and he goes into an inner-office. He comes out with papers. He says, "Now, you sure you want to go to Fort Dix?" I said, "Yes, I want to go to Fort Dix." He says, "Sign here." So, I sign there. He says, "Now, what you do is, you go home. You're on your leave. In a week, you'll get orders canceling your assignment to Gloucester, Mass." "Okay." So, I drive back home and, sure enough, in a week, I get it. He says, "In about two weeks, you'll get orders to Fort Dix." I said, "Fine." We go. I'm home. Two weeks, I get orders for Fort Dix. You ever been in Fort Dix?

TF1: Yes.

LM: Big building. You go in it and go downstairs and go to the left and all the way in the corner is the enlisted personnel section. So, I walk into the enlisted personnel section and who's the personnel sergeant but one that I had in Korea. So, he says, "You assigned here?" "Yes." He said, "Well, we've got a number of vacancies." He says, "Look, you're coming as a first sergeant--there's three vacancies for basic trainees and one for AIT, Advanced Individual Training." He says, "The basic training aren't good. You have too many court-martial papers to make up." I said, "All right, give me the other one," but connections, imagine, I saw this guy in Korea six months before, meeting him in Fort Dix. So, I go to an AIT unit. This was a particular time when the Army was looking to promote ... minorities and they had a black sergeant major for the regiment, but the system was, you put in a letter requesting promotion, your company commander endorses it and sends the letter over to battalion. They endorse it and send it to enlisted personnel. They endorse it and send it to Army Headquarters and you end up going and taking a test. So, there's about fifty-nine of us took the test. This is one of those cases where you're amongst your peers and you can't fault any of them. You can't think you're better than any of them. You know, there's guys with Combat Badges, ribbons on them, you know, service stripes, real old soldiers. These guys are from fifteen years up to twenty-some-odd years. So, you take the test and I came out on the test and I'm one of the twelve and I go for this board and this board is the two-star general commanding the infantry training replacement [center], his staff, there's about eight of them, and his sergeant major and we have a big, long talk and I'm talking, this and that. ... He says to me, "You know, well," here, I'm talking about the problems he had, he says, "Well, you apparently don't think much of these enlisted men." I said, "No, that's not the case." I says, "I dwell on the difficult, the same as you do," [laughter] and I told him about this group. We had gotten a group of men in ... that they'd sent them to the leadership

course. It was one month more than the basic course and they were very helpful. See, back, the cadre that I had in the company were all older men. You know, the youngest man was about twenty-five, twenty-seven, they were up to thirty-five. So, these kids really fit in good, really fit in good. So, at any rate, I'm told to go down--there's a reception for the commanding general of the Infantry School. So, I go down there and I go through the reception line, I'm shaking hands with him and he says, "Congratulations." I say, "Thank you, sir." I said, "What the hell is he congratulating me for?" I don't know. So, the orders finally come down. When the orders come down, there's a semi-riot up ... at Regimental Headquarters. They didn't know me and they had their own boys picked out for this. So, I went over to the First Training Regiment, I think, and I had a battalion of five companies. Normally, there'd be four companies. I had five companies, but what you have there is, you have a very skeleton force. You have one or maybe two officers in the company, but they have ample enlisted men. They usually have seven to ten enlisted men. ... My biggest job, when the company went to any kind of a firing range, a live firing range, hand grenades, machine-guns, rifles, anything, the company had to have two officers with it. So, these companies would have one officer. Well, if there was a company that was out of cycle and had two officers, you would take the second officer and send him over. Otherwise, I didn't do much--drink coffee, that's about all. ... Sometimes, that was funny. You know, I had a very good officer, a company commander, and I was down to the point where I had to take a company commander to--you weren't supposed to take company commanders as the second officer--I was down to the point where I had to take a second, a company commander. So, before I did that, I called up regimental, told them what the story is, [I said], "What do I do now?" and they said, "Well, if you have to take a company commander, take a company commander." So, I take this guy and sign him, and he's very much a gentleman. He says, "Well, I want to check it out with regiment." Well, I knew already. I had checked it out with regiment, [laughter] but he checked it out with regiment. He called me back. He says, "I'll be there," [laughter] but that's all I did. The only other thing is, sometimes, a unit would be coming in from the field and they'd say they don't have any transportation. I'd call up the motor pool and see if they could have any transportation. That was about it.

NM: When did you retire from the military?

LM: 1962, 1962. You know the little building in front of the big building, the little brick building in front of the big brick building? That was the actual headquarters building and the ceremony was in front of that building. ... It's funny, you know, my sister's boyfriend was down in Browns Mills, [near Fort Dix]. He had TB [tuberculosis] and he went for eyeglasses to Fort Dix one time. They go on a Saturday. ... This was [in] 1933 or '34 and these Army doctors would go in there on a Saturday, they'd give him an eye test, two bucks. [laughter] That's the way they had to eke out their living.

NM: In the previous interview, you mentioned that you went into the Postal Service.

LM: Yes. ...

NM: Could you talk about how you got there?

LM: Well, when I got out of the Army, I'm forty-four, you know. I went and took the test at the ... federal labor board and this woman says, "Oh, you did great on it. You could be a lawyer or an accountant or an engineer." I say, "Yes, great, sure. I've got three years of high school. I don't have the paper." So, I go in now for one interview and, actually, the interview was where a guy that was running an asphalt plant in--not Long Branch, but right next to it--but he was mafia. So, that's the only interview I went to, and then, I took the test for the Post Office. ... I had taken a test for it [when] I had seventeen years' service and I had been offered a job, but I decided I'd stay in the Army at that time. ... The first call I got was to Little Silver, but it was a small office and they weren't sure they could give you forty hours a week work. So, I passed that up and the next call I got was to Long Branch and I went in there. ... This was 1963, yes, April 1963. ... I went in as a sub. I'm a regular sub. Now, they had regular subs and they have temporaries that they could hire from the street, but these temporaries couldn't be appointed as a regular. There was no promotion for them. You wouldn't believe the hours we worked. We went in at five o'clock in the morning and worked two or three hours. We got knocked off ... or, sometimes, we'd have to carry. I would come in as a clerk. I'd come in as a carrier and transferred over as a clerk and we'd work three hours then, maybe four hours, and we'd get knocked off and you had to come back in at four or five. You come back in at four, you're on the collection ... all around the town. We'd come in at five, it was for the outgoing mail at night. So, we worked from five o'clock in the morning until seven-thirty at night, seven days a week, seven days a week. You didn't get a day off. On Sundays, you worked from about six in the morning until about ten, nine or ten, and you worked from five in the evening until seven. ... You would pick up, like, forty-eight, fifty-four hours, something like that, a week, every week--real rough scheduling. All of that has been done away with now, all of it. There was no guarantee as to how many hours you would get any time you'd come in, except for two hours. They'd guarantee you two hours. ... This had improved a little. Before that, they used to make the temps go down in the basement and wait and get called from the basement--rough.

TF1: How long did you work for the mail service?

LM: The military?

TF1: For the ...

LM: Post Office?

TF1: Yes, sir, for the Post Office.

LM: Eighteen years.

TF1: Eighteen years. Did it get easier as you went on?

LM: Well, there were tests there, too. ... I took the test for foreman and the test, you got a credit, one credit, for each year of service. I'd only been there for three years and you had to get a seventy or above, seventy or above. Well, I got a ninety-six with only four years' credit and I'm against the guys that got a seventy-four with sixteen years' credit and Long Branch is a small town. It's an Italian town. These men I worked for, there were three brothers in the Post Office.

There were three brother-in-laws in the Post Office. I don't know how many cousins were in the Post Office. You couldn't go by the name of anybody. You had to be careful whatever you said, that you didn't run into a family business, and I took the test and they passed over me. ... These government tests, they have a procedure and these people don't have enough sense to go by the procedure. So, I appealed it on the basis of the procedure. ... The postmaster was an Italian that belonged to the (unintelligible?) and whatnot and he was in a position where it would have caused him great embarrassment to have to reduce this fellow that was there. Well, fortunately, another position opened up and they put me in it. So, I was in there as foreman of mails and ... they were asked to send me into Deal. The postmaster in Deal was sick. He had a nervous breakdown, I think. So, I went to Deal as the postmaster assistant, or whatever you want to call it. I was there for two or three months and the whole situation really got screwed up. In this period of time, they went to the ... machines, what do you call them, that you use today? not computers. There's other machines that you use, that kids use to type on. What's the name?

NM: Typewriters?

LM: ... No.

NM: I am not sure.

LM: At any rate, they went to these machines and they screwed my pay up completely, completely, and they never did get it straightened out. They were paying me this and paying me that, they weren't paying me at all. I'd have to put in a request for it and they got it completely screwed up. ... About that time, you know, I was never very, very healthy, I have three perforated ulcers, one colon cancer, I don't know what else. I was almost killed when I was six years old. Some dummies told me that the big fuse boxes--there's a trolley car underneath an elevated. ... The electricity for the trolley car was from this fuse box and somebody told me that this is a pigeon trap and I climbed up on it, when I'm six years old--I got chickenpox, that's why I'm out of school. I put both fingers into it, like that, and get a shock and, man, that was shock. I stumbled off that thing and I stumbled over about twelve feet and I grabbed a hold of a telephone pole and held on there. Anybody else would normally be killed from doing that, but I had all kinds of accidents like that. I took the postal truck. ... I was only working there about two months. The postal truck was supposed to be turned in after that day. ... It was condemned and it was a pre-World War II postal truck--truck was probably thirty years old--and, you know, they didn't have thin metal on it. The sheet metal on those trucks was heavy. So, this truck is about eight-foot high and there's a bridge underneath the railroad, which, if I could go underneath the railroad, I had to go from here to there. So, I had to go around like that, through the railroad--I couldn't go back. So, this truck is eight-foot high and the damned bridge is only seven-foot, eight inches high. ... I'm going down, I pass my wife walking. Rita was walking on the street. I wave to her as I pass her and I turned in there and I say, "Oh, this truck will go underneath that bridge," and I give it the gas and hit it and the goddamned metal didn't shear off, you know. It just stopped the truck. I went over the front, over it. I've got scars down my nose yet from it, head went into the windshield, bleeding like a pig. I got out of the truck. I knew to turn the ignition off, got out of the truck. I laid down on the grass and I was drowning in my own blood. I sat up, so [that] I didn't drown, and my wife, [laughter] God, that poor woman, she saw me just two minutes before that, no, a minute before that accident, and so, I got to the hospital there. The

hospital there is crazy, too. I'm in the hospital, I'm bleeding like a stuck pig. ... This is the nighttime, after I've been treated. There's blood all over and I ring the rattle and the nurses come in. All the nurses were there for was, they wanted to change the linen, change the pillowcase and change the sheet, never mind me. This is a picture of me when I come back from Hawaii. I was a sergeant. That's [as] a sergeant. That's in March 1943. This little picture here, this is a pretty good picture, this is when we came to Presidio. I was in the 34th Infantry. I was in a rifle company then. Did you see this?

NM: Yes.

LM: Neither one of you happen to be able to read Italian script, do you?

TF1: No, sir.

TF2: No, sir.

LM: This is a nice place, isn't it? ... That's where I spent a nice weekend.

TF1: When you were in Italy, sir ...

LM: Yes.

TF1: ... Did you stay in contact with any family members?

LM: When I was in Italy?

TF1: Yes, sir.

LM: Lucky I got a letter once a month; [laughter] no contact very much. I had one aunt [who] sent me a package and another aunt sent me a package, small boxes. This is me as a lieutenant. ... That's the weekend I was up to this hotel. You know, it's pretty late. I hope you people don't get hungry.

NM: Is there anything you want to add to the record about anything we have not covered, such as your service in Italy, your service at Rutgers, your time in Korea and your time at the Post Office? If there is anything you want to add to the record, please feel free to now.

LM: Well, one thing I'll say is that tests, whether in the Army or in the Post Office or anyplace else, is not the complete answer to promotions. It has to be also upon what you do, what you actually do. In many, many places, everywhere you will go, you will always find something that can be done better, always find something that can be done better, and you will find there's obstinate objections to doing it. It might be very simple. When I was in the Post Office, they used to take the packages and they had a rack with five sacks on it. ... They were supposed to put the package in a sack that's going to a certain place and it didn't work, because the sacks were never filled and they'd have to dump them. So, that was tedious, to try and get a package out of a sack. So, I took the rack away and I pushed a cart there. Now, these were flatbed carts and they

put the package down, you can pick them right up and put it [elsewhere], but I took the rack away three times, replaced it with the cart three times. Finally, they left it there, [laughter] but ... you want to make progress, you know, you're not going to make it necessarily in a big step. It's usually going to be in a minor step, but that's the way progress goes, minor step. We have the business today with Obamacare. A lot of people are against it. Maybe I'm against it, but it's a step in a certain direction.

NM: Mr. Minch, thank you for having us today.

LM: Oh, you're welcome.

NM: We will make a copy, and then, get you a copy of your interview.

LM: Yes. I'll give them to my son, who can give them, in ages, to my grandson.

NM: Great.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 3/14/14

Reviewed by Cody Czerniak 4/1/14

Reviewed by Francesca Di Chiara 4/1/14

Reviewed by Kenneth Lavin 4/1/14

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/25/14

Reviewed by Leonard Minch 7/2/2015