

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARL W. MONN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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CLINTON, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on November 16, 2007, in Clinton, New Jersey, with Carl W. Monn. First of all, Mr. Monn, thank you very much for coming here today to the Clinton Library to speak with me and the Rutgers Oral History Archives. To start the interview, could you tell me where and when you were born?

Carl W. Monn: Yes, I was born in High Bridge, New Jersey, August 25, 1922.

SH: Thank you. Tell me a little bit about your father, where he was born and raised, those kinds of things.

CM: My father was also born in High Bridge. [laughter] He was one of three children, and his father fought in the Civil War and I have his discharge paper at my house.

SH: Do you really?

CM: Yes, and the house we lived in was built two years before I was born, and it was a package Sears- Roebuck house, and they put together a real good package. [Editor's Note: Between 1908 and 1940 Sears, Roebuck and Co., had over 447 different styles of homes in their Modern Homes Program available for purchase through their mail order catalog.] All you did was put the foundation in and, of course, High Bridge has ... always had good rail communication and they, Sears, sent the thing up, packaged, gets into the freight station, guy comes with a horse and buggy, carts all the stuff up and they assembled the house. ... It had running water, it had a bathroom and it had central heat and electricity, back in 1920, yes.

SH: Were there other homes built in High Bridge the same way?

CM: Yes. There are, I would guess, five, maybe six, of those Sears homes around, and they are excellent construction, very, very good.

SH: That is amazing. What was your father's profession?

CM: He was a wood patternmaker. You could have guessed that, I suppose. [laughter]

SH: Only because I read your pre-interview survey.

CM: Oh, okay.

SH: Tell me what a wood patternmaker is and where you would apply that.

CM: Well, actually, a wood patternmaker makes a wood pattern of an object that's going to be cast in metal. We'd get a drawing, a flat piece of paper with lines and numbers on it, and turn it into a 3-D object that they can take to the foundry. [To] simplify it, they put them on a board, put a box around it, pack it full of sand, with binders in it, turn it over, take the pattern out and pour the metal in where the pattern was. That's to simplify it, but, if you want to go a little further, take your four-cylinder engine block in your car. Now, that's got an outside, it's got a water jacket, which is hollow, in there and it's got those sleeves where the pistons go up and

down; then, it gets complicated. [laughter] That's when your five-year apprenticeship pays off, when you can make the pattern for that.

SH: I guess so.

CM: Yes.

SH: Did you apprentice to your father or to someone else?

CM: No. I apprenticed at the Taylor-Wharton Iron and Steel Foundry, here in High Bridge.

SH: How long has there been a foundry in High Bridge? Do you know?

CM: Yes, in, what? 17--; it started as Union Forge, actually, and they made cannonballs for George Washington. ... Actually, the foundry, 17--; in the 1700s, late 1700s, I say, ... and they employed four to six hundred people. [Editor's Note: The forge that evolved into the Taylor-Wharton Iron and Steel Foundry started in 1742 and was later purchased by Robert Taylor prior to the Revolutionary War.]

SH: Had your father's family been here originally or were they brought in to work in the foundry?

CM: No. My Grandfather Monn, when he was drafted for the Civil War, he was in New York City. That's what his discharge papers say, anyway. That's all I know, [laughter] and his wife was from Glen Gardner, [New Jersey]. Now, how he got up here, I have no idea, none.

SH: This would be something then that he would have trained to do. Is that the Civil War grandfather?

CM: ... The Civil War grandfather, no, he had a team of horses and a wagon. He was in the trucking business, you know.

SH: All right. Your father, where did he learn the craft of being a wood patternmaker?

CM: In Taylor-Wharton.

SH: In Taylor-Wharton, okay.

CM: Yes.

SH: He went there and it was on-the-job type of training.

CM: Oh, yes, it's an apprenticeship course, yes.

SH: All right. Did your father talk about World War I?

CM: He was not in World War I. He was ... too young for World War I and too old for World War II, or something. I forget what it was, but he didn't go.

SH: Did he talk at all about having any family or friends involved in World War I? For the tape, we should say that we are in Hunterdon County, just south of Warren County, and it is very rural.

CM: Oh, there were fellows that, as a kid, I knew, that were in World War I. I had four uncles in World War I, two in the Navy and two in the Army. Our local undertaker was in World War I. [laughter] Yes, and so, everybody knew everybody. It was a town, like, 2,300 people. Everybody knew everybody, and they didn't come in for five years and, then, move away. ... You know, it was their home.

SH: Has this foundry always, even through the Great Depression, been able to keep going?

CM: Yes, but just barely. Now, my father got laid off [at] different times during the Depression and he had worked in what they called a pattern shop. That's all they did, make patterns, wood patterns, down in Plainfield, [New Jersey], and he would get a call to come down. "Well, I've got three days' work," or something, get on the train and go down and come back, and it kind of sustained us for awhile. Then, things got real bad and they had made Voorhees Park [into] a CCC camp, Civilian Conservation Corps. ... Things really got desperate, so, he had to go up there, for thirty bucks a month, but, when the Captain found out what he could do with wood, and he was an excellent sign painter to boot, he made signs for all the barracks, he made footlockers for the officers. ... When he found out my father had three little kids home, about once a month, on a Sunday, he would send his command car down. We'd all pack in it, we'd go up to the camp and have a dinner, have real meat, because, during the week, we didn't get meat, you know, potato soup, and potato soup and homemade bread and apple butter, because apples were free, ... but we didn't know any [better]. That's the way you lived, you know, and neighbor took care of neighbor back then, you know.

SH: Talk to me a little bit about your mother. What was her name and where was she from?

CM: My mother's name, maiden name, was, well, her name is Luceta Walton, W-A-L-T-O-N. She was born in Summit Hill, Pennsylvania, one of eight children, no, ten children, eight boys and two girls, excuse me. ... When the boys got big enough to start to go out to work, their father, my Grandfather Walton, didn't want them to work in the mines, [the] slate mines and the coal mines up in Pennsylvania. So, he came and they moved into West Easton, and he was, like, a machinist, a boiler operator. ... I don't know what they called them back then, but that's basically what he did. ... Then, a couple of my uncles were, well, all but one uncle was a good baseball player, excellent baseball players, they were, and they got down to High Bridge, somehow or other, my Uncle Charlie and my Uncle Elmer. They played ball down here and they brought my Uncle Harry, who was a catcher, and my Uncle Russell, who was a pitcher, and they only stayed here a couple of years, but the other two, Charles and Elmer, they stayed on. ... That's how my mother got in High Bridge and met my father.

SH: She came to the games.

CM: I haven't the slightest idea, really. [laughter] I know, when they got married, they lived in a house on Main Street, which, while they were there, married, they moved it back a good ways and they built a three-story building on Main Street, in place of that two-family house that they lived in on Main Street, and I have a picture some place home with her, or somebody, walking up the wooden sidewalks on Main Street, a dirt street.

SH: This is in High Bridge.

CM: This is High Bridge, yes.

SH: Did her family stay in Easton?

CM: Well, they started scattering around and most of them wound up in East Stroudsburg, PA.
...

SH: When did your mom and dad marry? Do you remember?

CM: Oh, boy, I wish I had Linda here. [laughter]

SH: Were you the oldest?

CM: She's doing a ...

SH: Someone is doing the genealogy for your family.

CM: Yes, my oldest daughter is. Now, I have an older sister, a year older than me. ... They must have got married in 1911 or 1912, somewhere in there, because they were married, like, ten years before they had any family.

SH: Were they really?

CM: Yes. Well, he was married before and the diphtheria thing that comes through every once in awhile, every hundred years or so, his wife, he lost his wife that way, his first wife. ...

SH: Did he have any children with his first wife?

CM: No, no, no.

SH: All right. Was your father quite a bit older than your mother?

CM: Ten years.

SH: I see that from the pre-interview survey. He was born in 1881 and she was born in 1891.

CM: Yes.

SH: Then, your sister is a year older than you.

CM: A year older than I am.

SH: You have a brother.

CM: A baby brother. He's only eighty-one. [laughter]

SH: Okay.

CM: Okay.

SH: All right, as you said, when you grew up, you grew up in this Sears house.

CM: Yes. It was a bungalow.

SH: Did they tell you why they moved out of the house on Main Street?

CM: No, no. ... I don't know why. I really don't.

SH: Did your mother ever work outside of the home?

CM: My mother, ... when she came here, she was, like, a housekeeper for the people next-door to the lot my father put the house on. Okay, so, that's how come they got that little piece of property, and it wasn't a very big piece of property, and they stuck this bungalow on there and there we were. [laughter]

SH: What are some of your earliest memories of growing up in High Bridge?

CM: Oh, golly. Boy, I should've brought those pictures with me. I'm taking pictures of individual buildings and I'm going to write a little piece, "What Was There in the '20s and '30s?" you know. I remember, when I was a kid, the road was paved up as far as the house next-door to us. In front of us was; ... no cars pulled in there, which very seldom they did, the grass grew, and then, right out in the, like, it would be in the middle of the road, was a huge lilac bush. We used to play hide-and-seek in that thing, it was so big, and then, up from that was what we called the "milk house" or a cold house, because there was a spring there, which was in the middle of the road, but there was no road there. ... The overflow of the spring ran through there, and then, ran down a brook alongside our house. So, it kept milk and butter and such [cold].

SH: It was a stone structure.

CM: A stone structure, yes. It belonged to the Crager gals, Harriet and Sarah Crager, and they had the big old house there. Neither one of them were married. ...

SH: Are these the people that your mother worked for?

CM: No. She worked for the (Littles?). He was a butcher in the Mutual store in High Bridge.
...

SH: What is a Mutual store?

CM: A chain store. Okay, we had a Mutual store, we had an American store, [now Acme Supermarkets], which was a chain store, and we had an IGA [grocery] store over in East High Bridge. So, nobody had cars, you had to walk. ... Yes, when I was a kid, I worked at the Mutual store and I would take my wagon down there and, if they had an order to deliver, I'd put the order in the wagon and take it wherever it was going. I'd get a dime for it. I took out one order one day and the lady gave me a fifty-cent tip. So, I made sixty cents that day, which was good.

SH: Good pay, good pay that day.

CM: ... Yes. We would roller-skate down, downtown. [In] the town, the upper part of Main Street was broken by railroad tracks and, when you wanted to go downtown, if the train was there, you just had to wait for them to brake and move the trains around, you know. ... It was noisy, but it was, like, educational. They had a little shack there, where the flagmen sit, and he'd get out there and he'd stop traffic, you know. ... I remember all that stuff, and the stores, the different stores that are on the Main Street and around town.

SH: You talked about the foundry in High Bridge. Were there other industries?

CW: Yes. In the '30s, a fellow came over from Italy and started up a small factory, making wood levels. ... They employed maybe half a dozen to a dozen people, but the pay wasn't that great, but you took what you could get, back in those days, you know, and then, they had a fire. ... The building they were in had asbestos shingles on [it], and the heat was so intense, those shingles would snap off there and go flying. It was unbelievable how they whistled through the air, you know, and then, he built another place, much bigger, and they made, besides wood levels, ... aluminum levels. They had a little foundry there and they cast aluminum levels, had a little machine shop to face them off, and so forth. ... My one daughter worked there one day, setting vials in the level; she worked a half a day. She came home for lunch, she says, "Mom, I can't handle that." She never went back, never got her half a day's pay or anything. [laughter] ...

SH: How big was the town of High Bridge when you were growing up?

CM: Twenty-three hundred people. ... We're two-and-a-half miles square.

SH: You told me before we started taping that High Bridge was a sending district, a regional school, where other kids were sent to go to school.

CM: Yes, yes, yes. They would come down. A fellow I met up with, and got [to be] buddies with, after we came back from the service, told me his mother came down from Califon, [New Jersey], on the train. ... The railroad ran near the school and they would stop the train there and the kids would get off and walk a little bit of distance.

SH: Really? The train was actually like the school bus.

CM: Yes, yes, yes.

SH: What are some of the other activities that you did that kids do not do too much anymore?

CM: We would get half a dozen or ten kids, go up on the commons, play baseball, in the summertime. In the wintertime, they blocked off one street, uptown, and we would sleigh ride on that street. They wouldn't plow it. ... Well, they didn't plow snow anyway. ...

SH: Back then. [laughter]

CM: No, but we would sleigh ride on that one street, and they did the same thing over in the east side. They had a special street there they blocked off. ... High Bridge was always a baseball town, lots of baseball. ... Gee, we always had little carnivals come in, in the summertime. ... This past summer, or in the spring of this year, we're going through a cardboard box full of pictures and I saw a picture there from one of the carnivals and it had a black bear standing up, [laughter] a real one, not like the one that chased me out of my yard when he took down my bird feeder.

SH: Really, just this past spring?

CM: No, two years ago.

SH: Okay.

CM: They always had a Flag Day parade, which the school kids all participated [in]. The firemen ran it. The fire companies from all around would come. They would have bands and a big picnic down at the park, and the park now is part of the soccer field. ... Oh, they always had soapbox derbies, for awhile, and that would be run on the same street we'd sleigh ride. Nowadays, you can't have it, because you've got to have insurance, in case somebody gets hurt, and lawyers [have] got to make a living, you know. [laughter]

SH: You talked about how the Great Depression had affected your family. Did the Great Depression affect the town equally? Was everybody in the same boat?

CM: Well, generally; well, the people that worked in the grocery store, they were pretty stabilized, okay. The hierarchy of Taylor-Wharton were pretty good, but neighbor took care of neighbor back in those days. Alongside of our house, well, the Crager gals had a chicken coop. They had chickens and guinea hens, but, past that, there was an open field and we got permission to dig it up and plant a garden. We had a big garden, really big garden. ... You know, everybody got out there and worked, I'll tell you, and, oh, yes, during my father's stint up in the CCC camp, they would send down a truckload of wood, logs, that were cut up into lengths, but there were some of them [that] big around, and I was a little guy, but ... the biggest one, I had to split them. ... Before I'd go to school, I'd split, and then, I'd split when I'd come home from

school, have enough firewood to keep the furnace going, so [that] we wouldn't freeze to death. It was all part of growing up in those days. You didn't know any better, and it never hurt us, you know. We didn't beg this, beg [that], "Gimme, gimme, gimme," like they do today, kids.

SH: How many kids were in your classes? Was it just one class, one grade at a time?

CM: Oh, no, each individual grade, each grade, had a teacher. Then, we had high school, which had teachers that taught typing and bookkeeping and English and history, you know, and the coach doubled up as a history teacher.

SH: You talked about working at the grocery store. How young were you when you worked there?

CM: Oh, gee, maybe, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, somewhere [in] there.

SH: Was that your first job then?

CM: Yes, yes, yes, besides working around the house, of course. [laughter]

SH: I was just going to say, your mom kept you busy, I bet. Did your sister have chores and jobs as well?

CM: Not that I recollect, not that I can remember, but she would have to help do the laundry, and whatever Mom said to do, you did.

SH: Did your mom sew the clothes that you wore?

CM: A lot of times, and we got a lot of hand-me-downs from; her sister had two boys and they were older than us two boys, so, we got a lot of hand-me-downs. Gee, I can remember, when I was starting high school, I was wearing knickers, instead of long pants, because they were free. [laughter]

SH: Were you a good student? Did you enjoy school?

CM: No. I hated school. I really did. I did not like school.

SH: Who was your favorite teacher, though?

CM: Gee, I never really had a favorite teacher, but Don (Babcock?) was our English teacher and he was a nice, nice guy. ... I don't think he was out of college two years before he came there, but he wasn't that much older than we were, you know. [laughter]

SH: This was in high school.

CM: This was high school, yes. Oh, we had a teacher, in eighth grade, (Fanny Jay Sturgeon?), never got married. She taught my father, but not in that building. The other school was down on

the other side of town, and that building still stands. If I had pictures, I could have showed you the building. Jeez, I didn't know you were going to go into all this stuff, you know, but she taught him. ... My sister went to her and ... I went to her, my brother, you know, and we all were [in there]. In our school, seventh and eighth grade, they changed rooms when they changed subjects, and (Fanny Jay?) taught Palmer Method penmanship, if you know what that is. [Editor's Note: Palmer Method penmanship was a popular system espoused by Austin Palmer in his 1894 work *Palmer's Guide to Business Writing*.]

SH: Oh, I do. [laughter]

CM: You know, and, if she came around and couldn't pull that pencil out of your hand, you got whacked with a ruler. "Loosen up there. Come on," you know, but she was strict, but everybody liked her, and Halloween, every kid went over to her house, and that was cross-town from where I lived, but we would traipse over there because it was (Fanny Jay Sturgeon?), our teacher, yes. [laughter]

SH: Was your family involved in the church at all?

CM: Yes, my mother was a Lutheran. That's what they [have] got a lot [of] out in Pennsylvania, and there was no Lutheran church in High Bridge, so that she started to go to the; ... it was Dutch Reformed Church then, now, it's just the Reformed Church. So, we went. ... I got baptized there. I was born in August and, December, I was baptized there and went to Sunday school there, until, [I have] got someplace, there should be twelve, a pin and twelve bars, for not missing for twelve years, you know. Then, you joined the church, and then, I kind of got away from that when I went in the service and, after I came back from the service, when my father passed away, my sister and her husband were living with us. So, we came back from the funeral ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Was your family involved in politics at all when you were growing up?

CM: Not in the least.

SH: Not in the least.

CM: No, no. [laughter] I'm sorry. We had politicians in town that; well, a town like High Bridge, where Taylor-Wharton paid a third of the property taxes, they ran the town. They had members on the school board, they had their hierarchy as mayor and council, and everything ran pretty smooth and it was good. I can remember, though, our dentist, old Doc (Trimmer?), he got elected and he got out there with a paintbrush ... and white paint and painted lines, parking lines, on the street. [laughter] ... They were all wiggly and everything, you know, but, I mean, his heart was in the right place, and he wanted to put a sewer system in High Bridge. The WPA [Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration], the government, would have paid for it. "Oh, we can't spend that kind of money." So, years later, in 1969, we go in with Clinton, [New Jersey], on a sewer system and we got a sewer in High Bridge, but nobody wanted it then,

because of the Depression, but they could have gotten it almost for nothing, but, you know, that's the way it goes with small-town politics. [laughter]

SH: Sure does.

CM: Yes.

SH: Were you aware, here in High Bridge, in rural New Jersey, of what was going on in the world, as far as Europe or in the Far East and Japan, prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

CM: We knew that Germany was raising all kind of dickens over in Europe. We knew that, because we had social studies in school and the teachers would bring that on, you know, and so, we had a general idea, not specifically anything, but a general idea of what was happening out there, yes, even in a little town like High Bridge. [laughter]

SH: That was what I wondered.

CM: Yes. Oh, no, we weren't isolated.

SH: Was there any [German-American] *Bund* [a pro-Nazi group] activity with the people of German ancestry?

CM: There was one family, lived in High Bridge, and his son got drafted in the service, but he went to the *Bund* meetings, the old man did, [laughter] and nobody could understand why the old man did that when his kid was in the Army, unbelievable, you know.

SH: You graduated in 19--

CM: '40.

SH: 1940. The draft is on for anybody eighteen. Did you go down and register for the draft?

CM: Oh, yes, everybody, when you were eighteen. Well, I guess I was over eighteen when they started it, maybe not. I got out of high school when I was seventeen. I was eighteen in August. [Editor's Note: The Selective Service Act of 1940 required all twenty-one to thirty-five-year-old males to register for the draft. These age parameters were expanded to eighteen to forty-five years of age after the United States entered the war.]

SH: Yes. In August, you would have registered for the draft.

CM: Yes, yes, I would have registered for the draft, yes.

SH: Was there any thought given to joining the military prior to Pearl Harbor?

CM: Yes, there were some of the guys that did, you know, ... and one of our mayors, that was mayor for one hundred and twenty or thirty years, [laughter] he joined the Navy and he was at Pearl [Harbor] when they attacked Pearl.

SH: Really?

CM: Yes, but I didn't think, because of my heart murmur, that I was [eligible].

SH: Let us take it chronologically. What did you do after high school? What was your plan?

CM: Well, to get a job doing most anything, and I applied, along with about four or five others, [for] a job as an apprentice wood patternmaker. Now, my father was a wood patternmaker. He was a good one, and I, of course, had an "in" because of him, not that he had any pull or anything, but, he couldn't say nothing, ... I did good work in high school, in shop, and so forth, ... like, mechanical drawing. My freshman year, I made more drawings in my freshman year in mechanical drawing than the sophomores did in two years, [laughter] because it came so natural. I couldn't understand why they were fighting this. You know, anyway, ... that's how I got in as a wood patternmaker.

SH: Did anybody in your high school go on to college?

CM: Oh, I don't remember. See, why didn't I bring the class picture down? [laughter]

SH: Was that something that teachers were encouraging or assuming?

CM: Well, mostly, nobody could really afford to go to college back then. It was [a situation where] you're lucky to just put food on the table and clothes on your back.

SH: Or to get to stay and finish high school.

CM: Yes, yes, because a lot of guys quit and joined the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp or joined the Army, you know, and, of course, back then, the Army only paid twenty-one dollars a month. [laughter] See, I got fifty [dollars] when I went in, but, no, nobody, and some of them, the people, took college courses, college prep, but I don't remember any of them [going to college], really, and, if they did, only a year or two, because, then, the guys would get drafted, you know.

SH: You did get the job as a wood patternmaker then.

CM: Yes, an apprentice, yes.

SH: In the same place that your father was working.

CM: Yes.

SH: Did you guys travel to work together?

CM: Oh, we walked to work.

SH: Together?

CM: Walked to work. Yes, you walked to work.

SH: Do you work shifts as a patternmaker?

CM: An eight-hour a day [shift], from; oh, I forget what the hours were. First off, when I went there, you started at, what? seven-thirty, or seven o'clock, whatever it was. Twelve o'clock, the whistle blew, you went home for lunch. Five minutes to one, the whistle blew. One o'clock, you went back to work and worked until four o'clock, when the whistle blew.

SH: That whistle kept you going. You did not need a watch. [laughter]

CM: ... No, you didn't need a watch, no. Everybody ran by Taylor-Wharton's whistle. [laughter]

SH: Did your sister marry after she graduated from high school?

CM: No, she didn't get married until, oh, gee, when he was in the service, must have been in '45; no, '44, because I was out in the desert, in California, and they wanted me to come in to be best man.

Louis Hoffman: Right.

CM: It was nice of you to ask. [laughter] ... So, I think they got married, it must have been '44, yes, ... or was it '43? Let me see; '42, I was down in Florida. ... I spent the first Christmas and New Year's in the hospital in Florida, with pneumonia, and, in April, we went up to Tennessee, pulled maneuvers up in the hills. Then, we went into Camp Forrest, Tennessee, after the maneuvers were over, and then, ... in July, we went out to Yuma, Arizona, and pulled maneuvers out in the desert until, I guess, December or sometime. They put us on a train, took us to Kansas, and, from shirt sleeves rolled up, we were wading through two feet of snow in Kansas. [laughter] So, second Christmas and New Year's was in Kansas, bottled up in the snow banks. ...

SH: Somewhere in there, your sister got married.

CM: So, when we were out in the desert, that must have been 1943 then, she got married, yes.

SH: Was she working also?

CM: Yes, she worked at Taylor-Wharton, in the office.

SH: Did she?

CM: Yes.

SH: Your mom kept the house.

CM: Yes, ... when my father was still alive, because he died in '47. He waited until I came home from the service. He had a brain tumor and our doctor thought he was a hypochondriac, giving him sugar pills. By the time we found out, he was walking with a list and it was too late then, you know. They operated, but he's too far gone, only sixty-five years old, you know.

SH: You were working for Taylor-Wharton at that time. You said you and your friends were listening to the radio ...

CM: A football game, Giants football. [laughter] We heard ...

SH: Were you at home?

CM: We were at his house, and they interrupted the ballgame, "The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor." Well, "Whoa," you know, "we're in it now." [laughter] So, from there on, he went, I stayed, then, I went. He flew missions and he came back, got married, had a couple of kids. Then, I went overseas, I came back.

SH: You signed up for the draft. When did you realize that you would be able to get a deferment? When were you aware of that?

CM: Oh, gee.

SH: Was that when you signed up for the draft, or was it after the attack on Pearl Harbor?

CM: I don't know. I don't remember, but all I know is that Herb (Greggan?) was really upset that I didn't take a deferment. [laughter]

SH: Herb (Greggan?) was your ...

CM: He was the foundry superintendent.

SH: He was the one who had guaranteed your father and you that ...

CM: I wouldn't have to go, yes. I'd be a draft dodger. [laughter]

SH: Talk to me about that, not wanting to be a draft dodger, because you were in an industry that needed people to work in the foundry.

CM: Yes.

SH: What kind of war-related products were you then making?

CM: They didn't do [much]; the only thing that I remember them doing, when I was still there, they made a tank tread for ... a light Canadian tank. The treads were yea big by yea big and they pinned them together, formed an endless [tread], you know, and they made [the tread] and they rolled them up, put a band around them, dipped them in Cosmoline, [a petroleum-based substance used to prevent rust and to preserve metal], put them on a gondola car and take them up to the railroad yard and away they'd go, but that's the only thing that they did in High Bridge [as] far as the war effort [is concerned]. ...

SH: Were they doing that just before you left or had they been doing that for awhile?

CM: No, they did that in '42, when I was still there, yes, because, in '42, they had the two hundredth anniversary, big celebration, huge celebration, yes.

SH: For the factory?

CM: For the foundry, yes.

SH: The foundry, I am sorry. In December 1941, did anybody run out and try to sign up right away, or did they wait? What were your thoughts? What were you thinking of doing?

CM: The only cuckoo bird was that guy [Louis Hoffman], [who] wanted to join the Air Force, [laughter] because he had gone to Casey Jones School of Aeronautics, out by Harrisburg, [Pennsylvania]. [Editor's Note: The Casey Jones School of Aeronautics was established in 1932 in Newark, New Jersey. It was later moved to New York.]

SH: This was prior.

CM: Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

SH: This cuckoo bird we are talking about is Louis Hoffman.

CM: Louis, yes. [laughter]

SH: We are talking about a photograph that Mr. Monn brought to me. It shows him and his three buddies, Kenneth Hoffman, his brother, Louis Hoffman, and then, a friend named Red Apgar, who was from Califon.

CM: Yes.

SH: There are four men in this photograph. Two are Marines, one is from the Air Corps, and you. All right, that is for the record. [laughter]

CM: Yes, okay.

SH: Because he had this prior training ...

CM: But, not as a flyer, but he was going to be an airplane mechanic, is what it was, and, while he was out there, I remember, they had a big air show, and it must have been in early '41, before the attack on Pearl Harbor, that, down in Newark Airport, and, with their coveralls, you got in for nothing. So, he had two pair of coveralls; I had one, he had one. We got to go to the air show in Newark Airport for nothing, had a good time all day. [laughter]

SH: Had you done much traveling as a young man before World War II?

CM: Oh, no, no. ... At Christmastime, we'd jump on a train and go to Easton, Pennsylvania. They had the big stores there, and you'd do your Christmas shopping up there and get on the train and come back home and that was about it, visit, maybe once a year, to East Stroudsburg, with an uncle, [he would] take us up, because my folks didn't have an automobile. ... Gee, that's about [it]; well, I guess I was in Plainfield a couple of times, on the train. ... We used to hitchhike, get on the highway, hitchhike, go to Somerville and back, see who could go down and back the fastest, [laughter] just to have something to do in the summertime, you know.

SH: Really?

CM: Yes.

SH: You said, because of your work in the foundry, that you would have had this deferment. Why did you decide to enlist?

CM: I didn't enlist. I got drafted.

SH: You did get drafted.

CM: Yes. ... The papers that the foundry superintendent wanted me not to sign, I just signed them and they went back to the draft board and, when my number came up, I went to Newark, took my physical.

SH: Do you remember when it was that you went to Newark?

CM: Sure, November 7, 1942, and we had two weeks off, so, the 21st of November, Fort Dix.

SH: You went down there to do your enlistment physical.

CM: All of that.

SH: Nothing showed up about your heart murmur.

CM: Hey, I was warm, I walked in, I could see, you know. [laughter]

SH: Okay, I understand. How long were you at Fort Dix?

CM: Five days.

SH: How shocking was going to Fort Dix for a young kid from High Bridge?

CM: Quite a revelation, I'll say, because you had some of these guys that, really, had never been away from home and you could hear them sobbing during the night, crying, you know, "I miss my mommy," and so forth, but, hey, you were there and what are you going to do about it, you know? The old saying goes, "Grin and bear it." [laughter]

SH: Did any of your friends from the High Bridge area go with you to Fort Dix?

CM: There was another fellow from High Bridge and a fellow from Clinton that I knew. We all got drafted at the same time and we all wound up in the same infantry division.

SH: Did you really?

CM: Yes. Those two were in the infantry and I was in the artillery. ... I think they knew that I had this heart murmur and they didn't put me in the infantry, where I'd have to run and walk and everything. You see, artillery mostly rode, because, with a leaky valve, you can't do what you normally would do.

SH: Five days in Fort Dix. This gets us to Thanksgiving time.

CM: Yes.

SH: Where did they send you?

CM: Florida.

SH: Camp Blanding?

CM: Camp Blanding, Florida.

SH: What were you being trained to do there?

CM: Well, you went in a recruit company, for thirty days, and, there, you basically got [the], "I'm a soldier," type of thing, you know.

SH: That was where you did your basic training.

CM: In Blanding, yes. ... I had very little, because I had; I must have been there about three, four weeks, and then, I caught a cold. I went to the hospital for a week, I came back out, and they always turn you loose in the morning and, after lunch that day, we all lined up, "We're going for a little walk, five miles, not bad," and this lieutenant came around and he asked everybody how they felt. I told him, I said, "I just spent a week in the hospital." "Do you good." Three days later, I was back in the hospital with pneumonia, and I spent six weeks there, because I

didn't want to come home to recuperate in the middle of the winter up here. So, I stayed down there, and they didn't have drugs like they have today. You coughed it up and you spit it out, and I wondered where they got these little wax boxes with the lid on them. The guys who were recuperating, they folded these things up. [laughter]

SH: That became your job.

CM: That became my job, yes, yes, and, while I was recuperating, I met up with a couple of guys, because I knew where I was going to be assigned, to Battery A, 312th Field Artillery Battalion, and this one fellow, a corporal from (Rarrisburg?), Pennsylvania, a farmer, he spoke with an accent. He was a Dutchman, German Dutchman-type guy, you know, and he would bring me books about the artillery, about the field piece and this and that and the other thing. So, I knew as much, when I got out of the hospital, as the guys who were actually out [training]. ... I never touched a gun, but I knew all the parts and everything, and then, I had a sergeant that was in the recuperation with me and he enlightened me to a lot of stuff. So, I got a good education in what the field artillery was all about. So, that's the basic training. [laughter]

SH: Did they send you back to catch up with the group?

CM: Oh, no, I went right with ... Battery A, yes.

SH: Okay.

CM: Yes.

SH: Where did you go after Camp Blanding?

CM: We went up to the hills in Tennessee.

SH: That would have been in ...

CM: '43.

SH: February of 1943.

CM: ... No, it must have been in March, because we woke up one April morning and had four inches of snow on the ground. [laughter] So, it must have been the later part of March, I guess, when we went up there. We pulled maneuvers up in the hills of Tennessee.

SH: What did you think of Florida in the winter, being a young guy from New Jersey?

CM: It sucked. We fell out with overcoats in the morning, shirt sleeves rolled up in the afternoon, and Camp Blanding, the nearest big town you would recognize'd be Jacksonville, up in the northern part of the state, and it was swampy and damp and miserable. ... Well, that's where they put the Army camps. Land that nobody else wanted or used, you know, they'd build an Army camp there. They had a nice, great, big lake there and everything. ... They had a big

platform there with a cargo net down and we would learn to climb down the cargo net and get in the little boats to go ashore. We took that kind of training in the artillery. ... The camp was big enough where there were two infantry divisions and, back then, fifteen thousand men comprised a division, so, thirty thousand, plus, station complement, and we would get out there in the parade ground and thirty thousand guys marching and, being that I was one of the taller guys, I was in the front row, [laughter] and I was a good marcher, because I could keep time with the music. ... We had one guy, they would get out there with a dishpan and a stick and beat on that, try to teach him how to march. He was a corporal. He pulled latrine duty while I was a private out there marching in the front row. [laughter]

SH: They wanted it to look good; is that what you are saying?

CM: Yes, yes, yes.

SH: Was this artillery group from all over the country or mostly from the East?

CM: Oh, yes. I went as a replacement. The 79th Division was activated in Camp Pickett, Virginia, in June.

SH: Was this before or after?

CM: June of '42, they were [activated].

SH: Okay.

CM: ... They were made up of cadres from other divisions, non-coms, mostly, and then, I don't know, but they needed replacements down in Florida, so, I was one of the replacements. I was the new boy on the block, as it were, you know, with a couple of other guys, ... but you fell right in with everything, ... because, with a gun crew, you've got seven or eight guys and you all have to work together to fire them.

SH: Where were the guys on your crew from?

CM: They were from all over the place. We had them from New England, we had one guy from Washington State, Missouri, the Carolinas, Pennsylvania, New York.

SH: Just everywhere.

CM: Yes.

SH: In Tennessee, what was the training like? What were they focusing on?

CM: It was maneuvers.

SH: Okay.

CM: Really, you know, you learned how to fight. Well, we in the artillery didn't go hand-to-hand or anything. ... We were support for the infantry. ... Without the artillery, the infantry couldn't move. They'd soften up, and so forth, and, basically, that's what we were there for, and to learn how to dig foxholes, learn how to dig the gun in. [laughter]

SH: What was your job?

CM: I was on the gun crew.

SH: What would you be doing, typically?

CM: Oh, whatever needed to be done, really, but you had a specific gunner corporal. He used this gun sight. When you shot the gun, you looked out back to shoot that way. Everything was set up on a survey, [a grid that demarcated range and trajectory], so, that's the way artillery is fired. ... The number one man, he's the guy [who] pulled the string, they called it a lanyard, and then, you had the ammo corporal, the powder corporal, the guy that set the fuses, and the flunkies that carried the shell up and they got flunkies that rammed it in. It was a ninety-six-pound shell, okay. They had a loading tray, one on each side. The guys put it up there. They had a ramrod, must have been eight, ten feet long, with a bronze bell on the end of it. You get that behind there, ram, and then, you pushed that in tight as you could get it, because they had what they called a rotating band on there, which had the seat and the lands and grooves; rifling, to you.

SH: Okay. [laughter]

CM: Okay, you know what I mean, to make the shell go spin around, and it had to seat tight, so [that] ... when the gas from the explosion pushed the shell out, it didn't leak, so [that] you know, when you set it for certain [settings], it's going to go to a certain place.

SH: What was the size of the gun?

CM: The 155-millimeter howitzer, split tail, weighed six-and-a-half tons, and we had a thirteen-ton "Cat," Caterpillar tractor, to pull it, and the crew rode in the tractor, along with some ammunition and powder, and the "Cat" pulled the gun wherever they wanted it. Then, they would back it into position and the guys would wheel it around by hand. [laughter] It's all physical work, really.

SH: It sounds like it really was.

CM: Yes, yes, and with a ninety-six-pound shell; ... well, I'll get into that combat stuff later.

SH: This was maneuvers, teaching you how ...

CM: Yes, basically, how to handle yourself in a situation that there's going to be combat.

SH: Okay.

CM: Yes.

SH: Which base did you report to after Tennessee?

CM: ... Then, we went into a camp, Camp Forrest, Tennessee, a permanent Army camp, and then, we got furloughs.

SH: Did you?

CM: It's the first time we got home, and that was in the Summer of '43. ... I can remember the day I went back. I got in late in the afternoon, I guess it was, and, during the daytime, they had ... crawled through the mud, under live machine gun fire, and, of course, I didn't do that. So, I had to do it at night. ... Half the crew did it in the daytime and half at night, and so, I'm out there. You'd look up, you see those tracers going over you, you keep your butt down, I'll tell you. [laughter]

SH: Bet you do.

CM: Yes. So, we had that kind of training. ...

SH: You reported back to Camp Forrest.

CM: Yes, yes.

SH: What were you being prepared for? Did you know where you were going?

CM: Not the slightest idea. They lined us up one day, "Anybody work in a store?" "Hey, the supply sergeant might need help." "I worked in a store," [laughter] up went my hand, and come to find out, we were going out to pull maneuvers out in the desert, in California. We were set up outside of Yuma, Arizona, and they needed somebody to work in the PX, [post exchange]. That sounded good. [laughter] So, I got that job. We went out, what, three, four weeks? ahead of time to set up the PX, get everything organized and trucks to bring the stuff in, and so forth, and then, the gang came out, and we were in five-man squad tents and they were dry rotted to beat the band. When it rained, raindrops as big as quarters, they'd just come right through the tent and just spread out into little droplets. Five minutes, it was all over, dry. [laughter] ... I worked in the PX out there, and I didn't have any duty other than working in the PX, and I got an extra twenty-five bucks a month for doing that. So, I made seventy-five bucks a month, big, big bread. [laughter] ... While we were kind of getting organized for the maneuver, this staff sergeant comes up to me and he says, "Hey, how would you like to drive a truck for me?" "Gee, that sounds good," because I don't have to shovel, you've got a camouflage net you put over the truck. I said, "Yes, that sounds good." So, I drove a truck for ... what they called the instrument section. They're the ones that went out and did the survey, because everything was done with coordinates. ... Like I said, you didn't have to do anything but just drive that truck.

SH: Had you driven a truck before?

CM: What? The truck is a truck. It's just a four-speed box. What's the big deal? Double clutch; I learned to double clutch when I was a kid.

SH: Did you?

CM: Yes.

SH: You said your parents did not have a car.

CM: A lot of people had cars.

SH: Okay.

CM: And there was no automatic transmissions then, no synchromesh transmission, [where gears and the engine are slowed to the same speed before engaging], and, if you went and shifted and it didn't go in gear, you've got to do something about it, you know. See, it's what they call double clutching.

SH: Okay. I just wanted to make sure where your training came from. [laughter]

CM: Yes. Oh, no, buddies had cars, and so forth, you know. ... When I got working, I bought a car for twenty-five bucks. I drove it all summer long, took my buddy home, went to pull out in the street and the front wheel fell off. Well, we bounced it back over to the curb. A couple of days later, I sold it for ten bucks, "Take it away." [laughter]

SH: This was when you were in high school.

CM: No, no, out of high school.

SH: Okay, before you went into the military.

CM: Before I went into the military, yes.

SH: I just wanted to set the stage, if you knew how to drive. Of course, you were out in the middle of the desert.

CM: Yes, what can you do, huh?

SH: How long were you in Yuma?

CM: Well, went out there in July, August, September, ... I guess we went into December, sometime in December, and I wouldn't tell you the day or anything, but we ... got on a train and went to Kansas, Camp Phillips, Kansas.

SH: Did you know what you were going to be doing in Kansas?

CM: Same thing. You were a GI; you did it, you know. You learned to fight in the cold weather, and this way, too, they took guys that couldn't stand the climatic change, the dramatic change in the climate and everything, and they would weed them out, because they didn't want a bunch of sickies going over there, you know. ...

SH: Before you were sent overseas, would you have rather fought in the Pacific or in Europe?

CM: Oh, when I found out the 79th Infantry Division was a big deal in World War I, I knew where we were going. They had quite a good reputation in World War I, yes. ... [Editor's Note: The 79th Infantry Division served in the Meuse-Argonne area during World War I.]

SH: You were quite confident you were going to go to Europe.

CM: My uncle, my Uncle Harry, was in the 312th, but it was heavy weapons then, because it was a square division, not a triangular division, like that we were in, and my father-in-law was also in the 79th Infantry Division. [Editor's Note: The US Army used square (four regiments) divisions up until the start of World War II, when they switched to triangular (three regiments) divisions.]

SH: Really?

CM: Yes.

SH: Did you have a fiancée back in High Bridge? Had you met your wife?

CM: No, no, no. I didn't think it was right to go off to war and leave a female back there and, no, that wasn't my thing, no, no.

SH: Had you been dating?

CM: Oh, yes, I took girls out.

SH: You did not have a steady girl, so-to-speak.

CM: Not really, no.

SH: Okay.

CM: No, but wait until you hear how I met my wife. [laughter]

SH: Okay, we will get to that.

CM: Yes.

SH: Going back to finish up the other question about Europe or the Pacific, did you have a different sense of the enemy that was German or Japanese?

CM: Oh, you knew the difference. Yes, you knew, because word spread like wildfire, you know, how bad the Japanese treated the prisoners and stuff, yes. Yes, I'd rather fight the way we were taught to fight, not sneaky and come up behind you, and then, get captured and stick bamboo sticks in your fingernails and stuff.

SH: Those were the rumors.

CM: Oh, everybody [knew], yes, and there were movies and stuff, you know, training films, yes.

SH: What kind of training films did they use for somebody in the 79th?

CM: Well, a lot of it was medical, [laughter] okay.

SH: Venereal disease, that sort of thing.

CM: There you go, yes. [laughter] Yes, most of it was that, yes.

SH: When you went to Kansas, did you know how long you would be there, or were you just doing what they told you to do?

CM: ... They said, "Go," you went.

SH: Okay.

CM: "You stop," you stopped, you know.

SH: How long were you in Kansas?

CM: December, January, February, March; I guess the latter part of March or the first part of April, we get on a train and it must have taken us five, six days, maybe, to go from Camp Phillips, Kansas, up to Camp Myles Standish. Camp Myles Standish was a POE [point of embarkation] for ships going out of Boston. So, that's where we wound up and, when we got up there, everything was fine and half the gang went into Boston one night, the other half went the following night, and you could do what you want in Boston, as long as you're at that place at twelve o'clock, because the truck was going. If you were not on it, you were AWOL [absent without leave]. So, some of the guys went in, they thought they were going to drink Boston dry, but [it] never happened, no.

SH: Gave it a good try, though, right? [laughter]

CM: Yes.

SH: What about the natives in Kansas, Tennessee and Arizona? Did you ever get into town to talk to any of the people?

CM: Oh, yes.

SH: How did they treat the GIs then?

CM: Oh, at Kansas, it was wonderful.

SH: Really?

CM: Yes. We were outside of a little town of McPherson, Kansas, and they would have dances there and stuff, and I met a nice, young lady there, yes.

SH: There was a USO.

CM: Whatever. I don't remember, specifically, what it was.

SH: Okay. Were you writing letters home at this point?

CM: Yes, once in awhile. I didn't much care for writing, along with book learning. [laughter]

SH: Were you getting any mail at this point?

CM: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: Your sister and your mom.

CM: Yes. Well, my sister was busy with that Marine, [laughter] and I had a couple of cousins that I would write to and they would write to me, and, well, yes, I had one girl that would write to me.

SH: Okay. When you got to Boston, to Camp Myles Standish, how long was it before they boarded you on the ships?

CM: Oh, I don't think we were there a week.

SH: Can you tell me about boarding the ships?

CM: Well, you got lined up, you got everything ... that you're going to carry that was yours on your back and you walked up to the gangplank, told the guy your name, he crossed you off the list, and then, this one sergeant was doing that, he says, "I've never seen such a happy bunch of guys to get on a boat to go overseas," [laughter] because everything was so military, military, military with us, and then, [we were] just fed up with it, "Get us out of here." ... [laughter]

SH: Were you still the person who was driving the truck? Was that going to be your job when you got overseas?

CM: Yes, yes. Oh, while we were in Kansas, I forgot, yes, they sent me to school to learn how to survey, so, I had that as a background, ... the sines, co-sines and all this. Now, they do everything with a computer, you know. They look at the thing and it figures it all out for you. No, we looked through an aiming circle and figured it out all by yourself, with those sines and co-sines and tangents and all that. ... When I got overseas, yes, I had a truck.

SH: Was it a convoy that you sailed in? Do you know what ship you got on?

CM: Yes. I went on the USS *Explorer*. It was a banana boat, and the reason they converted that is because it was a fast ship. They [would] bring bananas from South America up and they didn't want to waste anything. It was the fastest ship in the convoy out of Boston, so, we rode what they called "coffin corner." We were the last one and we zigzagged and, you know, dodge this, that, because the U-boats were still out in the Atlantic. ... In April, the Northern Atlantic is a little on the rough side and that baby was just bobbing up and down. [laughter] ...

SH: Were you seasick?

CM: I personally never threw up, but I didn't feel good. No, I didn't feel good at all. [laughter]

SH: Can you describe how they had converted it? Did the ship have stacked bunks?

CM: Yes, yes, yes.

SH: Was the crew Merchant Marine or regular Navy?

CM: The crew was Merchant Marine, yes.

SH: How did they treat the GIs?

CM: Good.

SH: Really?

CM: Yes.

SH: Did you do any exploring on the ship or did you stay in the hold?

CM: Oh, no, you could get on deck, ... because that's where the guys would go throw up, over the side, you know, [laughter] but, yes, when the weather was decent, you could go up topside, no problem, wander around.

SH: When did you first know what your destination was going to be?

CM: Well, when we went to Myles Standish, you knew where you were going.

SH: You knew you were going to Europe, right?

CM: Yes, yes.

SH: Did you think you might be going to Italy or the African Theater?

CM: No. We pretty much knew it was going to be the ETO [European Theater of Operations], because that was starting to wind down and, if you were going there, you would go out of New York, you know. ...

SH: Okay, you knew from Boston.

CM: ... But, we did meet up with a convoy out of New York and they came up and they joined us and we had this huge convoy going over, in '44, April of '44.

SH: Where did you land?

CM: Glasgow, [Scotland], and wouldn't you know, the *Queen Mary*, [a British ocean liner converted into a troopship], was in there unloading and that had priority, because that went all by itself, and they unloaded quick and got on the road again and we had to climb down cargo nets and get in little boats to go ashore. That's what our training was down at Camp Blanding, cargo nets. [laughter]

SH: To bring in a huge convoy, did they all come down the River Clyde, [a major river in Scotland]?

CM: I haven't the slightest idea.

SH: Could you see the other ships as you were traveling across?

CM: Sometimes. If you were on top of a wave and they were on top of a wave, you could see them. ...

SH: What did you do to pass the time?

CM: Goofed off. What can I tell you? There's nothing, basically.

SH: Did you play cards?

CM: No, not that I was against it, but I wasn't that lucky in cards, because I'd lost a whole pay[check] playing blackjack while we were in Tennessee.

SH: Did you?

CM: Yes. I was going to Nashville and ... I didn't think I had enough money. So, I sat down in a blackjack game and I lost all but five bucks. So, I was broke that month. I didn't get to town, either. [laughter]

SH: Learned your lesson, right?

CM: Yes, I learned my lesson good, but, getting over, to over there, when you got ashore, [you] got assembled, marched up to the railroad station, got on the train, went down to England.

SH: Where did you go?

CM: Leek, L-E-E-K, little town, and we were in Quonset huts [prefabricated semi-circular structures] down there, and there was a parade ground across the way, where all the guns and the vehicles were, and we'd go over there every day. Sometimes, it was raining, sometimes, it was foggy, sometimes, a couple of days, it was clear. [laughter]

SH: Maybe.

CM: Yes. ...

SH: What was your first interaction like with the British or Scots?

CM: Yes, they sounded funny. [laughter] No, because, well, when I went to work as an apprentice patternmaker, my boss at the pattern shop was a Scotsman, and he talked with a real accent, [Mr. Monn imitates his brogue], yes, and, boy, ... the first time I went in the office, he said something to me. I came out. They asked [me], "What did he say?" "I couldn't understand it at all."

SH: What did they tell a GI going into Europe at that stage?

CM: They didn't tell you anything.

SH: There were no books on how to treat the British or how to deal with them.

CM: No, just be civilized, you know. You're there as a guest in their country. Don't go bananas, and, basically, you know, you were just in a different country, but the people who were there, it was the same, basically the same thing as you left home.

SH: They had been at war for a very long time. What did you see?

CM: Yes. When we were getting ready to go across to France, my truck was loaded up with officers' footlockers and I took them to; oh, what's that seaport?

SH: Le Havre? Cherbourg?

CM: No, no, no, in England.

SH: Oh, Southampton?

CM: No, no, on the Irish Sea there. I forget the name of it.

SH: Not Plymouth.

CM: Anyway, they had a couple of those big "buzz bombs" [German V-1 rockets] that Hitler sent over, hit that town. I mean, it was a big city.

SH: Bristol?

CM: No, I'll think of it when I get home.

SH: Okay.

CM: If I'd have brought my; no, I wouldn't have brought my book. That wouldn't have helped out. So, we delivered the [footlockers], me and I guess a sergeant went with me, and we went, deposited the footlockers that the officers left back. ...

SH: This is before you go to France.

CM: Yes. That was really the first bombing that we saw. Of course, some of the guys didn't see that, because they were back in Leek.

SH: It happened while you were actually there.

CM: Yes, you know, the holes were there in the ground. They might have been bombed a month or two ago, I don't know; not while we were actually in there.

SH: Okay, I thought maybe you were there.

CM: No, no, no. Those "buzz bombs" usually went over at night, but we traveled in the daylight.

SH: Good.

CM: You could see better that way. [laughter]

SH: That was the first evidence that you had seen of bombs being dropped.

CM: Yes.

SH: Did the English look like they were being well cared for and fed?

CM: I'll tell you, they're a gutsy bunch of people over there, [to] put up with that stuff and still being able to smile and [say], "Hi," you know, and, "Glad to see you. You're going to help us out." ... They were not the least bit envious of us being there or anything like that, you know, yes.

SH: Did you have any interaction with the British military?

CM: No.

SH: Strictly operating with Americans.

CM: Yes, yes.

SH: You took the footlockers to this other port, and then, you came back to Leek. Then, you are not there too long before D-Day, [June 6, 1944].

CM: Yes. Then, we packed everything up, ... gee, it must have been before D-Day, because we were down near the Channel, June the 5th, at night, well, even during the day of June the 5th. All night long and all day long on the 6th, you could almost walk on the airplanes going overhead. They were just one after the other, flights going over to bomb this, that and the other targets, you know, make believe that they weren't going to land here, but they were going to land there and just a roar of airplanes, constantly. It was unbelievable, really.

SH: What kind of training did you get when you were in England?

CM: ... We went over to Wales, for a couple, three days, and took GHQ [general health questionnaire] tests, and we must not have done so good, because we didn't make D-Day, [laughter] thank goodness, ... and then, we came back. ... You kicked around, you pulled maintenance on the machinery, on the guns and the trucks, make sure everything was "hipsy-pipsy." ... They waterproofed the trucks. All the instruments under the dashboard were all packed with gunk, so [that] they wouldn't get water in them. The exhaust system was up in the air, the intake was up in the air, and the truck I had, they drove it through, most all the drivers took that truck through the pond, and you had water. You were sitting in water. There's water; that's how deep the water was when you went through there, four-wheel drive, low gear, to see what it was like to drive in the water, you know, because, when you went on the beach, you didn't know what you were going to do.

SH: Right, right.

CM: ... We had a lot of fun doing that, yes. [laughter]

SH: Did you feel well-trained at this point? Were you confident in your abilities?

CM: Oh, yes, yes. ... Everybody knew what they were doing, yes, and we had good officers.

SH: When did you realize that the invasion was actually taking place?

CM: ... When we packed up out of Leek and went, we knew something was going on, and we didn't know when the day was or anything, but, you know, now, the rumors start spreading around and, "Hey, hey, you know, this is it, guys."

SH: Really?

CM: Yes, "Write your last letter home." [laughter]

SH: Was there any type of extra security?

CM: Oh, no, no, because we always had guards out.

SH: When did you load up to go overseas?

CM: To go over to Europe, from England to Europe?

SH: Yes, across the English Channel.

CM: Yes, yes. ... 14th, the 14th of June, and we got on, I guess, LSTs, [landing ship, tanks], or whatever they called them, where ... you could back the truck up on the ship, on the landing craft. They dropped the front down, you drove off, and they took us in. We landed on the wrong beach. So, we had to wait for the tide to come in, so [that] we could back off. ... We sat out in the Channel overnight and "Bed-Check Charlie" came over, dropped a couple of bombs, just to be sociable, ... a single German plane. ...

SH: After you went in on the wrong beach, did they have to load you back on the ship?

CM: No, we didn't even go ashore.

SH: They knew it before, okay.

CM: Yes. As soon we got there, they knew it. We were supposed to go in Utah Beach and we were in Omaha Beach, yes, real funny. [laughter]

SH: I bet that Captain heard from it.

CM: Real funny. I don't know who put us on the wrong beach, but the whole bunch of ships or boats are ready to unload there and [they] blow the whistle and get back out.

SH: Oh, my.

CM: So, we went one way, went another way, and the following day, June the 16th, I landed in France.

SH: Prior to June 16th, and right after June 6th, what did you hear about the progress of the invasion?

CM: Oh, we knew that it was rough going, because there would be communiqués [that had] come back, ... and we were kept up-to-date.

SH: Were you?

CM: Oh, yes, yes. So, we knew, pretty much, that some of the outfits there [were] ... having a hard time, and, of course, like, the airborne divisions and the gliders, I wouldn't [have] wanted to [have] been a glider, no. [laughter]

SH: That is one time you would not have raised your hand, right?

CM: No, I wouldn't, not in the least, no, or the airborne paratroopers neither, no.

SH: There are reports coming back to the GIs about how it is going.

CM: Yes, oh, yes.

SH: They send you back. They take you off of ...

CM: Omaha Beach.

SH: Omaha, and land you on Utah.

CM: Yes.

SH: When crossing the Channel, did you see any evidence of what had taken place ten days before?

CM: Not until you got near the shoreline, you know, where there was more shallow water and you could see some of the ships, like we were on, were sunk. Of course, they sunk some ships to make reefs, to keep the waves from coming too far in, and so forth, but, basically, you wanted to get off that thing, get on dry land, you know. That's your main objective, get on, get out and get on dry land and get up off the beach.

SH: Other than "Bed-Check Charlie," could you hear or see anything while you were in the water waiting that night?

CM: No. Well, no, no; I was going to say, maybe, some of the cruisers or something were shelling, but, no, it was too late for that, and my buddy, one of my buddies in the Navy, he was there at D-Day. His ship was shelling the Normandy Beachhead.

SH: You talked about the other guys who wound up being in the 79th with you. When did you first see them?

CM: ... The two of them and I, we were home on furlough just about the same time, the first time furlough, and the next time I heard anything about them was when the one guy from Clinton, I was standing alongside of a road and he came by. He was riding in a jeep. "Hey, Monny," he hollered at me, and he ... had a face full of hair. ... He says, "Harry." "Oh, yes, Hi," as I saw him, he drove by in the jeep, and then, a couple of days later, one of the forward observer crews came back and said that another, Kenny Hoffman, got wounded. So, that's all I basically knew about those two guys and their service in the division, because they were in the infantry, which was ...

SH: Right.

CM: We were [in] support of the infantry.

SH: After you landed on Omaha Beach, what did you do when you got off the ...

CM: Off of the ...

SH: Landing craft?

CM: Landing craft. Well, we drive and we drive and we drive, and we set up a base camp someplace; don't ask where.

SH: Okay, I will not. [laughter]

CM: Next time, I'll bring the book.

SH: Okay. [laughter]

CM: Okay, because our division had a hardbound book.

SH: Like your history book.

CM: Yes. ... I didn't have it there when you were there the last time. I did the first time, blue with the double cross on it, the Cross of Lorraine. That was the division insignia.

SH: Oh, really? Okay.

CM: Yes. ... The guys in the First World War picked that out, because they were in Alsace-Lorraine. ...

SH: Your job was just to drive.

CM: We just got in and we were going to be replacements, okay. We wound up, oh, ... we must have been in there maybe three days, but, during the course of that three days, you had guards posted and everybody was on the alert. ... I was on guard duty by this hedgerow and I'm there,

it's starting to get dark, and I hear this rustling. Then, it stopped. Some more rustling; then, it stopped. I said, "Somebody's trying to sneak up on us." So, I bring my gun up over, just about to squeeze the trigger off, and it's a cow. [laughter]

SH: You were alert and ready.

CM: Oh, yes, yes. Oh, hey, shoot or get shot. ... You know, you were there to protect each other. ... Then, after awhile, we would set up. When the 90th Division moved out, unit by unit, we would go in and take their place. ... Then, they had, by that time, cut off the Cherbourg Peninsula. So, we had three divisions lined up across and we happened to be in the middle. So, they said, now, I don't know how true it was, that the 90th sat there for two or three days and wouldn't move, because they were all shot up from D-Day. So, when we got there and they got everything organized, the next day, they took off and we went a mile or two, drive the Germans back up to the peninsula, and then, they had a heck of a job taking Cherbourg, because of the pillboxes and everything. ... We shelled the pillboxes and they bounced right off, you know. [laughter] After all, it's only a ninety-six-pound shell, you know. We marked them with smoke shells. They [aircraft] would come over with five-hundred-pound bombs and drop on them. Well, you've got ten feet of dirt over top of five feet of concrete bunker, you know, just barely shake the ground, but they got them out of there. They sent the guys up with dynamite charges on the end of long sticks, [Bangalore torpedoes]. They'd sneak them up there at dusk and light the thing and shove them in the slits ... for the machine guns, shove them in there and dynamite them out. It's the only way, you know; concussion killed most of them. Well, I'm glad I didn't have to do that. [laughter]

SH: Were you well-supplied? Did everything get ashore that you needed?

CM: Yes, pretty much so. Yes, we were really well-supplied. We didn't have a kitchen. We ate K rations and C rations for the first month, month-and-a-half, or whatever it was. Then, the kitchen truck finally caught up to us, and the "old man's" command car, that's the Captain, his vehicle came along with the kitchen truck. So, a lot of times, he rode with me. [laughter]

SH: Really?

CM: Yes, and the other times, he would ride in a jeep. ...

SH: Do you remember his name?

CM: Sure, Captain Robert Frost, from Red Bank, New Jersey.

SH: Really?

CM: Really, yes.

SH: Found another Jersey boy.

CM: Yes. [laughter]

SH: How quickly did you move?

CM: As the infantry went, we had to keep in range. We could only shoot seven miles.

SH: Okay.

CM: Okay? That was under good conditions. Usually, we wanted to shoot about five miles. So, as they moved up, battery after battery would move along with whatever regiment they were attached to, and to keep in range, so [that] when they called for artillery fire, you could supply it, and, after Cherbourg, they did that. Then, we went down around France and St. Lo and wound up up in Belgium. ... I should have brought the book. It's got maps in it and everything. As a matter-of-fact, when the war was over, we had watercolor maps made. They were almost as big as this picture here.

SH: Three-foot square?

CM: They're not quite square. They're maybe two-and-a-half-by-one-and-a-half, or something like that. Anyway, there are four of them and I got them framed and on my rec room wall, four of them across the one wall.

SH: That is wonderful to have.

CM: Yes, and it gives what outfit was where and what date it was, and so forth.

SH: What was it like at St. Lo? Were there lots of friendly-fire accidents? [Editor's Note: St. Lo was where the Allies broke out from the Normandy Beachhead and where a large-scale air-to-surface friendly-fire incident caused many casualties among the ground forces.]

CM: Well, I don't know. Gee, St. Lo wasn't as bad as far as [that]; I'm picking out the big town, but we had a little town there, La Haye-du-Puits, I think the name of the town was. It was a railhead, might have been the size of Cokesbury, [New Jersey], or something like that. The Germans wouldn't get out and we just leveled that with artillery, until they finally had to go. ... There was no set plan for anything. You did what the situation called for, you know, and being that the Americans were very innovative, as it were, we could cope with a lot of different things, and that stood us in real good [stead] when it came to getting down to the nitty-gritty, but I don't know about St. Lo. I mentioned that because we went through there. We went through a lot of places that had been bombed or shelled, you know, and we didn't know when and how or whatever, but all we knew is, when ... [the] fire direction center called for artillery, we were jolly-on-the-job to do it. ... Then, maybe we were in there three months, maybe four months, and our first sergeant went bananas. Some fighter planes came over and they were kind of low and he grabbed a fifty-caliber machine gun. He started firing at them, our own planes, and they came back and they strafed the holy dickens out of us. ... They had big plastic things, about twice as big as this table, they stretch out, color-coded for every day, to tell [aircraft] we were friends, okay, but, when you shoot at those guys, they ain't going to take that. They're going to shoot back. He got busted. My staff sergeant made first sergeant, one of the corporals made

staff and I lost my truck and I became a scout corporal. Scout corporal's job was, [in] a crew of five, in which he was one, they would go up with the infantry. You'd live with the infantry for four, five, six days, fire the artillery, come back and get cleaned up. The other gang would go up, you know, and we'd be back there and do what we had to do back there, clean up and what-have-you, and that's one of the mistakes I made. I should never have taken that job. That's too close, too close up there, you know. ...

SH: What was that position called?

CM: Forward observer.

SH: A forward observer. There were five in the group.

CM: Yes. ... You had a jeep driver, you had a wireman, you had a radioman, you had a scout corporal and you had a lieutenant.

SH: You were the scout corporal.

CM: I'm the scout corporal. In case something happened to the Lieutenant, I would take over and get the map out and get the coordinates squared out there and pick out the target and send the coordinates back. I'd get that, sometimes, anyway. The Lieutenant says, "You're good."

SH: Do you remember your lieutenant's name?

CM: Well, yes, we had a Lieutenant (Welock?), he was from New England, and we had a Lieutenant (Nelson?), he was from Utah or Idaho, or someplace out there, and he's the one; in 1944, Roosevelt was running for President again and, now, we were eligible to vote. They sent us ballots.

SH: Really?

CM: Oh, yes. So, we got the ballots. I filled the ballot out and I sealed it up, put it in the envelope, other envelope, and sealed it up and, oh, a month or so later, he, Lieutenant (Nelson?), came to me, he says, ... "I hope you voted for Roosevelt." I said, "Lieutenant, that's why they've got a secret ballot," and, to this day, I haven't told him, [laughter] because he was one of the guys censoring our mail, you know. ... When I heard that this one fellow from High Bridge that went [in] the same outfit, this Kenny Hoffman, the other Kenny Hoffman, "Turtle," we called him, he was nicknamed "Turtle," he got wounded and I knew it the next day, because one of our scout corporals was up and knew Harry, and he told me. So, I wrote a letter to my mother, "Hey, Kenny Hoffman got wounded." This lieutenant comes [over], he says, "You can't write that." A month later, I get a letter from my mother, "Kenny Hoffman got wounded." I wrote back, "Yes, I knew it the next day." [laughter] ...

SH: Crazy world.

CM: Yes, and, a lot of times, ... observers would go up in a church steeple, look around, pick a target, or the infantry would come by and say, "Hey, we've got a pocket over here that we need a little support with," and we'd bring the artillery in on that. ... This one time, we were in an open field, sugar beet patch, and, to keep the sugar beets white, they would mound the dirt up. So, you would have, like, a trench between the leaves, ... and we got up there on the forward slope of the hill, because they were going to attack this forest, that we were supposed to bring artillery fire down, so that they could attack [the] beginning of the forest, where the trees were. You couldn't see the woods for the trees, but we wanted to do it anyway, you know, and the Lieutenant says, "Tell (Campbell?) to check the radio." He set up the radio, [click], "Yes, good communication." Pretty soon, "Boom, boom, boom; zoom," over behind us; I said, "Hey, Lieutenant, they've picked up our radio." "Naw," he says, "they're after the crossroad back there." "Okay." A little while later, maybe four, five minutes, "Boom, boom, boom, boom," same sound, same place, "Zoom," they land in front of us. I said, "Hey, Lieutenant, they've got us in a bracket." Now, being in the artillery, I know what a bracket is, you know. They're searching and they're going to close it up until they get us. So, I said, "We'd better get out of here," and they fired four more. Then, if you had the guts to look up, you could see that shrapnel cutting the tops of those sugar beets off. ... I tried to crawl under my helmet. It was scary.

SH: To get all six foot of you under that helmet. [laughter]

CM: Yes, yes, and so, the guy in the wire section, he grabbed his stuff and (Campbell?) grabbed the radio and all three of us, I said, "Lieutenant, we're going," and away we went. He came back. He followed us down the hill, but that was one of the real, real close ones we had. ... Another time, we had a lot of fun up on the Seine River, where we got transferred from the First Army to the Third Army and Patton was ... the Third Army, and we were headed straight for Paris, our division was. Well, you send armor in; Patton was armor, you know. So, we got set north of the city and the Seine River makes a loop up there, you know, where that [is], and we went above the loop and we sat up there, on the one side of the river. ... We got up in a house, and those bigger houses, then, had a little balcony off the roof, you know. So, we go up there, we're looking around, "Hey, look at that nice, little bungalow over there." Here's a lot of command cars, German stuff, coming and going all the time. So, we plot it in. We called back for fire, "We don't have any ammunition." "What?" "Yes." It seems as though, we were told, there was a strike back here in the United States, which I don't know whether it was or not, but we only got enough for a "K" correction. That's a weather correction. You do that every day, you fire, to find out what the weather is like. If it's damp, the shell won't go as far. So, on comes this captain, comes up, "Hey, guys, how's it going?" "We've got a target up here. What do you got?" He says, "I've got eight-inchers back there." "Got any ammo?" "I guess so." So, we give him the coordinates; he sends it back, hear the big boom. The shell comes over; nothing, a dud. So, well, he says, the command that you send back is, "Lost, fire another round." So, they fired another round, "Boom." ... "Gee, that one didn't explode." Pretty soon, I'm looking, we see a puff of smoke come up. I said, "Hey, let's look at the map again," and they've got contours on the maps. This house was sitting on top of a hunk of dirt like this, you know, [laughter] and we had just gone over the top, but, by the looks of where the smoke was coming up, [we could hit it]. So, this captain says, "What do you think?" Well, we all decided, "Shorten up fifty." He shortened up fifty and it came, "Bang, zoom," blew that house to smithereens, oh, right on the front porch, man, which was, "Hooray for us," [laughter] because you don't get to see that very

often, where you're firing, you know, the target. So, that was two really weird experiences that I had as a forward observer.

SH: Did you travel with any kind of personal weapon?

CM: Oh, we had a carbine, or a carbine, or whatever you want to call it, yes. [Editor's Note: The M-1 carbine was shorter and fired a smaller cartridge than the full-sized M-1 rifle.] When they got a little dirt in them, they were worthless. [laughter] ...

SH: Were you a good shot, with a carbine?

CM: Oh, yes, yes. Well, I'd never qualified with a carbine, but I did qualify, in Florida, with an Enfield rifle, [a British bolt-action repeating rifle]. That was a World War I rifle. I got sharpshooter with that. ... Yes, I could, because, when I was a kid, we used to go up to the dumps with .22s, rifles, and shoot the rats. Rats were, like, big as cats. [laughter]

SH: Did you stay with the Third Army and move with them?

CM: Well, yes, we stayed with the Third Army, and then, we went down to Alsace-Lorraine, which was the Seventh Army, and we spent the winter, Christmas and New Year's, down in the snow. [laughter] ... Believe it or not, the kitchen truck came up and we had turkey dinner, with the stuffing and everything. ... The Battle of the Bulge, [also known as the Battle of the Ardennes], was going on then, remember, in the winter, and we were down there and I forget what the other division was; two divisions holding the whole army front down there, and Hitler still had some crazy ideas. So, I guess it was after the first of the year that we see convoys of trucks going the other way. So, we go up in the road, "Hey, guys, what's going on?" "Well, we're pulling back." Strategic withdrawal; we don't retreat. Strategic withdrawal, remember now, [laughter] and we would kid this one guy from Philadelphia. He stayed up for forty-eight hours, because we had dynamite charges to blow the guns up and to blow the ammo up and all. Then, we're going to take off on foot, in case we got overrun, and it was kind of fun that we had him going, but, then, you know, you stop and think about it, "Gee, we're in the same boat," but we got out of that one okay, ... but for them guys, you know, "What's up in front of you guys?" "The Germans," [laughter] you know, they were just nonchalant, "The Germans; nothing between us and them but bare ground." ... Little things like that, you know, you kind of remember, and you get a move order, "We're pulling out. Load up everything." ... I remember, one day, we moved three times, just barely got the guns set up, because the front was moving so fast.

SH: Really?

CM: Barely had time to set the guns up and orient the things in, to get them surveyed in, and, other times, you'd be there two, three, four days. You'd never know, you know. ... It was weird, all right, I'll tell you. [laughter]

SH: You talked about the first sergeant that really lost it fairly early on.

CM: Yes, he lost it real early.

SH: Were there others?

CM: No, no.

SH: They pretty much held it together.

CM: We had guys [who] used to go out and get drunk all the time.

SH: What did they find to drink?

CM: Oh, there was all kinds of stuff, ... a lot of wine in France, calvados, schnapps, *kartoffel* schnapps, potato schnapps. We found, on the way to Cherbourg, somebody found a barrel of cognac, I mean, a big barrel, that the Germans didn't find, so, it must have been seven years old. They went up there and filled five-gallon water cans with cognac. I had one where I was sitting and there was a spare tire here and there's just room [enough] to set a water can down in there, you know. ... My gang would come around and they'd fill up your canteen with the booze, because you'd go to the brook and wash your hands. That's no problem. We didn't need it; ... instead of drinking water, we drank it. ... We did little things like that, you know, make it bearable, as it were, but, as far as actually getting into hand-to-hand combat, the artillery does not do that. The artillery, trained personnel in the artillery, they want to keep them alive, because it takes a good trained crew to fire day after day after day and get them on target.

SH: This was one of the worst winters ever in Europe. What did you do to keep warm?

CM: You dug a hole, a slit trench, actually. ... It's a shame to say this, but you slept in the same clothes you wore in the daytime for weeks on end, and we didn't shave. It was too cold to shave. Boy, you've never seen a nice set of red whiskers like I had.

SH: Really?

CM: Really. [laughter]

SH: They could have nicknamed you "Red."

CM: Yes, but I was a "toe head" [light-haired] when I was a kid, ... but nobody said anything. What are you going to say, you know?

SH: You did not have to worry about being "spit-and-polished," as they say.

CM: No. The first rest camp we went to; we were in combat, like, 154 days, or something like that, and we got a rest camp. Then, [you] polish your shoes, get dressed up for retreat, blah, blah, and, after a week, put us back out there. "Enough of this crap. We don't have to put up with this. We're fighting guys, you know." [laughter]

SH: Where did you go to rest camp?

CM: I don't know.

SH: Just somewhere back?

CM: ... Oh, yes, you were way back, yes, forty miles, thirty miles back, yes, where you're out of danger. ...

SH: Did you go to Paris?

CM: No. I told you, Patton wouldn't let us go to Paris.

SH: You never got a chance to go into Paris on R&R [rest and relaxation].

CM: No, no, I didn't have any R&R. I don't remember any of our guys going, because we were, most of them, waiting to get out, very few, I don't think. I heard of one guy that re-enlisted and he was one of the guys that got drunk all the time, and that's how come I got stabbed in the finger with a bayonet. One of our guys did it, when he was drunk.

SH: Oh, no.

CM: Yes. He had a German rifle. He says, "Here's where these..." and I couldn't pull back far enough.

SH: Oh, I see.

CM: ... See this scar here?

SH: Yes

CM: And it came out over here.

SH: Oh, my word. Did you get a Purple Heart for that?

CM: No, it was friendly-fire. [laughter]

SH: With a German bayonet.

CM: Yes.

SH: How did the people treat you? Were you in Belgium at this point?

CM: Yes. Well, gee, we were so many places. ... Well, we were in France, we were in Belgium, we were in Holland, Luxemburg, and then, in Germany, and, basically, I wound up in Czechoslovakia.

SH: Did you?

CM: ... We pulled border guard over in Czechoslovakia, yes.

SH: Do you remember about the time that you went into Germany? How did they treat you?

[TAPE PAUSED]

CM: We didn't have that much contact with the civilian population over there, because we needed room for the artillery. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: You did not have that much contact.

CM: No, because we needed room and we were out more in open [areas]. The infantry would have the hand-to-hand combat in the towns, you know, house-to-house stuff. ...

SH: Did you have to evacuate civilians or were they already gone by the time you arrived?

CM: By the time we got there, some of them may start to come back, because, if the front was moving fast, we would be five miles from town; a couple of days [later], we're five miles past town, you know, and you're never consistent. They were consistent with their inconsistency; is that the way you put it?

SH: That sounds good. Were there other foodstuffs that you found to supplement your rations?

CM: Oh, sure, yes. In France, we would go in the farmhouses and you'd find flour and stuff, and we had a couple of farmer boys that knew how to make apple turnovers, and potatoes. ... They'd [the French would] pile up the potatoes and they'd cover them with dirt. ... You dig in the bottom and you get a couple of potatoes and slice them up and fry them in that gook they called butter. ... Some of this stuff wouldn't even melt.

SH: Really? [laughter]

CM: Yes, and, every once in awhile, one of the guys'd get brave and grab a chicken, spin it around, snap its neck off, you know, but, when we got in Germany, they would go out hunting. A gang of them would go out and get some deer, venison, but they were only ... just about as big as a greyhound, a small deer over there, yes. You'd have to have four or five of them to feed a gang of guys like us, but they would do it, [laughter] and pigs.

SH: Did you know where you first went into Germany? Were you aware that you were actually in Germany?

CM: Oh, yes, we crossed the Rhine River.

SH: You crossed the Rhine River.

CM: Oh, yes. You know, the Remagen Bridge was captured intact. Well, before that, we had been in Belgium and we had taken amphibious training to cross the Rhine River. The whole division was there, and then, we came back and we set up camp, as it were, on the ... west bank of the river, the Rhine River, to make an assault. ... I guess it was a couple days before kickoff time, they captured the damn Remagen Bridge, but we went along with the attack and fired the artillery and the guys got in the boats and the Navy took them across the river. ... We just laid down barrage after barrage on the far bank, so that there wouldn't be any small arms fire coming on the guys getting ashore. They said, they came back [with] reports, that the German soldiers sat over there, wanted to see our automatic artillery. [laughter]

SH: Just laid back on the bank to watch?

CM: Oh, just give up, too much artillery, give up, "We don't want any part of it," you know, ... but we did the crossing and everything as planned. They built ... pontoon bridges. We went across on pontoon bridges, one coming and one going, and that's how we got in Germany, and there is a sign, says, "Welcome to Germany, Compliments of the 79th Infantry Division." That's in the book. [laughter]

SH: It is in the book. [laughter]

CM: Yes, should have brought that book, I know.

SH: Do you remember when you crossed the Rhine?

CM: Oh, I would have the dates in the book.

SH: Yes, okay.

CM: Yes, but I don't [readily recall] dates and numbers.

SH: When did you hear that Roosevelt had died?

CM: I would imagine it was in the week, easily within the week.

SH: How did people react to that?

CM: Well, I myself, it's like when Kennedy got shot. The guy was working when his mother came in. "Oh," she started crying, "Kennedy got [shot]. ... What are we going to do now? Kennedy's dead." "So, we're going to have another President within twenty-four hours," and, you know, that was kind of my philosophy all during life, "you come and you go," you know. I was always that way.

SH: Did you have confidence in Truman?

CM: After he dropped the atomic bomb, yes, oh, yes, [laughter] but politics didn't enter into the fighting or into the war, basically, you know, as far as being Commander-in-Chief, ... because Eisenhower's running the shebang, with his group there, you know.

SH: What did the men think of Eisenhower?

CM: Oh, he was great.

SH: Did they?

CM: Oh, yes.

SH: Bradley?

CM: Yes, yes, all our [generals], except that damn gunslinger. ...

SH: What did you think of Patton?

CM: A gunslinger, a wild man, violent, and, of course, I never met him, but, from all the reports we were getting, he's a gunslinger from the word go, man. He should have been out West when they were settling the West. [laughter]

SH: Were you aware of the war winding down or did it end abruptly for you? What were you doing?

CM: Yes. When the war ended in Europe, we were in rest camp, our second rest camp.

SH: Were you really?

CM: Yes, and, when they said the war was over, we didn't believe it. We said, "You're joking." "No, it's really true. It's over." Well, after two or three days, we begin to believe it, because we weren't going anyplace and nothing was happening, and that was fine, and then, being that our division was such a crack outfit, we were coming back to the States [to] get re-outfitted and go to Japan. Well, we got to "Camp Callus," in Marseilles. Camp Callus is that you get calluses from sitting around so much.

SH: You are spelling that C-A-L-L-U-S, okay. [laughter]

CM: Yes, and, while we were there, oh, it must have been within two or three days of us getting aboard ship, Japan quit. So, ... everything stopped. Then, they came along with a bunch of trucks and that's where I got into Czechoslovakia, all the way cross-country to go to Czechoslovakia. ...

SH: From Marseilles.

CM: Yes, to pull border guard [duty], between us and the Russians. There was a mile of dead space in-between the two.

SH: Really?

CM: Yes.

SH: What did you have to do then? You have been an artilleryman all this time. Now, what are you doing? Were you doing the same thing?

CM: ... No. ... I got back [to] driving a truck. Oh, I didn't tell you one of my good experiences.

SH: Okay.

CM: One time, when I was a forward observer, we got, like, up on that hill I was telling you about, and another time we almost bought the farm, and this one time, [it was so] close that you wouldn't believe. ... I said to the Lieutenant, on the way back, I said, "I'm done. I'm not coming back up here." "What do you mean?" I said, "I'm not getting paid for this," because I didn't get corporal stripes yet. It's not the stripes, it was the money. It's sixty-six bucks against thirty bucks, plus your ten percent overseas pay, [laughter] and all that adds up, you know, and you send the money home; you buy a bond that month. So, all the while, he tried to talk me into staying. I said, "Nope." He says, "Well, I'll talk to the 'old man.'" I said, "You can tell the 'old man' to shove the stripes where the sun don't shine." Of course, I didn't use those words; you know what I'm talking about.

SH: I bet you did not. [laughter]

CM: I said, "Court-martial me, do anything you want; I'm not going up." "Well, if that's the way you feel about it," he says, "what do you want to do?" Well, I said, "There's two places I haven't been in this outfit;" one was the kitchen and one was in the wire section. I said, "Now, me and the mess sergeant don't get along." We never did get along, and I'll tell you that story. When we were out in the desert, in California, my truck was to go get water. The five-gallon water cans, all of them fit right inside the bed of the little truck, and he went with me one time and he starts mouthing off. ... On the way back, he was shooting his mouth off and giving me what for and all this kind of stuff. I reached out, like, turned it off, left it in gear. Before it stopped, I was over the side. I said, "Drive the truck home yourself." I knew he couldn't drive. "Now, don't get excited. Be calm now, don't get [excited]." I said, "I've had enough," ... you know, and so, things were pretty good for awhile, but that kind of put the squash on that end. I knew he didn't like me from the [beginning], more so after that. So, I said, "I'll take the wire section." Good; now, the wire section, they have reels of wire which they take out of the truck and lay it in the gutter of the road and, come [to an] intersection, they go overhead and back down. Then, they bring wire from the fire direction center into the different batteries, and my job was, I had two phones, one from fire direction center and one connected to the four guns. I had to make sure I had communication with the four guns. ... The telephones were in a leather packet, about yea big, by yea big, by that thick, that made a beautiful pillow. [laughter] It was hard as a rock, but just right to lay back, put your head on, and I got where I could doze off and that thing would

ring once, grab it, "Able Blue, Able Guns, fire mission," ring the other phone, you know. ... So, I did that, and, of course, then, when we moved, I had to go take care of the phones here and I would get on the truck and help them, and we were picking up wire one time in this intersection. We had to go over top and I got up with the climbers. I climbed this pole, couldn't have been this big around at the top. Of course, I only weighed about 170 then. I got up there, and the way you tie it, you're supposed to grab the loop and it's supposed to let go. Well, I pulled the loop and it didn't let go. Pretty soon, I hear four guns go off and they're shelling the intersection I'm at, and I'm up on this pole. "Oh, I should have stayed a forward observer," [laughter] but, luckily, again, you know, the luck of the draw, [if] you don't get hit, you don't get hit. So, I finally got that wire loose and we went on about our business, little odds and ends like that, you know, breaks up the monotony, as it were. [laughter] ...

SH: Were you still a wireman when you went over the Rhine?

CM: No, I think I was a forward observer yet. I'm not sure, but I think I was. Things travel and you don't remember, days turn into months, you know, and it could have been the last month or it could have been the next month. ... Time is nothing.

SH: Nobody has a watch.

CM: Yes, you know what time it is.

SH: Did you pay attention to the time?

CM: Yes. ... Twenty-four hundred hours in a day, but, other than that, now, like my watch tells you today is Friday, 11/16, 3:02, point eight, nine, ten seconds, [laughter] but you didn't have that. All you had was a dial with twenty-four numbers on it. ... You know, it just didn't occur to you to say, "Well, I've been here at this time, I was here at this time," or, "We went here or where."

SH: Did you keep any kind of a diary or a log for yourself?

CM: No. The only thing I found is, and it must have been [from] when I first went in the service, I was six-[foot]-one and I weighed 182 pounds. ... When I graduated high school, I was that weight, you know. So, that's about all I [found], the little book. I don't know where it came from or where I got it or anything.

SH: It was probably to keep track of your pay that you were watching so carefully.

CM: Yes. [laughter] I got the first dollar bill that I drew across the tables at pay.

SH: You kept that.

CM: I kept it, and it's ragged.

SH: I will bet it is. [laughter] Did you have any other mementos that you kept or good luck charms?

CM: No, ... good luck charm, that's [nonsense]. ...

SH: I had to ask.

CM: Yes, that's for ...

SH: You talked about being on the ship and being put back on shore.

CM: We weren't onboard ship yet.

SH: I thought you said that.

CM: No, no, we were a couple of days from getting onboard.

SH: I misunderstood.

CM: Yes, no.

SH: Where were you sent now?

CM: Czechoslovakia.

SH: Who was in charge and how many went?

CM: These same officers, the same people, but we didn't have any artillery pieces. We had our vehicles. That's all.

SH: You were a driver this time.

CM: I drove, yes. [laughter] ... They have what they call "six-bys," GMC six-by-six, and then, we had a Diamond T, which was the same thing, only it had air brakes on [it and] it was bigger. Well, I grabbed one of those and ... you go out in a circle. You drop a guy off, you pick a guy up, make the rounds, and, on the way back, there's a flock of geese in the middle of the road. I had no more chance of stopping that great, big truck than the man in the moon, and the feathers flew all over the place. The guy's hollering, "What are you doing?" [laughter] but you couldn't stop. You just kept right on going; you know how it is?

SH: You did not stop to pick up the geese.

CM: No, no. They're all beat up anyway. [laughter]

SH: Were you well-supplied when you were on guard duty along the border?

CM: Yes, oh, yes, because the Russians would come over and they were short of gasoline, and, oh, God, you could rob them blind, for a five-gallon can of gas, you know, two [or] three hundred dollars for a five-gallon can of gas.

SH: Really?

CM: Yes, and cigarettes, they loved our cigarettes, but they didn't have much to trade, you know. That's the problem. ...

SH: What were your orders? Could you talk with the Russians?

CM: Oh, no, no fraternization, no. You kept away from them, supposedly. You know Eisenhower and his non-fraternization policy, yet he had a girlfriend. [laughter] You're not supposed to hear that.

SH: What was a typical day like when you were on guard duty? What were some of the memorable things about it? What was the terrain like where you were stationed?

CM: Gee, well, Europe's full of crazy terrain, as I remember it. Some places were flat, some places weren't, and you'd be riding along, pretty soon, you come to a hill and up, over and down. It's hard to explain, just like around here.

SH: Were any of the native Czech people coming back?

CM: Oh, yes, they were all back. We were in Pilsen.

SH: In Pilsen.

CM: Yes, we had a, it was like a big rooming house, or a small hotel or something. We had rooms in there. The guys hung out the window and hollered at the girls. [laughter]

SH: Were you then collecting your points?

CM: Yes, yes.

SH: Trying to get enough points to get back.

CM: Yes.

SH: Were the guys peeling off one at a time or did you come back as a whole unit?

CM: No, if you had, and I forget what the points were, eighty-six, I think; my unit was designated eighty-six points, which I had, some guys didn't, and they got out. Other guys from other outfits had eighty-six points, they came in, and it got all mixed up, you know. ... When you're aboard ship, coming home, we sailed out of Marseilles eventually, in December, nice and peaceful in the Mediterranean, went past the Rock [of Gibraltar], the Azores, get out there a

ways. I'm sitting there, reading a book, and I took to reading then, and, pretty soon, the light's behind me, and then, the sun is in front of me. "What's going on here?" I look out back; we're going in a big circle. You could see the wake. We lost control of the ship. The hydraulic steering went out on us. We made seventy-five nautical miles [in] one twenty-four-hour hitch. Then, we were three, four days from coming into Newport News and we hit a storm. We bounced around out there for another week. So, it took us eighteen days from Marseilles to Newport News. That's almost straight across the ocean, yes.

SH: What were you on? Do you remember the name of the ship?

CM: The SS *David G. Farragut*. Yes, I remember. It was a Liberty ship, I suppose one of [Henry J.] Kaiser's, you know, and I remember, coming back, [when] we hit in that bad weather, the ship had a band around the gunnel. It must have been an inch, inch-and-a-half thick steel plate, maybe four feet, all riveted, all around, but they used to split in half. The ships used to split right in half when they got on a wave, you know. So, they put this big band around it, to hold it together. [laughter]

SH: Keep the wash tub together.

CM: Yes, yes, because the boatswain, you know, talking to him, he says, "Oh, yes," he says, "these things used to split apart all the time." So, they had to take them back and band them all. [laughter]

SH: Was the mood on the ship a whole lot different coming back than it had been going over?

CM: Yes, because we weren't getting sick. You had your sea legs. On the Mediterranean, you had a chance to get your sea legs and everything was fifty-fifty until we hit that storm.

SH: Was it just Army guys onboard?

CM: Yes, and the crew, mostly Merchant Marine crew, yes, and one of the guys on the crew, ... he was discharged from [the Army]. He was in the paratroopers and he jumped on D-Day and he broke both feet, and I guess he landed on the roof of a house or something, broke both feet. So, they fixed him up and discharged him and he went back in the Merchant Marine, [could] make a lot more money than he did in the paratroopers. [laughter]

SH: That is true. Did you ever consider staying in the military?

CM: Never.

SH: I had to ask. [laughter]

CM: I know you did. [laughter]

SH: Did they try to talk you into staying in?

CM: Never. It must have been my attitude, because they ask a lot of guys, you know, "How about re-uping?" "No, thank you, I've had enough of this."

SH: When you came into Newport News, where did you go?

CM: Gee, where did we go? I guess we stayed there for a little bit, I'm not sure, a day or two, and then, we went to Fort Monmouth.

SH: That was where you were discharged from.

CM: Discharged out of Fort Monmouth.

SH: On Christmas Day in 1945.

CM: Yes, December the 24th.

SH: The 24th.

CM: Yes, the 24th. ... I came home Christmas Eve.

SH: You just immediately got on the train and headed home.

CM: Well, I bummed a ride from Fort Monmouth to Newark, okay, and, out of Newark, I caught the Jersey Central Railroad, which went through High Bridge. Every train that went from Newark to Harrisburg stopped in High Bridge. There's another little story. When I ... came on furlough from Kansas and I got on a train at Harrisburg to come in, ... this nice, young lady came over and she sat by me, because I'm a GI, you know, and [we were] talking, you know. I'm telling her this big, sad tale about, "We're getting ready to go overseas," and all this. I could have taken her home with me. [laughter]

SH: It must have been some tale you told.

CM: But, anyway, I bummed a ride up to Newark, got on the train, and the train got in [to] High Bridge about six-thirty, I guess. It was the *Queen of the Valley* that ran from Newark to Harrisburg, and that same train I came with that little girl there, got in High Bridge about ten-thirty in the morning. So, I had the *Queen* both ways. [laughter]

SH: Was your family expecting you or was it a surprise?

CM: They knew I was on my way home, but they had no idea when, and I didn't know when, and, back in those days, we didn't have telephones. ... I could have called the people across the street, but I didn't know their number. So, I just hoofed it on home and the train station, from my house, is maybe a mile, which was nothing. You [could] hoof that easily.

SH: Especially after knowing that you were done and out.

CM: Yes.

SH: Tell me how you met your wife and what your plans were?

CM: Well, when I got back, this lieutenant here, he had gotten married while I was ...

SH: The guy that was in the Air Corps.

CM: Yes. He got married and his wife had a couple of sisters, and he hooked me up with one of his sister-in-laws. We got along all right, ... no real connection there, and I bummed around with her and I took a couple of other girls out, and so forth. ... I'm downtown, beautiful downtown High Bridge, and the shoemaker's shop there, and the guys used to hang out in the shoemaker's shop and gab, and so forth, and I hear this whistle and I look out there. There's these two girls, and nose me, I go out there, yes. "Hey, how about taking us out to my summer [place], to my father's summer place, about, you know, three, four miles out of town?" I said, "Okay, jump in," because I had a '38 Dodge then. [laughter] So, I took the girls. They'd bummed a ride from Centenary Junior College in Hackettstown. It was a junior college, all-female. Then, [they had] bummed a ride into High Bridge, but they had no way to get out to Stone Mill. They had some luggage. So, [I] pile them in the car and took them out there. We talked a little bit, blah, blah, blah, you know, and one thing led to another and [I said], "How you getting back to school?" "Well, you want to take us back to school?" "Ah, what the heck, you know?" and it's a good-looking girl, nice, long, black hair, pretty, pretty girl. I should have brought some pictures of her, too, damn. ... So, gee, we started to date, and then, in ... March of 1948, March the 13th, '48, we got married, and January 1, 1950, we had a son. Then, we had another son. Then, we had a daughter. Then, we had another daughter. We named her "Quits." [laughter]

SH: Did you go back to work at the foundry?

CM: No, I didn't, because, when I got home, my father had been sick. So, the guy down in Plainfield, he was working in Plainfield at the time, he called up and says, "Hey, come on down, take the old man's place." I said, "You've got to be kidding." I said, "I had one year as apprentice patternmaker on a bench. I made one pattern, and I didn't make that right." I made it right, except I didn't allow enough on it for finish. ... On the line, they put a little "F" mark there. That means you've got to add more wood on there, so [that] they can machine it off. Well, he says, "Come on down, give it a shot." So, "Okay." So, I went down, I hooked up with him and I worked from early '46; I was only out of ... the Army two weeks, never drew any 52/20. You know what 52/20 is? [unemployment insurance provided under the GI Bill] never drew any of that, and take the train down and back every day, and things worked out pretty good. I was learning. I loved to do that kind of work and, ... to me, it was so easy. I've worked with guys that would fight it every inch of the way, you know, and we had one guy working for us that couldn't make a core box. So, you couldn't give him a job with a core in it, though, you know, ... [just] one of those things. [laughter] So, anyway, ... I stayed there until '53. We had an apartment in Plainfield where I could walk to work, and Plainfield was starting to go downhill then. So, we figured we'd get out of here. So, this summer place I was telling you about, we fixed it up and we moved out there, up in Clinton Township. So, we were there and I had a

chance to buy this piece of land in High Bridge, seven-eighths of an acre for fifteen hundred bucks, said, "Hey," took Helen up there. We looked at it and it looked nice, "Can we do something with it?" "Yes." So, we bought it. ... We saved up some money, had a guy come in, dig the hole, saved up some more money, put the footings in, saved up some more money, bought some block and sand and cement, start laying up the foundation. Three years later, we moved in, with a little help along the way, here and there, had a guy come in, put the heating system in. I had a plumber come in and put the plumbing in, but my oldest son, he was, what? '55, '56, six years old, seven years old. We pulled all the BX wiring in the house, the two of us, took it down and tagged it. So, the guy, the electrician, come in, put it in the box, and, weekends, Helen'd pack a lunch, I'd take the boys up with me, and she'd come up, sometimes, and bring the daughter. We only had the one daughter then, and we would have a picnic lunch out there and stuff. ... Basically, she'd been a good woman. Now, ... they found out she had a tumor in her stomach, so, she's on chemo now, ... started in August, I guess, ... but she's doing well and she's got a good attitude. It's not going to beat us. We're going to whip this thing. [laughter]

SH: Good. I thank you so much for talking with me today.

CM: Well, you're quite welcome.

SH: I look forward to seeing you again. Thank you.

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Reviewed by Jeffrey Wisniewski 10/3/08

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 7/20/09

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/22/09