

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HAROLD MUSSELMAN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

MOLLY GRAHAM

and

MOHAMMAD ATHAR

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TRANSCRIPT BY

BEDROS KHARMANDARIAN

Molly Graham: This an interview with Harold Musselman. The interview is taking place on June 18, 2014, in Washington, New Jersey, with Molly Graham and Mohammad Athar. Let us start at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

Harold Musselman: Well, I was born in a farmhouse up in Honesdale, Pennsylvania, in Texas Township, right up in the northeast corner of Pennsylvania. I was the youngest of seven. The oldest brother was killed in a logging accident, and he's buried in [Glenn] Dyberry Cemetery in Honesdale, Pennsylvania. But the rest of us, the oldest four, we're three half-brothers and one half-sister. I was the youngest of the three full brothers. Then, we moved from Honesdale to East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania at about age six. It was there that I grew up along the Lackawanna Railroad. I guess that's what you wanted to know anyway.

MG: Yes. What year were you born?

HM: 1921.

MG: How old does that make you today?

HM: Today, ninety-two going on ninety-three.

MG: What are some things you remember about growing up? What is it like to be the youngest of seven?

HM: Youngest of seven? Well, Mom raised us without my father. My father and mother were divorced. I don't know much about him. He was an itinerant minister up in Wayne County, Pennsylvania. But Mom brought us kids up in a strict fashion. She had a strong right hand. You didn't talk back to her. When she said to do something, you did it. She went out to work every day. There were off times around the neighborhood there; the kids played all the street games and everything else that was possibly going around.

I traveled on weekends with a truck driver for the feed mill across the road, and that's where I learned to drive. We're going down the road, and he said, "Here, steer this thing." I'm sitting alongside him, steering the truck, going down the road with one hand like that. We'd get on a dirt road in a back place like that; he'd slide over and put me behind the wheel and that's where I learned to drive. It was a good experience, believe me.

MG: About how old were you when that happened?

HM: Thirteen, fourteen years old. We didn't have a car, so anything I learned was going there on the feed truck. Every Saturday, I traveled with him on a whole load of flour up to Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania. We delivered it to a bakery there. Another session was there.

[TAPE PAUSED]

HM: That was the only elementary school that I went to, the first grade. If you ever go up into Northeast Pennsylvania, you'll find that Honesdale today is a tourist area through there. Then,

we moved from there down to East Stroudsburg on Lackawanna Avenue. The Lackawanna Railroad ran right through the town and it still does, but not with the volume that was then. We lived in half of a double house on Lackawanna Avenue. My sister was a waitress at a restaurant down across from the Lackawanna Railroad. My one brother was still living up in Seelyville, Pennsylvania. He went to Carbondale as a young man. He was an air brake inspector while he was going to high school in Carbondale. Then, when he married, he stayed up there. Sometimes, in summers, I'd go back up there and spend some time.

My other brother was a carpenter. Of course, carpenters in those days moved every place down the line. I remember a lot of things. My sister, at that time, was quite a rider of horses. Mom used to get a call every so often, saying, "Your daughter is out here riding across the railroad trestle on her horse." She trained the horse so good that you couldn't keep him in a pasture. He'd go over the fence. Then, at night, you'd hear a thump in the barn like that, and he'd taken his nose and lifted up the feed box so he'd get in there. You'd have to go out and get him away from that because a horse will founder themselves. They're not smart like a mule. A mule will only eat what he wants, but a horse will just keep right on going.

After we moved out of the country and came up to East Stroudsburg, that's where I attended elementary and high school up through there. I participated in the high school band. We were the first state champions out of East Stroudsburg. I guess it was 1938 that we won the first state championship. That carried over to my life in the Army because, when I was drafted, they gave you an examination as to what you did in civilian life. Well, the only thing they had down for me was that I played in the high school band. So, my first assignment in the military was with an Army band down in Texas. That was the 102nd Division Artillery band. I spent not too long a time with them because the other musicians in there were professional musicians out of Chicago mostly. They were all draftees, the same as I was, but they were professionals. I got out of that routine real fast.

For a while, I worked with the airplanes, the observation planes, down through there. I learned some mechanical work with them. In the off-hours, I served as a chauffeur for the brigadier general who commanded there while his regular driver was on leave or something. I chauffeured him around. I always remember that every day we had to take him back to his--it wasn't a barracks, it was a building. He'd go in to take a nap, and I sat out in the Jeep waiting for him to finish up his nap.

One of the things that you remember about the military when you first were drafted, they would give you a written examination to find out what you were qualified for and what your educational background was. By the way, before that time, I'd had half a year in college before I went in there. I was drafted right from college. At that time, they were taking a lot of the fellows right from college and put them in the ASTP program, Army Specialized Training Program. So, I was given an examination like the other fellows were, and that follows right along on your service record while you're in there. Then, they determine what they were going to do with you after you finished up your basic training in school. They ask what you wanted to do when you were in there. "Well," I said, "I had three years of French in high school. I'll go for languages." Instead of sending me down to Texas, down to one of the Texas schools to go back for languages, they hauled my butt up to Syracuse University to take math for engineering,

which, when I was in high school, wasn't one of my better subjects. But they figured that I could last up there.

So, I took the ASTP program up at Syracuse. Then, when I finished there, they sent me down to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, down there to the artillery placement center. I stayed there for a period of time through a couple of operations. They kept me right there. Then, finally, when they finished classifying you in the artillery, they sent me over to the 272nd Field Artillery, which was in the old horse-drawn artillery place over at Fort Bragg. When I say they were horse-drawn artillery, there were no paved roads where the horse-drawn artillery was; it was all sand. That's where the organization that I ended up in, the 272, had started up at.

Here's one for you, too. They built the camp at Fort Sumter up above North Carolina, and that today is being used for millionaire people up there. They've made a prison out of it. One time, at one of our reunions, we went up and looked around. It's a pretty nice place today. But back then, it was nothing but a bunch of wooden barracks all through there.

We had that under our skin, but this outfit, when they first became artillery, was a 105- [millimeter Howitzer] outfit. They were a bunch of hillbilly boys from North Carolina, like that. I say hillbilly because some of them were out of the hills. One boy in our outfit had never had a pair of shoes on, and he couldn't read or write. I wrote letters home for him when we were in the service. This happened in a lot of outfits because fellows could not read or write. Anyway, they were good on 105s, to the point they took them up to Washington, D.C. to give a demonstration for the Secretary of War at that time. They were so good they could have seven shells in the air before the first one landed.

But the gun that they switched us to was the 240-millimeter Howitzer. That was like a Navy ship gun. The shell was 9.6 [inches] long, like that, and stood about that high. It had to be loaded with a powder charge in behind and had a little powder on top. They cut off how much they wanted to fire that thing. We took basic training then on the 240s, and they had us out there one time to give a demonstration to the Secretary of War. We sat there half a day waiting for him to show up, but we couldn't do anything else. We had to sit and wait.

MG: Before we get too much into training, we have questions about growing up still.

Mohammad Athar: Did your parents immigrate to the United States, or were they already living here?

HM: No, my mother was raised in Bartonsville, outside of Stroudsburg. As a matter of fact, on Memorial Day, we took flowers up there to her grave.

Carol Musselman Kain: She was born in Snydersville, in the Snydersville Hotel. The Shooks and the Storms, both sides of her family, have been several generations in the United States prior to her being born. His father, we're not so sure how far back. The Musselmans have been in the United States--he came out of Carbon County, which, back then, was part of Lehigh County. So, the Musselmans that are in the Lehigh Valley. That's where we are connected to, if you go back far enough. I did some research in Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania, at the library to see and checked

census records and things, but I never found a whole lot on his side because of the divorce. We don't have a lot of his father's family history. His mom's family history we do [have] because her uncle was Judge John Storm, who is a big figure in the Stroudsburg area. He was quite well known, and there's a lot of genealogy stuff on that. So, we have a lot of that family history. [Editor's Note: Ms. Musselman is referring to John Brutzman Storm (1838-1901), who served as a Pennsylvania member of the House of Representatives and later as a judge.]

MG: Are you able to trace where they came from many generations ago?

CMK: The Musselman side has been traced back to Austria. The Shook side, Dutch.

HM: The Dutch went up the Hudson Valley, up to Kingston, New York, and from there, they migrated down to the Delaware Valley and came down to the Monroe County area, through Shawnee and that whole section up through there. So, that was that phase of the family.

Stroudsburg and East Stroudsburg--those towns were pretty old. In Stroudsburg today, you can go up to the library on Main Street in Stroudsburg, and you can find a lot of material up there on the family. But there's a town outside of Snyder'sville out there, Stormville, and that was one phase of the family. The other one, my mom was raised in Bartonsville. She grew up in that area. My uncle John Alleger was the postmaster in Bartonsville, and my mother's sister was married to him. My cousin John was in the military in World War II. My Uncle Roger up in Tannersville, his son was in the military in World War II. If you go to the cemetery up at Bartonsville, you can see the names back through there. We were talking about it, and we found one tombstone back there with Musselman on it in the 178th--what was it?--volunteers?

CMK: Yes, but the connection we're not sure of.

HM: Then, of course, at the same time, if you go outside of Lehigh, Pennsylvania, there's a church. Behind there, we went in the cemetery, and there was a Lieutenant Musselman in the Civil War. They had a statue erected to him there. These were all part of the Musselman heritage in that area. So, if you go up into the Lehigh Valley, you can find a lot of Musselmans hanging around up there.

CMK: Even if you get into the Amish community, there are a lot of Musselmans there, too. That's one area. You need a lot of time to sit down to really dig through. I run into roadblocks as far as beyond my grandfather and his parentage and all that because I'm trying to locate the records, and everything is time.

HM: Well, we did find a hardware store or something there in Lehigh.

CMK: Yes.

HM: A cousin or something was running that.

CMK: Yes, I don't even remember that. I'd have to look that up. I don't remember the names of that. But there's a lot. The information is out there, but sometimes, too, you have to come

forward to go backward in your genealogy, knowing offspring and finding their records, and then going back from there through marriage records and things like that.

HM: Anyway, my two brothers and myself were the ones that were in the military. In the meantime, my one half-brother became a teacher. He was out in Central Pennsylvania out there at a school, very rural. During World War II, he was a guard at a military installation out there.

CMK: That's a scary thought. [laughter] Knowing this particular brother, it's a scary thought for him to be a guard somewhere.

MG: You mentioned he was a half-brother.

HM: Yes.

MG: Did your mother remarry?

HM: No.

CMK: Well, she was married twice.

HM: She was a widower at twenty-four, with four kids, down here in Peapack-Gladstone, New Jersey. Her husband dropped dead in the railroad station down there, so she left there and went back up into the Stroudsburg area until she married my father. My two full brothers and myself were the ones that went in the military in World War II. I went overseas with the 272 Field Artillery, and we were stationed in England between Birmingham and Coventry.

MG: What's this?

CMK: [Editor's Note: Carol Musselman Kain is sharing a photograph with the interviewer.] Just before going into the service, that's the three brothers. That's Larry, Dad, and Wally. Larry was the oldest. These are the three Musselman boys.

MG: Very handsome. I'm curious about the effect of the Great Depression and your parents' divorce had on your family.

HM: When we think of the depression and stuff like that--Mom went out to work every morning when I was growing up. She left us kids, me in particular; I was the youngest. She'd leave breakfast on the stove or something like that. Then, she'd go to work at seven o'clock in the morning, walking up to the silk mill or something up the road. People can't imagine. During the winter months, the kids would stand up along the railroad tracks and throw stones at the brakemen on the railroad on the coal trains, so they'd throw coal back down and then they'd go along and pick coal. That was something. People don't realize; everybody had a coal chute down on their front porch, something like that. We had a friend of the family; he used to have a construction company. He'd drop all kinds of junk wood in the backyard, and we had to cut it up and put it in the furnace because we had a pipeless furnace. But after school, my brother and I were on a crosscut saw; we cut up railroad ties that had been thrown away. After school, we had

to cut up a couple of railroad ties to last all night. It's a wonder we didn't burn the house down because those railroad ties were so hot. You'd throw a chunk of that, and you had heat in the house. The street we were raised on, Lackawanna Avenue, was practically all old railroaders that lived up and down that street, and they kept tabs on you and on the kids, too. You didn't want to get in any trouble because they'd give you the boot if they had to. We didn't have cars. It wasn't until Larry was working out in Snydersville.

CMK: When he was at the gas station?

HM: Yes. He got robbed one night. He was down on the floor. He came home, and he was pretty well shook up. He worked a night shift all night long, and the guy robbed him. That was it.

MG: When was this?

HM: That was before we went in the service.

CMK: It was in the '30s at some time.

MG: This is your brother Larry.

HM: Yes. Then, he got a job working in a printing place, over the railroad tracks from his house. A big salary--three dollars a week. That was something that you don't think about today, but three dollars a week, and he was an apprentice in the bindery. Then, later on, because he had a friend who was in the printing section of it, they moved him over. I guess he got about four or five dollars a week from that. But any money that came in went right to Mom to run the house. That was the thing. You didn't keep any money. Of course, at that time, when I was growing up, I was caddying on the golf course, too. The caddy fee I can remember was eighty cents a round. Sometimes, a good tipper would give you a buck, and then you had to pay the caddy master his ten cents off of that dollar. The rest of it you could take home. But Mom put that money away, and that was to save it for your school clothes in the winter.

CMK: Tell her where you caddied at.

HM: Back in those days, if you wore overalls to school, you were poor. When you came home from school, you took off your school clothes and put on your work clothes, boy clothes. It wasn't anything to have a patch on your pants or something like that because you got a hole in it. You didn't just go downtown to buy a pair of pants when you were at that age. So, that's the rudiments of growing up during that period of time. The fellow that I used to go with on the feed truck on Saturday, he'd give me a quarter at the end of the day. Man, that was big money because that was good for the movies and a soda, and afterward, you still had five or ten cents left. That's the way it was growing up. My sister was a waitress in a restaurant. She'd get tips like that. Once in a while, I'd slip down on a Monday night and ask her for a dime, so I could go down--Monday night was cowboy night down at the theater.

CMK: When you were a caddy, where were you at?

HM: Let's see. Glenbrook Country Club, it's still in business up in Stroudsburg. They'd sometimes come up to school when they needed caddies for a tournament down in Shawnee. It's still there. That was Fred Waring's operation [the Shawnee Inn and Golf Resort]. They took us by truckload up to Pocono Manor, which is up in the Poconos. There'd be a truckload of us from high school. On one trip, I guess we went up to Skytop, which was up at the top of the mountain. Anyplace that needed caddies, they'd come up to the high school, and the principal would let us go because he knew the families needed money. They'd load us up in the backend of a truck. In those days, we had an open truck in the back. You couldn't do that today. That's how we traveled. If it went down the Shawnee, that was almost a guarantee of loot; that was a dollar and a quarter. Fred Waring owned the Shawnee Inn.

CMK: They had Fred Waring's and Pennsylvanians. They traveled. It was a singing group. They actually played up here at Warren Hills. They did a show here at Warren Hills many years ago.

HM: What's his name?

CMK: Jackie Gleason used to be a big one at Shawnee. A lot of celebrities would go there.

HM: They'd land an airplane right over on the lawn over in Shawnee. We were over across the river at Worthington State Forest. We'd seen them come in and land. They'd have tournaments over there. They'd have shotgun tournaments over there, shooting blue rock skeet out over by the river. That's about the story of my youth growing up. It was work, work all through there. [Editor's Note: Mr. Musselman was a Forest Ranger from 1960-1966 at Worthington State Forest.]

When our outfit, the 272, left the United States, went out to--I don't know what it is now, but it used to be Fort Slocum. It was a military station out on Long Island. I think it was made into some kind of a housing development today. Then, one night, they said, "Pack up." We packed up, and they took us by light boat. We didn't know where we were going. We ended up down at the docks, and we were loaded on the *Queen Elizabeth* [QE]. We didn't know it was the *Queen Elizabeth*. In the middle of the night, you're walking up a gangplank.

CMK: It was the QE1; it was the original one.

HM: It was a big ship. We ended up with twenty thousand of us onboard that ship, going across, past the Statue of Liberty. We said, "Bye-bye" and that was it because we traveled on that ship without an escort. At the time, all convoys and everything had escorts, military and otherwise, going across. But we were--I don't know. It was seven or eight days, and we landed up in the Clyde River in Scotland. At that time, they had an anti-submarine chain or something across. They closed all those rivers up. They opened up, the boat would come through, and it would close up. You waited your turn until they unloaded us onto a lighter boat that took us to shore. That was an experience, too. I was looking out the porthole. That was the only time we could ever open the porthole. We couldn't have much on deck because a cigarette light would show for miles at sea. I was looking out the window, and there was a hospital group unloading

down below. I was looking at them, and I said, "Anybody from Pennsylvania?" This guy looks up, and he says, "Hi, Muss." It was one of my high school friends. He was with this hospital group unloading at the same time.

So, we unloaded there. If you ever tried to travel on a British train with a pack on your back or something like that, there's not much room. We loaded on that train, and they took us from there down to between Coventry and Birmingham. But you never saw so many little redheaded kids in all your life, up through there in Scotland. They had shipped all the kids out, at that time, they shipped them all out into the country. A lot of them were shipped over here to Canada because they got the children out of London. London was devastated. People don't realize just how bad it was burned down. We were stationed between Coventry and Birmingham. Birmingham was an industrial center, but Coventry was flattened; the only thing left was part of the church steeple. So, we were about halfway between the two. Our barracks were on a big estate that had been turned over to the military. They had built barracks there, and that's where we were stationed when we were in England.

Some episodes that go through there like that--everybody could get a bicycle, and that was a mode of transportation. The buses were charcoal-fired. The driver would have to get out every so often and throw some charcoal [in], like that, and that's how the bus traveled. The fellows in our outfits, a lot of them got bicycles. They'd go on over to a pub. Do you know what a pub was? It's a bar there. They'd go over there to the pub at night. I can remember one of our radio sergeants, he came in, and he was swearing and everything. "What's the matter?" When they came down the hill, there was sand or gravel on the road, and he'd taken a spill. His pants were all skinned up. Another time, one of our sergeants, who later became our first sergeant, came back from town, and he hid English pies inside his shirt. He came in and put his bicycle up like that. He started into the barracks, fell, and splattered the pie. Of course, those are anecdotes that happened with a bunch of fellows.

Every gun that was shipped overseas in this country, those big guns, came on deck, and when they were unloaded down in the motor pool, the gun crews who were down there had to clean them constantly. It's the grease. They were all greased up when they were shipped over on deck, and they had to clean all that stuff off the guns while they were sitting over there.

There were different things that you traveled with. I was driving for a lieutenant. We had to go someplace to look for some supplies or something like that. We got about ten or twelve miles away from where we were and asked people where we're going. They didn't know. People over there didn't travel. Not only that, but they had taken down all road signs in case there was a German invasion. There was nothing out there for you to go on. You got somebody with a good word that you could travel. We had to go different places over England to pick up our equipment after we got overseas because they usually unloaded down at the docks, down in Wales someplace.

The British, when it came to tea time, they stopped work. They'd have a cup of tea. I don't know what time of the day it was, but work stopped. It didn't make a difference if the war was on or if it wasn't, but the British had tea time. That was while we were stationed in England. It was there that I saw for the first time, an airplane, a bomber, loop. They were making them in

Birmingham. I was out there, and you could see this plane going down here, and it turned a loop, testing it to see if it was any good. They didn't pull any punches when it came to work. But as I said, the funny part was when they had tea. Of course, we didn't have tea. It was either a coffee break, or they went over and had a beer or something at the pub.

When they were getting ready for the invasion, they had a dummy Third Army [First U.S. Army Group, FUSAG]. Do you know where the Pas-de-Calais is? It's the narrow part where the English Channel comes up there. Right there at the Pas-de-Calais, they built a dummy army out of wood and everything like that to make the Germans think the invasion was going to come across the English Channel at the Pas-de-Calais. The Germans had heavy artillery and everything set up on that side over there, and they had moved some of their crack troops over on that side of the channel. [Editor's Note: Leading up to D-Day, the Allies created two phantom army commands, one in Scotland to threaten an invasion of Norway, and the other in East Anglia and southeast England to threaten the Pas-de-Calais. The latter established an imaginary army group called the First US Army Group (FUSAG), commanded by General George S. Patton. After the Allied invasion of German-occupied France on June 6, 1944, Patton commanded the Third Army.]

We went on maneuvers while this was all going on. Our outfit, we were down in Wales. If you've ever seen rabbits down there in the hillside, down there in those fields and pastures--every place you looked, there'd be a rabbit warren there. The farmers, or shepherds as I'd call them, down there with their sheep--you'd see them shearing sheep. If you've never seen a well-trained sheepdog, when the wool was coming off, the sheepdogs and shepherds would mount the wool. It was a part of their life, and their pups were trained by the parents to herd the flocks.

So, we were down there in Wales, and you'd see these Piper [J-3] Cubs, the planes coming in, and landing on the side of the hills, just like that. The boys, we were hoping they didn't crack up because they were coming in on the hillside. Those were our maneuvers in England. One maneuver we had to do was down before going on to England--do you know what chalk looks like? Did you ever try digging into it? Well, we had maneuvers; we had to dig our foxholes down in that chalk. You could maybe get down about that far, and that'd be about the size of it.

[General George S.] Patton was around us one time when we were down there. He wanted to know how long it took to get our guns into position because we only had two guns to a battery; we were six guns to a battalion. They came around, and he wanted to know how long it took to get those guns in position. They said, "Forty-five minutes." He said, "Too G-D [Goddamn] long." That was it. That's the way he talked. He had a nasty tongue to him. He always said, "With your guts and my [glory]"--whatever it was--"we're going to win." So, we were on maneuvers there in England.

CMK: When you were talking about the dummy army, wasn't Patton in charge of the dummy army?

HM: Well, it was the Third Army.

CMK: There had been a documentary on TV, and they showed that they used inflatable tanks, like balloons, so that they were life-sized. That's where they put Patton because of his boisterous personality, shall we say? They wanted to put him somewhere out of the way for a little bit.

HM: When you were in Patton's Army like that, you wore a necktie, and you wore a steel helmet at all times. If you were working under a vehicle or something like that, you had that on. That was part of Patton's routine. He was tough. He was lucky that he wasn't sent back to the States that time in the hospital, when he hit that guy. [Editor's Note: In August 1943, at an evacuation hospital in Sicily, General George S. Patton slapped an American soldier who was suffering from "battle fatigue," now known as post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD].]

CMK: He hit a patient in the hospital; it was PTSD basically.

HM: It was shellshock.

CMK: There was nothing outwardly physically wrong with the guy, but Patton was like, "You're going back on the line."

HM: "You're a coward."

CMK: Called him a coward and slapped him in the hospital for being a coward.

HM: He had to apologize to the whole hospital unit and everything like that. They showed pictures of it. He didn't want to do it, but he said, "Well, I guess I have to." Otherwise, they were going to ship him back to the States. Then, they brought him up to Europe. It's a good thing [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower knew him from way back because actually Patton outranked Eisenhower, and that was the thing that people [don't know]. I've got the whole history of the thing here in a book. It's about that thing. It was put out by the War Department. Maybe you've seen it.

MA: I know they made a film about it in the '50s, about that whole incident and Patton's career.

HM: He almost got flattened on that one. But Eisenhower recognized him for what he was. He was a cavalryman. That's why they always pictured him with a white-handled pistol, stuff like that. That was the cowboy all the way through, but he actually outranked Eisenhower until they finally came up with the four stars.

CMK: This one is *The History of World War II*, and this one is *My Three Years with Eisenhower* by Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR [United States Navy Reserve].

MG: Neat.

HM: He was a Navy ...

CMK: We've got a lot of this kind of stuff around here. [laughter]

MG: Wow, big book.

HM: Yes, you'd spend some time.

CMK: And small print.

HM: People don't realize that we actually had two D-Days, one down in North Africa. I spend a lot of time reading on it. We invaded North Africa. During the invasion of North Africa, Eisenhower's headquarters was on the Rock of Gibraltar. He wasn't a four-star general then. He had everything down through. We actually got the hell kicked out of us in North Africa. When the Germans had pushed the British all the way back to Egypt, and they were about ready to take over the Suez Canal, and [Bernard] Montgomery--he was a big artilleryman. He got every piece of artillery to line up in North Africa there, and he started the invasion coming back. But we had two places in North Africa that we actually fought the French. People don't realize that there were battles with the French through there. They finally got a division together down there and fought with the Allies. But we fought the French for a while in North Africa. Along with that, the French scuttled their fleet, which was down in the harbor down at the end, so the Germans couldn't get a hold of it.

I don't remember whether there was one French ship or something that ended up with our fleet, but that was the "D-Day" before D-Day. Actually, [Winston] Churchill wanted the invasion not to go into Europe like that; he wanted it to go back into Turkey and those places like that. Out of North Africa, we bombed the Ploesti oil fields over in Germany. [Editor's Note: The oil fields at Ploesti, Romania, were a major target for the US Army Air Forces throughout the war. The heavy anti-aircraft and fighter protection established by the enemy led to high casualties for the USAAF, such as during the August 1, 1943, Operation: TIDAL WAVE raid, in which over three hundred American airmen lost their lives, nearly two hundred became prisoners of war and many more were wounded.] We lost a lot of planes on that flight coming back, too. As a matter of fact, they found not too many years ago a plane that had come down in the desert. They couldn't find any crew for it. The plane was in perfect condition, but it must've just had enough fuel and landed by itself, and that was it. Then, of course, we went from North Africa, there were a bunch of little islands in the Mediterranean there. We went to Sicily. We went to Italy. One of the fellows over in town was Charlie Stauffer, and he was wounded at Anzio. People don't realize that Anzio was almost a boondoggle because the Germans had us bottled up on there for a long time, and the Fifth Army was down there. Later on, the Seventh Army came up from Southern France, on up through there, to join up with the invasion army in the North.

We were over in England. We didn't go over to D-Day because our guns were too big. Each section of the gun weighed thirty tons. We stood down at Plymouth down there in England. The LSTs [Landing Ship, Tank] would come back from the invasion over through there, and you'd see them unloading German POWs [prisoners of war] and you'd see them bringing wounded out and the whole thing--take them right away. People don't realize that all the while we were in England that we were building artificial docks and stuff like that. When the invasion started, they floated them over there because the Germans had destroyed the piers and docks in France. There was no place to get troops to land on a pier or docks for supplies. So, they made several of

those right there in Southern England and floated them off during the invasion to make piers and docks for them. That's the story.

The invasion took place, and then our outfit was with the Third Army. The Third Army didn't go over there until August 6. Anyway, when we landed over there, we landed out of an LST. We were all backed into those LSTs, and the minute that thing hit the beach, the ramp went down, our motors were running, we went right off. When that LST went in, it dropped an anchor out at sea, so we went in on a high tide. When the tide was out, they cranked themselves back out to sea, so that they would take it right out. After they got their loads on, they went right over to England.

So, that's an experience, too. You sit there with a motor running and wait for the ramp to go down, and *whoosh*, right off the beach and right up the road. One of the first towns I remember seeing was Sainte-Mère-Église, if you've heard about that. That was the paratrooper hung up in the steeple, up in the belfry. Somebody said that the Germans shot at him, but they didn't hit him. I don't know what the full story is on that. [Editor's Note: Mr. Musselman is referring to Private John Marvin Steele, who landed and whose parachute was caught on the steeple of a church in Sainte-Mère-Église during the Battle of Normandy. For two hours, he hung there, pretending to be dead, but was able to escape and rejoin his division. Steele was awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Private John Marvin Steele's foot was injured from anti-aircraft fire.]

But anyway, some interesting anecdotes happened through there. We didn't all go in one ship. I didn't know how many of us went across, but when we got up there, they took us up to an orchard. There are a lot of apple orchards in Normandy; believe me, there was. When we got up there, we had to wait until we got everything unloaded and got together again as a unit. Of course, when the military got into a place like that, one of the first things they do is they had to dig a latrine. They put a fence around it like that. The French civilians were over there. They went up there, and they were looking, "What the hell is going on?" That was something the French didn't do. The guys would have to go to the latrine like that. They'd point to them.

MG: What else could you do in terms of a bathroom?

HM: Give you a trenching shovel. You went out there, you dug a hole, and that's where you went to the bathroom. Of course, on farms like that, there was usually a pile of manure, and that was it. Guys didn't worry about pulling their pants down and stuff like that; they went where they could. But the thing that stands in mind is the fact that these French civilians were standing up there and looking while these guys were going to the toilet. But they stopped digging those slit trenches. If you were in an area where it was a permanent installation, then they did that, not when you were on the move. People don't realize that when you're in a convoy and you're going through a town, the lead vehicle might be outside the town. The rest of them were down sitting in the town, and if these guys had to go to the toilet, they went to the toilet right there in the middle of a town.

Of course, if you went to some of these [cities] later on, Paris [and places] like that, you'd walk down the street, and they'd have these outdoor latrines right along the sidewalk, and the guy

would stand there and tip his hat to a woman out on the street, carry on a conversation with them, all while they were going. In a barroom, or something like that, there was a hole in the floor and two places for your feet, and that was the toilet. I can remember this one place, we were just on the edge of Germany. It said on the door: "*Damen und Herren*" [ladies' room and men's room in German]. You understood real fast. Once in a while, you'd see some of these stage shows show up or something like that. Usually, there was an artillery outfit set up right outside the town hall. Girls would be putting on a show or something like that, and *wham*, they'd hit the floor because they didn't know whether it was incoming or going out. We didn't know either. That's the way it went.

We were situated right there. We fired on Vire-Mortain; that was one of the bloodiest battles there was. Then, Saint-Lô, which the cathedral was there. That's when the British and the others started pushing farther north. Patton was in by then. He had his armor. The Germans were surrounded there. Was it the Falaise Gap? [Editor's Note: The Battle of Mortain took place between August 7 and August 13, 1944, and set the stage for the Battle of the Falaise Pocket or Gap, which took place between August 12 and August 21, 1944.] They put the squeeze on the Germans, and they retreated fast, back to the Fatherland, back to the Siegfried Line. [Editor's Note: The Siegfried Line was a series of defensive fortifications built by Germany along its borders with the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France.]

I follow the history of a lot of these things. The Maginot Line was a well-fortified line in France. What they didn't realize when the French built it after World War [I], they put it north, but they didn't close the gap. The Germans, when they attacked, they just came right around. [Editor's Note: When the Germans invaded France in 1940, they invaded through the Low Countries, thus bypassing the Maginot Line. German forces pushed British, Belgian and French forces back to the sea at Dunkirk, necessitating evacuation by British military and civilian forces.]

CMK: Are you talking about the Ardennes Forest?

HM: They made an end run, coming right down through there. That's when the Allies got pushed back into the sea--it was another preliminary for D-Day--but the British got pushed back into the sea [at Dunkirk]. They didn't have any arms or anything like that; they had to leave them behind. They sent every available boat that there was along the coast, fishing boats and everything else, to pick up the soldiers and everything that was coming out and going through there. People don't realize that people in this country sent firearms, hunting rifles, and stuff over to the English because they didn't have guns over there to protect themselves. A lot of that stuff was shipped out of this country and went right over.

The Germans were pushed back. They were pushed back to Paris. A lot of the German generals got in a real lot of trouble because they had orders to blow all of the bridges in Paris, and they didn't do it. The French underground about that time had come out, and they started fighting the Germans who were left in Paris. So, they were pushed out.

At that time, people don't realize, the trucks that hauled gas to Patton's Third Army up there had a red disc on the side of them; it was the Red Ball Express. [Editor's Note: The term "Red Ball Express" describes the logistical supply line established by African American trucking units of

the U.S. Army from the Normandy beachhead to the front in Northern Europe in the summer and fall of 1944.] You didn't take another vehicle on those highways because it was strictly for the Red Ball; they'd haul them right on through. Of course, we were pushed up to Versailles. Our guns and everything were held there; they took all of our trucks to haul on the Red Ball. But we couldn't have gone very far anyway. We had a M10 tank destroyer with the turret taken off that pulled our guns.

MG: Can you say who those Red Ball trains were for again? What was their purpose?

HM: The Red Ball [was] hauling gas for the Third Army because Patton was making an end run, going down toward southern France. When we moved up, we moved right up to the Luxembourg line, and Germany had fortified everything. They had tank barriers and everything like that. But the guys knew--the American GI was really good at this stuff--they made what they called Bangalore torpedoes [tube mine]. It was powder and it looked like a snake and they'd push it out through those things and blow them. If that got too slow, what they would do, they would take a bulldozer and cover those things up and run right over the top of them.

By the way, that was one thing that happened back in the fence rows [hedgerows] in Normandy. Some smart GI put cutters on the bottom of tanks, and they'd cut the roots on these fence rows. These fence rows would be as high as this room. Every time a tank would start to rotate, they'd expose their belly and they'd get knocked out. But once they started cutting their way through like that, they kept right on going. So, that was getting us out of the fence row.

We were stationed on the German border. I'm trying to think, Saint Vith and some of the others were back in through there. We were in firing positions, and while we were in firing position, we were on "buzz bomb alley." [Editor's Note: The German V-1 was a flying bomb, nicknamed the buzz bomb or doodlebug, launched from ground launchers or from the air and aimed mainly at London.] You've probably heard of those, the flying bombs. Each warhead was a thousand pounds. They'd go over, and there was a little jet engine on the top of them. The Germans were either firing them at London or down along the Channel. When they cut out, those things went down. When they went down, you'd better be on the ground because with a thousand-pound warhead going off, the concussion went for miles, all the way over through there. So, we had those going over. Sometimes, a whole fleet of them would go over at one time. They were heading for the Netherlands. I'm trying to think what the town was over there. We were using the docks in the Netherlands at that time. So, they were firing everything possible.

Then, later on, that's when they got the V-2s. We were up in OP [observation post]. I saw them fire, and you could see the trail going off. Then, they'd disappear up in the atmosphere, and they went over. They were hitting London with those things. They were a big warhead. I think after the war, they found some of the warheads buried in the streets of London when they were digging. So, they were already there. But we sat there and watched those buzz bombs go over--one-thousand warheads went off and cut loose right in front of our guns. We rolled back and we cut across the road in front of a colonel or someone in a command car--cut across right in front of it. I think he did something in his pants. But, fortunately, when the V-2s came up over the ridge, there was a line of pine trees up through there and they cut a swath right through them and you could see them back where they came down.

There's things that you see and remember. We were coming in toward winter at that time, in the fall, and we didn't have the gear that they had later on in Korea. I mean, we were just with summer uniforms and stuff like that. That's why I got frostbite on my hands. A lot of guys got frostbite on their feet. Fellows lost their feet. The best way to stay warm in that country up there was to dig a hole, and if you could get an empty shell case, make a little stove out of it, and stay down on the ground.

We were in that one spot, and Fred Wetzler, he was our pianist. Every time he'd find a piano in an old building, he'd sit down and pound out "Boogie Woogie" [by the Glenn Miller Orchestra] for us. He was a good pianist, believe me. Anyway, this one night, we were on the hillside there. We had a pup tent up. He was my tent mate. In the night, he shook me. He said, "Musselman, Musselman, wake up, goddammit. I'm drowning." It was raining. It was coming in on his side of the tent. [laughter] You remember those things that happened. He only died a couple of years ago up in New England, but he was still playing with orchestras.

CMK: He did a lot of piano bar music, too.

HM: Anytime we had a reunion or anything like that, they had him beating out on the piano. He was good.

CMK: Do you want me to go get the picture? There's the one picture. There's six of you in a group, and Wetzler is right in the middle of it. It's in there on the shelf.

HM: All right.

CMK: Did he tell you how they each carried half of the tent?

HM: They were pup tents.

CMK: Wetzler was his tent mate. Dad carried half of it, and Fred carried the other half of it. Wherever they were staying for the night, they'd hook the two pieces together. That way, they shared the load. They equaled out their load.

MA: I wanted to go back to before your experience in the war. I just wanted to get a sense of your high school experience and if you were aware of events overseas. Generally, how was high school for you?

HM: High school?

MA: Yes.

HM: Well, in high school growing up, I was ...

CMK: Here's Dad. There's Fred, right in the middle.

MG: Where was this picture taken?

HM: That was probably at Ludwigsburg, at the end of the war.

CMK: Yes, Ludwigsburg.

HM: At the end of the war, we were shipped down to a German Army barracks.

CMK: Look at the hair.

MG: I know. A wonderful head of hair. [laughter]

CMK: That's Dad there. That's Fred, the tent mate. Be careful. The whole thing is not in there very well, but there's a label on the back. So, you can see all the names. You'd probably be able to spell them out anyway.

HM: Fred is right in behind there. Harold Brown was right there.

CMK: Harold's still alive. Wetzler's gone.

HM: This one was still alive out in Ohio, but we never heard from him. He wouldn't come to the reunion or anything like that. This one, he only ever went to sixth grade in school, but he could do mathematics better than anything because this was a survey crew. We had to do the math for laying gun positions and stuff, and he could do it. But he came to an Army reunion. He married a young ...

CMK: He was one of the ones that married one of the--some of these guys get into their second and third wives. The wives kept getting younger and having bigger gaps between them.

HM: He's the one who told us about his brother being a bootlegger, making moonshine. He told [them] about their house. They were digging a hole in the living room, taking the dirt out, carrying it away very carefully. Somebody must've turned them in because he said they got raided by the revenuers.

CMK: Who was it that when he enlisted and they wanted you to put the previous occupation on it, somebody did put down that they were bootleggers?

HM: Yes. Well, he was a member of one of the gun crews. We had just about an eight-man crew. This was Bellamy. He took over the section after we lost--well, let's see.

CMK: The names on the back, Dad.

HM: That's Bellamy up there.

CMK: Is it Sharpe? Zimmerman, Wetzler, Bingham, Crouch, you, Harold Brown, and Bellamy. That's Brownie, right?

HM: That's Bellamy back there.

CMK: I got to know a lot of these guys because they held the reunions every year. This is only the second summer they haven't had reunions anymore. They stopped doing it. There's not enough of the unit left.

HM: We were down to seven.

CMK: It's too hard to get people together because when you've got the kids, the grandkids, and great-grandkids all showing up together, it became a big family thing. The first time I ever went, I was fourteen, so I've known these guys.

MG: Yes. They must feel like surrogate uncles.

CMK: Absolutely. Then, even after the guys have died, the widows have still been coming. So, it's extended family.

MG: Yes, that's great.

HM: What was your question now?

MA: My question was about your high school experience.

MG: Yes. I would like to back up, too, and hear about what the world was like while you were growing up and going to school. What did you expect to do with your life? Then, we can talk in more detail about getting drafted and your service again.

HM: The high school experience mainly was band.

MG: What instrument did you play?

HM: I was a drummer. I can remember one of the fellows there became a solo trumpet player for the Navy band afterwards. Later on, when the war was over, he had his own orchestra that he was playing around resorts up through the Poconos. In high school, everybody took music. We had chorus. We had a male chorus, too. We had good male choruses because we would have won the regional championship with our chorus, but the school board wouldn't pay to send us to the state finals. But our director was in the Navy in World War II. He was there, and he was a musician too. So, that was part of our high school experience.

I took part in the senior play. I'm trying to think of what the one play was that I was in. *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* was one of them that we did. I'm trying to think of what the other one was. But that was one that sticks in my mind. Our band leader had been an intramural boxing champion at West Chester State College when he came to the high school. He was kind of an effeminate-looking fellow with glasses. I can remember one music class. There was one big farm kid who challenged him. He said, "Out." He said, "Make me." Boy, this guy took his

glasses off. That guy was out in the hall, and he found out who was the boss in that music room. [laughter] He never challenged him again; nobody did. He'd play baseball with the boys and everything like that, but he was good. He was an athlete as well as a musician. He had played different instruments with bands. You respected him because he'd take care of things. What else?

MA: Just for the record, this was the late 1930s?

HM: Yes.

CMK: You graduated in 1939?

HM: '40.

MA: Were you aware of world events? Obviously, in Europe, there was a lot of turmoil.

HM: Well, about that time, there was war going on all over the Pacific and the others. So, we knew it was coming. Then, when you reached eighteen, you signed up for the draft and that was it. We all took part in the school activities one way or another. We had some damned good athletes. We took part in town parades and everything else.

MG: What were you hoping to do when you graduated from high school before the United States entered the war?

HM: Well, my brothers said I was going to college. They laid down the law because Larry was working down in the printing shop. They said, "You're going to college." My older [brother] Wally was in college at that time. When he graduated from college, he went right into the Air Force, and he ended up as a weather observer in Australia for four years. When they said that we were going into these things, the college students got taken right in. Wally was down in Biloxi, Mississippi.

CMK: Was he enlisted, or was he an officer?

HM: He enlisted. He was down there when we got hit by the Japanese in World War II. They shipped him right out of Biloxi, Mississippi, up to Illinois, up to weather school. From weather school, they shipped him--he took a course, nine weeks or something like that, because he had a college education--and they shipped him right out overseas. He was in Australia for the four years.

CMK: Okay. Now, a family story here. Before Larry shipped out to Europe, Larry was quite the lady's man. Larry had a lot of correspondents, shall we say, when he was in the service. One of the letters he handed off was the one from Anne, Aunt Anne. She married Wally, the other brother. Larry [said], "Here, I have too many. Take this one."

HM: Well, he was stationed down south at that time.

CMK: Larry was, or Wally was?

HM: Larry was.

CMK: Wally went to ...

HM: Wally went over to Australia.

CMK: Larry sent the letter off to him?

HM: Larry was down there in camp, and then they shipped him up outside of Pittsburgh.

CMK: Anne dated Larry before she ended up dating Wally and marrying Wally. She's still alive. She's in Seneca, South Carolina, and had five children. More Musselmans, of course, four boys and a girl.

HM: What else?

MA: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked? What do you remember about that experience?

HM: When Pearl Harbor was attacked, I was sitting in the living room on Sunday morning. There used to be the children's hour and stuff like that. There was a Sunday morning program. We sat there, and an announcement came over that the program has been canceled and Pearl Harbor has been bombed by the Japanese. We were sitting there in the living room.

CMK: You were in college, though, at that time, right?

HM: No, I was in high school.

CMK: You said you graduated in '40, and Pearl Harbor was in '41.

HM: Well, I don't know what it was, but we sat there in the living room. It was on the radio.

CMK: I know it was a Sunday.

HM: Now, just a minute. Wally wasn't there at that time because Wally had already signed up, and he was with the Air Force.

CMK: I'm just trying to clarify the years here because if you graduated high school in '40 and Pearl Harbor was December of '41, you had to have already started college.

HM: Don't forget that the Japanese were in the islands.

CMK: In the Aleutians, yes.

HM: They were also in those islands over in the Pacific. So, the British lost I don't know how many battleships around Singapore and other places like that. You couldn't keep track of them all through there. Japan was coming down through China. The war was in the Pacific early. What else was it?

MG: What else do you remember about that day when Pearl Harbor was attacked? Do you remember how you felt?

HM: Well, how you felt--what could you do? Our next-door neighbor was in the National Guard. He bailed out of the house and headed right down to the armory because he thought they called him up. He ended up as a colonel in the Army, by the way. He was one of the neighbor boys.

CMK: At this point, you're still on Lackawanna Avenue?

HM: Yes. There was nothing we could do at that particular time. Then, right after that is when the government came out and put restrictions on automobile tires and everything like that. We had moved up to Brodhead Avenue. Any extra tires or anything like that, you took down to the railroad station and they were shipped off because tires were not available.

CMK: When, in all of this, did you meet Mom?

HM: Did I meet Mom?

CMK: When?

HM: Well, just a minute. Your mother, I met her in a biology class in college.

CMK: Right. So, Pearl Harbor had already happened. Mom was two years behind you.

HM: On Wednesday nights, all freshman boys had to go to a Wednesday night dance in college. You loosen up, so you met people. That was a Wednesday night dance that I met her.

CMK: I'm just trying to keep the chronology going here, that's all. I knew somewhere along the line when you were in college but before you went in the Army, you met Mom. They were both at East Stroudsburg State Teachers College at this point.

HM: Well, she was ahead of me.

MG: You met her at this Wednesday night dance?

HM: Well, she was in class with me all the time. She was just a part of the class; that was it.

CMK: I thought she started out behind you.

HM: No, she started out ahead of me.

CMK: I know she graduated ahead of you because you were in the Army.

HM: Now, just a minute. Now, just a minute. [laughter] No, she was in class. We were required to go to these Wednesday night dances. So, that was the first time I ever danced with her. Later on, we were in chorus together. But then, I was supposed to take her to a dance this one night. In the meantime, I got my card saying ...

CMK: Time to go.

HM: "Time to go." I was supposed to go take her to a Christmas dance or something. So, I sent her a letter back, and I said, "Sorry, I can't take you to the dance. I'm already in Texas." [laughter]

MG: How long was it between the attack on Pearl Harbor and getting your draft card?

HM: I don't remember the time.

CMK: Do you remember when you actually enlisted?

HM: I didn't enlist. I was drafted.

CMK: Well, from the time your active duty started. That's what she's looking for.

HM: My active duty?

CMK: Your active duty start date.

MG: When you went to training.

HM: First thing, the ASTP program was in session, but the college boys were signing up for it, so they could stay another half of a year or so in college. So, I signed up, and I went up to Wilkes-Barre, which was the induction center up there. I tried to enlist, and they said, "You can't go. You've got a heart murmur." So, I didn't go. I went back. A couple of weeks later, I got my draft notice. I went up to the draft board to take the physical up there. I can remember the doctor up there saying, "Musselman, did you ever try to enlist?" I said, "Yes. I was turned down." He said, "Why?" I said, "I had a heart murmur." He said, "Go down to my office." I went down to his office, and they put an EKG [electrocardiogram] on me and went through. He showed it back to me, and he said, "It's normal. A lot of people have a heart murmur." So, I went back up to the induction center before I was technically drafted, and I showed it to them up there and they said, "It doesn't make any difference. We're not taking you anyway." A couple of weeks later, I get a draft notice, and that's when I started my career through the draft board.

MG: Do you remember what year that was, or what time of the year that was?

CMK: I'd have to find the paperwork. I don't know.

MA: Where did you report after receiving your draft notice?

CMK: They gave you dates and times.

HM: They gave the date for us to meet the bus over in Stroudsburg. We got aboard and said bye-bye. That was it. We went up to Wilkes-Barre, and they sent us down through the line. It all depended on what they needed at that time. If they wanted Marines, you went to that pile. If they wanted Navy, you went the other way. They were filling up a new division down in Texas. That's where we went. So, that's what happened.

We went, from there, down to below Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; there was an induction center down through there. We got in there about midnight, two o'clock in the morning. The first thing they did was sat you down at a desk, and you took that Army General Classification Test. That was the first thing that they did. They finally let us get a couple of hours of sleep. Then, they took us down and started shipping our civilian clothes home. You never took much with you when you went. They got you down there and they gave you a military uniform. From there, they put us on a train for Texas. We were about a week getting down there because every critical freight train or something like that, they put us on a siding until the other trains got through. That was until we got down to Arkansas and Texas. Did you ever hear of Texarkana? Well, down the middle of the street, one half of it is in Arkansas, the other half is in Texas. They shipped us down there, and they shuttled us over there to the Army base. This was a new camp. I'm trying to think of the town. It was halfway between Dallas and Texarkana. Camp Maxey was its name. [Editor's Note: Camp Maxey is located in Powderly, Texas, just outside of Paris, Texas.] That was a new camp. We got off the train. There was a lieutenant standing there with your records, "You go here. You go there." He looked at me and said I was going to headquarters because that's where the band was. That's where I started with my musical career, which didn't last too long.

MA: Did you receive your basic training in Texas?

HM: Well, yes, basic training. The first thing you had up there was double time, double time, double time. Every place you went was on the double. So, I took the basic training there, and that was where I became an instructor on fifty-caliber machine guns. That was one spot. That's where I started losing weight. We had an inspection out there, and the captain goes up through. I had pleats in my pants and stuff like that. He told the first sergeant, "Give this man a ticket to the tailor to get new pants."

MG: Can you describe yourself going into basic training? I have seen the pictures, but for someone reading this, can you describe yourself?

HM: I was overweight, but it didn't last too long, because, as I said, every place you went was on the double.

CMK: Being in Texas, it was a little warm, so it probably melted off a little bit.

HM: It was a new camp. Every place you went, if you saw any [cigarette] butts or anything like that, you bent and picked them up. Everything was clean. We had mud because the streets were paved, but anything around the barracks were on wooden planks going in and out of the place. That was where an old Army sergeant, who became our first sergeant, taught us how to put those leggings on at that time. He said, "You put them on like this." He had been retired, and he was back in. He taught us how to put those leggings back on, and we started wearing them. Another thing they did, when we got down there, they took us out on the thousand-inch range, gave us a '03 Springfield [Model 1903], we laid down and we fired five rounds at a target. That was so we could walk guard duty with live ammo at night. We were out there with an '03 Springfield rifle. At that time, the regular Army, the infantry, was coming in with the Enfield semi-automatics, but we were carrying the old bolt-actions.

MA: What other weapons training did you have besides the rifle and the machine gun training?

HM: Well, any kind of work that they wanted us to do, we did. They took us on forty-mile hikes, stuff like that, in Texas weather, all things like that in basic [training]. Then, they took you over to the obstacle course, and you swung across a rope across a pond. For a lot of guys, if it was hot weather, they'd deliberately drop off the rope down into the water to cool off. When you went out at four o'clock in the morning on a forty-mile hike, that was a long jaunt. You didn't make it all in one day either. You went through some of that old farmland, dust. Then, you'd get rain, and you'd accumulate about that much mud on the top of your shoes. You'd finally get back to base. As I said, later on is when they started declassifying us and putting us where they wanted us. From there, I went to Syracuse.

MG: Can you tell me how you felt when you put your uniform on for the first time?

HM: Well, they took our clothes away from us. [laughter] We had to have something on. [laughter] But the way they put your shoes on, you walked across a board, and a guy's standing behind there. He's measuring your feet and giving you a pair of shoes, and that was it.

MA: Did you make any friends at basic training?

HM: What?

CMK: Did you make friends at basic training?

HM: Oh, yes, sure. Some of the older guys were taken out and went right to the officer training program. That's when they got us going to the colleges. They went according to your classification, how many points you had on there, whether you were good for something or you weren't.

CMK: When you went through boot camp then, those guys were not the ones you ended up with in the 272 then?

HM: No.

CMK: A lot of the units, when they started with boot camp, would go all the way through, but because you changed jobs along the way, that shifted.

HM: When I left Syracuse and came down to Fort Bragg, it was the old CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] barracks, and it was cold. You could see cracks through the floor. It was cold. That's where I ended up in the hospital. I ended up in the hospital because I had hemorrhoids and a fistula on the bowel in the back. So, they shipped me over to the hospital, and I spent a couple of weeks over there.

MG: Where was this?

HM: At Fort Bragg, before I ever went to the 272. They had those long barrack wings. There was a center part, and there were wings. There were guys in there from all over the place with carbuncles on their necks and stuff like that. That was one place that you found out where the segregation came in because one of our nurses was Black, and she came through there. It didn't make any difference to the fellows; she was a nurse and that was it. After the operation, they shipped me back over to the replacement depot over at Bragg. That's when they needed replacements over at the 272. That's when I shipped out from the basic training over there. That was the Christmas I didn't have money to buy a postcard to send home to Mom because they redlined you on your pay.

CMK: When you were ...

HM: When you were in the hospital, you're redlined. They held your pay up until they got through with you. Then, when I got over to the 272, I wasn't with the unit I went overseas with either. I was in headquarters when I got over there, and then they decided which of us were going to A battery, B battery, C battery, and headquarters. Some of the things you learned about the Army then--we had a cook that the fellows told us about real fast, he liked to borrow money and never pay you back. When he came around, we don't have any money, so that was it.

That's when I found out who our battalion commander was. That was Wallace Wade who led the 272. He, at that time, had had a broken leg, so he wasn't with us at the basic training at Fort Bragg. But he made sure he got healed up enough to go overseas with us. He was the football coach at Duke University and before that at Alabama. He was bound and determined that he was going to go with us, and he did. The boys called him "The Great White Father" because he hobbled around, but he was there all the time.

CMK: The 272 put a commemorative thing at Duke University for Wallace Wade because he was so renowned. When Dad had his hip surgery four years ago, Dr. Friedman went to Duke, and Dad told him about how Wallace Wade was his battalion commander then. The doctor's attitude towards Dad changed in a good way, a more respectful way, because back then, Dad had known Wallace Wade, and the doctor only knew of him.

MG: What became of Wallace Wade?

HM: He came home, and he had a beef farm down in North Carolina. He raised beef until he died.

MA: What did you think of your training and your superiors? Do you feel like you were adequately trained?

HM: Oh, yes. [laughter] I guess we were trained is right. They took us out like that because they put me in a survey crew, and that's when I found out what the math was all about. We had a lieutenant. He was from out here in Pennsylvania. He was a Pennsylvania Dutchman. He gave us good instructions. He's the one that, when we went overseas, he became the forward observer in our airplanes. It's interesting to find out what some of these people did. Our gunnery sergeant became president of the California [University of] Pennsylvania. Some of the medics we had, one of them became a doctor that we know of. He used to show up at the reunions. Another one became a lawyer, and he's still alive.

CMK: Who's that? The one that was up near Paul?

HM: No.

CMK: Who's that? Anyway, the military careers carried over into civilian [life], which is what they're pushing to try to do now to help get veterans jobs.

HM: Well, I went right back to college. I was discharged in November. By January, I was back in college. In two years, I finished up because I went to summer school and everything else. But the GI Bill put us right through. Any records you had came with you right down the line. On your discharge papers, everything was right on the back of it. You never worried about being fingerprinted because your thumbprint is right on it all the way through. Every year, we had an Army reunion. For a while, we had a pretty big crew. The guys came in from all over. One was out in California, some of them down in Florida.

CMK: Most of the unit, they were Southerners predominantly. Most of the reunions were in the South. Every year, they'd have it in a different place until they got smaller and older. How many years was it at Pigeon Forge, Tennessee?

HM: About seven years.

CMK: At least that.

HM: Buckethead never showed up.

CMK: Who?

HM: Buckethead. He was our first sergeant.

MG: How did he get that nickname?

HM: Well, every time he came out to give an order, he'd go [imitates spitting]. He was always spitting. The guys didn't call him that to his face, but that was his nickname, Buckethead.

CMK: We did that on the ship. All the officers had different nicknames. We knew who we were talking about, but the average person didn't know.

HM: Here's something else, too. The cavalry for this outfit we went overseas with came out from the Michigan National Guard. They were mostly Polacks and others from up in Hamtramck, Michigan. Everybody knew it, too, because our cook was from there. I don't know how many down the line was out of that old Michigan National Guard. They had been out in the middle of the country, and then when the 272 was formed, they broke up the National Guard and put the cavalry, as they called it, into these other outfits. So, Buckethead, we understood that he died a drunk. One of our sergeants found him along the streets up in Michigan. But the different ones down the line got different occupations. One of them became a minister, and he passed away after one of our reunions. I'm trying to think who some of the others were. They found their way around.

CMK: Some of them did quite well for themselves when they got out, like Hoyt Kirven.

HM: Well, Hoyt took over his father's business. He was a lumberman down in South Carolina, and Hoyt had an interest in the business after that. As a matter of fact, she was still alive the last time ...

CMK: Margaret. What a character. Both of them were characters.

HM: He was a character. On his honeymoon, he went down to Louisiana, down into a barroom. He was a big burly individual, and he cleaned us out. It cost him five thousand dollars that night, but the barroom was his. That's just the way he was. They were rebels through and through. I'm trying to think where it was. What else do you want to know?

MG: Well, I have so many questions, but since we've been talking for over two hours, I think we should take a break and pick up next time with more questions about training and shipping out. Would that be a good idea?

CMK: Schedule another date?

[RECORDING PAUSED]

HM: I was stationed in England. I had an opportunity to go see a Shakespeare play. Where *Ivanhoe* was written, I've got the picture of the old castle. A lot of guys wouldn't go. They hadn't been exposed to it. Most of them were just out of high school, and they didn't want to go to something like that. But there'd be a pickup load of us who would go, and we'd go see the play. I've got pictures of the village where all the stuff was written, particularly the castle where there's a plaque on the wall where the family history of George Washington was--it's engraved right in the wall of this castle.

MG: I would think it would be nice to take a break from the war to do something like this.

HM: Well, this was at the end of the war when we were on our way from where we were positioned against the Russians. They were shipping our outfit all the way down to Ludwigsburg, Germany, at the end of the war. The Germans it called a Kaserne; it was a German army barracks. We took over that barracks, and that's where they broke up our outfit. It was from there that I got shipped out to another outfit. I had the opportunity from there for a seven-day furlough in Switzerland. The colonel, who was in charge there, gave another fellow from California and myself a Jeep with unlimited gas. We went back up through Belgium and on up into the Netherlands. At that time, I knew that I had a high school buddy that was buried there. I visited his grave up through there. We spent the night with a Belgian family. They treated us like long-lost brothers because this outfit had liberated their town. He was out of a tank outfit.

MG: That attitude still persists today in many places in Europe.

HM: In some of these towns over there, they take care of these cemeteries. You can't believe the number of people that were liberated from Germany. You could see truckloads of them going, hauling them back to Belgium, the Netherlands, and these different places, coming out of prison camps. People just can't visualize that.

CMK: Which is why they're doing this, so that people don't forget.

HM: Yes, but there's a lot of people that forget.

CMK: That's why they're documenting these stories, Dad, which is why Eisenhower wanted all of those pictures taken, so people don't forget.

MG: Yes, what you're doing is so important.

CMK: This needs to go back into the schools with the kids because they've watered down the history books so badly. On Memorial Day, our group Gem Vac Veterans Association goes into Voorhees High School. Of course, we have an in there because Larry's daughter is a teacher there. But we go in and talk to the kids because there's just so many that are not hearing the stories, and it's sad, really. [Editor's Note: Mr. Musselman is referring to Larry O'Neill, a Gem Vac Veterans member].

MG: Well, we have so much material for next time, so I'll look forward to coming back next week.

MA: I will try to be here as well.

HM: I got a lot of pictures.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 3/18/2021
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 5/24/2021
Reviewed by Carol Musselman Kain 9/8/2021